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PLEASURE AND REASON: MARCUSE'S IDEA OF FREEDOM

JAMES M. RHODES

I

Herbert Marcuse often has been accused of advocating the abolition of liberty and the establishment of totalitarianism in the United States. This is ironic, for Marcuse always has imagined himself a champion of freedom and a foe of tyranny. Conflicting ideas of freedom and contradictory assessments of its status in American society are at issue in this disagreement.¹

Most of Marcuse's antagonists are American democrats who define liberty in terms of "rights" which they have learned to cherish. They firmly believe that people are entitled to live under representative political institutions and impartial laws constituted by majority rule. They also feel that men ought to be permitted to form and express their own opinions without being persecuted or forced to assent to official orthodoxies. They think further that individuals should be allowed to make their material fortunes competitively and consume them as they please, or, if they are socialists, they think that economic decisions at least ought to reflect the popular will. The American democrats consider men free if they enjoy all these rights and they are satisfied that their country tries to assure the rights to everyone.

It is easy to see why people who accept this creed would charge that Marcuse preaches tyranny. The man openly encourages the New Left to defy duly constituted laws and policies of the United States and to forbid freedom of speech to persons who defend what is "radically evil." He also calls for the violent subversion of American institutions and a drastic revision of the nation's economic priorities "against the will and against

¹ A sympathetic interpreter professes not to know what Marcuse means by the "weasel word" freedom. Robert W. Marks, The Meaning of Marcuse (New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), pp. 55-56. Nevertheless, Marcuse has an explicit idea of freedom which is developed in the following works: Reason and Revolution, Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (1941, 1960); Eros and Civilization, A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud (1955, 1962); One-Dimensional Man, Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society (1964); "Repressive Tolerance," in Robert Paul Wolff et al., A Critique of Pure Tolerance (1965, 1969); An Essay on Liberation (1969); and Five Lectures, Psychoanalysis, Politics, and Utopia (1970). The latest paperback editions of these books are cited in this paper and, of these, all but the second are published by Beacon Press in Boston. The exception is a Vintage Book published in New York. The works are cited as RR, EC, ODM, RT, EL, and FL respectively.
the prevailing interests of the great majority of the people." Moreover, he urges the creation of an "educational dictatorship" managed by a revolutionary elite (albeit reluctantly).² There never has been a more emphatic refusal to respect majority rule, freedom of speech and thought, and popular economic sovereignty. There never has been a clearer invitation to dictators to control the psychic development of human beings, either. Marcuse seems bent on depriving people of their rights, not to speak of their souls, and thus his adversaries could not help but judge him a would-be totalitarian.³

For his part, Marcuse admits readily that he would abridge existing rights and empower despots to mold the human psyche. However, he rejects his critics' inference that this would put an end to liberty. He maintains in the first place that no one has any freedom to lose; the belief that the American rights are equivalent to freedom is a delusion. Granted, these rights do guarantee choice, but Marcuse contends that: "The range of choice open to the individual is not the decisive factor in determining the degree of human freedom, but what can be chosen and what is chosen by the individual."⁴ Americans do not will what freemen would will; they are incapable of doing so because they are the unwitting victims of an insidious and cruelly effective slavery.

This slavery consists of two impediments to truly free choice. The first is "repression," a nearly universal psychological disorder which gravely impairs man's capacity to desire his proper happiness.⁵ Repressed individuals are both aggressive and euphoric; they engage in destructive mass behavior which would grieve them if they were in their right minds and they do not seem to be bothered by the "alienation" of their labor, from which they would suffer intensely if they were sane. They think themselves happy in their sorry state. Their madness is reinforced by the second element of the slavery, "totalitarian" manipulation. Marcuse thinks that ruling elites in America who benefit from aggression deftly manage human minds to make certain that the masses remain repressed. Using modern creature comforts, the media, and pernicious academic doctrines as "instruments of domination," the rulers reach down to the "very instincts" of men to make

² RT, pp. 81, 88, 100, 109-110, 117; EL, pp. 17, 70; FL, pp. 86, 104; ODM, pp. 16, 39-41.
⁴ ODM, p. 7.
⁵ Marcuse insists that happiness is an objective condition and not merely a matter of subjective feelings. EC, p. 94. The correct name for the psychological disorder actually is "surplus-repression" but this term is too awkward and hence is contracted to "repression" in this essay.
them content with false pleasures, to secure their labor and their aggressive co-operation in schemes of oppression, and to make them “one-dimensional,” i.e. incapable of perceiving the evils of their condition. The masters also disguise their control of society to prevent rebellion; they maintain democratic rights and institutions as facades which help to generate one-dimensionality by creating an illusion of popular self-government.6

Marcuse hopes to substitute real self-determination for the illusion but he faces an enormous problem; people who dementedly love their slavery and call it freedom are likely to resist their own liberation. Since their slavery is an intolerable evil nevertheless, Marcuse concludes with Rousseau that contemporary men simply “must be ‘forced to be free,’ to ‘see objects as they are, and sometimes as they ought to appear,’ they must be shown the ‘good road’ they are in search of.” He advocates subversion of the American democracy, the universities, the media, and the economy against the popular will in order to destroy the system of manipulation which nobody senses and he conceives educational dictatorship as a necessary therapy for minds which have been programmed to accept irrationality as happiness. When manipulative institutions have been done away with and conscious will has been reformed true liberty will be at hand; then the will of the people can be respected once again and dictatorial measures discarded. Meanwhile, Marcuse suggests that his opponents should not complain if revolutionaries temporarily employ despotic methods to prepare society for true freedom; a benevolent despotism with this aim surely would be better than the present tyranny, which has made the Affluent Society an Auschwitz.7 The American democrats, of course, are scandalized and reject Marcuse’s entire argument as a shabby rationalization of dark designs, generally without paying sufficient attention to the challenge which Marcuse poses to the grounds of their beliefs.

If anyone wished to examine the merits of the Marcusean and American democratic positions, he would have to consider two issues seriously. First, he would have to look into Marcuse’s accusation that America is not the democracy that it pretends to be, that it is controlled by a minority which manipulates popular consciousness. Actually, this thesis has been the stock-in-trade of the New Left since C. Wright Mills and it has been contested strenuously by the sociological “pluralists” and others. The de-

6 EC, chaps. i-vii, especially pp. 42, 90-95; ODM, intro., chaps. i-vi, especially pp. 3, 6, 7, 9, 12, 16, 80; RT, pp. 84, 97; EL, pp. 7, 11, 63; FL, p. 16. It is not quite clear whether Marcuse envisages manipulation as a deliberate conspiracy of culpable evil-doers or as the result of an impersonal system which entraps both oppressor and oppressed. Compare EC, pp. 33-34; ODM, xvi, pp. 14, 168; FL, p. 54.

7 ODM, pp. 6, 7, 16, 39-41, 80; RT, pp. 88, 100; EL, pp. 17, 65, 70. Marcuse once rejected educational dictatorship, arguing that all men would know the truth automatically if only their minds were not “methodically arrested and diverted.” EC, p. 206.
bated has been inconclusive and it cannot be settled in this paper. One comment would be pertinent, however. The question of who exercises power and how is essentially empirical and Marcuse himself does not supply any empirical proof that his claims are valid. He merely interprets selectively assembled data arbitrarily, without showing why these data could not be construed equally well some other way. He often seems strangely unaware that rigorous demonstrations are required to establish that the facts are as he says and at times he does not even indicate precisely which facts are supposed to support his generalizations. Thus, as many of his opponents have pointed out, it is a mystery that he expects anyone to believe his power elite thesis.

Marcuse's theory of repression presents the second issue which needs to be discussed; American democrats never would concede that people today are unfree due to some psychological incapacity to want real happiness. This dispute, unlike the first, does not admit of empirical resolution. Marcuse says explicitly that he takes his theory from Freudian "metapsychology" and that parts of it are more important for their "symbolic" than their literal truth. His primary concern is to establish that men are misguided and have neither true liberty nor true happiness; the rest of his argument is intended as an explanation of the causes of these evils in terms of certain "ontological" circumstances. Several philosophic questions, therefore, are at the heart of the repression issue: What are "true" freedom and happiness? Is the range of choice inherent in the American rights "real" liberty? Or is "true" freedom the attainment of some Marcusean end? Is the achievement of this end "happiness" and all else "misery," despite the individual's subjective feelings? Have man's "ontological" circumstances really led to a defective kind of human existence which lacks "happiness"? What are these circumstances and how can one know what they are? Would it be justifiable or even possible to save people from their "misery" by compelling them to choose the Marcusean good?

It is not immediately evident that Marcuse treats these problems any more rigorously than the empirical ones. Most scholars think that he proceeds cavalierly, that he merely asserts what he believes man's ontological situation, true freedom, and real happiness are, and a commentator says that: "He does not make it clear what criteria of truth he accepts or to what criteria of truth he is appealing when he invites us to accept his assertions." Difficulties also have been pointed out in the very questions

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8 EC, pp. 6, 7, 11, 25, 54-56, 94, 96-99, 113-114.
9 The critic adds that: "Marcuse seldom, if ever, gives us any reason to believe that what he is writing is true. He offers incidental illustrations of his theses very often; he never offers evidence in a systematic way. Above all, there is entirely absent from his writing any attempt on his own part to suggest or consider the
which Marcuse raises. The questions are couched in idealistic language, implying that there actually may be Forms of true freedom and happiness, and it is intimated that Marcuse persists in his idealism ignorantly, without realizing that analytic philosophy has done much to discredit its assumptions.\(^\text{10}\) Furthermore, idealism often is nothing more than a manner of expressing opinions about good and evil and Marcuse goes so far as to admit that all his work is informed by "value-judgments."\(^\text{11}\) But, it is asked, if this is the case, aren't the questions implied by Marcuse's arguments un-answerable? In fact, in planning to force his "values," mere "subjective preferences," on his neighbors, isn't Marcuse committing the one unforgivable intellectual sin of baseless arrogance and proving himself a tyrant who would make others bend, not to any truth, but to what necessarily could be only his imperious will?

Marcuse is confident that he is acting on the basis of something more than personal whims. He maintains against the analytic philosophers that true freedom and happiness are ideal realities and he rejects positivistic claims that knowledge of an objective good is impossible. He also thinks that he does appeal to explicit criteria of truth to demonstrate his assertions; he says that humanity's need for what he takes to be freedom "is not a truth imposed upon man by an arbitrary philosophical theory, but can be proved to be the inherent aim of man, his very reality."\(^\text{12}\) Being certain that he can demonstrate the truth, Marcuse holds that it is no sin of arrogance to revolutionize the present order undemocratically. Although the scholars seem blind to his proofs, he also has done a remarkable job of convincing some sensitive young students of the justice of his cause. He even produces an extremely curious spiritual effect in one of his mature critics, who admits that when he reads Marcuse he has a problem: "An inner voice seems to say, 'You know more or less what he means. Why be so carping about details?' To which another voice replies, 'I haven't the faintest idea what he means, but I have a strong feeling that he may be right.'"\(^\text{13}\) Because of their revolutionary potential and their strange power to move sensitive minds without any evident reason, Marcuse's arguments should not be dismissed out of hand. Rather, it would seem necessary to learn what they are, to attempt to discover their grounds, and to try to determine why Marcuse's "values" would have more or less to recommend them than the American alternatives.


\(^\text{10}\) Marks, *loc. cit.* Marks also attacks Marcuse for his loose and arbitrary use of words. See pp. 50, 79, 82.

\(^\text{11}\) RR, viii-ix; ODM, x-xi.

\(^\text{12}\) RR, pp. 98-99.

\(^\text{13}\) Marks, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
II

A summary of Marcuse's ideas of liberty and happiness logically begins with his theory of human nature, which is pieced together from Freudian and Hegelian thought with some ingenuity. Marcuse believes with Freud that the human organism is something which arises out of inorganic matter "under the pressure of external disturbing forces" and which continues to be excited after birth by stimuli which are experienced as needs and desires. Because it originally comes from the "quiescence" of inorganic matter, the organism does not like to be disturbed and it strives for "relief" from its "internal tension due to stimuli." It can find relief in either of two ways, by satisfying its desires or by returning to the inorganic state. The organism attempts to do both and, thus, for Marcuse, man is a dialectical unity of opposites. He is an organic whole with two basic, diametrically opposed "instincts": Eros, which tries to ease tension through pleasure, thereby sustaining and reproducing life, and Thanatos, the death instinct, which seeks refuge from want in the ultimate peace of the tomb and which manifests itself as aggressive destructiveness.14

Freedom and happiness are not categories which pertain to dead matter. Whoever wants these prizes must suppress Thanatos and submit himself to that discomforting bombardment of stimuli which is life; he must give himself over to Eros and participate in a being which is "essentially the striving for pleasure." Liberty and happiness then become identical with the goal for which being strives; Marcuse defines both concepts as "absence of want," "the full satisfaction of needs," and "integral gratification," in short, as pleasure. This is not to say that Marcuse commits man to a vulgar, hedonistic search for new and ever more attractive forms of titillation, a quest which inevitably must lead to boredom and nihilism. On the contrary, to spend one's life in the pursuit of new excitements would be to exacerbate the condition from which the organism seeks relief. Marcuse stresses time and again that what the instincts "really want is not unending and eternally unsatisfying change, not a striving for what is endlessly higher and unattained, but rather a balance, a stabilization and reproduction of conditions within which all needs can be gratified and new wants only appear if their pleasurable gratification is also possible." In other words, the instincts want to propel the organism into a radically transfigured existence, into an eternal, "permanent order" which offers "peace," "attained and sustained fulfillment," "rest in fulfillment," "calm through fulfillment," and a "true mode of freedom" which is "not the incessant activity of conquest, but its coming to rest in the transparent knowledge and gratification of being."15 Of course, it might be inquired whether such a miracu-

14 EC, pp. 21-27, 114. It should be kept in mind that Freud is presented in this essay as interpreted by Marcuse.

15 EC, pp. 17, 104, 105, 113, 203, 204; FL, pp. 11, 41. Paul Eidelberg says that
inous transformation of organic being is possible; Marcuse tries to answer this question, as will be seen below. It also might be asked whether man really is Eros and Thanatos and how this could be proved, whether the striving for pleasure truly is all that is significant in human existence, and whether it is appropriate to define freedom and happiness as a miraculously permanent satisfaction of Eros, especially since many people think that not all erotic desires should be satisfied. Marcuse does not appear to deal with these problems rigorously.16

Marcuse's reference to true freedom as "the transparent knowledge" of being represents a further definition of the concept; liberty is not only pleasure, but also "a form of reason." Falling back on a Left Hegelian view of human nature, Marcuse argues that if man were to seek "mere instinctual gratification" he would not be distinct from the animal and his pleasure really would not be enjoyment. To be a truly enjoyable, human freedom, gratification must be "mediated," or permeated with reason.17 Three typically Hegelian requirements have to be met: pleasure must be based on and consistent with rational human control of the world; the individual, through reason, must determine his needs and satisfactions autonomously, and man must attain to a fully developed consciousness of his freedom.

Marcuse sets the first requirement, "conscious and rational mastery of the world" by man, because he thinks that this is one of the "conditions that render freedom possible." People could not achieve "rest in fulfillment" if they pursued pleasure mindlessly and permitted themselves to be subject to the vicissitudes of nature, an unregulated economy, and capricious social relationships; famines, depressions, civil strife, and the like would keep such improvident men in constant turmoil. Eros must act with foresight to escape these results of improvidence; it must allow reason to establish "a new rationality of gratification" which anticipates and guards against threats to tranquillity. Order will be necessary; reason will create "its own division of labor, its own priorities," and a "multitude of coordinated arrangements" which will have to "carry recognized and recognizable authority." Eros will have to obey this authority but the result will

Marcuse teaches "activistic hedonism," making it look as if Marcuse's ideal were the life of the jet-set. See "The Temptation of Herbert Marcuse," The Review of Politics, XXXI (October, 1969), 451. This interpretation misses the point; it fails to give proper emphasis to the radical overcoming (Aufhebung) of Freudian existence that the Marcusean man craves.

16 Regarding the hypothesis about Thanatos, Maclntyre (op. cit., p. 51) points out that "almost all those acquainted with the relevant empirical facts agree with Reich in rejecting it." Although the criticism seems cogent, it may be inadequate. For Marcuse the question is "ontological" and, hence, "the relevant empirical facts" may not be a sufficient basis for rejection of the hypothesis.

17 RR, pp. 9, 99; FL, p. 35.
not be a loss of pleasure, or unfreedom, because the authority will be "rational." It will be an authority of experts aimed at protecting men from unwanted consequences of disorganization and ignorance and, as such, it will "sustain the order of gratification." Eros also will have to accept the constraints of some form of morality; Marcuse observes that even though the instincts by nature are amoral, "no free civilization" could dispense with a distinction between good and evil. An amoral Eros with free rein could wreck liberty by causing conflicts among individuals. At times, therefore, the "genuine gratification" of Eros would call for moral barriers to immediate satisfaction set by reason (if not by Eros itself).18

Marcuse's insistence on the second requirement, that people must determine their own needs and gratifications to be free, flows directly from Hegel's definition of liberty as the "self-contained existence" of Spirit. Hegel was unwilling to permit his Weltgeist to be dependent for its existence on any being in any way; this would amount to a lack of perfect autonomy and, without this, there could be no liberty. Hegel asserted: "I am free, on the contrary, when my existence depends upon myself."19 Following Hegel, the young Karl Marx applied this maxim to man without shrinking from its glaring paradox. Denying that man was created by a God and arguing that nature should be considered a chaos out of which man could create his own body through work, he concluded that: "Since

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18 RR, p. 99; EC, pp. 205-208; FL, p. 81. It would seem to be a significant distortion of Marcuse's thought to say that "morality and other forms of authority will have been dispensed with" in his utopia. Eidelberg arrives at this conclusion by attributing to Marcuse an absolutely anarchistic sentiment which the latter merely attributes to Schiller and which he accepts himself only insofar as this does not mean sacrificing rationality. Eidelberg also makes the erroneous claim that Marcuse is a "nihilist" who rejects any form of self-restraint. He apparently attempts to support this claim in part by citing Marcuse's description of the instincts as "beyond good and evil," while neglecting to mention that Marcuse thinks this instinctual amorality antithetical to freedom. Eidelberg does not distort Marcuse dishonestly in this; rather, he is confusing two issues. What he actually wants to argue is not that Marcuse has no morality, but that he has a pseudo-morality. He is disturbed by Marcuse's identification of the grounds of morality and legitimate authority with "rationality"; he does not like Marcuse's willingness to satisfy any and all erotic desires whenever this would be consistent with the canons of "rationality." He thinks that there are erotic desires which are intrinsically unworthy of gratification and that there must be some standard of morality which transcends Marcuse's version of reason. Finding that Marcuse does not concede this, Eidelberg carelessly jumps to the conclusion that his protagonist recognizes no limits on the instincts at all. This leads to the distortions noted and forces Eidelberg to treat Marcuse's demands for authority and morality as stupid aberrations. See Eidelberg, op. cit., pp. 448-454.

for socialist man... the entire so-called world history is only the creation of man through human labor... he has evident and incontrovertible proof of his self-creation, his own formation process." 20 Marcuse applies the maxim to man too and thus he is unwilling to call any being free unless it can escape from "alien necessity" and "reason its own potentialities into being." He seems to accept Marx's view of nature as a chaos out of which man can form himself physically and he goes beyond Marx by adding a psychic dimension to the chaos; he says that the instincts, Eros and Thanatos, are "mutable." They are a "plastic," "malleable," substratum of being which can be shaped almost any way reason desires and man can create a new, "second nature" for himself simply by determining his instincts. All each person has to do to create himself is to decide rationally which desires and pleasures he wants to cultivate in his life, or which ones will constitute his peace and fulfillment, and secure a commitment from others not to interfere with his choices. Since autonomy is desirable, no one would be permitted to interfere with his rational choices in the new order; Marcuse argues vehemently that "no tribunal can justly arrogate to itself the right to decide which needs should be developed and satisfied." 21

The establishment of each man as the autonomous creator of his own fulfillment does not imply that the realm of freedom will be a liberal order based on "a compromise between competitors, or between freedom and law, between general and individual interest, common and private welfare." Marcuse agrees with Marx that a society which is "shot through with a conflict at every hand among individual interests" and which employs political institutions to ensure the common good is thoroughly enslaved. Self-interest, competition, and compromise are irrational; they place unnecessary limits on man which could be eliminated by co-operation. Laws which ensure the common interest are slavish because they usurp the function of willing what men really want, thereby setting up society "as an abstraction opposed to the individual." In this, they differ fundamentally from rational authority, which only saves people from unintended blunders. Liberal individualism, interest group politics, and law as an expression of the common good therefore must be transcended before human beings can be autonomous. Liberty will be found only in a political anarchy in which men spontaneously act for the common welfare because "the interest of the whole" is "woven into the individual existence of each." Marcuse's autonomous person will not be a selfish god unto himself but a man "capable of being free with the others." If it is inquired how a collective élan can be instilled in a being who seeks pleasure for himself,

