

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

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SELF AND POLITICAL ORDER*

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It is a commonplace of contemporary thought that the traditional sources of authority—religious, moral, governmental—have been successively undermined by the logic of modern philosophical inquiry, by the impact of mass society, and by the effects of technological revolution. At the same time, it is alleged that the profoundest impulse of man is toward the realization or fulfillment of the “self,” a self that more often than not is seen as something existing apart from and even threatened by the wider community or political order. The wearing of masks and the assumption of roles are looked upon as the behavior of the market place; “authenticity” and “being a person” are thought to be states accessible only to those who have withdrawn from the social or political community. The confluence of these two movements—the destruction of the traditional sources of authority and the concentration upon and elaboration of the self—threatens the existence of political order altogether. Whether this is cause for alarm or celebration we cannot yet determine: consider only the persistent demands for a “genuine” community compatible with each “doing his own thing.”

The incongruity of the demands of self and the demands of political order is one of the oldest themes of political philosophy, finding its earliest formal expression in the dialogues of Plato. The allegory of the cave in the *Republic* underscores the necessity for the individual who is to achieve his true potential to leave the market place, the home of political society. But Plato’s resolution of the political and human problem—a resolution that entails the coincidence in the same person of the power to rule and the love of philosophy—is itself more apparent than real. The philosopher-king, after all, is compelled to descend again into the cave to assume the burden of ruling; it is not a task he would voluntarily undertake in his own self-fulfillment. The contamination of the authentic self by the mass or crowd, by the demands of social and political life, is the theme also, in our own time, of Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger among others. Nietzsche, for example, exhorts his disciples to shun “the flies of the market place” by fleeing into solitude.¹ For the moderns, the market place is the locus of representations, actors and acting, baseness, and conformism, as for Plato it is the locus of images and opinions in place of reality and truth. For Plato, however, the self, or more properly the soul, finds its authentic fulfillment in its participation in or identification with an order of things that exists outside itself and in the creation of which it plays no part. But this sense of an external and

* An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the American Orthopsychiatric Association in San Francisco, March 24, 1970.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, I, 12.

eternal order of things in which man may be said to locate his natural home and the authority for his self-quest is not a part of the shared consciousness of contemporary man. It is possible to condense three centuries of thought and history by simply taking cognizance of the fact that for modern man his natural home, indeed his only home, is his *self*.

Still, old aspirations neither die nor wither away. The goal of a recently published study is an authentic society that would obviate the division and opposition of public and private selves. Far from looking upon the market place as an obstacle to the individual's quest for authenticity, Amitai Etzioni in *The Active Society* restores to us a vision of classical political life: "The active society has written on its door the Greek motto: An idiot is a man who is completely private . . . The active society would be closer than modern society to the city-state in the intensity and breadth of its political life."² This welcome, if unexpected, resolution of the problem under discussion by means of a return to what has long been regarded as matter fit only for history texts, justifies and necessitates an excursion into the classical conception of the requirements of political order. The earliest myth of Plato, recounted by the sophist Protagoras in the dialogue of that name, provides the most direct access. It should be clear that we are not here explicating a Platonic text; we give no thought to the way the myth is received by Socrates nor to its place in the dialogue as a whole. We turn to it, rather, in order to address ourselves to the questions it raises about authority and political order.

The tale is simple. Prior to the emergence of mortal creatures on earth, the gods assign to Epimetheus and Prometheus the task of distributing the faculties appropriate for their survival to each particular species. This particular choice of subordinates very nearly proves to be fatal for the human race. Prometheus (we have to assume his mind was on other things) agrees to let his absent-minded and somewhat less than astute brother handle the distribution while he, himself, is to inspect the job upon completion. Naturally enough, Epimetheus runs out of raw materials, and man is discovered naked and defenseless. In desperation, Prometheus (he never quite lives up to the meaning of his name) steals fire and mechanical arts from the gods and turns them over to man. For the short run, this suffices: man's technological prowess provides whatever is necessary for the support of life. Indeed, Prometheus has generally been regarded as man's great benefactor; in the fiery crucibles man forges the instruments and furnishes the testimony to his own transcendence over nature. Today, we are not so sanguine. A few voices still proclaim the salvation of man in unlimited technological progress; some are hopeful if not confident that technology can be subordinated to moral and social requirements; more strident voices call for dismantling the entire edifice. In terms of the myth, the gift of fire is necessary but not sufficient. Technology does not solve the problem of community. Although armed, man is no match against the beasts as long as he remains in isolation. Gathering together into cities, the better to defend themselves against their enemies,

