

LET FREEDOM REIGN

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TO LUDWIG VON MISES

If given power over others, he would abdicate.

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*When experience is not retained . . . infancy
is perpetual. Those who cannot remember
the past are condemned to repeat it.*

—SANTAYANA



PROLOGUE

THE STORY is told of the minister and his spirited young filly which a wealthy fancier wanted for his stables. They proceeded to the track to check the filly's capabilities. When the prospective purchaser mounted and gave the usual "Giddap," there was no response.

"What makes her go?" he asked.

The minister explained his habit of praying as he rode, and gave the filly the command: "Praise the Lord!" She promptly circled the track at a fast clip, but then failed to stop when the rider said, "Whoa."

"And what makes her stop?" he shouted.

"Amen," said the minister, and the filly halted.

The prospective buyer then asked the minister if he might try the filly in the open country. After mounting, he said, "Praise the Lord." Off they went at top speed. Suddenly, horse and rider approached a 300-foot cliff. The man in his fright forgot how to stop, so he prayed aloud, "Lord save me. Amen!" The filly stopped just a few feet from the cliff, whereupon the man in great relief exclaimed, "Praise the Lord!"

Even the finest of words and the best intentions can lead to disaster.

As I view our current situation, good intentions have brought us to the brink of disaster. Pollution. Inflation. Statism. Disorder. And without knowing the right words to halt our headlong plunge!

That I know precisely the right words is not claimed; indeed, my thesis is that neither I nor anyone else has all the answers.

Yet, it behooves us to bring as much light to the surface as lies within our power. Where are the answers to be found? Not in governmental management of creative activities! They are not to be found in the planned economy and the welfare state, but in the absence of these arrangements, which is to say, *in the practice of freedom*. For it is only in an essentially free society that unknown answers to problems of this nature emerge from the minds of men and become known. Freedom, with all the answers there are, is allowed to perform when coercion, which has no answers, is removed. This is my thesis.

The wisdom by which we exist is an enlightenment emerging from free men. Were this not the case, we would have to assume that all progress to date has sprung from supermen, not one of whom has ever existed.

Despite the overwhelming case for freedom, it is assailed from every side—reasons and excuses without end. “I’m for freedom, but . . .” is a loud, pervasive, dissonant chorus, bedeviling anyone who would champion the freedom philosophy.

The following chapters will attempt to remove some of

the doubts and contribute to a faith that freedom should be the rule.

My own faith cannot be shaken, even though I fail adequately to make the case for this philosophy. Freedom, like righteousness or wisdom, must never be faulted because of my shortcomings. Or anyone else's. If I cannot articulate the merits of freedom, the fault is in my understanding and explanation, not in freedom as a way of life.

THE POLLUTION PROBLEM

POLLUTION IS BUT A SAMPLING of the problems into which we have collectivized ourselves. But it is serious enough to be of grave concern.

Why are people so disturbed about pollution of air and water? It is not simply because they have become more refined and aesthetic, but because they begin to realize that we have reached a critical point in human habitation of the earth.

There was no split of opinion . . . last year when more than two hundred experts from fifty countries met in conference. *Within twenty years, they decided, life on our planet will be showing the first signs of succumbing to pollution: the atmosphere will become unbreathable for men and animals; life will cease in rivers and lakes; plants will wither from poisoning.*¹ (Italics mine.)

Even if the pollution problem is only half as bad as these experts believe, it must be conceded that the condition of the planet's air and water is deteriorating. More and more people are concerned about pollution, and their apprehensiveness is justifiable. The paradox is—as I shall bring out later—that many of these same people ignore or even favor other forms of pollution which may be more destructive!

¹ *The Royal Bank of Canada Monthly Letter*, February, 1969.

But pollution, favored or not, is difficult to remedy—something like unscrambling eggs. It's a matter of undoing that which has been done.

If we examine only one source of air pollution—motor vehicles—we may be able to uncover what's involved in other sources of pollution; indeed, a principle or two may come to light.

The first gasoline buggy polluted the atmosphere. However, the owner felt no guilt; and no one else sensed any injury. The winds, rains, sunshine—agents of nature—were so overwhelmingly corrective that no detectable traces of poisonous gases remained in the air people breathed.

But during the intervening decades motor vehicles in the U.S.A. have multiplied 100 million times while the corrective forces of nature are the same now as always. As a consequence, it's the pollution that now overwhelms nature! While we as offenders feel little if any more guilt than the single owner of long ago, we as inhalers of polluted air have a genuine sense of injury. Most of us are at once offenders and the offended; we keep right on polluting the air ourselves as we increasingly direct our criticisms at others. Driver after driver bemoans the polluted air with little if any awareness that he himself is polluting it. "The pot calling the kettle black!"

Viewing the problem in this manner, it is plain that we glossed over a very important point between the first gas buggy owner and today's millions of owners. The first owner did no offense; many of us are now offending. What turns precisely the same act—car driving—from offenseless to offending?

Here's the point most of us glossed over: It begins with a fact that we'll all concede, namely, that I have no more right to poison the air you breathe than I have to poison the food you eat. But the air I pollute does not become poisonous to you until nature is overwhelmed, that is, until she can no longer dissipate the poisons.

Little wonder that we miss the point. As a car owner, I do nothing differently today than I did sixty years ago when driving my first auto. I poisoned no one then; now I do. Neither you nor I have altered our behaviors; therefore, external forces must have converted us from offenseless persons to offenders. External to you and me are (1) the millions of others who now pollute the air and (2) the limitations of nature to cope with the excessive pollution. Another way to explain our confusion: I do not poison others when driving in fresh-air country but begin to do so as I approach a metropolis. Offenseless and offending while on the same trip with the same tank of gas!

Plainly, we have no awareness of a change from harmless to harmful as we drive from open country to congested city. Nor did we sense any change when and where forces external to our individual selves turned the air from fresh to poisonous. It is thus understandable how we let pollution get out of hand. While our unawareness is excusable, the problem is not thereby dismissed; pollution is an enormous and rapidly increasing threat and will continue as such unless and until we come to grips with it.

The air pollution dilemma is not a problem exclusive to you and me. It has become a social problem no less than other destructive activities: killing, thieving, misrepresent-

ing, poisoning, and so on. Thus it is that pollution cannot be remedied short of a resort to social devices, namely, legal prohibitions. This is where the agency of society—government—comes in. For the role of government is to codify the thou-shalt-nots and to enforce their observation. In good theory we employ the defensive force of government to inhibit and restrain that which is destructive.

Self-Imposed Disciplines

What then does this suggest? It means we approach this problem in the same manner as we do the poisoning of food. Impose penalties for infractions! In short, make it illegal to drive a polluting vehicle or otherwise contribute to tropospheric pollution in any area in which the forces of nature can no longer keep the troposphere free of poisonous gases.²

When nature can no longer cope with man-made contamination, then man must discover ways to avoid self-destruction. We can't go on willy-nilly, eating our cake and having it, too. Our cherished comforts and affluence must be attended by at least a few disciplines. This is to say that we cannot go on forever enjoying our horseless carriages without, on occasion, "bringing them to rein." Otherwise, they'll run over the cliff with us!

Of course, this remedy, at first blush, appears to be worse

² Even prohibiting pollution in highly polluted areas may be no solution. Pollution is becoming a problem of the whole troposphere, that is, the troposphere assuredly has containment limitations. If this view be accepted, then pollution released atop Mt. Everest could eventually wreak its havoc on Americans.

than the malady. Why, the whole Los Angeles area would be carless, and Angelenos are dependent on motor transportation. The same will be said about most large metropolitan areas.

But make the legal prohibitions effective several years hence—time enough for a transition from polluting to non-polluting vehicles—and watch ingenuity come to the fore in response to consumer demand. With 100 million motor vehicles requiring a nonpolluting gadget, it is naive to believe that inventors and entrepreneurs wouldn't rise to the lure. Technologically, this is nowhere near the challenge that color TV was but a few years ago. Indeed, it is already pretty well known how this feat can be accomplished. Nothing more is needed to bring a perfected answer from obscurity than the economic incentive and prospect of a profit. We should neither overlook nor deprecate the power of a hoped-for profit; it is one of the best mothers invention ever had.

The same procedures can be applied to the other sources of air pollution: home and factory furnaces, municipal and private incinerators, DDT, nuclear fallout, and the like. No one has a moral right to poison the air of another any more than the food or the water of another. And no one should have a legal right to do so. From where I sit in the bleachers, it seems that we must apply the legal prohibitions or prepare our children to live in gas masks, an unattractive alternative.³

Assuming we are on the right track in legally restraining

³ But to what avail are gas masks for human beings if plant and animal life succumb to pollution?

pollution, that theoretically this is the correct remedial procedure, we have considered only the second step without thought of the first step. For, sadly, we have only a theory as to what should be done but nothing to do it with. Lacking is an agency of society capable of putting the theory into practice. Governments, as they exist today in the U.S.A. and elsewhere, are not the kind of societal agencies that can perform this service. These governments are not "purifying" agencies: quite the contrary!

Pollution of Money Supply

Governments, the world over, are themselves the greatest polluters of all, departing as they do from their principled role of defending the lives and the private property and freedom of choice of peaceful persons, becoming instead the instruments of plunder and tyranny. Nowhere is this "pollution" more evident than in the behavior of national governments with respect to the medium of exchange.⁴

Money, the economic circulatory device, is essential to exchanging our specialized goods and services; our lives and livelihoods depend on exchange. The usefulness of the medium of exchange decreases as its integrity is destroyed. This is an unassailable fact demonstrated over and over again throughout history; inflation is as unworkable as counterfeiting and for precisely the same reason. Yet, today, the pollution of money is a popular panacea for the ills of

⁴ This is not to overlook or minimize the polluting effect of a thousand and one other well-known governmental interventions.

mankind; the idea is on the rampage as much without as within the government. My point, however, is that we cannot expect the polluter of money to rid us of the pollution of air, water, or any other useful thing.

And here is why: Whenever any government pollutes the medium of exchange, that act in itself reveals a type of societal agency that cannot effectively perform the defensive function. For implicit in money pollution is the acceptance of government in the role of ruler or general manager of our lives and livelihoods.

To grasp the switch in roles I am trying to portray, merely imagine the local chief of police with a printing press, turning out at will the money we use and thus setting its value. This police officer would be our czar. His concentration would be on the economic management of us: *his* people! Reflect on how little he would or even could concentrate on defending us against thievery and other forms of violence. Invoking a common justice would be out of his field. These and other defensive employments, including pollution riddance, would be no more than annoying trivia to him.

The national government today is in this inverted role. It is now the Grand Factotum over which there is no restraint—none whatsoever—except the thinking of citizens which, currently, is more molded by it than it by them. And as Grand Factotum, the government exhibits all and even more faults than we observe in numerous private enterprises that operate as laws unto themselves—you name them!

So, what is the first step to be taken before we can rid ourselves of pollution of the air, water, money, and other necessities of life? It is nothing less than restoring govern-

ment to its principled function, to that position which is its sole justification for existence in the first place: the protection of life and livelihood. Government can be turned from offender to defender only as it is confined to codifying the taboos and enforcing them, to invoking a common justice, in a word, to keeping the peace—the role of servant. Its present role as general manager of 200 million people and their economy, its assumed and irrational role as dispenser of welfare, security, and prosperity, has to be abolished.

That this is ideological revolution (reversal of the mores), an affront to those currently in the seats of power, and seemingly impossible of accomplishment is conceded. But it's this, or pollution; it's this, or national downfall.

However, the job isn't as impossible as it seems. Could you personally run the nation or the world? Of course not! Then draw a perfectly obvious conclusion: Neither can anyone else. The turnabout requires little more than a general recognition of this simple fact and an understanding of how freedom works its wonders.

A ROLE FOR RATIONALITY¹

THE CHARACTERISTIC that most significantly distinguishes man from other organisms is his ability rationally to will his own actions. Admittedly, this is only a budding ability, a rarer achievement than generally believed. But, nonetheless, the rational will is a potentiality, and its progressive realization would seem to be the mark of man fulfilling his destiny, namely, coming more and more to share in Creation.

The observation that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it generally refers to the rise and fall of nations and civilizations. My contention is that history does have certain lessons to teach:

1. The rise of civilized societies is the result of freedom, and freedom is a state of affairs stumbled upon and, in no instance, a premeditated, rational design.
2. The explanations for societies in ascendancy have generally been false—the ascent has been attributed to organizational gadgetry rather than to freedom.

¹ This chapter was first presented as a paper to The Mont Pelerin Society, Caracas, Venezuela, September 8, 1969.

3. The decline and fall of civilized societies has usually been attributed to some organizational error rather than to overorganization. Rarely has a lack of freedom been assigned as the cause.
4. To avert a decline and fall requires rational analysis and an understanding of what it is about freedom that accounts not only for ascendancy but for the maintenance of the ascendant position. *Be rational in this respect or look for the cycles of history to repeat themselves!*

Professor F. A. Hayek, who has a scholarly sense of what is historically significant in human behavior, observes:

Modern man prides himself that he has built his civilization as if in doing so he had carried out a plan which he had before formed in his mind. The fact is, of course, that if at any point of the past man had mapped out his future on the basis of the then-existing knowledge and then followed this plan, we would not be where we are. We would not only be much poorer, we would not only be less wise, but we would also be less gentle, less moral; in fact we would still have brutally to fight each other for our very lives. We owe the fact that not only our knowledge has grown, but also our morals have improved . . . not to anybody planning for such a development, but to the fact that *in an essentially free society* certain trends have prevailed because they made for a peaceful, orderly, and progressive society. (Italics added.)

It is my belief that each praiseworthy society—Sumer,

Athens, Carthage, Rome, Venice, Florence, Kiev, England, America—has not flowered from a rationally designed scheme for social felicity but, rather, has bloomed from a state of freedom come upon unwittingly, inadvertently, accidentally. Merely observe that there has been little understanding of the reason for the remarkable release of creative energy—even after freedom has existed. If there is no understanding of the wonders wrought by freedom after the fact, how, possibly, could there have been any anticipation of its wonders before the fact?

The American Miracle

History's greatest creative outburst took place in the United States of America where freedom—private ownership, freedom in transactions, willing exchange, government limited to keeping the peace—was more nearly approximated than elsewhere or at any time. The correlation between freedom and creativity appears to be unassailable.

Was the American miracle premeditated, a rationally designed structure of society? Far from it! The people who came to this land were fleeing from old-world tyranny. They had little else in mind than to get away from their shackles. Europeans who migrated to America observed that the more a government ruled the actions of men the worse off they became. Their conclusion: That government is best which governs least. Hardly a refined theory!

What did these settlers do? They limited government more severely than governments had theretofore been limited. An examination of the Constitution and the Bill of

Rights reveals 46 instances of “no” and “not” directed against governmental action; in short, hands off! And there they stood, freer than man had ever been before.

This American action did not occur as a rational prognosis of better things to come, for these forebears of ours hadn't the slightest idea of what lay in store for them except that each could be his own man. They chose freedom for freedom's sake alone; hang the economic or other consequences.

If we could gather all the facts, I believe that every instance of freedom has come about as a last resort. Authoritarians had tried everything in the way of controlling the creative actions of men; everything had failed and their bag of tricks was exhausted. What to do when such a dead end is reached? Indeed, what could be done in ruling creative actions? Nothing! And there stood the citizens free to act creatively as they pleased.

Freedom in every historical instance has been brought on by desperation; there simply wasn't anything else to try. And then followed the miracle which was attributed far more to organization than to freedom.

Facts concerning the U.S.A. are more abundant than in previous instances. Beginning roughly 150 years ago, people the world over observed in America something most unusual. For the first time in history, every individual, regardless of station or status, was his own man.² Each could employ himself as he saw fit, each retain the fruits of his

² One exception, of course, was Negro slavery, a horrible infraction of the freedom philosophy. The American Indian fared no better.

own labor, each decide his form of worship; in a word, freedom of choice in all aspects of life was as open to one as to another. Foreigners heard of an explosive creativity and an unprecedented prosperity—a new world in which the lowliest laborer might rise to an affluence greater than that of lords and dukes!³

The upshot? There began the greatest migration to a single country ever known. And something more: curious individuals, such as Alexis de Tocqueville, as well as governmental commissions from many nations, came here to discover the magic that had been loosed. If they could find it, they themselves could experience the miracle. Or, so they thought.

Imitations Unsuccessful

What was the message most of them took back to their countries? What was the magic word? It was *organization*. They focused their eyes on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights featuring limitations of governmental authority, separation of powers as between the legislative, judicial, and executive branches, and so on. Simple enough; merely duplicate these forms of political organization and then any society can experience the social and economic progress evident in America!

And many nations did just that, patterning their new Constitutions after our own. Indeed, it may be that Argen-

³ This and the following seven paragraphs appear in my *The Coming Aristocracy* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1969), pp. 76-78.

tina's Constitution was an improvement over ours. But take a look at any Latin American nation today, especially Argentina during the past three decades. Perón! Military juntas! Outrageous inflation! Meatless days in what was the greatest meat-producing country on earth! Ten to twelve million pesos for one of our good autos, well-equipped. Export and import at a virtual standstill! Another veritable Garden of Eden in a state of social and economic chaos! And bear in mind that the Argentinean Constitution is still there—a scrap of paper, no more!

For further proof that “organization” is not the magic word, we need only consider our own situation, the current state of affairs in the nation that provided the organizational model. I think it is not necessary to document here the nature or extent of our social collapse. That we have not fallen as low as Argentina is only because we began our decline from a higher perch. We need only bear in mind that good organization, by itself, did not insure the ascendant position.

The American Constitution was no more than a written record of what the preponderant leadership at that time believed. It was a recording of the thoughts, sentiments, and principles that made up their code and that they were capable of practicing. This document merely put their ideals in writing. The Constitution did not produce their high qualities; it was the other way round: their qualities produced the Constitution. And that's all a Constitution can ever be; it's an effect, not a cause. Instead of paying obeisance to our Constitution, we ought to be probing and admiring the thoughts of those who wrote it.

Seen in this light, it becomes clear why other nations gained nothing by copying our Constitution. Copying is useless unless the thinking be up to such a standard. And when our thinking falls below that of our Founding Fathers, our Constitution, like copies of it in other lands, becomes but a scrap of paper. To expect anything more is like expecting a rogue to change his ways by pinning on him a "good conduct" medal.

The Creative Plus

I am arguing that something much more than organizational gadgetry accounts for the good society. Social remedies are not to be found in writing a new Constitution, by amending the present one, or by adding laws upon laws. We must keep in mind that a good society and good organization are not two different sets of data to be correlated; they are simply two different aspects of the same set of facts.

Of all the foreign investigators who sought an explanation of the American miracle, Alexis de Tocqueville came closer to the right answer than anyone else known to me. At least, he knew that the miracle could not be attributed to organizational gadgetry:

I sought for the greatness and genius of America in fertile fields and boundless forests; it was not there. I sought for it in her free schools and her institutions of learning; it was not there. I sought for it in her matchless Constitution and democratic congress; it was not there. Not until I went to the churches of America and found them aflame with righteousness did I understand the greatness and

genius of America. America is great because America is good. When America ceases to be good, America will cease to be great.⁴

Aflame with righteousness! Of one thing I am certain: there can never be a good society except it be comprised of persons distinguished by righteousness. But I doubt that this alone is the magic word.

I return to Professor Hayek for the key ingredient: “. . . *in an essentially free society* certain trends have prevailed because they made for a peaceful, orderly, and progressive society.” For it is only in an essentially free society that certain trends have the possibility of prevailing: self-responsibility, improved morals, a passionate striving for intellectual excellence, a will to overcome obstacles, an energetic enthusiasm turned inward to self-improvement, an abounding entrepreneurial spirit, competition, and free pricing.

One point ought to be crystal clear: No manner of organizational gadgetry can make a great society out of unworthy people. Further, a nation of great people can suffer considerable imperfection in organization and still experience an outburst of creativity.

