



An Electronic Edition of Leonard E. Read's Library

Deeper
Than You
Think

Deeper Than You Think

Leonard E. Read

Deeper Than You Think

by

Leonard E. Read

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To Aggie

Thanks to

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Lawrence Reed

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—Ortega

Prologue

Despite the fact that men never have found a paradise on earth, many continue to hope for a Shangri-La here and now; and they seek a shepherd to guide them to it. They long for a god or goddess to dispense the “last word” on social, economic, political, moral, and spiritual matters—a source of certitude—a Leader.

Nor is there ever a shortage of egotists who covet such a role and desire above all else an army of followers. The result of this combination is a cult; the slightest deviation from the master’s mind is taboo.

The individual who would be his own man could never follow blindly after another, any more than he could tolerate or assume the responsibility for a band of blind followers.

To be in the vanguard of any line of thought is to leave a trail of sorts, and any responsible person will occasionally check his bearings. If he finds nothing but followers in his wake, he probably should write off his efforts as love’s labor lost.

However capable in his own right, the leader who inspires nothing but followers works for a lost cause—one that is unlikely to survive himself. No matter how unswerving their allegiance, human carbon copies never register full fidelity and must inevitably corrupt their master’s doctrine. And the master who encourages a blind following cannot logically escape a responsibility for the transgressions of his idolators.

To measure a teacher’s success, to evaluate his work, one must ask: Does the teaching induce in others what Aristotle termed “activity of soul”? Are his students learning to think for themselves and to will their own actions? Are they creatively thinking, writing, talking—each becoming his own man?

Unconcerned for a following, a true teacher continues to pursue his own studies, leaving his students to develop in the only way they possibly can: on their own initiative.

We should ever bear in mind that the unknown is infinite. No person, regardless of his pretensions, glimpses more than an infinitesimal fragment of the Truth. To merely focus the gaze of one’s followers down that narrow aperture of understanding glimpsed by “the leader” is no service to anyone. The successful teacher inspires others to join in the search for Truth, on their own volition and

power; and growth in knowledge and understanding takes place only to the extent that some of his students surpass him. No leader or teacher ought to be satisfied with anything less than this.

Chapter I

Causes Run Deeper Than We Suppose

And now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect;
Or, rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause.

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

An ancient hindu myth has it that the earth is held up by a gigantic elephant. But what holds up the elephant? A still more gigantic turtle! And what holds up the turtle? *Oh, it's turtles all the way down!*

Or, refer to the Maya of Yucatan of some thirteen centuries ago. They “caused” the much-needed rain by weird offerings to their Rain God: tossing virgin maidens into deep wells.¹

But let's not laugh too heartily at the ancients for their childish conclusions as to causes. What causes high prices? Less than two centuries ago:

The washerwomen of Paris, finding soap so dear that they could hardly purchase it, insisted that all the merchants should be punished with death; . . . Marat [Member, National Assembly] declared loudly that the people, by hanging shopkeepers and plundering stores, could easily remove the trouble.²

And only recently, newspapers across America displayed pictures of women toting placards, parading in front of stores as pickets are wont to do, demanding lower prices. As if the retailers were responsible for their budgetary problems!

Parenthetically, suppose the chain stores were to yield to the pressure of such publicity and reduce their prices by 2 per cent (their average profit on sales is about

¹ *Indians of the Americas* (Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1955), p. 197.

² Andrew Dickson White, *Fiat Money Inflation in France* (Irvington, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1959), pp. 71–72.

1½ per cent), they would be forced out of business. The paraders' victory would consist of round steak ground, for instance, at \$1.22½ instead of \$1.25 per pound, but only for the brief period that a losing business could keep its doors open.

Wrong Methods Widely Used

But here again we must not be too harsh on *les femmes* of Paris or our own placard bearers. Politicians in high places, as well as Ph.D.'s, labor officials, clergymen, and even businessmen are guilty of the same offense; they refuse to probe below the surface; they ascribe as causes no more than "effects defective" and, by so doing, aggravate the very ills they would remedy. Price, wage, rent, interest, exchange, and production controls are all of the same pattern, as are the so-called "guide lines." Economically, such measures are as inept and harmful as our women on parade with their placards, or as the demagogue's plan of hanging the shopkeepers.

The shopkeepers are far less responsible for high prices than are their customers; they are not the cause. The retailers are the ones who first confront the consumers with the bad news; they bear the sad tidings, the ill consequences, of uneconomic policies framed and carried out previously by others who, more than likely, received praise and votes for their unwise actions. Observe the politicians asking acclaim for bestowing this and that on everybody and then the merchants getting blamed for the inevitable aftermaths of the giveaways! Very well. If not the shopkeepers, who or what does, in fact, cause rising prices? How deep lies this cause?

The high prices of the 1790's in France, in Germany following World War I, in most Latin American countries during the last three decades, and the rising prices in the U.S.A. today are the result of a dilution of the medium of exchange, in a word, *inflation*.

Spending and Inflation

But merely knowing that our rising prices are caused by inflation isn't all we need to know. We must probe deeper and ask, what causes inflation? The answer is simple enough: excessive governmental expenditures.

The next underlying cause must be uncovered: why do excessive governmental expenditures cause inflation? The answer is no secret: whenever the costs of government—federal, state, and local—rise to that high mark where it is no longer

politically expedient to defray the costs by direct tax levies, governments have throughout history resorted to inflation as a means of financing.³

To probe still deeper, the next logical question is, what causes governmental expenditures to reach that high point where explosive inflation ensues? The answer appears to be that those favoring excessive government spending exercise more political influence than do those people who oppose such spending.

What, then, causes so many people of influence to favor excessive government spending?

Any honest investigator must confess that he's in trouble here. His plan of putting his finger on causes that underlie "effects defective" comes to a sudden halt. No longer can he precisely identify *the* next underlying cause. The problem, at this point, is to find out why human beings behave as they do. Here, instead of a single track to follow, the analyst is faced with literally millions and billions of more or less blind alleys. Why, for instance, will people who decry personal theft approve feathering their own nests at the expense of others, provided the government will do the looting for them? Is it a deficient sense of justice and, if so, why the deficiency? Or is it a stultified moral nature, faulty education, economic ignorance, an inability to see beyond the moment, materialistic mania, a declining self-reliance, spiritual arrestment, an inferior concept of human destiny, no sense of process,⁴ energies expended destructively because creative release is hampered, or what?

Growth Comes Through Effort

The case of rising prices and their causes has been used for illustrative purposes. Take any social ill—communism, crime, wars, or whatever—and pursue the causal sequence. Finally, in every instance, the investigator will come to an analytical

³ Governments begin inflating, as a rule, when the costs of government approximate 20 to 25 per cent of the people's earned income. This is the high point beyond which it is politically inexpedient to collect any more by direct tax levies. Inflation is an indirect levy on capital assets. In 1946, governmental expenditures in the United States were about 31 per cent of the people's earned income. The figure has steadily risen to the present rate of about 41 per cent.

⁴ See Rebecca West, "Gerda's Empire," *The Freeman*, April, 1965.

wilderness. To go further in depth is speculative at best. For the whole cosmic enigma confronts him. The message he gets is almost one of defiance.

To me, the message reads something like this: Go ahead with your attempts to unravel Creation's Scheme. You will never find *the* answer; it isn't within the ken of man nor will it ever be. But try, everlastingly try, for it is the trying that stimulates individual growth in awareness, perception, consciousness, conscience. While you will never discern precisely all the causes of things you think wrong, you will come upon ever so many behaviors and practices that are identifiable as things not to do.

Things not to do! Some twenty-five years ago a dozen of us had gathered for an evening of discussion with Ludwig von Mises, our first meeting with the distinguished economist. As midnight neared, a guest posed the final question: "I'll agree, Professor Mises, that we are headed for troublous times. Now, if you were the dictator of these United States and could impose whatever corrective measures you think wise, what would you do?" Quick as a flash came the evening's final answer, "*I would abdicate.*"

Dictating how another should live his life—authoritarianism—is a thing not to do.

Self-Control Can Change the World

Recently, a scholar of note recommended a technique quite at odds with FEE's self-improvement methodology, but which he thought would assure putting our ideas into practice. Assume his claim to be valid. Should FEE make the change? No, this is a thing not to do. Were my ideas to govern the nation or the world, the situation would be tragic. No such wisdom exists in any person, and it seems unlikely that it ever will.

Wisdom, such as mankind acquires, can be likened to an over-all luminosity that derives from a host of tiny, individual enlightenments in complex interchange over space and time. The brighter the glow, the more and better can each of us see his way. Neither I nor anyone else can manage the over-all luminosity, but I can attend to my own wee candle.

Cervantes' "The road is better than the inn," should serve to remind aspiring men that there isn't any inn for them, but only the road, now and forever. It is the effort along the trail that matters.

* * *

The following chapters, all but eight of which have previously appeared in *The Freeman* and *Notes from FEE*, are small gleanings from one person's search for understanding as he journeys on the road. And the next chapter explains why understanding has not been sought in that dark area of authoritarian or coercive arrangements. It is my conviction that what cannot be found in human freedom cannot be Truth. . . .

Chapter II

Look to the Stars

A man goes down from a blow to the solar plexus, and we say he's had the breath knocked out of him.

Every act of coercion in society—coercion being the forcible imposition of one's will on others—is like a damaging blow that knocks the breath out of humanity.

Nor does it make any difference whether the coercive act is accidental or deliberate, for a noble or an ignoble purpose. It is not the intention behind the act, but the nature of the act itself, that does the injury. Whether one be injured “for his own good” or “for the good of humanity” does not modify the extent of the injury. Erecting a Taj Mahal in the name of love with forcibly extorted funds or enslaved labor, or compulsorily expropriating people's income to build hospitals or art centers, are no less coercive than compelling Negro slaves to hoe one's cotton, or forcing workers into unions, or robbing others at the point of a gun.

This is strong language when acts of coercion are proudly and widely advocated from platform, classroom, pulpit, and the editorial page; but can such a reading of the issue be logically challenged?

Coercion imposed on others, whether to gain something for self or for those we love or pity, or to keep others from gaining for themselves by their own honest effort, is the crowning evil of our times. Coercion is anything but peaceful. Its practice on the grand scale is a crippling blow to our human potential.

Nor does it make any difference whether the coercion is inflicted directly or indirectly through one's agent, such as a personal accomplice, a labor union, a government, or whatever. I am personally responsible for any evil I support, encourage, or condone, regardless of who carries my banner. It isn't the mob that strings up Joe Doakes; only individuals commit crimes; the hanging is done by each member of the mob. Nor is it the association that takes money from everyone in the nation to finance the local plaza; it is a coercive act on the part of the association's members—each one of them! Individual absolution is not to be achieved by collectivization.

Regardless of pretensions to the contrary, only now and then can a person be found who does not advocate some coercion, for some laudable end. Indeed, so pervasive is the coercive doctrine that most Americans are unaware of any acceptable alternative.

After I had lectured recently in New Delhi, a reporter said to me, “Economic freedom is all right for you affluent Americans but not for an underdeveloped country such as India.” And at home I hear, “Economic freedom was all right for the simple, agrarian [underdeveloped] economy we had two centuries ago but not for a highly specialized, complex [affluent] economy such as we now have.” In a word—underdeveloped or affluent—there is no place for economic freedom but only for state socialism, that is, coercion. So decree today’s intellectuals.

The coercive doctrine is highly publicized and accounts for much of the ideological noise we hear. “Let the government do it,” goes the deafening chant. But hark! At this very moment someone is exchanging the fruits of his labor for a tank of gasoline. *Each party gains!* Willing exchanges such as this occur by the billions day in and day out. Taken together in their enormity, these wealth-creating, poverty-destroying actions give us all our net economic gain, every last measure of material progress. Unlike the doctrine of coercion, these willing exchanges—economic freedom in practice—are commonplace, unheralded, unnewsworthy. Thus, they go unheard, unseen, unappreciated. So impressive is the noisy babble for destructive coercion and so quiet is the performance of creative freedom that coercion is thought to be the cause of the progress we enjoy. Such mistaken correlations can be the downfall of any individual or group, of any nation, economy, civilization.

The Flow of Human Energy

Facing the matter from another point of view, we see that man is an entity of radiant energies. Each individual is a composition of realized and potential energies—diverse, unique, ever-changing. Were all to go in accord with what appears to be the Cosmic Design, these individual specimens of the Universal Energy would exert themselves in an improving, creative direction. For certainly the Design must call for human emergence in awareness, perception, consciousness.

But man, with his power to choose, can, and often does, turn his energies in a destructive direction. His energy cannot “stay put”; it has to expend itself.

We observe some persons, having enormous energy, turning it inward to their own evolvment: Goethe, Shakespeare, and their kind. But others of unusual energy utterly fail in their own evolvment; their energy spins outward over the environment, in the form of coercive, dominating control of others: Napoleon, Hitler, and their kind. Of course, each of these two archetypes has its minor performers.

But the lack of self-control is not all; there is another influence at work. Whenever coercive policies dominate the societal situation, inhibiting and prohibiting energies from manifesting themselves creatively, these energies, under the necessity of expending themselves, tend to turn destructive: moral laxness, riots, strikes, vandalism, wars, and so on. Coercion—even when backed by good intentions—must knock the breath out of humanity, totally, sooner or later. Coercive practices breed more coercion, and there is no remedy short of replacing these practices with freedom and willing exchange.

In the name of doing good! To illustrate my point, let us consider an educated electorate as an objective. But how is universal education to be achieved? Surely, not by relying on freedom, as we do with religion! Freedom can't be trusted for something as important as education! Here, runs the argument, coercion is necessary: compulsory attendance, government dictated curricula, and the forcible collection of the goods and services to pay the educational bill. To challenge this near-unanimous, deeply-embedded notion is to risk being classified as a “nut.”

Yet, the application of coercion to education is turning out what a vast majority of us do not want: millions of “educated” coercionists, annually—exactly what any capable diagnostician would have predicted. It is unrealistic to believe that institutions founded on coercion can, in the long run, advance an understanding of freedom. The record is already speaking for itself.¹

Universal education may be a worthy objective. But when coercion is applied, compelling universal attendance, it becomes necessary to “scrape the bottom of the barrel” to find teachers. The qualified teachers are “watered down” by the unqualified, turning the trend away from excellence and toward mediocrity. The

¹ For my detailed criticism of coercion in education and the case for the free market in education, refer to chapters XV, XVI, and XVII in *Anything That's Peaceful* (Irvington, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1964).

itch to teach, to project one's views, takes precedence over eagerness to learn, and this is a perversion of the educational process.

Granted that education ought to rank high in any rational hierarchy of values, it must also be conceded that there is no more difficult aim to achieve in the whole creative realm. It is precisely for these reasons that education should be divorced from coercion and left completely to freedom. While the free market or willing exchange way of life is necessary for the preservation of an affluent society, it is an absolute "must" for any growth or development. *Especially when confronted with difficult or "impossible" problems, turn to freedom.*

Wisdom Will Not Be Forced

It is a simple, obvious, self-evident fact that ideas, understanding, wisdom cannot be coercively injected into the consciousness of another. Yet, such is the presumption of persons who employ the coercive techniques.

If human creativity is the goal, the reliance should be on freedom. And it matters not whether the anticipated area of growth or development be education, steel making, dress designing, or whatever. Creativity at the human level behaves according to the law of attraction. Attracted to what? To someone or to something better. Available to each of us are literally tens of thousands of "betters." From among the millions of seemingly common men, stars appear—some tiny, some a little larger, and the relatively big ones: Socrates, Edison, Beethoven, Christian Dior, Pasteur, Madam Curie, Booker T. Washington, Menger, Adam Smith, Bastiat, Marshall Field, Mises, and perhaps your good self should be included. These luminaries—when freedom in transactions prevails—set the pace, lead us, if we so elect, into new and higher realms; they cut all the patterns for progress.

Our human stars come from every walk of life—when not retarded by illusion or slumber or fear or coercion. They emerge from the oddest environments and circumstances, as if every new-born babe were a potential star. These talented ones shine for a moment, help to light the way, and then are gone forever except as they remain in book or memory. Together, and over the millennia, they serve to increase the over-all glow, this being the Universal Energy in its human manifestation.

This human luminosity is as mysterious as life itself for, indeed, it is life in its richest form. For any one of us in our proximity to absolute ignorance to attempt its controlled management, that is, the coerced coalescence of this infinitely

intricate profusion of minute energies, is to reactivate a notion as nonsensical as “the divine right of kings”; it is to say, in effect, “Only *I* can make a tree”; it is to ask for enthronement atop the Cosmos! *The coercionist in us is this pretentiousness*; as it asserts itself the glow dims—a dark age; when it lessens, the glow brightens—a renaissance. Infinitesimal human energies, as minute molecules, configure naturally, miraculously, creatively when free to flow, when obstacles are out of the way.

If we would improve ourselves, we will cast off our coercionist inclinations; we will look to the stars, which is to say, we will look to excellence in ourselves and others. This is what we do when we abandon our coercive ways and put our reliance on freedom.

* * *

So, let us proceed with several speculations of what’s right and righteous in order better to discern what not to do. . . .

Chapter III

What Seek Ye First?

Over the years I have believed and often said, that the essence of Americanism is the revolutionary concept set forth in the Declaration of Independence: “that all men . . . are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.” This belief in divinely endowed personal rights is, in my view, the launching pad of our idea of limited government and the only creditable explanation of the genesis of the American miracle.

The importance I attach to this idea is not generally shared; it has been understood by a few, and not much contested by the many. The Creator-sovereignty idea was the highest spiritual note struck at the time of our country’s founding; it gave tone to our country’s early days. In no other instance, to my knowledge, have the founders of any political agency heeded so scrupulously the Biblical injunction, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness,” and history reveals no case where the promise, “and these things shall be added unto you,” has been so overwhelmingly verified.

Today, the spiritual genesis of the real American revolution is all but forgotten; indeed, attempted refutations of the Creator concept assume the proportions of an epidemic. Many are now proudly affirming, as if it were a sign of enlightenment, “I am an atheist,” while a growing number of believers acknowledge their faith as if it were irrelevant to earthly concerns. Even from professors of religion we hear the refrain, “God is dead.” In response to the question, “What seek ye first?” the number is dwindling who will reply, “the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Nor need the dissenters reply in explicit terms, for their actions speak louder than words. The answer their actions proclaim is, “We seek first *these things*,” that is, wealth, affluence, fame, power, and the like. In a word, most people have become addicts of the additives! When the eye is on “these things” and not on the genesis, the priorities are inverted and “these things” might not be long for this world.

The Question Each Must Answer

Man has no more important question to answer than, “What seek ye first?”

Numerous persons have said to me, “I don’t have to believe in God to believe in freedom, do I?” My answer is, “No, you do not have to believe in an Omnipotent Principle, or Infinite Consciousness, or God, to believe in freedom. Yes, you can be an atheist and, at the same time, believe in freedom. But a society of active, militant atheists will not be a free society.” This affirmation, I discover, seems incredible even to believers. Therefore, if it be valid, the reasons should be set forth. Is there a correlation between militant atheism and authoritarianism, on the one hand, and between the Creator concept and freedom, on the other? I think there is.

Holbach (1723–89), one of the Encyclopedists and an opponent of Christianity, had written a book advocating atheism. The book fell into the hands of Frederick the Great, who asked Voltaire for his views. The book has eloquence but no proof, Voltaire declared, and contains matter pernicious to Prince and people alike. His letter closed with these words: “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him. But all Nature cries aloud that He does exist, that there is a Supreme Intelligence, an Immense Power, an Admirable Order, and everything teaches us our own dependence on it.”

Voltaire’s statement falls into two distinct parts: (1) If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, and (2) He does exist. I shall comment on the latter first, and only casually, because it is the former—the necessity of God—that I wish to examine in order to give my answer to “What seek ye first?”

As to the existence of a Supreme Intelligence, there are atheists on the one side of the question, and theists on the other—with deists, agnostics, and other shades in between. Apparently, The Existence is as unthinkable to the atheist as his tenets of ultimate meaninglessness are baffling to me.

I can only suggest that possibly his life thus far may be barren of certain perceptions or spiritual experiences that fall into the noncommunicable category—the kind that no one else’s word can be taken for. The mind barely outruns experience. Or else the would-be atheist is rebelling against a notion of the deity he should have outgrown in boyhood.¹

¹ “Any effort to visualize God reveals a surprising childishness. We can no more conceive Him than we can conceive an electron. Yet many people do not believe in God simply because they cannot visualize Him.” Lecomte du Noüy, *Human Destiny*, A Mentor Book, 1947, p. 133.

How Little Each of Us Knows

Let's pause for a look at ourselves as related to the Infinite Mystery. How difficult it is to appreciate the littleness of our private wisdom, awareness, perception, consciousness! The tendency is to compare one's self with one's fellows which, more often than not, leads to the conclusion, "What a bright boy am I!"

Infinite time, space, consciousness, or whatever, cannot be fractionalized. However, to help with my point, assume The Infinite to be The Whole—all-there-is. Based on the incontrovertible fact that the more one knows the more is one exposed to the unknown, it would be an exaggeration for me to claim awareness of one trillionth of all-there-is. Now, for the sake of speculation, assume that you are fifty times as richly endowed as I. You would still possess only fifty trillionths of all-there-is!

I am merely suggesting that no person is any more than an intellectual mite, a spiritual speck in the Cosmic Scheme. The political officeholder who recently intimated that he and his bureaucratic staff now had the will and the power to maintain an ever-expanding economy may be less a speck than you or I, for he doesn't even know how little he knows. The oft-heard statement, "We have doubled our knowledge in the past decade," means no more to me than a leap from one trillionth to two trillionths! Why, it is easily demonstrable that no living person knows anything, really, about himself; a few superficial observations are all that any person can rightfully claim.

Parenthetically, being an intellectual and spiritual speck does not spell insignificance. The atom is significant!

Three other facts about human beings that are relevant to this analysis: First, while each person is no more than a tiny speck, each is unique; there are no carbon copies; the variation is all-pervasive; no two souls are alike in any respect.²

Second, we are extremely active specks, each being, to some extent, a self-steering entity. In a word, we have some control over what phases of our personalities will be active and, also, what directions the activities will take.