² Amitai Etzioni, *The Active Society*, (New York, Free Press, 1968,) p. 7.

men fall to quarreling and abusing one another; the common defense vanishes. War cannot be fought if men have not first learned the art of government or have not been taught the requirements of political order. Fearing that the entire race would thus perish, Zeus dispatches his messenger to men "bearing reverence and justice to be the ordering principles of cities and the bonds of friendship and conciliation." A divine law is promulgated to the effect that "he who has no part in reverence and justice shall be put to death, for he is a plague to the state."³ Protagoras draws from the myth the conclusion that for there to be a city at all, each citizen must partake of one quality—the virtue of a man (the term has an archaic ring about it), or the sum of justice, temperance, and holiness—and that every form of private and public instruction be undertaken with a view to promoting this virtue. We do not go about teaching each other to be flute players, but we constantly admonish each other that this is just, that unjust; this holy, that unholy; this good, that evil. So imperative is the need for a common conception of justice that when the work of parents and schools is completed the state "again compels the [youth] to learn the laws, and live after the pattern which they furnish, and not after their own fancies."⁴

Evidently, the myth cannot be understood as implying that the gods gave to each and every man the identical conception of justice. It takes very little observation to remark that cities or nations are held together and are distinguished from one another by their differing conceptions of the just, the noble, the appropriate. A community or political order may be said to exist when a body of men are gripped by their shared perception in these matters, and when this perception, often inscribed on holy tablets by "good lawgivers living in olden times,"⁵ is regarded as authoritative for the citizens thereof. So, at least, is the classical conception.

It is not impossible to apply this teaching to contemporary democracy. It can be maintained, for example, that freedom is the fundamental value of our political order; it is the common aspiration that serves to define us as a people. And it may easily be seen that this principle is different in kind from every other principle that may be said to give a regime its specific character. Such principles, say communism, fascism, or nazism, strive to shape the citizens of the regime into one mold; they aim at conformity and similarity. Freedom as a principle acts in a contrary direction. To the extent that it succeeds, citizens will be dissimilar one from the other; freedom is the only principle that is not only compatible with but also positively encourages the widest diversity of human types. The principle of freedom extends even to the internal reaches of the individual. As Socrates understood, an individual in a democracy is not one man, but many, as he pleases; he is a "fair man of many colors." One day he is a political scientist, another a lecturer, a third a psychologist. The proliferation of so many human types, and within each, the possibility of still greater fragmentation, robs the regime of any unifying element. The ambiguous character of the principle of freedom generates a

³ Plato, *Protagoras*, 322d.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 326d.

⁵ *Ibid.*

centrifugal effect displacing society from its common center. Nor does that center, freedom itself, enjoy the status of a privileged sanctuary, to be breached only upon pain of death. Democracy may be regarded as a regime that has rejected the gift of Zeus.

Descending to a less abstract level, we may confirm by the most casual glance that we in America have lost any sense of a common center; far from sharing the same perceptions of the just and the unjust, the pleasurable and the painful, the noble and the ignoble, we seem to vie with one another both in the ingenuity with which we bring forth novel perceptions and in the rapidity with which we discard them. A very small measure of the distance we have traveled since Protagoras is revealed by the fact that we are far more likely to teach each other to play the flute—or the guitar—than we are to admonish one another on what is just, holy, and good. The very terms embarrass us. Nor is it likely that the promises of campaign oratory to “bring us together” will succeed. The Declaration of Independence may be said to be the tablet upon which is inscribed the common principles of our regime; in the terms of the myth, it is “the invention of good lawgivers living in the olden times.” But if those over thirty are already suspect, what shall we say of the authoritative status of those who are more than twice “four score and seven?” Whatever the beliefs of the majority of Americans, the assertion that men are “created” equal is scarcely credible to men in the academy; they have heard, and I believe acknowledge Nietzsche’s message that “God is dead.” The appeal to nature or to the laws of nature is, furthermore, incomprehensible to a generation encapsulated by the belief that the universe is either indifferent or hostile to man, altogether devoid of meaning, or, at best, a construct of his own mind and nothing more. Finally, the resort to the self-evidency of certain truths is now charitably understood as simply the views of men of the eighteenth century; far from expressing universal truths, these reveal nothing but the “ideology”, the prevailing intellectual horizon, of a given historical period. The situation is indeed not very far from what Henry Kariel describes in a work with the ironic title, *The Promise of Politics*: “We . . . have to acknowledge . . . that there is no place to drop anchor, that no history, no tradition, no metaphysics, no minority, no majority, no group pluralism, and no inventory of consumer pleasures can finally certify [our ideals] as just, that literally all we have is ourselves and the ground on which we stand.”⁶