Observe the Florentines at the height of their creativity. We look askance at their organization, the opposite of our ideal: an all-powerful Duke of Florence, a person of dictatorial power in the driver's seat. But the limitation of

⁴ This quotation is found on pages 12-13 of the popular school text by F. A. Magruder, *American Government: A Textbook on the Problems of Democracy*. Except for the last two sentences, this is Magruder's paraphrase of Tocqueville's words.

power was more or less self-imposed by several Dukes, attaining its apogee in Lorenzo the Magnificent. In effect, he limited his great political power to keeping the peace; Florentines acted creatively as they pleased; an essentially free society prevailed which accounted for one of the greatest outbursts of creativity up to that time. The decline began with the reign of Lorenzo's son, Piero, whom the unlimited power corrupted.⁵

Creativity and Freedom

I wish only to stress that creative outbursts have a direct correlation with freedom; that freedom exists in the absence of coercive control of creative activity and that the limitation of power, whenever it has occurred, must be attributed to happenstance rather than to organizational design. And, finally, there never has been nor can there now be any avoidance of a decline in our Western societies short of a rational analysis of why societal ascendancy depends on freedom. These points, I believe, are what history has to teach; and the failure to apprehend them is not only an invitation for history to repeat itself but an assurance that it will.

The reason that creativity and social felicity can flourish only in an essentially free society is an enormous wisdom

⁵ Whose interpretation of historical events is one to trust? Which historian deduces from the facts available the real causes of what shows on the surface? My impressions of Florence, at odds with what the encyclopedias report, are from *The Medici* by G. F. Young (New York: Modern Library).

or knowledge that cannot otherwise be tapped. My own term for this is Creative Wisdom. This, I am insisting, is not only the most important but, also, the most overlooked point in political economy.⁶

As a starter, reflect on freedom's opposite, an essentially authoritarian society where the dictator or a committee of commissars—bureaucrats—plan and dictate what shall be done: what produced in what quantities and qualities, what exchanged and by whom, where citizens shall work and at what hours and wages, how educated, what thoughts may be openly expressed, and so on. On what knowledge does such a society operate? According to the authoritarian design, only on that of a discrete individual, the dictator, and his conforming henchmen—infinitesimal knowledge! Were the authoritarian design carried out to the letter—no more knowledge in operation than he and his bureaucracy possess—all would perish. And just as surely would any population perish were there no knowledge but yours or mine!

Actually, what happens in all statist arrangements is a leakage of free human energy. Independent knowledge persists in showing itself, because no bureaucracy has ever been able to bring under control all creative actions. Even in Russia, every citizen makes some choices. As in the case of lightning, the knowledge implicit in choosing zigs and zags its way along the lines of least resistance, leaks through the

⁶ Professor Hayek apprehends this exceptionally elusive fact better than anyone else known to me; indeed, I am unaware of who the others are. See his "The Uses of Knowledge in Society," *The Freeman*, May, 1961.

porosity of the authoritarian embrace. It is this leakage of knowledge which alone accounts for any and all accomplishments generally credited to statist arrangements. For it is self-evident that it is only a free, volitional action that can possibly be creative. But bear in mind that the knowledge which does show forth in these statist organizations of society is an inhibited, stifled, restrained knowledge, bureaucratically unwanted, politically illegal, and, thus, a frustrated and minimal knowledge. All knowledge in society stems from freedom trying to operate, and only when this fact is overlooked do people come to believe that an authoritarian society has possibilities worth exploring. It is the knowledge that leaks out despite the Plan that accounts for all the accomplishment, but people see only the Plan and mistakenly attribute the accomplishment to it.

Now, reflect on the knowledge that emanates from an essentially free society. It is a luminosity so brilliant that, by and large, we are blinded not only to its genesis but even to its part in our lives. The blessings it confers are taken for granted as is the gift of sunshine—automatically our daily due.

The Role for Rationality

Here we have a role for rationality. We will either discover how to give this luminosity—Creative Wisdom—a rational analysis; or we will lose it—that is, history will repeat itself.

The enormous knowledge that emanates from an essentially free society develops by reason of the fact that in such

a society no person imposes his will by force upon any other person. Were such imposition possible, that society would not be free. When no one can restrain anyone else in his creative actions, then knowledge, ideas, insights are free to emerge from many millions of potential sources. Creativity, in this event, has no external inhibition!

Potential sources! This is one of the key points in any rational analysis. No one can even remotely guess where bits of knowledge will originate. Example: Some decades ago, in the state of Michigan, an angry brakeman picked up a young railroad newsboy by the ears and threw him into the baggage car. For all anybody knew, he was an ordinary waif named Tom. Who could then have guessed the potentiality in the lad who later became known to the world as Thomas Alva Edison!

Every normal person on this earth has a bit of unpredictable Edison in him. From whom an idea will burst forth can no more be foreseen than one can know today what tomorrow may bring. Freedom taps this richest of all the world's resources and assures us that society will have the use of all the knowledge there is or ever will be!

The knowledge freedom makes available to all of us is unimaginably greater than the knowledge that can issue from those who would rule others, for they suffer the greatest ignorance of all: an unawareness of how little they know.

Who in our field, for instance, is more knowledgeable than Professor Ludwig von Mises? He once was asked, "Were you the dictator of these United States, what steps would you take to remedy our current ills?" Mises replied, "I would abdicate." His response evokes a hearty chuckle,

because it's so startlingly at odds with the popular mode. Most people, unaware of how little they know, would respond with suggestions for ruling. Mises—wiser—knows he lacks the wisdom to rule, an understanding as rare as it is profound.

Those of us without such deep understanding are unaware of any impressive alternative to your or my rule. To ever so many people, it's only a question of *who* shall rule: you, someone else, or I? Generally, I am more impressed with my knowledge than yours, and vice versa. Overlooked is the fact that your knowledge or mine is infinitesimal, that not enough knowledge exists in any discrete individual to rule a single person, let alone a society. Also overlooked—and this is my point—is the almost unknown alternative, strikingly impressive, once it is apprehended. That alternative is the aggregate of all the knowledge issuing in literally trillions of tiny bits from all who live, which I refer to as Creative Wisdom.

Two Steps

Two steps are required to grasp the alternative to the minuscule knowledge that can issue from authoritarian arrangements. The first is to recognize that there is actually such a phenomenal force as Creative Wisdom. The second is not so much to understand precisely how tiny bits of knowledge form into a magnificent whole—a brilliant luminosity—but to know for certain that these bits will automatically form in an essentially free society. Rationally, how may these steps be taken?

The first is easy. Take any manufactured thing—an automobile will suffice. What is this thing? It's a product resulting from the application of human knowledge—inventions, discoveries, ideas—to the resources of Creation.

Reflect on the knowledge that accounts for the automobile. The automobile is inconceivable apart from the fact that someone, eons ago, harnessed fire, and later invented zero, and learned how to refine ore. It is no exaggeration to claim that bits of knowledge by the trillions prefaced today's motor vehicle. Note that this knowledge spans the period of human consciousness and that much of it was experienced before there was even the idea of an auto.

To complete this exercise, merely reflect on how little of this knowledge you contributed. A tiny bit, if any, regardless of whether you are a coal miner or the President of General Motors! No single person has the knowledge to make a thing as simple as a pencil, let alone an automobile.⁷ Yet, pencils are made by the billions and autos by the millions, annually. The explanation lies in that phenomenal, over-all knowledge, that brilliant luminosity: Creative Wisdom.

Nor should we ever limit these observations to things. You and I are less competent to structure another human being than to build an automobile. And still less competent to structure society. All progress stems from Creative Wisdom, none from human masterminding.

The second step—seeing how Creative Wisdom is formed—

⁷ See the chapter, "Only God Can Make a Tree—Or a Pencil" in *Anything That's Peaceful* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1964).

may be beyond our comprehension. Trillions of knowledge-bits, from moments to eons apart and originating in persons rarely known to each other, form into a phenomenal, effectively working whole. How can their coalescence be explained?

It seems to me that society is blessed with a performance observed in nature: molecules coalescing to form in one instance a tree, in other instances a blade of grass, a rock, a lily of the valley, on and on in an infinite display. Merely note that the coalescence is automatic as long as the molecules are free to form. I cannot make a tree, but I can interfere with its development.

It is inconceivable that any human mind, regardless of how brilliant and wise, could coalesce these trillions of disparate bits of knowledge. What is it, then, that brings them together for their remarkable and countless performances? There has to be an ingathering or beckoning force and we should have some idea as to what it is or how it functions.

This beckoning force, I believe, operates through self-interest—the profit motive, material and psychic,⁸ plus competition and free pricing—these being found only in an essentially free society.

Price is the monetary message of self-interest, the voice of subjective judgments. Its call penetrates not only our own society, but societies the world over. For instance, if one wants more tomatoes for his canning business, he only has to announce an attractive price; it's that simple. Further, no

⁸ For my comments on material and psychic profit, see the chapter "What Shall It Profit A Man?" in *Deeper Than You Think* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y., The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1967).

more market wisdom is required on the part of potential suppliers than the ability to read a price; anyone can do it. In a word, tomatoes go where price beckons. But this is my point: Price coordinates or brings together the countless fractions of expertise involved in tomato production and distribution: soil culture, planting and harvesting machinery, trucking and railroading, indeed, bits of know-how too numerous to calculate.

Let me repeat: While I have used *things* for the purpose of illustration. Creative Wisdom applies no less to social, moral, and related problems. I can no more ingather the knowledge to run society or other people's lives than I can make an automobile or a jet.

In any event, rationality does not require that I comprehend *everything* about life in order to affirm my certainty that life exists. And by the same token, rationality does not require that I comprehend *precisely* how trillions of tiny bits of knowledge form into Creative Wisdom in order to affirm my certainty that this is a phenomenon essential to life.

Finally, Creative Wisdom functions only in freedom. To avoid another disastrous decline and fall, we must not only know that freedom *is* essential but must try to know *why* it is essential. This is the lesson that history teaches.

Here, indeed, is a role for rationality.

LET'S BE PHILOSOPHERS

WE CAN GAIN in self-controlled, rational activity only as we become what I call philosophers. Viewing ourselves in this role brings forth a few more thoughts about why the overall luminosity—Creative Wisdom—brightens among free men.

Tradition has it that philosophy is a discipline reserved for rare souls with brilliant minds and an esoteric bent. I propose a break with this tradition: let's all be philosophers! We can begin by understanding what philosophy embraces in its most meaningful sense.

Ortega describes philosophy as going down deep for underlying causes and forces and surfacing with them, that is, bringing them up in clarity for the sake of understanding. Thus, the philosopher is the clarifier, the simplifier of complex reality, the one who can see through and explain in terms that others may also see. If he does this well, we call him a "seer."

Parenthetically, it is doubtful if anyone ever clearly sees that which he cannot bring to the surface in clarity, which is to say that no idea is clear in the mind of a person if he

cannot lucidly express it in words. An idea, committed to words, is but the reflection of what's in the mind; if the reflection is fuzzy, so is the original. An intelligible idea can be plainly articulated.

Bringing difficult matters to the surface—clarification to the point where others may behold and use them—gives us a helpful picture. But it occurs to me that “going deep” conjures up a wrong impression as to where truth and ideas, awaiting apprehension, are to be found. Using this analogy, we may visualize a globe with ourselves on the surface. So far, so good! “Going deep,” however, suggests that the probing—searching for truth—is toward the globe's center. Were this the case, then the deeper philosophers probe, the nearer would they come to agreement; they would be working toward a common position. Eventually, there at center would stand the philosophers, all in unison, proclaiming Truth in its pristine purity.

This going-down-deep analogy simply does not square with reality. For proof, take a look at the findings and explanations of some four hundred of the most famous philosophers who have lived¹—and note how rarely have any two seen the same things. Here some light, there a flicker, with each philosopher seeing and explaining some tiny point different from all other sightings. I can find no evidence that these intellectual giants have been moving toward a common point or center. To the contrary, each appears to find a fragment which he brings to the surface as a bit of light.

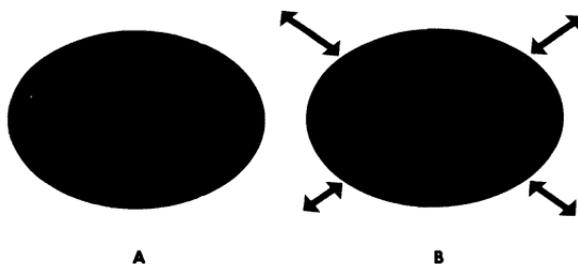
¹ See *Treasury of Philosophy*, ed. by Dagobert D. Runes (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1955, 1280 pp.)

There isn't necessarily a contradiction in the findings, but there is an impressive lack of unanimity.

How, then, can we better visualize what actually occurs?

Simply imagine a globe with all of us on the surface, as before, with the lines of search stretching up and away rather than down and deep. The lines, instead of converging toward a center, are diverging as they reach out toward an ever-expanding and limitless periphery—the infinite.

Our customary way of thinking has philosophers going deep and bringing their findings back to the surface as in A. Instead, they go up and outward and bring their findings back to the surface as in B:



The A diagram pictures the searchers for and explainers of truth coming closer to agreement the “deeper” they probe. This is false. B, on the other hand, has them probing outward and bringing back to the surface bits of truth that are always new and different. The further they probe, the greater the divergence. This squares with what we observe—the gist of the matter.

Now, here's where we come in. According to the above description, philosophers are not merely the few who have

distinguished themselves historically—become famous—but every last one of the countless millions—known and unknown—who reach out, discover, and bring back to the surface rays of light: creativities, inventions, insights as we call them, ideas. Admitted as philosophers in this description are the unknowns who discovered how to harness fire, invented zero, and so on. Indeed, our tribe, when described this way, goes back to the dawn of self-consciousness and includes all persons past or present who have probed, found, and brought to the surface any bit of light. There have been trillions of flickers and flashes, from the dimmest to the brightest.

At first blush, this thesis gives the appearance of beating a very tiny drum. But there's more to it than first meets the eye.

Consider the millions of us on the surface and how bewildered we are by the absence of unanimity among those who sincerely search for truth and seriously try to explain and clarify their findings. Instead of their findings moving toward a hoped-for agreement, these impress us as more and more antagonistic; they seem to be at sixes and sevens. This isn't, we are prone to believe, the way it ought to be. But we need to take another look: these seeming antagonisms are not *necessarily* antagonisms but, rather, varying fragments on which evolution and all progress are dependent.² For peace of mind, we need to see these variances for what they really are: assets, not liabilities.

² When I say "*necessarily* antagonistic," I am trying to embrace only those findings which lead in the direction of truth. Admittedly, many sincere searchers bring horrible error to the surface.

That which philosophers seek and sometimes find and bring back to the surface is, hopefully, and often is, a bit of truth. And, interestingly enough, the more the prober knows of truth, the more he knows he doesn't know. The more he finds, the more he should know there is to find. This is finite man in a never-ending invasion of infinity—man's wonderful destiny.

Put it another way: Out and away from the surface, challenging man now and forever, is unseen truth, a limitless darkness. Truth can only be found in an infinity of fragments—call them ideas—awaiting apprehension. And the moment any idea is apprehended it becomes a light. Philosophers bring to the surface these tiny rays of light which, in their aggregate over the millennia, result in an enormous luminosity.

The Elusiveness of Truth

Without denying that there are verities, we observe that new-found truths are forever correcting or even displacing earlier "truths." A new bulb for one that has dimmed or burned out! One of countless examples: Galileo affirmed the theory of Copernicus that the solar system does not revolve around our earth. Galileo brought a new ray of light to the surface by a new apprehension; he added to the illumination by which we live and evolve. So long as we do not go static, that is, so long as we are philosophers, truth will remain an ever-elusive, advancing object, a wisdom to be pursued but never captured entirely.

We should bear in mind that man progresses or regresses,

which is to say, humanity evolves or devolves as the surface luminosity dims or brightens. It seems to follow that everything in life that matters hinges on our competency as philosophers.

This luminosity, gathered within the history of mankind—rays of light by the trillions—is sometimes referred to as “knowledge in society” rather than my own favorite term: “Creative Wisdom.”

Once the enormity of Creative Wisdom—the luminosity—is grasped we see that:

- The wisdom by which we live is unimaginably greater than can possibly exist in any discrete individual;
- All forms of authoritarianism are pompous nonsense;
- These trillions of tiny know-hows—ideas—to be useful, must flow and exchange freely, which explains our vital need for individual liberty;
- The miracle of the free market is the miraculous coalescence of these tiny rays of light into the over-all luminosity;
- It is possible to have jets, cars, pencils, and a million other things without any one person knowing how to make them;
- We can trust mail delivery or any other creative activity to the free market;
- We are the beneficiaries of countless economic, political, moral, ethical, and spiritual principles we have not ourselves deduced;
- We owe our lives to this inheritance and, as specialists, we are interdependent;

- My freedom depends upon yours.

Philosophy—the pursuit of truth and bringing the findings to the surface in clarity—is not reserved to those with brilliant minds and an esoteric bent. Philosophy is for you and me and for every human being who cares one whit about his own growth and the welfare of others.

I say, let's all try to be philosophers!

YOU CAN'T TRANSPLANT A FACULTY

THE PRECEDING CHAPTER makes the claim that “all forms of authoritarianism are pompous nonsense.” This seems self-evident to anyone who grasps the unimaginable content of the over-all luminosity and the infinitesimal part any discrete individual has or can have in its composition. There is, however, another way to demonstrate the utter fallacy of authoritarianism in the absence of which freedom reigns.

While technicians may, sooner or later, successfully transplant hearts, eyes, and other human organs, no one will ever succeed in transplanting such innate faculties as conditioned reflexes, intuitions, insights, volitional actions, and the like. These native aptitudes are exclusively private, personal, individualistic, and can no more be transplanted than can a dream or a vision.

This claim will arouse no dissent when expressed in theoretical terms; but many people have a yen for back-seat driving, and I think it can be shown that a back-seat driver foolishly or unwittingly attempts to transplant a faculty.

Millions of people are afflicted with the back-seat driver syndrome, and this is freedom's widespread and persistent enemy.

Thus, if freedom be our destination, then the prevalent itch to do back-seat driving ought to be restrained. But this bad habit isn't curable until we recognize that a driver, regardless of competence, can drive better when left to his own resources than when confused by instructions from behind.

In automobiles, back-seat drivers range all the way from a kindly advisor to a thug with a gun in your back.

In society, back-seat drivers range all the way from "friendly," unsolicited instructors, to associational resolutions, to edicts by both private and public bodies backed by force, some legal and some not.

Of Automobiles and Society

We are inclined to view with disfavor the person who tries to direct a driver from the back seat, or the parent who tells his offspring whom to marry, or the neighbor who is always telling us what to wear, eat, drink, think. These intimate busybodies or back-seat drivers are more often shunned than sought. Yet, we who frown on these intimate, personal intruders are likely to find upon careful self-inspection that we ourselves are remote, impersonal intruders, distinguished only by being further removed from those we would instruct than are the more intimate busybodies. What I wish to explain is that back-seat driving in society is strikingly analogous to back-seat driving in automobiles.

Two recent questions impressed upon me how widespread is the impulse for back-seat driving in matters of social import. The first: "Can you suggest a man big enough to head a citizens' committee that could cope with campus strife and other breakdowns in law and order?" My answer: "He doesn't exist." The second: "Should we not insist that economics be taught in all high schools?" My answer: "No."

How gentle these questions, and how seemingly far removed from the authoritarian mentality! Yet, this way of looking at problems other than our own reveals a lack of understanding of the driver-training process, whether it be driving a car or working out one's own destiny. This way of looking at social problems, however innocently, is the genesis of authoritarianism. It reveals an unawareness of how freedom works.

As for driving a car, suppose you had to mentally formulate and word the message before each move of the wheel, each touch of the brake or the accelerator. Messages from the eye to the brain to the hands and feet are far too slow; you couldn't drive. If you are a competent driver, all of these movements have been relegated to the conditioned reflexes. Your thinking is reserved for the unexpected on the road, how to avoid hitting or getting hit by other drivers, and where it is you want to go.

Now, suppose that instructions from a back-seat driver are substituted for both your thinking and your conditioned reflexes, that you are downgraded to an automaton. The thinking, more than likely, will be inferior to your own. But even more serious, conditioned reflexes would not be in operation at all. In view of the fact that conditioned re-

flexes cannot be transplanted, split-second actions and reactions are out of the question; car driving becomes an utter impossibility.¹ However, up to this point, I am only pointing out the obvious.

Not so obvious is what happens in the case of social back-seat drivers. We who would play that role are unable to imagine a good and flourishing society except as others are guided by our lights. We insist on minding the business of others which, were they to heed us, would make them less competent than they are now, whatever that level. We fail to grasp this point only because we do not understand how freedom works.