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21 RR, p. 9; EC, pp. 7, 12; ODM, pp. 5, 6, 18; EEL, pp. 5, 10, 11; FL, p. 7n.
Marcuse answers that it does not need to be instilled; it is already there. Eros is love; it aims to "combine organic substances into ever larger uni-
ties," to make "one out of many," to "unite men in an increasingly inti-
mately bound mass." As genital sexuality it leads to the formation of pairs
of individuals "libidinally satisfied in each other" and, as a more general-
ized libido, it disposes people well towards those who participate with them
in the activity of gratifying the major needs of life. Collective and "highly
civilized human relations" therefore are guaranteed if Eros is free to do
its work.22

If men collectively succeed in becoming the satisfied, rational, and
autonomous masters of their world, they will have achieved what Marcuse
calls the highest form of reason, namely, "attained and sustained fulfill-
ment, the transparent unity of subject and object . . . ." To meet the third
and final condition of rational freedom, then, they will need only to reflect
on what they have done and appreciate its meaning. When this is done,
man will realize that "the conditions and relations of his world possess
no essential objectivity independent of" himself, that the entire world is
his "own doing." Being will appear to be nothing but an extension of
man; it will be a "transparent unity of subject and object" in the sense that
man will be able to see himself all through it. It will be a reflecting pool
and, like Narcissus, whom Marcuse invokes as a symbol of happiness, man
will look into that pool, see himself, and love the being that he sees. Unlike
Narcissus, however, he will recognize himself in the pool and, knowing
himself as the source and substance of his happiness, he will be content
with his pleasure and loving self-consciousness until death releases him
from tension forever.23

As with Marcuse's definition of liberty and happiness as pleasure, some
critical questions arise about these assertions to the effect that they are
"reason." To subject nature, economies, and the relationships between men
to rational foresight as Marcuse proposes would require a Herculean effort
of social co-operation and technology. Is mankind capable of this effort?
Moreover, economic and social breakdowns seem to have causes other
than disorganization and ignorance; sometimes they are products of sheer
human perversity. Man's perversity could not be overcome merely by
preaching a new rational morality, not even under an educational dictator-
ship; preaching has been tried for centuries, without much success. This
being so, wouldn't mankind's occasional penchant for evil make Marcuse's
vision of rationality hopelessly utopian? Wouldn't it be impossible to dis-
pense with law as a guardian of the common good, leaving only "rational
authority" as a sort of law among angels? And isn't it simply a facile trick

22 RR, pp. 283-284; RT, pp. 86-87; ODM, p. 42; FL, pp. 18-20; EC, pp. 38-39,
187.

23 RR, ix, pp. 95, 110, 113; EC, pp. 105-106, chap. vii. Marcuse hopes that death
eventually will be overcome by a technological breakthrough.
to say that Eros is love and that liberated erotic men would construct a moral, collective society spontaneously? Further, what is the meaning of Marcuse's Hegelian demands for "autonomy" and a "transparent knowledge" of being as a "unity of subject and object"? Man undoubtedly can reason his "own potentialities into being" and make being an extension of his will in a metaphorical sense; he can make decisions affecting his own destiny, impose a better order on his economic and social life, and arrange and rearrange the things which he finds in existence. But he cannot escape from "alien necessity," create himself by working or by choosing his pleasures, or make the entire world his "own doing" literally. Anybody can see that man is endowed with a nature for which he is not responsible and which he does not change in any essential way merely by cultivating selected desires which first arise from the nature itself. Likewise, anybody can see that being has another source than man (even if that source is not a God), that existing things have their own structures and laws from that source, that man cannot use existing things profitably irrespective of their structures and laws, and therefore that he cannot master absolutely all the conditions which affect him.24 What, then, is Marcuse's meaning, the metaphorical or the literal? If the former, what is gained by speaking as if man could remake himself and the world in his own image? What is the use of dressing commonplaces up as riddles? If the latter, couldn't one suspect Marcuse of megalomania? Finally, what assurance is there that rational control of the world, autonomy, and the unity of subject and object would make man happy? Could man be a contented Narcissus? Even if he could, should he?

Marcuse does not appear to see the difficulties inherent in his hopes for autonomy and the unity of subject and object; neither does he present proof that rational freedom would be conducive to happiness or otherwise desirable. However, he is sensitive to charges that he is utopian in his dreams of moral, communistic men rationally controlling the world and achieving "rest in fulfillment." He responds to the charges by channeling discussion in two directions. First, he says that the vision of perpetual pleasure is made to seem utopian by the painful reality of work and the "common sense" knowledge that man will have to toil all his days to make a living. He does not look into other arguments which could be based on the nature of the appetites themselves, arguments epitomized by Plato's comparison of the intemperate life to an effort to keep a leaky jar filled.25 He probably would answer such objections by saying that the

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jar could be kept filled by adjusting the rate of influx to the rate of draining and that the only significant question then would be how much work would be necessary to keep the two rates equal. Secondly, Marcuse sees no reason at all to doubt that people could subject the world to foresight if they wished but he does admit that human wickedness is a barrier to rationality and communism. As a Freudian, he conceives of this problem as that of man's "aggressiveness" and he knows that Freud considered aggressiveness an "indestructible feature of human nature." This led Freud to attack the ideal of a moral, collective existence in which "ill-will and hostility would disappear among men" as an "untenable illusion."\(^{26}\) Marcuse, naturally, does not agree. He maintains that neither aggressiveness nor the necessity of work are insurmountable obstacles to freedom. He thinks that both problems have been solved in principle and that they only appear insoluble today because "common sense" has not awakened yet to the genuine possibility of a new reality.\(^{27}\)

In earlier periods of history, the problem of work originated in the fact of scarcity. The world was too poor to support an order of universal gratification and people had to work hard merely to stay alive. Dramatic improvements made in the means of production during the past few centuries have changed all this; it is not necessary for man to suffer from scarcity anymore or to permit it to dictate how he will spend his time. Labor remains a problem, however. Far from freeing man from toil, the industrial revolution chained him to the machine, robbed his work of creativity, regimented life, and forced him to work all the harder for subsistence in the system of mass production which keeps the specter of scarcity at bay. Labor is "alienated" by being coupled with these evils and it is this alienated form of work to which the modern, common-sense thinker believes man is doomed for all time. Marcuse sees another alternative. He argues that recent advances in technology have made possible a "reversal of the relation between free time and working time." Man always will have to work but automation has created a "possibility of working time becoming marginal, and free time becoming full time." It also is conceivable that the marginal work which still will be necessary no longer will be "stupefying" and "enervating." "It might be turned into "play" and a "process of creation" guided by imagination and reason. Thus, man can both escape from labor as from a painful realm of necessity and transform working time itself into a realm of freedom within the realm of necessity. Moreover, Marcuse thinks that this can be done now. He agrees with Marx that the historical realization of freedom depends on progress in technology but he does not accept the Marxist proposition that absolute material superabundance is liberty's *sine qua non*. The technological base

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\(^{27}\) EC, pp. 3-5, 32-33, 74, 125-126, 140, 206; EL, pp. 3-4, 21; FL, pp. 62-63.
of freedom is already present and, at the expense of a decrease in productivity and the standard of living, people could abolish alienated labor and seize their liberty today, if only they would.\textsuperscript{28}

The problem of aggressiveness also is a historical one which Marcuse connects with the development of “repression” in human life. In the early days of scarcity, it was not possible for Eros to be gratified immediately, whenever it wished. Any person who strove for nothing but instant satisfaction rapidly found himself destroyed by a world which had not been mastered sufficiently to support universal pleasure. For the sake of continued existence, man had to learn to give up dangerous, immediate satisfactions and to accept in their stead a mixture of pain (work) and “delayed, restrained, but ‘assured’ pleasure.” In Freudian terminology, Eros had to be “repressed,” or compelled to stop living by the “Pleasure Principle” and to bow to the “Reality Principle.” To this end, the ego (reason) developed out of the id as an organic function capable of probing reality to discover the useful and the harmful, society created sexual taboos, divisions of labor, and authoritative institutions to translate the useful into practice and to ban the harmful, and the superego (conscience) developed out of the ego to introject social utility into the psyche as morality. Working together, ego, superego, and society succeeded in repressing Eros and in diverting its energy into the transformation of reality through labor. Then, as reality changed, reality principles and conceptions of social utility (morality) changed. In our time, Eros is made to bow to the “Performance Principle,” under which erotic energy is diverted into alienated labor and society is “stratified according to the competitive economic performances of its members.” The result is increasing productivity and, for this reason, people dementedly think repression, alienation, and political structures good, just as all previous peoples thought their schemes of slavery good because they made for economic progress. However, repression, work, and political authority really were good only insofar as they were rational reactions to necessity. They actually have been a heavy price to pay for progress. Man has had to sacrifice his freedom since history began and, furthermore, progress has been aggression’s doorway into his affairs. It has been “the fatal dialectic of civilization” that “the very progress of civilization leads to the release of increasingly destructive forces.”\textsuperscript{29}

This “fatal dialectic” can be understood readily if it be recalled that

\textsuperscript{28} EC, vii-viii, pp. 32-33, 41-43, 78, 95, 137-143, 203-204; EL, pp. 19-21; FL, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{29} EC, chaps. i-iv, especially pp. 11-16, 27-29, 32-34, 41-42, 49, 57, 81-82. In this argument, Marcuse could be mistaken for a relativist because he is a “historicist” who has morality and rationality varying between historical periods. The test of a true relativist, however, is whether he rejects the possibility of a summum bonum which can be discovered by man. This Marcuse does not do; his highest good is freedom. He calls earlier historical periods moral and rational only when he measures them against their capabilities and he condemns them when he compares
man is a unity of opposites, Eros and Thanatos. These instincts are not friendly to one another. They are in conflict, and the “fate of human freedom and happiness is fought out and decided in the struggle of the instincts—literally a struggle of life and death.” Eros gains the upper hand in the struggle and for a time it even harnesses Thanatos to the service of progress; the superego and society rely on man’s fear of Thanatos to assure his obedience to socially useful norms and Thanatos also provides the destructive energy man uses in “attacking, splitting, changing, [and] pulverizing things and animals (and, periodically, also men)” for the sake of economic advancement. However, Eros is being repressed all the while it controls Thanatos in this manner and “the perpetual restrictions on Eros ultimately weaken the life instincts and release the very forces against which they were ‘called up’—those of destruction.” The newly invigorated Thanatos then oversteps the bounds set for it by Eros and goes on a destructive rampage which threatens civilization. It also “strives to gain ascendancy over the life instincts” and accomplishes this to the extent that, in the era of the Performance Principle, the “second nature” of man itself is stabilized in an aggressive form. Freud’s pessimism about the possibility of freedom thus seems to be justified, for the moment. Because they must repress Eros in favor of the Performance Principle, people today appear to be hopelessly aggressive, whereas liberty requires the full flowering of Eros as love. Freedom can be saved, however, because there is no reason why the Performance Principle should be any more permanent a fixture in life than work.Marcuse asserts that “technical progress has reached a stage in which reality no longer need be defined by the debilitating competition for social survival and advancement” and that the tenure of the Performance Principle in the superego therefore could be ended immediately. This would bring about a change “in the infrastructure of man,” a rebellion “in the very nature, the ‘biology’ of the individual,” for Eros would be liberated from repression and it could subjugate Thanatos again. Man then would be “no longer capable of tolerating the aggressiveness, brutality, and ugliness of the established way of life.” He would be ready for freedom.30

them with the idea of freedom. — It is true that Marcuse is a “historicist.” Like Marx’s doctrine of historical materialism, his argument contains a theory of how “consciousness is conditioned by social existence” throughout history. However, he believes that the social determination of consciousness is slavery and that man somehow will free himself of this bane in the new order. “Historicism” does not lead inevitably to relativism. On the contrary, most “historicists” have used their doctrines to discredit previous versions of the one truth in order to clear the stage for their own. This is what Marcuse himself does, as will be seen below. See RR, pp. 312-322, and compare MacIntyre (op. cit., p. 15) and Eidelberg (op. cit., p. 448).

30 EC, pp. 3, 40-41, 47-49, 76, 79, 140; ODM, p. 18; EL, pp. 5, 21; FL, pp. 4, 6-8, 45, 56.
It should not escape notice that Marcuse's treatment of the problems of work and aggression envisages a rebellion in the nature of man. In fact, even more is involved; Marcuse is announcing a fundamental revolution of being. His argument, in effect, is that up until now there have been three "ontological" realities, i.e., a principle of goodness which draws man towards freedom and happiness (Eros), a principle of evil which leads him towards misery and the void (Thanatos), and a niggardly universe which has made labor necessary. Labor has obstructed the good principle and helped the bad throughout history, thus inflicting evil on man and lending credence to the accusation that visions of happiness are utopian. Now, however, work has ceased to be an ontological necessity and being finally can be set aright. Mankind's problems truly have been solved at the most profound level possible.

To be sure, this raises a question. Men still are unfree. Even though all ontological difficulties have been surmounted, human life lags behind its potentialities. Why? Since ontological necessity no longer is involved, the only explanation which Marcuse finds conceivable is that some arbitrary social practice is to blame; the perpetuation of slavery must be the product of "a specific historical organization of human existence." The culprit is "domination," social control "exercised by a particular group or individual in order to enhance itself in a privileged position." With an eye on Freud's myth of the "primal horde" and Marxist sociology, Marcuse speculates that domination probably always has gone hand-in-hand with social organization under the Reality Principle. Whether it has or not is of no consequence, however, for the question is whether it does today and Marcuse is certain that those who benefit from the Performance Principle in our age continue to enforce it. Using the subtle instruments of manipulation mentioned earlier, today's rulers freeze the Performance Principle in the superego of the masses. Then they exploit the prodigious labors which result and reward their subjects with the false pleasures offered by tons of wasteful gadgets and the "entertainment" purveyed by television. They also unleash the aggressiveness of their slaves on racial minorities at home and whole populations abroad. Thus, they deny true happiness to all mankind for their own profit. This is the most heinous crime against humanity in a history which is nothing but a record of crime against humanity, for surely it is more evil to make people unhappy when felicity is within their grasp than when it is not. The crime threatens to grow in magnitude, too; as long as Eros remains repressed, Thanatos goes about like a devil released from Hell after the Millennium, making the nuclear incineration of mankind a distinct, terrifying possibility. The enormity of these evils and the urgency of the situation are what justify the drastic revolutionary measures which Marcuse recommends.81

By singling out "domination" as the only remaining cause of human misery, Marcuse returns to one of the weakest links in his argument; it was stated previously that he does not even attempt to prove empirically that domination exists. It is clear now why he does not feel obliged to be empirically rigorous; his belief that the order of being no longer makes unhappiness necessary drives him inexorably to the conclusion that something must be wrong with society. Rather than requiring proof, the proposition that people are manipulated would seem self-evident to anyone of Marcuse's persuasion and in need of only a few illustrations at most. However, those who are sceptical of Marcuse's ideas about being would not feel the same logical compulsions as he and would prefer an independent demonstration of his power elite thesis. Indeed, if no such demonstration were possible, the ontological arguments themselves could be called into question. One legitimately could wonder whether Marcuse had described the order of being and its historical changes accurately if no system of manipulation could be found and existing evils still did not disappear.

There are additional grounds for doubting Marcuse's ontology, of course. What real evidence is there that the necessity of work ever could be so reduced as to make possible a transition from the Performance Principle to the Pleasure Principle? Marcuse attempts to prove that this and other wonderful things could happen by appealing vaguely to "trends," "tendencies," and historical "possibilities" which he sees and, in doing so, he succeeds in proving nothing. He never says how "trends" are to be identified and he never tells why they can or necessarily must be carried through to their logical conclusions.32 In holding that work can be eliminated by automation, he also may be displaying a naive faith in the power of machines to do all the jobs which society ever would want or need to have done. On the whole, his predictions about the abolition of labor may amount to no more than wishful thinking. They also are vulnerable to the objection that they do not demonstrate that an ontological revolution would occur even if labor could be abolished. Work may have nothing significant to do with the ontological situation of man, whether that situation is defined by Eros and Thanatos or by other factors, and no one is obliged to accept Marcuse's unsupported assurances in the matter. Further, it still has not been proved that Eros and Thanatos are the fundamental elements of human existence and much less has any evidence been adduced to show that they play the roles which Marcuse attributes to them. Thus far, the story of the two instincts seems as arbitrary and mythical as a Manichean demonology. It also performs the same ideological functions as a Manichean myth inasmuch as it interprets being as a struggle between principles of good and evil and history as a salvific process in which the miraculous outcome of the ontological struggle assures the ultimate redemption of

32 EC, pp. 5, 99, 126, 220; ODM, xi, p. 17, 219-221; EL, pp. 3-4.
man. This brings up a crucial final question. Marcuse apparently finds American democracy totally evil and abhorrent primarily because it does not lend itself to the erotic, rational redemption envisaged by his myth, much as if a fanatical Christian were to despise a political order because it was not the Beatific Vision. It follows that he would not be justified in judging the American order evil unless there were an adequate basis for saying that his myth identifies evil and possible goods correctly. How does Marcuse know that he understands good and evil? What are the criteria of truth to which he alludes and which have been so long in forthcoming?

To this and all the other questions and doubts which have been accumulating in the analysis Marcuse makes but one answer. He says that: “Dialectical thought starts with the experience that the world is unfree; that is to say, man and nature exist in conditions of alienation, exist as ‘other than they are.’ Any mode of thought which excludes this contradiction from its logic is a faulty logic.” At first sight, this statement appears to substantiate the charges of arrogance which are brought against Marcuse; he seems to be proclaiming arbitrarily that anybody who disagrees with him is wrong. After the first anger fades, it still is difficult to see that he has made any epistemological advance; he seems to be demanding that others accept his “value-judgments” simply on faith. Closer examination, however, reveals that Marcuse has made a genuine epistemological proposition. He is saying that the evil of the existing world is known to man through experience. Universal alienation is not something which can be demonstrated with empirical evidence or deduced from incontestable first premises; rather, it is itself an incontestable first premise which is grasped directly through participation in being. Merely to exist under present conditions is to feel unfree. Once recognized for what it is, this experiential knowledge leads to an act of will, to a “Great Refusal to accept the rules of a game in which the dice are loaded.” It also becomes the basis for all further thought. Thought becomes “negative” and deliberately is “used as a tool for analyzing the world of facts in terms of its internal inadequacy.” It condemns the world rather than merely describing it and it expresses the will’s yearning to escape from what it condemns. If any philosophy, psychology, or social science fails to do this, Marcuse dismisses it contemptuously as a “logic of domination.”

The primary experience of alienation also points the way infallibly to humanity’s final cause, for it is plain to Marcuse that happiness would be to get away from the slavery which man now experiences and to attain to some good which is “absent.” This much being granted, the specific form of the absent good, erotic, rational freedom then is revealed by two activities of the mind, Phantasy and Reason. The former, Marcuse says,

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33 RR, ix.
34 RR, vii-x, xiii, pp. 27, 98, 112-113, 123, 131, 321; EC, pp. 5, 101-102, 114; ODM, pp. 63, 70, 127, 137-140.
is the one mental activity of man which "remains free from the rule of the reality principle." Throughout a person's life, it "stays committed to the pleasure principle." Truth is found in this commitment to the Pleasure Principle; Marcuse states that: "As a fundamental, independent mental process, phantasy has a truth value of its own, which corresponds to an experience of its own—namely, the surmounting of the antagonistic human reality. Imagination envisions the reconciliation of the individual with the whole, of desire with realization, of happiness with reason. While this harmony has been removed into utopia by the established reality principle, phantasy insists that it must and can become real, that behind the illusion lies knowledge." In other words, happiness is the pleasurable, rational life about which man daydreams and man knows that he would be happy if he could experience this life in reality because he does experience it vicariously in his daydreams and in these dreams he is happy.35

Reason takes a different tack; it discovers the Reasonable, or that which ought to be and which therefore is most truly Real, simply by pondering existing irrationality. In every stupid, wrong situation (or philosophy) there is a potential for rationality and justice. Reason can grasp this potential by testing experiences and ideas to see what there is in them that produces intensely alienated feelings and to see what changes would allay the feelings. For example, if Reason observes that ignorance, disorganization, amorality, competition, political institutions, work, aggressiveness, alien necessity, a world created in some image other than man's, and ideas which defend such things typically cause a sense of alienation to mount, simple meansends analysis leads to the obvious conclusion that the opposites of these things are Real. The more blatantly "untrue," or enslaving, a mode of existence or thought is, the louder it shouts to Reason what Truth and Freedom would be. The irrational makes the Real self-evident, or as Karl Marx once said in a fit of Hegelian abstruseness: "[The fact] that the reasonable is real is demonstrated precisely in the contradiction of unreasonable reality, which in all corners is the opposite of that which it expresses and the opposite of which expresses what it is."36

It is not an inconsistency in this theory that very few people ever have perceived what is supposed to be so obvious. Reason, for Marcuse, is historically conditioned; its recognition of the necessity of previous forms of historical existence has prevented it from condemning them and rising to the Real. Since history is dynamic, however, Reason is dynamic. History has altered the character of necessity and Reason no longer is fettered. It now can see the good easily and it would if the minds of the masses were not caught in the snares of modern domination. It is domination which

35 RR, ix-x; EC, pp. 14, 18, 130, 135.
explains why only a few "critical spirits" here and there actually understand what Reason should understand today. On the other hand, Reason's present potential also explains why Marcuse is so intrigued with the idea of a temporary educational dictatorship; if the Performance Principle only could be uprooted from the mass psyche, people rapidly would see the self-evident good. They could not avoid knowing the Real as they gazed upon existing unrealities. Action to realize the Real probably would not be long in following; Marx pointed out that theory becomes a force when it grips the masses. Marcuse may be relying more on this expectation than anything else in thinking that his utopian dreams can come true. He feels that the strength of will of people who understood their slavery and craved freedom would be a powerful guarantee of revolution.  