Protagoras declares that no society can exist, nor can men maintain themselves, without some common conception of the things to be revered and respected. But are we to accept the myth itself as authoritative? Does it disclose truly the prerequisites of political order? For confirmation or disavowal we might turn to the vast and growing literature of empirical studies on consensus. These have, indeed, turned up some novel and sometimes conflicting findings. While some scholars confirm that no genuine consensus on fundamentals exists in America, they do not necessarily view this condition with alarm. As one study concludes, “A democratic society

⁶ Henry Kariel, *The Promise of Politics*, (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1966,) p. 10.

can survive despite widespread popular misunderstanding and disagreement about basic democratic and constitutional values. The American political system survives and even flourishes under precisely these conditions . . .”⁷ Other studies point to quite opposite conclusions: we do have agreement, and the agreement is essential for the maintenance of the system itself. Easton and Dennis maintain, for example, that the basic values of our society are suitably and more or less permanently internalized as a result of the normal processes of acculturation. The inculcation of at least one fundamental norm of the regime, the expectancy of political efficacy, may very well be decisive: “. . . childhood socialization may thus have central significance for the persistence of a democratic regime. It provides a reservoir of diffuse support upon which the system can automatically draw both in normal times, when members may feel that their capacity to manipulate the political environment is not living up to their expectations, and in special periods of stress, when popular participation may appear to be pure illusion or when political outputs fail to measure up to insistent demands.”⁸

So brief and scarcely adequate an excursion into the labyrinth of empirical studies cannot, of course suffice to prove or disprove the basic contention of the myth—nor was it so intended. What is instructive, I think, is to remark that these studies, even where they appear to reach opposite conclusions, are within the spirit of the myth. For, it will be remembered, the primary concern of the myth is the preservation of the species and, to that end, the preservation of political order. Virtue, justice, holiness are in the service of the regime, and not vice-versa. Similarly, contemporary empirical studies on consensus address themselves primarily to the stability of the regime, to the question whether democracy can survive the real or apparent absence of agreement upon fundamental norms. As some critics have noted, this concern with stability or survival sometimes reaches bizarre proportions. The political apathy of those who least share or comprehend the basic democratic and constitutional values can come to be regarded as a salutary feature of the regime, since these individuals are least likely to rock the boat. From a different perspective, however, the same phenomenon might appear as a national scandal, and the transformation of the politically apathetic into morally responsible citizens might be regarded as the first order of national concern. Where some, then, are concerned with stability and the avoidance of conflict, others take their stand with personal growth and human excellence. In their attachment to the primary values of survival and stability, the studies to which I have alluded are, I believe, in the same tradition as the myth of Protagoras.

We cannot turn away from these studies without noting that the political order is not a closed system unaffected by those who make it their primary

⁷ Herbert McCloskey, “Consensus and Ideology in American Politics,” in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2, 1964, p. 376.