Parenthetically, I concede that it is correct in principle, as well as necessary, to formalize and enforce the taboos against destructive activities: fraud, violence, and so on. Invoking a common justice and keeping the peace is what government is for. And this is as far as any of us should ever go in interfering with the actions of others. This is another way of saying that, when it comes to creative activities, let us be done with contriving what others should do and how they shall act. Leave them alone except, of course, when our counsel or tutorship is sought. And have faith that their behavior will be superior to their performance under our intrusive prescriptions.

Upon what is such a faith founded? It rests upon the fact that numerous complex faculties are singularly and exclu-

¹ Some scientists may insist that transplanting conditioned reflexes is within the realm of possibility. For they have succeeded, by the use of DNA, in doing this first to flat worms and now to rats. But not to taxi drivers. If they ever do, I'm walking!

sively manifested in each person who lives on this earth. These include not only the power to think and the conditioned reflexes employed as when driving a car, but also inventiveness, intuition, the ability to will, choose, decide; in a word, volition. Every iota of human creativity stems from these discrete, unique sources, these individual wellsprings—dynamos, so to speak, varying in power from very low to very high. Nor has the make-up or combination of faculties in any one of these power sources ever been duplicated in any other. Each person is unique.

Each of us is the possessor and protagonist of his own nontransferable life.² I may never do very much with my own possessions but I will do more with what I have if left to my own resources and on my own responsibility than if others interfere with the free employment of my faculties. To the extent that others do not interfere with my creative potentialities, I am free. Only when I am free can the best that is in me show forth. If you interfere, even as a “friendly” busybody, then you confuse, frustrate, and stifle such generative capacity as lies within my power: *you turn me off!* Remember that I am as unique and as complex as are you. And it is easily demonstrable that you know very little about yourself, far less about me.

All of this comes clear when we analyze the back-seat car driver—a personal, intimate situation—substituting his guidance for a relatively simple operation in which only a few faculties are employed. Consider, then, the far greater hazard of inflicting your views on people unknown to you,

² José Ortega y Gasset.

in an operation as big as the destiny of man, attempting to alter the conglomeration of faculties in each of millions of persons, faculties which you cannot even identify by name, much less understand. The social back-seat driver by his remote, impersonal intrusions is incalculably more absurd than is the back-seat driver in a car with his intimate, personal intrusions!

Creative Faculties Are Exclusive

Why does freedom work? Why is it that you, for instance, when left alone and free from intrusions, do better than when another attempts to make you into a carbon copy of himself? The answer, of course, relates to the free functioning of *your creative faculties!* Your faculties may be of low or high generative capacity, but *they are exclusively yours.* Your faculties are yours alone and nontransferable; and the same applies to every other individual. A faculty transplant is impossible and that is what social back-seat drivers do not apprehend. Try to transplant apprehension!

The social back-seat driver has at least two effects: (1) to the extent that one person imposes his will on another, he thwarts and stifles that other's generative capacity, and (2) by casting his eye fruitlessly on others, the back-seat driver neglects his own much-needed upgrading. The fact that he is a back-seat driver is testimony enough that the need is his.

Freedom works its wonders simply because the generative capacity of countless millions has no external force standing against its release!

The aggregate of this creative human energy is so far beyond our power to imagine that, by and large, we have no faith in it and the wonders it works. How can I believe in something my mind cannot encompass! Yet, to have faith in freedom requires that I believe in this incomprehensible creative power. Summarizing, this is how my own belief is founded:

1. I observe how frustrating back-seat drivers are to me and how my best shows forth in their absence. Then I multiply this minus-to-plus shift by countless millions of others, arriving at an incomprehensible human creativity.
2. History reveals to me that civilizations form and rise when freedom is the mode and decline with back-seat driving authoritarianism.
3. It is clear that all progress stems from the nontransplantable faculties of unique individuals, generating at their best when free and unrestrained.

Macro Problems

Let us now return to those opening questions: "Can you suggest a man big enough to head a citizens' committee that could cope with campus strife and other breakdowns in law and order?" and "Should we not insist that economics be taught in all high schools?"

These questions, typical of countless others heard daily, are so gentle that they seem unrelated to that political authoritarianism decried by the questioners. But observe what analysis reveals.

Implicit in the first question is the acknowledgment that campus strife and other breakdowns in law and order are too big for the questioner. So he's looking for a man as big as the problem: a macro man to cope with a macro problem.³ And a *Macro Man* is what enough of this kind of searching will uncover: Der Fuehrer! For precisely the same reason that the questioner isn't big enough to cope with the problem, a point he admits, neither is anyone else. No one else can transplant faculties either. In this respect, all are impotent.

Why such delegation in desperation? It is a common response to an insistence for order with no realization that this road must end in utter chaos.⁴ What's going on in our homeland is strikingly similar to what went on in Germany prior to Hitler's rise to power. They wanted a man "big enough" and they got him. But he was big only in ignorance and the capacity to slaughter.

If we go deeper for an explanation of this desperation

³ Macro: meaning large; comprising the universe; as distinguished from the individual components. Macro economics, for instance, refers to the economy as a whole without relation to the individual components. The term recently has come into popular use for what might otherwise be called the economics of collectivism, the centrally planned economy, the welfare state, with emphasis on national income, social progress, full employment, and the like, instead of private property, freedom of choice, self-responsibility, and other aspects of individualistic "micro economics."

In earlier times, macro economics had its equivalent in tribal custom, feudalism, mercantilism, and other variants of collectivism. Today, its top practitioners are to be found in Russia, Red China, Uruguay, Cuba.

⁴ See the chapter, "Incomprehensible Order," in my *The Free Market and Its Enemy* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1965), pp. 50-67.

thinking, I believe it lies in the tendency to mind other people's business, nicely illustrated by "Should we not insist on the teaching of economics in all high schools?" This question has the same flavor as "What we ought to have in every high school and college in this country is a compulsory course in freedom."

Economics in all high schools! Where are the teachers and the textbooks? Most of what's being written and taught is of the macro brand. Better that there be none of it! And who among the millions of students have any desire to learn economics, or could learn if they tried? Maybe one in a thousand! Might as well insist on the teaching of paleoecology!

My point, however, has to do with this kind of back-seat driving—people forever concocting designs for the rest of us. If a few people insist that economics be taught in all high schools, economics will be a "required" discipline; government will be brought into the act. So many of these intrusive and nonsensical designs have been foisted upon us that today our society is overburdened with rubble, countless monkey wrenches in the machinery. Small wonder that we have a macro problem and that people are looking around for a man big enough to cope with it.

When Freedom Reigns

What is the remedy? It is to recognize the fallacy of back-seat driving, to quit these attempts at faculty transplants, to let people alone in their creative activities. Forswear designing what they should study, think, produce, exchange,

where they should work, what their hours and wages should be, and so on. Relieve ourselves of this fruitless meddling and watch the rubble disappear. See how quickly individuals improve themselves!

Would a society free from this meddling conform to my present idea of the ideal? Indeed, it would not! It would be *better* than anything I can imagine, just as America excelled anything its founders had in mind.

We can have faith in freedom by simply acknowledging that we already know how the driver-training process really works: Instead of my telling you what to do, you seek tutorship if and when you want it. The process is that simple and that sensible.

That no one of us can ever figure out how this humpty-dumpty can be put back together again is conceded. But we don't have to know. If we will merely quit our back-seat driving, stop trying to graft our own faculties onto others, it will put itself back together. God gave me only myself to control, not the world. The message I get is to let Creation work its wonders! This is possible only when freedom reigns.

THE MIRACLE OF A MEAL

I LIKE to emphasize again and again the common and careless inclination to take our blessings for granted, and why we should not do so. Miracles of the free market abound in our daily experiences but, short of an appreciation of what accounts for our affluent existence, we'll do nothing to preserve the miraculous process; we'll let it go by default!

Day-in and day-out experiences? To illustrate, here's a homey case in point, commonplace as our daily bread; indeed, it's about an ordinary dinner and, for good measure, with the recipe thrown in.

'Twas a Sunday morning. The two of us had given no thought to any eating for the day except the conventional orange juice and coffee and the unconventional sautéed chicken livers and bean soup for breakfast. Let the rest of the day take care of itself! Then the not-too-unconventional thing happened: three unexpected guests for dinner!

What to do? Westchester County has numerous restaurants of moderate quality. Why shouldn't the five of us dine out? That's the expedient even if the expensive solution—the escapist way. But to the gent who likes to cook,

this is also to run from a challenge; it is to accept conventional check-writing while rejecting exciting culinary creation.

An inventory of the refrigerator revealed some staples but nothing in the way of main-course fare except a cup of canned tuna and a cup and a half of left-over roast chicken—not much of a start for a table of five. Yet, it was this paucity of supplies that presented the challenge. The Chinese approach came to mind—a little meat and fish for flavor and many vegetables for good diet and bulk.

Two utensils were brought forth from the gadgetry closet and placed on the stove. One was an enameled cast iron casserole, an art of the Belgians, Dutch, and French—lost for years—in production again as the finest cooking ware there is. The other was a large, shallow, steel bowl used in Chinese kitchens for numerous kinds of cookery and called a “woc.”

A tablespoon each of butter and flour went into the casserole for a roux. After whisking and cooking over a low heat, two cups of an excellent chicken stock, made by a lady in Connecticut, were added and blended. Added and blended into this was the following, already combined: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of water, a heaping tablespoon brown sugar, juice of one lemon, 2 tablespoons soy sauce, a smidgen of Accent, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon Pernod, and a tablespoon of corn starch which gives the sauce that glistening effect achieved by the Chinese. At this point, the heat was turned off under the casserole. Then was added a large clove of garlic, put through a garlic press, 1 can bean sprouts, drained and rinsed, and the tuna.

Now to the woc. Five slices of bacon were chopped and sautéed to a near crispness, the pieces, drained of the grease, added to the casserole. The grease was removed from the woc and then returned sparingly for the following high heat and quick sautéing, each put in the casserole when no more than half cooked: cup of chopped celery, can of water chestnuts, drained and sliced, a cup of chopped scallions, and a cup of sliced mushrooms. Last, the chicken was browned and added to the casserole.¹

Well, there's the concoction; call it a chop suey, a salmagundi, or what you will. I merely mixed the sauce and ingredients with a fork, put the cover on the casserole, brought it to a simmer, and served the stuff over rice in soup plates. I announced to my hoped-for admirers, "We're in business!"

The Miracle Workers

Anyway, this dish came off first-rate and it was pronounced "Delectable!" Wanting at least to affect modesty, and seeing an opportunity unobtrusively to strike another blow for the free market, I demurred by saying: "I had very little to do with this Chinese hash. Many tens of thousands of persons had a hand in its making." This remark evoked more in the way of astonishment than did the savoriness in the way of "ums" and "ahs."

I explained: "Consider the persons who made my uten-

¹ Had I not been improvising, I would have preferred to the chicken and tuna 3 pork chops, cut in small pieces, and sautéed.

sils, the ones who discovered how to enamel cast iron, and all of those who had to do with the facilities of manufacture. Who grew and milled and packaged the rice? From whence came the vegetables, and who brought them to market, and who had a part in the transportation and communication apparatus? The gal in Connecticut who processed the chicken stock had a part in this dish, as did the fishermen who caught the albacore and the folks who made their boats and tackle—and the canners and the makers of cans. Reflect, also, on the countless persons who saved, thus providing the capital for all of the enterprises. Think of the army of people who brought the gas to my stove. Above all, bear in mind that not one ingredient used in this preparation was grown, mined, fabricated, or transported by me. Numberless thousands, perhaps millions, through space and time, lent their services for this which you now declare delectable.”

“But,” retorted one of our guests, “it has always been thus. What you speak of as if it were a miracle is really commonplace. Aren’t you making much ado about nothing?”

“Indeed, I am not. To get a full appreciation of my point, I shall give you a copy of Weaver’s *Mainspring*.² Read this and you will get the history of freedom and its meaning to you as a person. You will see that most of the people who have inhabited this earth have been faced with famine and starvation; that in most countries only a certain few have been able to command the services of

² As do many others, I keep a supply of this remarkable book on hand for passing on to anyone whose interest in the freedom philosophy appears to be sprouting. Obtainable from FEE in paperback.

others. The historical rarity is where persons, in moderate circumstances like ourselves, can obtain the services of millions in exchange for some minor specializations of our own. The abundance we are experiencing at this table is no longer necessarily confined to kings and commissars and monopolists, the special privileged, to successful pirates and thieves. A way is known, at least to a few, that can make a meal like this the fare of anyone who is willing to work. It is this little known way that constitutes by far the most important ingredient of any good meal."

"What is this way in a few well-edited words?"

"This way is to *get out of the way* of all creative activities, an absence of authoritarianism. As a consequence of getting out of the way, there is a releasing, a flowering of creative energy. We refer to this as the free market, private ownership, limited government way of life."

"You have carried brevity too far. Can't you expand on this a bit?"

"Not adequately during a dinner hour. In essence, however, it is simply to leave everybody totally free to act creatively as he pleases, to let anyone and everyone exchange their goods and services with whomever they choose on whatever terms can be mutually agreed upon, to let the fruits of one's labor be one's own, and to limit government—society's agency of force—to the protection of everyone equally in these freedoms."

"Do you mean that government should never assume the role of Robin Hood?"

"That is precisely what I mean. Political Robin Hoodism is like taking 20 points from the student who graded 95

and giving the 20 points to the student who graded 55: this would give each a grade of 75, adequate for passing. The first will work less because his incentive has been removed, and the second will see no point in working at all because he has become the object of something for nothing. Fancy names for this way of life are Egalitarianism, Dirigisme, Etatism. Labels more familiar to us are Communalism, Communism, Socialism, or just plain Welfare State.”

“You go too far in limiting government. Imagine the chaos there would be in a complex society like ours if government were not managing the economy at all.”

“When you say I go too far, you are really saying you favor some predation, providing it is legal, and that I am wrong for being opposed to all of it. And as to government management of the economy, could you manage it or organize its management? Let me make this easier for you. Could you have directed the creative activity that went into the making of the woc that sautéed our food?³ Or that went into the other ingredients employed by us today? Could you direct just one person in invention, discovery, ingenuity? Why, directing your own self in this respect is a bigger chore than you can fulfill. And what makes you think that voting you into or appointing you to some political office betters your capacities? By doing this, we would make you less capable. If we give you power to direct us, that will corrupt you. Examine yourself and your limitations, add a dose of corruption, and you will see the true nature of an

³ There isn't a single person in the United States Steel Corporation who could do this!

authoritarian, the one who presumes to direct the creative lives of people within a society. And, remember, everyone else, no matter how skilled in other ways or how well educated, is just as incompetent as you are when it comes to controlling the productive lives of others.”

“But, under your system how are the poor fed?”

“You are now witnessing the answer. The principles I have but casually touched upon have been practiced in the U.S.A. more than elsewhere, and the poor are better fed here than in those countries where these principles are less practiced. All five of us started with no inheritance beyond what God gave us. We are the beneficiaries of freedom. We not only have good food by reason of it; we have life and the opportunity to enrich our lives intellectually and spiritually by reason of it.”

“Why, though, do you dwell so passionately on the subject? Your talk would imply that freedom is precariously held; that it’s something we are in imminent danger of losing.”

“We are in danger of losing our freedom. You and millions of others are taking freedom for granted, so much so that you embrace authoritarian ideas as long as they are legally clothed and democratically implemented. Only now and then can a skilled expositor of the free market, private ownership, limited government way of life be found. Socialism (authoritarianism)—freedom’s opposite—is on the increase, and dangerously so.”

“I did not know this.”

“Without an understanding of freedom and how it works, you couldn’t possibly know this.”

“Anyway, I enjoyed your dish.”

“Well, thanks. And, please don’t think I have been talking irrelevantly. I only want you to know the whole recipe and to realize that numberless thousands of others, past and present, were ‘cheffing’ for you this day. Here’s a toast to their health and happiness, all of them, and, with a wine from California—to the vintners, and to all the folks through the ages who brought it to perfection and to our table.”

The right words didn’t occur to me until after my guests had departed. I should have concluded that meal with, “Here’s a toast to free men, the miracle workers!”

CONFESSIONS OF A RICH MAN

TRUE, we are threatened by disaster. But an appreciation of the wonders freedom has made possible cannot help but impress on all of us the importance of doing everything within our power to avert another decline and fall.

What can inspire us to discover and then to exert our utmost powers in this respect? In our work and in our games competition is among the forces that move us toward excellence. Competition, however, appears to have little or no influence in making us better students and expositors of freedom.

The following self-analysis is an attempt to discover what moves me to better understand, explain, defend, and expand freedom. Note that the force at work is not competition—would that it were!—but appreciation.

There are many thousands of persons in America today whose assets exceed a million dollars. I am personally acquainted with numerous millionaires who acknowledge their status and with many more who do not. Some of these men, indeed, give every appearance of trying desperately to keep their heads above water; they put me to shame when it

comes to economizing! I may even know a billionaire or two.

No trillionaires are yet known to me, although there are some prospects. Trillionaires, it seems, are not self-made but government-made. In Germany, for instance, following World War I, when the inflation reached the point that 30 million marks wouldn't buy a loaf of bread, trillionaires were a dime a dozen.

These observations lead me to the conclusion that adding up dollar assets is not necessarily the best way to decide who is rich and who is not. Actually, this is the old-fashioned way of assessing affluence: acres of land, size of castle, number and quality of jewels, how many serfs, slaves, servants, or ducats in the vault. On this basis the legendary Midas, Croesus, kings of England, and German trillionaires would be accounted richer than I am. *And I say they are not!*

Applying concepts conceived during the past six or seven generations, I may be among the very rich. And bear in mind that I do not have many dollars stashed away; that FEE is not nor has it ever been a part of the social security system; and that I have refused to accept Medicare which, in turn, made me ineligible to continue my Blue Cross and Blue Shield insurance. By the old standards of measurement, I am far from a well-to-do individual. Why, then, do I think of myself as so rich?

First, consider the little I do—not a single thing which, by itself, sustains life. I only read and write and speak abstract stuff—a theoretician of sorts.

Next, observe the goods and services I obtain in exchange

for the infinitesimal mite I offer on the market:

Others raise every bit of my food and it comes not only from our fifty states but there's lamb from New Zealand, cheese from Italy, Switzerland, England, endive from Belgium, fish from the North Sea, snails from France, caviar from Budapest, bananas from Honduras, on and on.

They built my home and the hundred-and-one furnishings which make it livable and attractive.

They extract gas from beneath the surface in Texas and deliver it to me in New York, and they supply me with electricity which I use to cook and to run several dozen household gadgets which they made, and not one of which was more than a dream when I was born.

They educated my children and provide the literature used for my own edification.

They make the cars I drive and the clothes I wear.

They air-condition my home and workroom.

They build airplanes and pay my fare on them all over this nation and to many other countries, permitting me to meet and know the finest thinkers of our times.

After building a fine golf course and adding a curling rink, they allow me membership and pay my dues and expenses.

They mow my lawn and pipe water into its sprinkler system which they concocted—and they provide water for me to drink.

They make my pencils, pens, typewriters, and paper to write on.

They provide a communications system which permits me to talk with countless individuals in our fifty states in a matter of seconds; indeed, to people in many other nations.

They provide me with numerous associates of high libertarian rank and skills and a splendid physical facility complete with library, machinery, and other tools that we may labor on behalf of the freedom philosophy.

Frankly, so numerous are the goods and services and blessings available to me that I am incapable of recounting them. Croesus never came close to having the riches which are mine. And, doubtless, this goes for you, too.¹

Who Is Rich?

Richness, in the sense I use the term, is a subjective judgment. It rests on the value one attaches to what he has. Reflect on the many so-called affluent people who take their countless blessings for granted, as if everything were their due. Their appreciation is next to zero. Based on the subjective theory of value—the correct theory—these people, regardless of how high their dollar status, are poor. And they never can become rich except as their appreciation sensitivity increases.