Marcuse's interpreters can be forgiven for having overlooked his epistemology of ontological experience; it is not exactly an orthodox epistemology and the eye often misses what it is not expecting to see. Now that Marcuse's criteria of truth are clear, it might be surmised that his critics still would not be prepared to give up the fight. There are at least four difficulties in his epistemology. First, if it be conceded that man learns of alienation and freedom through experience, it is not evident that the myth of Eros and Thanatos could follow from the experience. Indeed, a person might feel the two instincts stirring and struggling within his soul. Beyond this, however, the history and evolution of the instincts would not be matters of direct experience. These things could be found out only by reason, if at all, and Marcuse has yet to demonstrate the validity of his reasoning. Secondly, if people knew freedom and slavery experientially and if they wanted very much to obtain freedom, there still would be no certainty that they could, especially if their dreams were intrinsically impossible of realization. To establish possibility, it is not enough to say: "Where there's a will, there's a way." Marcuse's hopes for rational communism and the abolition of labor still appear unfounded. The same is true of his paradoxical wishes for autonomy, the unity of subject and object, and an ontological revolution. Third, although it is plausible that the experience of alienation could lead to knowledge of freedom, Marcuse does not show that this is what happens necessarily. An equally possible alternative is that the mind would react to alienation by seeking refuge in self-deceiving defense mechanisms and that man really would not be happy even after possessing the objects of his dreams or instituting "rationality." Dreams, after all, are only illusions and Marcuse's Reason is only speculation on what might result if certain steps were taken. Conceivably, illusory pleasures could turn out to be unsatisfying realities and Reason could founder on reefs in the new order which it does not see now. Finally, it prob-

ably is not possible for man to experience unfreedom. It must be admitted that experience is one thing and the description which is attached to it another. A person experiences whatever it is that he comes across but he does not experience the description of that experience; the description comes later as the man attempts to grasp what has happened to him. It follows that Marcuse does not experience alienation, but something which he chooses to call alienation. He experiences something in his own existence and this makes him call his existence unfree. But does he have an adequate reason for doing this? What reasons could there be?

One possibility which springs to mind is that Marcuse feels alienated simply because life does not offer "integral gratification." He may think existence unfree because it does not provide full satisfaction every time he desires something. If this is the case, it would appear that Marcuse's epistemology of ontological experience is not an affair of the intellect at all but, rather, one of the will. He would be attempting to validate his condemnation of the existing order not on the basis of any objective standard of good and evil which the mind could discover but on the sole ground that existence frustrates him. He would be trying to make his own will the measure of all being.

If this is what Marcuse is doing, all his intellectual constructs collapse in a heap. As far as the truth is concerned, they would not seem to be worth a moment's notice. It would be understandable that Marcuse's reasoning never appears rigorous and that one of his sympathizers could admit: "I haven't the faintest idea what he means," for the primary referents of his arguments would be found only in his will. But there is one nagging doubt which forbids that Marcuse be cast aside. How could his sympathizer add: "...but I have a strong feeling that he may be right"? What is there in Marcuse that produces the ambiguous feeling that he may have his finger on the truth? How could he convince anybody of anything if his work had no intellectual substance? Is he right, despite the apparent deficiencies of his epistemology? Is his epistemology really so faulty or has some mistake been made in evaluating it?

III

Actually, it would be impossible to understand Marcuse and his appeal to sensitive minds with the analytic techniques used so far. An unwarranted demand was made in the analysis, namely, that Marcuse was expected to demonstrate his "values" in terms of realities extrinsic to his soul and his fundamental experience of being. Although Marcuse's own pretensions are responsible for the error, it also was demanded wrongly that his ontological myths pertain to realities other than his experience and that their truth be measured against other standards. This has been to misconceive the nature of his thought and, perhaps, to lack insight into the phenomenon of irrationalism on the New Left, for Marcuse's "values" and his basic
doctrines are not drawn rationally from "objective" reality at all. Rather, they are groping efforts to describe his primary experience itself and wild, desperate speculations about man's past and future relationships to it. Marcuse attempts to make the content of the experience clear with analogies and symbols and whatever else is useful in communicating "non-objective" truths and then he simply guesses at the meaning which the experience has for man's place in "objective" reality. His arguments are persuasive, or at least cause feelings of uneasiness, because what they convey strikes a familiar chord in every human soul. This can be seen by retracing the path of the Marcusean spirit.

To repeat what was said earlier, what Marcuse experiences is something in his own being. In the first instance, personal existence presents itself to him as it does to all men, as a seat of consciousness within an animate body and as various on-going activities of consciousness. The conscious activity which most attracts his attention is that of the appetites, which indeed always are striving to possess their objects, except during brief periods of gratification, and which keep body and soul in a constant, discomforting tension when they are not satisfied. Marcuse describes this universally known experience of the appetites much as anybody would. However, he notices something about it which others do not seem to see. In defining human existence as the striving for pleasure, Marcuse is saying that he experiences the erotic appetites as the strongest element of consciousness. He feels the appetites to be so powerful as to dominate the soul absolutely. They are so much at the center of consciousness that they and they alone appear to make consciousness what it essentially is and, therefore, human life essentially what it is.

It could be objected here that this is to elevate the appetites to too high a rank, to a position which reason actually holds. The objection presents no obstacle to Marcuse, however, for now he can turn the tables on his interrogators and demand that they produce their evidence. What does introspection really show? Reason does seem to be directing all human activity but isn't it doing so at the behest of the appetites? The fact appears to be that even when reason represses Eros it is acting in the enlightened self-interest of the appetites. Marcuse is sure of this and, looking ahead to the new order, he says that then: "Eros redefines reason in its own terms. Reasonable is what sustains the order of gratification." When repression becomes unnecessary, reason will be nothing but the servant of Eros, which will be the undisputed sovereign of the soul. Having established the fact, Marcuse takes another step; he says that Eros rightfully is sovereign. What positive good does reason offer in defense of its claims to rule? What does reason know how to do other than to help Eros or obstruct it? What would the rule of reason mean other than permanent repression and what good is there in repression? Is it argued that reason is higher and nobler than Eros, that it orients the soul towards something which "transcends" the "base" pleasures? Then why is reason higher, why is pleasure base, and what is there in the soul or beyond it which is
better than erotic satisfaction? The very idea of transcendence perplexes Marcuse. It makes no sense to him, for he simply cannot see that there is anything beyond pleasure to talk about. As far as he can tell, philosophies which make "transcendence" the final cause of man give man an empty end which is "free of happiness." He can conclude only that such philosophies are crude fabrications of the superego which were designed to aid in the repression of Eros back in the days when repression was necessary.38

Presumably, every human soul begins to cast about for answers to Marcuse's questions when challenged like this. It is then that the sensitive person begins to feel that Marcuse is right, for the soul suddenly discovers that Marcuse's arguments seem to ring true to its own experience. In something of a panic, the soul sees that it cannot be sure that Eros isn't truly in command. Moreover, it finds itself unsure that it knows any real transcendent good to which reason could claim to be the guide and which would justify reason's sovereignty. Religion and philosophy really may be abstractions of the superego and, meanwhile, reason does seem to spend its time figuring out ways of gratifying the appetites. It is hard to see why it shouldn't; pleasure does not seem to be such a terrible thing to want. Thus, Marcuse wins. The man who accepts the challenge to inspect his own soul and who finds that he cannot say honestly that Marcuse is wrong about spiritual experience concedes Marcuse's case. The capitulation is painful but the convert, by an effort of will, succeeds in interpreting his pain as a "bourgeois hang-up" supported by an as yet unregenerate superego. By degrees, he suppresses his "guilt-feelings" and gives himself over to the enthusiastic service of Eros.

This prepares the ground for Marcuse's next advance. It is a matter of experience that Eros is frustrated more often than not in our age. The appetites do frequently writhe in the pain of dissatisfaction. The soul which has enthroned the appetites suffers a broken heart to see this. It begins to think that man's essence (the striving for pleasure) is an enormous self-mockery; existence absurdly denies the human essence its natural rewards. To feel the soul's heart breaking and to know the pain of being mocked in one's own existence is what it is to experience alienation. The experience then leads immediately to a demand for justice. The soul insists that being be restructured to stop the crime against the human essence. Indeed, this is to make the human will the measure of all being but being is will, will which has been the victim of an atrocity. Why shouldn't will demand to be the measure of being if it is itself the raped and suffering essence of being? It is not fair that man should be the victim of an ontological conspiracy. Thus, the Marcusean soul resolves to revolutionize existence. It decides that there must be a new creation in which the human essence and its external supports are governed by man's will. Only by becoming his

38 EC, pp. 99-102, 113-114, 192, 205; FL, pp. 30-32.
own God and remaking being according to his own idea can man become happy; this is the message in Marcuse's calls for autonomy and the unity of subject and object. But ontological revolution is still a paradoxical enterprise; how can man carry it off?

At this point, Marcuse falls victim to his own defense mechanisms and his intellectual honesty crumbles. He wants to know that there can be an end of his pain and frustration, that he can succeed in an apparently impossible enterprise. He does not demand to be certain of victory but he wishes to be certain that he at least has a chance to rebel successfully. He proceeds to create that certainty artificially. Operating speculatively, he fabricates his salvation myth with its already finished transformation of being and its one last powerful but not invincible Anti-Christ, domination, the defeat of which would usher in freedom on earth. The stories of Eros and Thanatos, work and aggression, anarchy and communism, and Phantasy and Reason all are sublimations by means of which Marcuse's unhappy consciousness arrives at the result which it desires, "proof" that there is a genuine possibility of an order of freedom. The only thing genuine about the result, however, is the wish that it be so. By accepting speculation and sublimated wishes as psychological props, Marcuse becomes just another figure in the long history of "gnosis," the spiritual disease in which pretenses to knowledge become the opium of unheroic souls.39

This being as it may, Marcuse still is not undone. If an ontological revolution is uncertain of accomplishment, less than ontological revolutions remain possible. If being cannot be altered, society can. It still might be possible to effect a social change which brings man closer to erotic freedom than he is now. At the present time, society does not seem to be as rationally contrived to sustain the order of gratification as it could be. People do suffer from the consequences of improvidence, competition, the Performance Principle, and aggression. They also chafe in the yoke of political authority. Why not make a revolution which institutes rational planning, shorter work weeks, co-operation, and an approximation of the Marxist principle: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs"? Why not make a revolution which teaches man to be less aggressive by habituating him to a peaceful life and which thereby might lessen the need for political authority gradually? As Marcuse admits, the revolution would have to abrogate the so-called American freedoms and, if it took a long time to get the order of gratification established on its own feet, the American rights would have to remain suspended a long time. But why would these rights be worth having anyway in a world which lacked as much erotic freedom as possible?

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There could be only one reason for denying Marcuse his revolution. If the American rights were means to some good which transcends erotic freedom, then there would be no justification for destroying them in the name of Eros. The question, then, is whether there is any good higher than pleasure which the American rights do help man to obtain. Of course, if anyone said that he knew such a good, his claims would have to be subjected to as close an epistemological scrutiny as Marcuse's were. If the champion of the American freedoms hoped to dissuade Marcuseans from their revolutionism, his test would be even more severe, for he would have to appeal to the rebels as Marcuse himself does. The youth of the "now generation" seem to distrust religious and philosophic abstractions which are not subject to immediate, experiential verification. Marcuse appeals directly to experience rather than to Scripture or tired old ethical maxims and, hence, his opponents would be at a disadvantage if they could not do the same.

The situation was equally difficult in the Athens of Marcuse's arch-enemy, Plato. Plato's Socrates had to spend most of The Republic teaching young Athenians why they should not attempt to live like Gyges, a mythical character who, like the Marcusean free man, acquired a magic power to act out all his fantasies. Justice cannot be done to Plato's arguments in the short space remaining. However, an outline of an answer to Marcuse can be ventured.

Socrates taught his students in The Republic that there is something in spiritual experience which tells reason that the appetites by themselves are not the essence of consciousness and that pleasure is not the highest good. This is the experience of what Plato calls the Agathon (The Good). The experience is like that of the appetites in that the soul feels itself striving for something. However, in this case it is not the appetites which are striving, but "reason," and the soul knows that what it wants is not pleasure. Beyond this, a problem arises. The precise nature of the object which the soul does want is unclear. Socrates says: "The soul divines that it is something but is at a loss about it and unable to get a sufficient grasp of just what it is, or to have a stable trust such as it has about the rest." Socrates thus finds himself forced to speak of the Agathon indirectly by discussing its "offspring," i.e., its effects in his soul, and he remains uncertain that the object of his yearning can be possessed. Man cannot escape this uncertainty and this may be why the soul panics when Marcuse suddenly challenges it to refute pleasure as the highest good. Fortunately, the panic is unnecessary; the soul does not have to overcome its uncertainty to answer Marcuse, for the "offspring" of the experience illuminate the right way of life. The soul knows just by virtue of the "offspring" that it ought to pass its existence attempting to approach the Agathon and to possess it.

This right way of life is not inconsistent with the satisfaction of man's necessary appetites for food, clothing, shelter, and reproduction and so it is not inconsistent with pleasure. Plato concedes this by putting the crafts-
men in his polis. However, it is impossible for the Platonic soul to allow itself to be ruled by Eros (and so the craftsmen who symbolize the necessary appetites do not govern the polis). As compared with the Agathon, the objects of the appetites acquire the character of unrealities for the Platonic man. They seem to be mere shadows, illusions, and substanceless wisps which are not worth the while of the man who yearns for The Good. A man could gorge himself on them and never be happy, for they never would satisfy the longing of reason to know the Agathon and thus would not fill up the abiding emptiness in his soul. To permit the soul to be ruled by Eros, therefore, would be to commit it to unfulfilling unrealities (doxa). It would be to offer the soul gall when it was thirsty and narcotics when it was hungry; it would be to condemn the soul to the self-mockery which Marcuse himself despises. There is a good reason why the Marcusean convert to Eros initially is pained by his chosic; far from being afflicted with "bourgeois hang-ups" his soul is recoiling from what it somehow knows to be its own assassination by suffocation in nauseating, inconsequential doxa. It follows that erotic, rational freedom would not be true happiness and that reason ought to be sovereign, the better to permit man to seek the Agathon. It follows too that true freedom would not be the rule of Eros but the rule of reason.

It is necessary to turn to Aristotle for enlightenment on what all this means for the American freedoms. Aristotle argues that the life of reason recommended by Plato requires choice. Since man is uncertain as to how he should approach the Agathon (or the nous, the ground of being) in his actions, he must deliberate about the matter from case to case and then do what reason tells him is best. Although the American rights do not guarantee that citizens will be so reasonable, they at least provide a context in which men can deliberate and act in this manner. This is why the rights are so sacred and why it would be folly to abolish them with the intention of instituting rational, erotic freedom.40

It will not be denied here that the American order may be in need of reform or that its Performance Principle and other principles of organization may inflict unnecessary suffering on men. Neither will it be denied

40 The materials drawn upon for this skeletal argument are as follows: Plato, The Republic, 477a-480a, 505e, 506d-618d, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1968); Aristotle, Nichomachean Ethics, 1138b-1145a, trans. Martin Ostwald (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Library of Liberal Arts, 1962); Voegelin, Order and History, III, Plato and Aristotle (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), chap. iii; and Voegelin, "Was ist Politische Realität," Anamnesis, Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik (München: Piper, 1966), pp. 283-315. To some it may be surprising that Plato and Aristotle are used to defend the American liberties. It is recognized here that there are opposing interpretations of the views of these thinkers on the question of "liberty." Suffice it to say here that, if the two were dyed-in-the-wool aristocrats, no one is obliged to accept them on every point because he accepts them on one.
that the American order occasionally perpetrates terrible injustices against various groups; it would be surprising if this were not the case. From time to time, the prudential soul could be persuaded to suspend the American freedoms as a means to the eradication of such injustices. However, the prudent individual would know that it would be preferable, if at all possible, to carry out reform without ever denying Americans the good which their rights safeguard. He would not decide to suspend the rights lightly to achieve a good which was not worth the evil inherent in dictatorship. And he never would accept Marcuse's arguments for dictatorship. Marcuse's critics are right. In proposing to force men to be erotically and rationally free, he actually is proposing to establish a tyranny in which every human soul would be destroyed with unnourishing spiritual food.41

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41 Paul Quirk, a political science student at Marquette University, acted as the reasonable man upon whom I could test the ideas in this paper. I am grateful for his splendid help. I also wish to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities for the summer stipend which made this work possible.
FREEDOM AS AN END OF POLITICS

ROBERT F. SASSEEN

I

Political science is called upon to determine the consequences for freedom of various policies and institutions. This requires investigation both of the policies and institutions, on the one hand, and of freedom, on the other. Otherwise, the efficient pursuit of what is thought to be freedom may result in the establishment of what is, in fact, slavery. The determination of what freedom is, then, is that part of political science which makes possible the meaningful investigation and successful identification of those policies and institutions which preserve or destroy it.

This paper seeks to understand the freedom which can be an end of politics by examining a dominant opinion of what this freedom is. Men often speak of the freedom of falling stones, uncaged tigers or potent gods. It is evident, however, that freedom of these sorts is not dependent upon men. Its existence is a matter of nature, not of human action. The freedom men are for or against, on the other hand, the freedom many have fought for and many have died for – that freedom is a matter of human action. It is possible; some men and some peoples have had it. But it does not occur of necessity; many have never had it. It can be lost.

That freedom, then, which men are for or against, which is possible but not necessary, and which requires common human action to establish and keep – that freedom might properly be regarded as an end of political activity. It is an affair of politics. Men establish republican institutions to secure it.

If a man can do what he wants to do, he is free; if he cannot do what he wants to do, he is not free; nor is he free if he does what he does not want. Such is an ancient, yet current and widespread view of freedom. It is a starting point of investigation. The investigation requires that the accepted opinion of freedom be stated as fully as possible, and then submitted to dialectical examination in terms of the consistency of its several parts, and in terms of its adequacy as a conceptualization of the condition men have been willing to fight and die for. Accordingly, we may begin with an essay by Professor R. M. MacIver entitled “The Meaning of Liberty and Its Perversions.”

The essay will be cited here both as an introductory statement of this common-sense view of freedom, and as representative of the opinion of many social scientists as well.

“There is no doubt,” Professor MacIver says, “about the universal meaning” of the word “freedom”. “The universality of usage sets it for

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us."² Freedom consists in the ability to do as one wants or to act as one thinks fit. Everyone knows this.

The child knows it who is forced to work when he wants to play. The savage knows it who is prevented from following his tribal customs. The criminal knows it who is put behind prison bars. The property-owner knows it who is not allowed to use his property as he pleases. Everywhere in human society, for better or worse, there are hindrances and prohibitions set by the will of others to that which we want to do, and everywhere the condition of which we are thus deprived is called liberty.³

And that of which we are deprived, to repeat, is the ability to do as we please.