⁸ David Easton and Jack Dennis, “The Child’s Acquisition of Regime Norms: Political Efficacy,” in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 61, No. 1, 1967, p. 38.

field of inquiry. A century ago, Alexis de Tocqueville observed, "Among all civilized peoples the political sciences give birth or at last form to those general concepts whence emerge the facts with which politicians have to deal, and the laws of which they believe themselves the inventors. [These general concepts] form a kind of atmosphere surrounding each society in which both rulers and governed have to draw intellectual breath, and whence—often without realizing it—both groups derive the principles of action."⁹ Those who confidently assert the stabilizing effect of the socialization process fail to confront the ancient question of who is teaching the teachers. Those who study the American system of beliefs often look upon it as something merely given, a datum, and they scarcely conceive of themselves as prospective authors of beliefs and values they shall later study. The popularity of such terms as "myth" or "ideology" to describe that comprehensive system of concepts and values comprising the American way of life may be taken as a case in point. To speak of these things as an "ideology" is to suggest that they comprise one of many possible, equally elaborate, and perhaps equally valid, alternative systems of belief. So to speak of them necessarily raises the question of the status of our loyalty to an arbitrary system of beliefs separating us from the rest of mankind, and questioning that status undermines our commitment to, and the authority of, the values themselves. It has often been remarked that teaching is a subversive activity.

We are back to the myth of Protagoras, which, if we consider carefully, only posed the problem of political order. The sense of reverence and justice that Zeus gave to all men was not, as we have seen, self-enforcing. In the actual application, each city was free to erect its own table of law—the particular code to which each of its citizens owed unqualified and unquestioning loyalty. The conflict between what men owe the city and what they owe other men—and even what they owe themselves—was scarcely allowed to surface.

In turning to consider what it is that men believe they owe themselves, turning from political order to self, we recognize at once a different order of priorities. In this as in so many other areas, we do well to begin with Nietzsche; his conception of the self may be shown to have striking similarities to our own. The particular emphasis that we place upon the uniqueness of each self is derivative from the uniqueness of each body. The body, Nietzsche tells us, is "a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace. a herd and a shepherd." What we normally understand as reason is but an instrument and a toy of the body's "great reason." The body is identical with the "I" or with the "self." More precisely, the self dwells *within* the body: it is an unknown sage, a mighty ruler.¹⁰ Nietzsche initiates the search for and the liberation of this great sage, wiser than reason. The search concentrates on ferreting out whatever is a man's own, the characteristic sign of which is

⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, address before the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques, 1853; cited in Marvin Zetterbaum, *Tocqueville and the Problem of Democracy*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1967,) p. 143.

¹⁰ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, I, 4.

that to it society attaches the label, "evil." What is *common* is good, says society. In a total inversion of the traditional teaching on morality, Nietzsche declares a man's individual passions or desires to be his *virtues*. Not what a man may come to share with all other men—be it rational discourse, or a specific conception of the just, the good, and the holy—but that which differentiates him from every other man is the source of the only true morality. For all the subjectivity this may suggest, Nietzsche is neither a democrat nor an egalitarian. If a man looks within himself and finds only one passion, if he *is* one passion (e.g., I-am-a-power-seeker), he is fortunate in that his lot in life is easier; he suffers no contrary passions or cross-purposes. At the same time, to have many passions, especially warring ones, is a sign of distinction. To be a battleground for one's passions, to sustain the conflict wherein each (reason, power, lust, etc.) strives to overcome the rest and to be the one by which the individual defines himself, to give the victory to no single passion—these are the marks of nobility.¹¹ Greatness lies in a person's "range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in manifoldness." A philosopher determines the value and the rank of individuals "in accordance with how much and how many things one [can] bear and take upon himself, how *far* one [can] extend his responsibility."¹² This craving for kaleidoscopic experience and the refusal (on *moral* grounds) to say no to the least of our desires are phenomena familiar to us all. In fact, they define our conception of a *self*. As Benjamin De Mott observes in his portrait of the decade just completed, ". . . we've come to relish plurality of self. We behave as though impatient or bitter at every structure, form, convention and practice that edges us toward singleness of view or option, or that forces us to accept this or that single role as the whole truth of our being."¹³ Nietzsche's message has at last been heard.