“My cup runneth over.” How can this be explained? It’s not because of my capabilities; they’re minuscule; indeed, I make hardly a thing by which I live. It’s because of a

¹ Asked one counter waitress of another, “Where are you going for your vacation?” Nonchalantly, “This summer, to Europe!”

sensitive appreciation of the miraculous: *receiving so much in return for so little!* When I flick a switch and the music of Beethoven fills the room, a sense of awe is experienced. The tiniest things convey this sense. The use of a pencil or a bite into a piece of toast is accompanied by appreciation. If I value those things which grace my life more than others, then I am richer than others. We are acquainted with "the poor little rich boy": many dollars, no appreciation, unhappy. Happiness comes to those who highly value what they have; these are the truly rich.

But I must not let this thesis be misinterpreted. Mine is not Thoreau's argument that "I am rich in the number of things I can do without." Rather, I am suggesting that richness is determined more by how highly one values what he has than by a mere statistic of possessions. To assess an individual's richness—one's own or another's—requires an appraisal of his subjective evaluation of what he has: if low, poor; if high, rich.

Analyzing richness in this manner leads to an important discovery, at least to a point that has never occurred to me before: Unless an individual is acutely sensitive to all-he-obtains-for-so-little as miracles of the free market—as blessings—he will have no special concern for the free market's preservation and improvement. One who is unaware that freedom is responsible for his largesse is easy prey for all the socialistic clichés authoritarians can invent. This common insensitivity also solves an annoying puzzle, that is, it explains to me for the first time why countless so-called wealthy people have no interest whatsoever in the freedom philosophy.

In fact, as one reflects on the matter, there isn't a strong incentive for the person who "has it made" to pursue a way of life that spells opportunity. Getting ahead isn't any longer a problem; he *is* ahead—he thinks! The natural incentive working on such a person, unless downed by reason, is to "hole up" with what he has, to preserve the status quo. I must conclude, therefore, that all reputedly affluent individuals who devote thought and energy to preserving and bettering free market processes are uncommonly aware, rational, and more devoted to principle than expediency.

Count Your Blessings

But regardless of one's largesse, richness is subjectively determined. Determination—evaluation—is governed by an appreciation of conferments as blessings. And only those who are sensitive to this richness can be expected to befriend the free market. Thus, we who believe in this philosophy will lose or win our case as the appreciation of conferments wanes or gains. This is another way of saying that if we knew how to accentuate an appreciation of blessings, we'd have the key to the free market way of life. What do we know of this?

Of one thing I feel reasonably certain: An individual will have a greater appreciation of what he obtains in exchange for what he does if what he does is the very best that's within him. I will more appreciate that which I get in exchange for what I love to do than for that which I hate to do. Johannes Brahms more appreciated what he received in exchange for a piano concerto than had the same

amount been won in a state lottery. A local hospital is more appreciated by members of the community when freely financed by them than when received from the Federal grab bag.

It seems that an individual's richness grows as he increasingly realizes the best of which he is capable. The extent of this realization among American citizens would also seem to pace the free market's future.

What can we do about it? This amounts to asking, What can I do about a subjective judgment other than my own? Nothing, for certain. But my own, if exemplary, may rub off on or be caught by others. This is the importance of being rich in the sense I use the term.

GOVERNMENTAL DISCIPLINE

MAN IS, IN PART, a social animal. As such, it is necessary that he find ways to keep himself in line; that he discover how to live in some measure of harmony with others. Man has devised several social disciplines, three of which deserve comment in this thesis.

The first is a deep and abiding belief that there is a fundamental Point of Reference over and beyond his own mind and his own institutions: an Infinite Truth or Consciousness or Principle or Ideal. This belief, when attended to, disciplines man in his daily actions, that is, he seeks approval more before God than man. Believing thus, he acts long-range, which is to say, he weighs what he does less by ephemeral considerations than by eternal life. It is my conviction that this, potentially, is by far the most important of all disciplines; indeed, without it, human evolution is a hopeless prospect. Furthermore, this disciplinary course is currently suffering an alarming abandonment.¹

¹ For the best explanation I can make of this point, see Chapter III, "What Seek Ye First?" in my *Deeper Than You Think, op. cit.*, pp. 15-27.

The second is governmental discipline, the one that has the least potentiality, the one that is being falsely and increasingly turned to with enormous out-of-bounds results—the subject of this chapter.

The third is the free market, the disciplinary potentialities of which are seldom explored—the subject of the next chapter.

The citizenry, in the hope of social discipline, establishes and empowers government to codify the taboos and enforce their observation: certain actions are put out of bounds, and government is given the job of punishing transgressors. In good American theory, any action by any citizen is out of bounds if it be destructive: murder, theft, misrepresentation, and the like. Stay within bounds or suffer the consequences. This is the disciplinary role of government.

Things Get Out of Hand

Everything human is subject to corruption; situations get out of hand.

It's easy enough for the citizenry to delegate the policing or disciplinary task to the formal agency of society, but it's quite another matter for the citizenry to keep the agency itself within bounds. For, short of anything yet accomplished in history, the agency will, sooner or later, declare out of bounds not only destructive actions but various creative and productive actions as well. Two among countless examples: It is out of bounds to raise as much wheat as you please on your own land and, in New York City, at least, to mutually agree with your tenant what rental he shall pay.

In a word, government, having a monopoly of the police force, will tend to act indiscriminately in its out-of-bounds edicts. And, it has always been thus:

. . . the greatest political problem facing the world today is . . . how to curb the oppressive power of government, how to keep it within reasonable bounds. This is a problem that has engaged some of the greatest minds of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—Adam Smith, von Humboldt, de Tocqueville, John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer. They addressed themselves to this particular issue: What are the proper limits of government? And how can we hold government within those limits?²

The dilemma seems to be that government is something we can't get along without and something we can't get along with.

Considering the great men who have attempted to resolve this dilemma, it seems unlikely that any one of us will hit upon a final solution. But we can and should entertain the hope of shedding a bit more light on the matter. My effort is no more pretentious than this.

The Limits of Government

During the last century, several of the best American academicians and statesmen—in an effort to prescribe a theory of governmental limitation—have agreed:

² Excerpted from remarks by Henry Hazlitt. See *What's Past Is Prologue* (Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1968), p. 14.

The government should do only those things which private citizens cannot do for themselves, or which they cannot do so well for themselves.

That this is meant to be a precise theory of limitation is conveyed by the words, "do *only* those things."

This proposal is repeated over and over again and we may therefore presume that it has a considerable acceptance and is influential in shaping public opinion as to what is and is not out of bounds in governmental activity. If that be the case, in the light of what's going on, we are well advised to re-examine this proposition. For it is true that all actions are rooted in ideas.

Parenthetically, one may wonder why I choose to pick on a small flaw in what, after all, is little more than an aphorism. It is my contention that this idea of limitation "leaks," like a leak in the dike, and if not plugged the whole countryside will be inundated. A trifle, yes, but as great oaks from little acorns grow, so do great catastrophes from little errors flow:

For the want of a nail the shoe was lost,
 For the want of a shoe a horse was lost,
 For the want of a horse a rider was lost,
 For the want of a rider the battle was lost,
 For the want of a battle the kingdom was lost—
 And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

The aforementioned notion gains acceptance because it is so plausible. The government should, indeed, do some of the things which private citizens cannot do for themselves.

All citizens, except philosophical anarchists—those who reject a formal agency of society—are certain, in the interest of social order and common justice, that each citizen cannot write his own laws. Man is now and forever imperfect and men must now and forever differ as to what is right and just. Codifying and enforcing an observation of the taboos gives the citizenry a common body of rules which permits the game to go on; this is what a formal agency of society can do for the citizens that they cannot, one by one, do for themselves. Doubtless, this is what the libertarian subscribers to this idea have in mind. And no more! They couldn't concede more and be libertarians!

This proposal is right as far as it goes; but it does not go far enough. It has a loophole, a "leak," through which an authoritarian can wriggle.

One can easily conclude, from the wording, that government is warranted in doing for the citizens only those things which the citizens will not and, presumably, cannot do for themselves. What they will not do and, therefore, "cannot" do for themselves is to implement all the utopian schemes that enter the minds of men, things that such schemers think the citizens ought to do but which the citizens do not want to do. Reform ideas are legion; and these are the things that government is obliged to do for the people, according to this proposal, as it is loosely written. That's how permissive it is; it leaves the door wide open; it's "only" is utterly meaningless!

Reflect on the veritable flood of taboos—against other than destructive actions—now imposed on the citizenry by Federal, state, and local governments. And all in the name

of doing for the people what they “cannot” do for themselves. In reality, this means doing for them what they do not wish to do for themselves. Here are but a few of many examples of things now out of bounds for American citizens:

- It is against the law to grow as much wheat or cotton or peanuts or tobacco as you choose on your own land.
- It is against the law, regardless of where you live, to refuse to finance thousands upon thousands of local fancies such as the Gateway Arch in St. Louis or the Fresno Mall.
- It is against the law to refuse to finance the rebuilding of urban centers deserted in favor of new and more preferable centers.
- It is against the law to refuse to finance putting men on the moon.
- It is against the law to refuse to finance socialistic governments the world over.
- It is against the law to be self-responsible exclusively, that is, to refuse to be responsible for the welfare, security, and prosperity of anybody and everybody, no matter who or what they are.

Restoring Government's Proper Role

How might we state this idea, then, in a way that will be understood and which, if followed, would restore government to its principled, limited role—keep it within bounds? Consider this:

The government should do only those things, *in defense of life and property*, which things private citizens cannot properly do each man for himself.

The only things private citizens cannot properly do for themselves is to codify all destructive actions and prohibit them, be the destructive actions of domestic or foreign origin. Neither the individual citizen nor any number of them in private combination—vigilance committees—can properly write and enforce the law. This is a job for government; and it means that the sole function of government is to maintain law and order, that is, to keep the peace. This in itself is an enormous undertaking, requiring rare and difficult skills, but it is a task much neglected when government steps out of bounds. When society's formal agency of coercion moves in and out of bounds, it becomes impotent to keep the peace among its own citizenry or among nations.

All else—an infinity of unimaginable activities—is properly within the realm of personal choice: individuals acting cooperatively, competitively, voluntarily, privately, as they freely choose. In a nutshell, this amended proposal charges government with the responsibility to inhibit destructive actions—its sole competency—with private citizens acting creatively in any way they please.

The objections to this latter proposal are legion; indeed, they are almost as prevalent in the U.S.A. today as in Uruguay, England, Argentina, Russia, or any other country one could mention. How, possibly, could we educate our children? Or run the railroads? Or deliver mail? Or

put men on the moon? Or secure medical attention or welfare in old age? Or have a Gateway Arch? On and on! Yet, every one of these objections can be and has been answered!

Men on the Moon

The government is engaged in countless out-of-bounds activities, according to our rewritten proposal. None of these is more favorably capturing the American imagination than putting men on the moon.³ Even many individuals otherwise sharply libertarian in their thinking are joining in the applause for this fantastic performance. And no one can reckon the enormous cost; it is running into untold billions. So, let's examine this most popular instance of government out of bounds.

It is self-evident that citizens acting privately would not, at this time, engage in this enterprise. This is an example of what private citizens will not do rather than something they cannot do.

Why is it so widely assumed that going to the moon is something private citizens cannot do for themselves?

Is it because they do not have the countless billions required for the project? No, the government gets its resources exclusively from the private citizens; none from any other source whatsoever!

Is it because the skills do not exist among private citi-

³ If the defense of our country required putting men on the moon, it would then qualify as a proper function of government. I am assuming that manning the moon is not of military value. At least, I am unaware of any persuasive argument that it is.

zens? No, every last person engaged in this project was a private citizen, many of whom are now on the government payroll.

Is it because a free-market enterprise is less efficient than a governmental operation? No, in every type of productive effort in which both are engaged, making comparisons possible, the free market is overwhelmingly superior.

We can only conclude that going to the moon is a project private citizens could undertake but will not, voluntarily.

Why? Simply because they do not want to. Nor is the explanation difficult. I have a thousand and one opportunities for the use of my income more attractive to me than sending men to the moon. This is far down on my priority list, not only as to desirability, but as to the amount I would voluntarily contribute—about the amount I would pay to see a good show. And I believe that a vast majority of private citizens—viewing the matter on this basis—substantially share my appraisal. The upshot, if left to private citizens? No trips to the moon! Not now, anyway.

How can we render a judgment as to what private citizens really favor? Surely not by yeas or nays; most of us are too distraction-prone for mere lip service to be trusted. So, let us judge a man's values by the way he acts: A person favors a war if he will voluntarily risk his life in waging it; and he favors an enterprise if he will voluntarily risk his capital in financing it. Popular acclaim for a war or a moon venture or whatever, which rests on risking the lives or the capital of others, is unimpressive; it's only loose talk, detached from realism, and unworthy of serious attention. Viewed in this light, there are few, indeed, who favor

putting men on the moon, their protestations to the contrary notwithstanding!

False Promises

Why, then, are we in this venture? There are numerous reasons.

For one thing, people are distracted and drawn by the glamor of it. Not even the fiction of Jules Verne or Buck Rogers ever remotely approached this performance. The TV shots of men in space divert attention from the means used to produce this spectacular.

Of the millions who do not favor putting men on the moon at the risk of their own capital, many enthusiastically endorse the project when the risk seems to fall elsewhere. Why do they not see that this is, in reality, their own capital?

Again, because of distractions. Citizens are distracted from reality by the false promise that they can spend themselves rich. They will believe such sophistry simply because they want to believe it. Doesn't the Gross National Product (GNP) go up \$1 billion with each billion spent on the moon venture!⁴

Then there is the sleight-of-hand expropriation of capital. That portion of one's capital taken for the moon venture by direct tax levies is so buried in the enormous Federal tax that identity is lost. The remaining portion is equally hidden: inflation. Inflation is a tax on savings of

⁴ For the fallacy of GNP, see Chapter VII, "The Measure of Growth," in my *Deeper Than You Think. op. cit.*, pp. 70-84.

many types.⁵ The expropriation shows up not on a tax bill from the Internal Revenue Service but in the form of higher prices for bread, butter, and everything else. Who, when spending \$10 for groceries, instead of the \$5 he used to spend, relates the higher prices to putting men on the moon? This fiscal hocus-pocus is distracting and diverts men from reality. "We do not know what is happening to us and that is precisely the thing that is happening to us."⁶

But our proneness to distraction, which accounts for popular acceptance of this project, is far from a complete explanation as to why we are in it. The primary reason is that we allow government coercively to commandeer resources that private citizens will not voluntarily commit to such purposes. In other words, private citizens are forced to do things they do not wish to do.

My purpose in this cursory analysis of the moon affair is not to single it out for criticism but, rather, to raise the all-important question that relates not only to this but to thousands of out-of-bounds ventures by government: Why are private citizens forced to do what they do not wish to do? After all, the formal coercive agency of society—government—is *their* agency!

We have one test, and one only, for what private citizens really wish to do: those things they will do voluntarily! It is plain that they wish telephones, printing presses, auto-

⁵ For example: cash, bank deposits, life insurance, pensions, bonds, mortgages, loans or holdings repayable in a more or less fixed number of dollars.

⁶ See *Man and Crisis* by Ortega y Gasset (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1962).

mobiles, air service, refrigeration, houses, corn flakes, gas and electric service; indeed, a million things could be listed. And they get them—voluntarily!

But here's the rub: There are those who believe we do not know of all the things we want or, at least, are unaware of what is good for us. These "needs," invented for us—going to the moon, old-age "security," the Gateway Arch, or whatever—have no manner of implementation except by coercion. In a word, these people who would be our gods can achieve the ends they have in mind for us only as they gain control of our agency of force: government.

And the primary reason why they can force upon us those things we do not want is our lack of attention to what are the proper bounds of government.

So it is that great catastrophes from little errors flow!

FREE MARKET DISCIPLINES

CONTRARY to socialistic tenets, the free market is the only mechanism that can sensibly, logically, intelligently discipline production and consumption. For it is only when the market is free that economic calculation is possible.¹ Free pricing is the key. When prices are high, production is encouraged and consumption is discouraged; when prices fall, the reverse holds true. Thus, production and consumption are always moving toward equilibrium. Shortages and surpluses are not in the lexicon of free market economics.

Conceded, the above is no news to those who apprehend free market economics; they well know of its disciplinary influence as regards production and consumption. This alone warrants our support of the free market. However, the free market has two other quite remarkable disciplinary possibilities which have seldom been explored.

Before making that exploration, it is necessary to recognize the limitations of the free market. The market is a mechanism, and thus it is wholly lacking in moral and spir-

¹ Professor Ludwig von Mises establishes this point, irrefutably, in his book, *Socialism* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1969).

itual suasion; further, it embodies no coercive force whatsoever. In these respects, the market is without disciplinary possibilities.

“Like all mechanisms, the market, with its function for the economizing of time and effort, is servant alike to the good, the compassionate, and the perceptive as well as to the evil, the inconsiderate, and the oblivious.”² Scrupulosity is not among its characteristics.

The free market is a name we give to the economic activities—a short-hand term, we might say—of a people acting freely, voluntarily, privately, cooperatively, competitively. It is distinguished by universal freedom of choice and the absence of coercive force. Ideally, only defensive force—government—is employed to put down fraud, violence, predation, and other aggressions.

Given a society of freely choosing individuals, the market is that which exists as a consequence—it is a mechanism that is otherwise nondefinitive. It is the procession of economic events that occur when authoritarianism—political or otherwise—is absent.

While private enterprise is often practiced in a manner consonant with free market principles, the two terms are not synonymous. Piracy is an enterprise and also private. Many businesses when in league with unions, for instance—willingly or not—feature elements of coercion and thus are not examples of the free market at work.

The free market has only been approximated, never

² See “Value—The Soul of Economics,” by W. H. Pitt. *The Freeman*, September, 1969.

fully attained, and, doubtless, never will be realized. It is an out-of-reach ideal; we can only move toward or away from it. Yet, in the U.S.A., even in these days of a rapidly growing interventionism, the free market flourishes to a remarkable extent. To appreciate this, merely envision the countless willing exchanges—hundreds of millions daily—such as Mrs. Jones swapping a shawl she has made for a goose Mrs. Smith has raised, or the money you pay for a phone call or a quart of milk. In these instances, each party gains, for each desires what he gets more than what he surrenders. In a word, the free market is individual desire speaking in exchange terms. When the desire for Bibles is accommodated in noncoerced exchange, we can conclude, quite accurately, that we are witnessing a market for Bibles. Or, when the desire for pornography is being thus accommodated, we can conclude that there is a market for trash. I repeat, scrupulosity is not a feature of the market.

When the desires of people are depraved, a free market will accommodate the depravity. And it will accommodate excellence with equal alacrity. It is “servant alike to good . . . and evil.”

An Amoral Servant

It is because the free market serves evil as well as good that many people think they can rid society of evil by slaying this faithful, *amoral* servant. This is comparable to destroying the sun because we don't like the shadows we cast or breaking the mirror so that we won't have to see the reflection of what we really are.

When I sit in front of a TV and view trash, I tend to rant and rave at what I'm seeing. Wake up: What I hear and see is a reflection of what's in me! Thus, my only corrective is to read a good book or otherwise cease to patronize such low-grade performances.

The market is but a response to—a mirror of—our desires. Once this harsh reality is grasped, the market becomes a disciplinary force. To elaborate: Say that a person desires, buys, and reads a filthy book. Were he to realize that what he's reading is a picture of what's in his own make-up, such a realization, by itself, would tend to change him for the better. The market would then reflect the improvement. But note that the market has no such effect on those who are oblivious to this fact. *It's the knowledge of this character-revealing fact that makes of the market a disciplinary force.* I am only trying to point out the market's potentiality in this respect.

Instead of cursing evil, stay out of the market for it; the evil will cease to the extent we cease patronizing it. Trying to rid ourselves of trash by running to government for morality laws is like trying to minimize the effects of inflation by wage, price, and other controls. Both destroy the market, that is, the reflection of ourselves. Such tactics are at the intellectual level of mirror-smashing, attempts not to see ourselves as we are. The market's potentiality as a disciplinary force is thereby removed. To slay this faithful, amoral servant is to blindfold, deceive, and hoodwink ourselves. Next to forswearing a faith in an Infinite Intelligence over and beyond our own minds, denying the market is to erase the best point of reference man can have. So

much for the first somewhat unexplored possibility of the market as a disciplinary force.

Imperfect Man

Now to the second. This cannot be explained unless we are aware of our numerous shortcomings, of how narrow our virtues and talents really are—everyone's, no exceptions.