² This is no exaggeration; nor is it paradoxical to assert that we are unlike in our similarities. For example, most of us hear, see, feel, smell—similarities!—but no two of us hear, see, feel, smell identically.

And, third, each of us has the potentiality for growth in awareness, perception, consciousness.

To summarize the above sketchy view of the situation, there are on this earth some three billion comparative know-nothings, not an exception! Each has the potentiality to grow in awareness; each sees but a fragment, but what is seen by any one is not seen precisely the same by any other; each possesses energy, but no two exert or direct it identically.

Contemplate this host of energetic entities, differing in every respect, and then assume that not one of them is aware of a Creation over and beyond his infinitesimally small mentality. In short, reflect on a world of active, militant atheists; each one completely egocentric, which is to say, believing in his own omniscience—egoism in the saddle! Only I am right; all who do not agree precisely with me are off course; in a word, three billion abysmally ignorant individuals, each preoccupied with his own righteousness.

We must bear in mind that these three billion energetic entities constitute an enormous force. But, a force to what purpose? Unless a Supreme Intelligence, an Infinite Consciousness, a First Principle be conceded, there is no integrative attracting center.³ These varied entities are propelled by their energies every which way, a societal situation at sixes and sevens; in a word, chaos!

Man has no affinity for social chaos; as a matter of fact, he will pay about any price for social order, and order there will be.⁴ But how? All history attests to the answer: The cleverest and most energetic know-nothing will take over, not on a mutual-consent basis, because there is no mutuality of minds; the take-over will be achieved by the use of coercion. Some one know-nothing will forcibly impose his own concept of rightness on all the others. There can be no more freedom in this arrangement than in godless Russia, and for the same reason.

³ In my acquaintance with many militant atheists, I have observed that the more intelligent they are, relative to the rest of us, the more rigidly are they addicted to their own systems of thought, and the more intolerant they are of even their own kind. If you want to see “the fur fly,” keep an eye on militant atheists in discussions with each other. Indeed, it was this observation, confirmed over the years, that inspired the deductions set forth in this chapter.

⁴ See “Incomprehensible Order,” in my *The Free Market and Its Enemy* (Irvington, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1965), pp. 50–67.

Man with his built-in variations and lively energies cannot achieve his earthly destiny—his potentiality to grow in awareness, perception, consciousness—where all human energy exerts itself in helter-skelter fashion. Conceded, deviant forces are tolerable—there can be both passive and active atheists—but *it is an absolute requirement that there be an integrative force—belief in God—more powerful than the deviant forces*. Voltaire could have had no reason, other than this, for repeating the old saying: “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent Him”! Put another way, it is necessary that there be men, sufficient to establish a prevailing tendency, who are drawn to an Infinite Ideal. Lecomte du Noüy phrased it this way, “To really participate in the divine task, man must place his ideal as high as possible, out of reach if necessary.”⁵ God—Infinite Consciousness—is assuredly out of reach.

A Goal Worth Pursuing

In what manner does the recognition of an Infinite Consciousness serve as an integrative force? First, it puts us, the creatures, in proper perspective. It is easily demonstrable that the individual consciousness is potentially expansible. But, regardless of progress, there is no end to achievement, for this Ideal, being infinite, is always and forever out of reach. Thus, humility is induced, the sense of know-it-all-ness demolished. It is axiomatic that the know-it-all cannot grow in knowing; only when one is emptied of such egotism can the individual grow in the direction of his potential uniqueness. The acceptance of God draws the individual toward the highest conceivable Ideal, this attraction being toward a harmony with Being or Natural Law.

To assess the second way in which a recognition of the Creator concept serves as a harmonizing force, we need only acknowledge the central presupposition of the Infinite Consciousness idea: the immortality of the individual spirit or consciousness. Reduced to its essence, this earthly moment is only the beginning; consciousness, *the reality*, is eternal, retaining its growth potential. Once this is accepted and lived by, the individual seeks approval of the Eternal Ideal; his prime objective cannot be fame before men. Daily actions have a higher guide than momentary expediency; whatever one does is premised on his highest concept of rightness and righteousness. The accurate reflection, in word and deed, of one’s highest concept of Truth, is integrity in its highest form, this being the

⁵ *Human Destiny*, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

cohesive agent without which man in his variation and specialization cannot exist.⁶ Integrity's integrative quality is a harmonizing force.

The third manner in which this spiritual faith serves as a harmonizing force is its cultivation of tolerance.⁷ Once an individual grasps the idea that he, as all others, is a child of Creation, that each is varied, and is meant to be, all inclination to mastermind others dissolves; the notion becomes absurd. Those with varying systems of thought are no longer condemned but, instead, inspected for what light they may shed. If no light, let them pass; if some light, use it to grow by. To rule or to try to reform others is not to play God; it is to work against God. The Creator does not forcibly impose the Kingdom on anyone. Why, then, should I take unto myself a role that the Creator has spurned? Intolerance is a divisive, driving-away force; tolerance is a harmonizing, ingathering force. Daily experiences confirm this.

One Nation Under God

Man, among animals, being both social and individualistic, cannot be too much torn asunder from others. At stake in his relations with others is nothing less than survival, for man's differences, specializations, variations must be more complementary than antagonistic—an economic fact of life. I repeat, the harmonizing forces must, to avoid disaster, be stronger than the combined divisive forces. This brings me to the fourth, and by far the most important, way that the Creator concept serves as such a force. Reflect on what might be called the intellectual love of God. Love, in this deepest sense, is a process which, in completion, spells enlightenment. The Supreme Intelligence is the source of all creation, of all Truth or enlightenment, even of all the little truths we come upon and call our own. Those of this spiritual faith have their eyes turned ever toward

⁶ When men become highly specialized, as we are in the U.S.A. today, it is self-evident that each becomes dependent upon the free and uninhibited exchanges of the numerous specializations. This dependency spells disaster in any society where one's word is not as good as his bond, where honesty is not in the driver's seat, where integrity is not the hallmark of the times.

⁷ Many, reflecting on the massive intolerance of so-called religious movements, will think this affirmation invalid. Church-going, partaking in The Crusades, or even ordination are not necessarily testimonials to the faith I have in mind. Superstition and political ambition have often borne the false label of spiritual faith.

The Light that they may better find their way to enlightenment; it is this that is the love of God, the strongest harmonizing force there is. To the extent that one succeeds in the Divine Venture, to that extent does one share in Creation.

The question, “I don’t have to believe in God to believe in freedom, do I?” is like asking, “I don’t have to believe in an end to believe in its means, do I?” For freedom is the primary means to the highest end; at best, it is a secondary end. The primary aim of earthly life, in the view of believers, is not “these things,” but “the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” It is to expand individual consciousness into as near a harmony as possible with Infinite Consciousness. Freedom is the first and absolutely necessary means to this end. Anyone who in any way frustrates the freedom of another to act creatively acts against the Supreme Intelligence, this being the gravest of evils.⁸

It is impossible for man to act consistently except as he reasons from a fundamental point of reference, a major premise. This is to be found in the answer to “What seek ye first?” If the answer be wrong, he will act consistently but in error. To act consistently and rationally, his answer must be correct. To act consistently, rationally, and correctly, it is my conviction that his answer must be, “the Kingdom of God and his righteousness.” For I share, unreservedly, what Voltaire observed, “All Nature cries aloud that there is a Supreme Intelligence, an Immense Power, an Admirable Order, and everything teaches us our own dependence on It.”

Human Destiny

Conceding the Kingdom to be the major premise, the one from which all lesser premises are deduced, it follows, then, that our dependence on the Kingdom is complete, and that our abiding by It is *The Way*, the only way. Get off course, as we say, and devolution—another dark age—will assuredly be our lot, this being the Cosmic signal to again get on course. Get back on, and there’ll be another upsurge in evolution—man growing, emerging, evolving in awareness, perception, consciousness. Human destiny!

⁸ “Nobody has the right to substitute his own conscience for that of another, for progress depends on *personal effort*, and to suppress this effort constitutes a crime.” *Human Destiny*, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Perhaps the separation of Church and State—a necessary break-up of power—has been, in some measure, responsible for the popular fallacy that spiritual faith and earthly concerns belong in two distinctly separate compartments. Many people seem to think that it is enough to doff our hat to God on the Sabbath and ignore him during the work-a-day week; they feel that matters of the spirit are for the churches and matters of the flesh for secular educational efforts, that the Kingdom of God and “these things” are in unrelated realms, that a concern for one’s immortal soul is for the confessional, but not for the market place, that spiritual faith and political economy don’t mix.

Man may separate or decentralize his organizations, often to advantage. But man’s soul is of a piece and cannot be “worn on the sleeve” without fracturing. One’s soul, the distinctive feature of being human, is exclusively spiritual in content. What else than spiritual are such qualities as integrity, belief, understanding, tolerance, kindness, charity, humility, conscience, perception, thinking, willing, intuiting? As a pool of water cannot be polluted at any point without pollution of the pool, so the soul cannot be corrupted here or there, now or then, without damage to the whole!

A Spiritual Performance

All human actions, as well as every artifact by which we live and grow and prosper, are spiritual in their roots.⁹ “These things” are the fruits; they are dividends, whose nature and abundance will be determined by how the souls of men are structured—not so much on Sundays, or only in the churches, or entirely in the hideaways of privacy but, even more, in the whole scope of every day, and every place, and every thing. Each precious moment gives a living answer to what the soul seeks first, be the firsts fickle, or inconsistent, or expedient—or, happily, the First of all firsts.

What seek ye first? Actions speak louder than words; therefore, as for me, my daily living must testify before nonbelievers as in my prayers, as much during the

⁹ “Production is not something physical, material, and external; it is a spiritual and intellectual phenomenon.” Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1966), p. 141.

week as on the Sabbath, in the market place as in a House of Worship: *the Kingdom of God and his righteousness*.

* * *

This view, instead of being shied away from or mumbled apologetically, is announced openly and proudly once we glimpse, if ever so dimly, our place in Creation's Design, what late-comers we are on the Cosmic Scene, how little we know, and what some of our startling problems are. An awareness of our unawareness helps mightily in recognizing that we are not gods but, instead, Creation's children, that such consciousness as we possess is but an infinitesimal perception of Infinite Consciousness. So, let me try to view the human situation through that tiny aperture which is mine. . . .

Chapter IV

The Human Situation

The current preoccupation with man-made spaceships, orbital flights, putting men on the moon—with all the attendant costs, inflationary and otherwise—may be no more than a childish escapade. Science fiction taken seriously as a means of running away from some very practical problems arising on a remarkable spaceship, Mother Earth! For, after all, our home planet is on the rim of a galactic wheel traveling through space at the rate of 10,000,000 miles a day!

The danger is that we look away too long from the task at hand, which is to keep our equilibrium in time and space aboard the planet that bears us. After all, we need a clearer view of what is going on, for we are moving at a giddy pace and know not what lies ahead. . . . This is the Earth we have to come to terms with, which has produced us, and where our future lies.¹

Conceivably, Mother Earth is spaceship enough for us. For truly, we “know not what lies ahead.”

Indeed, we know very little of what has gone on in the past, and perhaps even less of what is going on now. And when it comes to “what lies ahead,” that is pure speculation. The English philosopher, C. E. M. Joad, helps us to a proper perspective:

There is no reason, at least I know of none, why the universe should necessarily be intelligible to the mind of a twentieth-century human being, and I take leave to remind him how late a comer he is upon the cosmic scene and how recently he has begun to think.²

Yet, neophytes that we are, we must do our best to “come to terms [with the Earth] which has produced us, and where our future lies.” To ignore these terms is to risk another of those catastrophic declines and falls of nations and societies which

¹ N. J. Berrill, *Worlds Without End* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1964), p. 229.

² C. E. M. Joad, *Philosophy* (A Premier paperback, 1965 edition), p. 9.

have with wearisome regularity punctuated the historic record. There is a human destiny, if we can discern it, which brooks no monkey business; sternly it decrees: Stay on course or start over again! In a word, the more accurately we can fathom Creation's Design for mankind, the more easily can we keep on course and know the difference between right and wrong. To be practical in a down-to-earth sense, we have no choice, ever, but to make the effort.

A Theory to Be Tested

If what lies ahead—our human destiny—is pure speculation, what, then, is speculative man to do? It seems that he has four choices: (1) take somebody else's word for it, (2) indulge in wild guessing himself, (3) respond to superstition or (4) pose what appears to be a sound hypothesis and then test its validity by whatever reasoning and evidence he can muster. Obviously, it is the last method that I prefer.

A hypothesis to be sound must not affront reason. Mine, concerning the Cosmic Design for mankind, began with a reflection on immortality. No, not of the Hereafter kind; that has not been revealed to me. I refer to the here-and-now brand, earthly immortality. For we do in fact immortalize certain individuals who, relative to the rest of us, outstandingly distinguish themselves by the light they give: the Socrateses, the Shakespeares, the Beethovens, for instance. The point is, we can come no closer to discerning the Cosmic Design than to observe those exceptional human qualities which we choose to study, revere, esteem—in a word, immortalize.

As to earthly immortality, few human beings make the grade; only a tiny fraction of the world's billions ever find mention in the fine print obituary columns. Then there are the much smaller numbers who are granted headlines in the news, most of whom are out of memory by the time tomorrow's daily is printed. The billions of humanity, with but rare exceptions, return to the good earth no more immortalized than autumn's fallen leaves.

But now and then a star appears among us, one who lights the way not merely for his contemporaries but for countless millions in unnumbered centuries to follow. *The seeking of their tutorship, the turning to their light, is our way of immortalizing them.* It is neither shallow fame nor notoriety that induces us to seek and heed; it is their light—the creative qualities which others might hope to develop and expand as their own.³

Thus, I infer—hypothesize—that the Design calls for each individual to rise to his potentialities, ardently pursuing those creative qualities which are peculiar to his own person, emerging, evolving, growing, developing, “hatching,” ascending along that distinctive line marked by his uniqueness. The fact that no two of us are remotely similar makes it plain that any enforcement of conformity, sameness, herd-likeness, and the status quo is contrary to the Design. If the emergence of ever and ever higher-type individuals be the Cosmic Design, and if we could see some substantial realization of it, we would get the picture not of a static humanity but of a rapidly expanding variation in talents and virtues. Differentiation!

So much for the hypothesis. All those who seek light from the human stars of today and yesteryear do, in fact, immortalize them and, by so doing, lend credence to this speculation; or so it seems to me.

A Calendar of Life on Earth

But the most convincing support for this concept of human destiny is derived from constructing a calendar of life on this earth, collapsing eons of time into a single year, reducing the life scene to a magnitude most of us can comprehend and mentally manage.

| <i>JANUARY THROUGH AUGUST</i> | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Traces of life | Local deposits of coal Bacteria | Traces of worms |
| Crustaceans | Trilobites | |
| <i>SEPTEMBER</i> | | |
| First Ganoid Fish | Marine plants Mollusks | |
| <i>OCTOBER</i> | | |
| First ferns | Insects appear | |
| <i>NOVEMBER</i> | | |
| Reptiles | Dinosaurs Crocodiles | First mammals |
| <i>DECEMBER, TO 7:00 P.M. OF THE 31ST</i> | | |

³ This observation inspires a sobering thought: while only one in countless thousands or millions is ever immortalized, only those few who are in pursuit of their light have any hand in immortalizing them. Thus, most of us are neither immortals nor makers of immortals.

| | | |
|--------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| First snakes | Flowering plants Mastodons | Elephants |
| Rhinos | Deer | |

BEGINNING AT 7:00 P.M. OF DECEMBER 31ST

| | | |
|-------------|--|---|
| | First man | Glacial period |
| 11:50 | | Cro-Magnon man |
| 11:58 | | Beginning of recorded history |
| 11:58:30 | | First civilization (Sumer) |
| 11:59:15 | | Athens in her glory |
| 11:59:24 | | Christ is born |
| 11:59:28 | | Fall of Roman Empire |
| 11:59:51.5 | | Florence in her glory |
| | | Columbus discovers America |
| | | Declaration of Independence |
| 11:59:56.6 | The <i>Wealth of Nations</i> by Adam Smith appears | |
| | The Industrial Revolution begins | |
| 11:59:56.85 | | Constitution and Bill of Rights |
| 11:59:56.86 | | Eli Whitney invents cotton gin |
| 11:59:57.86 | | Bastiat clarifies freedom in transactions |
| 11:59:58.27 | Menger and others discover one of the most important points in economic theory: the marginal utility theory of value | |
| 11:59:58.72 | | Radio |
| 11:59:59.26 | | Commercial aviation |
| 11:59:59.63 | | Television reaches the market |
| | | The atom bomb |
| 11:59:59.86 | | Jet air travel begins in the U.S.A. |
| 11:59:59.87 | If anything, the giddy pace accelerates during these last 13/100ths of a second. ⁴ | |

This calendar, aimed at improving our perspective of the human situation, devotes more space to the last minute than to the previous 525,599 minutes, a diverting factor. But one needs only to think of the twelve months drawing to a close; it's New Year's Eve, our TV sets are tuned into the merriment at Times Square; there are only 60 seconds to go!

⁴ I have used the conservative figure of 1,750,000,000 years. Some scientists believe that life had its earthly start as long ago as 3 billion years. Were the latter figure used, the giddy pace would be even more pronounced.

It's in these last 60 seconds of a long year that man has begun to think in abstract terms and that the qualities we regard as distinctively human have shown forth to any significant extent. All of the human qualities we would immortalize have manifested themselves during these moments. The last minute has witnessed the dark ages and the renaissance periods, flare-ups of freedom and human slavery, as well as the decline and fall of empires and civilizations. Viewed in this perspective, these last 60 seconds appear as a veritable explosion. Indeed, "how late a comer on the cosmic scene" is man! Little wonder that his "giddy pace" is presenting problems faster than he can comprehend, let alone solve. Can we not now sense the force in Berrill's calm observation, "This is the Earth we have to come to terms with, which has produced us, and where our future lies"?

Man Must Keep Growing

Countless conclusions can be drawn from a projection such as the above. Two seem particularly relevant to those of us interested in the human situation and political economy.

First, if the evolutionary thrust is toward an ever-expanding variation, an individual emergence in consciousness, awareness, perception, then it follows that "staying put," retirement, ease, basking in one's accomplishments is contrary to the Cosmic Intent. Indeed, such relaxed behavior is at odds with the immortality we earthlings confer. The thrust of life, so conceived, is not comfortable; keep on the move, grow, grow, grow, even if painful, is its dictum.

Except for those who can find happiness in growth—how else can happiness be found?—the evolutionary thrust is anathema. In a word, the security-seeking man rebels against his own evolution. This accounts, in some measure, for the general tendency to collectivize, to seek the guaranteed life through socialization. *It is quite possible that the roots of communism, socialism, authoritarianism are to be found not in the Kremlin or in a political party but in a stunted or arrested concept of human destiny.* If this supposition be valid, it suggests that probing deep enough reveals causes to be other than what they seem on the surface.

For the second conclusion, look again at the collapsed calendar, especially beginning at 11:59:15 P.M., just 45 seconds before midnight. Listed are samples of events that appear to have set the stage for the current giddy pace. The greatest truths of all time were pronounced during these last moments. These truths,

together with a remarkable emergence of the intuitive mind, resulted in periods of enlightenment punctuated now and then by the decline and fall of a nation—costly penalties for not heeding the highest moral insights of our seers. Live by the best that is known or start all over again! That seems to be the message.

But the feature of these moments I wish to highlight has to do with the politico-economic situation. Most of us, had we lived right up until $3\frac{1}{2}$ seconds ago, would have been serfs and vassals. Lords of the manor—special privilege posts—were few and far between simply because there was so little pelf to dispense. Individual liberty was the exception; life at the subsistence level was the rule. While we would have been dependent on others, it would have been far more a political than an economic dependency, for economic survival rested mostly on self-dependence. Specialization and exchange were truly primitive by present standards and, thus, a high percentage of children never reached adulthood; those who survived were condemned to poverty. Economically speaking, humanity, as we know it, hadn't even moved off the drawing board.⁵

To continue the dramatization: from 11:59:15 P.M. to 11:59:56.6 P.M. was but preparation for the politico-economic take-off. During this interval nothing happened in the way of economic betterment because there existed no fuel with sufficient power to put us into economic orbit. Then, $3\frac{1}{2}$ seconds ago, discoveries in fuel improvement began. Specialization was hit upon and, simultaneously, political and economic liberty. The former without the latter would have been wholly lacking in power. But combine specialization with a release of enormous quantities of creative energy—freed by merely removing the political obstacles that had always stood against its release—in a word, liberty, and an unimaginable thrust results. There followed refinements that multiplied the thrust a hundredfold or more: *liberté des transactions*, as Bastiat phrased it, and, of equal importance, the discovery that the value of any good or service is what others will give for it in *willing exchange* (liberty). What a fuel! And what a thrust!

Observe what has happened in the last $3\frac{1}{2}$ seconds as this fuel increased in thrust-power. Beginning with the Industrial Revolution, and at an accelerating pace ever since, has been specialization and technology so great that description is next to impossible. Yet, *it is absolutely necessary to appreciate how dependent we now*

⁵ I refer, of course, only to that part of humanity blessed or damned, as the case may be, with industrialization and technology.

are on the new specializations and on the free, uninhibited exchanges thereof. It is a lack of this understanding that makes the term “giddy pace” relevant to the human situation.

One among countless examples: man-made electrical energy. Had every last watt of it been stricken from the earth less than two seconds ago, the event would have been no more disastrous than the removal today of electric can openers. We were not then dependent on that bit of technology. But cut it off now—all of it—and every American would perish except the very few who could exist by foraging. Think of it: no telephones, radios, telegraphs, ships, trucks, tractors, planes, automobiles. The horses and wagons have gone; people are urbanized; businesses by the thousands are computerized. There could be no distribution of gas or coal or food or medicine. Factories, farms, stores, schools, hospitals would shut down, and worse, there would be no one around to reopen them. What a blackout!

Or, take another example of a relatively new specialization: airplanes. Had all aircraft been grounded one second ago, most people would have exclaimed, “good riddance!” But note our growing dependence on this form of transportation and the havoc wrought by the coercive grounding (destruction of liberty) of five airlines. Millions of people were adversely affected.