But of course it has not. What has occurred, particularly in America, has been a democratization and perhaps even a vulgarization of Nietzsche's teaching. We have sought access to the totalization of experience by embracing a doctrine of freedom or of "letting oneself go" buttressed by the belief that such is the "natural" state of man. Little support for this view can be found in Nietzsche. On the contrary, he maintains that almost everything of value of life—virtue, art, music, dance, reason, spirituality, ethics, even government—arises only through "*obedience* over a long period of time . . . in a *single* direction." The rigor and subtlety of the European mind, for example, was honed through its subservience to "capricious, hard, gruesome, and anti-rational" presuppositions of thought. The "tyranny of such capricious laws" is indispensable, and Nietzsche concludes "in all seriousness" that "the probability is by no means small that precisely this is 'nature' and 'natural'—

¹¹ *Ibid.*, I, 5.

¹² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York, Vintage, 1966,) p. 137.

¹³ Benjamin Demott, "The Sixties: A Cultural Revolution," in *The New York Times Magazine*, December 14, 1969, p. 30.

and *not* that *laissez aller*."¹⁴ Nietzsche sought to enlist to his cause "the philosophers of the future," the "overmen," those who by dint of long training and arduous discipline were able to demonstrate that they were not of the herd. His was not a doctrine for everyman.¹⁵

Whereas Nietzsche drew from his doctrine of the self no specific political implications (other than the need for overmen to hold themselves aloof from the herd), others have been less cautious in applying his teaching. The experience of nazism is all too familiar. The application to democracy is certainly less familiar but not impossible if certain modifications are undertaken. Henry Kariel's world in *The Promise of Politics* is Nietzsche's world—one without tradition or transcendence. But this world is made to seem compatible with, and indeed the very condition of, democratic politics. In this world, politics is conceived as a process or as a stage on which men try out various "roles" in an effort to discover their true selves or to integrate the various parts of themselves. Where Nietzsche's self shuns the market place, Kariel's self regards political order as its greatest good.¹⁶ The ultimate value for the individual, not unexpectedly, is the "*comprehension of the greatest diversity of experience*."¹⁷ and the best society is an open or democratic one "that will not foreclose individual choices, that will nurture alternative styles of life."¹⁸

Kariel retains the aristocratic overtones of the Nietzschean self in emphasizing the achievement of self-awareness, recognition of limits, and ultimately self-mastery, even if these are to be sought in the political arena. At the same time, democratic overtones make their appearance in the emphasis upon role-playing and the search for alternative styles of life. Men assume various roles, but scrupulously avoid becoming *identified* with any one of them. Kariel resolutely insists upon a thoroughgoing skepticism that refuses to

14. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 100–102.

15. *Cf.*, however, the concept of self that emerges in Theodore Roszak's *The Making of a Counter Culture*, (Garden City, Anchor, 1969), pp. 235–6. Like Nietzsche, Roszak has a vision of a "whole and integrated person in whom there is manifested a sense of the human variety genuinely experienced," and he believes also that a person must reckon with "the needs his own personality thrusts upon him in its fullness, often in its terrifying fullness." The task of forging a "comprehensive style of life" out of these needs and of the raw materials of experience must be undertaken " . . . as laboriously and as cunningly as a sculptor shapes his stone . . ." At the same time, the genuine growth of the person is not a matter of discipline, intellectual or otherwise: "The expansion of the personality is nothing that is achieved by special training, but by a naive openness to experience." Referring to those illuminating moments by which a life is quite suddenly deepened and enlarged, Roszak adds, "The homely magic of such turning points *waits for all of us and will find us if we let it*. What befalls us then is an experience of the personality suddenly swelling beyond all that we had once thought to be 'real', swelling to become a greater and nobler identity than we had previously believed possible." (Italics mine.)