Let's take, for example, the greatest mathematical genius who ever lived. He's a giant in his field. Yet, without any question, he's a know-nothing in countless other ways. This goes for outstanding generals, chemists, physicists, scientists of whatever brand. No one ever gets more than an infinitesimal peek at the Cosmic Scheme, at the over-all luminosity, even at himself. We must see that the biggest among us is tiny. And one who denies this about himself is displaying the greatest ignorance of all: he doesn't even know how little he knows! "If we wish to know anything, we must resign ourselves to being ignorant of much."³

Reflect on this human reality, on imperfect man, particularly on the more imaginative and brilliant individuals among us. While they possess an outstanding and remarkable aptitude or two, they, too, are daydreamers. "If only I had a million dollars," is a dream that flashes across countless minds. Many of these specialists want above all else to pursue their own peculiar bent whether it be going to the moon, genetic alteration of other human beings, releasing the atom's energy, or whatever.

³ John Henry Newman.

Knowing so much about one thing and so little about everything else, they are unable to know what effect their ambitions, if achieved, might have on the human situation. Just as a baby with a stick of dynamite and a match is unaware of what the consequences might be!

The lamentable fact is that scientists, pseudo scientists, and other technologists have been given a wishing well: the Federal grab bag. They, thus, are encouraged to carry out any experiment their hearts desire, without let or hindrance. Leaving aside the destruction of our economy by inflation—featured in the grab bag's financing—they are alarmingly endangering all the people on this earth, even the earth itself. And primarily because they suffer no restraining and disciplinary forces; their passions and ambitions are on the loose!

The Discipline of the Market

The remedy? Let these ambitions be submitted to the discipline of the market precisely as are most other commodities and services. Go to the moon? Of course; that is, when the market permits the venture, if enough people voluntarily subscribe the cash. Release the atom's energy? By all means; that is, when the market is ready for it.

Am I saying that the market has a wisdom superior to the President of the United States, or the Congress, or a bureaucracy? I am not. The market is a mechanism and is neither wise nor moral. I am only claiming that it has disciplinary qualities. To understand why requires no more than a knowledge of what the components of this mecha-

nism are: millions upon millions of individual preferences, choices, desires. *The market is an obstacle course*; before I can pursue my bent or aptitude or obsession, I must gain an adequate, voluntary approval or assent! No wishing well, this! My own aspirations, regardless of how determined, or lofty, or depraved, do not control the verdict. What these others—impersonal as a computer—will put up in willing exchange for my offering spells my success or failure, allows me to pursue my bent or not.

There are exceptions to this rule, of course. For instance, some of us who may be unable to win in the market will, like Van Gogh, face starvation in order to pursue our passions. The threat of starvation, however, is quite a discipline in itself; at least, not much is likely to be uncovered in these circumstances that will destroy life on earth. It takes big financing to do unearthly things.

The market very often returns fortunes for comparative junk and, on occasion, returns nothing at all for great and beneficial achievements—temporarily, that is. Eventually, in a free society, the junk goes to the junk heap and achievements are rewarded.

I believe that anyone should follow his star; but let him do so with his own resources or with such resources as others will voluntarily supply. This is to say that I believe in the market, a tough, disciplinary mechanism. I do not believe in cars without brakes, impulses without repulses, ambitions without check points, wishes run riot. Societal schemes that are all sail and no ballast head society for disaster!

The rebuttal to this line of reasoning is heard over and

over again: "But we voted for it," meaning that the Federal grab bag—open sesame with other people's income—has been democratically approved. Granted! But this is nonsense: the fruits of the labor of one man are not up for grabs by others, that is, not rationally.⁴ This is not a votable matter, except if one's premise be a socialistic society. What's right and what's wrong are not to be determined at the shallow level of nose-counting or opinion polls. To argue otherwise is to place the same value on the views of morons as you do on your own.

As a disciplinary force over wild aspirations, the President of the United States, a member of Congress, a bureaucrat is not only less effective than the market but less effective than any single buyer or seller in the market. An individual, when a government official, considers only how much of other people's money should be spent. The motivation in this instance favors spending over economizing. The same individual, in the free market, considers how much of his *own* property he is willing to put on the line. The motivation in this instance is self-interest. And this is tough! Ambitions as silly as tracking the meanderings of polar bears by a nimbus satellite stand a chance for satisfaction when a grab bag made up of other people's money is readily at hand;⁵ whereas, the free market gives short

⁴ For what I consider to be a rationally constructed explanation of this point, see "The Limits of Majority Rule" by Edmund A. Opitz. Copy on request.

⁵ See "The Migration of Polar Bears," *Scientific American*, February, 1968.

shrift to projects that are at or near the bottom of individual preferences.

True, were personal ambitions subjected to the disciplines of the market, trips to the moon would have to be postponed. Atomic energy might be a phenomenon of the future. Many other scientific explorations—some secret—taking place today in our universities and Federally financed would, under the discipline of the market, still be safely stored in imaginative minds.

This is no argument against technological breakthroughs. It is merely to suggest that these illuminations be financially encouraged only as the free market permits. The resulting steadiness in progress might then be harmonious with an expanded understanding of what it is we really want and can live with.

I repeat, societal schemes that are all sail and no ballast head society for disaster. The free market is ballast—a stabilizer—we might well put to use if we would avoid wreckage in the stormy seas of political chaos.

THE BLOOM PRE-EXISTS IN THE SEED

BE THE FLOWER an orchid, rose, thistle, or skunk cabbage, the bloom, whatever it is, pre-existed in the planting. So, if one's object or goal be a rose garden, let him plant only roses.

Everyone will concede that to plant thistle seeds and then expect roses is rank folly. Yet, many of these same people expect to achieve lofty goals without any thought of the means they use to attain them. They simply have not learned the planting lesson.

It's while on the subject of disciplines that a hard look at means and ends is appropriate. The mastering of this is disciplined thinking as related to aspirations and a big step forward in rational self-discipline.

Ends, goals, aims are but the hope for things to come, in a word, aspirations. They are not a part of the reality—not yet, at least—from which may safely be taken the standards for right conduct. They are no more to be trusted

as bench marks than are day dreams or flights of fancy. Many of the most monstrous deeds in human history have been perpetrated in the name of doing good—in pursuit of some “noble” goal.¹ They illustrate the fallacy that the end justifies the means.

Means, on the other hand, partake of reality; they are of the here and now; they are tangible, concrete forms of action or conduct that can be weighed on the scale of cause and consequence. Examine carefully the means employed, judging them in terms of right and wrong, and the end will take care of itself. A rose blooms from a rose planting.

Emerson observed that “the end pre-exists in the means.” Let’s try to check it out in one of the fields of our major interest—political economy.

Ends and Means

A collectivist, if a purist, looks upon humanity as we look upon the beehive; his focus is on society as on the swarm; the individual, like one of the bees, counts only because he is a part of the over-all conglomerate. The welfare of the collectivity is the goal. This is the so-called macro view of life.

An individualist, if a purist, looks upon society as the upshot, outcome, effect, recapitulation incidental to what is valued above all else, namely, each distinctive individual

¹ The Thirty Years’ War witnessed the slaughter of millions of people in Central Europe to the Glory of God! See *Grey Eminence* by Aldous Huxley (New York: Harper & Bros., 1941).

human being. The goal is Creation's finest image: man, singular! This is the so-called micro view of life.

These two goals represent extremes on the ideological spectrum or, as we say, they are poles apart. But putting these opposed goals in this dimensional arrangement is risky; it invites the shallow conclusion that the proper goal is somewhere between the two. However, there is no "golden mean" between these two, any more than between certain other extremes: wrong and right, hate and love, hell and heaven. What's right is not to be found with a tape measure along that line; there are some alternatives that have no happy middle ground between them—polygamy and monogamy, for example. Nor is there a middle-of-the-road between collectivism and individualism.

True, there may be no purist in either camp. The stoutest collectivist will show individualistic tendencies on occasion, and vice versa. But no person can be both a collectivist and an individualist at one and the same time; he may waver from one to the other—that is all.

Regardless of my acknowledged bias for individualism, I must concede at the outset that all honest advocates of both collectivism and individualism are sincere; each hopes for a societal situation in which harmony and advancement are most likely of fulfillment. Professor Hayek said, when speaking of our doctrinal adversaries, "Their conceptions derive from serious thinkers whose ultimate ideals are not so very different from our own and with whom we differ not so much on ultimate values, but on the effective *means* of achieving them." Thus, if we would find the distinction between collectivism and individualism, we had best ignore

the goals temporarily and, instead, examine the actions—means—that are implicit in achieving the goals. Admittedly, this is not the usual approach to the problem.

Overlooking the Consequences

For the most part, proponents of both philosophies tend to play down or fail to apprehend the consequences and actions which must follow from the opposed means implicit in the pursuit of collectivism or of individualism. By their failure to be explicit about the consequences of the means each must employ, they see neither the shortcomings nor the merits of their respective doctrines. So, for us to understand these two opposed and antithetical ways to the good life, we must discover what is implicit in the collectivistic as well as in the individualistic approach.

Implicit in the collectivistic approach—looking at humanity as a beehive—is the masterminding of the people who make up society; it is the forming and reforming of individuals into patterns—collectives—of which there are countless variations ranging from rent control in New York City to the collective farms in Russia. The control of the individual's life is from without—external—and includes production, distribution, exchange, education, even worship. Any creative activity, to the extent that it comes under governmental control, falls into the collectivized category.

Plymouth Colony—1620-23—on which we have an excellent history, was second only to Jamestown as an early illustration of the American beehive way of life, and of the

way it was soon modified when it became evident that the colonists worked harder and produced more when they were working for themselves and their own families, than when they were working for the collective.² Presently, that is, during the past four decades, collectivistic practices have been on the increase in countries where free market, private ownership principles had been most nearly observed, notably in Britain and the U.S.A., picking up the collectivistic pace set by Russia, Red China, Cuba, and Uruguay.

Whose Need?

The collectivistic view holds that society is the prime concern. *The need is society's!* The individual does not fit himself into place but, instead, is fitted into place, that is, he is assigned that niche or role which the political priests believe will best serve whatever societal pattern they have formulated. And right down to such details as interest rates, prices, wages, hours of labor! These coercive actions are no less than consequences, that is, they are implicit in and must logically follow from the beehive way of looking at humanity. Consistent with this "look" are the "national goals" theme and the "gross national product" (GNP) form of economic assessment.

Implicit in this beehive view is that men exist who are competent to form the ways and shape the lives of human beings by the millions. The belief is—and has to be—that

² See *Of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford; Harvey Wish, ed. (New York: Capricorn Books, 1962).

there are those who not only can rightly decide what is best for all of us but who can prescribe the details as to how the best that is in us can be realized.

Order and progress, in the collectivistic approach, can occur only as conceived and then dictatorially implemented by a human "elite"—an age-old concept. I put "elite" in quotes only because this is their appraisal of themselves, not mine. This self-same "elite" will readily concede that "only God can make a tree" but will insist that they can create and arrange the destiny of a human being or, what is far more complicated, a good society. Yet, unless power over others be their primary end in life, we must allow to them the same sincerity as we pridefully ascribe to ourselves.

Sincerity I'll grant, but little more. Any conscientious collectivist, if he could see beyond his utopian goals and thus properly evaluate the authoritarian means his system of thought demands, would likely defect. At this point, it may be helpful to paraphrase Emerson's unassailable observation, "the end pre-exists in the means": *Goals or ends must always be the summation of the means employed to achieve them. However lofty the goals, if the means be depraved, the result must reflect that depravity.* Therefore, the eventual outcome (bloom) of the collectivistic way of life may be accurately predicted by anyone who understands the means (planting) which must be employed.

Can we pronounce a moral judgment on the means implicit in the collectivistic system; that is, can we ascribe right or wrong to coercively taking from some and giving to others in the name of the perfect beehive? I can! My own judgment is aptly expressed in a bible of the Hindus:

Sin is . . . [that] ignorance . . . which seeks its own gain at the expense of others. . . ."³

But let us not be too harsh on the collectivists. People who call themselves individualists rarely reflect on the means implicit in their philosophy. Individualists thus overlook the merits of their means to the good life just as the collectivists overlook the shortcomings of their way. When only ends are envisioned and means ignored, there can be no reliable estimate as to whether the consequences will be good or bad.

When the Individual Is the Goal

When the individual replaces the beehive as the ultimate goal, that is, when the need is construed to be the individual's rather than society's, the means implicit in achieving such a goal must be radically different. I shall comment only briefly on two of the means implicit in advancing Creation's finest image: man, singular. The two are perfection of self⁴ and private ownership.

The alternative to perfection of self is perfection of others: Either I will concentrate on me and my welfare or on others and their welfare; in other words, mind my own business or mind other people's business.

³From *The Bhagavadgita*, translation by S. Radhakrishnan (New York: Harper & Bros., 1948), p. 224.

⁴"Each of us is interested in himself whether he wishes it or not, whether he thinks himself important or not, and for the simple reason that each of us is both the subject and the protagonist of his own nontransferable life." *Man and Crisis* by José Ortega y Gasset, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

Looking out for my own best long-range interests turns out to be a bigger project than I can handle. No person has ever come close to realizing his potentialities. In view of the obstacles to the relatively simple task of self-realization, reflect on the utter absurdity of my undertaking to manage your life or, as the collectivists would do, undertaking to manage the lives of millions.

Attention to self is not a disregard for others. On the contrary, each individual best promotes his own self-interest by peaceful, social cooperation as in the free market. Indeed, the more I make of myself the more are others served by my existence. Who can give what he does not have! The way to assume "social responsibility" is for the individual to rise above zero as far as possible. Anyone affronted by the idea of focusing attention on self need only imagine the opposite: a society of selfless persons—a world of nothingness.

The alternative to private ownership is "public ownership"—everything in the name of the beehive. Ownership, however, is meaningless in the absence of control. You do not own a home if you have no control over its disposition. When the swarm holds the title to property, the control (ownership) of it is in limbo. A property will get better care if it is all yours than if it is everybody's in general and nobody's in particular.

Private ownership means more than each individual's having a moral right to the fruits of his own labor; it also means that the right is accorded common respect.

Civilizations remained on the launching pad so long as men, like the bees, deposited their nectar in a common

hive or, like our Pilgrim Fathers, their produce in a common warehouse. The incentive of private ownership is far more powerful than the sentimental thrust of laboring for-the-good-of-all.

If we concede, as I do, that man has a right to his life, it follows that he has a right to sustain life, the sustenance being the fruits of one's own labor. Private ownership is as sacred as life itself.

Private ownership lies at the very root of individual liberty. Without it there can be no freedom; with it freedom is secure. For private ownership presupposes free choice in disposition, that is, freedom to exchange. It is senseless to talk about freedom if the right of private ownership be denied.

Can we pronounce a moral judgment on these means implicit in the individualistic goal, that is, can we ascribe right or wrong to the pursuit of self-perfection and the right of owning what one produces? I can! These means serve as a powerful thrust toward the individual's material, intellectual, moral, and spiritual emergence—and that is right! Others—those who comprise society—are the secondary beneficiaries of individual growth. If we would help others, let us first help ourselves by those means which qualify as righteous.

AGREE WITH ME!

MAN IS, in part, a social being, but each person is a unique individual as well. The higher a species in the evolutionary scale, the less alike are its members and the more marked are personality traits. Such differences show up in the higher animals: dolphins, dogs, horses, cats, even in birds. Variation, however, reaches its apogee in man; and the more developed he is, the more he differs from his fellows. So varied are members of the human race that similarities can often be expressed only in broad generalities: the potentiality to think, for instance.¹ But there the similarity ends, for we do not think alike; indeed, each person varies in his own thinking from moment to moment. These observations merely set the stage for the thesis of this chapter, namely, that agreement among us is not in our nature and, as an objective, is both unrealistic and mischievous.

Of all the stumbling blocks to the enlightenment, aware-

¹ For an enlightening treatise on how enormously varied we are, see *You Are Extraordinary* by Dr. Roger J. Williams (New York: Random House, 1967).

ness, perception, consciousness required of those who would try freedom, few are more difficult to hurdle than the attitude: *agree with me or be damned!* True, we seldom put the sentiment in these words, but this is precisely the meaning of that rancor or ill-feeling which follows on the heels of a disagreement. Amiability in the face of disagreement is a rare human trait.

Show me the communist whose blood doesn't boil when confronted with the free market, private ownership, limited government philosophy. Nor do we have to go to such extremes of the ideological spectrum for examples. They are to be found among our neoliberal acquaintances; indeed, anyone who has become in any way addicted to this or that phase of American socialism flares up at the mention of libertarian ideas.

What's worse, however, is that similar attitudes are found among devotees of freedom: many libertarians are quite as intolerant of contrary or differing views and beliefs as are persons of authoritarian disposition. Devotees of freedom thus prejudice their own case by intolerance. *Believe as I do* is, at the very least, intellectual authoritarianism.

Implicit in this intolerance for contrary opinions is the assumption: Were everyone to agree with me, ipso facto, the millennium! How false this is! Were all people in precise agreement with me, all people would perish, including me. What makes anyone think he could survive if he were this earth's sole occupant?

Refer again to the circle with the diverging lines in Chapter 3. If this be correct symbolism, sameness in what is seen and understood is out of the question. Indeed, it is not

necessary to compare with others to prove that agreement is an utter impossibility. If I am growing, I don't even agree with my yesterday's self.

Such faculties as insight, inspiration, inventiveness—the creative mind—on which emergence depends, seem never to spring from anger, rancor, ill-feeling. Therefore, if we would lend ourselves to the pursuit of truth and a better world, it behooves us to control our tempers. This may sound somewhat Pollyannish, but only joyous activity will bear good fruit.

Disagreement is everywhere evident in the ideological and philosophical realm, and it generates an enormous amount of ill-feeling. We must, therefore, find some way to be joyous in the face of "I absolutely disagree."

When we rebel at disagreement, this is an instinctive reaction, an animalistic response. Animals are governed by their instincts; they do not stop to reflect before choosing their course. But note that they are stymied in the evolutionary process; they do not go beyond simple consciousness.² An individual bent on an emerging consciousness cannot rely solely on his instincts but, instead, must turn to man's distinctive potentiality: the power to reason. A modicum of rationality helps to school his impulses and may effectively challenge his instinctive attitude toward disagreement.

² The higher animals have simple consciousness; they know much but don't know they know. Self-consciousness is an attribute that does not show forth in other than the human being; and there is a tremendous range among individuals in the extent to which self-consciousness is manifested.

Actions and Reactions

I shall first state my conclusion and then try to explain it. There is no more reason to be distraught by disagreement than by gravitation. Or, put it another way: if one favors self-improvement, he should see that this is impossible without differences of opinion.

The rational case for this contention rests on an observed fact: there can be no reaction without action. Go as far back in the nature of things as the atom, 30 trillion of which could be placed on the period at the end of this sentence without overlapping. Within the atom are electrons. Were an atom enlarged to the size of Houston's Astrodome, an electron would be the size of a basketball. The late Robert A. Millikan, renowned physicist and Nobel Prize winner for his measurement of the electrical charge of the electron, has this to say: "All elastic forces are due to the attractions and repulsions of electrons." This same principle of action and reaction appears to operate in all phases of matter and life.

Scratching is out of the question without something to scratch against.

The concept of light would be inconceivable without darkness. Precisely the same observation can be made about enlightenment and ignorance.

Truth grows by correcting error. I am trying to establish the point that error does have a function; it is the stepping stone to truth; it is the action that makes reaction—the pursuit of truth—possible.

Emerson referred to this all-pervasive principle as "com-

pensation." There are other terms such as "tension of the opposites" and "the law of polarity." Whatever the label, it is in the nature of things.

This is not to urge that we condone error but only to suggest the absurdity of getting emotional about what seem to be errors by others. Indeed, there is no more reason to resent a difference of opinion than to fly into a rage at a sunset. Each is a fact of life, something to grow by.

My first book was written 34 years ago under trying and difficult conditions: in upper berths of trains, late at night in hotels following speeches—during a period when the views I held were under increasing attack by spokesmen for the new socialism. The book was well received by persons whose judgments I respected. There followed a pipe dream: What a book I could write if only I could get away from all that travail and nonsense! So, for a month I secluded myself by the seashore with typewriter and paper—peace, quiet, serenity, cut off from the world of error. Nary an idea, nor a word written!