Professor MacIver identifies two "perversions" of meaning and usage that are to be avoided in understanding freedom. Though it is legitimate to speak of restraints to doing as one pleases which originate in nature as well as in the will of other men, it is a mistake to hold that "all restraint is a curtailment of liberty". It is a mistake to maintain that "liberty exists only in the interstices of the law". This, according to Professor MacIver, is the first "perversion" of the meaning of freedom. It "misunderstands alike the nature of liberty and the nature of law". It fails to see that, although "every law restraints some liberty", law is nevertheless "a necessary basis of social order", "a system of regulating human relationships", and hence, a "restraint of restraint" without which "every complex society would be reduced to chaos". It is a view of freedom which fails to see that the "liberties we possess are relative to the social order in which we live and in large measure are created as well as sustained by that order".⁴ Politics, it seems, is not only not antithetical to freedom; it also makes freedom possible.

This compatibility of law and freedom, however, must not be misunderstood. Professor MacIver warns that it must not "be made the ground for the redefinition of freedom" as a matter of doing only what is lawful. That would be to pervert the meaning of freedom in a second and more dangerous way.

This identification of law and freedom is, moreover, one of the most ancient and enduring misconceptions of freedom. In MacIver's opinion, this misconception stems from our awareness of internal constraint, or psychological compulsion. We sometimes speak of being compelled by fear or forced by habit. We often speak of "hindrances in ourselves to the fulfillment of the things our hearts desire." But, Professor MacIver warns, we must not forget that the corresponding conception of freedom as the absence of such internal constraint is an extension, or "analogical variant of the universal meaning" of the term "freedom".⁵ Such an extension of

² Ibid., p. 280.
³ Ibid., p. 285.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 280-82.
⁵ Ibid., p. 285.
accepted usage must not be pushed too far. In particular, it cannot be made to support the view of all those who, distinguishing liberty from license or real from counterfeit liberty, insist that freedom consists in the ability to do, not as one pleases but as one ought.

This, according to Professor Maclver, is worse than error. It is sophistry. It is a view which "sophisticates liberty into its own contradiction", and "enables men to justify in the name of liberty the most extreme suppressions of liberty". It is the view, Maclver continues, of our modern sophists... (who) proclaim that we are free only when we do what we ought to do - or rather what they think we ought to do; only when we desire what we ought desire - what they think we ought to desire. They say that liberty is self-realization, the realization of the true self... in surrender to the "law" of our being, to the law of God, to the law of the State as the organic whole in which we are fulfilled. They do not say that self-realization is good and liberty is good, and seek for some relation between them. They say the one is the other.... These apologists will not face the issue that they value other things more highly than liberty and that they reject liberty for the sake of those other things. That position would at least be honest. Instead they pervert the universal meaning of liberty.6

To understand freedom aright, then, it is necessary to avoid such perversion. It is necessary to keep clear of the two pitfalls of identifying law with unfreedom, on the one hand, and of mistaking lawful behavior, on the other hand, for freedom. It is necessary to cling instead to this view of freedom as doing what one wants. This view, Maclver insists, is an "immediate datum, something... as ultimate as being warm or pleased or angry". It is thus necessary "simply (to) recognize and accept the universal meaning" of "freedom" as a term signifying the "state of being free"7 - the state of being able to act as one wishes, wants, or desires unrestrained and unconstrained by things natural or human or divine. It is necessary, in short, to cling to the view of freedom as the ability of each individual to do as he pleases.

There are, however, a number of reasons why it is not possible simply to take "doing as one pleases" for the universal meaning of "freedom". This universal meaning, after all, is not so universal in usage as Professor Maclver would have us believe. The second "perversion" - which has existed from the beginning - is evidence enough of this. If, on the other hand, Professor Maclver does not mean a universality of historical usage when he speaks of the universal meaning of the term "freedom"; if he means instead not a universal but the generic meaning of the term, it is still not possible to accept it without qualification. In that case, it is necessary further to specify the generic meaning. After all, one seeks to comprehend not the genus but the species, not just animal freedom but the freedom of the human animal. In any case, the definition of a word

6 Ibid., pp. 280, 286-87. (Italics in the original.)
7 Ibid., pp. 279-80.
from its usage must not be mistaken for the definition of the reality the
word names. Men may sometimes mean what they say, but they do not
always say well what they mean. One wishes to know, not the opinion of
men, but the nature of the reality about which they have opinions. The
purpose of this examination of opinion, one may be forgiven for
mentioning, is to proceed from what men say freedom is to the eventual
determination of what, in fact, freedom is.

There is, moreover, still another reason for a refusal simply to accept
“doing as one pleases” as an adequate conceptualization of the “state of
being free”. The refusal is born of the experience of psychological
compulsion; it is born of the experience of personal as distinguished
from environmental deficiency. The refusal is grounded in the experience.
precisely, of those “hindrances in ourselves” which Maclver mentions but
does not confront. Madness, disease, inhibition, fear, stupidity, ignorance,
prejudice, cowardice, intemperance, sloth – these surely are some of the
“hindrances in ourselves to the fulfillment of the things our hearts
desire” which preclude acceptance of any unqualified conception of free-
dom as the ability to act as one wants, or thinks fit. Not many, after all,
are willing to call a madman free on the basis merely, of his ability to
carry out his crazy schemes, to enact his compulsive desires, or otherwise
to do what he insanely wants to do.

It is not possible, in short, either “simply to accept” a common usage
of the term “freedom” as a definition of the reality meant to be defined.
or to stipulate a definition on the basis of that usage, without begging the
question of what freedom is. Stipulation is itself a question-begging
procedure, and common usage (in the sense of “commonplace”) is neither
common (in the sense of universally accepted) nor unambiguous.

It is necessary, then, to proceed to a clearer, more adequate conception
of freedom. It is necessary to clarify common usage and to develop (not
stipulate) a definition of freedom on the basis of an examination of the
problems that reveal its ambiguity. The examination of the common view
of freedom, in other words, must proceed to an examination of the
principles uncommonly adduced to support its acceptance and to qualify
its meaning as an adequate definition of human freedom. For this
examination we may turn to the study of the different concepts of freedom
concluded by Mortimer Adler and his colleagues of the Institute for
Philosophic Research.8

II

This common view of freedom as doing what one wants is basically
that concept which Mr. Adler calls the “circumstantial freedom of

8 Mortimer J. Adler, The Idea of Freedom (2 vols.; Garden City, New York:
self-realization”. He describes it as “a freedom which is possessed by any individual who, under favorable circumstances, is able to act as he wishes for the sake of the good as he sees it.”9 This description is meant to make explicit two distinct points in the insistence that freedom is always, at bottom, a question of doing or not doing as one pleases. The first point is that freedom is a matter of action that the individual himself does, not that he is forced to do by another. This point concerns the origin of an action. For a man to be free his action must be self-originated; it must be voluntary action. It must be “action proceeding from himself,” not from another by way of some form of coercion.10 Let us call this point the principle of self-origination.

The second point concerns the nature or quality of the action itself. This is the point in the insistence that freedom is a question of what one pleases to do as distinguished from, perhaps even in opposition to, what one ought to do. The point is that what is done must not only be voluntarily done. It must also be the enactment of what the individual actually desires to do, not merely what law, obligation or duty requires him to do.11 Let us call this second point the principle of self-realization.

The two points, of course, are distinct but inseparable aspects of human freedom. Each principle, in other words, is a distinct specification of the single view that freedom is essentially an individual affair, essentially a matter of action which is the individual’s own action. The two principles of self-origination and self-realization specify two ways in which an action can be said to be one’s own: The individual himself acts; and what he does is characteristically his, bears the stamp of his being and personality, constitutes the realization of his individuality in being and in action.

Freedom is thus seen to be a question of a person’s uniqueness as an individual. What is at stake in the issue of freedom is the individual’s realization of himself as this, not that person. What is at stake for the individual is the alienation or realization of himself — that is, the loss or achievement of his good. To be free, then, the individual must himself act, and the action which he initiates must be what he desires to do. He must act, and his action must constitute what is his good, what is good according to the uniqueness of his situation and his self.12

According to this opinion, however, the internal world of the individual — what it is, the constitution of its parts and the hierarchy of their inclinations, in sum, the condition, character, and nature of the person — is basically irrelevant in the conception and issues of freedom. (One remembers Professor MacIver’s warning not to peer into the world within ourselves lest we over-extend the meaning of freedom and end up with its re-definition.) So far as the conceptualization of freedom is concerned,

9 Ibid., II, 5.
10 Ibid., I, 173-74.
11 Ibid., I, 184-87.
12 Ibid., pp. 173, 183-89.
the person is taken as identical with the individual as a whole. One must not speak of a "true self" as distinguished from the person who does whatever he wants. The only self is the actual individual, the psycho-physical whole named Tom or Dick who says "I", and who stands over and against, separated and distinct from the other, from everyone else and everything else in the external world. The self, so understood, is the only self that counts in the conception of freedom.\textsuperscript{13} The derivative principles of self-origination and self-realization, then, must be understood in an equivalent way.

The principle of self-origination, accordingly, stops short of what has been termed the issue of "free choice" or "free will". Self-origination is a matter of the absence of external forms of coercion. It is a matter of circumstances, of factors present or absent in the individual's environment, not in himself. Freedom is viewed essentially as the relation of the individual taken as a whole to the world without, not the world within. The relevant issue is not whether the individual is necessitated to desire as he does, nor whether he is necessitated to action by his desiring. The only relevant issue is whether the individual can enact his desire however it is come by.

And that ability to act as one desires is conceived, in turn, as a matter of situation. It is a question, at the very least, of the absence of external conditions of obstacle, force or threat which compel action contrary to the individual's desire, or prevent action according to it. For many writers, this ability is a question also of the presence in an individual's environment of a multiplicity of means and a wealth of opportunities (economic, social and political) for enacting desire. Freedom requires alternative courses of action. For some, freedom is a question of the presence, even, of such circumstances -- schools for instance -- as "reach inside" the individual to improve his mental and emotional condition. For others, freedom requires such aids as would make an individual more conscious of the desire that actually moves him and better able to choose apt means for its realization. But for all adherents of this view of freedom, an action is said to be self-originated if it is done in the presence or absence of the relevant external circumstances. Thus it is held that the condition and character of the person are irrelevant in the conception and issues of freedom. Men -- ignorant men as well as learned men, vicious men as well as virtuous men -- are equally free if similarly situated.\textsuperscript{14}

This irrelevance of the internal world of the individual also characterizes the understanding of the principle of self-realization. It too stops short of adequate consideration of an important question in the conception of freedom -- let us call it the question of the measure. The principle of self-realization tries to state the measure according to which an action is to be judged as one's own, from the point of view of what the action is.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Ibid.}, II, 76-87.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, I, 111-33, 174-87; II, 533-61.
not from the point of view of who does it. Self-alienation, after all, can
be accomplished as much by what one does voluntarily as by what one is
forced to do. The principle of self-realization, then, declares that the
individual – not some external agent nor the command of some divine or
human law – must be the measure of his own good, the measure of what
constitutes the alienation or the realization of himself. The standard the
individual uses in taking this measure of a possible deed, however, is left
unspecified. That measure is merely said to be his desire, his pleasure,
his wish or his preference.\footnote{Ibid., II, 173, 183-89.}

The individual taken as a whole, then, is the only self there is in this
conception of freedom. He is the real, the actual self. The desire he
actually has, not that corresponding to some metaphorical “true self” or
to the command of some law, is the only relevant measure of what the
individual must be unrestrained from doing if his action is to constitute
his good, to be his own, and if he, himself, is to be free. \textit{What the
individual desires to do} is, according to the principle of self-realization,
what the individual must be able to do; and \textit{he}, according to the principle
of self-origination, must do it if, according to this view, he is to be free.

It is not difficult to see that an individualistic concept of the person is
the basis of this view of freedom, the fundamental ground upon which it
stands or falls as an adequate concept of freedom. This view of the
individual whose self-realization lies in the achievement of the “good”
that is the object of his “subjective” desire is also the ground of a
correspondingly individualistic conception of the nature and function of
government. The necessarily aggressive pursuit of individual “subjective”
desire in the condition of scarcity means that the golden rule is, in fact,
do unto others, \textit{first}. Life, accordingly, is “poor, solitary, nasty, brutish
and short.” Government is necessary to end the war of “every man against
1950) Part I, Chs. XIII, XIV. The famous quotation is from Ch. XIII, p. 104 and
p. 103.} Or, in a less blunt version, the golden rule is no harm to
others, if possible.\footnote{John Locke, \textit{Second Treatise on Civil Government}, Ch. II, Sect. 6. Found in
Ernest Barker, \textit{Social Contract, Essays by Locke, Hume and Rousseau} (New York:
Oxford U. Press, 1960).} But it is not possible. The unregulated pursuit by
individuals of their “subjective” desire means that “each man is judge in
his own case.”\footnote{Ibid., Ch. II, Sect. 13 and Ch. III, Sect. 18.} It means that there is no “established known, law,
received and allowed by common consent to be the standard of right and
wrong, and the common measure to decide controversies.”\footnote{Ibid., Ch. IX, Sect. 124.} Life, conse-
quently, is characterized by “great inconveniences,” full of “confusion,
disorder, partiality and violence,”20 “mutual grievances, injuries and wrongs.”21

Government is necessary, in short, to ameliorate this warfare. Its chief domestic function is “to harmonize the conflict of interests,” and politics becomes, so to speak, the activity of “getting yours,” peacefully. Or, to express the matter more euphemistically, government is necessary to establish the condition of order, security and peace in which the cooperation of many individuals is both possible and of benefit to all. Or finally, to express the matter in the language of this view of freedom, government is necessary to establish the conditions in which the private pursuit of “subjective” happiness becomes productive of abundance and of those other circumstances which concretely confer upon each individual “the ability to act as he wishes for the sake of the good as he sees it.”

This is not to say, of course, that everyone who accepts this view of freedom is aware of its foundation in this view of the individual and his government. Nor is it to say that everyone who accepts this view of freedom views freedom as an end, let alone as the end of politics. Hobbes, who originally persuaded modern men to the acceptance of this understanding, altogether rejected freedom as a specific end of government. Many of the inheritors of his view of freedom accept it as merely one end among many, and see in politics the task of reconciling its requirements with those of other, and more necessary ends. But the kinship of this concept of freedom to that conception of politics through the individualistic concept of the person points to a serious problem with even a qualified acceptance of this freedom as an end of politics.

For individualism, the end of politics is to establish in existence its dream of the individual. The final aim of politics is to enable each individual to live as though in an imagined state of nature, as though in the state of acting for the good as he sees it, without at the same time suffering the fate of such a life, without suffering its nasty and brutish consequences. However, since the individual is as naturally needy as he is naturally selfish, one may with equal title say that, for individualism, the end of politics is power. Its aim is to cure that natural impotence which leaves the solitary individual prey to nature and its creatures by establishing and maintaining the power of Leviathan over both. Simply stated, its aim is to cure the impotence of the individual by means of the relative omnipotence of the State, and so to create the illusion that the individual lives as a god, obeying only himself.

This is perhaps the greatest irony of individualism. It points, as many have noted, to a totalitarian fruit of the liberal seed. But if this is true, and if it is true that in politics freedom partially accepted often becomes freedom totally accepted, one is forced to ask whether a totalitarian fruit

20 Ibid., Ch. II, Sect. 13; Ch. IX, Sect. 123-27.
21 Ibid., Ch. VIII, Sect. 91, n. 4.
might not eventually be the ironic product of the acceptance of individualism's characteristic view of freedom as an end of politics.

III

Before one were to accept or reject "the circumstantial freedom of self-realization" as the end of politics, however, or before one were to accept it as one end to be reconciled with others, he would do well to examine its adequacy as a concept of human freedom. To recall the beginning of the essay, he would do well to ask whether this individualistic understanding of freedom adequately expresses that human condition which men have established republics to secure and have given their lives to maintain. If one wishes to understand freedom it is necessary to avoid arbitrariness, and to submit this widely accepted opinion of what freedom is to an examination of the consistency, at least, of its several principles.

The "circumstantial freedom of self-realization" is deficient on both counts. It is contradictory in its principles, and inadequate as an understanding of the condition of being men have sought to achieve through politics. More precisely, this view of freedom can be made consistent, but only at the cost of its adequacy as a concept of the freedom politics aims to secure. For it is impossible without contradiction to maintain that the condition and character of the self are irrelevant in the conception of freedom and, at the same time, to maintain that some particular condition of the person - madness, for example - is a constraint that deprives him of freedom. One cannot have it both ways: The contradiction is on the level of principle, and that is the domain of "Either/Or".

Either the internal world of the individual is relevant, or it is not. If the condition and nature of the person are not relevant, then freedom may indeed be accounted "the ability of an individual to act as he wishes for the sake of the good as he sees it". Then too, neither insanity nor imbecility can be deemed hindrances to freedom. Then feeling free, thinking oneself free, is the same as being free. Then too, and on that account, freedom cannot be an end of politics. Politics, surely, does not aim to help mad or criminal individuals enact mad or criminal desires. Besides, everyone is free in this sense - everyone that is, except the individual literally dragged by the physical force of another. Such a conception of freedom is thus politically irrelevant. Everyone - the idiot, the foolish, the intemperate, the insane, the diseased, the primitive, the superstitious, the cowardly, the duped, the depraved or the deprived, for example - everyone acts as he wishes for the sake of the good as he sees it in the circumstances in which he finds himself. If the internal world of the self is irrelevant in the conception of freedom, there is no ground for saying otherwise. The individual, it is true, may wish to exist in different circumstances. But that is another matter altogether. It is a matter, not of doing what one wants, but of existing in circumstances that accord with
one's wish, in a reality that corresponds to one's dream.

The issue here concerns the measure of an individual's realization or self-alienation. The point is that if the internal world of the individual is irrelevant in the conception of freedom then his actual desire in his present and immediate circumstances is the only possible measure of a deed as his own. But what the individual does can be the only possible indication of what he really, what he actually desires to do. Hence he always does what he wants. If the internal world of the self is irrelevant – if one really means that the actual individual in his present condition (whatever it may be) is the only self that counts in the conception of freedom; if one really means that his "subjective" desire or wish or preference (however originated and whatever it may be) is the only relevant measure of his good, of his self-realization as distinguished from what some "other" (person or law) says he ought to do – if, that is, one means what one says and maintains it consistently, then what an individual does must be taken as what, in fact, he desires, wishes or prefers to do.

There is no alternative consistent with these assertions. It is asserted that the nature and character of the person are irrelevant in the conception of freedom. And it is asserted that to be free the individual must be able to do what he "subjectively" wants to do. These two assertions taken together, effectively eliminate from the problems of freedom any distinction between the inner life of the person (between his "subjective" desire or wish or preference) and its outward manifestation in action. Given these assertions, a person who acts at gunpoint, out of his desire to avoid threatening death, acts as freely as the person who acts in conditions of civil peace, out of his desire to achieve immortal fame. Each is able to act upon his desire. Given these assertions, neither yesterday's desire nor even today's wish to be in yesterday's circumstances can be taken as relevant for the issue of freedom. They cannot be summoned as the appropriate measure of self-realization, as a substitute for the present desire prompting a deed, without denying one or the other of the assertions.

Such is the logical consequence of the unqualified assertion that the individual as a whole, in his "subjective" desire or preference, is the standard or measure of his self-realization, of what, therefore, he must be able to do to be free. His good must be understood to be what he desires. What he actually does must be taken as what he actually desires. And the individual himself must be said to act, since he is not literally moved by the physical force of another. Thus freedom, often thought to be a rare good worth much to achieve and in need of constant care, turns out to be commonplace, a common characteristic of almost every human deed in every kind of regime.

It is doubtless true that one wishes, by reason both of the experience of coercion and the habits of linguistic usage, to reject such mad consistency. Few are willing to say that a man acts freely even under the duress of a weapon threatening his life. In order to avoid that conclusion
and still maintain that freedom is doing whatever one wants, many would insist that the drug addict, the psychotic and the man under duress obviously do not do what they want. But this is not obvious at all. It is possible to maintain it only by an equivocation on the word "desire" or "want" — an equivocation, moreover, that amounts to a contradiction of the assertion that the internal world of the person is irrelevant in the conception and definition of freedom. The avoidance of that conclusion is possible only if one distinguishes among a person's desires between his desire and his wish. With such a distinction, it may be well said that the addict desires his drug but prefers to be rid of his desire; that the victim chooses to surrender his money but prefers to be rid of the bandit; or that the psychotic does what he desires madly, but prefers to be rid of his mad desire. With such a distinction, however, it is necessary to speak of freedom as doing, not as one wants or desires, but as one prefers or wishes.