We Depend on One Another

The above examples are sufficient to suggest that specialization and technology are on an enormous scale. While self-reliance has not diminished in importance, a new dependency has been ushered in and added: *every individual's dependency on others*. Were I condemned to live on only that which I produce, I would perish! In short, let others go awry and I am lost. Free exchange of our numerous specializations is an absolute must if we are to survive.⁶

⁶ It may occur to the reader that people in India, China, Russia survive by the hundreds of millions without economic and political liberty. They do, indeed! Only bear in mind that they have never left the launching pad and, thus, have not become dependent on specialization to any significant degree. Most of these poverty-stricken millions have never been in a plane, a train, or an automobile; electrical energy is unknown to them. An electric can opener? They have no cans to open!

It is plain enough that technology—specialization—as it grows, puts an ever-increasing load on the transmission line: the free exchange mechanism. And as the load becomes greater, more and more of us are increasingly at the mercy of those who, for whatever reason, interfere with the flow.

I, for one, would have no concern whatsoever about the extent of specialization could I be certain of free exchange, of economic and political liberty, that is, if willing exchange were allowed full play.

In a society where self-subsistence predominates, freedom in transactions plays an insignificant role. Plundering—feathering one's own nest at the expense of others—is as unprofitable as it is mean, for there is nothing to rob beyond the trivia owned by the poor, and the taking has to be from one poor family at a time. The temptation to indulge in this base trade is so minor that few people yield to it, and those who do are confronted by the owners; it's a person-to-person plunder. If the thief doesn't pay with his life, he certainly will with his reputation: he'll be branded a horse thief and a crook!

The Necessity for Freedom

But when a society becomes highly specialized, the picture changes so radically that economic liberty is a requisite to survival: self-subsistence disappears, dependence on others dramatically appears, and freedom in transactions (liberty) becomes not only important but absolutely necessary. Why necessary? The choice is simple: exchange or perish. This is self-evident.

But in this specialized or division-of-labor situation, dependent as it is on exchange, the exchange mechanism can no longer be barter, that is, the direct exchange of goods and services for goods and services. Instead, all goods and services are and must be translated into and committed to an economic circulatory system: money and credit, in a word and in our case, dollars. These dollars, the current in the transmission line, are purchase orders on everyone's goods and services.

The wealth that each of us possesses—our services, goods, savings—are inextricably in the current. To repeat, the ingredients of this economic flow—dollars—are real wealth in the sense that they are purchase orders on real wealth. And our possessions, whatever they are, can be extracted from us by anyone who can tap or otherwise impair the current at almost any point in the whole

world-wide transmission line. To take our savings, for instance, no longer requires of the taker that he enter our premises and take our horse or pig or whatever. He can now be an unknown a thousand miles from home and take much that we own by merely tapping or impairing the current.⁷

In a division-of-labor society, there is one other ingredient, along with our items of wealth, which we automatically toss into and commit to the current: our liberty. For freedom of speech, of assembly, of the press, of religion is impossible when economic freedom is lacking.⁸ Thus, any person or combination of persons, in or out of government, who can tap the current or impair its flow, can gain access to our goods and services no less than a successful thief, and also take command of our liberty as effectively as any dictator.

So here we are in economic flight, well into orbit and at a giddy pace, with all of our wealth and all of our freedom translated into and committed to the economic circulatory system, that is, to the medium of exchange: money! The total wealth and freedom committed to this flowing current is far too great for any mind to comprehend; yet, we must understand how its very magnitude and its easy availability to predators—innocent or malicious—sets up a temptation that few can resist. Let us assess this changed situation.

Fame! Fortune! Power! “These things,” when achieved ideally, are but aftermaths of excellence. Men with no thought of fortune have enormous wealth freely and willingly conferred upon them for rendering superior services. And others achieve power or positions of influence because their wisdom is sought and their counsel heeded. Fame, fortune, power are, under these circumstances, conferments by others rather than coercive acquisitions by self.

But note how those with no especial goodness, or who render no distinguished service, or who have no extraordinary wisdom to impart, covet “these things”! To

⁷ The least understood but the most subtle and effective device for tapping the current is a dilution of the money supply: inflation. Suggested readings: *Fiat Money Inflation in France* by Andrew Dickson White, and *What Has Government Done to Our Money?* by Murray Rothbard. (Both obtainable from The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., Irvington-on-Hudson, N.Y.)

⁸ For an explanation of this point, see “Freedom Follows the Free Market” by Dean Russell. *The Freeman*, January, 1963.

millions of ungifted people fame, fortune, power become ends in themselves as if they were the aims of life rather than the dividends.

To repeat, in a self-subsistence, barter-type economy, the covetous can do little more than nurse their envy; there is no way of gratifying it. To mix the metaphors, feathering one's own nest at the expense of others is unrewarding and, if resorted to, ends in disrepute and disrespect. The temptation is, by and large, uninviting and only the weakest characters yield to it.

Organized Covetousness

But now, in a highly specialized economy, with all of everyone's wealth and most of everyone's liberty in the flowing current, feathering one's nest at the expense of others dramatically changes in several respects:

1. That which can be plucked is not merely a hen, pig, or bag of corn but may be an amount of purchase orders good for millions of hens, pigs, bags of corn. And the wealth that's there for the plucking isn't all. There's also power. When the people's wealth is siphoned off, so is their liberty to use the wealth. The liberties belonging to everyone, when taken, are converted into the power of the plucker. Successful tapping of the current means wealth and power, and with these go fame. The temptation is so powerful that the "best" people yield to it.

2. This near irresistible temptation has its allies. This process of tapping the current depersonalizes the act of living off the goods and services of others. They who in this manner take our wealth and liberty are unknown to us; they never confront us; they are far away and anonymous and, for this reason, incur no shame as does a small-scale house thief. Further, they have no awareness of having done anything harmful to any one of us personally. We, as they, are hidden in anonymity. Thus, they can carry on their sullen trade with impunity.

But more than with impunity. So little understood is this tapping of the current that approval attends the hocus-pocus; they become known not only as humanitarians but as the benefactors of mankind.

It is easy to see how humanity, once in economic orbit, makes undeserved fortunes, fame, power available to manipulators, be they innocent or malicious, and with enhancement rather than loss of reputation. Never has chicanery been so attractive or so universally practiced. Two examples, among thousands, will serve to identify tapping and impairing of the current.

The head of a corporation and chairman of a private hospital remarked, “But I must appeal for Federal aid; we’re short of beds.” This is how the current is tapped. When asked, “Would you personally use force to collect funds from others?” he replied, “Of course not; I’m no crook.” Here is innocence, for this man thinks of himself as a humanitarian and benefactor.

Long, drawn-out strikes illustrate both impairment and tapping. The unions, having been granted coercive powers by government, forbid free exchange of purchase orders for services. Their dictum, in effect: “Take only us—no one else—at our price, or shut down.” That’s impairment of the current, pure and simple. And while on strike they often receive unemployment insurance—purchase orders on the goods and services of the rest of us, the ones injured by this impairment. That’s tapping not only our wealth but our liberty as well.

It should be plain to any thoughtful person that when all of us have committed our lives and livelihood to the flowing current—an exchange device absolutely essential to a specialized economy—everyone’s best interest is served by the protection of the current against all siphoning, plucking, tapping, impairment of flow. This protection is the role of society’s formal, legal agency—government—this and nothing else. This is what is meant by invoking a common justice, inhibiting and penalizing all fraud and violence, keeping the peace. This can be phrased in other terms: let government try, as best it can, to prevent all *unwilling* exchange. If successful, all then that remains is *willing* exchange. In a word, do away with all infringements of liberty, and what is released is human liberty.

Needed, A New Line of Defense

That’s all there is to the device of liberty. It’s simple; it doesn’t have to be invented; it merely awaits our use of it. We are in economic orbit; specialization proliferates at an unimaginable, giddy pace. Nationally, society-wise, where is this taking us? We can only speculate. But of two things I feel certain:

1. If we are to avoid becoming “space trash,” man must be at liberty to live and grow, and to engage in uninhibited, willing exchange—as long as it’s peaceful.
2. As the taking of private property is now far more by anonymous predators than by personal thieves, so must the defenses be altered against predation. A shot gun and a dog, or a good police force, served to scare off horse thieves. But these physical defenses are useless against the new predation. Nothing less than

an advanced understanding and practice of difficult human virtues can possibly serve us now. Our exploding specialization and exchange with its increasing interdependence can be protected by nothing less than a pronounced display of sound economic and moral principles. If we are to remain on course, and avoid starting all over again, perfections of the intellect must replace the outmoded physical ramparts. This is the imperative, the price, and the flower of any meaningful growth.

* * *

The reader will note that I repeatedly employ the term *willing exchange*, though it is not in common use today. Let me now explain, and you also may wish to adopt it as a means of clarifying what you want to say. . . .

Chapter V

Saying What You Really Mean

This bears repeating: there is no respect in which any two persons are identical—physiologically, psychologically, philosophically, ideologically. Nature decrees variation in everything—no exceptions. In the animal world it seems that the more advanced the species, the greater the differences. As to man, this rule also holds true: the more advanced the individuals, the more distinctive are their dissimilarities.

Yet, regardless of this fact, we do generalize about our fellow humans; we attempt to categorize each other, to lump men and women under neat little labels: brilliant, muddled, idealistic, cussed, black, white, religious, inventive, and so on. All generalizations are oversimplifications; nonetheless, we couldn't get along without them. Communicating one with the other would be out of the question were minute particularization a requirement. Categories are tools of thought and are essential to communicable writing, talking, even to thinking for ourselves.

We cannot dispense with classifications without doing away with communication; we couldn't even think without them. But we can aid and abet our own thinking as well as our powers to communicate by dropping loose, sloppy classifications in favor of more refined ones. In short, we can try to say more precisely what it is we really mean.

For instance, in the politico-economic area, we carry oversimplification to an absurd extreme by putting all of humanity into two categories: (1) those we roughly think of as on "our side," and (2) those we regard as ideological adversaries. Such, of course, is the ultimate in erroneous classification. And to continue the error is to promote suspicion, misunderstanding, dissension, hate—yes, even wars. We should, insofar as possible, be done with this nonsense!

The sloppy labels employed depend on which of the two imaginary sides is doing the classifying. Those on one side will call the others collectivists, leftists, statists, communists, interventionists, state planners, welfare staters, Fabians, traitors, nazis—each term used derisively. There is another label—the favorable one these "collectivists" call themselves: "liberals."

But those who call themselves “liberals” will, with no less self-righteousness, refer to their so-called adversaries as extremists, reactionaries, rightists, profiteers, enemies of the poor, and even fascists. One also hears muttered epithets such as dog-eat-dog, law of the jungle, and the like. These are some of the ways the “lefties” label the “rightists.”

Observe, now, how the “rightists” label themselves: conservatives, patriots, libertarians, individualists, constitutionalists; some will say they stand for capitalism, many for private enterprise. There are other favored labels—terms to indicate where they stand: the rule of law, free enterprise, free competitive enterprise, the market economy, the exchange economy, voluntarism, the profit and loss system, the incentive system, limited government.

What a babel of nondefinitive classifications from both imaginary camps! And who among us is exempt from this looseness? Most—not all—of these labels are meaningless and utterly confusing unless one is aware of the author’s thinking, motivations, prejudices, predilections; they’re no aid to clarity.

Reflect, for instance, on “capitalism” as used by Karl Marx, a term of opprobrium, and then by Ludwig von Mises, a term of approbation. We do, of course, derive some idea of what is meant when “capitalism” is employed by such well-known authors, but most people who use the term are total strangers and, thus, we haven’t the slightest idea as to what is implied. “Capitalism,” on its own, is nondefinitive. We are at the mercy of the definers, few of whom agree.

Or, to further illustrate, take “private enterprise.” To some minds this conjures up privately owned businesses honestly competing for consumer favor, an economic ideal. To others, everything from embezzlement to piracy is suggested, both of these enterprises being quite private.

All politico-economic classifications in current usage have their faults. Nor is it possible to construct a term that is precisely definitive. However, there is one that seems to be an improvement over the others: *willing exchange*. I have used this term for some years as a means of identifying my own position, and, while little if any adoption by others has been noted, it is significant that no one has taken issue with me for using it. Perhaps if the implications of “willing exchange” were high-lighted, it might be more widely employed. If clarity can be served, it’s worth trying to make the case for its inclusion in our vocabulary.

The first step is to recognize how deeply exchange extends into human affairs. It goes to the very roots of and is fundamental to earthly existence. This is more

or less apparent, as related to goods and services, in a division-of-labor society. As stated earlier, specialists exchange—or perish! But more: man, individualistic as he is, remains a social being. Even were an individual in comparative isolation, he can exist only by reason of his heritage—an exchange process in knowledge and ideas extending back to the harnessing of fire, even to the dawn of human consciousness.

So far, so good—no argument. In a word, we can declare ourselves in favor of exchange and arouse no more controversy than announcing a favoritism for life. And for good reason: exchange, without any modifiers, isn't meaningfully definitive.

Willingly—or Not

It's at the next step—when modifiers are introduced—that controversy has its genesis. Shall it be *willing* or *unwilling* exchange?

I wish to suggest that standing for *willing* exchange, on the one hand, or for *unwilling* exchange, on the other, more nearly accents our ideological differences than does the employment of the terms in common usage. It is when using these terms to distinguish ourselves that we can openly, honestly, logically part company, and with considerable clarity. *Willing* or *unwilling* exchange makes subterfuge not impossible but difficult; to side with one or the other is to declare one's meaningful position more or less unequivocally and unmasked; there is a minimum of verbal façade to hide behind.

Willing exchange, uncommon and thus not in the trite or cliché category, immediately provokes reflection, a big mark in its favor. The term has not yet been saddled with emotional connotations, such as those built around *free trade*, for instance. Further, its antithesis, *unwilling* exchange, comes to mind, and no one, not even a protagonist, proudly acknowledges he favors that; it does offense to his idealism. Unwilling exchange, at the very least, is a semantic jolter; it suggests to any sensitive sponsor that he take another look at his position.¹

¹ The forcible collection of income (taxes) to defray the costs of governmental activities must, when the activities are beyond the principled scope of government, classify as *unwilling* exchange. But taxes to defray the costs of activities that fall within the principled scope of government are in neither the *willing* nor *unwilling* category; they are the payment

The Many Facets of the Market

While I use *willing exchange* and the *free market* synonymously, the word *market*, to most people, conjures up no more than a swapping place for produce or the little understood and much maligned stock market; they see in *market* only crass materialism, no spiritual or cultural qualities, none whatsoever.² Frederic Bastiat used the term, *liberté des transactions*, a good-image phrase but, to my way of thinking, not quite as thought-provoking as *willing exchange*.

The full antithesis of *willing exchange* encompasses more than *forced* or *coercive* exchange which *unwilling* so clearly implies. No exchange at all—the absolute prohibition of exchanges—must also be included as the antithesis of *willing exchange*. One of many examples: the prohibition of exchanging dollars for gold.

If we cut through all the verbiage used to report and analyze political and economic controversy over the centuries, we find that much of it boils down to a denial of *willing* and the insistence upon *unwilling* exchange. What were the Crusades but an attempt forcibly to substitute the “true faith” for the beliefs of the “infidels”? Napoleon attempted to substitute his authoritarianism for someone else’s rule, armies and guns being his method of persuasion. The looting of neighboring nations was only a coercive exchange of some people’s property for the invaders’ satisfactions. Robbery, an exchange device, was the first labor-saving scheme. Feudalism was a coercive exchange of the serfs’ labor for the serfs’ and lord of the manor’s protection. Mercantilism forcibly controlled and/or prohibited exchange.

However, it is not necessary to draw on ancient history for examples of *unwilling* exchange. Today, the fruits of one’s labor are forcibly exchanged to put men on the moon, to pay farmers not to grow numerous crops, to rebuild deserted downtowns. The list of coercive activities that go beyond the principled scope of government runs into the thousands.³ Nor does one have to be much of a political economist to

of an obligation as, for instance, a just debt. See my *Government: An Ideal Concept* (Irvington, N.Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1954).

² I insist that the free market is a spiritual phenomenon and that its apprehension is a greater cultural achievement than are poetry, music, or whatever. See the chapter, “The Miraculous Market,” in *The Free Market and Its Enemy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 6–21.

³ See *Encyclopedia of U.S. Government Benefits* (New York, N. Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 1,000 pp.

see that minimum wage laws, labor union compulsions, social security, medicare, free lunches, foreign aid, and a host of other governmental activities are the antithesis of *willing* exchange.

Unwilling exchange has its genesis in an objective theory of value, that is, in the forcible imposition on the individual of a value standard not of his choice but of someone else's making. It's Napoleon's, or a labor union's, or a bureaucracy's value judgment—not the individual's value judgment—that determines how the individual shall employ himself, what his hours and wages shall be, what and with whom he shall exchange, and what shall be the disposition of his income. Throughout the ages, right up to the present moment, *unwilling* exchange has been conspicuous, and for a simple reason: most people haven't known any better!

It was less than 2 seconds ago on our collapsed calendar, not long enough to be widely apprehended, that Austria's Menger, England's Jevons, and Switzerland's Walras, almost simultaneously, made the greatest discovery in economic science: the *subjective theory of value*, sometimes called the "marginal utility theory of value." Until this time, no one had ever formulated a valid theory of value. Then these economists, by merely observing how ordinary people exchange when unrestrained, discovered that the value of anything was what others would give for it in *willing* exchange. The value of a painting, for instance, is whatever others will forego in order to obtain it. That's marginal utility, pure and simple, which can be only subjectively determined. In short, no one else but you can determine the relative or marginal utility of anything to you.

Here, for the first time in history, the concept of *willing* exchange unseats Napoleonic behavior—all forms of authoritarianism—and enthrones the individual. The consumer becomes king. Individual freedom of choice rules economic affairs. Whether I plow the fields or pilot a plane, or whether I exchange the fruits of my labor for some corporation's stock or for a bungalow by the seashore is for me, and a willing seller, to decide; it is no one else's business! In good theory this is true; in practice it faces opposition.

Liberty Is for Others, Too

Most individuals favor subjective evaluations as applied to self but will, at the same time, insist on objective evaluations as applied to the millions who "don't know what's good for them." In a word, very few will accord that liberty to others

which they personally cherish so much. These inconsistent people are the victims of an historical momentum—the darkened millennia of mankind’s past—and thus have not apprehended the newest politico-economic fact on the face of the earth: individual liberty. This slowness to apprehend may, in turn, derive from our poor choice of descriptive terms.

Admittedly, making the case for the use of willing exchange as a means of identifying one’s position, is going to raise the question, “Well, if I am not to single out as descriptive of myself such terms as conservative, patriot, capitalistic, libertarian, free enterpriser, or some other loosely definitive label, what then? Are you suggesting that I call myself a *willing exchanger*?” Indeed not!

The best answer to “What are you?” is your own name. If one be a Marx or a Mises, whose reputations precede them, the name alone suffices. If one be neither infamous nor famous, and another is interested in the details, let him inquire and listen. A personal experience will help with my point:

I was invited to lecture at a clergymen’s seminar in Texas. Just before the affair got under way, a gentleman proffered his hand, announcing, “I am Charles Hemphill from Cisco.”

My response, “I am Leonard Read.”

“Where are you from, Mr. Read?”

“The Foundation for Economic Education at Irvington-on-Hudson.”

“Oh! You’re Leonard Read!”

My ideological position was unknown until identified with FEE. Immediately, Mr. Hemphill knew of my beliefs, and in considerable detail.

Now, suppose my answer to the question, “Where are you from?” had been, “Right here in Mineral Wells.” That would have given him no tip-off as to my position. This new friend, an inquiring spirit, would have wanted to know how to classify me. My capsule answer, today, would go something like this:

No man can contrive or blueprint a good society any more than any individual can make such a simple thing as a wooden lead pencil.⁴ The pencil, or any other artifact, for that matter, is a manifestation of infinitesimal and varied creativities

⁴ See the chapter, “Only God Can Make a Tree—Or a Pencil” in *Anything That’s Peaceful*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136–143.

flowing through the minds of men in complex interchange since well before the harnessing of fire. Once the pencil comes into existence, we can, to some extent, observe and write about what took place, the most significant deduction being the *unobstructed* flow of creativities, that is, creativities in free and *willing* exchange.

Similarly, the good society is a manifestation, not of a predesigned blueprint—not of a mass blindly following some person's scheme of organization—but, rather, the natural out-cropping of the efforts of a goodly number of people in pursuit of Truth. In a word, a good society, like a pencil, is a configuration of the tiny wisdoms men come upon when seeking, above all else, what is right and righteous.

Whenever a good society shows forth, we can, to some extent, observe and write about what took place, the most significant deduction being the *unobstructed* flow of millions of individually acquired wisdoms, that is, flashes of enlightenment in free and *willing* exchange.

No man set about inventing *willing* exchange. Instead, some men were in pursuit of Truth. Their numerous findings and insights combined to make of them the kind of men who understood the advantages of *willing* or free exchange. But whenever the pursuit of Truth has not been uppermost among the aims of a considerable number of people, the understanding recedes to the point where *unwilling* exchange is believed in and practiced.

No man preconceived and set about designing and writing the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights as a means of erecting a good society. These political documents were really a configuration of beliefs that achieved dominance through a pursuit of Truth quite extraordinary in its intensity. The seeking of Truth was the seed; a good society, perhaps the best that has existed, was the bloom; these documents were but a recording of the beliefs. To confirm this, merely note that when the beliefs changed, the documents became commensurately meaningless.

When we entertain the idea that political documents and laws cause a good society, we are wont, in adversity, to repair and revise the documents and laws. This is not only useless but seriously diverting. For nothing counts but Truth, and Truth comes to us only when we are seeking what is right and righteous. This, to my way of thinking, is the most important and practical of all political facts.

Special Privileges for None

Reflecting on what the pursuit of Truth has divulged, I believe that no person, or any combination of persons, regardless of numbers, or any agency they may contrive—be it a labor union, trade association, or government—has any right of control over any other person that does not exist or inhere as a moral right in each individual. The only moral right of control by one individual over another or others is a defensive right, that is, the right to fend off aggressive or destructive actions. Governments, therefore, should go no further in controlling people than the individuals who organize it have a moral right to go. For, if government does not obtain its power of control from those who establish it, from where then does its power derive? In short, limit governmental power to codifying the do-nots consonant with the defense of life and livelihood, to the protection of all citizens equally. No special privilege for anyone!