This is twelve books later. I think I have experienced some growth since that first one. And every step of progress has been the result of trying to shed light on what has appeared to me as error. Life's purpose is growth, and error has had an important role to play in mine. "I absolutely disagree with you" is no occasion for bad temper but, rather, an invitation to check one's own premises and positions, seeking correction or improvement—at least, refinement in exposition.

Believing that man is now and forever imperfect, myself included, what do I hold to be truths by which error may

be judged? Among them is an unswerving belief that all human beings should be free to act creatively as they please. In the light of that premise, what then must be ascribed as error? It is the notion that some man or group of men or their organizations have a right to control the creative actions of others.

Note, however, that this which I believe to be a truth is little more than a generality. I can claim no more than being on the right road. When it comes to making the case for freedom and exposing the fallacies of authoritarianism, I haven't scratched the surface. Nor am I aware of anyone who has, pretensions to the contrary notwithstanding.

Is this to say that I have completely overcome the instinctive rebellion at disagreement? Hardly! Instinctively, I still react more favorably to flattery than to criticism. But when a modicum of rationality is applied, I discover that flattery induces a false sense of wisdom, whereas disagreement shows me that I am not far from the starting line; further, it serves as something to brace against, permitting propulsion forward.

It is not agreement among ourselves that we should seek but, rather, an amiability in our countless differences—without which we could not exist. Whether this stance or attitude can be achieved depends on an ability to discipline our animal instincts and to look at the matter rationally, as human beings.

Whenever a person angrily projects his philosophy, he either does not understand it well, or else it is not worthy of projection.

IF FREEDOM HAD ONLY ENEMIES

THE FOLLOWING, when first appearing in *Notes from FEE*, evoked both moderate approval and severe criticism, that is, numerous instances of “I absolutely disagree.” This is my reason for using it as a sequel to the previous chapter and for doing a commentary on the criticism in the next two chapters.

During the question period following a lecture, the lady asked, “Why is it that the behaviors we believe to be good and true and virtuous are today shrugged off as ‘old hat?’”

If we had all the answers to that question, we’d also know why so many economic and political verities are now dismissed as “reactionary,” relics of the “horse and buggy days,” ill-suited to “the wave of the future.”

Knowing that the alternative to “old hat” is irresponsibility and that “the wave of the future” is out-and-out socialism may inflate our sense of righteousness, but this is of little comfort and no answer to the lady’s sticky question, nor does it give us any clue as to our own shortcomings.

One possible answer is that bad teaching is finally catching up with us.

First, recount some of the virtues: kindness; cheerfulness;

honesty, truthfulness, integrity; courage, candor, frankness; awe, reverence; humility; perseverance; courtesy, good manners; thrift; modesty.

Next, reflect on the manner in which, to a marked extent, these virtues have been and are being "taught." Mostly as forbidding admonishments! The common overtone is: "Be good or be damned." As a consequence, these truly admirable human qualities seem to be peddled primarily by prophets of gloom; the virtues are thus associated with such dreary and offensive intrusions as being preached at, nagged, scolded. If honesty, for instance, has only unhappy, holier-than-thou protagonists, perhaps honesty isn't all it's cracked up to be. Little wonder that deviations are tempting, that the virtues are relegated to the "old hat" category.

It seems clear to me that the glad tidings of what's right can never be borne on the wings of admonishments, preachments, scoldings. This intrusive method evokes both resentment and resistance and pushes away from us the person we would influence and win, be that person a child or an adult.

Truth is its own witness, which is to say, the virtues speak for themselves in a language all their own—loud and clear; their language is exemplary action. In reality, virtues are spread by contagion; they are caught, not taught. True, others may drink at my fountain if they wish, provided there is anything there to drink. But that's "catching," not teaching in the popular sense.

Granted, keeping a tight rein on our own impulses to set others straight is no easy matter; we have been exposed for too long to compulsory education and all that such an in-

trusive process implies. Perhaps we can correct this in ourselves by drawing a lesson from one of the finest maxims ever written: "Do not unto others that which you would not have them do unto you."

The lesson is this: *Use no methods aimed at enhancing the virtues of others that you would not have them use on you. And you would not have them use on you any methods you would not use on yourself.*

Concerning Methods

What are the constructive methods? Assuredly, they do not include censure, denunciation, or abuse. To the extent that we strive after virtue, it is always a quest for something better—the seeking of light, the finding of which is attended by the kind of joy that accompanies discovery, invention, insight. The virtues so discovered are associated with happiness as they should be. Instead of being "old hat," they afford an exhilarating glimpse of the Cosmic Scheme. We need only to grasp the simple point that enlightenment—education—can only be educed, never forced.¹

The efficacy of personal virtues, such as "honesty is the best policy," is no recent discovery; this knowledge is to be found among the ancients, deep-rooted in tradition. Lapses are self-corrective provided we step aside with our offensive methods and let the virtues speak for themselves in their own language: exemplary actions.

¹ See "Education, the Libertarian Way," in my *The Coming Aristocracy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-127.

When we assess economic and political verities, however, we find that these are not rooted in tradition; indeed, they're brand new. Free market, private ownership, limited government concepts and the knowledge pertaining to specialization, freedom in transactions, the subjective theory of value, and competition and free pricing as a means of allocating scarce resources have come into a minimal apprehension only during the last six or seven generations. For these concepts and ideas to simply survive, let alone grow and thrive, in the face of traditional authoritarianism requires thoughtful and patient nursing.

It takes a great deal of very offensive "teaching" to displace the idea that "honesty is the best policy." But similar tactics can easily snuff out the tiny flame of freedom. The former is a tough old bird;² the latter is a fledgling!

The difficulty of keeping freedom concepts and ideas alive is enormously compounded by a mischievous and wholly false assumption, namely, that the protagonists of freedom know precisely what they are talking about. The truth is that no one knows much more about the wondrous ways of freedom than about the miracle of Creation. Indeed, we should not dismiss the thought that freedom is an important aspect of Creation.

In the case of personal virtues relegated to the "old hat"

² "Tradition in its broadest sense refers to knowledge and doctrines as well as patterns of behavior transmitted from generation to generation. More specifically, *tradition* means a particular observance so long continued that it has almost the force of law. . . ." *Modern Guide to Synonyms* by S. I. Hayakawa (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1968), p. 634.

category, we have only offensive tactics to blame. But when it comes to the economic and political verities that have so far been uncovered, we have two destructive influences to ward off: know-it-allness, plus the offensive tactics.

To qualify as a spokesman for freedom—judging by the thousands who speak “authoritatively” on the subject—apparently requires little more than to be out of favor with some aspect of socialistic practice. As a consequence, many of the utterances we hear “on behalf of freedom” range all the way from nonsense to a potpourri of inconsistencies. So awful is much of it that, were I a beginner in political economy sitting on the fence while deciding which way to jump, most of the voices from “the right” would turn my head to “the left.” And I would have justification enough to hurl such disparagements as “old hat,” “reactionary,” and the like.

The Know-It-Alls

We cannot fault a person for knowing less than everything about freedom, for no one knows very much. It’s the people professing to know everything who should give us concern, the ones whose views are “the last word,” those who condemn everyone not in precise agreement. Such offensive arrogance breeds disrespect not only for these persons but also for the causes they espouse.

The above point is important because a vast majority of uncommitted citizens do not accept or reject freedom on the basis of logic, analysis, fact; theirs are rarely rational decisions. Rather, they choose sides by deciding which spokes-

man they like best. If the protagonists of freedom are unlikable, freedom is lost. People are repelled by the know-it-allness and arbitrariness of many who march under the freedom banner. If freedom could talk, she would doubtless exclaim: "May God defend me from my protagonists; I can defend myself from my enemies!"

We hear a great deal about "fighting for freedom" as if success depended upon warlike skills. On the contrary, the very first step toward freedom and its advancement is to cease one's own belligerent tactics. Initially, such a step would have the effect of silencing most freedom protagonists. Were this miracle accomplished, freedom would then have only her enemies to guard against. If the protagonists of freedom would only stop making spectacles of themselves, the millions of uncommitted citizens could give undivided attention to the antics of authoritarians. Authoritarianism could never endure even such casual scrutiny; its follies must be apparent when the eye is not distracted!

From freedom's side, a total silencing of all pushy, fighting, intrusive, scolding noise! Done with now and forever! What then? Disaster? To the contrary, we have positioned ourselves for a new and promising beginning. For "Silence is the mother of Truth."³ Meaning what?

The Spirit of Inquiry

With offensive, noisy, diverting tactics abandoned, our only alternative is to turn from the coercive to the educa-

³ Benjamin Disraeli.

tional method. That is, we pursue truth, probe ever further into the miraculous wonders of freedom. This is the spirit of inquiry, as silent as intuition or insight—noiseless as a thought.

The rule of personal conduct for this educational method can be expressed in this manner: Go only where called but do everything within your power to qualify to be called. Become so proficient that tutorship or counsel is sought; resort to the law of attraction.

Reflect on our situation thus altered. Devotees of freedom would simply have nothing to say except as they would quietly share with those who seek to achieve a similar level of understanding. Golden silence! One cannot imagine teachers more attractive than these, more likely of emulation.

What is the philosophy of these attractive people? Freedom! And the uncommitted will conclude that if these thoughtful people believe in freedom, then let freedom reign!

THE ART OF DOING SOMETHING

WHAT A CHALLENGE it is to establish effective communication! The person who says, "I know precisely what you mean," could be wrong for several reasons, one of which might be that you failed to say precisely what you meant. As I once heard a speaker put it:

I know you believe you understand what you think I said. But I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.

Perfect communication, except in simple matters, is doubtless unattainable, such perfection presupposing a perfect sayer and a perfect hearer. These are hard to come by. Our best hope is for improvement on the part of sayer and hearer, bearing in mind that each of us plays both roles.

A simple proposition like "two plus two equals four," and similar concepts that can be reduced to numbers and simple formulas, are more or less communicable. But when it comes to abstract ideas, particularly if they possess any novelty or fail to harmonize with familiar sentiments, most thoughts of most sayers come through as mumbo jumbo to

most hearers. As if a Japanese who doesn't understand French were trying to explain the theory of relativity to a Frenchman who doesn't understand Japanese! We expect too much if we hope for precise communication of abstract ideas. Nevertheless, we must keep trying.

Take the previous chapter. When originally released in *Notes from FEE*, it evoked both approval and criticism. Here's a sample of the latter:

I am concerned over the advice given. The gist of it appears to be that those who are opposed to communism and socialism should simply sit back and do nothing and say nothing.

Should we who know better . . . do nothing when a minister quotes approvingly from *Peace, Power and Protest*? Or when he doesn't object to a publication designed to be read in Sunday School which states, "Nothing happened to correct all these abuses until the Communists came along and gave them love, help, and understanding"?

Should we do nothing, that is, make no effort to *inject* some light and understanding into this mass of ignorance? (*Italics mine.*)

This is an example of imperfect communication. Nor can I ascribe more fault to the hearer than to the sayer. Obviously, I did not say all I meant nor did he hear all I said.

"If Freedom Had Only Enemies" was warmly approved by many readers. These letters left me flushed with a feeling of success—a finished job, well done, was my instinctive

reaction. Viewed rationally, however, I could not possibly have shed all the light there is on this line of thought. It's the criticisms that force me to acknowledge that I've barely scratched the surface; I'll have to clarify the distinction between "doing nothing" and the kind of action appropriate in the circumstances. To scratch, there must be something to scratch against, and the criticisms provide that surface. So, here's another try at expressing what I mean.

On Being Constructive

Should anyone attempt to inject common sense into a rock, however vigorously, I would classify the effort as a do-nothing project. Doing something suggests constructive action. A rock cannot respond to instruction. The analogy is appropriate. One's wisdom can no more be forced into another's consciousness than a rock can be educated.

Assume that I am the ignorant one, the victim of communistic error, and that you rue my miserable plight. Merely have one fact in mind: At the human level, I alone am in control of such doors of perception as I possess. Your wisdom is admitted to my mind, if at all, on my say-so, not yours. The chances are that the more aggressively you try to displace my ignorance with your wisdom, the more airtight will my doors of perception be sealed against your "injections." Reverse the roles and see if you do not arrive at the same conclusion.

The problem here is error which, according to our judgment, we refer to as ignorance. Exactly where is error corrected? Who is in charge? The correction, if any, is in the

psyche and this is never dual or collective but as individualistic as "I." In the sense that I am the ultimate arbiter of what is received and rejected by me, whether it be a belief in God, or the wisdom another possesses, or nothing at all, I alone am the dealer in my own errors. No matter how brilliantly or ignorantly I discharge my role as a human being, or whether I strive for reason, or surrender to environmental forces, I am, so far as other men are concerned, the captain of my soul. You are not and cannot be my captain except on my election.

Suppose that this were not true, that you could, on your election, inject your wisdom into my ignorance. If you could do this, so could anyone else! Indeed, if each person were not in charge of his own doors of perception, then his mind must necessarily be open to every possible wisdom—or inanity—others might propose. I could have you believing that the earth is flat or that murder is a virtue! Fortunately, such control over you is not possible; and any attempt to do the impossible might be described as a do-nothing project.

I do not mean to imply that I alone correct all my errors. Far from it! Actually, such corrections as I make must be credited largely to others. But I hold the key position: deciding who these others shall be. What turns my head to this or that person for enlightenment? It is my assessment of the enlightenment this or that person has to offer. In a word, my head turns to whoever attracts me.

The so-called battle for men's minds is commonly thought to be an injection process. Unless ideas can be forcibly transplanted, this is false and, thus, is a do-nothing procedure.

Should we be serious about battling for men's minds? Or is this concept in error? Devotees of freedom who take this tack are, in my judgment, on a wrong course. If I read God's message aright, it goes something like this:

You have not been given the world to run or men's minds to repair. Instead, you have been given you to rule and yourself to improve. Your assignment is the biggest project on earth and, try as you will, completion will never be in sight. Yours is the role of sharing in Creation, if you will, but you are not God. Attend to yourself, and leave the heavens and the earth and others who inhabit it to your Creator.

It is attending and practicing of this belief that is so often referred to as saying nothing and doing nothing. But, as I see it, the art of self-improvement is in fact the art of doing something. Conceded, this is difficult. It rests on expanding one's own understanding, awareness; indeed, it is a process of stretching one's own mind. This, however, is within the realm of possibility, whereas stretching the mind of another is not. What one does with his own mind is entirely up to him.

Not that we lack concern for the quality of other people's thinking. One's existence is powerfully governed by the thoughts and the conduct of others. But if we would effectively influence such thoughts and conduct, we must look to the means.

What can I do about the thinking of others? I can turn my concentration away from their observed ignorance or depravity and try, rather, to overcome my own shortcom-

ings. I cannot concentrate on others and on self at one and the same time. Keeping my eye on them is to accomplish nothing; keeping my eye on self is to do all that's possible.

"Seek Ye First . . . "

This brings us to the theory of the dividend, never in clearer words than, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." In the context of my thesis: "Seek truth and righteousness first of all and then these things (better thoughts on the part of others) will be the dividend."

Of course, the rejoinder to this is, "Prove it!" Personally, I need no more proof than to observe what happens day by day. To the skeptic, I suggest a broad, sweeping look at our society: millions of individuals, each embracing numerous errors and truths but with each in control of what he receives and rejects, taking unto himself only that which attracts him. With this picture in mind, we can see the fallacy of each trying to reform the others. This is not the way improvement is brought about. It's the other way around: you improve yourself and, if successful enough, I and others will be drawn to you as to a magnet.

Viewed in this manner, our problem boils down to a competition in magnetism. Bear in mind that communist and many other types of errors can be and more often than not are attractive, that is, they exert an ingathering, magnetic force.

What then is my problem? Or yours? It is to make our ideas, and our methods, more attractive than are offered by

the competition. This can be illustrated by a simple homology.

There were two golfers; one remained a dub, the other became the world's best. The dub, concerned about the errors he observed among golfers, spent his time injecting his "wisdom" into their ignorance. Golfers avoided him as they would the plague. The other sought out the best tutors and concentrated on the improvement of his own game. Finally, he was able to defeat every golfer he met in competition. Golfers the world over turned to the champ that they might remedy their errors. It was the magnetism generated by his excellence that paid the dividend of a general reduction in error. The counsel of Frank Lloyd Wright comes to mind:

The moment you buttonhole somebody and begin to convert him it is all over. But when you let him buttonhole you and ask you questions that have been arousing his mind by the superiority of what you have done, or what you do, or what you can do, then you can talk to him . . . beyond that you cannot go.¹

Only those who concentrate on their own improvement can ever acquire the art of doing something.

¹ Mrs. Frank Lloyd Wright, *The Roots of Life* (New York, Horizon Press, 1963), p. 41.

THE MAGIC NUMBER IS ONE

TEACHERS, in the meaningful sense, are those to whom others are drawn—the magnetic ones.

My problem and yours, if we would advance the freedom philosophy, is first to become teachers ourselves and, hopefully, to attract another or others into this role. This recommended ingathering method is to be distinguished from the commonly practiced outgoing procedure.

Time and again, over the years, friends of the freedom philosophy have urged FEE to go on radio, TV, and into other public media. Or, “Get that excellent article in the *Reader’s Digest*; it reaches millions.”¹ Implicit in such advice is the notion that ours is a selling rather than a learning problem, that the job is to insinuate our ideas into the minds of others rather than having something in our own minds that others will wish to share. Theirs is an inversion of the educational process.

¹ No one “gets” an article in the *Reader’s Digest* any more than in *The Freeman*. Editors and publishers do their own getting precisely as you get your own ideas.

Let me state my own position at the outset: Were some philanthropist to say, "Put FEE on TV and I'll foot the bill," my answer would be, "No, thank you." And that would be to turn down millions of dollars. Why would I reject such an offer? Not because of any objections to the use of our material in public media; far from it! I simply frown on wasting other people's money and I have an aversion to kidding myself.

Any experienced lecturer or personal counselor who ignores applause and accurately assesses results, knows full well that the best audience is one, though he may not know the reason why!

The biggest live audience I ever addressed was 2,200. But the applause must have been for "a good show" rather than for any ideas that might have been garnered, for I have yet to find the slightest trace of any ideological impact or of any lasting interest aroused by that lecture.

Often, when I have been scheduled to address a convention or an annual meeting, a friend in that community has at the same time arranged for a small, invitational gathering. The big affair pays my expenses in dollars, and little more. But the small one invariably yields handsomely in terms of FEE's objectives.

How Audiences Differ

My experiences over several decades attest to the fact, and I believe many teachers would confirm, that the smaller and more personal the audience the better are the educational results. From the inexperienced, however, comes the

general insistence on "reaching the masses." Nor should we expect any change in this fallacious attitude unless we are able to explain *why* the best audience is one.

In the case of a national convention, for instance, the program chairman may share my ideas on liberty and invite me for this reason and this alone. His aim is to "educate" the members or, at the very least, to get them interested in the freedom philosophy. Overlooked is the fact that he may be the only one attending the convention who is really interested in these ideas. The others, by and large, couldn't care less; they are not looking for my ideas and, as a consequence, do no "drinking in" at all. I might as well have spoken to so many cemetery headstones.

However, if the message is presented in a highly entertaining manner, audiences will loudly applaud and, on occasion, give the speaker a standing ovation. And the speaker, unless severely realistic, may think they are approving his message rather than the entertainment he furnished. More often than not, the program chairman is primarily interested in "a warm body" who can amuse. If all of his speakers are rousinglly applauded, his associational fellows will adjudge him the best chairman they ever had—and that's the reward he seeks. But from the speaker's standpoint, the honorarium comes pretty close to all that counts.

The smaller invitational gathering is another matter. Only those accept the invitation who are interested in the ideas for which the speaker is reputed. As a result, such sessions often continue for hours with a give and take of ideas edifying not only to the guests but to the speaker as well. Parenthetically, of the small gatherings, a FEE Seminar

with many hours of concentration on and discussion of the freedom philosophy is the best of all when viewed in the light of our aims. But in all of these smaller sessions the "drinking in" is incalculably greater than in the large, wholly impersonal conventions.

However, even these small get-togethers, rewarding as they have been over the years, do not measure up educationally to the man-to-man confrontation between two individuals, each in a high spirit of inquiry.² One times one beats 2,200 times zero!