But why introduce such a distinction? Obviously, to avoid the conclusion that the addict, the psychotic and the victim act freely. But why avoid that conclusion? Obviously, because it is not in accord with the experience of coercion or the accepted usage of the term "freedom." Well then, it is necessary to make a further distinction. It is necessary to distinguish between real and unreal, reasonable and unreasonable wishes or preferences. After all, if it is unacceptable to call the victim of duress free, it is equally unacceptable in the light of that experience and usage to call the contented prisoner free who loves his prison as his good, and prefers above all to remain there. By the same token, it is just as unacceptable to account the man unfree who cannot square a circle, or exist as the youth the prefers once again to be. Similarly, it is unacceptable to call the absolute tyrant unfree who cannot re-create man in the image of his mad dream. If, then, it is necessary to avoid conclusions that are absurd to the common sense of freedom, it is as necessary to distinguish between reasonable and unreasonable wishes as it is to distinguish between a person's preference and the desire that actually moves him to act in his immediate circumstances.

This, however, is to admit the relevance of the condition and character of the person in the conception and definition of freedom. It means that ignorant men and wise men, mad men and sane men, vicious men and virtuous men cannot be said to be equally free if similarly situated with respect to external circumstances. To admit such distinctions in the attempt to avoid an absurd conclusion, in other words, constitutes a radical qualification of the original assertion of the "subjectivity" of the standard of self-realization. It altogether changes the notion of freedom as "the ability of an individual to act as he wishes for the sake of the good as he sees it." The admission means at least this: The wish must be sane and the judgment sound.

This, of course, raises again the issue of the measure, though in more general terms. What is the standard or measure of soundness and of
sanity, of health and of well-being, that is, of an individual's actual good, about which he as much as anyone has opinions and may be mistaken? Since it is always a particular opinion, a particular wish or desire, and a particular judgment of a particular individual which must be measured, neither the particular opinion, wish, desire nor judgment can be the measure of an individual's self-realization. By the same token, *mutatis mutandis*, the measure cannot be the traditions of the community. Even less can it be some cross-cultural "denominator" of individual opinions and communal traditions.

In the last analysis the measure can only be the nature of an individual's human being, since this is the only possibility remaining. Concerning this measure men may everywhere have disagreed. One man may be as ignorant as another. Both may be as partial or as mistaken as the spirit of the laws of their regime. It may well be that a man can come to know this measure only "subjectively," only through a kind of participation in human being which is achieved in the fact of the individual's existence as a man, to the degree that he exists as a man and not as a brute.

But whatever may be the specific character of the measure and whatever may be the way in which it can be known, the measure of self-realization cannot be "subjective" in the sense of the principle of self-realization. It may be true that a person's good is whatever enables him to realize himself in being and in action. It is not true, however, that doing whatever a person happens to prefer or to desire will enable him to realize himself. Suicide can scarcely be imagined to constitute self-realization — if words still mean anything. The same is true of the analogous form of suicide with which experience in life or in art confronts us. Paris acts upon his love for Helen, and thereby dooms himself with his city. Joseph K. prefers not to be arrested by the real world, and ends up watching from afar as the executioner twists the knife in his heart. A young "hippie" prefers a "psychedelic" life which, in his case, results in madness. A slothful man prefers his ease and realizes nothing, whereas a lustful man, acting upon his preference, realizes only his lust. And rash would be the judgment of Hitler which saw his life as a realization of himself. In literature or in life, the world is full of cases where following one's preference or one's desire is seen to bring the opposite of self-realization — unless, of course, self-realization means whatever one wishes it to mean.

If, however, self-realization consists in whatever one happens to wish and therefore means whatever one wishes it to mean, so too does freedom. Then one is forced once again to accept those conclusions rejected above as absurd to the common sense of freedom. For (as it was the purpose of the second section of this essay in citing the Adler study to document beyond the possibility of reasonable denial), self-realization is the hinge-principle in the conception of freedom. The principle of self-origination declares that the individual must *himself* act, but the principle of self-realization defines *what* it is a man must himself do if he is to be free.
Self-realization is the cardinal principle in the conception of freedom because it specifies that in which freedom consists.

If, then, self-realization means whatever one wishes it to mean, it is necessary to recognize that freedom is not a matter of being anything, but of believing oneself to be realizing oneself in whatever one happens to do. It is then necessary to recognize that the contented prisoner is as free as the man is unfree whose discontent rests in the fact that he cannot be the god, the angel, the bird of the snake he prefers literally to be. Indeed, it is necessary to recognize that the slave — wholly in bondage to and wholly in the service of another — is free so long as he prefers his slavery, and that for him slavery is freedom. At this point, however, absurdity triumphs over intelligence. Discourse must cease the moment it is believed that opposite conditions of being become identical in fact when they are subjectively held to be the same.

The point is that to avoid absurdity, it is necessary to recognize the relevance of the condition and character of the person in the conception and definition of freedom. The man acting deliberately under the duress of a threat to his life or property can be said to act unfreely though voluntarily only by distinguishing between his desire and his wish, and by changing the concept of freedom from doing as one desires to doing as one prefers. But the experience which makes this distinction necessary and legitimate demands the further distinction between reasonable and unreasonable, real and unreal wishes or preferences. Only with this additional distinction is it possible to maintain that the prisoner, the slave, the psychotic, and the fool are nevertheless not free despite their preference for their condition and despite their conviction that they are realizing themselves. The point is that the admission of the distinctions among a person's desires, wishes and judgments necessary to avoid absurdity thus introduces an element of "objectivity" as the decisive thing within the "subjectivity" of the standard of self-realization. It may be that to be free the individual must be able to act himself for the good as he sees it. Perhaps he alone must judge. But the admission means that he must judge rightly, and with the right measure.

The point is, moreover, that the admission of the necessary distinctions is an admission not only of the relevance, but above all, of the primacy of the nature and character of the person in the conception, itself, of human freedom. The person's good, his condition of real and not imaginary self-realization, is thus declared to be the measure of the content of freedom, of its matter, of that which the individual must do to be free. This means that freedom cannot be primarily understood as a matter of environment. It cannot be conceived as essentially consisting in the presence or absence of external circumstances. The absence of guns and threats and tyrants as well as the presence of a city's advantages may indeed be necessary if an individual is to be free. But the presence or absence of these circumstances can be understood neither as the sufficient condition of an individual's freedom, nor as that
in which it consists. The standard of self-realization, however "objective," is declared to be within the individual, not in the external world of circumstances constituting his environment. In fact, this measure, because it is the measure of what freedom is, is the ultimate ground of any judgment concerning what environmental circumstances are even relevant, let alone destructive of freedom or requisite for its establishment.

The point is, in short, that the distinctions necessary to avoid the conclusion that everyone acts as he desires or wishes, or to avoid the conclusion that everyone is free who believes himself to be free, establish the primacy of the individual, of his nature and his well-being, in the conception and definition of human freedom. The point is that the necessary distinctions – among a person's desires, between his desires and his wishes, between his good and his opinion of his good, between being and thinking, reasonable and unreasonable, sane and mad – lead to the recognition that freedom is not so much a question of the condition of an individual's environment (however much it may require an environment of a certain kind), as it is a matter essentially of the nature and quality of his action. What the individual does must be in the nature of action as distinguished from mere movement. He must act, not merely re-act, not merely be moved to disrupt in some way the arrangement of things in space. And what he does must be action of a certain kind. It must be action according to the measure of a person's good, in virtue of which an individual exists as a man and realizes himself as an individual.

Either the internal world of the individual is relevant, then, or it is not. If the condition and nature of the person and the character of his desire or wish are not relevant in the conception of freedom, then freedom may indeed be conceived as a matter of doing whatever one wishes. But because of this irrelevance, the individual must be understood to do what he wants. Given the "subjectivity" of the standard of self-realization – because the individual's desire is then unqualifiedly the measure of what he must be able to do to be free – what the individual actually does must be taken as arguing, revealing, being what he actually desires or wishes to do. Everyone accordingly does what he really wants. Everyone is always free except in the one instance where he is moved as a leaf upon the wind. Everyone accordingly is almost always free and freedom is, as Hobbes maintained, merely voluntary as distinguished from involuntary action. Freedom so conceived is thus politically irrelevant. It comes to the individual with the mere fact of his existence. It exists in any regime; it is dependent upon politics neither for its establishment nor for its security. It is the starting point of politics, not its end.

If, on the other hand, the internal world of the individual is relevant in the conception and definition of freedom, then freedom may perhaps be taken as a reality politics aims to establish and secure. But in that event freedom can no longer be conceived as the ability, merely, of an "individual to act as he wishes for the sake of the good as he sees it." It is then necessary to qualify this conception in the light of that world. It s
necessary to qualify this conception both with a view to the problem of internal constraint and deficiency, and with a view to the problem of the "objectivity" of a person's being and self-realization. It is necessary, in short, to qualify this conception in light of the determination of what makes an action both genuinely self-originated and genuinely self-realizing.

Freedom, everyone admits, is a matter of the nature of an action as well as of its source. It is a matter of action that is a person's own in the double sense that he originates it and that it conforms to his own aims, not another's. Freedom, in other words, may still be conceived of as a matter of action that is both self-originated and self-realizing. But the principles of self-origination and self-realization must take into account the nature and interior world of the person. The principle of self-origination, accordingly, must be able to distinguish movement to which an individual is necessitated by some internal as well as some external force. It must also be able to distinguish such movement from action which a person does of himself; and to distinguish, as well, such action from merely conditioned or instinctive reaction. It must, in brief, be able to distinguish choice from voluntary response, and voluntary response from involuntary movement. The principle of self-realization, on the other hand, must be able to distinguish what an individual believes to be self-realizing from what is self-realizing in the uniqueness of his situation and his person. It must be able, so to speak, to take into view the aim of a person's being for its well-being, and to be able to distinguish according to that measure which aims the person has taken are straight and which are crooked with respect to hitting that mark.

If, then, the internal world of the individual is relevant in the conception of freedom, it appears that freedom cannot be conceived as the ability of a person to do as he desires, wants, wishes, likes, prefers or thinks fit — that is, to do whatever he pleases. It appears that freedom must be conceived, instead, as the ability of a person to act — to act not merely as he desires but also as he chooses, and to act for the sake of the good not only as he sees it, but also as it is in fact. In short, it appears that freedom must be conceived as the ability of a person to desire, to choose, and to do what is really his good, to do what will in fact enable him to realize himself.

IV

It appears, however, that with this concept of freedom the investigation of what freedom is has become impaled upon the other horn of the dilemma of adequately defining it. If the common opinion of freedom as doing what one pleases ends up, if consistently maintained, in the assertion that everyone acts freely because he does what he wants in his circumstances, this sophisticated view of freedom seems to lead to a conclusion equally unacceptable to common experience and the habits of linguistic
usage. It seems to lead to that identity of the good man and the free man
which Professor MacIver condemned as enabling "men to justify in the
name of liberty the most extreme supression of liberty." Far from
clarifying the ambiguities in the common sense of freedom, the investi-
gation seems to end up in that dangerous sophistry which "proclaims that
we are free only when we do what we ought to do -- or rather what
(others) think we ought to do (or) . . . to desire". If a man is a good man
to the degree that he actually desires, chooses and does what is good, the
argument seems to end up in the unacceptable if not dangerous conclusion
that only the good man is free.

The issue at bottom of the objection to this identification concerns the
asserted "objectivity" of the human states of being good and being free
on the one hand, and the "subjectivity," on the other hand, at the core
of popular -- that is, both positivist and humanist -- conceptions of free-
dom and goodness. It may be that "ought" implies both obligation and
authority, that the "ought" can be viewed as a commanded good. But for
the positivist the "subjectivity" of the good as the groundless, merely
projected object of individual desire or "subjective preference" means that
the "ought" is always reducible to some private preference that has gained
authoritative status as social custom or public law. To do as one ought,
accordingly, is to do what someone else has commanded. It is, ipso facto,
to serve the interest of another. At best -- because law is as Professor
MacIver points out, "a basis of social order" and a "restraint of restraint"
-- it is to serve one's own interest only incidentally, or by coincidence.
That, however, well defines the condition of a well-kept slave who exists
as such to serve not his own, but his master's aims. Thus the implied
identification of the good man and the free man in the notion of "doing
as one ought" is rejected as a sophistry characteristic of tyranny. It is
thought to correspond to the dream of the cunning tyrant who would
make citizens into willing servants of his self-interest through their
indoctrination in the belief that their goodness consists in lawfulness, and
their freedom in obedience to the laws of his regime. It is the sophistry
of the tyrant who would, in a vulgar understanding of Rousseau's phrase,
"force men to be free." Thus it is believed that "doing as one ought" must
be rejected as an adequate concept of human freedom.

The basis of this rejection is the reduction of the good to private interest
if not "subjective preference"; the consequent denial of a public or a
common good, and the corresponding equation of law with the interest
of the stronger. This view of politics as the struggle of individuals (singly
or in combination) for the power to realize their "subjective" interests is
the counterpart of the view of freedom as doing what one wishes. It is
therefore subject to a similar dialectic. Either this view is correct or it
is not. If it is correct, then politics is indeed "the struggle for power." But
its end -- if one can still speak of an end -- is power, not freedom. Freedom

22 See above, p. 107.
as the ability to do what one wishes remains the starting point of politics. Its end can only be victory — that is, the power to make citizens the servants of one’s private interest and to make a world that corresponds to one’s dream. It thus appears that this view of freedom is no less dangerous than the alternative view it rejects as a tyrant’s sophistry. It is, in fact, a far more dangerous view since its teaching that man is by nature solitary and selfish confers upon him the soul of a tyrant. If the good is what a man subjectively prefers or wishes, then nothing is forbidden — not even Auschwitz.

But it is simply a mistake to see tyranny in the concept of freedom as the ability of a person to desire, to choose and to do what is really his good. In fact, the “objectivity” of the measure of this good — the “objectivity” of the human condition of self-realization — is the fundamental basis of the distinction between tyranny and its opposite in the first place. Without that “objectivity” there is ultimately no intelligible ground for the distinction between the legal and the just. Without that distinction there is no abuse of power — at least, not on the part of a legally constituted and procedurally correct sovereign. And if there is no abuse of power, “tyranny” is merely a name the loser gives to the regime of the winner in the struggle for power. The alternative to freedom as doing what one pleases, in short, may well be freedom as doing what one ought. But this cannot be rightly understood as doing what the tyrant pleases. It must be understood instead as a matter of the individual’s desiring to do what justice demands, of his pleasing to do what is in reality good.

This, however, still implies the troublesome identification of the good man and the free man. The ability of an individual to act for his good implies prudence at least, if not wisdom. The ability both to desire to do and to choose to do (hence, please to do) what is good implies the development of the other moral virtues. But the acquisition of these virtues is a constant and difficult task. Few succeed. Both their development and the ability to act according to their requirements, moreover, are not entirely within the power of the individual. Both the acquisition and the actions of these virtues ordinarily require not only a certain natural endowment on the part of the individual, but good up-bringing, opportunity and other circumstantial advantages as well — in brief, good nature, good parents, good teachers and good laws. What is troublesome then about this identification of the good man and the free man is this implication that if freedom implies virtue as well as circumstance, goodness implies circumstance as well as virtue. The trouble, in short, is that if according to this concept of freedom only the good man is free, it appears that only the fortunate man has the possibility of being either good or free.

This “objectivity” of freedom as an acquired, and in part, circumstantially dependent condition of the person seems to run counter to the essential “subjectivity” in popular — this time humanist, not only
interpretation

martyrdom is with difficulty thought to be free while on the rack. Though courageous, he need not be thought of as particularly temperate, or just, or prudent. Yet some men would admire his integrity, and many would consider him good in virtue of his obedience, “even unto death,” to the dictates of his conscience and his faith. The slave’s martyrdom might even be considered the supremely free act that establishes or confirms his goodness. By similar token, the same slave, laboring in the double yoke of life’s necessities and his master’s commands, would be considered by many Christians to be good – and by a few of them to be even free – in virtue of his humility in the “acceptance of his lot in life,” of his charity in the turning of his cheek to his master’s lash, and in virtue of his hope that the Living God of his faith (whose inscrutable Providence “writes straight with crooked lines”) will lead His beloved through many a valley of darkness to a life of eternal blessedness.

The issue here concerns the nature of the measure whereby some men see the goodness, and perhaps the freedom, of a Job in the steadfastness of his faith and in the dust and ashes of his submission to the Will of the Almighty; or else, in the “authenticity” of his life and his suffering. The issue here concerns the “subjectivity” of conscience and integrity as the measure of human goodness, and so also, as the measure of freedom. This measure is apolitical in the extreme. It describes, in Whitehead's phrase, “a freedom lying beyond circumstance.” In Professor Adler’s words, it describes a “freedom to live as one ought (that) is essentially a freedom of the inner life,” a freedom that “consists in a man’s ability to will as he ought,” who therefore “remains free whether or not he can enact what he wills.” The issue concerns the radical “subjectivity” of a measure that makes goodness and freedom essentially a matter of “being able to will as we ought, whether or not external circumstances permit us to do as we will.”

This integral freedom of the human will in steadfast adherence to the dictates of conscience, it must be noted, is not that quality of the will which is at issue in the debate concerning a person’s freedom of choice. The question of free will in the sense of choice – in the sense of not being necessitated to all one’s acts either by instinct, by training or by desire – concerns that minimum of responsibility for one’s deed that common sense and common law have always assumed as the threshold of human action, as the hallmark of the moral and political world. As was noted above, free choice concerns the problem of self-origination.

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23 Adler, Op. Cit., I, 250-54. Adler calls this notion of freedom the “acquired freedom of self-perfection.” He describes it as “a freedom which is possessed only by those men who, through acquired virtue or wisdom, are able to will or live as they ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature.” Ibid., II, 6.

24 See above, p. 110, and p. 119.
of what makes an action distinguishable from mere response or movement, and one might add, what makes a self distinguishable from an instance or an example of a species. This question of free choice is a matter of the nature, itself, of the person and his act of willing. The issue in the debate is whether man is of such a nature as to have an inherent power of choice. If he is, he has; if he is not, he has it not. In Professor Adler's terminology, it is a natural, not an acquired nor a circumstantial freedom. "Neither circumstances nor acquirements of any sort confer this freedom upon men or deprive them of it." If there is such a freedom, natural as breathing is natural, its existence is obviously not a matter of human action. As a natural freedom, it cannot be understood as an end of politics.

The relevant issue in the troublesome identification of the good man and the free man is thus not the issue of an evil man's responsibility for either his deeds or his condition. The assertion that only the good man is free does not necessarily mean that only the good man has choice. But neither does it mean that a man is free simply in virtue of his ability to will as he ought. It is this restriction of freedom to the inner world of the person that is at issue here. That is the "subjectivity" at issue in the humanist measure of human goodness and human freedom. It is a "subjectivity" that makes freedom essentially independent of circumstances and eliminates it as a specifically political end.

The radically apolitical or subjective character of this freedom is most easily seen, perhaps, in its specifically Christian version. "The good that I would, I do not; but the evil I would not, I do." That is the unfreedom which St. Paul describes in the famous seventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "Wretched man that I am, . . . I do not do what I want, but the very thing I hate . . . . It is no longer I that do it but sin which dwells within me, . . . in my flesh, . . . in my members, . . . (in) this body of death." The point is that this "slavery to sin" is a purely subjective servitude - subjective, that is, not in the vulgar sense of imaginary or fictitious, but in the sense that it is a wholly interior servitude. The slavery to sin is a matter of the person's inability to rule himself because of the war of his "spirit" and his "flesh," if not also because of some terrible duality and paralysis within his spirit itself.

But just as this servitude is radically subjective, so too is the freedom which replaces it. That freedom is, as it were, an ability to turn up another cheek, to break the "reign of sin," "to yield oneself to God as a man brought from death to life." It means that "sin will have no dominion

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25 Adler, Op. Cit., I, 156. The concept of freedom which is ordinarily at the root of this controversy concerning free choice is called by Mr. Adler the "natural freedom of self-determination." He describes it as "a freedom which is possessed by all men, in virtue of a power inherent in human nature, whereby a man is able to change his own character creatively by deciding for himself what he shall do or shall become." Ibid., II, 6-7.
over (the Christian) since (he is) not under law, but under grace.” He has been “set free from sin” and has become “a slave of God.” “The return . . . is sanctification and its end, eternal life.” This freedom comes to the person as a “free gift from God,” and enables him, at least potentially, “to walk in newness of life,” “dead to sin and alive to God in Jesus Christ.” (Romans, 6: 4-23).

The point is that according to Christian belief this is a subjective freedom which no man can give, and a freedom that only the individual himself can destroy. The point is that this new life of freedom from sin and in Grace is not of this world, but of the subjective world within the person. As a subjective, not to say a “supernatural” freedom, it cannot be understood as an end of politics. The same is true, mutatis mutandis, of stoic or humanist versions of this freedom.