This is to say that, ideally, government should be limited to inhibiting and penalizing all violence, fraud, predation, misrepresentation—that is, to keeping the peace. Insist that it tolerate no *unwilling* exchange and that it never indulge in what it is organized to prohibit. Let government do only this; leave all else, including welfare and prosperity, to *willing* exchange.

I believe we are fully agreed as to the quality of liberty we cherish for ourselves. The question is, are we agreed to allow this same quality of liberty to all others? If so, the spirit of liberty may be on the move again.

* * *

Practicing *unwilling* exchange is clearly a thing not to do. Understanding what not to do, in this instance, makes clear what to do: *willingly* exchange.

Since the division of labor, or specialization by human beings, is so intimately involved as both cause and consequence of the exchange process, let us look deeper into the nature and meaning of automation. . . .

Chapter VI

The Robot Explosion

Again, using our collapsed calendar, the population in this country, during the last three seconds, has increased from an estimated 5 million to an approximate 197 million. The significant increase had its beginning with the Industrial Revolution. There are now about 40 times as many human beings in the U.S.A. as then.

Far more startling is what has happened to the robot population. During this same period robots have increased at least 135 times! That the robot explosion has had something to do with the lesser population explosion is incontestable. But let us begin by putting the robots in their customary frame of reference: the employment-unemployment problem.

Means are often confused with ends. Thus, when we focus on the employment-unemployment picture, as I do in this chapter, the tendency is to overlook the fact that job-holding by itself is, as a rule, but a means to the satisfaction of wants. The growth of any individual's physical and mental faculties does, of course, demand exercise, but having a "job" isn't always necessary for that; these faculties can be and often are more exercised by the jobless—coupon clippers, for instance—than by job holders.

So, we're not seeking employment merely for the exercise. Human labor for its own sake is seldom our aim; we labor in order to enjoy its fruits in the form of food, clothing, and shelter, or to satisfy other physical and spiritual hungers. And one of the most essential qualities of being human is the urge to be relieved of burdensome effort and freed to pursue more desirable objectives. It is this urge, when men are free, that causes the invention of mechanical slaves—our tools and machines; they free us for something hopefully better. This is also why we specialize and trade.

In a world which has an infinite amount of work to be done, involuntary unemployment is inconceivable—provided the market is free. Unemployment is always the result of price (wage) and other coercive controls. Automation, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, has nothing whatsoever to do with it. Our mechanical slaves—labor-saving devices of all kinds—stem from the recognition and pursuit of higher wants than mere survival; they are the means toward such ends. Let us

therefore try to clear away some of the confusion that attends the employment-unemployment problem as related to automation.

Shall Our Robots Rule Us?

Whenever we come into possession of a source of mechanical energy equivalent to one man's energy, we have added to the work force a mechanical slave, an automaton, a robot.

No question about it, the robots, at first blush, appear to cause unemployment. Take the automobile, for instance. It disemployed buggy and wagon workers, whip and harness makers, stable hands, and a host of others. True, some went to work for the auto makers but, nonetheless, the automobile—automated travel, the product of automation—made for unemployment. So goes the chant.

Regardless of that first impression, we know that robots do not, in fact, cause unemployment. For instance, we have experienced an enormous outburst of automation, yet a high percentage of the population—about 80,000,000—is on the work force; today's many areas of acute labor shortage refute the notion that automation causes unemployment.

Quite possibly we could settle the whole question in our own minds by merely reflecting on primitive automation: the wheel and a domesticated animal. The ox-drawn cart, instead of putting the owner out of work, gave him higher level work and multiplied what he could produce and thus consume.

Or, consider the story of two men who were watching a huge steam shovel removing earth in preparation for the building of Hoover Dam. Said one, "Think of all the men that shovel is putting out of work!" Replied the better economist of the two, "There wouldn't be a single person working on this project if all that earth had to be removed by men with their hands."

Yes, the automobile disemployed buggy workers, but in the same sense that the ox-drawn cart relieved primitive man from doing everything by hand. Failure to see this point leads many people to believe that automation causes unemployment.

If robots are the cause of unemployment, then the telephone—automated communication—must have wrought havoc. The fact? The operating companies employ over 700,000 people, and several hundred thousand are employed by the suppliers. But surely, some will contend, automatic dialing disemployed a great

number of switchboard operators. The fact? There are nearly 50 per cent more operators today than in 1940. Why? Because automatic dialing made possible so much more use of the telephone than before. If the present volume of conversations had to be connected manually, at least 1,000,000 switchboard operators would be required. Of course, this is a fictitious “if.” The manual operation would be so inefficient relative to automatic dialing that the volume would require no such number.

If automation caused unemployment, then it would follow that an addition to the work force of any mechanical energy equivalent to one man’s energy—one robot—would disemploy one man. However, this is contrary to observed fact. Today in the U.S.A. each worker has perhaps 135 mechanical slaves—helpers or robots—working for him, each contributing energy equivalent to the energy of one human worker.¹ If each robot displaced one worker, the unemployment figure would be 135 times the present work force—10,800,000,000—an utter absurdity.

If these robots do not displace workers, then where does all this extra energy go? Should we discover the right answer, we will know whether they are the workers’ friends or foes and whether we should try to encourage or discourage their proliferation. Let’s try to find the answer.

My grandfather, recalling the 1850’s, used to repeat, “Many times have I walked thirty miles in a day.” His boast recently came to mind as I flew from New York City to Kansas City (1,100 miles) in two hours. It would have taken grandfather about 280 hours of walking to negotiate that distance. He would have been on his way to Kansas City for thirty-seven days. Only 365 round trips would have taken every day of his long life.

Grandfather, in his early days, had only his own energy at his disposal—just one manpower. Now assume that he had walked to Kansas City, taking 280 hours. I made it in two hours by jet. Isn’t it clear that something has to account for that 278

¹ The figure of 135 mechanical slaves per worker is believed to be conservative, though there are too many variables to afford proof positive. The electrical industry estimates that 67 KWH’s is equivalent to the energy of a man working an 8-hour shift for a year. More than a trillion KWH’s were generated in 1965, which would mean nearly 200 electrical robots for each person in the work force, assuming that there were no energy losses in transmission and use. Some machines convert energy more efficiently than others; some humans are more energetic than others; so the figure is a guess, at best.

hours miraculously, one might say, put at my disposal? What made this possible? It was, among other factors, the billions upon billions of robot days that assisted in the construction and the operation of that jet!²

But these robots did more than give me 278 hours unavailable to Grandfather. There were 100 passengers on that flight, a freeing for other use of 27,800 hours. Further, that very same jet may be good for 25,000 such flights or a total freeing of 695,000,000 hours. And that jet is only one of hundreds of commercial jets. Add all the commercial prop jobs and all the private planes, and the liberated hours become astronomical. Anyway, that's where some of the robots' energy went, without putting anyone out of work.

The Uses of Leisure

We must, of course, keep in mind that the energy of robots going into airplanes is but some very small fraction of all automated energy. But the statistics do not matter; what is important is that we understand what these robots do for us and, also, to us. For one thing, they multiply our opportunities for unique, enriching experiences. When taking the family for a drive at 60 miles per hour, speculate on why the trip is possible and what is propelling you at this speed! Think of the situation were only shank's mare available. Or why you can read a book instead of washing the dishes, or write a poem instead of foraging for food. You will, perhaps, stand in awe of and give some credit to the robots for relieving you of the necessity of sloshing around in the rice paddies or scrounging for rabbits so you won't starve or, yes, from making buggy whips.

Or even more: perhaps these robots have something to do with your very existence. Less than 400 years ago this land we call the U.S.A. had only an Indian population of perhaps 250,000, certainly not many more. Why so small? It was not because of the Indians' inability to breed, nor because of unfriendly climate or infertile soils, nor for any lack of natural resources. It was because a foraging economy would not support more than then existed. Assuming no improvement

² I must not leave the impression that added mechanical energy alone accounts for all material progress. There is gain, for instance, in every voluntary exchange. An idea, a flash of insight, an improved concept of freedom, the abandonment of a coercive practice, an incentive, a spirit of entrepreneurship, the practice of integrity, in short, spiritual activities, add incalculably to material as well as to other forms of progress.

over that type of economy—no robots except some horses—the chances are at least 800 to 1 that you would never have known adult life.

But back to Grandfather: he never saw Kansas City; indeed, through his teen years, he never went beyond his walking orbit. I, on the other hand, have visited Hong Kong, as far from home as I can get; my air mileage alone is now equal to eighty loops around the world. Grandfather didn't have time enough to do very many things. I have the time to do a thousand times as many things, and by reason of your and my mechanical helpers, the robots. This, of course, explains why timesavers multiply busy-ness—there are so many more things we can do. For good or ill, we are far busier than our ancestors ever were.

Grandfather never talked over a telephone in his life. I reach my son—2,600 miles away—in 10 seconds; I have talked across the Pacific, to Buenos Aires, Gander, London, Mexico, and to every nook and cranny of the U.S.A. If the robots have disemployed me, it is from the limited opportunities Grandfather experienced. There is a better way to put it: the robots have liberated, not disemployed, humans.

Automation Follows Labor Shortages

Robots put people out of work? On the contrary, robots become economically feasible and appear in our lives only as the result of a scarcity of human labor to accomplish all the tasks we want done. It doesn't pay to do by machine what can be done more cheaply by hand. Businessmen tend to mechanize or automate after, rather than before, laborers have moved away from a particular job.

For example, our operation at FEE calls for three large mailings every two months, requiring 20 workers for two days on each occasion. When we began two decades ago, we trained local housewives for this part-time work and paid the hourly minimum wage of 80 cents. Afterward, the minimum was raised to \$1.00 and later to \$1.25. Now assume that FEE was on the brink of bankruptcy, that is, at that critical point where a few hundred dollars would tip the scales toward institutional survival or closing, and that the latest minimum wage raised our costs to that point. What to do? We bought some robots in the form of a machine: press a button and it automatically collates, stuffs, seals, and stamps, doing the work of the women, quicker and at lower cost. True, the part-time women lost their "pin money" jobs but the rest of us were saved from losing ours.

Most people will say that the robots disemployed the women, a grave error. The culprit was none other than the minimum wage law—governmental interference with the free market. It was bad law that sent our women back to housework. As these costs of governmental intervention rise year after year, more and more employers are faced with failure. The robots have performed a remarkable and incalculable rescue mission.

There isn't anything wrong with automation per se. The serious problems cropping up are not because of the robots but because of the people who are blessed with them. These problems, as near as I can fathom them, have their origin in an imbalance between technological know-how and economic, political, and moral wisdom. The former is remindful of an explosion; the decline of the latter amounts to apostasy. This is dangerous, for an increase in the robots we command calls for a commensurate increase in understanding and virtue. It isn't at all promising to put a chimp at the wheel of a truck, a truck driver at the controls of a jet, or a people in command of a powerful system of robots the interworkings of which they but dimly understand. If we aren't to be done in by our own creations, what then is it we must understand?

The Fruits of Freedom

The kind of automation that proliferates opportunities as to varieties of employment and, at the same time, multiplies the kinds of goods and services that may be obtained in exchange for the fruits of one's labor, is exclusively a free market phenomenon.³ Such automation, as is so often demonstrated, cannot be transplanted into or copied by authoritarian societies. Robots that serve the masses are first the outcroppings of freedom and then of capital formation, and cannot exist where these two absolute essentials are absent. For instance, steel mills have been built in Russia, India, and other socialist countries, the effect on the masses of people being further impoverishment. Automobiles are not being produced for the

³ I am omitting any discussion of the robotry that does not originate with free market processes, the kind that can be and is made possible by the coercive collection of funds, the type used to make sputniks and to put men on the moon. Robots originating with socialist processes impoverish rather than enrich the masses of people. For an explanation, see the chapter, "How Socialism Harms the Economy" in *Anything That's Peaceful*, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–81.

masses in Russia; only the Commissars can have them. And so it goes. The point of all this is that if we substitute the governmentally planned economy for the free market, the mass-serving robots will tend to disappear until they become as scarce and useless here as they are in the USSR! This is only a part of the understanding that must accompany our increase in technological know-how. There is much more.

As only casual observation reveals, automation spells specialization—in our own case, to a fantastic degree. This, in turn, increases interdependence. Is it not self-evident that all of us—no exceptions—have become dependent on the robots but also on the free, uninhibited exchanges of our numerous specializations? In a word, we are at a level in interdependence that can only be sustained by a highly intelligent, perceptive, and moral people. It should be plain that when we extravagantly automate and do not at the same time know more about, and practice with increasing scrupulosity, the economic and moral facts of life, disaster lies ahead.

One can hardly imagine a societal situation more chaotic than one with specialization on the increase as freedom in transactions is on the wane. As robots increase and augment our specialization, so must there be an increase in free and willing exchange, freedom of choice, the free market. As robots appear, coercion—governmental control and rigging of the market, for instance—must correspondingly disappear. Simple reasoning as well as all the evidence attest to this fact. Yet an alarming number of people in all walks of life, even businessmen, are blind to it.

Unused Minds Deteriorate

For reasons not easy to explain, understanding appears to be decreasing as robots are increasing. Is there, perhaps, a correlation between struggle and sound thinking and, conversely, between easy affluence and intellectual decadence? Of one thing we are certain: our robots confer more and more material satisfactions with less and less effort on our part.

The present trend is toward increasing material affluence in return for decreasing effort. Literally millions of individuals are approaching a something-for-nothing way of life. Obviously, it is difficult to keep mentally rigorous when the robots are doing one's work. Indeed, mental rigor may be impossible unless the individual experiences a cultural growth commensurate with growth in affluence. This is to

say that the individual may vegetate unless he realizes that the purpose of wealth is to release him from drudgery so that he may more vigorously pursue those potentialities and aptitudes uniquely his own. If the robots are to induce our getting away from or out of life—vegetating, rather than getting ever deeper into life—growing, then the late Dean Inge’s observation is indeed prophetic, “Nothing fails like success.”

The struggle to *overcome* is the genesis of *becoming*. It is the law of polarity, the tension of the opposites, that spells growth, development, progress; at least this appears to be Nature’s dictum. Men need new frontiers to explore and occupy and transcend, not in the form of politically contrived obstacles—heaven forbid!—but in the form of challenges worthy of the mind of the individual human being striving toward his potential. When the struggle for existence is eased, higher level struggles must be substituted: expanding awareness, perception, consciousness, in a word, difficult, hard-to-achieve, intellectual, moral, and spiritual goals. This is by way of saying that disaster cannot be avoided unless a growth in wisdom be up to and on a parity with a growth in technological know-how.

Obstacles as Stepping-Stones

But here is the rub: material hardship, once overcome, does not and cannot serve as the obstacle, the tension, the springboard for this required growth in wisdom, this flexing and expansion of the intellectual and spiritual faculties. Material hardship is an obstacle supplied by Nature, or, if you prefer, by the environment. But once it is overcome, man is on his own; he has to make his own obstacles in the form of rationally constructed goals. And is not this creating of our own obstacles, perhaps, the profound lesson we should learn from the robot explosion?

The robots presuppose our knowing how to live with them. They, as an auto, TNT, sulphuric acid, a jet plane, are dangerous in the hands of those who do not know their properties, of those who are unaware of automation’s deeply significant meaning. The robot army, in its present dimensions, requires, at a minimum, an understanding of private property, free market, limited government principles—economic and political enlightenment—far superior to any such understanding ever achieved up to this period in history.

* * *

Next, we might consider the point of reference we should use to determine whether this explosion has us on or off course. How are we to tell? Growth we are having, but is it healthy or unhealthy? Should we measure our progress by so-called national growth or by individual growth? . . .

Chapter VII

The Measure of Growth

A correspondent from Pakistan asked: “How can one tell whether a nation is experiencing economic growth?” Really, a nation experiences nothing; only individuals have experiences. So, if we would measure growth or progress, it must be with respect to the individual human being, not a nation.

I here lay myself open to an argument no less contentious than Galileo’s when he affirmed that the solar system does not revolve around the earth. He was up against the established faith; I find myself up against Hegel, Comte, and others who have held that only society is real and that the individual is the abstraction. Today these philosophers have followers by the millions—collectivists who have no inkling of the origin of their ideas—those who favor an intervening political apparatus, the planned economy, the welfare state.

Thus, the argument is between those who pose society, the nation, the over-all economy as the prime unit and the small minority who insist that all meaningful comparisons in progress must be made in terms of the individual.

First, let us ask, how would a bureaucracy, with its numerous interventions in the market place, go about measuring economic progress? The task is greatly hampered by the fact that economic calculation, which is founded on market data automatically supplied in a system of free competitive pricing, is denied in socialism; it is impossible.¹ Leading communist “economists” concede the point.²

¹ Professor Ludwig von Mises is generally conceded to be the one who intellectually—though not politically—demolished socialism. He did this by proving that economic calculation is utterly impossible under socialism. Were this not an elusive fact and extremely difficult to grasp, others would have discovered it before him. See Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 131–42.

² Aleksy Wakar and Janusz Zielinski, leading professors of the Central Planning School of Poland, astonishingly for socialists, say, “The best methods of producing a given output cannot be chosen [by socialist methods of calculation] but are taken from outside the [socialist] system . . . i.e., methods of production used in the past, or so-called ‘advanced’ methods of production, *usually taken from the practice of more advanced countries and*

Yet, the interventionists are faced with decision-making. And in the absence of economic calculation, they have but one recourse: statistics! “Statistics are, in a crucial sense, critical to all interventionist and socialistic activities of government. . . . Only by statistics can the Federal government make even a fitful *attempt* to plan, regulate, control, or reform various industries—or impose central planning and socialization on the entire economic system.”³

When an economy is controlled by government, prices are not established by competitive forces but by bureaucratic edict. Edicts are written, modified, repealed in accord with bureaucratic judgments. Thus it is that they are compelled to form judgments from their readings of the statistical data they compile. While the ups and downs in employment, standard of living, and many other data are contrived for their use, the usual statistic for measuring economic growth or progress is gross national product (GNP).

The GNP idea is subject to several obvious flaws:

1. If I divorce my wife and hire her as a cook at \$50 a week, the GNP will increase by \$2,600 annually. How, pray tell, is there any economic growth or progress in that maneuver?

2. If the Defense Department spends \$50 billion instead of \$1 billion on war and its hardware, the GNP will rise by \$49 billion. The larger expenditure may or may not increase our security but, assuredly, it represents no economic progress for you or me. We have a lower, not a higher, freedom of choice by reason of such outlays. To what economic use can a citizen put a battleship, or a nuclear warhead, or a dead “enemy”?⁴

used as data for plan-building by the [socialist] country under consideration.” (Italics mine.) See *The Journal of the American Economic Association*, March, 1963.

For a clear, brief, simple, and excellent explanation of economic calculation, see Dean Russell, “Play Store Economics,” *The Freeman*, January, 1964.

³ See Murray N. Rothbard, “Statistics: Achilles’ Heel of Government,” *The Freeman*, June, 1961.

⁴ This is not to deny that expenditures by government to keep the peace are useful. Defense against destructive actions is to avoid losses; it is but a means to make progress possible; it is not in itself growth or progress or gain.

3. Were we to spend \$40 billion to tear down New York City, the GNP would rise by that amount, the same as if we were to spend \$40 billion to build a new city.⁵

4. The dollars we pay farmers not to grow wheat, or peanuts or whatever, boost the GNP just as do the dollars paid farmers for things produced.

5. GNP—expressed in the monetary unit—enlarges whenever the medium of exchange is diluted, that is, it gets bigger in an inflationary period.⁶ Contemplate what Germany's GNP would have been in 1923 when 30 million marks wouldn't buy a loaf of bread.

The Case Against the GNP

What an inaccurate device is GNP, the so-called measuring rod of economic progress employed by intervening governments and so heartily endorsed by many economists!

Why, then, is GNP used at all? Probably, there is no better statistical guide available to an intervening bureaucracy; that is, none more consistent with their gross-economy—as distinguished from individualistic—assumptions. Further, they have come to believe that spending, rather than productive effort, is the key to growth or progress. Were this true, then Germany achieved its peak of growth immediately prior to complete economic collapse. Were this true, we could experience enormous progress by the simple expedient of repealing all laws against counterfeiting! The fact is, exploding expenditures no more measure economic growth than does exploding population!

I repeat, GNP is purely an invention and a device of an intervening government and/or its intellectual supporters. In an ideal free market society, with government limited to invoking a common justice and keeping the peace, GNP is inconceivable. Try to find a GNP figure in Hong Kong, the nearest approach to

⁵ In Federal urban renewal, for instance, expenditures for razing the old structures are as much included in GNP as are expenditures for constructing the new.

⁶ True, the Department of Commerce does publish a figure with a “deflator” (adjustment to a constant dollar) in its monthly *Survey of Current Business*. But this figure, far from flawless, is noted almost exclusively by professional *economists* and statisticians. It is the inflated figure that is “fed to the public.”

a free economy in today's world. There simply is no use for a GNP figure by the voluntary participants in a free market. Market data is related to one's goods or services, yes; but definitely not a generality like GNP related neither to specific markets nor to individual progress.

GNP is, of course, subject to manipulation, as explained above. Merely spend more, regardless of what for, and up it goes. Thus, the prevailing bureaucracy is enabled to "prove" that it is doing better each year, or better than the Establishment it succeeded.

Now, here is where the mischief enters: *If the majority of the citizenry can be sold on the merit of government spending and made to believe that GNP is a reliable measuring rod, then we can easily be led by the nose into the total state—the free market wiped out completely.*

Again, why is GNP used at all? Bureaucracies that intervene in the market will never use a valid definition of economic growth or progress for the simple reason that the real thing cannot be measured in mathematical or statistical terms and, thus, is utterly useless for bureaucratic procedure.