A lecturer, if at all experienced, "feels" an audience. He knows whether or not they're listening. There comes to mind an audience of 500 really first-rate people. I knew they were not tuned in, that I wasn't even entertaining them. Later that night, the reason dawned: the lighting or, rather, the lack of it; I had been speaking in near darkness, as ineffective as if through the loudspeaker of a radio.

A few weeks later, when asked to give the same lecture before an equally first-rate audience, I arranged to be spotlighted. Never have I had a more responsive audience. There's a good reason why stages have footlights. I do not wish to leave the impression, however, that the responsive audience "got the message"; only that they were listening and were, at least, entertained.

Such are the highlights of my experience which lead me to the conclusion that the best audience is one. Bearing in mind that "getting the message" of the freedom philosophy

²"My definition of a University is Mark Hopkins at one end of a log and a student at the other." Attributed to James A. Garfield in a letter accepting nomination for Presidency, July 12, 1880.

is the sole problem here at issue, let us now examine how the educational process works as related to our aims.

Starting with Self

In the first place, no person can ever grasp these ideas who has not done some thinking about them on his own. A truism: "A man only understands that of which he has already the beginnings in himself." In a word, regardless of how powerful a magnet may be, it can never attract straw or sawdust. This fact drastically limits the number of those who are educable in economic, moral, and political philosophy. It makes nonsense of the notion that educating the masses is even a remote possibility.

Next, of the few who have done some thinking on these matters for themselves, only that fraction of them are further educable who eagerly seek additional enlightenment. A person who is satisfied with what he knows will never add to his knowledge, and one might as well talk to a book as to him.

There is a further crucial point, well expressed by Cardinal Newman:

The general principles of any study you may learn by books at home, but the detail, the color, the tone, the air, the life in it, you must catch all these from those in whom it already lives.³

³ From "What Is a University?" reprinted in *The Essential Newman*, U. F. Blehl, ed. (New York: New American Library, Inc., Mentor, 1963), p. 162.

“You must *catch* all these from those in whom it already lives”! You can “catch” the idea that the best audience is one far easier when it is made available for reading than you can by listening to the same idea over radio or TV or as a member of a large audience. When reading, you can reread but you do not relisten to the difficult ideas in speeches, that is, not when the speaker is before large audiences. But if you are one of a dozen in a discussion session, where you are in personal contact with the one “in whom it already lives,” there is a back-and-forth exchange which brings you and the other to a common level of understanding, that is, if you “have the floor” to the exclusion of the other eleven.

When the audience is you and you alone, you do, in fact, “have the floor.” Assuming that the teacher is intelligent and that you are at once eager to know and perceptive, you will become a better teacher yourself as a result of the experience. There is no other get-together in which the transmittal of ideas is so assured of success as in this one-to-one arrangement. The best audience is always one!

The experiences and reasons I have cited are enough to convince me that the best audience is one, but there is a deeper reason which, if I understood and could explain, would be even more convincing. It's in the area of radiation. There is an enormous dissipation of radiating energy in large audiences. The “sending” is weakened by spreading it out, and the attention—“receiving”—markedly diminishes. I know this to be true from experience and not from analysis, just as I know that the law of attraction—magnetism—works its wonders, though I do not know why.

The rebuttal to these observations is heard over and over: The process is too slow.

Overlooked are two unassailable facts. The first is that no ground is gained except as new teachers of the freedom philosophy come into existence. And good teachers are not made from large audiences. *Any effort, such as FEE's, which does not result in more teachers is meaningless.* And the hope must be that they will far excel our own capabilities.

The second is that ours is definitely not a numbers problem in the sense of tens of thousands or millions; like every constructive movement of ideas throughout history, ours is exclusively a quality problem. Studying the history of movements, it is clear that you alone could turn the world toward freedom were you competent enough. Until you reach that state of competence, it will behoove others of us in our varied endeavors to try to fill in where there may be deficiencies.

True, the educational process is slow, but it alone merits our attention and effort. While the propagandizing, proselytizing, selling-the-masses techniques get quicker results, the results are no good; they lack any upgrading quality. Indeed, they tend to turn uncommitted citizens away from the freedom philosophy. It is folly to hurry in the wrong direction! As Charles Mackay expressed it in the preface to the 1852 edition of *Extraordinary Popular Delusions and the Madness of Crowds*, "Men, it has been well said, think in herds; it will be seen that they go mad in herds, while they recover their senses slowly, one by one."

Above all, we must bear in mind that good results depend on the power of attraction which, in turn, rests on

excellence. Any individual can assess his own competence in this respect by merely observing the extent to which others are seeking his tutorship on free market, private ownership, limited government, and related concepts.

If, hopefully, the seekers be numerous, may they appear one by one, for that is the magic number of the perfect audience.

THE NEED IS MINE

THE LECTURE had been well received. I had argued for freedom and urged everyone to become a student of liberty so that he might better understand the philosophy and explain it with greater clarity. It was an enthusiastic harangue on my part, but what had been accomplished for my audience?

The more I reflected, the less satisfied I was. For the lecture had been just that—a harangue, similar to the “persuasiveness” most libertarians employ, the kind that gets us nowhere. Have I been going about things wrong?

In effect, I’ve been telling my listeners that the country needs freedom and that freedom needs them. Get in there and fight for freedom and country; *you* are needed! Now, what is wrong with that?

There are at least two flaws in this approach. First, there is very little motivation in some generalized and nebulous need—be it the need of country, society, ideology, or whatever. Everybody’s need is everybody’s responsibility, but everybody in theory usually turns out to be nobody in actuality.

Yes, in the case of emergencies such as war or other catas-

trophe, where each person fears what will happen to him if he doesn't act, response to the call of duty can be and often is general. But when the call is in the name of freedom—particularly if the listeners are affluent—one may expect applause if the lecture is well presented, but not much more. The speaker will be admired for his labors and lauded as a rare idealist, while freedom continues to lose support. This calls to mind the matinee idol in a play that's a flop.

The second and more important flaw is this: Freedom doesn't need you or me any more than wisdom needs us. It's the other way around! The need for freedom, no less than wisdom, is mine; and this goes for you, too, whoever you are. Once this fact is grasped, motivation sets in. The need for freedom is seen as a vital urgency: self-emergence. Utopian sentiments to the contrary, self-interest ranks first as the motivating force in human action.¹ When and if I see that the need for freedom is an immediate, personal need of my own, you can count on me to act when freedom is threatened. And on others, too!

Freedom is not a living, thinking being and not like a plant or domesticated animal to be watered and nurtured and protected and propagated. Freedom no more has needs than it has eyes to see. Rather, it is an abstraction; indeed,

¹ Self-interest, as I use the term, can no more be associated with greed than with charity. Each of us is motivated by his own assessment of values—profound or shallow, right or wrong. What distinguishes us is not attention or inattention to self but, rather, how intelligently we interpret our self-interest. The thief is so ignorant that he thinks self is best served by taking great risks for the sake of small material gains. Another may believe that self is best served by a search for truth and learning to explain with clarity whatever he discovers.

it is not a thing in itself but, instead, an *absence* of some things: deadening restraints on creative actions.

One may harangue businessmen about their "obligations" to uphold and maintain a climate of freedom, shame teachers for neglect of their "responsibilities," condemn the apathy of voters. But freedom does not need these persons or groups—or you or me. The concept stands, whether or not anyone supports it, believes in it, acts in accord with it. The question is: Does the individual need freedom? And my answer is, "Yes, indeed!"

Sensing the Problem

If there is such a thing as a freedom problem, it is the problem of becoming aware of one's need for freedom. Let's see if this need can be portrayed.

To sense one's need for freedom is never easy, and the detection is made more difficult by the gradual erosion of freedom, that is, by the steady addition of restraints. As a rule, it takes sharp and sudden contrasts—people have to be shocked into awareness.

How sensitive one would be to the need for fresh air were its supply suddenly threatened! Imagine yourself—say in 1900—at the site where any large metropolis now stands. How fresh the air! Next, imagine a sudden dumping from the heavens of today's atmospheric pollution that often brings tears from the eyes and smarting of the lungs. One would easily recognize the need for fresh air. But when the pollution increases gradually, over decades, most people accept it without much grumble; their sensitivity is numbed.

Man's need for fresh air hasn't changed; but his recognition of the need has dimmed.

So it is with freedom. One's need for freedom is no less in Russia or Cuba than in the U.S.A. or Hong Kong; no less now than when restraints on creative actions were fewer. It is the recognition of the need that flags as freedom gradually dwindles. Adaptation to the mores, whatever they are, is the natural tendency. Most Russians, for instance, do not recognize the extent of their enslavement.

Nor is there any way to overcome this natural tendency unless one is always aware of the *what-ought-to-be* and constantly makes comparisons with the *what-is*. When one is conscious of the *what-ought-to-be*—the ideal—the *what-is* automatically becomes apparent. The need for freedom then looms large. Sudden contrasts are no longer necessary for awareness.

The Need for Freedom

Why do I need freedom? The following brevities—three among ever so many—leave no doubt as to my need.

1. Man, singular, is Creation's finest image. His destiny is the improvement, now and forever, of this image in order that he may increasingly share in Creation. Man's purpose is a realization of his unique, creative potentialities. Man requires, above all else, not to be smothered—that is, he requires an absence of restraints against creative release. He needs "room to breathe," as we say.

2. Man needs freedom in order to be self-responsible. No

one can be self-reliant when the government coercively assumes responsibility for his welfare, security, prosperity. It is only when the individual responsibly chooses between alternatives—becomes a decision-maker—that there can be growth of the faculties essential for self-realization. It is only in the absence of coercive restraints—freedom—that man becomes his own man.²

3. Man needs freedom because it is the only state of affairs in which Creative Wisdom can flourish, without which man cannot exist. As explained in previous chapters, Creative Wisdom is that coalescence of tiny bits of knowledge—inventions, insights, discoveries, and the like—into an enormous luminosity; it is a body of knowledge that never even remotely exists in any discrete individual. It is Creative Wisdom that accounts for all the man-made gadgetry by which we live and materially prosper—everything from a pencil to a jet plane. Coalescence—the ingathering of the tiny bits—presupposes their freedom to flow. This Creative Wisdom or “knowledge in society” is equally a requirement for all social, political, moral, ethical, and spiritual achievements of high order.

Dean Inge’s, “Nothing fails like success,” comes to mind. Two or three generations of affluence—temporary in historical terms—have the superficial earmarks of success. Most of those who live so affluently in these periods become insensitive to needs, particularly to a need for any more

² For a further explanation of this idea, see the chapter, “Expanding Selfhood” in my *The Coming Aristocracy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 15-22.

freedom than exists in their experience. Freedom fails to prevail at the hands of these "successes."

It takes intellectual calisthenics for one of these "successes" to recognize his need for freedom. He must go beyond his own experience to see what his needs really are, that is, he has to see that his own needs extend to the children for whom he is responsible, and to their progeny. To do what is sound and right at any point in time requires that present thoughts and actions be assessed as to their effect on some future point in time.

Freedom has no needs. But anyone who can think long-range will likely conclude, sooner or later, that "the need is mine."

STUDENTS, WHEREVER YOU ARE

LET ME SHARE a problem posed in a recent letter from a businessman:

We have two sons, both honor student graduates of _____ University. Both are radical, political activists, as are their student friends whom we meet through them! And the "brighter" they are the more they criticize our free enterprise system.

They despise communism and dictatorships and are against public ownership of the means of production. What they embrace is something loosely called democratic socialism. How can this be answered?

It is obvious from the rest of the letter that these young people are in pursuit of an ideal, and there are many like them on our campuses.¹ Such students are searching for something better than what they see going on all around them. In this respect, I'm on their side.

¹ The reference here is not to those persons on our campuses who are enrolled as students and whose devotion is not to learning but to disaster.

But to look for the ideal in any form of socialism—democratic or whatever—calls to mind the old story of the blind man in a dark room looking for a black cat that isn't there!

Why? Because these students have had their vision cut off, through no fault of their own, and they grope unsuccessfully. They know of no alternative to the present mess other than "democratic socialism," rarely having been exposed to the ideal of a free market, private ownership, limited government society.

Very few fathers and mothers—whatever their calling—have the slightest idea what the free society really is or how it works. Thus, the young folks grow to college age uninstructed. And their college teachers—again with a few notable exceptions—know no more of the ideal than do the parents. Many of these teachers, being of the socialist persuasion, so thoroughly discredit everything that is private, individualistic, competitive, voluntary that the students dismiss what really is the ideal as not worthy of consideration. They are blind to the ideal!

The Search for the Ideal

Where, then, must their search be conducted? If freedom is rejected, what remains? Nothing, except in the socialistic realm. True, they reject communism, dictatorship, public ownership of the means of production—those socialistic schemes bearing familiar labels and demonstrably unworkable. So they search for the ideal in another socialistic arrangement bearing some such label as "democratic socialism." They look for a cat that isn't there.

We must now define our terms. At the outset, let me clarify one point: cooperative activities unrelated to government do not fall within my definition of socialism; it is the collectivization by government force that qualifies as socialism. Socialism is always a statist or interventionist way of life; it has a double-barreled definition: government ownership and control of the means of production and/or the results of production. Put another way, it is the planned economy and/or the welfare state. The two, as a rule, go hand in hand; indeed, it is next to impossible to practice either without the other.

While governments have varying methods of organization for owning and controlling the means and results of production, such control is of the essence of socialism; the rest is window dressing. The details of *how* government runs my life fail to interest me; I am concerned with one fact: does it or does it not run my life?

If we keep our definition in mind, we are compelled to refer to communism and all dictatorships as socialism. Other labels for socialism are Collectivism, Castroism, Leninism, Maoism, Marxism, Trotskyism, Fabianism, Fascism, Nazism. Aside from the Welfare State and the Planned Economy, we have some other labels distinctly American in origin: New Deal, Fair Deal, New Republicanism, the Great Society, the New Frontier, Creative Federalism. Observe that each of these so-called progressive ideologies has a characteristic common to all the others: the belief that it is the role of government to look after "its" people. The ideal of limited government—codifying and enforcing the taboos, that is, inhibiting destructive actions and defending

the life and livelihood of all—gets less and less attention as government assumes the management of creative activities. Limited government gives way to unlimited government.

Actually, the various labels for socialism are far from definitive. Most of them have been conjured up to catch the eye or imagination of the people just as advertisers concoct fancy names for soap. But by whatever name, it's still soap; and by whatever name, all governmental ownership and control of creative activities is still socialism!

A Comparison

Let us now reflect on the euphemism, "democratic socialism." Perhaps we can dispose of the matter simply and quickly by observing how it differs from dictatorship. In the latter, the dictator and his henchmen decree the extent and manner of socialization. In the former, the "democratic" means that the decree is by majority vote.

Theoretically, both are dictatorial. The democratic majority-vote merely means that might—the overwhelming number—makes right. The coercive majority deserves no more approval than does the dictator who uses his might to make right.

Practically, it's a choice between tweedledum and tweedledee. The dictator knows no more about how to control your life than I do. And as to the wisdom of a majority, it may be even less, if that is possible. Keep in mind that the larger a committee the fuzzier are its resolutions, and the majority of a nation's citizens is a very big committee, indeed! This may explain why majorities are often more tyrannical than

dictators.¹ Furthermore, it is possible, on occasion, to be rid of a dictator. But minorities find it quite difficult to rid themselves of the majority. "Democratic socialism" is just as far from the ideal as is communism!

So far as the ideal is concerned—the free market, private ownership, limited government way of life—it is a quest without end; it correlates with understanding and wisdom. Bear in mind that, historically speaking, it is brand new. Its features such as specialization, freedom in transactions, the marginal utility and subjective theory of value, competition and free pricing as a means of allocating scarce resources, free entry, the right to the fruits of one's own labor, a common justice—that is, each person equal before the law as before God, and other related concepts have had but slight apprehension on the part of an infinitesimal minority—and only during the last six or seven generations! This ideal way of life has been glimpsed by a few; it has never been mastered by anyone. And, because man is now and forever imperfect, it will never be mastered, only approached.

The Lack of Understanding

The ideal way of life *has had* its nearest approximation in the U.S.A., that is, some aspects of it have been heeded and practiced. But relatively few persons have even begun

¹ While rejecting majority vote as a dictatorial device, I subscribe to it as the best method for choosing who the officials of a limited government shall be. See "The American System and Majority Rule" by E. A. Opitz. *The Freeman*, November, 1962.

to understand the freedom philosophy; most people are quite unable to distinguish between what is freedom and what isn't.² As a consequence, many of the blessings that have flowed from freedom have been mistakenly ascribed to other causes. Freedom is rarely given credit for its accomplishments, and, more often than not, has been blamed for socialistic destructiveness.

In the absence of an understanding of freedom and socialism, there can be no accurate relating of either causes or effects. The *post hoc* fallacy is an ancient error and explains why so many think the cause of something good or bad is an irrelevant, preceding event or something else occurring simultaneously. An absurd example is the Indian tribe which holds an annual rattlesnake dance just before the rainy season and concludes that the dance brings the rain. But equally absurd is the cliché we have heard for four decades: "If free enterprise is so wonderful, how come the great depression?" Irrational as the snake dancers, most people assume that freedom brought on the depression. That's because they don't know the difference between freedom and socialism.³

These few paragraphs are only to suggest the direction in which young folks might turn in their search for the ideal. Even years of effort will never reveal the answer in full, but a modicum of serious study will assure the seeker that he is

² For an explanation of the differences between the ideal—the free market—and private enterprise, see the chapter, "Finding Words for Common Sense," in my *The Coming Aristocracy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-34.

³ See *Depressions: Their Cause and Cure*, a minibook by Murray N. Rothbard. Copy on request.

on the right road. Two cautions: never be dissuaded from this course by those who don't know the difference between freedom and socialism. And beware of clichés! Freedom will then reveal its nature.

Nor need this thesis be limited to young people in high school and college. Graduation and the beginning of earning should never be a signal to quit learning. Anyone whose counsel is worth seeking is a student through his adult years and into maturity.

DOCTOR, WHOEVER YOU ARE¹

DOCTOR, whoever you are, come heal this sickness!

While the following is an invitation to those who have their doctorate in medicine, it can be extended with equal validity not only to all who have doctorates in law, philosophy, divinity, or whatever, but to citizens, academy-graded or not, who have any competence for healing the sickness in question. The invitation is general because those who can heal this sickness may come from no one knows where. In this context, the lowly fishermen of Galilee come to mind as doctors.

I take for my text these words from the Hippocratic oath:

. . . You will lead your lives and practice your art in uprightness and honor; that whatsoever house you shall enter, it shall be for the good of the sick to the utmost of your power, you holding yourselves far aloof from wrong, from corruption, from the tempting of others to vice. . . .

¹ Delivered before the 26th Annual Meeting, Association of American Physicians and Surgeons, Denver, Colorado, October 9, 1969.

At the outset, I would make it clear that I hold no brief for mere pledges—even pledges as noble as this one. I observe that personal resolutions are more often broken than honored; few of us have the strength of character to resist minor temptations. Loyalty oaths are no more observed than wedding vows. Pledges of allegiance to the flag are mostly meaningless mumbles, pretty words relegated to the habit category. Oaths to uphold the Constitution, with a hand on the Bible, are recited as blandly by those who would wreck it as by others who seek its preservation. And when assessing the wide range of performance observed in M.D.'s, who are traditionally bound by the Hippocratic oath if not personally pledged to it, I remain just as unimpressed with "canned" oaths. Rectitude isn't to be acquired, persons of quality are not fashioned, by any device which begins with, "Repeat after me." The words must become flesh, so to speak, and this requires more than an occasional recitation.

Secondly, I do not think of you doctors as requiring more virtue than others by reason of the career you have chosen. Honorable relationships are as much required between aircraft makers and their customers as between you and your patients. Righteousness is as appropriate for me or a plumber as for the Pope or an M.D. I make this point only to emphasize that occupational category has nothing whatsoever to do with honor and quality. Morality is individual, not collective. For M.D.'s, as I observe them, are no less the victims of passions and nonsense or more the exemplars of honor and quality than are clergymen, teachers, businessmen, or whoever. You run the same moral and intellectual gamut as do the rest of us!

Meaningful Words

Let us now take a few words from the Hippocratic oath and note how narrowly they are interpreted by some men in your profession and how broadly an M.D. of excellence and quality might render their meaning to himself.