It appears, then, that the basic trouble in the identification of the good man and the free man on the one hand, and the main problem in determining the freedom that can be an end of politics on the other hand, turn out to be one and the same. The problem seems to be in the notion of goodness which turns up at the root of the concept of freedom. If a positivist insists that freedom is a matter of doing what one wants, it is finally because he understands the good as merely “subjective preference or taste”; and because he sees, albeit inconsistently, a person’s good as the (not at all subjective) object of his private interest, or projection of his singular desire. If a Christian insists that freedom is essentially a matter of willing as one ought, it is finally because he understands a direct, unmediated union with God as the supreme good; and thus sees the individual’s steadfast adherence to His Word in Faith and Charity as the essential element of personal goodness. If an ancient stoic or contemporary humanist insist that freedom is an affair of the individual with himself, it is finally because he conceives of goodness as essentially a matter of self-mastery, or personal integrity. And if one asserts, as this paper has tentatively done, that freedom is a matter of doing what is good, it is because goodness is viewed as the perfection of a nature—a nature, moreover that is specifically political. Accordingly, a person’s good is seen as his ability to live and to act as a man among men, and to achieve thereby a special excellence of his own being.26

A conception of goodness thus appears to be the basis of a concept of freedom. It spells out, as it were, the principle of self-realization. It states

26 This is not to say that goodness as adherence to God’s Will and goodness as excellence in being a man are incompatible notions. Famous are the attempts of every great Christian theologian from Augustine to this day to demonstrate that the two formally different concepts of goodness are nevertheless materially the same. After all, begins that demonstration, can a God who is “Love” will anything but the excellence and perfection of a person’s being? The success of the theologians is not at issue here. The two concepts of goodness, and the correlative concepts of freedom, are, as argued, quite different notions.
the measure of a person's realization or alienation. It declares the basis of judging whether or not a deed or an aim is one's own. A concept of goodness is thus "warp and woof" of a concept of freedom. It defines what freedom is by specifying that activity or ability or quality in which a person's freedom consists. Thus the chief problem in determining what freedom can be an end of politics reveals itself as a problem of determining the nature of the human good. For to be free is to participate in the activities of goodness.

If, then, freedom is an end of politics, it cannot be understood merely as the ability of a person to do as he pleases. That is the start of politics, not its end. Everyone does what he wants in his circumstances, and any qualification of this makes freedom another matter altogether. Nor can the freedom which politics aims to establish and secure be conceived of as the ability of a person merely to will as he ought. Since that is an essentially subjective freedom which is "beyond circumstance," it is a freedom that is beyond politics.

It would thus appear that the freedom which is an affair of politics must be understood instead as the ability of a person to engage with his fellows in those activities which will achieve the particular excellence of his being, and in virtue of which he can exist as a man. And to take this understanding of freedom as an end of politics is to say that politics aims to discover such solutions to common problems and to construct such forms of common life as will assist each person, so far as possible, to realize for himself a life that is both truly human and his own.
ON LA ROCHEFOUCAULD: PRELIMINARY REFLECTIONS

J. E. PARSONS, Jr

I

George Saintsbury writes in his article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica on La Rochefoucauld: "...each maxim is the text for a whole sermon of application and corollary which any one of thought and experience can write."\(^1\) It is in response to this generous spirit of invitation that I approach the task of providing an adequate introduction to the study of La Rochefoucauld. Yet my first care is not to be overly sanguine in minimizing the difficulties that beset my subject. In particular, it is not entirely clear to which kind of literature Rochefoucauld’s Maxims belong. For example, according to Montesquieu: “The Maxims of La Rochefoucauld are proverbs for persons of intellect.”\(^2\) Whether by this he means to dismiss them as mere epigrams, or elevate them to the rank of precepts for the wise, is not sufficiently explicit, for Montesquieu nowhere else refers directly to the Maxims. Provisionally, however, we may assume that they are more than proverbs or epigrams and something less than precepts. As the outgrowth of an enquiring mind they reflect the endeavor to instruct; as the internal dialogue of a statesman with himself, they reveal a highly cultivated man. At the very least, they avoid the facile iteration of preceptive moralism, and (to speak in Rochefoucauld’s behalf) they elude the familiarity of the prosaic. On balance the Maxims are perhaps best described as aphorisms.

Now, the distinction between aphoristic prudence and rules of practical reason (precepts) is clearly demarcated by Kant, among others.\(^3\) A difference in motive as well separates Rochefoucauld’s endeavor from Kant’s. For the former proposed to assist kindred spirits on the grounds of tout comprendre, c’est tout pardonner, whereas the latter sought to inculcate an ethic of the will giving itself its own laws. The earnest of this is that La Rochefoucauld is harder on faults or deficiencies than on vices. Indeed, he hardly concerns himself with sins at all, except as they correspond to their secular counterparts, that is, to excesses of amour-propre.

To carry the parallel with Kant still further, we observe that the distinction between maxims and precepts corresponds to a disjunction

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\(^1\) Encyclopaedia Britannica, seventh edition, vol. 16, s.v. “François de La Rochefoucauld.”


\(^3\) La Rochefoucauld was probably acquainted with Plutarch’s distinction in the Moralia between apophthegms and precepts: apophthegms resemble anecdotes, or epigrams (indirect precepts), while precepts themselves directly appeal to the judgment and aim to influence the will as hortatory injunctions.
between subjectivity and objectivity, or to the will as revealing each individual's intentions distinct from objective rules or principles. Kant juxtaposes "maxims which each person bases on his inclinations" to "precepts which hold for a species or rational beings in so far as they agree in certain inclinations." Evidently, mankind in all its diversity does not qualify as Kantian "man", not constituting such purely "rational beings". Besides, Kant's prime maxim turned precept, that each must legislate for himself as if he were legislating for all mankind, bodes forth a kind of misanthropy that La Rochefoucauld, even in his most reproachful moments, utterly fails to match.

From the above considerations, there seems to be no mediation between the departure point of aristocratic moeurs in La Rochefoucauld (timocracy) and Kant's meliorist principles in ethics. For La Rochefoucauld morality breathes the spirit of life and life's uncertainties; for Kant it is to be prescribed from within as part of a methodical programme. Hence the maxims of La Rochefoucauld are at variance with those of Kant, whose first principles assign duties never known before to moralists ancient or modern. In short, for Kant "we can understand moral conduct only if we discover rules or principles which are logically independent of experience and which are capable of contradiction." We may ask, can maxims remain maxims which are utter strangers to the experience of the good? It would seem not unless it follows logically that maxims, to be authentic, must also be capable of contradiction.

As so far stated, such a likelihood is more than dubious. Accordingly, Kant's derivation of a misanthropic ethic from maxims is tendentious, to say the least. Still less is his ultimate successor, Nietzsche, plausible in attempting what Karl Löwith called a philosophical "system of aphorisms". Whether La Rochefoucauld conceived of such a possibility will be investigated in the sequel. It suffices here to note that his suspicions

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5 Ibid., p. 69. Similarly, Kant suggests that maxims pertain to the ethical mode of "the permitted and the forbidden", whereas precepts pertain to the ethical mode of "duty and that which is contrary to duty." (Loc. cit.)
7 See Kant, op. cit., p. 167: "... when the maxim did come into vogue of carefully examining every step which reason had to take and not to let it proceed except on the path of a well-considered method, the study of the structure of the world took an entirely different direction and therewith attained an incomparably happier result." Stephen Körner notes that for Kant: "To choose maxims is to choose a policy," (Kant, Harmoudsworth, Middlesex, 1955, p. 134.)
of imposture on the part of agents claiming moral rectitude for their deeds are, in most instances, all too justified. "Whatever the care one takes to disguise one's passions by simulation of piety and honor, they always become apparent through such obscurities."  

II

Maintaining, as we should, that the art of writing aphorisms requires empathy between the aphorist and his public, we but reflect the universal inclination of literate men to ever better understanding of those among whom they must live. In this, the aphorist somewhat resembles the poet, imitating the whole rather than elaborating a part; for him, parenthetically, the half can be greater than the whole (which is beyond our ken). At all events, the aphorist's art is like a vehicle that can veer, on the one hand, toward the loosely textured rhetoric of politics, or, on the other, toward the fine-spun discourse of political theory.

Before turning our attention directly to La Rochefoucauld, it remains to examine the similar turn of mind in other great moralists who sought truth in aphoristic form. Pascal's *Pensées* would serve as the best known prototype of that kind were it not for their disclosing, on inspection, the unfulfilled design of a fideist apologetic. In a more political vein we could example Harrington's "Political Aphorisms", Halifax's "Maxims of State" and even Swift's "Thoughts on Various Subjects". Of comparable interest and of broader scope we could distinguish Goethe's *Maximien und Reflexionen* which (thanks to their arrangement by topic) bear every mark of being as thoroughly meditated as those just mentioned.

The predominating unit of thought with these moralists was the chapter, as in their discursive works, and subdivision by paragraph, sentence, or even phrase only in appearance suffices to present their thought adequately. Hence La Rochefoucauld must not be expected to furnish us with a finished, synoptic system of thought, although he cannot be understood except in his entirety. M. F. Zeller, for example, after classifying all his maxims by subject matter, concludes that Rochefoucauld intended nothing especial by their haphazard order of presentation, and certainly no thematic development. On this point, a contemporary of the Duke, La Chapelle-Bessé, writes: "I remain in agreement that one will not find

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10 La Rochefoucauld, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. La Pléiade (Gallimard, 1964), p. 404. All further references to Rochefoucauld's maxims will be to this edition; these citations appear in the author's translation, unless otherwise noted.


there all the order or all the art one could wish for, and that a scholar
who would have had more leisure, would have been enabled to supply it
with better sequence . . .”13 On this and similar evidence we can safely
assume that La Rochefoucauld intended no complete moral teaching, but
instead afforded such a series of insights into man’s nature as the selective
study of human passions could furnish.

To avoid confusing the reader by treating ethical in isolation from
political maxims, I will set forth my initial intent to follow in this matter
the moderation of the ancients, notably Aristotle. For Aristotle the correct
understanding of the good, prudence, temperance and justice must first
be at least approximated prior to any worthwhile attempt to improve the
quality of political life. Aristotle prefaces the study of politics with the
study of ethics, not only as a matter of appropriate procedure, but in so
far as some moral virtues – say, magnanimity – demand the widest
possible range for their practice. In addition, there is the fact that politics
is a necessary pre-condition of philosophy, both being rendered choice-
worthy with a view to their end of human happiness (viz. eudaimonism).
Happiness, in turn, for Aristotle reaches its heights through the experience
of maximal self-sufficiency, in contrast to awareness of social inter-
dependence. What constitutes this self-sufficiency par excellence is the life
of contemplation (i.e., the “theoretic life”). For however attractive in
itself, the ethical life proves less autonomous by dint of its social and
political dependence on others’ approval. One cannot practice liberality,
for example, in reclusive solitude. Besides, virtue requires the right kind
of education and moral habituation, which can only be produced as an
incidence of healthy political life. The good life is indissolubly attached
to modes and orders of a political nature – themselves reflecting the
intentions of a first legislator or legislators. “. . . it is difficult to obtain
a right education without being brought up under right laws.”14

Examining moral and political life from another perspective than
Aristotle’s, we perceive that the distinction between State and Society is
resolvable only in terms of official morality counterbalanced by freedom
to act in all cases except where the law expressly forbids. Under this
arrangement Society’s moral role in education becomes the prime issue,
whose amelioration is as equally vitiated by mindless anarchists as by
waspish ultras. In consequence, the social balance struck between the
intimidators and the libertarian voluntarists, or between “folkways” and
“stateways”, remains exceedingly tenuous. Jurists would tend to see a

13 La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 388.
14 Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 1179b32 ff. See Thomas Aquinas, Commentary
on the Ethics, Lesson XIV, sec. 2150: “He [Aristotle] says first that it is difficult for
anyone to be guided from his early days to virtue according to good customs unless
he is reared under good laws, by which a kind of necessity impels a man to good.”
solution as represented (in principle) by the impartiality of a Kantian *Rechtsstaat*. "God," according to Kant, "wants men to be made happy by men, and if only all men united to promote their happiness we could make a paradise of Novaya Zemlya."\(^\text{15}\)

Perhaps so, but Kant is known for understanding happiness in a most curious way, since he accepts the Rousseauan position that men may *become* happy only by being forced to be "free". However, the promise of human perfectibility can lead to the utmost misery, as well as to the utmost happiness, as is sadly indicated by the dystopias of our era. To see this in all clarity, we need not postulate a *trahison des clercs*. We have only to perceive the law of inflated expectations and their reactive aftermath.

Kant's "internal constitution of the state erected on pure principles of right" can be fruitfully compared to that of Humboldt's:

"While the State constitution, by force of law, or custom, or its own power, sets the citizens in a specific relationship to each other, there is another which is wholly distinct from this [juridical relationship] - chosen by their own free will, infinitely various, and in its nature ever-changing. And it is strictly speaking the latter - the free cooperation of the members of the nation - which secures all those benefits for which men longed when they formed themselves into a society."\(^\text{16}\)

What Humboldt's statism leaves out at the expense of public conscience is restored in the guise of a libertarian private morality. His ethos of freedom is placed in a category prior to and distinct from the rules of political right. John Stuart Mill derived a similar preference for private over public life - as is found in La Rochefoucauld as well. But La Rochefoucauld reconciles this preference with absolute monarchy in the only way he can. For both he and Humboldt perceive the state as limited by prior rights and by its own character as a regime which demands less of its subjects than would a commercial republic (like Venice) - one without an elite of birth, but with a competitive civil service. La Rochefoucauld's practical politics indicate his role as foremost *politique*

\(^{15}\) Kant, *Lectures on Ethics* (New York, 1963), pp. 54-5. Kant once criticized a maxim of La Rochefoucauld as follows: "If we, however, incline to the opinion that human nature can better be known in the civilized state... we must listen to a long melancholy litany of indictments against humanity [and to]... the remark (Maxims, ed. 1678, No. 583) that 'in the misfortune of our friends, there is something which is not altogether displeasing to us'." (Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone. New York, 1960, pp. 28-9.)

of his nation and his magnanimous concern to preserve the appearance of individual liberty (even when the operative reality was subjection).17

Further, to the present day ethics are still considered propaedeutic to politics. Common sense discerns the link between the two in practice to be “morale” or the civilian counterpart of military esprit de corps.18 In Rochefoucauld’s times French absolutism attempted to replace a land-based aristocracy with an aristocracy-in-arms, a vertical organization of staff officers and naval commanders. But it suffices to say that its drawback lay in dearth of men in the ranks and bad finances. To resume briefly: La Rochefoucauld’s high-minded indifference to the “verdict of history”, his scorn of clerical influence and his profound patriotism all indicate an amplitude of spirit seldom encountered among even his best contemporaries.

III

In view of considerations similar to the foregoing – and with hopes of not overly vexing the reader by our digressions – we now approach some of La Rochefoucauld’s chief moral maxims. While these maxims are possibly indicators of frustrated ambition, motives other than chagrin, regret and disillusionment must have contributed to their initial conception. A certain noble cast of mind equally betokens higher motives on our author’s part (and perhaps reasserts them). For who – and especially La Rochefoucauld – would spare no pains to reveal his innermost thoughts were his aim but to relieve the feelings of those similarly inclined to frustration and disillusionment? Besides, La Rochefoucauld’s efforts to remain both aloof from partisanship and self-effacing in his moral concerns do not so much testify to preoccupation with today’s “value-free” social science, as with his own well-concealed pride.

The distance produced by Rochefoucauld’s remarkable self-effacement, his pride as consummate anatomist of morals (moeurs), suffices for us because it helps clarify our knowledge of human deficiencies, so as to render us more circumspect than we would be otherwise. For the statesman-like moralist, such as he was, the orotic constitution of man necessitates now and again the use of disingenuousness to deliver men from

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17 See La Rochefoucauld, op. cit. p. 505: “To render society convenient, it is necessary that each maintain his liberty; one must see oneself, or not see oneself at all, without obligations... One must contribute, to the degree that one can, to the diversion of those with whom one wishes to live; but it is not always necessary to be burdened with the care of such a contribution. Deference is necessary in society, but it ought to have limits: it becomes a servitude when it is overdone; there are necessary reasons why it should at least appear free.” (Emphasis added.)

18 Ibid., p. 455: “The middle class manner can sometimes be lost in the army, but never at court.”
undesirable illusions; and these most emphatically include self-diremption and misconceived systems of nature, as in Rochefoucauld's pejorative reference to Seneca. Yet even dissimulation has its limits.  

According to La Rochefoucauld, nature in the Machiavellian guise of "Fortuna" is arbitrary sovereign over much human life: "Our wisdom", he writes, "is not less at the mercy of fortune than our property." This sense of human limitations is expressed in an equally skeptical opinion of our author's, as follows: "Moderation in good fortune is nothing but the apprehension of shame which accompanies the heat of anger, or the fear of losing all that one has." In either case, it seems that Rochefoucauld neither commits himself to the course of basing his perception on extremes of nature, nor regards the mean of nature as normative. His tendency, if such can be ascribed to him, is to explain moderation as concern for averting the consequences of others' imprudence, not as constituting paradigms to be imitated in action. This is in full accord with his (ascertainable) Christian "pessimism".

Moreover, the further we venture to interpret Rochefoucauldian moral thought, the further we are led to remark its distinction between politics and ethics, public and private life. This conclusion seems most fully justified due to what we would today call our author's "psychology". Indeed, the human affections, faculties and accompanying virtues which typify ethical as distinct from political conduct can be grounded in principles representing the positive supports inherent — according to Rochefoucauld — in the life of reason. Hence we will try to summarize certain aspects of his "psychology" so that a sample of the good qualities belonging to human nature may be seen clearly by way of contrast with their corresponding deficiencies.

On the merit side we can discern and enumerate six prominent qualities: kindness, reasonableness, curiosity, prudence, magnanimity (akin to Cartesian "generosity"), and wisdom. On the demerit side, we discover and must confront corresponding deficiencies — though not necessarily sins: selfishness (amour-propre), arrogance, thoughtlessness, vanity,

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10 See Pascal, Pensées, "Misère de l'homme", Nos. 119-20, in Oeuvres complètes, ed. J. Chevalier, (Paris, 1954) p. 1121: "What are our natural principles, if not principles to which we have become accustomed?... Custom is a second nature, which destroys the first. But what is nature? Why is custom not natural? I am greatly afraid that this nature may itself be nothing but a first custom, as custom is a second nature." (Author's transl.)

19 La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 447.

21 Ibid., p. 487. Cf. ibid., p. 445: "People have made a virtue of moderation to limit the ambition of great men, and to reconcile the mediocre to their paucity of means and merit." Rochefoucauld also writes of moderation as "being nothing in reality but an idleness, a tedium and a lack of courage, such that one can justly say that moderation is baseness of soul, whose elevation is ambition." (Ibid., p. 352.)

22 Compare J.-J. Rousseau, Oeuvres complètes, ed. La Pléiade, (Paris, 1964), Vol. I, lxvii, where it is maintained that La Rochefoucauld alone prior to Rousseau
avarice and folly. We will be occupied at length in giving almost every merit its due, it suffice to remind ourselves that the preliminary character of this study rules out a more exhaustive treatment.

Excepting magnanimity and prudence, the balance of the positive dispositions (the "merit" side) belongs to ethics and the sphere of private life. We should likewise note the conspicuous absence of that greatest of all political virtues, justice. Accordingly, La Rochefoucauld, where he does not reduce political to moral virtue, permits the former certain freedoms which are less apparent in the latter's confinement to private, even personal rectitude. In neither does his insight falter as between merited praise and unmerited reward of actions purporting to be in the best interests of each and every one. Just as the moralist should not endeavor to politicize what are essentially private dispositions, so should the politique endeavor not to moralize what are at bottom political necessities.

To focus our attention on any conjoint "psychology" of heart and mind is to note the different kinds of knowledge requisite for greater or lesser degrees of self-sufficiency. Our author is particularly solicitous in behalf of man's independence and autonomy, and this can be ascribed to his conviction that "Fortuna" is not the whole of nature, which proceeds by an economy of order and purpose rather than by blind chance.

What seems to be indicated here is that the problem of the relation between necessity and freedom is reproduced in that governing the relation between theory and practice. Because men are not entirely free, it follows that they are free within the ambit of their unhindered faculties. This particularly applies to their unhindered mental faculties, in so far these do not restrain one another, but are co-ordinated. Rochefoucauld discerns the difficulty of the relation between theory and practice, without trying to reduce theory to practice (as in Marx), or minimize the intervening distance.

To La Rochefoucauld policy and contemplation have in common a measure which is commensurable in itself only in so far as community and friendship make it so. Taken together, they deliver each individual thinker from the self-imposed isolation of solitude — and even more significantly — from alienation in the bosom of the social order. Above all, the society of men needs an integrated knowledge of theory and

expressed clearly the thought that jealousy can outlast love because it is the fruit of selfishness, or the doctrine of egoism. Rousseau avoids egoism through his conception of self-regard (l'amour de soi), from which he derives empathetic compassion (la pitié). See Letters from the Mountain, First Letter and Julie, or the new Eloïse, Bk. III, Letter xlviii.