Measuring Personal Progress

The real thing—individual economic progress—cannot be measured by objective standards. This is to say that the individual's economic progress cannot be reckoned by the number of chickens in the pot, by cars in the garage, by cash in the bank or statements of net worth, or by any or all other standard-of-living measurements.⁷

This is not to say that the individual can have no idea of his own economic growth; it is only to argue that growth cannot be judged by any set of objective standards.

For instance, I am aware of personal economic growth, which is to say, I can now obtain more of *what I want* in exchange for *what I want to do* than was the case thirty years ago. Further, the Pilgrim, or an eighteenth-century Englishman, or my father, had nowhere near the choices of employment I have, or what could be

⁷ "True economic growth is theoretically unmeasurable. . . . Concern about economic growth could . . . properly be shifted from pondering meaningless percentages to preserving and perfecting the mechanisms and incentives through which growth is achieved." *United States Steel Corporation Annual Report*, 1960.

received in exchange for the fruits thereof. My choices are abundant compared to theirs.

But please note that *what I want to do* is forever changing, and that *what I want* in exchange is in perpetual flux. Like a bird on the wing, I don't "stay put," as we say. Even more to the point, I have no carbon copy on this earth; we are all in flux relative to each other.

Perhaps one man's highest aspiration is to write and lecture on behalf of freedom. He prefers this to other employments, even though the other jobs available to him pay twice or ten times as much. And in exchange he desires above all else a working acquaintance with the best libertarian minds in the world, along with the economic means—food, transportation, and the like—for realization. To him this is the ultimate in economic progress. Who, pray tell, has any right to set a standard for him other than these unusual but, nonetheless, self-chosen goals?

But here's another fellow who, above all else, prefers to strum a guitar. And in exchange his heart's desire is "a Loaf of Bread . . . a Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou." To him this is the ultimate in economic progress. Where is the superman who has any logical, moral, or ethical basis for decreeing otherwise?

The above gets at the crux of the matter: *gain or economic progress is individual and subjective; gain cannot be objectively measured, that is, neither I nor anyone else can devise a standard that can accurately assess what is or isn't a gain to you.*⁸ It's difficult enough to know one's own choice in such matters.

What economic progress is to one individual may very well be regress to another. Examples: There are persons who would prefer an audience with the President of the United States to \$10,000, and vice versa; a hoola hoop to \$5, and vice versa; a can of imported snails to \$2, and vice versa; a Ph.D. or a mink coat to \$5,000, and vice versa; a Sammy Davis performance to one by Roberta Peters, and vice versa; a Jeep to a Cadillac, and vice versa; and so on ad infinitum. *Objective standards simply cannot be used to measure subjective judgments.*

⁸ This is clear to anyone who understands the marginal utility theory of value. For study purposes, see Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk, *Value and Price* (South Holland, Illinois: Libertarian Press, 1960).

Measuring and determining the total value of these trillions of complex, ever-changing whims, fancies, desires—subjectively recorded only in the minds of individuals mostly unknown to one another—is not humanly possible.⁹

The individual can, if he so elects, generally assess his own economic progress, but he can no more express this growth statistically or mathematically than he can his intellectual, moral, or spiritual gain. Indeed, in these latter categories, no one makes any attempt at such measurement. Unlike the single dimensions of height, weight, girth, bushels of wheat, and population, these other forms of growth, including economic, are multidimensional and—to top it off—in never-ending flux. And suppose one had an accurate measure of his own economic growth; what could he possibly do with the statistic that he could not do as well without it?

Opportunities to Choose

Far more important than fruitlessly trying to measure individual economic growth is understanding what it is that increases the possibilities for progress. Were we searching for a single phrase to express what has to be understood, we could well settle for a *freeing of choices*. This, however, is as big as “all outdoors.” Reflect on the enormity of what’s involved:

First, freeing the choices—increasing the alternatives and opportunities—for profitably (subjective) employing one’s abilities and properties.

Second, freeing the choices—increasing the alternatives—of the desirable (subjective) goods and services that can be obtained in *willing exchange* for the fruits of said employment.

Third, freeing the capacities of self in order to partake of the increasing alternatives. To what advantage is a proliferation of opportunities to an oyster, or to a human who can’t get off dead center?

All three of the above developments are founded on exchange—production as much as distribution. And this is true even of self-development, for man grows

⁹ This is not to say that the complete satisfaction of personal desires is necessarily to one’s advantage. It is only to argue that it is not my role to decide what someone else’s advantage is. Is it to another’s advantage that he be cast in my image, have my likes and dislikes imposed on him? Nonsense!

by exchanging ideas with his contemporaries or drawing on his heritage; he is incapable of going it alone. Thus, exchange is the key economic term.

As set forth in Chapter V, there are two kinds of exchange, broadly speaking: *forced* exchange as in state interventionism (socialism) and *willing* exchange as in a free market economy. No society ever has had exclusively one or the other; every society has more or less one or the other.

To repeat what is already implied, economic progress may be judged only by the extent to which an individual becomes capable of taking advantage of an increase in opportunities for productive activity and an increase in what he can obtain for his goods or services in *willing* exchange.

Such progress, let it be emphasized, originates only in willing as distinguished from forced or coerced exchange. For example, when a robber takes \$100 from you, there is no net gain; his gain is canceled out by your loss; this exchange is no more than a coercive swap. Precisely the same holds true when the government forcibly takes the fruits of your labors as a contribution toward any project which does not fall within the principled scope of government.¹⁰ Parenthetically, an intervening government, to be consistent, should tabulate robberies and include the total figure in GNP!

It is clear that there is no gain or progress in forced or coerced exchange. But, as I attempt to explain in Chapter X, all parties gain in willing exchange—in the only way that gain makes sense.

The Discovery and Use of Talent

Let us now ask, why is individual economic progress so important? What, really, is its deep significance? For, surely, it transcends sensual pleasures and satisfactions.

Assume I am a Russian whose employment alternatives may be limited to working in the sputnik factory or on a collective farm and where the things that can be obtained in exchange approximate the contents of Mother Hubbard's cupboard.

¹⁰ Bastiat suggested the principled scope in simple terms: "See if the law takes from some persons what belongs to them, and gives it to other persons to whom it does not belong. See if the law benefits one citizen at the expense of another by doing what the citizen himself cannot do without committing a crime." See Frederic Bastiat, *The Law* (Irvington, N. Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc.).

Or a Chinese who, employment-wise, has no choice beyond sloshing around a rice paddy, in exchange for which he gets rice and little else.

Next, grant this: I—the Russian or the Chinese, it matters not—possess a potential talent, hidden, latent, untapped. Mine is distinctively unique, unlike that of any other living being. I don't know what it is myself. I only know that it isn't making sputniks or transplanting rice. If I understand life's purpose, one aim must be to see how close I can come during my earthly days to realizing those creative potentialities uniquely mine. Under the conditions outlined above, I should go to my grave—in this respect *unborn*!

Now, let the alternatives for employment greatly proliferate. They pop into existence every day, one might say. Undeniably, the greater the proliferation the greater is the probability that some one alternative will coincide with that latent, undiscovered talent uniquely mine. In short, self-realization!

It is now appropriate to consider what type of political economy is most conducive to a maximum of alternatives for the employment of abilities and properties and of opportunities for profitable exchange. In what socio-economic climate is there the greatest freeing of choices?

To Defend Life and Property

At the risk of repetition, I believe the first requirement to be a societal agency—government—devoted to keeping the peace, that is, to inhibiting and minimizing all violence, fraud, misrepresentation, predation. Though fully aware of the tendency of governments to get out of hand—the policeman turned plunderer—I'm nonetheless convinced that society requires an organized agency of defensive force to keep the market free of coercion, to secure to each citizen his life and the fruits of his labor. Private property is the outcome of such security, this institution being a basic foundation for any growth in economic alternatives.

Only when life and property are respected is capital formation possible, labor and capital being the tools of production.

When the societal agency is limited to keeping the peace—assuming it does so—there remains no organized force standing against the freeing of creative human energy, a potential always seeking release to some extent in everyone.

When the societal agency keeps the peace, that is, when no one is permitted to lord it over others, there is free entry, free and willing exchange; in short, the free market.

It is under these conditions—never under authoritarian arrangements—that alternatives proliferate, both as to opportunities for the employment of one's abilities and properties and as to what one can obtain in willing exchange.¹¹ The flower of freedom!

The flower of freedom, I say. But how, many will ask, can this proliferation of alternatives be taking place coincidentally with a rapidly advancing state intervention into the market? Isn't there a contradiction here?

While no societal agency has ever been strictly limited in practice to keeping the peace, invoking a common justice, and securing the rights of life and livelihood, and no market has ever been ideally free, the U.S.A. has afforded the nearest approximation to these ideals. This practice of freedom brought an unprecedented outburst of creative activity, and through the persons of self-reliant individuals. What's going on today can partly be accounted for as a momentum, a mighty thrust from decades when sound principles were generally practiced. The traditions, the ways of dealing with each other, the will to improve, the incentives, and numerous other virtues born in that era combined into a fabric too tough for easy destruction.

But more than momentum: our impressions of what is happening are greatly colored and distorted because, to a marked extent, they derive from what we read in the press or hear over TV and radio. Public media—our eyes for seeing much of the world around us—highlight the news. And what's news? Not the commonplace—never! But, rather, the exceptional events. A new intervention or control (restriction of the market) is always an exception; it is a break with tradition, with our ways of doing things and dealing with each other. So, it is the substitution of force for willing exchange that is taken to be news nowadays.

¹¹ The alternatives (specializations) brought into existence by government, founded on forced rather than on free exchange—space hardware, and the like—must be excluded from the list that makes for individual economic progress. When we become dependent on the exchange of our numerous specializations—as is now the case—exchanges must be by common consent if we are to avoid the Russian type of authoritarian state. For more explanation of this point, see Chapter VI in *Anything That's Peaceful*, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–71.

Commonplace Constructive Forces

Let's reflect on the commonplace which mostly we overlook. For instance, the exchange of 30 cents for a can of beans. We take no more note of this than we do the important air we breathe. Yet these commonplace, unnoted actions occur daily in billions of unpublicized voluntary exchanges, with a constructive effect that tends to overcome many destructive, intervening forces.

I repeat, we are keenly conscious of the exceptional destructive forces and only dimly aware of the commonplace constructive forces. This, of course, is very dangerous, for we tend to accept these glaring interventions as causes of the proliferation of economic alternatives for the individual. This type of mistaken correlation leads labor union officials to believe that their coercive tactics raise the wage level,¹² or bureaucrats to believe that their price controls curb inflation. The fact is that coercion is an inhibitive force, never creative. It precludes creative activity by the person doing the coercing as well as by the one being coerced.

Free and willing exchange, on the other hand, can be likened to a world-wide electric grid into which flow the infinitesimal and varied creativities of several billion individuals, resulting in a magnificent total available to all.

Freedom Finds a Way

As a bolt of lightning zigs and zags along the line of least resistance, so has free action found its way through the porosity of governmental restraints. It is the free action, not the restraints, that accounts for all that's good in the economic situation. In short, free action is stronger than you think, and the interveners are weaker than they think.

True, the tides of unreason and political intervention are on the march; their forces are appalling, and we shudder at the news of them. But we should take stock of the commonplace. Why, 99 per cent of all actions are as honest, as fair, as complimentary to all parties concerned as are the actions between you and your best friend. In a word, the constructive forces are enormous. Were this not true

¹² See Dr. F. A. Harper, *Why Wages Rise* (Irvington, N. Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1957).

the destructive forces would have done us in ere this, a happier picture than most people conjure up.

Yet, there is a sobering thought: a small amount of coercion wreaks a havoc out of all proportion to its quantity. Imagine, for example, a church social of a hundred people, and all the friendly, constructive, cooperative energy used in its preparation. Now visualize say 1/10,000th of the total energy turned to coercion, a deacon slapping the pastor in the face. Contemplate the ensuing chaos and the effects of coercion are clear. A single drop of some deadly poisons will kill!

* * *

Even those of us who think of ourselves as free of coercive tendencies have our moments of falling from grace. We are prone to see such failures only in others. Let us now do a bit of self-assessment. . . .

Chapter VIII

The Macro Malady¹

Had Napoleon been asked to sit atop the Cosmos and manage everything in interstellar space, probably he would have demurred on the grounds that such an assignment was beyond his competence. Yet, he unhesitatingly strove for a role no less pretentious: managing millions of human beings, each of whom is as phenomenal as the Cosmos itself. A master at his specialization—coercion—he was grossly ignorant of the limits of his wisdom. Knowing so much in so narrow an area, and being unaware of his limitations, led him to assume a role for which no man—not even a Napoleon—has any competence whatsoever.

Napoleon was a “macro.” Historically, he and his ilk have been the exceptions. Most people have been “micros.” While victimized by authoritarianism, they have nevertheless been content to wrestle with social problems of the micro sort. That’s the way the past reads to me.

Solving Other People’s Problems

But the picture changes! Millions upon millions of people are now presuming to settle problems that are over their heads—macro problems. This accounts, in no small measure, for our headlong return to coercive collectivism. At least, this is my thesis.

¹ 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.

A typical case in point: A noted geneticist, extrapolating population trends, predicts that there will be one billion billion of us on earth no further in the future than the Norman Conquest is in the past—"some 120 persons per square yard of the earth's surface. . . ."² This, of course, is a horrendous statistic! But the nub of the matter is that this scientist has taken on a problem that's over his head. Such would be the case even were he limiting himself to the problems of our nation at the present moment. This scientist, however, takes on the social problem of the whole world, and some centuries hence! Now, how does this biting off more of a problem than one can chew lead to coercive collectivism? Listen to one of the several suggested remedies:

A program in which everyone is temporarily sterilized (perhaps with a substance added to water supplies or staple foods) will be necessary. This would make positive action, in applying for and taking an antidote, necessary before reproduction.

Mass sterilization! The only way to have a baby is to apply for an antidote, a drug that will restore fertility. Who is to possess this permit-granting authority? Not the scientist; he won't be here. The answer is that a government official will decide who is or is not to be born. Would an Abe Lincoln be given dispensation of life by this political god? Booker T. Washington? Sam Goldwyn? You? I? The geneticist himself? Shades of *1984*³

The above, while somewhat startling and sensational, is no more far-fetched than millions of Joe Doakeses who now take on social problems bigger than they are and then turn the problems over to government for solution. Joe Doakes, who votes in favor of a resolution for the government to finance the local hospital, is in exactly the same category as the geneticist—each trying to focus on a problem that is beyond his competence.

² "The Biological Revolution," *Stanford Review*, September–October, 1965.

Predicting the future by extrapolation can easily lead to fantastic conclusions, points out Dr. Henry Margenau, Yale physicist. By projecting the rate of increase in the number of scientists against general population trends we would have more scientists in 2000 A.D. than people!

³ I refer to George Orwell's book, *1984*, his nightmare vision of England's future.

We Inhabit a Shrinking World

What has brought on this rash of macro addicts? Nearly everyone trying to solve problems bigger than the would-be problem solvers? Perhaps we can put our finger on the cause of this.

Reflect on my farmer grandfather. The social problems he dealt with—welfare, security, prosperity—were of a size befitting his mentality; he thought in micro terms—that is, he did his thinking in terms of the few individuals with whom he was acquainted and whose needs could be personally judged. Grandfather operated, for the most part, within an orbit of 7–10 miles radius; a trip to “the city,” some 50 miles away, was as much of an occasion as one of my trips to London. Frankly, Grandfather didn’t know of any “need” except what he personally scanned. His communication with and vision of the nation or the world never went beyond a stint in the Civil War, a macro event. Unless a neighbor’s barn were on fire, in which case everyone within seeing distance lent a hand, “need” wasn’t much in evidence except for the now-and-then peripatetic beggar or hobo. In his micro-vision orbit just about every family looked out for itself; self-reliance Was in the driver’s seat. These people knew each other too intimately to fool one another. Pretense seldom reared its head.

What we should keep in mind is the fact that America’s era of micro vision broke all the world’s records for security, welfare, prosperity. Governor Bradford of the Plymouth Colony, when commenting on the results of dropping coercive collectivism, in effect the macro madness of the Old World, wrote:

. . . any generall wante or famine hath not been amongst them since to this day.

Following that momentous decision in 1623, there has been no famine or involuntary starvation in our land for over three centuries. However, we must not, in this analysis, give too much credit to our grandfathers. By and large, our ancestors had no more capacity to think for themselves or to see beyond the surface of things than do their progeny who now people this country. Those who cannot think for themselves—ancestors, or us—must, perforce, respond to their environment.

How the environment has changed! Replacing Grandfather’s little world of micro vision is a brand new world of television, radio, telephone, astro vision,

world-wide news coverage in daily papers, magazines, books; we hop into an auto and see America; we board a jet and view the world—in a word, macro vision.

Of a sudden—one might say, without warning—Grandfather's progeny are constantly having dinned into their heads all the "needs" of all the people on earth. Appalachia is no less an intimate and pressing need today than was a bucket brigade to put out Grandfather's fire. Distressed areas, backward countries the world over, foreign ideologies and isms, Negro unrest at home and in faraway Africa, all the poor farmers and all the suffering wage earners, prices for steel, aluminum, copper (the list grows), the cotton surplus, downtowns deserted for shopping centers, the threatening efficiency of the Japanese, the vanishing gold supply, the weakness of the pound sterling, getting to the moon "because it's there," Russian sputniks—you name it—are problems which most Americans now feel they must find solutions for.

Grandfather had to figure out how to milk his sick friend's cows as well as his own; I have to contrive ways to get all of mankind out of the mess it's in; I do unless I can see beyond the surface of things and thus protect my micro mentality from being drawn into tackling macro problems.

Those persons who cannot see beyond the surface of things—their number is legion—take on problems bigger than they are and, as a consequence, push us into the coercive collectivism of the all-powerful state. But we may never understand why this is true, why they act as they do, unless we can effect a self-induced blindness equal to their myopia, until we bring ourselves to seeing no more than they now see.⁴ In short, we can explain them only as we put our own vision into reverse and back up to where they are—put ourselves in their shoes.

With this mental gymnastic accomplished, what is it we no longer see? We now cannot see any efficacious results that could possibly flow from thinking in micro terms. A leading labor official put it clearly and succinctly:

⁴ For further exploratory reading on this point, see the chapter, "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen" in *Selected Essays on Political Economy* by Frederic Bastiat (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1964), pp. 1–50.

Or, on the same subject, read the chapter, "The Broken Window" in *Economics in One Lesson* by Henry Hazlitt (New York: Macfadden, 1962), pp. 15–16.

Only a moron would believe that the millions of private economic decisions being made independently of each other will somehow harmonize in the end and bring us out where we want to be.⁵

The implication here is clear. The labor official, not being able to see any possibilities in micro economics (the free market), can see no solution to social problems except through the political implementation of macro economics. That he in his blindness refers to free market see-ers as morons is only because the term is stronger than extremists, crackpots, nuts. There is nothing new or strange in this. Most of us have a tendency to regard as slightly touched the connoisseur of any specialty about which we know nothing.

I use the labor official as a prototype only because he expresses his blindness more brilliantly than do the vast majority of citizens who are in his unseeing state. The labor official simply does not see what a few at least dimly perceive.⁶ However, the fault may be as much with us as with him. Free market see-ers aren't able to throw enough light on the matter. Indeed, some of "us" entertain a doubt now and then about the free market being adequate to the occasion—mail delivery, for instance. Or monopoly, or disaster, or education. Who among "us" has no blind spots?

That Which Is Not Seen

There is no man, present or past, who achieves more than a micro mentality. As the distinguished French scientist, Lecomte du Noüy, put it, "Man's image of his universe is founded on less than one-trillionth of the vibrations which surround him." In any event, our inability to recall a single see-all, know-all, individual should make this affirmation self-evident. No one of us ever sees more than a wee fragment of the whole universe, of another person, or even of the whole self.

Now suppose a person—such as the labor official—is unable to see how ordinary mentalities focused on micro problems, if left free to act independently of

⁵ *The New York Times*, June 30, 1962.

For an extended explanation of why the labor official's view is false, see the chapter, "Incomprehensible Order," in *The Free Market and Its Enemy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–67.

⁶ For an explanation of what one micro thinker sees, refer to my chapter, "The Miraculous Market," *ibid.*, pp. 6–21.

each other, could possibly attend to social and economic problems. Remember, we have put ourselves in his position. Blindfolded thus, we can see no opening to the free market (micro) avenue—none whatsoever!

What to do? Surely, there are macro problems galore. One avenue, and one only, appears open to us; a macro-solving formula. Having only micro mentalities ourselves, we don't quite know how to solve a macro problem. So, how are micro mentalities to be made into macro-problem solvers? What's the formula? This is the question we must, in our self-induced blindness, ask ourselves.

Our answer? Thoughtlessly, and for the most part, we turn the macro problems over to government. But, by this process, what is it we really do? We do no more than give the macro problems to micro mentalities with but one ingredient added: a police force! Reduced to its essence, we give micro thinkers the gun power of a constabulary on the naïve assumption that this renders a competency to cope with macro problems. We add only force—not one iota of wisdom—and feel relieved by how intelligently, neatly, efficiently we discharge our responsibilities! This is the view we get when we cannot see beyond the surface of things.

The blindfold having served its purpose, let's remove it. The fallacy of the above course of action, and the unjustified sense of accomplishment, are immediately apparent when we distill what we have done to micro dimensions: you and me.

Let us say that you are insufficiently secure and prosperous. What can I do to ameliorate your plight? I can give or loan you something that is mine or, perhaps, give you some helpful counsel. Isn't it obvious that my assistance cannot be increased by forcibly imposing my will upon you? What can I do with a gun that I can't do better without one? Nothing whatsoever! For, surely, you won't sanction my employing this coercive means to take from others and give to you. Not in a you-and-me micro situation, you won't. But if you start thinking in macro terms you will—as do millions.

The Victims of Coercion

No plague has ever destroyed or impoverished or kept from self-realization more human beings than has the macro malady. The pilgrims who starved and died during the three years after landing at Plymouth Rock were its victims. Several million Russians perished during 1931–32 at the hands of macro thinkers—not by

men playing God but by men playing against God.⁷ Every soldier who loses his life on the battlefield dies of the macro malady—micro men undertaking macro roles.