16. Kariel, p. 25.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 35.

affirm any given role as appropriate, final, or definitive. He recognizes the danger implicit in this: "Committing himself to play the roles of his choice, [the individual] is, it is true, always in danger of losing his self, giving rise to the question of who, if truth be told, he really is."¹⁹ Yet Kariel rather embraces than rejects the ambiguity; indeed, it defines for him the nature of the self and of the human condition. His view "accepts the ultimately irreconcilable character of our roles, and therefore defines as mature whoever has the capacity for playing diverse parts and remaining an unreconciled being—tense, nervous, civil."²⁰ In such a context, to speak of self-mastery or ultimate integration is meaningless, for these concepts cannot be understood without the correlative ideas of completion or resolution. The confusion of self with role-playing leaves unanswered whether there is a way to progress from playing to self, or indeed, whether one really knows when one is play-acting and when one is not. Kariel's reassurances are scarcely convincing: ". . . however man feels himself to be threatened, he can yet preserve his distinctive identity by recognizing that his dedication to the role he plays is quite deliberate. He is no mere role-player, but at core a discriminating being who picks and chooses from available roles. Drawing on his primordial animal energy, he interprets them, transforms them, and creates new ones."²¹ Yet in the condition of fluidity that characterizes Kariel's world there is nothing to suggest that this tense, nervous, unreconciled and unreconcilable being can have a "core" that remains fixed enough to provide him with principles with which to discriminate. Nor can we immediately comprehend how a reservoir of "primordial animal energy" satisfies the requirements of choosing, evaluating, transforming and creating roles.

The democratization of the Nietzschean self is accomplished, I believe, by jettisoning whatever finality or fixity is thought to reside in the concept of self and to substitute in its place the concept of man as role-player. Kariel's democratic role-player is the lineal descendant of Socrates' "fair man of many colors." In neither the one instance nor in the other is there the possibility of the appearance of a genuine self constituted by the organization of passions, ideals, and responsibilities into a meaningful whole, or into what was formerly embraced in the concept of "character."²² Kariel does not deny the Nietzschean characterization of political order as the locus of role-playing and representation; but if in the final analysis there is no possible appeal to a genuine self then nothing is more natural than to look upon political order

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28. See also *Ibid.*, fn. 7, p. 29.

²² That the concept of character is still intelligible to at least one contemporary writer is evident from the preface to David Cecil's *Melbourne* (London, Reprint Society, 1955), p. v. Cecil notes that his book divides into three sections: "The first, extending from childhood into middle life, describes the formation of [Melbourne's] character; the second gives an analysis, illustrated by references both to his earlier and subsequent history, of this character when set into middle life; the third tells how this character exhibited itself in action during his later years."

as the indispensable arena for playing out the drama of human existence. The flight from society cannot be justified in the name of genuine self-fulfillment.

It would be tempting but unwise to dismiss Nietzsche, perhaps even Kariel, as exotic thinkers outside the mainstream of contemporary social science. To see that this is not the case, we have only to turn at last to the work which, as I noted earlier, promised to end the split between self and society. In *The Active Society*, Professor Etzioni rejects the seventeenth and eighteenth century notion of the objectivization of the self as if it is capable of having an existence apart from society. In place of this outmoded concept, he offers that of the "social self." "Man," he tells us, "is *not* unless he is social; what he is depends on his social being, and what he makes of his social being is irrevocably bound to what he makes of himself."²³ The social entity itself penetrates to the very being of the individual; it forms a "part of what he views as his irreducible self . . ." ²⁴ For this reason, Etzioni finds the Greek model of an all-embracing, all-encompassing society congenial to his own thought. Still, the classical conception of political order took as its model the order of the cosmos itself, an eternal, natural order which political order tried to approximate on the human level. The classical understanding of self or soul also derives from an unchanging idea of man. Far from following the classical disposition to regard the self as fixed, Etzioni reveals his fundamental agreement with the notions of modernity that we have already rehearsed: the social self "may be thought of as a self able to reset its own code . . ." If men are what they are primarily because of a social structure, and if that social structure is not itself fixed and immutable, then we can locate "the key to a secular conception of man—in the ability of men, by changing their social combinations, to change themselves, to be the creator."²⁵

The goals of Etzioni's "active" society are the "fuller realization" of its citizens and the "uninhibited, authentic, educated expression of an unbounded membership."²⁶ It is not until the final chapter of his book, devoted to alienation and inauthenticity, that we reach some clarity about these aspirations. Alienation, (which, according to Etzioni, does not lie in interpersonal conflict or in intrapsychic phenomena but rather has its real roots "in the societal