La Rochefoucauld reduced justice to "a lively apprehension that someone is robbing us of what belongs to us" from which derives "this respect for all the interests of our neighbor..." See, op. cit., p. 361.
Otherwise, faction and partisanship will divide human society into bellicose antagonisms, none of which will seem worthy of support. La Rochefoucauld, who had experienced at first hand the evils of civil war and intestine strife, professed to be no longer much "concerned which of the two parties gains the advantage." Man's dual nature will not bear easy transformations of malice into benevolence, or obdurate into complaisant.

Thus, man's dual nature is not best served by endeavoring to derive the higher from the lower, as it were; instead, it is better served by perceiving mankind's indissoluble unity, yet with sufficient diversity to belie Kantian "man". How else could one proceed to dignify man's common humanity were one to neglect the polarities of rich and poor, wise and ignorant, agents and subjects, warriors and civilians, men and women, the guilty and the innocent, saints and secularists, free and slave, and so on? While the higher is more vulnerable than the lower, the least one can say is that a balance struck between them indicates a reciprocal relationship. At the very minimum it takes two to seesaw.

An approach to understanding such a balance is implicit in La Rochefoucauld. If he does not invariably aim as high as the Christian state of grace, or always take his bearings by "the peace that passeth all understanding", neither does he lower his sights below what common decency and decorum prescribe. As a politique he invariably observes the rules which make community and society viable. It has been ably propounded, for example, that "as judge and lawmaker... [La Rochefoucauld] is very much a Doubting Thomas who grants no one the benefit of the doubt." At the same time, our author is not half the skeptic about politics that we are often given to believe, and his evident amplitude of mind accords ill with the cynicism commonly ascribed to him.

In due course we will come to the cruces of Rochefoucauldian politics. Suffice it for the moment to say that La Rochefoucauld desired both to extend and modify the spirit of genuine aristocracy; his was not the jealousy of rank or pettiness of intrigue characteristic of the court of an absolute monarch. For the meantime, it behooves us to detail a foremost quality we would have otherwise omitted had we dealt exclusively with Rochefoucauld's secular virtues.

There should be no surprise that among the moral qualities for which our author reserves praise is the theological virtue of charity. La Rochefoucauld emphasizes in this connection the ascent from virtues of unassisted reason to preternatural ones on the principle of superinduction. Hence with what can be characterized as an unusually acute aptitude for such a subject, he defines charity as follows: "The passions possess an

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24 Ibid., pp. 411, 417, 476, 505-6.
25 Ibid., p. 588.
injustice and a specific interest which makes them always offend and wound even when they speak reasonably and equitable. Charity alone has the privilege of addressing almost everything that pleases it, while never offending anyone."27 Charity lessens jealousy and envy, it seems. Another means of expressing the same moral truth is to say that for La Rochefoucauld charity is best understood as "one virtue and the form and director of all the others."28 In such terms, it nowhere falls short of the theologians' caritas or agapé.

What the aforesaid indicates as Rochefoucauld's general orientation is that his perspective on human affairs is both fortified and limited by his adhesion to a transcendent faith. This is borne out by his statement on man's post-lapsarian culpability: "To punish man for original sin God has let him divinize his selfishness that he may be tormented by it in all actions of his life."29 Our author does not seem to subscribe to that thought of proto-modernity which recasts charity as impersonal benevolence and impartial tolerance.30 He should evidently be thought of as approaching more Pascal in this respect than Montaigne and the politiques in general. The Rochefoucauldian world is not the world of man abandoned and left to his own resources alone. Whatever else he may be, La Rochefoucauld's deity is not an anthropomorphism.

Now, La Rochefoucauld evinces a love of truth and contempt for improbity which serves as correlative to his appreciation of charity. In addition, this interest in our author discloses a distinctly aesthetic turn of mind. For example, he traces a connection between the true and the beautiful in our sense and pursuit of perfection. Such perfection, understood rightly, is much akin to the performance of charity in that it is ordered to an awareness of the divine order. As perfection is primarily of a moral kind, the moral is inseparable from the beautiful. "Truth is the groundwork and cause of perfection and beauty. Nothing," adds our author, "whatever its nature, can be beautiful or perfect that is not everything it ought to be and has not all that it ought to have."31

IV

To return to the question of La Rochefoucauld's politics, we find that

27 La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 314.
28 St. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologicae (Eyre and Spottiswoode: London, 1966) Vol. 46, p. 118. Cf. ibid., 1a2ae, 64, 4: "A root comes before what grows from it... charity is the root of all virtues..."
29 La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 381. See ibid., p. 367: "Only God knows whether a plain, sincere and upright action is a result of honesty rather than improbity."
31 La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 368.
he turned from the conspiratorial intrigues of his youth to more self-assured, moderate interventions of later years. Essentially a patriot, he hoped for his country's good and impugned the temporal power of the clergy, especially of its upper echelons. He aspired to encourage a true aristocracy that would become the fulcrum of power between court and people.

But this solution depended in great measure on the aristocrats' participation in local affairs, far from the Byzantine politics of Versailles. Moreover, such a landed aristocracy functions best when it follows a deliberate policy of the aristocratic concealment of aristocracy:

"One can also be in society with those to whom one is superior by birth or personal merit, but those who have this advantage ought not to abuse it: they must make it seldom felt and use it only for instructing others; they must induce others to perceive their own need for guidance, and then guide them by reason."32

For the welfare of society as a whole, each individual must be taught to relinquish his inclination to live at the expense of others.33 Each must learn to rely on himself and manifest some regard for the sensibilities of others. Such limited deference to others must follow the recognition that civil society can only be made viable through each's willingness to sacrifice for the common good: *salus populi suprema lex*. La Rochefoucauld's spirit of aristocracy is not to be confused with the venal administration of oligarchs overshadowed by an absolute prince out of touch with the majority of his subjects.

We have already mentioned La Rochefoucauld's preference for private over public life. This means that he elected to explain public affairs by private motives, rather than the reverse. However, his caution in this regard led him to observe limits in such an undertaking. At any rate, we are indebted to him on account of the following illustration. "My intention is not to speak of friendship while speaking of society: although they have some relationship, they are nevertheless very different: the first has more grandeur and dignity, and much more excellence than the other, which consists in resembling it."34

In so far as La Rochefoucauld indicates a preference, his evident par-

32 Ibid., p. 505.
33 See John Locke, *A Letter concerning Toleration* in *Works*, third edition, (London, 1727) Vol. 2, p. 249: "... the Pravity of Mankind being such, that they had rather injuriously prey upon the fruits of other Men's Labours, than take pains to provide for themselves, the necessity of preserving Men in the Possession of what honest Industry has already acquired, and also of preserving their Liberty and Strength, whereby they may acquire what they further want, obliges Men to enter into Society with one another..." Cf. La Rochefoucauld, *op. cit.* p. 504: "Chacun veut trouver... ses avantages aux dépens des autres."
34 La Rochefoucauld, *op. cit.*, p. 504.
tiality to private virtues exceeds his concern for public ones. In this sense he is a liberal, a lover of privacy. As a liberal and, by anticipation, a Whig after the manner of Sir William Temple, La Rochefoucauld opted for rural retirement, or semi-retirement, rejecting the life of a courtier. And we ought not forget that the audience to whom he addressed his aphorisms was of those to whom rank and preferment were not all-consuming passions. For La Rochefoucauld's greatest estate was always in the minds of men of letters.

Before passing on to further indications of our author's "privatism", we would do well to note the emphasis he places on jealousy as a motive close to selfishness (amour-propre). Like Machiavelli, La Rochefoucauld demotes love of glory to ambition, a more private, more secure preoccupation since the alternating extremes of human baseness and exaltation result from aiming too high. In the long run, accordingly, such a reduction is the safest policy for civil society. Indeed, this matches Rochefoucauld's analysis of injustice (another near parallel to Machiavelli), especially in its assumption that the people prefer to stave off injustice rather than actively seek justice. "For Machiavelli the ruling class is always a prince or princes; the people are not a self-subsisting class apart from the ruling class. They passively receive the imprint of the ruling class, and their function is to hold what they receive."36

La Rochefoucauld's account of injustice thus partakes of a certain Machiavellian reasoning, although it avoids the cautious commendation of extremes advanced by Machiavelli. As for its corollary, that "the love of justice among good judges who are moderate is only the love of their own eminence",37 Rochefoucauld sees as clearly as any great political theorist of his time that the salvation of the state lies in its firmest adherence to personal security and the protection of private property, albeit these in themselves are not sufficient. Or to express this in less political terms and in ones characteristic of Rochefoucauldian "psychology": "Pity is an awareness of our own injuries in [those of] another; it is a clever foresight of the misfortunes to which we can succumb that makes us aid others, to oblige them to return the same to us on comparable occasions . . ."38 Immediately, we perceive the grounds of a substantially negative golden rule: "Do unto others only those benefactions which will oblige them in like manner to reciprocate to you". Or as Rousseau, emphasizing the role of compassion, was to modify it in the Second Discourse: "men would never have been anything but monsters if nature had not given them pity in support of reason".

37 La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 307.
38 Ibid., p. 347.
The private basis for certain of man's political dispositions is nowhere better exemplified than in the Rochefoucauldian estimate of magnanimity. If La Rochefoucauld can be said to anticipate in part the school of political opinion known as Whig liberalism, he is equally well-acquainted with ethical thinking anterior to it. There is much to remark about the manner in which he compressed into a single aphorism his by no means negligible insight into a most equivocal moral disposition. To be specific, it would perhaps be more correct for us to say that he understood the disposition in question — magnanimity — as an unqualified good in private life, but as of highly equivocal utility in public life.

However this may be, La Rochefoucauld defines magnanimity as a disposition that fits a man for public and private life alike. "Magnanimity is a noble effort of pride by which it renders man master of himself in order to render him master of all things." This assessment of magnanimity falls short of Aristotle's definition, which emphasizes honor as the aim of the magnanimous man in contrast to Rochefoucauld's definition stressing ambition. His Christian — even Augustinian — orientation could perhaps be taken to credit pagan virtues as no more than "splendid vices." Accordingly, La Rochefoucauld explains that liberality is an ephemeral pursuit. "Liberality does not exist, and [if it did] it would be only the vanity of giving, which we prefer to that which we actually bestow." Liberality, then, is not only less than magnanimity (which we might expect), because it is needed to reassure the donor of his own worth, but because, surprisingly enough, it provokes ingratitude. This, in turn, supplies us with greater evidence than we have before had of La Rochefoucauld's Christian "pessimism." "Arrogance and self-interest everywhere produce ingratitude; the determination to reward goodness and avenge evil appears to them [the majority of men] a bondage to which they have difficulty submitting themselves." We should not forget that the author of Réflexions ou Sentences et maximes morales moved in what W. G. Moore calls his "Augustinian circle" of acquaintances.

Proceeding to a more universal affect than the one underlying magnanimity, we come to the basis of man's erectic constitution, love. The Rochefoucauldian analysis of love soon proves to be the direct opposite of his analysis of egoism or amour-propre. At the same time, such recognition equally avoids the error of confusing love and charity, in so far as love to Rochefoucauld is selfless in the same sense as friendship can be. It is not sublime through being a theological virtue.

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40 La Rochefoucauld. op. cit., p. 306.
41 Ibid., p. 340.
42 See above, note 22 for a comparison between amour-propre and l'amour de soi.
To be brief, the capacity for love corresponds to honestly impasioned yearnings of the soul. Indeed, in the Rochefoucauldian world there are as many lovers as there are appropriate objects of love (laying aside the problem of love's insalubrious realizations). La Rochefoucauld recognized love as existing in the form of what today we would call "true" love. "Love is to the soul of the lover as the soul is to the body it animates."  

Nothing else can qualify as such, not only because there exists a God of love than whom nothing is worthier of the soul's impasioned yearning. It is also because La Rochefoucauld unequivocally stigmatizes fear and the hatred fear breeds as such a low, degrading passion. "There is no disguise which can long conceal love where it exists, nor simulate it where it does not."  

A sense of growth in love, paralleling the same in growth of knowledge, brings with it a wisdom that can be defined as knowledge perfected by love. No one could mistake love thus understood as the chief element by which *eros* seeks to overcome the particularity of human life in its ascent toward the divine, or toward that which is akin to the divine. However, La Rochefoucauld stops short of this pursuit for the reason that none but God could judge the probity of such endeavors. Man as a finite being with a finite mind cannot penetrate what it means to experience love that surmounts his own nature. Like Aristophanes in the *Banquet* (189c4-d5), La Rochefoucauld is reluctant to enlighten man as to his own nature, if such an awareness bids fair to issue in absurd presumptions. In other words, clarity about the whole leads to the dissolution of the mystery and obscurity on which human existence depends. For even were man to achieve clarity about the human condition, the resulting awareness—however complete it itself—would not be a sufficient means for transcending that condition.

VI

To recapitulate: we have already seen that La Rochefoucauld develops "privatism", or liberal love of privacy, in contrast to the political virtues. We also perceive his reasons for placing the deficiencies of human nature squarely in the context of Christian (even Augustinian) "pessimism". Further, his cautious stress upon restraints to prevent oppression patently relies on an aristocratic concealment of aristocracy. This is the element of Rochefoucauldian thought that has suffered most at the hands of posterity. For it does not sufficiently satisfy man's free use of himself as a moral agent envisaged by proto-modernity. And man must act as free agent in such affairs, or forfeit the hope to act freely even within a narrow

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44 Ibid., p. 377.
45 See above, note 29.
compass. "The desire of bettering one's condition," avers Joseph Cropsey, "is the endless impulse to add to the means of preservation, and it depends essentially on free use of powers. The desire to forestall violence," he adds, "may be satisfied by the effective restraint of all others, and it depends essentially upon a privation of the free of powers."46

It is in the light of these principles that La Rochefoucauld envisages the natural order to be one in which the human affects balance and check one another, but in a productive way. For "though motives may differ, the effects are the same". Or to articulate this phenomenon otherwise: "However uncertain and ill-harmonized life may seem, there is yet a certain hidden chain of circumstances and an eternal ruling order created by Providence, which assigns everything its proper place and which decrees its proper destiny."47 Such an order is the effect of defects and deficiencies, as well as of sound dispositions. We must not forget that some of his contemporaries were given to referring ironically to the Duc de La Rochefoucauld as "Sir Truthful" ("La Franchise").

The aforesaid considerations bring us to the one remaining theme in La Rochefoucauld as regards that "which assigns everything its proper place". This dispensation is political or economic rather than theological; it bears on the means for making civil society durable. It anticipates a transformation of the ancien régime either into a bourgeois, commercial republic, whose aristocracy has grown liberal and inclusive, or into the Rousseauan state of the "social contract". Both models were possible or were thought possible ones by philosophers of the eighteenth century, although Rousseau himself seems to have regarded the latter as only a temporary stay of execution from the aggravating ills of modernity. Be this as it may, La Rochefoucauld did not share the meliorism of proto-modernity because he was acutely aware of human imperfection and because his analysis of amour-propre is the secular counterpart of original sin. For the same reason he did not share the disillusion of later modernity with Hegel's version of philosophy as "a sanctuary apart" served by "an isolated order of priests, who must not mix with the world, and whose work is to protect the possessions of Truth."48

Our author escapes categorization as a cynic or a frivolous man through his unmistakable moral earnestness. According to Louis Kronenberger, La Rochefoucauld induces in us a certain sense of shame coupled with an abjuration of cynicism: "... for if there is any chance of our becoming better than we are, it is through our perceiving that

47 Louis Kronenberger, op. cit., pp. 128, 151.
we are worse than we think." For Rochefoucauld there are still perhaps grounds for decent politics (despite men's defects), and he does in fact compare political harmony to that produced by the various instruments and voices in music: one can find in society an identical proportion and rightness as in well-performed chamber music.50

Such political observations reflect something tangible. A certain mesure in public and private matters affords reason for hope. To be sure, La Rochefoucauld's statesmanship in this respect was not exerted over a broad range of questions. But his influence, for example, with Adam Smith is not negligible, even though we must grant that it operated at one remove from the more immediate influence of Spinoza and Montesquieu.51 On the other hand, the Rousseauan state of the "social contract", the alternative here, has a definite analogy in La Rochefoucauld's account of hypocrisy. As Rousseau chose to cite him in his Reply to the King of Poland: "But hypocrisy is the homage that vice renders to virtue: yes, [in] such a one of Caesar's assassins as he who prostrated himself at his feet in order to slaughter him with greater sureness. This thought is able to illuminate; it can be authorized by the celebrated name of its author [La Rochefoucauld]: it is not more worthy of him."52 Be this as it may, hypocrisy is better than open crime, as Rousseau would not have denied.

Returning to the subject of the commercial republic, we note that Adam Smith had originally included La Rochefoucauld among authors of "licentious systems" of moral philosophy, only to withdraw his name on reconsideration. The other moralist with whom he had paired La Rochefoucauld in this category was Bernard Mandeville, whose Fable of the Bees so scandalized both clergy and laity in England. Smith incorporated this alteration in the 1790 edition of The Theory of Moral Sentiments, which, incidentally, quotes La Rochefoucauld at one point on the power of love. (See Part I, sec. 3, ch. ii.) In addition, John Rae, Smith's assiduous biographer, reports that the consensus of scholarly opinion regarded this textual change as an emendation, since "there is certainly difference enough between Rochefoucauld and Mandeville to support such a view."53 And W. G. Moore was surely

50 See La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., p. 506.
51 See Montesquieu, On the Spirit of the Laws, III, 7: "It is with this kind of government [monarchy] as with the system of the universe, in which there is a power that constantly repels all bodies from the center, and a power of gravitation that attracts them to it. Honor sets all the parts of the body politic in motion, and by its very action connects them; and it is the case that each individual advances the common good, while believing that he promotes his private interest:" (Author's transl.) Cf. Benedict Spinoza, Tractatus Politicus, VI, iii.
52 Quoted in La Rochefoucauld, op. cit., at p. 828 (author's transl.).
53 John Rae, Life of Adam Smith, (New York, 1965) p. 428.
not in error when he asserted the following. "It may well be that suggestions about the nature of man and of society, which La Rochefoucauld handed on to Adam Smith and Bentham . . . whatever their intrinsic importance, help us to understand how the modern world was made out of the hierarchic society of the seventeenth century."54

We close by reflecting that La Rochefoucauld would deserve careful study, even if his sole contribution had been only to prefigure a political theory based on self-interest. As it is, we are equally well served by other findings of that capacious and critical mind.

MACBETH AND THE TYRANNICAL MAN

HOWARD B. WHITE

That Macbeth is the Shakespearean play about tyranny will perhaps not be widely challenged, though a case can be made for Richard III. Macbeth is also the Shakespearean play about mental illness and guilt, and about time. These subjects have some relation to one another, and my goal is to understand tyranny a little bit better by understanding that relation a little bit better. Macbeth is not called a “tyrant” nor is his regime called “tyranny” before the Third Act. This may be simply because of ignorance of his crimes. Yet even when Banquo says:

\[
\text{I fear} \\
\text{Thou play'd most falsely for it.}
\]

(III, i, 2-3)

Banquo does not call Macbeth a tyrant. There is certainly not perfect clarity as to the identification of a tyrant, or even the distinction between the modern and the pre-modern tyrant.

In identifying Macbeth as a tyrant, Shakespeare seems not to consider a tyrant a usurper of royal authority, in the sense that Xenophon considered Hiero a tyrant.\(^1\) Tyranny seems rather to rest in the quality of rule, or, if you prefer modern terminology, the use or abuse of power. Consider the charge of Isabella in Measure for Measure:

\[
\text{O! it is excellent} \\
\text{To have giant's strength, but it is tyrannous} \\
\text{To use it like a giant.}
\]

(I, ii, 107-109)

For one brief moment of delegated and unsurped power, Angelo is a tyrant. Or consider what Pericles says of Antiochus:

\[
\text{I knew him tyrannous; and tyrants' fears} \\
\text{Decrease not but grow faster than the years.}
\]

(Pericles I, ii, 84-85.)

Yet we do not know that Antiochus is an usurper. The family name for the rulers of Antioch makes it unlikely. There are a number of cases of

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usurpation in Shakespeare: John (the more in Shakespeare than in Holinshed), Henry IV, and how many subsequent rulers depends upon prescription. If one agrees with Warwick:

You tell a pedigree
Of threescore and two years, a silly time
To make prescription for a kingdom's worth.
(III Henry VI, III, iii, 92-94)

then none of the contestants were usurpers. They were all fighting for a title which, one day perhaps, prescription might establish. Yet whether their claims were equal or unequal, they hardly helped the common people who had to submit to a century of civil war.