Any observer can see that wars, the preparation for them, and their aftermath, lead toward the total state, that is, toward more governmental take-over and an increasing number of macro problems. But only those who can see below the surface of things can see that when a people collectivize in a power organization—socialism, authoritarianism, the welfare state, the planned economy—in short, when they “macronize,” wars become possible, indeed, more than likely. Men in a free market, a people who limit themselves to micro problems—acting individually and in response to free choice—do not make war; they create and trade! Just as do the people in the abutting states of Illinois and Wisconsin, so will any people who, when free of busybodies, tend to mind their own business.

We cannot help concluding that the macro malady is but the social and economic manifestation of a vicious circle: macro organization brings on wars, and wars make macro problems which, in turn, compel us into macro organization.

Inflation helps to make the point. This dilution of the medium of exchange is the fiscal outcome of excessive government, that is, of macro organization. And what are the solutions? One control atop another: price, wage, rent, interest, production, exchange, all of which are macro dimensions.⁸

The recent water famine on the Hudson was a macro problem that arose from macro (socialistic) organization.⁹ I see no point in extending the list; it is clear, if we focus the eye aright, that micro mentalities, when trapped into macro-problem solving, contaminate society with mankind’s most destructive disease: the macro malady.

⁷ William Henry Chamberlin was in Russia at the time of this enormous disaster. See his article, “State Economic Planning: Tragedy or Futility,” *The Freeman*, January, 1966, p. 27.

⁸ See “The American Setting: Present and Past,” *Anything That’s Peaceful*, *op. cit.*, pp. 10–30.

⁹ See “Water Famine on the Hudson,” *The Freeman*, September, 1965.

A Reason to Be Humble

What, then, is the remedy for the macro malady; how do we get ourselves out of this vicious circle? The answer, it seems to me, is simple enough but, in our world of macro vision, difficult to put into personal practice.

Perhaps the wise Socrates gave us the cue when he said, in effect, “That man thinks he knows everything whereas he knows nothing. I, on the other hand, know nothing, but I know that I know nothing.” The first step, it seems, is to recognize that “I”—no matter who—am a micro mentality and, thus, incapable of coping with or solving macro problems. In short, when asked how to solve macro problems, I must learn to tell the truth: “I don’t know.”

The next step is to realize that no other person, regardless of pretensions or the amount of force at his disposal, possesses anything beyond micro mentality himself and is no more capable of solving macro problems than I am. Required is a penetrating skepticism: trust no man beyond his infinitesimal area of competence; hold him to the very little he knows.

When enough of this kind of realistic skepticism exists, we will have no more truck with “pretenders to the throne.” Only then may we begin to see slightly beyond the surface of things, at least beyond what the afore-mentioned labor official can see: the therapeutic power of freedom. True, “millions of private economic decisions made independently of each other,” may not bring us out where he wants us to be; but this micro, free market, individual, freedom-of-choice process will bring millions of people as close to where each of them wants to be as is possible. There is a distinction.

As stated above, the nearest approximation of the micro approach ever practiced broke all the world’s records for security, welfare, prosperity, and the release of creative human energy. The argument that this worked all right in a simple economy but is inapplicable in a complex economy does not hold water. The more complex the economy the more must the micro way of life be relied upon. For, as the complexity of the economy increases, man’s ability to manage it correspondingly diminishes. No self-respecting individual will concede to any other person the competency to manage his own creative life for him. Think, then, how absurd it is to expect a competency to direct the complex arrangement involving millions of lives!

The micro approach—each person operating within the limits of his knowledge and competence—should require no theorizers; its record is so remarkable and profuse. Those of us who are privileged to apprehend its performance know full well that its practice will put an end to macro problems. There'll be no more water famine on the Hudson, for instance, than there is a famine in chickens, or cornflakes, or mink coats. Only micro problems will remain: each person trying to figure out how best to improve his own little world in free and voluntary cooperation with others. Problems will fit the problem solvers and, thus, find such resolution as each is capable of. When individuals attempt to solve problems over their heads, they are in a wild and dangerous guessing game, like children trying to explain what makes the world go round, and with the power to impose on the rest of us the vagaries of their imagination. But when individuals are at work on problems of their own size, they will be at their best as problem solvers; they will, as we say, come to themselves.

* * *

In this attempt to identify the causes that underlie cause, we can well ask, what causes the macro malady? No doubt there are many, but the transmutation of wishes into rights deserves most careful consideration. . . .

Chapter IX

When Wishes Become Rights

Reflect on the “backward” countries in the world; the “distressed areas” in the U.S.A.; the many individuals who are poverty stricken, lame, blind. Then add all the unfulfilled desires and yearnings of nearly 200 million Americans, ranging from better food, housing, clothing, medicine, hospitals, mink coats, and automobiles to putting three men on the moon. What a field for the would-be philanthropist if all these wants were within his power to fulfill!

Let us imagine that you have been offered a magic power to satisfy everyone’s material wishes with no effort on your part. Suppose, for instance, that you had Aladdin’s lamp and could call up a jinni that would confer any good or service on anyone you might choose to help. If you could thus satisfy desires for material things with neither cost nor effort on the part of anyone, would you be willing to assume the role of Aladdin and bestow benefactions like manna from heaven?

Perhaps you are among the very few whose answer would be an emphatic “No!” There are those few who would immediately sense the consequences of such reckless “humanitarianism”: no more farming; the closing of all factories and stores; trains and planes coming to a stop; students no longer studying; a heaven on earth—a veritable Shangri-La! No more problems; labor passe; self-responsibility “old hat”; effort relegated to the decadent past; all obstacles overcome for mankind! These few know that when there is no exercise and flexing of the faculties, atrophy follows as a matter of course and our species disappears—all because everyone is granted riches for nothing more than the wishing!

If this sort of magic were only half practiced, would the result still be bad? “Yes!” answered Benjamin Franklin. “If man could have Half his Wishes, he would double his Troubles.” We may infer from this that if a man’s objectives could be achieved for nothing more than wishes, no good would be served, deterioration would ensue. Struggle, earning one’s spurs, conscious effort, calling on one’s potentialities and bringing them into use are essential to survival—to say nothing of progress. This is crystal clear to a few. But not to the many!

A majority of Americans, today, would accept the magic lamp. For it is obvious that most persons who would gratify a wish *at the expense of others* would more

readily do so *at no expense to others*. Such wishers are among us by the millions, all in pursuit of something for nothing—effortless wish gratification.

These many Americans have found their magic lamp in the Federal political apparatus, and what a jinni! Aladdin's lamp evoked a jinni of supernatural powers; but this modern jinni is a composite of quite ordinary human beings and, as a consequence, it relies on the earthly ways of humans. Even so, we must never sell it short; it is unbelievably clever.

Aladdin's jinni performed only on call; it responded to wishes when requested. This modern American version, on the other hand, displays zealous initiative in that it:

1. invents wishes for people;
2. persuades people that these wishes are their own and, then, actively solicits their gratification;
3. convinces people that these wishes are among their natural rights, and
4. casts itself in the role of “helper.”

The Myth of Federal Aid

Mythology in its heyday never came up with a jinni to equal this.

Golden goals for people to adopt? It was this jinni, not the people of the Tennessee Valley, that initiated TVA with its below-cost pricing. It was this jinni that conceived “social security,” the Peace Corps, and so on.¹

Further, the jinni insinuates its golden goals into the minds of people as wishes capable of fulfillment. The jinni appears in nearly every community of the nation and in many countries of the world selling its wishing wares. Federal urban renewal projects are promoted far more by the bureaucracy in Washington than by local citizens. Federal largess is urged upon the citizenry. Of course, the reason is clear enough: urban renewal is an integral part of the numerous Federal “full employment” projects required as cover-ups of the unemployment caused by other Federal policies.²

¹ This point is excellently covered by Dr. Emerson P. Schmidt in “The Public Demands . . . ?” *The Freeman*, August, 1964.

But it would hardly do for this jinni to gratify wishes were the performance attended by any sense of guilt on the people's part. So, how does the jinni dispose of this hazard? Simple! It transmutes wishes into "rights," and remains above suspicion in this legerdemain. Do you wish a restoration of your decaying downtown? Very well; that wish is a right. Do you wish lower rates for power and light? Presto! The wish is a right. Do you wish a better price for your tobacco, a better job, a better education than can be had by your own efforts in willing exchange? These wishes are now your rights. As one spokesman for the Federal jinni so eloquently phrased it:

Enjoyment of the arts and participation in them are among man's natural rights and essential to his full development as a civilized person. One of the reasons governments are instituted among men is to make this right a reality.³

Except in this political never-never land, it would be absurd to labor the point that a mere wish for material betterment does not create a right to its fulfillment; that is, a wish does not, in any moral or ethical sense, establish a claim on someone else's property. Yet, transparent as is such double-think, this is precisely what is accepted by a majority of our countrymen. When the intellectual, quoted above, insists that "enjoyment of the arts and participation in them are among man's natural rights," he is not referring to a right to attend the opera provided the citizen can buy his own ticket; he means that the citizen has a claim on the property of others to build opera houses and to stage performances for his enjoyment.⁴ Labor unions with their right-to-a-job concept and businessmen with their right-to-a-market idea (outlawing competition) are dealing in the same category of false rights. Indeed, this can be said for all of socialism—without exception!

Rights, in the context under examination, are claims. When we say we have a right to life and liberty, we are staking out our claim to them. We find our sanction for this in the self-evident fact that life and liberty are an endowment of the Creator, not of society or the collective or government.

² For a development of this point, see "How Pressure Groups Cause Inflation," *Anything That's Peaceful*, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

³ *The Commonwealth*, August 23, 1963, p. 494.

⁴ See "Can Opera Be Grand If Socialized?," *The Freeman*, September, 1962.

Claims Against Others

But, when people say they have a right to a job or to enjoy the arts or to lower power and light rates or to an education or to a decent standard of living, they are staking out a claim to the fruits of the labor of others. Where rests the sanction for this claim? It simply comes from the notion that a wish is a right.

The absurdity of this wish-is-a-right sanction comes clear if we reduce the problem to manageable proportions: a you-and-me situation. Do I have a just or rational or moral or ethical claim to use your income to build an opera house for me? Or to buy opera tickets for me? Or to construct a golf course for me? Or to provide a “living wage” for me? Do I have a valid claim to use your income to erect my school and staff it with teachers, or finance my church and supply clergymen?

Most people victimized by the magic transmutation of wishes into rights will, in this you-and-me situation, answer the above questions in the negative. What escapes them is that the problem is not altered one whit by adding one person or a hundred or a million of them. And, if it be contended that numbers do matter, then, pray tell, what is the magic number? A majority? Must we not infer from this majoritarian cliché the indefensible proposition that might makes right? Once we accept the fallacy that a wish is a right which, in turn, has to be founded on the error that might makes right, we are led, logically, to the syllogistic conclusion that a wish is might. And what could be less rational than that?

The modern jinni, however, must go on to even greater magic. For it is not adequate merely to dream up wishes for people, to sell them on accepting the wishes, and to solicit the gratification thereof. And more is required than to transmute the wishes into rights. One other bit of abracadabra is a must if the jinni's image is to remain unassailable: the jinni must cast itself and be popularly accepted in the role of helper. To be thought of as a modern Robin Hood or as a robber of Peter to pay Paul would destroy the whole illusion.

In any community in the land may be found people pointing with pride to some “necessity” the local citizens could not or would not finance, explaining that it was made possible “with *the help* of the Federal government.” Or, read at random on any subject falling within the enlarging Federal embrace and you will come upon statements like this:

The cost of such machines is so prohibitive that no one institution or company can undertake to build one. In our country, *it was only with the help of the Federal government* . . . that the cosmotron and its successors were built.⁵ (Italics added)

The modern American jinni, lacking supernatural powers, cannot bring down manna from heaven. Being earthly, its manna is earthly in origin. Having nothing whatsoever of its own, its “gifts” must, perforce, stem from what is taken by coercion from others. It cannot be otherwise.

Who Gains from Looting?

The questions posed are: Do these “gifts” qualify as help? Is this jinni, in fact, a helper? Are the “beneficiaries” really helped? If we can answer these questions in the negative, we come out from under the jinni’s spell.

Help is a social term.⁶ At least two persons—the helper and the helped—are implicit in its meaning. There cannot be one without the other. The extent to which one is helped is measured precisely by the nature and amount of the helper’s contribution. What is received by the one is what comes from the other. *Nothing is altered by the transfer*. If the helper’s help is a loaf of bread, the recipient is helped to the extent of a loaf of bread. If the contribution is a rotten egg, the other gets a rotten egg—nothing more or less! Emerson summarized these facts succinctly and dramatically:

Cause and effect, means and ends, seed and fruit, cannot be severed; for the effect already blooms in the cause, the end pre-exists in the means, the fruit in the seed.

Property taken without consent is correctly branded as ill-gotten. If passed on to another, the other receives ill-gotten property. *Nothing is altered by the transfer*. According to moral law, as well as the law of the land, one who takes property without the owner’s consent commits a crime. When such property is passed on to and accepted by another, the other is adjudged an accomplice to the crime.

⁵ George L. Bush and Anthony Silvidi, *The Atom* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc.), p. 109.

⁶ Self-help is irrelevant in this context.

Property taken without consent cannot be given, for *to give* is conditioned on and presupposes ownership by the giver. I cannot give that which is not mine. Thus, the jinni's largess cannot qualify as gifts but only as loot. Citizens who have been pointing with pride at their rebuilt downtown sections or at the new hospital "financed" by Washington or at their subsidized this-or-that should modify their exclamations: "See what we have done with the loot of the Federal government!"

Loot is not help, one who loots is not a helper, and one who accepts the loot is not really helped.

Power to tamper with the volitional faculties of others is, in fact, a dangerous possession. Nor does it matter whether this power be used to restrain these faculties, as in private or political dictatorship, or exerted to relieve the need for the exercise of these faculties, as in private or political welfarism. However strong the compulsion in most of us to modify or improve the lot of other people, if we would avoid causing more harm than good, we must confine ourselves to those aids that stimulate the renewed exercise of the volitional faculties in others. This suggests a rejection of *all* power to impose, leaving instead a reliance upon in-gathering or drawing power—that magnetic, attracting, emulating force, the power that derives from such self-perfection as one may achieve.⁷

I must not, in picking to pieces the notion that wishes are rights, leave the impression that wishes, of and by themselves, are proper objects of scorn. On the contrary, wishes, hopes, aspirations are among the most important forces motivating human progress, evolution, emergence. At issue here is only the means of their gratification.

We who reject illusory schemes are not denying the good life to others but merely pointing out that these political nostrums can lead only to desolatory dead ends. No good end can be reached by choosing a wrong way.

* * *

As we uncover more and more wrong ways, the right way begins to take form. It is the greatest gratifier of human wishes ever come upon—when allowed to operate. It is as morally sound as the Golden Rule. It is the way of willing exchange, of

⁷ This is not to be construed as an argument against the practice of charity in its best sense: coming to the rescue of those who are at the end of their rope—a subtle, sensitive, secret, highly spiritual experience rarely dwelt upon today, in or out of church circles.

common consent, of self-responsibility, of open opportunity. It respects the right of each to the product of his own labor. It limits the police force to keeping the peace. It is the way of the free market, private property, limited government. On its banner is emblazoned *Individual Liberty*.

But what looms as the right way has, in the minds of many people, emblazoned on its banner only the sign of the dollar (\$) and, thus, is largely rejected because of its supposed materialism. A hard look at this fallacy is in order. . . .

Chapter X

What Shall It Profit a Man?

The advocate of freedom may not command others to share his enthusiasm. But he should do everything in his power to correct the widespread illusion that the willing exchange of the free market is limited to materialistic considerations and neglects the “higher things of life.”

There was no science of economics nineteen hundred years ago—and it would take eighteen of the intervening centuries for someone to discover and describe the marginal utility or subjective theory of value. Yet, we know that at least one individual at that time had a sense of values seldom matched today:

For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?

MARK 8:36

The reference here is to two distinct kinds of value. To “gain the whole world” relates to economic gain or profit (entrepreneurial, monetary, material); to “lose his own soul” has to do with a spiritual or psychic loss.

So, there are in life two categories of satisfactions: material and mental. It is reasonable to want a comfortable house, health-giving food, adequate clothing, an automobile, and what are called the amenities. And most of us today are in no danger of ignoring this part of life. It is our mental and spiritual growth that we tend to neglect as we busy ourselves making a living and keeping up with the Joneses. Preoccupation with economic profit often deflects our attention from what might be termed psychic profit.

To illustrate these two distinct types of gain, let me relate a personal experience. An Emcee, in his introduction, alluded to “the sacrifice our speaker is making on behalf of freedom.” My response:

Mine is no sacrifice. I prefer having a hand in replacing coercive socialism with creative freedom to having a higher-paying job or even a million or a billion dollars.

Incredible as it may seem to some people, not all values are economic. In this particular instance a psychic gain outweighs an economic gain. But suppose my whole experience were devoid of any economic gain, that I am starving. Then, more than likely, the all-out pursuit of economic gain would take precedence. The choices a man makes for his own life are personal; they are based on his scale of values—his attempt to put first things first. Such a value judgment, of course, is subjective; only I—no one else—can determine what is or isn't a gain for me. As explained in Chapter VII, there is no objective standard by which individual value of choices can be mathematically or statistically reckoned.

It should be obvious that human action may be motivated by the urge for either economic or psychic satisfactions, or by both. And even though an acting individual may not always be able to fully explain his psychic motivations to the satisfaction of others, he may nonetheless be more powerfully motivated by them than by the cold logic of economic gain. And the final entry in the calculus of the market registers simply how he acts—not why. The *why* is a matter of his own choice.

When the head of a family buys term or ordinary insurance to provide only for his wife and children in the event of his demise, he experiences only a psychic gain. That action can reward him only psychically, never economically. In this case he exchanges his economic gains for a psychic gain simply because he values the latter more than the former. Were this not true, he would not make the exchange. But, be it noted, this particular psychic gain, as do so many, depends on current or prior economic gains.

Each Gains from Willing Exchange

It has been said that you can't give anything away. This appears to be incontestable, for in every willing exchange each party gains, and it matters not whether the gain is economic or psychic. No clear thinker questions the point in the economic realm: when the lady exchanges 30¢ for a can of beans, she no more “gives away” the 30¢ than the grocer “gives away” the beans. The lady in her own mind gains (a subjective judgment) as does the grocer. In the absence of such a dual judgment no willing exchange would ever be made.

Nor is the element of gain or profit altered when moving into the psychic realm. When the lady voluntarily contributes \$100 to the object of her interest—be it a church, an educational institution, a family in poverty, or whatever—she

experiences a psychic gain, a reward, a satisfaction that outweighs the retention of economic gains: the \$100. Were this not true, she would not willingly or voluntarily make the contribution. She no more “gives away” the \$100 than the 30¢. In each instance she receives in exchange something she values more than the money. Willing exchanges, at the moment they are made, are mutually gratifying and, thus, we err when we think we give something away.

The reason why so many of us, when making a contribution, pat ourselves on the back—overrate our “goodness”—is that we pay no heed to our psychic profit, as if it didn’t exist; we’re blind to it. For instance, when we contribute \$10 to the Boy Scouts, we assess ourselves as all give and no take; their gain is our loss or, so we seem to think. We are, perhaps, too exclusively economically oriented. Assuredly, it was to this point that the Gospel question was directed: “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world?”

But the other side of the profit coin is attended by as much confusion, if not more. While there are many who are only economically oriented, who think only in materialistic terms, there are those who are too exclusively psychically oriented; they seek only psychic gain and with no attention whatsoever to whose economic gain is at stake. Their sense of pity blinds them to economic reality, and, just as certainly, to justice. In a word, there are countless American citizens today who experience psychic gain with someone else’s economic gains. Politicians are forever publicly patting themselves on the back (psychic reward) for the “good” they have done to millions of Pauls, often oblivious to the fact it is done by forcibly extorting the economic means from some Peters. Such one-sided individuals are to be found among all occupational categories—clergymen, teachers, business leaders, labor officials, and many others. This is a tragic error. The good Samaritan, I suspect, would not approve robbing Peter to gratify another’s pity for Paul. He used his own goods to aid the object of his compassion, not the goods of someone else.

But despite current confusions, a moment’s reflection reveals how barren life would be were there only economic gain, that is, were there no aspirations higher than gaining “the whole world.” And suppose the profit motive consisted solely of economic gain, bereft of psychic gain. Of course, this is an impossible concept, as meaningless as one side of a coin without the other. The motivating force, essential to man’s evolvment, springs from a wedding of the two. But we must have an awareness of the ideal partnership if we are not to run amuck!

There are, of course, many opportunities for psychic satisfactions quite apart from the economic, for instance, the kindly concern, a friendly word, the generous sentiment, the thoughtful act. Discussion of this type of psychic gain, about which there is little argument, will be omitted in order better to center attention on the type that is strictly related to the economic, the kind attended by so much confusion.

At the outset, let us not delude ourselves that the contribution of funds for the alleviation of poverty, or the furtherance of education or religion, or whatever, is without the hope of gain. There is no less hope for a gain in such an act than there is when an individual buys equities on the stock market. The hope in one case is for a psychic gain, in the other an economic gain. And we observe many instances where the yen for a profit, psychic as well as economic, becomes avaricious, blinding, irrational, nonsensible.

Giving Presupposes Owning

Confining ourselves to the kind of psychic satisfaction under discussion, it is axiomatic that such gain presupposes and rests upon economic means. Thus, any attempt to experience a psychic gain that in any way frustrates economic production and reward is self-defeating. So-called welfare programs that destroy the economic profit motive must, eventually, eliminate the possibility of psychic gains. Prior to psychic gains there must be an accumulation of economic gains. The saying, "You can't get blood out of a turnip," applies here: contributions are never forthcoming from pockets of poverty; noble intentions must remain no more than forlorn aspirations.

Poverty spreads in India, for instance, not because humane sentiments are lacking or welfare programs neglected, but because the way to economic gain is scarcely known. Economically, India is about as profitless as any place on earth. Psychically, it is just as unrewarding. But let us not be too harsh on India; we make our own mistakes. Our philosophers and intellectuals are no more drawing on the lessons our achievements have to teach than are their contemporaries in India.