²³ Etzioni, p. 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 12–13. It is impossible to follow here Etzioni's attempts, ultimately unsuccessful, to steer a path between the Scylla of absolutism or objectivity and the Charybdis of relativism or subjectivity. On the one hand, his study of the active society purports to be wholly neutral: he wishes to investigate how *any* society attempts to realize *its* values. On the other hand, he recoils from the possibility that his study might facilitate the realization of the values of societies such as Nazi Germany and South Africa. Such societies, he finds, are repressive rather than responsive, and the members thereof are inauthentically mobilized "in support of unethical positions." (p. 13.) His frank use of "oppressive," "educated," "unethical," and "authentic," would be meaningless in the absence of some objective criteria by which to reach these judgments. Yet, he rejects any appeal to an "absolute set of values" thought to be available to social scientists,

and political structure,") is defined as the "unresponsiveness of the world to the actor, which subjects him to forces he neither comprehends nor guides." Inauthenticity is seen as a subcategory of alienation: "A relationship, institution, or society is inauthentic if it provides the appearance of responsiveness while the underlying condition is alienating."²⁷ To avoid the charge that a society which was responsive to just any needs of its citizens could not then be regarded as alienating, Etzioni has recourse to the concept of basic human needs, neither arising from society nor subject to societal approval. Only those societies, then, which are successful in meeting these needs can be characterized as truly active and authentic. Etzioni thus adopts what he calls a "moderate" version of the concept of a "deviant" society, one "whose structure is contrary to human nature and does not allow the satisfaction of basic human needs."²⁸ It is clearly the case that the list of basic needs is proffered in a tentative spirit, subject to further testing and verification, and it is evidently beyond the scope of this paper and the competence of this writer to evaluate that list and so determine the degree to which Etzioni has solved the problem of man's nature.²⁹ Still, if man is a social being, if what he is depends on his social being, then it is difficult to speak of basic human needs as if these constituted a core external to and impervious to social penetration. The needs in question are described as "autonomous." They are needs "which are independent of the needs produced by [the individual's] relationship to

and he rejects as well a social science unable to transcend either the values of the individual social scientists themselves or of the subjects of their study. He seeks to resolve the dilemma by recourse to a "transcendental analysis" which "can be conducted openly, building on the values to which the social unit under study is actively committed but disregarding the parochial, tribalistic limits within which it expresses them . . . Universalizing the values of the subjects provides an Archimedial standpoint for a critical yet objective social science." (p. 34.) This procedure is open to at least the following difficulties: One cannot "induce" a universal value by abstracting and generalizing from the values of a particular social unit under study unless one has a prior conception of what is universally valid. Without some such conception one could not even identify the parochial and tribalistic *as* parochial and tribalistic. Nor, unless the ultimate test of validity is some quantitative measure, can we say that a value is parochial, hence, subjective, if held only by one or a few, and that it becomes valid or objective if universally shared. There is a curious but extremely relevant confirmation of the difficulties involved here—and of the necessity for their resolution—in a remark that Etzioni supplies (p. 661, fn. 34) on the concept of "role." He tells us that "in the prevailing American sociological tradition, role is a positive concept; in the European one, it is a negative concept, constricting the person." If, in seeking to attain some understanding of self it is essential (as we have seen above) to assess the value of role, shall we universalize on the basis of the one tradition or the other? Which view of role is essentially tribalistic, the American or the European?

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 618–19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 623.

²⁹ See *Ibid.*, fn., p. 624.

the societal structure . . ."³⁰ Nor can the apparent ambiguity be resolved by defining basic human needs as *formal* requirements whose substantive content may be variously filled by different societies. Etzioni's emphasis upon activity seems to emphasize his conviction that men change in a more fundamental way—perhaps in their constituent make-up—as a result of the interaction of man and society. "In the process of societal activation, not only do more people gain a share in society, thereby reconstituting its structure, but the members themselves are also transformed; they advance along with the society that they are changing . . . Mankind is continually redefining itself . . ."³¹ Whatever the final solution of this difficulty (I believe there is none), there can be no hesitancy in declaring that the resolution of the alleged conflict between self and society is accomplished at the expense of a total depreciation of the private self. Because man is only, or is primarily, a social being receiving and creating the definition of himself through society, the final paragraph of Etzioni's book is, fittingly, a paean of praise for the public self. In the inauthentic society most men are trapped in a conflict between their private selves and public roles from which there is no real escape. These citizens "manage by treating their neuroses with drugs, alcohol, professional counseling, and the like, thus reinforcing the inauthenticity of the society which caused their malaise." Some few retreat to a private world which is somewhat more authentic for them. "Finally, there are those who evolve new public selves which they collectivize and make the basis of societal action. In these lie the hope for an initiation of the transformation of the inauthentic society. They are the active ones."³²