Tyranny, certainly tyranny in Shakespeare, is something else again. No one calls John a tyrant or his regime tyranny. There are two conspicuous tyrants in Shakespeare: Richard III and Macbeth. There are others, like Antiochus, who are not the central figures in the plays in which they appear. It is true that usurped authority and despotic power make the exercise of tyrannical rule easier, or, more precisely, more urgent. The failure of present-day political science to understand tyranny has been shown by Leo Strauss:

"Not much observation and reflection is needed to realize that there is an essential difference between the tyranny analyzed by the classics and that of our age. In contradistinction to classical tyranny, present-day tyranny has at its disposal 'technology' as well as 'ideologies'; more generally expressed, it presupposes the existence of 'science', i.e., of a particular interpretation or kind of science..."

"It is no accident that present-day political science has failed to grasp tyranny as what it really is. Our political science is haunted by the belief that 'value judgments' are inadmissible in scientific considerations and to call a regime tyrannical clearly amounts to pronouncing a value judgment."

Yet there are links, as Strauss shows, between modern and pre-modern tyranny. Sometimes, though not always, the use of a common nomenclature may furnish a clue. Let met add parenthetically that the teaching regarding tyranny, even the definition, is by no means uniform among Greek classics. Aristotle's complete tyrant is not only irresponsible and despotic. He rules for his own advantage rather than for the good of the people. Hiero, on the other hand, is a tyrant simply because of the way to power. Here we distinguish usurper, despot, and tyrant as three distinct persons, though often related, and sometimes united in one.

What is particularly important to us is the fact that we speak of the

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2 Ibid. p. 22.
3 Politics 1295 a 22 ff.
“tyrannical soul” or the “tyrannical man”, a man who may not have, who may never acquire the power that real tyranny demands. There are, in particular, two pictures of the tyrannical man: the Ninth Book of Plato’s Republic and Shakespeare’s Macbeth.

The tyrant is the antithesis of the statesman, the statesman who, in fact knows how to rule, whether he rules or no. The way in which the tyrannical man comes about is described by Socrates in the Republic. “This leader of the soul takes madness for its armed guard and is stung to frenzy. And if it finds in the man any opinions or desires accounted good and still admitting of shame, it slays them and pushes them out of him until it purges him of moderation and fills him with madness brought in from abroad.” Later he adds, “A man becomes tyrannic in the precise sense when, either by his nature or by his practices or both, he has become drunken, erotic, and melancholic.”

The tyrannic man, certainly Plato’s tyrannic man, may exist in almost any walk of life. He may not have the opportunity to become a tyrant in practice. Plato’s tyrant, as we have seen above, is a man afflicted by many passions. The modern tyrant, beginning perhaps with Macbeth, is a man afflicted with, fundamentally, only one passion, the lust for power, and the security that is supposed to go with power. Perhaps he also has one great vice, the vice the Greeks called hubris. Petty vices, private vices, he treats with scorn, even almost to the end:

Then fly, false Thanes,
And mingle with the English epicures.
(V, iii, 7-8)

Macbeth is not an “epicure”. For entirely different reasons, he might say, as Hamlet does:

Yea, from the table of my memory
I’ll wipe away all trivial fond records.
(Hamlet I, v, 98-99)

Even Macbeth’s love, strong as it is, is surprisingly void of tenderness. Brutus says to his Portia:

You are my true and honorable wife,
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops
That visit my sad heart.
(Julius Ceasar II, i. 288-290)
Even Hotspur's wife is "gentle Kate," and their love scenes are touching. Brutus and Hotspur are embarked on dangerous, doubtful courses, but their marriages are not "trivial fond records." When Macbeth, on the contrary, writes to his wife about the prophecies of the witches, he refers to her as "my dearest partner in greatness." All trivial fond records, and some which those in love might not consider trivial.

To the modern tyrant, private vice, as well as private virtue, is a luxury. It impedes the singleness of tyrannic purpose. Would to God that Hitler had been a drunkard and a sodomist. With Macbeth, the beginning of tyranny is somehow in the beginning of disease. To Plato, too, the beginning of tyranny, in the desire to have no master, is a disease. Long before tyranny itself, before the murder and the usurpation that followed it, Lady Macbeth knew that she and her husband even required disease:

Thou would be great
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it.
(I, v, 18-20)

If even ambition must be attended with illness, what shall we say of tyranny?

The problem of when a tyranny really becomes a tyranny is an important political problem. When Macduff flees to England, leaving his wife and children in Fyfe, he thinks he knows that Macbeth is a tyrant. He does not know, however, the extent of Macbeth's irrationality. Therefore he makes the mistake, which political men sometimes make, when dealing with tyrants, the mistake of supposing that tyrants are still guided by political considerations, rather than by irrational and enraged passions. Perhaps it is fair to say that Macduff's error in dealing with Macbeth was comparable to Chamberlain's error in dealing with the Nazis. Chamberlain assumed that Hitler still retained some antique notion of German need and German interest.

We return to the problem of the development of Macbeth's tyranny. Even before the murder of Duncan, though we cannot be sure that this is before the consideration of that murder, Macbeth gives his views of kingship:

The service and the loyalty I owe,
In doing it, pays itself. Your Highness' part
Is to receive our duties: and our duties
Are to throne and state, children and servants;
Which do but what they should, by doing everything
Safe toward your love and honour.
(I, iv, 22-27)

—Ibid. 563 e.
As a theory of kingship, that the throne and state\(^8\) owe nothing to the people, and the people owe all to the throne and state, this passes all bounds of reason. It may be said that Macbeth is flattering Duncan. But I have learned to take what tyrants say seriously. No really serious apologist for monarchy, and there have been serious apologists for monarchy, like Thomas Hobbes, would ever have made a speech like this one. It out-Filmers Filmer.

When Macbeth kills Duncan, he has the impulses of the tyrant, but not the reality of tyranny. The reality of tyranny begins with the murder of Banquo. Macbeth has such power that he says he could

> With bare-fac'd power sweep him from my sight . . .
> (III, i, 118)

He uses secret murder as a substitute for the cruel and arbitrary but open use of despotic power. Yet the element in tyranny at which Lady Macbeth hints, has not yet shown clear symptoms. The restless course, and the meaningless course of tyrannical rule, is seen in the murder of Lady Macduff and her children. The other murders are criminal enough, but they are "Machiavellian." In some sense they are political. The ultimate in Macbeth's tyranny is his irrationality in crime. In this he comes closer to the pre-modern tyrant. Yet the will to power and the insecurity of his own power still guide him, not the raging of little passions, like the "English epicures."

We can see Macbeth's development into the tyrannical man perhaps if we explore Macbeth's one virtue, courage, or manliness, and the development of his manliness. Unfortunately, the English language does not have two words for man, as Greek does. We could distinguish \textit{anthropos}, a man belonging to humanity from \textit{aner}, a man of manliness, a he-man. When Macbeth speaks the well-known lines:

> I dare do all that may become a man;
> Who dares do more, is none.
> (I, vi, 46-47)

he is referring to his common humanity. He is calling himself a man in the sense that Antony so refers to Brutus: "This was a man." Two acts later, terrified by Banquo's ghost and his own guilt, Macbeth says almost the same thing, but he means something quite different:

> What man dare, I dare:
> Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
> The arm'd rhinocerous, or th'Hyrcan tiger;

\(^8\) Note the use of the word "state", of which Elizabeth disapproved. Compare Francis D. Wormuth: \textit{The Royal Prerogative} (New York, 1939) p. 11.
Interpretation

Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble.

(III, iv, 98-102)

What he says is probably true, but he is no longer testifying to his humanity. He has one virtue left, that of manliness, and he brags about it, even in terror.

From the beginning, Macbeth's manliness is unquestioned. Rosse refers to him as "Bellona's bridegroom", in other words, the bridegroom of the bride of Mars. Strangely enough, the valor of Lady Macbeth is supposed to be masculine valor. "Unsex me," she cries. (I, v, 41) And Macbeth pleads:

Bring forth men children only!
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males.

(I, vii, 73-74)

Manhood moves from humanity to manliness, but, apparently before that, even womanhood, if it ever was humanity, becomes manliness.

If courage or manliness is indeed a virtue, even that virtue wanes in Macbeth before the end of the play. It wanes under the influence of the unearthly, whether superhuman or subhuman. It is not possible here to explore the significance of the unearthly in Shakespeare, but the experience of contact with the weird, the unearthly, the not fully comprehensible differs with different characters. We can forget Oberon. He is not human and can hardly be overwhelmed by powers he can control. We can forget Bottom. His experience as the paramour of Titania is at once too elevated and too degraded for him to understand. Horatio, however, could face a ghost. He seems to have required none of the corroborative evidence Hamlet required. Prospero accepted spirits and monsters and, in fact, ruled them. I submit that the difficulty with Hamlet is similar to the difficulty of Macbeth. They are not sure whether they believe or not.

Part of the doubt that comes to Hamlet and Macbeth is religious. One must recall that historical inversions are by no means rare in Shakespeare. King John uses Protestant arguments long before there were any Protestants. The drunken porter talks about an "equivocator," often a Protestant synonym for a Jesuit,⁹ and, as everyone knows, there were no Protestants in the Eleventh Century in Inverness or anywhere else. As for Hamlet, he only half believes in the ghost and turns the play into a test. Had Macbeth truly believed, he would have acted on his own solicitation:

⁹ See Act II, Scene III, Kenneth Muir ed. Arden, p. 61, fn. 9 and citations.
Macbeth and the Tyrannical Man

If Chance will have me King, why Chance may crown me,  
Without my stir.  
(I, iii, 144-145)

Had he gone that way, there would have been no tyranny. But Bellona’s bridegroom, the man who can face the Hyrcanian tiger, is unnerved by what he does not understand.

To say this is not for a moment to suggest that Shakespeare believed in superstition. Nor am I sure that superstition would have been salutary to Macbeth. Indeed there is some evidence that Macbeth and Lady Macbeth had considered ways, presumably criminal ways, of achieving his ambition before the weird sisters appeared on the scene. What is really at stake is that valor is not enough. It does not bring the resources which other virtues, like wisdom, justice and moderation, might bring. Unnerved by the uncanny, Macbeth has become mentally ill, in the sense that Plato and Shakespeare saw tyranny as mentally ill.

It may be said that Richard III is a more complete tyrannic man than Macbeth, because he is untroubled by the uncanny, the unearthly. I submit that Richard III is the same kind of tyrannic man that Macbeth is, but the species is less fully developed in the earlier play. There are no witches in Richard III, but there are ghosts, the ghosts of those whom the king has murdered. Even before the ghosts appear, however, Queen Anne complains:

For never yet one hour in his bed  
Did I enjoy the golden dew of sleep  
But with his timorous dreams was still awaked.  
(IV, i, 82ff)

The ghosts who appear are but in dreams, perhaps, yet Richard says:

Cold, fearful drops stand on my trembling flesh.  
(V, iii, 182)

and he adds

By the apostle Paul, shadows tonight  
Have struck more terror to the soul of Richard  
Than can the substance of ten thousand soldiers.  
(V, iii, 217-219)

Let us return to a passage already quoted, returning to Macbeth:

Art not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it.  
(I, v, 19-20)
Interpretation

It is difficult to know whether Shakespeare means by illness just what the Twentieth Century psychiatrist means by it. Murder is a crime, but there is a moral pathology related to that crime. And, while Lady Macbeth speaks of it first, it is Macbeth who is most tormented by it. I know that the mad scenes of Lady Macbeth raise a question about that statement, but I shall return to those scenes. Consider a few passages. Fearing that no son of his may succeed him, Macbeth says:

If't be so,
   For Banquo's issue have I fil'd my mind;
   For them the gracious Duncan have I murther'd;
   Put rancours in the vessel of my peace...

(III, i, 63-66)

The fact that Macbeth refers to rancours rather than guilt suggests malignancy. To the potential murderers of Banquo, in the same scene, Macbeth refers to "us"

Who wear our health but sickly in his life,
   Which in his death were perfect.

(III, i, 106-107)

Macbeth wants to eliminate three things: the insecurity which compels him to continue tyrannical practices, the pathology which this power has brought, and tomorrow. The terrible improbability of succeeding in the first two is clear when he says to his wife:

But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
   Ere we will eat our meal in fear, and sleep
   In the affliction of these terrible dreams
   That shake us nightly.

(III, ii, 16-19)

For the moment, at least, Macbeth has given up his chance of peace of mind and sees that Duncan's state is preferable to his own. Persistently he dwells on the witches' prophecy that Banquo's heirs shall reign. It is the last thing he asks the witches at their final meeting. And when they refuse to answer, he curses them. (IV, i, 105) But why? According to Macduff, Macbeth has no children, even though Lady Macbeth claims to have given suck. (Compare IV, iii, 216 with I, vii, 54-55.) Yet there is a diseased fear of the succession of Banquo's line.

There are other instances of mental illness. When Cathness tells the other thanes what Macbeth has done, he adds:
Some say he's mad; others that lesser hate him
Do call it valiant fury.
(V, ii, 13-14)

Later in the same scene, Cathness refers to the "sickly weal" (line 27).
Before we can see the most decisive evidence of the diseased mind, we must note that Lady Macbeth, an accomplice to the murder of Duncan, is an accomplice (at least, before the fact) to no other crimes, as far as we have knowledge. That does not make her a very nice woman, but it makes her a "Machiavellian" prince, not a diseased, pathological agent of massacre. Of Banquo's murder she has perhaps a hint:

Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck,
Till thou applaud the deed.
(III, iii, 44-45)

Of the most unholy murders of all, those of Lady Macduff and her children, Macbeth makes it quite clear that he will seek no counsel:

From this moment,
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand.
(IV, i, 146-148)

Lady Macbeth has a conscience, with a shame for what she has done, and horror for what her husband has done. Together they make her mad. When she says:

The Thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?
What, will these hands ne'er be clean?
(V, i, 41-42)

she refers first to her husband's guilt, then to her own.
That brings us to what may well be the most important discussion of mental illness in Shakespeare, the question Macbeth asks the doctor:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseas'd,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?
(V, iii, 40-45)

and the doctor's answer:
Interpretation

Therein the patient
Must minister to himself.
(ibid. 45-46)

That many a doctor would answer differently today is interesting, and one should not discount the possibility that Shakespeare believed that that might become so. However, we have no proof. What we do have is an imperfect analogy. When Malcolm and Macduff meet in the palace of the English king, varying between alliance and animosity, they are accosted by an English doctor. Dramatic reasons have been employed to explain this scene, yet the strangeness of the scene remains. Malcolm asks about the king, and the doctor replies that the king continues to heal the sick. The king is Edward the Confessor. Malcolm says:

The mere despair of surgery he cures.
(IV, iii, 152)

That a king can cure what a surgeon cannot cure suggests that rule has healing powers. Now let us go back to the Scottish doctor's answer to Macbeth.

The doctor has no healing powers for the mind. Or, to be more specific, the Scottish doctor has, in his situation, no more healing powers for the mind than the English doctor has, in his situation, healing powers for the body. But Edward the Confessor does have healing powers for the body, and the logical inference is that Macbeth should have healing powers for the mind. Let me quote Macbeth's response to the doctor's answer given above:

Throw physic to the dogs; I'll none of it.
Come put mine armor on; give me my staff.
Seyton, send out — Doctor, the Thanes fly from me.
Come sir, despatch. If thou couldst, Doctor, cast
The water of my land, find her disease,
And purge it to a sound and pristine health,
I would applaud thee to the very echo,
That should applaud again.
(V, iii, 47-55)

Macbeth is no longer sure who the patient is. He wants the doctor to cure Lady Macbeth, whose mind is more diseased than his own only in that she is more aware of it. Perhaps that makes her less diseased. But here Macbeth, after discarding "physic" because it cannot cure Lady Macbeth, turns to his readiness for battle, and then finds another disease, Scotland. Can the doctor cure Scotland? But what is Scotland's disease? The Doctor

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10 This analogy was pointed out to me by Irene Scheuer.
should cast the water of the land, which is clearly impossible. But to what goal? Macbeth speaks of purging the land to a pristine health. He later speaks of a purgative drug to "scour the English hence" (ibid. lines 55-56). But everyone knows that "scouring the English hence" will not purge the land. The pristine health is not the realm of Macbeth but the realm of Duncan. Macbeth, however, no longer knows the difference between health and disease.

The Thanes are deserting; the English are arriving. The inference is not difficult. The English doctor cannot cure the body; the Scottish doctor cannot cure the mind. The English monarch can cure the body. The Scottish tyrant cannot cure the mind. The analogy is imperfect because Macbeth is a tyrant. Could Duncan have ministered to the mind of Scotland, as Edward ministered to the body of England?

Shakespeare's concern with time, showing "intense intellectual application" has been the source of critical concern, and the reader is referred specifically to Frank Kermode's essay, "On Shakespeare's Learning." What Shakespeare got from Augustine's Confessions which is here at issue is that, should the present always be present, it would not be time but eternity. This very problem runs throughout Macbeth. I agree with Kermode that "If it were done when 'tis done..." is a "wish that a moment in time should have no succession - that is, be eternity." The following lines make this fairly certain:

... But here upon this bank and shoal of time,
    We'd jump the life to come...
(I, vii, 6-7)

Why does Macbeth imagine that he can make today eternal, and do away with tomorrow, I should add, to make the one chosen day eternal? The evidence is tenuous. Yet one should look at the famous dagger speech and note that it has thirty-two lines. (II, 1, 33-61) Thirty-two is one less than the years of Jesus and probably represents the anti-Christ. This may seem far-fetched, but I have elsewhere tried to show something of the common significance of soliloquies of thirty-three lines. Another thing which one should notice in the dagger soliloquy is the well-known beginning:

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11 Center for Advanced Studies, Wesleyan University, Monday Evening Papers: Number 2, pp. 7-11.
12 Augustine: Confessions XI, xi praesens autem si semper esset praesens nec in praeteritum transiret, non iam esset tempus, sed aeternitas.; Kermode ibid, p. 11.
Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand?  
(Ibid. 33-34)

But if the dagger is placed with the handle before Macbeth's hand, the dagger is an inverted cross. And, if it is not an inverted cross, why speak of the position of the handle? Macbeth may be the anti-Christ, and he admits some similar role when he speaks of "giving" his "eternal jewel" to the common enemy of man (III. i, 67-68). Apart from the divine, who could convert tomorrow into eternity save the anti-divine?

Macbeth, however, renounces that goal. He knows, in the most famous speech on time, that he, at least, cannot convert either today or tomorrow into eternity:

To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day.  
To the last syllable of recorded time.  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death.  
(V. v. 19-23)

The passage seems too well-known to quote, but there is one line which raises a particular curiosity:

To the last syllable of recorded time.

The philosophers and writers of early modernity were very much concerned with the first syllable of recorded time. Bacon, and Boccaccio before him, saw the old myths as the veil between the unknown origins and recorded history. If there was a first syllable of recorded time, why not a last? Macbeth has apparently given up the idea that he can make the present eternal. But he takes comfort in man's folly, for some day recorded time will be no more, and the new barbarism will take its place. He was saying, much more eloquently, what Hitler said, "If we go down, we shall take the whole world with us."

The Macbeth tyrant is closer to the modern tyrant than to the pre-modern tyrant. Yet he does not have the techniques which modern technology has devised. Nor does Macbeth have what is popularly called "ideology," a word susceptible of several interpretations. Let us say rather that the modern tyrant has a cause. For a moment Macbeth imagines that he has a cause: the pristine health of Scotland. Like Macbeth the modern tyrant does not recognize the difference between his cause and his will to power. He too has a point where history stops. He too has a day when there is no tomorrow, when today is eternity. And that day justifies his ruthlessness.

That there is no such day in this-worldly history, most reasonable men
will believe. To believe in other-worldly eternity is a matter of faith, as it is with Augustine. To believe what Macbeth and his followers have believed is an arrogance of human history, an arrogance of left and right, crippling and maiming the reasonable and political center.

In one sense the tyrant is the political man par excellence, and so he was seen in antiquity. In another sense, the modern tyrant is the least political man. He is incapable of understanding the give and take, the ebb and flow. A peace treaty that will last for fifty years, such as Churchill hoped would come out of World War II, is meaningless to him. He has only one goal, apart from his own power: the secularization of Augus-tinian time, the creation of a tomorrow which will have no tomorrow, the elimination of the future tense in the day of eternity. To that goal all means are subordinate. The love of learning, the protection of procedural justice, the inviolability of human life, the sanctity of personal confidence, the very language of love, the glory of hospitality, the grace of life – all these shall pass, waiting for the last syllable of recorded time.