To illustrate these confusions, let's take two persons and a welfare problem, designed, shall we say, to cope with a brain malady that fells 1,000 persons annually. The persons, Dr. Doakes and Mr. Roe, are equals in their compassion for the afflicted ones. But here the similarity ends.

Dr. Doakes, a surgeon, has, by reason of experience, research, and skill, become the sole individual who can perform a successful operation. And, further, he has an understanding of how the free market, willing exchange economy functions in the work-a-day world.

The complications of the operation are such that Dr. Doakes can accept but one patient per month. In a word, he can save only 12 lives; 988 must perish. How is this skill of his, an extremely scarce resource, to be allocated? Who of the 1,000 shall he save? Dr. Doakes resorts to the free market method; he sets his price at that figure which will bring supply and demand into balance, let us say, \$25,000!¹

Mr. Roe has only his compassion to go on, or what C. S. Lewis termed “the passion of pity”; he has no surgical skills, no accumulated economic gains, and not the slightest idea of how pricing in a free market allocates scarce resources and automatically forces supply and demand toward equilibrium, alleviating poverty and distress. He accuses Dr. Doakes of being interested in saving only the John D’s in order to have an economic gain for himself. Roe’s passion for a psychic gain—the saving of the 988—is such that he will use almost any means which he, in his utter incompetency, thinks will achieve his ends, even to the imposition of a “medicare” program. This will, of course, put the 1,000 in a queue, a further burden on the single surgeon, one that will render him less able to save lives. We have here the basis of a confrontation, the kind that can get pretty mean.

Dr. Doakes tries to explain to Mr. Roe that his high price will attract hundreds of surgeons who shortly will be able to perform the operation even better and quicker than he, and, as a consequence, the price will fall to the point where eventually it will be within the reach of all. To illustrate the free market thesis, he used one of thousands of examples, the case of the ball point pen. When it first appeared on the market the price was \$13.95, all the traffic would bear, as we say. This attracted all sorts of competition. Today, ball point pens, far superior to the original, are used by countless businesses all over the country as give-aways.

Confrontations of this sort would fade away were there a wider realization (1) that economic gains must precede psychic gain and (2) that economic gains are possible only in willing exchanges, the free market.

¹ Actually, only now and then does a member of the medical profession go all the way in free market pricing; a considerable amount of their work is done without charge or below cost. Were they to resort to free market pricing the “doctor shortage” would disappear.

In summary, the entrepreneur who would profitably employ his talents and property is obliged to give consumers what they want as efficiently as possible. But should he choose to elevate the tastes of consumers by giving them more of what *he* thinks they ought to have, rather than what *they* think, his greater psychic gain likely would be offset by less economic gain. Which of the two types of gain does he value more? That's the only question, assuming no coercion. His choice would seem to be strictly a matter of his own intelligence.

Now to cases: More economic profit has been made on the Holy Bible than on any other book. In our own field, the sales of *Mainspring* by Weaver, *The Law* by Bastiat, and *Economics in One Lesson* by Hazlitt each approach the half-million mark, and they continue to return an economic profit. But suppose that, like many excellent works, these teachings were so contrary to the common or popular point of view that their publication meant economic loss. Would this fact, by itself, warrant relegation of these books to the literary graveyard? Is the only test of appropriate human action economic gain? Were this the sole guide to correct action, then the mere utterance of an unpopular view would be taboo. Were psychic gain not also an appropriate motivation, then how could one teach a Sunday school class, or serve on the Little League Board, or loan books to inquiring students, or finance research work that may help others as much or more than one's self, or do a thousand and one other things that are more of the heart than the pocketbook?

Peacefully and Profitably

From all of the foregoing I derive three conclusions:

First, do whatever you think is right with what is your own, so long as it's peaceful.

Second, the profit motive—which fuels human action in the free market and functions peacefully in no other setting—operates psychically as well as economically. A psychically motivated transaction is as much “of the market” as one entered strictly for economic gains; and any “market” that accommodates but one of these motivations, and not the other, is less than a free market.

Third, while recognizing that “to gain the whole world” is not the object of life, we also may see that charity does in fact begin at home. Helping others presupposes economic self-reliance of our own. Psychic gains—in the context as previously explained—and economic gains both rest upon the use of economic

resources. Human action is both psychically and economically motivated, the ultimate satisfaction from either one being affected by and at least in part dependent on the other.

* * *

The quality of being human is of the spirit as well as of the flesh! For man not to “lose his own soul” in satisfying his economic needs, requires a balanced assessment of economic and noneconomic needs—of others as well as of self. A political economy that stresses one to the exclusion of the other has both idealistic and practical shortcomings. . . .

Chapter XI

Concerning Self and Others

Poles apart are the philosophies of egoism and altruism. A specious case may be made for each, and both points of view have gained followers among those who believe that there is no alternative but to favor one or the other.

Egoism: “Away, then, with every concern that is not my concern. . . . My concern is neither the divine nor the human, or the true, good, just, free . . . but solely what is *mine*. . . . Nothing is more to me than myself!” Here we have the credo of the exclusive “I.”¹

Altruism: This is at the opposite end of the ideological spectrum. There is no “I” in its vocabulary, nor any concern, whatsoever, for self. The right to exist for self is denied; one lives, thinks, acts for humanity, that is, on behalf of others. Here we have the credo of the all-inclusive “they.”²

Borrowing a phrase from the Bard of Avon: “A plague o’ both your houses.” For I wish to argue that egoism is no more or less valid than altruism, that neither one squares with enlightened self-interest.

Concern only for others or no concern for others are alike heedless of the fact that man is both a social and an individualistic being. Man can no more exist wholly social—as a hive of bees—than he can live in isolation. Henri Bergson observed: “Vainly do we try to imagine an individual cut off from all social life.” He insists, quite rightly, that there is a little of society in each individual.

¹ Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own* (New York: The Libertarian Book Club, 1963), p. 5.

² Altruism has had no more influential champion than the French philosopher, Auguste Comte, who coined the word. Professor F. A. Hayek, in his book, *The Counter Revolution of Science* (Free Press of Glencoe, 1952), has this to say about Comte: “. . . he even surpasses Hegel in claiming that only society is real and that the individual is only an abstraction.” p. 198.

Others Influence Our Lives

If we are right in assuming that there is a little of society in each of us, implying that there is a great deal of distinctly individualistic quality in each person, one's concern for others and one's concern for self would, logically, have to be apportioned according to one's dependence on society and to one's dependence on self. Obviously, a complete and accurate division of these two dependencies would be voluminous, if not impossible. Yet, we can, by simple economic illustration, support the claim that each person should, to act intelligently, look to others as well as to self. We can demonstrate that the individual is faced with twin dependencies which means that concern for others, as well as for self, is appropriate. In short, it can be shown that survival depends on others and self, warranting a dual concern.

To illustrate: Creation, insofar as man has any hand in it, begins with tiny ideas and perceptions—intellectual and spiritual energies—flowing through the minds of individual men; *that's their exclusive routing!* Here is a prime dependence that warrants a deep concern for the perfection of self, the individual being the source, the originating point, of all human creation.

However, these creativities, as they emanate from any single mind, are no more than infinitesimal fragments and, by themselves, are meaningless, utterly inadequate to compose any usable wholeness. They're no more than "trillionths," and might be likened to thumbnail-size pieces of a jigsaw puzzle which, in its entirety, would be the U.S.A. Wholeness, as manifested in the artifacts by which we live and advance, is in each instance a social phenomenon, the product of the individual coupled with an enormous "otherness." An individual's creativities are meaningless except as they unite or configure or coalesce with trillions upon trillions of creativities flowing through the minds of other individuals since the advent of human consciousness. For instance, a jet plane or a pencil or whatever is inconceivable without the discovery that harnessed fire and without the countless ideas, perceptions, and discoveries that have taken place since that event. Here, also, is a prime dependence—others!

Creativities flow from single minds; without these we perish, so let's have a deep concern for the single mind—mine!

The extent to which the realities we live by are the products of others can be put in perspective by the owner reflecting on the imperceptible part he has had in the

car he drives, or the bread he eats, or the plane he rides. Without others we perish, so let's have a deep concern for their being at their best.

It becomes clear that having a concern for others is as much in one's self-interest as is concern for self. Indeed, I am coming more and more to believe that a concern for others, be it founded on the real as contrasted with the specious need of others, leads to the development of self.

We shall, however, let concern for self stand as self-evident; the balance of this chapter has only to do with a concern for others.

A Misplaced Concern for Others

As I view the current scene, concern for others is on the rampage but it is a concern for a need that requires more self-than-other fulfillment, that is, the massive concern we witness is a misplaced concern. For, never in the history of mankind have such fabulous sums been dispensed to all and sundry, at home and abroad, and in the name of need. I am referring, primarily, to the dispensations made by government: tens upon tens of billions collected by force or the threat thereof and handed out willy-nilly and, to a great extent, even urged upon persons, communities, "distressed areas," and foreign governments. I insist that this hodgepodge—it isn't a system—is unrelated to an intelligent concern for others. For one thing, a political collective can no more fathom the subtleties of need than can a brainless computer. Such a collective is, by its nature, an impersonal structure and, thus, incapable of being personal. These others to whom we refer are individuals, even as you and I, and a concern for them, to make any sense, has to be intimately personal. It is arrant nonsense to dispose of a concern for the need of others by lumping them into mass: humanity, society, areas, governments, the needy, workers, businessmen, farmers, the aged, and so on. These terms are but recapitulations, the language of the altruists.

While collectivized salvation, as evidenced by governmental extortion and largess, is way out front in its enormity, we note the same trend toward impersonalization on the part of private and voluntary collectives. Merely observe how we tend to dispose of our sense of obligation to others by turning it over to an organization—with some cash, of course. In short, we toss overboard the sensitive, spiritual, rewarding, and upgrading experience of personalization by the executive gesture of writing a check!

Understanding What Is Needed

Why this drift toward impersonalization? Why do we apply division of labor tactics to a concern for others, clearly no more applicable than to a concern for one's relationships with his Creator? Why not be done with the latter by giving some committee a check with instructions to look after the matter? It would be just as sensible as delegating to government or to a private agency the task of looking after one's concern for the need of others. Why this deviation from the personal practice of concern?

Perhaps this malpractice originates with a misunderstanding of what constitutes need. By and large, we have become so materialistically oriented that we think that the only need others have is a dollar need. This is, in fact, among the least of all needs. My guess is that our 90,000 millionaires have about as many needs as do any like number in Appalachia! To misconstrue the need of others must lead to a misplaced concern for others. What, then, is the crying need of our times? This becomes plain if we will take note of the kind of people we are becoming.

If you want to know the "kind of people" a person is, so goes the counsel, take him camping or fishing or, better yet, get him slightly inebriated. Under any of these conditions the true self breaks through the thin, "civilized" veneer. But these things are not necessary for a revealing insight. Simply observe how we act in traffic during any rush hour! No other animal will behave so unconcernedly, not to say viciously, among its own species.³ Here we have real selves showing through. While the veneer of superficial manners hides these egotistical traits in most other relationships, the real selves remain the same, nonetheless.

The Golden Rule

Let's stay with our traffic behavior to highlight what the crying need is in so many present-day relationships. Once we see what the need of others is in this situation, we can adjust our concern to fit the need, and project the practice it dictates into all human relationships and occupations and activities.

Item: I observed a worker, heavily laden with tools, waiting to cross a one-way road. His plight went unheeded by driver after driver, even though accommodation

³ See final chapter.

would not disadvantage following drivers. Then one appeared who slowed to a near stop and waved the worker across the road. Never have I seen a person's face light up more; he fairly glowed with appreciation and, assuredly, his appraisal of the human lot went from pretty low to very high. It is a fair guess that his own thoughtfulness of others was given a renewed vitality.

But, even more important, reflect on what happened to the driver by reason of that exercise of a concern for the need of another. This use and flexing of the faculty to be kind is as necessary to the making of a soul as is self-responsibility. For thoughtfulness can, indeed, be regarded as a faculty, requiring exercise, as does any faculty; exercise strengthens as neglect brings on atrophy. This little incident, the likes of which we observe all too infrequently, improved the lives of two persons which, in turn, bettered the human situation. But observe how personal it was! It is also important to note that the worker and the driver were, still are, and probably always will be unknown to each other, as well as to me, the one who just happened to look up, catching a glimpse of man playing not to an audience of men for applause and glory but acting in response to a matured conscience. This is as high a guide as man can have on the earthly side of his Creator, a harmony with right principle and righteousness.

Impoverishment of the Soul

Our concern for others, if intelligent, must be a response to an accurate assessment of their needs, that is, their impoverishment. Clearly, impoverishment in worldly goods is much less serious than is soul impoverishment: a poverty in extensions of kindness, thoughtfulness, consideration, recognition as a significant human being—little acts over and beyond the call of legality or tradition or customary duty or fairness or even the Golden Rule. I refer to dividends of the heart that come from unknown sources and, thus, with no expectation of reward or gratitude or even a simple “thank you.” Call these what you will, they are noiseless radiations that snuff out or destroy envy, covetousness, greed, hate, lust, dishonesty, and other soul-seering attitudes. With these out of the way, the soul can grow toward its potential richness, becoming distinctly human.

As suggested above, the greater beneficiary of this process is the benefactor. Indeed, he brings to his own thinking and willing the energizing forces of Creation. In a word, self-development, growth, emergence—life's purpose—is aided and

abetted by discerning the true needs of others, having a concern for these needs, and giving evidence of that concern by those noble actions which shy from applause, return favors, or even recognition.

In the absence of this process—every person with his guard up, distrustful, suspicious, and so on—all education, economic or whatever, is utterly futile. Mad people are uneducable. But once under way, this process causes the beneficiaries to become benefactors themselves.

* * *

Anyone seeking or attempting to maintain political power can best prosper at his trade if he affects a concern for others and then convinces the voters that he, given the office, will effectively minister to their needs. If we the people are not to be “taken in” by these affectations, we must know the origins of coercive power and why it is corruptive. . . .

Chapter XII

The Origins of Power

The political authoritarian exerts over our lives a coercive power which distinguishes him as ruler and us as subjects! Of what is it composed? From whence does it come? Why, as so often claimed, does this kind of power corrupt the wielder? The wise shun rather than seek it. Why?

First, let us identify the authoritarian. His archetype plainly emerges from the double-barreled definition of socialism: the state ownership and control of the means of production (the planned economy) and/or the state ownership and control of the results of production (the welfare state).

In the planned economy the authoritarian organizes and controls important sectors of our lives by forcibly imposing restrictions on individual free choice. These restrictions bear such names as wage, price, rent, interest, credit, production, and exchange controls.

In the welfare state phase of the socialistic formula we find three archetypes: the looted, and those who share the spoils, plus the authoritarian who does the taking and the conferring.

Controls are simply forcible interferences with individual decision-making, the negation of free choice. We refer to “governmental price fixing of cotton,” for instance. This terminology evades the real issue. It isn’t the bale of cotton that suffers the interference; it is the grower, the ginner, the trader, the weaver, the consumer. Interference with personal choice!

We can clearly identify the authoritarian as one who coercively interferes with the creative side of people’s lives. Of what, then, is such authoritarian power composed?

Individual liberty itself is a power; it is the power to choose, the power of personal decision. But since no man gains liberty by denying it to another, it follows that individual liberty is a voluntary, noninterfering power.¹

¹ Liberty is a social-relationship term. It comes into use only when there are two or more people—a society. Any action of one which impairs the liberty of another is not the exercise

One Chance in Millions

The authoritarian's power is a substitution of coercive decisions for voluntary decisions. For instance, his power to spend our income is evenly matched by our powerlessness to spend it. When he can set our wage, or fix our hours, or whatever, we are not at liberty to arrive at wages and hours by voluntary procedures. Were we at liberty to offer our own goods and services as we please, the authoritarian would be powerless in these respects. We can deduce from these observations that the authoritarian's power, while not a one-man exercise of voluntary powers, is a one-man exercise of a coercive power made possible by the loss, for whatever reason, of voluntary powers. It is, in fact, a transmutation of varied voluntary powers of the many into a unitary coercive power. In this sense, coercive power feeds at the expense of voluntary decision-making, freedom to choose, or, shall we say, individual liberties.

This proposition can be expressed as a theorem: *the coercive power of the authoritarian increases as individual liberties decrease, and vice versa*. The reason for the precision of this power teeter-totter is the infallibility of the transmutation: whatever power of decision the authoritarian has over the people is precisely matched by the people's voluntary powers that have been ceded or expropriated or, in any event, transmuted.

Whether individual liberties are more ceded than expropriated is anyone's guess. Most persons are no more conscious of liberty than of the air they breathe; thus, liberty is rarely prized and seldom defended, except in instances of sudden constraints. Let the authoritarian suddenly outlaw the eating of bread, and the people will rise in wrath, claiming an affront to their liberty. But if the authoritarian installs programs which will eventually diminish what we eat by an oblique and a gradual approach—inflation, controls, paying farmers not to farm, and workers not to work, et cetera—few voices will be raised; hardly a person will sense any loss of liberty, any more than one senses each day that he is older than the day before!

Our failure to prize and guard what we take for granted doubtless accounts for the easy transmutation of individual liberties into the coercive power of authoritarians. The avidity for coercive power on the one hand and a careless,

of liberty. It is patently absurd to think that liberty can be composed of the negations of liberty.

inattentive husbandry of individual liberties on the other—a passionate desire meeting little resistance—gives this unfortunate transmutation more the appearance of an osmotic action than of voluntary surrender or expropriation. The desire for coercive power can hardly be called expropriation. Nor can our inattentiveness to freedom of choice and individual decision-making be described as a voluntary ceding of these powers. We might as well call it a transmutation of voluntary powers into a coercive power and let it go at that.

Variation Has a Purpose

If we will keep in mind that the authoritarian's coercive power is a transmutation of individual liberties and, in this sense, has its roots in voluntary powers, we will see why it is appropriate to refer to "origins" rather than to "the origin" of coercive power. For individual liberties are infinitely varied! Each of us is unique as to creative potentialities and, thus, each of us uses his liberties in unique ways. No two uses of liberty are identical; your choices and decisions are never precisely the same as mine; there are as many variations of individual choice as there are human beings and, thus, as many origins of coercive power.

This fact of variation gives a clue as to why coercive power corrupts the wielder: he substitutes for that liberty uniquely required for his own growth and development a coercive power which he erroneously fancies is for *our* good. This corrupts him in two ways. First, this inattention to his own evolution must lead, sooner or later, to his devolution; and, second, he makes a fool of himself. By the wildest stretch of the imagination, he cannot in any single instance make a choice for you or me that will mesh with our unique requirements.

Should I Live Your Life?

This latter point reveals yet a third and even greater corruptive influence. Forget the millions the authoritarian attempts to stamp in his own image and, for easier analysis, turn to a you-and-me situation.

Just suppose that I coercively impose upon you carbon copies of choices and decisions unique to my requirements. This would, unquestionably, spell *your* undoing. Now, if we can demonstrate how this would spell *my* undoing, we shall discover how the exercise of coercive power leads to "third degree" corruption.

When I make choices and decisions unique to my own requirements, I get a play-back on any mistakes. This is highly instructive, for when I must bear the effects of my follies I often learn not to repeat them. But when I make choices and decisions to cope with your requirements, each decision likely to be wrong, you are the one who gets the play-back. And, as long as my power remains coercive, you are helpless to correct me regardless of how much instruction you receive from the play-back. It is obvious that I will *go* uninstructed as long as the play-back comes to you and not to me; there is no influence to swerve me from my errant ways; my coercive power shields me from the effects of my follies. What greater corruption than to remain forever wrong! Herbert Spencer put it this way:

The ultimate effect of shielding men from the effects of folly is to fill the world with fools.

The wise do not seek but always shun coercive power. Christ refused political power; George Washington rejected the offer of kingship. Many knowing individuals have done likewise. The wiser the individual, the less will he corrupt himself!

The Prospects Examined

The question arises as to the prospects for liberty on the Coercion-Liberty teeter-totter. Will voluntary powers rise, causing a matched decline in coercive powers, or what?

In the first place, it is unrealistic to expect a marked diminution in the desire for coercive power; indeed, this desire gives every appearance of being on the increase. Robert Ardrey, in what I believe to be an accurate assessment, calls ours “the Age of the Alibi . . . which seeks fault anywhere but in oneself, and damns it as immoral to do otherwise.”² A person who thinks of all others as faulty cannot suspect the same of himself; he is led to believe in his own omniscience; all would be well were his way to rule. The number who aspire to this role, who crave the power it confers, are legion. Those disposed to liberty can derive little, if any, comfort from the coercive side of the action.

² See *The Territorial Imperative* by Robert Ardrey (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 37.

But what of the other end of the teeter-totter—the resistance-to-coercion side of the action? Short of a happy accident or an unimaginable breakthrough in human mentality, it would seem that liberty’s ascendancy is at the mercy of those few who can, by sheer rationality, portray the practicality and idealism of this abstraction—with the same vigor that most of us will defend against all comers our plot of ground or the bread we bake.

We must ever keep in mind that liberty is not like our plot of earth, or a morsel to be consumed. Liberty is as nebulous as respect and as intangible as intuition or thoughtfulness or spirit, and, withal, as indispensable as any quality of the soul, for it ranks as a reality along with life itself, life-growth depending upon it. Liberty can no more be sustained by physical might, which we customarily associate with defense, than can an insight, a thought, a silent prayer. Liberty’s sole defender is the highly advanced mentality, this state being within the potential reach of an adequate number. The answer to the question, will *they* arise to it? will probably be found in the answer each of us gives to the question, will *I* try to arise to it?

Men may, in their thoughtlessness, believe they can do without liberty; they simply are unaware that liberty is *indestructible*; and that the only question is, how *much* of it will each recognize, appreciate and, as a consequence, possess?

It seems reasonable that liberty’s chances are enhanced as more of us recognize that the corruptive, coercive power which plagues society is first a take-over and then an invasion of individual liberties—yours and mine; that this evil we loathe has its origin in the ramshackle shape of our own intellectual and spiritual ramparts. With this recognition, it becomes plain that the required defense—resistance to the take-over—rests not only on prizing our liberties but on understanding and clearly explaining why, by all that’s good and just, we should embrace them with the same fervor we do our lives.