What, for instance, is meant by "whatsoever house you shall enter"? Narrowly, it means no more than some patient's abode. But could this not be thought of as whatsoever life your activities—medical, political, or otherwise—enter into or impinge upon? A person of quality will comport himself with rectitude, with or without the tools of his trade, regardless of whose "house" he's in.

And how are we to interpret "the sick"? Narrowly, this means only those with some physical or psychic ailment listed in a medical dictionary. But an M.D. with a broader view knows that there is a sickness more pervasive than any he normally treats. This sickness is more profound and more dangerous than a virus infection, or a loss of blood, or a shortage of glandular secretions, or whatever. Analogous to a virus is a fearful belief, namely, the notion that it is proper to feather one's own nest at the expense of others. The virus equates to this belief, that is, it is an agent that infects and multiplies and causes widespread effects. And, along with this goes the loss of integrity and the shortage of self-responsibility. This is a spiritual sickness, a degenerative disease of the soul, one that the Higher Law beckons the person of quality to come and heal.

Next, reflect upon "far aloof from wrong, from corruption." I lay particular emphasis on these words not only

because they present such a wide range of possible interpretation but because they bring me to the very heart of my thesis.

By reason of the intimacy and confidence generally accorded those in your profession, it is easy to see why every precaution should be taken against wrong and corruption. Doctor-patient relationships should be free from wrongdoing, right down to presenting an honest bill for services rendered. But these, while important, are minor aspects of rectitude, and fall within a narrow interpretation of the Hippocratic oath. What about the broad and really significant interpretation of "wrong" and "corruption"?

Men and women in your profession have, over the decades, attended to the ills of millions unable to pay for services rendered; the M.D.'s only charge in such cases has been: "Be my guest." Traditionally, in addition to the practice of medicine, you have, more than any other occupational category known to me, practiced charity. You have been noted as good Samaritans which accounts, in no small measure, for the high esteem in which you have been held by rich and poor alike. Let me explain why my references are in the past tense.

Imagine, if you will, that a certain doctor of medicine has tired of this tradition and now insists that he be paid in cash for each service rendered. Unable to obtain payment from some of the more destitute of his patients, he goes among the citizenry with a gun, as a robber is wont to do, and extorts from nonpatients and total strangers the unpaid fees. Must we not rate this as wrong? As corruption of the first order? As a violation of the Hippocratic oath?

If such an act isn't wrong and corrupt, then these words are without meaning.

Actually, today, even in "this mad, mod world" of ours, were any M.D. to behave in this manner he would lose his membership in every medical society and be forever barred from practice. Yet, collectivize and then legalize this very same behavior and, in popular parlance, it will become "good and ennobling" instead of "wrong and corrupt." Not only the populace, but M.D.'s by the tens of thousands, have joined in socialized medicine—this "wave of the future" known as Medicare, Medicaid, and other euphemisms. As if association gives absolution! As if mass participation rights a wrong! As if legality alters morality! This is an intellectual sickness that needs analysis.

The Root of the Sickness

A physician, if competent, doesn't apply his treatments merely to surface manifestations of illness. He tries to approach the matter systemically, that is, he attempts to get at the root of it. We should approach this sickness of the body politic in such a manner, difficult as the diagnosis is.

I suspect this sickness has its genesis in wishes, these being but entertainments of the mind. Few, indeed, are the individuals who do not wish for improved circumstances. They wish for more and better food, housing, education—on and on—including more medical care than they can afford in many cases. Nor can we fault these aspirations. Indeed, when not perverted, human hankering motivates human progress. Wishes, unless in consort with improper

methods of fulfillment, are as benign as many other attributes of body and mind.

But now in vogue is a fearful combination of wishes and methods, as fanciful as Aladdin's lamp, and spreading like wildfire: *the transmutation of wishes into rights!* Do you wish for better housing? Then better housing is a right. Do you wish for a Gateway Arch in St. Louis, a Mall in Fresno, higher returns for goods and services, shorter hours of labor, protection from competition? Then these are rights. Do you wish for free medical care? Then free medical care is a right!

And what is the nature of the jinni called upon to transmute wishes into rights? It is organized police force: government. It extorts from all, allocating the legalized loot to those who effectively make their wishes heard.² There is no greater indictment of education in America than the fact that so many are victims of this hallucinatory sickness.

The extortion of income from everyone, funneling enormous amounts into the coffers of hospitals and M.D.'s has, as might be expected whenever the market is abandoned, brought on a shortage of both hospitals and M.D.'s, and we are witnessing only the beginning. That the quality of medical services will decline under this system and that corruption will increase is predictable whether we resort to analysis and reasoning or to the dismal record of all such attempts, be they in England, Canada, Sweden, the United States, or wherever. Most M.D.'s know this, so I shall not dwell on it further. But in a stampede of cases, this more

² This idea is developed in "When Wishes Become Rights," in my *Deeper Than You Think*, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-107.

or less common knowledge on the part of M.D.'s is relegated to second place by a force that is more powerful: personal financial enrichment! In any occupational category—your profession included—there is always a rush to where the “almighty dollar” is, a lure that often swerves man from his principles, from the straight and narrow. Only M.D.'s of unusual quality will yield not to this temptation!

Let Freedom Be the Cure

How do we go about healing this sickness? We must acquire an understanding that wishes, regardless of how numerous, do not constitute a right. *I have no more right to your professional attention than you have a claim on me to wash your dishes.* We are dealing with an absurdity which, once established as such, will vanish as did the earth-is-flat absurdity. That a wish does not make a right is so nearly self-evident by mere assertion that only cursory comment is warranted.

Absolute self-subsistence is impossible. We live and prosper by specialization and exchange. None of us can exist solely by his own efforts, so each of us specializes according to his bent or talents, and whether we prosper or not is substantially determined by what and how much others will give in exchange for what we have to offer. In a free society, that is! In a word, others tend to encourage me to specialize at what is of value to them, and I tend to encourage them to specialize at what is of value to me. This is how people in a free society exert their wishes. But note that these wishes do not carry with them any right on my part to

command what others shall produce or any right to *force* on them the terms of exchange.

When the notion that a wish is a right is put into effect by police force—the only way it can be done—then specialization is no longer guided by consumer wishes nor are the terms of exchange. What happens under Medicare, for instance, is this: M.D.'s give of their labors and the senior citizen gives substantially nothing in return. Other citizens are then forced to perform labor for which they receive absolutely nothing in return. Exchange is by coercion rather than by free choice.

If we make the simple concession that no one should be forced to labor for no return, then the absurdity of socialized medicine is clear. Were M.D.'s forced to perform their services for nothing, as nonpatients presently are forced to pay for services not received, no person would choose medicine as a career.

I repeat, the fact that many of us wish more medical attention than we can afford does not give us a right to your services or a right to force others to make up the difference, wishes to the contrary notwithstanding! Your services are a scarce economic resource, and precisely because of that scarcity should be priced and otherwise regulated by the laws of supply and demand and open competition, as should every other valuable and scarce commodity or service.³

³ The advocacy of pricing may give the false impression that all transactions must be in monetary terms. But bear in mind that there is psychic as well as monetary profit. An M.D. enjoys a psychic profit when he says to the destitute patient, "Be my guest." For further explanation, see "What Shall It Profit a Man?" in my *Deeper Than You Think*, *op. cit.*, pp. 108-117.

Otherwise, your good efforts will be wasted in the hopeless cause of socialism and the welfare state.

I have asserted that the Higher Law beckons persons of quality to heal this sickness, the cure for which is to rid the body politic of the notion that wishes constitute a right.

A Natural Aristocracy Among Men

My diagnosis, however, presupposes that the body politic be graced with persons of quality, that is, with an aristocracy in the pink of condition. By an aristocracy I mean what Jefferson meant when he said, "There is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talents."

Let me explain: The fact that most of you are presently free of the common cold is not because of an absence of the virus. When you are in the pink of condition the virus is harmless. But become overtired or run-down and the virus proliferates.

The same holds true for the body politic as for the human body. The bad ideas (virus) in the minds of men are omnipresent. But they are held in abeyance when the aristocracy is in the pink of condition. However, when men in positions of political, professional, religious, educational, and business leadership give more heed to desires of the flesh and to expediencies of the moment than to moral and spiritual principles, the bad ideas proliferate; they come out of the heads of men as termites from a rotten stump.

Recently, I commented to the proprietor of a well-managed barber shop: "I have never seen any of the hippy

long-hairs in your place." He replied, "Oh, no, they would be embarrassed to be seen in here." Men are similarly embarrassed to expose their silly ideas in social situations distinguished by a leadership of first-class citizens.

Noblesse Oblige

Finally, how do you Doctors go about "holding yourselves far aloof . . . from tempting others to vice"?

Bear in mind that high priests are the ones who hold the greatest powers of attraction—are the ones in whom confidence is most likely to be placed. And a high priest fallen from grace, having forsaken his role as exemplar, could easily tempt others to vice. Let a known thief commit a robbery and the only harm is the loss an owner suffers; others are more repulsed than tempted to imitate. But let a person held in high esteem thus defile the moral code and he will tempt others to vice. "If it's all right for him, why not for me?"

Inasmuch as citizens entrust their lives to M.D.'s more than to other specialists, they are inclined to trust you in many matters. They'll even seek and respect your economic and political counsel along with your medical advice.

Now, the more one is respected by others, the more must he bind himself to righteousness; that is, the more rigorously must he adhere to the highest principles he can envision. This is the obligation—the noblesse oblige—of anyone who holds the respect of others. For one to reflect less than the best that is within him is to tempt others to vice and, thus, to violate the Hippocratic oath. The Higher Law

dictates that the more one is respected, the more must one be respectable.

An encouraging thought: You who would heal this sickness can rest assured that good ideas are easy to advance—proliferate—whenever the aristocratic spirit is the mode, which is to say, when enough persons aspire to that high standard which establishes the climate for moral healing.

LET FREEDOM REIGN!

THE LAD who later became my friend ran away from home and school at the age of fourteen, never to return to either one. Uncommonly brilliant, energetic, egotistical, ambitious, audacious, his rise in the world of letters and business was meteoric. Within a few years after reaching the top, he failed, returning to the rank of the unknowns from whence he had come.

It seemed to me, as I came to know him, and watched him climb the ladder toward success, that we were ideologically in tune. Then, one day he casually but confidently remarked to me, "Put the economy of America under my control, and it would be greatly improved!"

My friend believed that he was smarter than the literary, business, and political giants he came to know. Perhaps he was! But he never became aware of how little he knew, a blind spot that is the most dangerous ignorance of all. This is the genesis of the authoritarian mentality, the blindness of dictators: Napoleon, Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, and all the rest. My friend's level of mentality, I believe, was higher than any of these.

And I would also rate him higher than any of the would-be rulers I have met during the past fifty years, higher than any of the less ambitious ones who likewise are unaware of how little they know. Compared to any of these, he was a genius.

As I look back, my erstwhile friend did a rather miserable job of running his own life. And the thought of his running mine is sickening; I'd rather be dead! I knew him too intimately to be fooled by appearances. Though smarter or sharper-minded than the rest of us, he was simply another imperfect individual. He was so keenly aware of his talents that he couldn't see they were limited. Consequently, like many highly educated individuals, he entertained no doubt whatsoever about his ability to run the economy and, thus, the lives of all Americans.

Think for a moment of the smartest person you have ever intimately known and see if you render a different judgment than mine about his ability to run your life. I know your answer. Therefore, no comment is required about those of lesser mentalities, the miniature Caesars, the ones who have no power but only a driving desire to straighten out friend and foe. "If others were only more like me, what a fine world this would be!"

I merely wish to point out that this impulse to rule the lives of others, whether spouse or progeny or neighbors or countrymen, originates in and is a form of blindness. These people believe, quite sincerely, that were they to reign everyone would be better off. They are would-be authoritarians because they don't know any better.

The phrase, "Let freedom reign," does not mean that

freedom should rule in the dictatorial sense; that would be a contradiction in terms. It means, instead, *let freedom be the rule*, as the alternative to persons who would rule or reign. Freedom can no more rule or reign over mankind than can fresh air.

Perfect Freedom

In this context, *perfect freedom is that state of affairs in which there is no exercise of man-concocted restraints against the release of creative energy*. Freedom can be said to wax or wane as such restraints diminish or increase. While others might phrase it differently, few will disagree with this as an abstract proposition describing a desirable state of affairs.

But agreement in the abstract is about as far as the agreement goes. Few, indeed, seem able or willing to apply the proposition in their workaday world. They may give lip service to freedom as an ideal concept but will rarely adopt it as a mode of living. Many of those who agree that freedom should be the rule will endorse social security, Medicare, trips to the moon, subsidies, on and on. These people unwittingly contradict themselves: they fail to see that in thus deciding how to spend other people's money they are restraining others from doing as each chooses with the fruits of his own labor. That other people's money is not his to give is a concept the would-be welfarist won't understand—any more than he understands that his way of doing things is authoritarian, the ultimate in antisocial behavior!

Because those with authoritarian mentalities do not ac-

knowledge or recognize their incompetence to run the economy and the lives of others, they are blind to the proposition that freedom should be the rule. Some of these doubtless have looked, and will not see. But there must be many thousands of others who simply have never looked to freedom. If they would but look, freedom could become the rule.

We go through life without seeing most of the world around us. Ours are but infinitesimal peeks. If fortunate, our horizons are broadened whenever someone says, in effect, "See *that!*" And we behold *that* for the first time. This expanding perception is the expanding Universe and the ones who point out to us that which we have not seen before are our teachers. This pointing-out process is education.

The first step in pointing out that freedom should be the rule is not only to grasp the point ourselves but to live by it as nearly as possible. Conceded, this is difficult. It is questionable that anyone has more than slightly apprehended the whole of this truth: it correlates with understanding and wisdom—a pursuit without end.

Nonetheless, this is our wonderful opportunity. The more clearly we apprehend why freedom should be the rule, the more clearly can we point it out. That numerous others will have a look and see this truth for the first time is the lesser of two dividends. The greater dividend is personal growth in wisdom and understanding; nothing matters more than this—for this is our God-given assignment!

EPILOGUE

PERFECT FREEDOM is here defined as an absence of man-concocted restraints against the release of creative energy. This is to say that freedom is a consequence of human actions. Slavery, on the other hand, is also a consequence of human actions, actions which restrain creative energy release!

These consequences of individual behavior—slavery or freedom—have no personality traits of their own; they are not sensory, acting things but, rather, impersonal conditions. These conditions, even as ignorance and darkness or wisdom and light, may be seen and observed but they can neither see nor observe. These conditions or results, as distinguished from the persons who bring them about, are senseless and no more have needs than they have eyesight. The point of this emphasis on the obvious is to help us understand what motivates us to act on behalf of freedom!

As suggested in a previous chapter, when I believe that it is freedom *which needs me*, I am no more moved to action than I'm moved by the notion that the orbital uni-

verse needs me. Freedom no more needs me than does the wisdom of Christ or the inventiveness of Edison. It's the other way around: I need freedom. Once this is apprehended, there's motivation; but not until then!

But there's more to it than just *my* need; *we* need freedom! And it is important that there should be a reasonably wide recognition of *our* need for freedom; I believe this plural need has a deep social significance.

Where Historians Fail

Historians, seeking to understand the rise and fall of civilizations and cultures, seem to attach great importance to the existence of a more or less commonly-accepted ideology which serves to unify a given society. Assuming such an ideology for which there is a general support, the resulting unification is supposed to lend survival vitality to a given civilization. When a general faith in a particular ideology declines, so will the civilization.

This reading of history doubtless explains the rise of a civilization to pre-eminence and then its fall: the rise and fall of Athens, of the Roman Empire, of England, and others. But if this be the final verdict, if the historical process must forever follow the patterns of the past, our own situation appears to be hopeless. For we have today no ideology to which there is a common dedication.

Perhaps there is a good reason for these declines and falls. Suppose that the ideology of a society is inconsistent with human development. Why should that society not decline and fall? Do not these failures contain lessons that ought

to be read in order that fresh starts, more enlightened, may be undertaken?

For instance, history is punctuated by reports of groups, tribes, societies whose ideology has been the plundering of neighboring societies. The dedication has been general enough but such depraved cultures have not survived. And who will argue that they should?

We have heard many times that wars have the good effect of unifying a whole people behind a common cause. The ideology in these cases is war. Regardless of the dedication to the cause, warring nations eventually join the long list of those that have not survived. The economics of war is such that the eventual outcome has to be detrimental to all participants. Again, why not?

Communism is the goal in Russia, a from-each-according-to-ability-to-each-according-to-need ideology, a rob-Peter-to-pay-Paul arrangement. And there's no shortage of dedication; the unification in support of the ideology is enormous. But because this motivation is out of harmony with the emergence or evolution of individual man, a society so motivated must sooner or later decline and fall. In time, the communistic culture will also be referred to in the past tense. I favor this.

The American Dream

A look at our own situation leads to what I regard as our urgent requirement. While our traditional ideology was rarely stated or understood in explicit terms, nonetheless, it existed as a lively generality to which there was a re-

markable dedication. As noted earlier, our forefathers chose freedom not as a prognosis of better things to come but as a means by which each individual could be his own man. The theme or cause or goal or ideology that predominated was that here in America one could, regardless of the station into which he was born, rise in accord with his own abilities. This was a wholesome ideology which, combined with the dedication to it, gave our special brand of civilization survival prospects. It was a culture worthy of survival!

But take note of what has happened. Instead of a common ideology, there are today ideologies without end—all at sixes and sevens! If there is one that dominates, it is political collectivism; and even this is in shattered pieces, with but limited dedication to this variant or that. Unification there is not!

If the foregoing analysis of history is right, and there appear to have been no exceptions, then we must be headed for the societal slag pile, for we lack a common ideology which might elicit a common dedication. It seems—short of a rational rebirth—that we are losing our survival vitality. Again, is our present hodge-podge of ideologies worthy of survival?

Short of a rational rebirth! This means, first of all, an ideology worthy of survival, one which harmonizes with the emergence and evolution of man, one in step with human destiny; no hit-or-miss or emotional cause or chance goal will do. Nothing less than an ideology logically and rationally conceived can meet our requirement. And, second, there must be some reasonable dedication to it. For me, the first is easy; the second is unbelievably difficult.

The first step is the practice of freedom, the subject of this book. It meets all the specifications of the ideal. For it is only when one exerts no restraints against the creative release of others and has no such restraints imposed on him that he can best grow in self-responsibility and develop his faculties most fully. It is when he is thus free and not a carbon copy that the best within him emerges—not just progress in a material sense, but his moral, spiritual, intellectual, and charitable potentialities find their highest expression. It is in freedom that man can more and more share in Creation, this being consonant with his destiny.

There can be no argument against freedom as the appropriate ideology unless it can be demonstrated that you and I will better emerge as our creativity is subjected to this or that restraint. Such evidence is utterly lacking.

Dedication Required

The ideology worthy of survival is the primary thing, but it cannot even exist, let alone survive, without our dedication—and that is quite another matter. Think of what's involved. Among the millions of us, all but a very few are smitten by authoritarianism, that is, they believe that the creative lives of others should be restrained in some respect. Count the people you know who are anxious to forego whatever special privilege they presently enjoy in order to remove restraints from their fellow men. Many of our citizens are so surfeited with special privileges—life at the expense of others—that they no longer recognize these special handouts and couldn't count them if they tried. Among

those in the mail order business, for instance, how many would include their subsidized parcel post as a restraint against the creativity of others? Examples can be cited by the thousands!

Think of the millions who fear the chaos that would be unloosed were all men freed of restraints and actually permitted to act creatively as they please!

To further assess the difficulty, reflect on the few who are capable of thinking logically and rationally on this problem. Then drastically reduce these few to the ones who will undertake the mental effort. Dedication—unification in support of this ideal of freedom—appears a hopeless prospect. A few thousand, perhaps—but not millions of enthusiasts! The inclination is to throw in the sponge: “Forget it!”

I return to the historians and a remarkable fact they have brought to the surface with crystal clarity. Every constructive movement of which there is any record has resulted from the excellence of a few, often a single man. History reveals that what we should seek is quality, not quantity. A leader, when excellent enough, turns our eyes toward the light.

The stakes, of course, are high: the rebirth and refinement of a culture with survival possibilities. And while we are on our way to understanding and explaining the proper ideology, we’ll be getting enlightenment for ourselves, the highest reward life has to offer—a worthwhile venture if there ever was one!

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