In setting forth his vision of the authentic society responsive to the genuine needs of its citizens, free of the neuroses generated by the split between private need and public responsibility, continually evolving fresh definitions of the self, Etzioni is not unmindful of the more narrowly conceived requirements of political order itself. The redefinitions of man that are formulated in the interchange between man and society must be "recorded in social tablets The social embodiment of values has an element of objectivization, but it also enables each member to lift himself. Human beings cannot reweave anew the normative fabric of society each morning . . ." Society then rests upon a "dynamic social contract" that provides and requires "a changing normative and political consensus . . ."³³ What Etzioni has achieved, then, is a return to the myth of Protagoras but on the plane of modernity. Life, liberty, and the endless redefinition of man replace justice, temperance, and holiness. Political order is held together by an ephemeral portrait of man, of which the only thing certain is that it will be different on the morrow. While some have sought to determine the degree and the conditions under which "man may be enabled to tolerate more chaos in the belief systems around

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 622.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 655.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

him,"³⁴ we have still to inquire whether political order can be sustained where social tablets are erected of sandstone in place of granite.

There is no need to dwell on the attractiveness of a concept of self that is characterized by autonomy; experimentation; freedom from singleness of purpose, occupation, or role; release from the stultifying conformism of mass society; and the capacity for self-correction and growth that arises from the opportunity for redefinition. Nevertheless, we have sought in vain for an integrative principle of self upon which we could rely for the accomplishment of these ends. The story of the liberation and celebration of the self that the modern era inaugurated has no unambiguous ending or meaning. It is facile, I believe, to pick and choose from among the elements of the Nietzschean self those which are congenial to our own tastes, and omit those that are too demanding or inegalitarian. It is sobering to reflect that we may restore the dignity of political order by populating it with individual role-players threatened with the loss of self altogether. It is unreasonable to contemplate the absorption of the self into a social self where we have no certainty about the make-up of the one or the other.

Because the concept of self is so indistinct, the attempt to reach some clarity about it through the discovery of basic human needs, either pre-social or trans-social in nature, has wide appeal. However, the resort to basic needs cannot solve the problem of self and political order. The quest for the satisfaction of such needs as have been tentatively identified, (the need for approval, affection, love, security, identity,) together with the appeal to political order as a means of overcoming loneliness, alienation, anomie, or separation-anxiety, reduces politics to the alleviation of emotional insecurity; political order, in this view, comforts man. But we scarcely need to be reminded that men have the capacity and the willingness to transcend basic needs, often at the sacrifice of comfort and security. A concept of self that made no provision for reverence, nobility, honor, justice, responsibility, and generosity, would be a diminished self; that is, it would not be a self at all. The satisfaction of basic needs is not, then, equivalent to the realization of self; regimes that are content only to meet these minimum requirements do not elicit the full range of human potentiality.

Man's fundamental impulse, we are told, that which gives meaning to his existence, is self-realization. If this is conceded, then the only legitimate purpose of political order, and the only justification for recourse to whatever authority such order requires, is the provision of the appropriate conditions and institutions whereby men may be aided in the accomplishment of this fundamental aspiration. But this proposition prejudices the issue, for until we have some certainty about the self we cannot assume that any particular political order or any form of authority facilitates rather than frustrates self-realization. If man's only home is his self, we need to inquire whether this home is hospitable or not, whether the fulfillment of the self is the result of art, nature, or nurture, and also whether the self-realization of one individual

³⁴ Christian Bay, *The Structure of Freedom*, (New York, Atheneum, 1965,) p. 81.

is compatible with that of another—in short, how the requirements of self-fulfillment articulate with those of political order, if at all. We need nothing less than to understand the meaning of self, and although there seems to be nothing to which we have more intimate access, we have finally to acknowledge that the self is even more elusive than political order.