* * *

When an individual settles on a way of life that appeals to him—be it shallow or profound—he becomes interested in its adoption by others. Deep-seated convictions usually are accompanied by an urge to “do something.” More often than not, the first impulse is to engage more actively in politics and “elect the right people to public office.” . . .

Chapter XIII

The Political Way

Action at the political level is not to be disparaged, much less condemned, at least by those of us who believe in a formal agency of society as a means of keeping the peace. Keeping the peace involves a legal codification and enforcement of the taboos, the thou-shalt-nots. Inhibiting and penalizing such destructive actions as fraud, violence, predation, and misrepresentation is one way we have of invoking a common justice. In theory, if not in practice, we rid ourselves of destructive activities that our creative activities may find full expression.

Intelligent statecraft—the fine art of politics—is prerequisite to maximizing creative activities. Good citizenship in an open society requires at the very minimum an understanding of government, its limitations and potentials. Its limitations, and its potentialities, are prescribed by its nature: organized police force. Clearly, such organized force is in no sense creative but only prohibitive. A good citizen must understand what should be prohibited to insure to all citizens equally an open field and fair play, that is, to maintain a situation in which there is no special privilege for anyone.

Those who believe that a human being has a right to his life must, if they be logical, also acknowledge the corollary right to sustain life, the sustenance of life being the fruits of one's own honest labor. This is the concept of private property. The fine art of politics is knowing how best to preserve private property against marauders, innocent and malicious, foreign and domestic.

Having acknowledged the importance of intelligent political action, I suggest that it is more the intelligence than the political action, per se, that matters. In other words, I do not share the popular notion that political action leads to an intelligent societal situation; it probably is the other way around. By thus inverting cause and effect, millions of Americans insist that political action is fast, sure-fire, and practical, and argue that self-improvement is a slow, tedious, passive, impractical alternative. "We want action," they cry, as they throw themselves into the political arena *to the exclusion of personal upgrading*.

Political Paths to Nowhere

This confusion in the ranks of those who oppose socialism and favor freedom has dire consequences. For when they succeed in electing one of their number to political office, they happily bask in their accomplishment and exclaim, in effect, “Well, now that job is done; bring on the next problem.” The chances are that nothing whatsoever has been accomplished; indeed, the societal situation may very well be worsened by what has happened.

If running true to modern form, the successful candidate doubtless avoided any mention of ridding society of such socialistic measures as medicare, Federal urban renewal, payments to farmers for not growing peanuts, the post office, and so on. His tactical credo is to let sleeping dogs lie and, above all, keep away from anything controversial; keep the eye on one thing only: how to get elected! And in these circumstances, the new officeholder, regardless of how sound his personal views may be, is absolutely helpless. The thinking on which all societal change is predicated hasn’t been altered one whit; nothing has changed but the name of the officeholder. Better that socialism continue to parade under socialism’s banner than under the aegis of our own political priests. But more damaging still is the disappointment of those who have given their all to the empty victory. Once they realize their failure, they give up the ghost and join the growing ranks of the pessimists and do-nothings. All because they haven’t been able to discern what is really practical. Those who put the emphasis on political action are impractical to the core, assuming that results are the measure of practicality.

Following the Crowd

There is one simple fact to keep in mind: that which shows forth on the political horizon is nothing more than a reflection or echoing of whatever the preponderant leadership thinking happens to be at any particular time. If the winning politicians are advocating and standing for socialistic programs, count on it, the preponderant leadership thinking is socialistic. And when the time comes that those in high office are standing against all invasions of private property—standing for the open society, and willing exchange—one can be certain that the preponderant leadership thinking is libertarian.

What's topside politically can be likened to a thermometer. The former registers the preponderant leadership thinking; the latter registers the temperature. If you don't like what the thermometer registers, you increase or decrease the temperature; you don't monkey with the mercury. And if you don't like the politicians and what they stand for, you alter the thinking; you don't toy with the personalities, that is, not if you wish to be practical.

It isn't difficult to see why politicians merely register the preponderant leadership thinking. With rare exceptions, those who offer themselves as candidates for public office have getting elected as their objective. I see no reason why they should aim to be defeated. Now, regardless of their personal views, what can they stand for and get elected? They cannot go beyond what the preponderant leadership thinking will support.

To illustrate: I honestly believe that TVA and mail delivery, for instance, should be turned over to private ownership and operation, that labor unions should be divested of the right to use coercion in any form, that medicare, compulsory social security, and a host of other socialistic programs should be abolished forthwith. Were I, at this time, to run for office on a frank and candid representation of these convictions—and I wouldn't run otherwise—my defeat would be assured. But suppose the preponderant leadership thinking were to do a turnabout and to parallel my thinking; then my election would become possible, if not probable. Clearly, the thinking is what counts.

The above explains why we should not give much weight as to how candidates present themselves to us privately. To know what we are going to get from them, once in office, we need only observe the public image they portray prior to election day. And if, to get in office, they will represent themselves to voters as something other than what they are, we can be certain that they will even more corrupt themselves to stay in office. Officeholders are rarely able to conduct themselves in a manner superior to the public representations that put them in their seats. Yes, they can and often do become inferior, but the thinking they championed while campaigning chains them down to it.

Bring Better Ideas into Play

A good society depends on good individuals, rather than bad ones. That seems self-evident, and equally evident is that individuals act in response to what they

believe—the ideas they hold. Thus, it would seem to follow that the state of society is but a reflection of the underlying ideas. If we do not like the current socialistic turn of American society, the only *practical* first step toward correction is to bring better ideas into play. This ought to be our top-priority project.

There would be no point in highlighting the above truisms were it not for this fact: Most of us who complain about the trend in the U.S.A. toward all-out statism insist, quite *impractically*, on looking for improvement through political action. For example, such activities as “organizing right down to the precinct level,” getting out the vote, and other forms of political contention and competition are at the action level. This action, we must bear in mind, is but the reflection of underlying ideas; and a reflection is utterly incapable of improving itself. To expect real and lasting improvement to *originate* with political action is like hoping for a lie from one’s mirror. It is obvious that actions—which are, after all, reflections—cannot be bettered except by improvements which precede the actions.

I act in response to what I am. The I-am is the idea side of me; the response part is the action side of me. Thus, each of us is at once an ideologist and an actionist. If we give no attention to improving the I-am part, we are likely to be low-grade ideologists indulging in low-grade actions.

It is extremely difficult for any of us to become aware of, let alone acknowledge, our own shortcomings. We quite easily, often unknowingly, slump into an egocentric rut: We ourselves have rectitude and knowledge aplenty; the faults lie in the world around us! Getting out of these ruts requires changing ourselves; it demands the flexing of imaginative and intellectual faculties which, if long unused, are stiff and hardened. Achieving cerebral activity, once “calcification” has set in, is painful and dreaded exercise, at least at the outset. Having completed their “education,” few have any stomach for the self-improvement venture; not many have what it takes to get off the dead center they are on. This is why countless persons look for solutions to social problems at the hopelessly futile political action level, and why they repeatedly offer the excuse of “not time enough” to labor at the meaningful, practical, ideological level!

When an individual arrives at the point where he realizes that “the proper study of mankind is man,” and that the best man to work on is himself, then he has staked out the area, if nothing more, in which he can fruitfully labor. Man as thinker will take precedence over himself as actionist—which is to say, he will get the horse where it belongs, ahead of the cart!

Improvement of ideas requires a growth in one's spirit of inquiry. The tools are study, contemplation, humility in the sense of freedom from know-it-allness, reaching out for that which is not yet understood, the kind of reading that's "above my head," a mind freed from dead center and unafraid to peer into the unknown and, above all, an indomitable, conscious, prayerful effort to emerge intellectually and spiritually. Ideological improvement is hitched to the eternal search for truth and is on a plane much higher than action and distinctly separate from it. One is substance, the other, shadow.

When we can get it into our own heads that we can play no part in bettering society except as we begin the process of self-improvement, thus attracting others to draw on what we have in store, we'll be off dead center—and not before.

* * *

Logically, we should next reflect on the most natural way to spread ideas on liberty.

. . .

Chapter XIV

The Natural Way

The text for a radical idea that deserves deep reflection was written by the late Albert Schweitzer:

A new public opinion must be created privately and unobtrusively. The existing one is maintained by the press, by propaganda, by organization, and by financial and other influences which are at its disposal. The unnatural way of spreading ideas must be opposed by the natural one, which goes from man to man and relies solely on the truth of the thoughts and the hearer's receptiveness for new truth. . . .¹

Dr. Schweitzer affronts the foibles of the day; for our contemporaries spend millions on propaganda, promotion, publicity, and advertising—"unnatural" means for creating sound public opinion, according to Schweitzer. In order to investigate the means he considers "natural," we must contrive a word picture of our predicament. In the broadest generality, it looks like this to me: There is arrayed on the "unnatural" side untold millions of persons. The world has never known an army with as many officers and footmen. The "natural" side, however, can barely muster a corporal's guard.

But these two sides are not geographically squared off against each other with a few persons here and many there. So intermingled are they that, except as we may hear their talk or see their writing, we cannot tell one side from the other. There is nothing in physical mien or uniform or insignia or political label to distinguish them. They ride on the same trains, fly on the same planes, work in the same offices, live in the same homes, listen to the same preacher, play on the same teams, defend the same flag, vote for the same office seekers. Indeed, the very same person will be on one side now and on the other a moment later. How, then, are we ever to discern which is which from such a melange as this?

¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization* (New York: The Macmillan Company, Vol. 1–2, 1923).

The two sides are to be distinguished by tiny, invisible entities that take root in the minds of men: ideas and beliefs. These determine how men act, make them what they are, fix the side they are on. Some of these invisibles are deeply and stubbornly embedded; others come and go willy-nilly but, actually, their absence or presence is decided by the mind's affinity for or antagonism to them. Being extremely sensitive to the mind's hospitality, no idea or belief ever takes root unless the welcome sign is out.

The method an individual uses to spread ideas is determined by his attitude toward ideas and people. Unnatural methods of dissemination proceed from unnatural ideas; natural methods grow out of natural ideas. In short, persons will try to spread ideas—good or bad—in ways that are consistent with the good or bad ideas they hold. The tumbleweed has no choice as to how it spreads its kind; neither has an oak tree; neither has an idea. Each has to obey its nature. Man, however, is free to choose the ideas he will accept or reject.

The above, of course, demands an immediate distinction between natural and unnatural ideas. How is the one side to be known from the other? The answer seems obvious: natural ideas are those that are consonant with Nature or Truth; unnatural ideas are antagonistic to what is real and true.

Truth Comes from Seeking

But, the skeptic will inquire, who has the effrontery to claim such wisdom? A sound question indeed, for no one can be said to behold Truth in its pristine purity. This, however, no more means that Truth should be discarded as an intellectual lodestar than that any out-of-reach ideal should be dismissed as a guide to reason. Let us put it this way: whatever one's highest conscience dictates as right may not in fact be Truth, but it is as near an approximation to Truth as one can achieve. This is the human being's Truth—the best he has to work with. To reject the individual's Truth as a means to thinking, simply because it may not be the whole Truth, is to allow no credence to conscience—the soul adrift.

Thus, the best I can do in defining natural and unnatural ideas is accurately to report what I perceive them to be. I discover, however, that natural ideas are infinite in number and variation and, therefore, beyond my powers of definition. Natural ideas, it turns out, can be known to me only as that infinity of ideas which do not fall within the unnatural category. What, then, is the unnatural?

It is contrary to the Cosmic Scheme—to Nature, to Truth—for any human being to be cast in the image of any other human being. Any person who believes it is his role to make over others into a likeness of himself is harboring what appears to be the basic unnatural idea. For this idea is the genesis of and is fundamental to countless day-to-day practices that show forth in political and private actions—man lording it over man not only temperamentally but, more often than not, forcibly. I shall not comment on the ways this idea extends itself, the above being sufficient to clarify Dr. Schweitzer's thesis.

It is often inferred that man plays God when he tries to cast others in his own image. What we must realize is that not even God “plays God.” As Hans Denk (1495–1527) phrased it, “God forces no one, for love cannot compel, therefore is a thing of perfect freedom.” But man is so radically free that he can deny and contradict his Creator. He is free to behave *unnaturally*. This is precisely what he does when he aims at controlling the creative activities of others or when he attempts to make the ideas and beliefs of others carbon copies of his own ideas and beliefs.

Love cannot compel! The observation is relevant to this discussion and comes clear if, instead of regarding love and affection as synonymous, we think of love as enlightenment. This is the inference I draw from the companion beliefs, God is love and God is light. For me, this reasoning at least reduces metaphysical language to earthly comprehension, to communicable terms, to dimensions from which a conclusion is crystal clear: enlightenment is obviously an attracting, never a repelling or a coercive, force. A natural idea, therefore, cannot be coercive, repelling, compelling. Only an unnatural idea can so qualify!

Now the rub, the rude awakening to all who apprehend and heed Schweitzer's counsel. We come face to face with the shocking fact that every time we employ unnatural ways as a means of downing authoritarian ideas we add fuel to the authoritarian fire we would extinguish! For this unnatural way of spreading ideas originates with and proceeds from the very same unnatural idea that gives rise to the authoritarianism we decry. For instance, when we argue with and try to convert the socialists—try to cast them in our image—we can be likened to the pot that calls the kettle black. When we lament that “we are only talking to ourselves,” we are in an authoritarian frame of mind: assuming enlightenment on our part and ignorance on the part of others. The inference is that we'd better set straight these poor, benighted souls. When we fret about an inability to insinuate our ideas into

the consciousness of others, that fret stems from the unnatural idea which bedevils the world.

The above explains, to my satisfaction at least, why authoritarianism has been gaining by leaps and bounds even though millions of man-hours and millions of dollars have been spent to combat it. The anti-authoritarians have, unwittingly, been employing authoritarian methods and, thus, siding with the authoritarians. Of course, no one employs only the unnatural way of spreading ideas any more than anyone resorts exclusively to the natural way. No one is ever wholly consistent. This is why the same individual is now on this side, now on that. But, assuredly, the unnatural idea and its corollary, the unnatural way of spreading ideas, is the vogue of our time.

Wait to Be Called

The natural way, counsels Schweitzer, is private and unobtrusive, goes from man to man, and relies solely on (1) the truth of the thoughts and (2) *on the hearer's receptiveness to new truth*.

The unnatural way, as we see it all around us, is mass and not private; it is obtrusive to the core—in effect: “Believe as I do, Stupid!” The seeking of Truth—learning—is rejected in favor of displaying an arrested growth, that is, peddling what one *has* learned. The hearer’s receptiveness is not simply ignored; it is defied!

The two ways are as different as the brainwashing of a propagandist and the introspection of a Shakespeare or Goethe; the difference between demanding and offering; between “ramming it down their necks” and making available; in short, the difference between repulsion and attraction.

The natural way should be more readily accepted and practiced than the other: it calls only for the improvement of one’s own understanding and clarity of exposition—a possibility within the reach of many. The other calls for making over others—an utter impossibility.

But the natural way is unpopular because it fails to satisfy our common itch “to do something.” Fie on improving me, run our notions; why, I’m only one person—too minor a project and, besides, what’s the need of it? Give me, instead, mankind to repair; that’s the kind of an intellectual giant I am. All of which reminds

us of Napoleon whose own family drove him to distraction, though this in no way shook his confidence that he could manage humanity.

The natural way of spreading ideas calls for more than ridding ourselves of name calling, propagandizing, telling others what to think and how to act, and other obtrusive activity. It suggests that the soul be cleansed of any such notion, for it is clear that we can no more improve another person than we can alter the heavens above. That other person, even as you and I, controls his own improvement which, of course, is encouraged and made less difficult if our own standards are such as to induce emulation. This power of attraction is the sole power we possess for the betterment of others. *We should be eternally grateful that this is a fact of life; were it not, all the insanities and inanities of earth could be insinuated into our own minds!*

Turn the eye inward, counsels Dr. Schweitzer. Quit trying to make carbon copies of others; give them, rather, something to copy. Seek Truth above all else. Then, instead of obtrusively, destructively, unnaturally shoving, each may concentrate his efforts on pulling—attractively, fruitfully, *naturally!*

* * *

Let us try, now, for some further refinement in our search for Truth. . . .

Chapter XV

Intelligent Curiosity

The desire for a better environment will always be an aspiration of persons who are maturing as human beings. Maturing persons are those growing in awareness, perception, consciousness. In a word, they are in a life-long search for Truth; they are, as we say, “possessed” of what Aristotle termed *intelligent curiosity*. This exclusively individual trait, if sufficiently cultivated, is, in my view, the only kind of cultural environment from which an improved society can ever flower.

One of the best descriptions of intelligent curiosity I have seen or heard or read is a painting, the “School of Athens,” done by Raphael before 1509 a.d. It is in the Vatican. But in better condition today than the original is a remarkable replica painted by Waller.¹ Depicting about sixty characters—Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, Ptolemy, Euclid, to name a few—the artist has captured that passionate spirit of inquiry which distinguished these people. When seen, studied, and apprehended, the impression remains to haunt and elevate the mind of the beholder.

It is my belief that this intelligent curiosity, on a scale found in the historic record only now and then, makes credible Edith Hamilton’s observation:

This full stature of greatness came to pass at a time when the mighty civilizations of the ancient world had perished and the shadow of “effortless barbarism” was dark upon the earth. In that black and fierce world a little centre of white-hot spiritual energy was at work. A new civilization had arisen in Athens, unlike all that had gone before.²

People are forever groping, as if in the dark, for some panacea that will insure a good society. Yet Raphael, looking backward 2,000 years, put his finger on an

¹ Waller’s masterpiece is in the Panhellenic Room of the Levere Memorial Temple, on the Northwestern University Campus, Evanston, Illinois. This Temple (Sigma Alpha Epsilon) is open to the public.

² Edith Hamilton, *The Greek Way to Western Civilization* (New York: New American Library. A Mentor Book), p. 7.

important key: intelligent curiosity! He perceived what so many of us miss, perhaps because he himself was an important figure of the Italian Renaissance, another “little centre of white-hot spiritual energy.” Conceivably, it takes an oversoul to recognize his kind, a Raphael to know a Socrates, an individual steeped in intelligent curiosity to discover that single and elusive path to a good society: intelligent curiosity.

“Ask and Ye Shall Receive”

A society of remarkable quality—for all its defects—got under way in this land of ours. The explanation? The phenomenon of our politico-economic ascendancy, the cause of which has had our best minds guessing for the past century—such achievements as dignity of the individual; man’s right to life, liberty, and to the fruits of his own labor; the freest market the world has ever known; a government substantially limited to securing these rights, invoking a common justice, and keeping the peace; an unprecedented burst of creative energy—these blessings suddenly tumble together, make sense, become intelligible in terms of this one spiritual assumption, the pursuit of truth—that is, intelligent curiosity!

For a confirmation of this point, merely reflect on your own reading of early American lives. Madison, Jay, and Hamilton were but three of the well-knowns among hundreds upon hundreds who, above all else, were passionately in search of what is right. If they weren’t literally heeding the Biblical injunction, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness,” they were at least paraphrasing it: “Seek ye first Truth, and rightly report and stand for what is perceived.” What about the promise “and these things shall be added unto you”? Never more than in America has mankind had such an affirmation of the rightness of this spiritual assumption.

Variation Leads to Progress

Is there anything mysterious about the assumption that the pursuit of truth is the genesis of a good society? Yes, of course. If the pencil your child uses had the intelligence to write its own story, it would repeat, “Only God can make a tree.” It would then add, “Since only God can make a tree, I insist that only God can make me.” Then, could the pencil carry these assertions to their logical conclusion, it would pronounce, “Only God can make a good society.”

If one can accept the mysteries of life as the facts given, then a good society as the flower of intelligent curiosity falls within human comprehension: the little wisdoms, the tiny enlightenments that result from the individualistic pursuit of truth spontaneously and mysteriously configure as do molecules to form protoplasm, or a tree, or whatever. They coalesce as do infinitesimal human creativities to make a pencil, or a jet plane, or any other product—provided they are free to flow!

Through Trial and Error

Do you mean, some will ask, that you would risk such a precious possession as human freedom, without which a good society is impossible, to men pursuing truth in their own random ways? Why, some men might mistakenly conclude that state socialism is consonant with truth. My own answer is that I shall trust freedom and expect a good society from no other arrangement or form of human activity. We should ever bear in mind two facts: (1) Individual freedom comes into consciousness as a prime human value only in the presence of light; the “dark ages” aptly characterizes its absence. And (2) light or enlightenment is generated only when the spirit of inquiry is turned on. Anyone who expects the emergence of the blessings of freedom without exposures to intense inquiry and light has, to say the least, misread history.

Intelligent curiosity must not be misconstrued. It is never to be associated with the kind of idle curiosity that kills cats and, most particularly, not with the kind financed by funds forcibly taken from others. This latter accounts for sputniks, moon shots, mis-education—freedom gives way to authoritarianism, light dims into darkness, the environment changes for the worse.

Intelligent curiosity is as individualistic as thought. It is as sensitive as intuition and requires meticulous husbandry; any prolonged inattention and it is gone forever, never to be recovered by the individual. Like any faculty, it atrophies if unused. Its hallmark is the incessantly probing mind, examining into what's right and just. Its companion is integrity, for intelligent curiosity cannot and does not live with inaccurate reporting of what one's conscience dictates as right. Freedom and a good society appear to be the fruits of intelligent curiosity and one wonders if they can ever be had without it.

* * *

Good methodology! How important it is! Indeed, I am convinced that if all of us were employing the right methods we would do away with most of our ideological controversy. For were everyone concentrating on self-improvement, there would be no meddlers among us. And without meddlers there could be no socialism. So let us try to clinch the argument for personal upgrading. . . .

Chapter XVI

Darkness Recedes as Light Increases

As we here approach the conclusion of the case for self-improvement. I am reminded of the last half hour of a FEE Seminar; I imagine my readers to be in about the same state of doubt or skepticism as the sixty intelligent, searching, seminar participants. Few if any questions remain about the free market, private property, limited government philosophy; in fact, there is much enthusiasm for this way of life—it is the practice of freedom as well as the Golden Rule in its day-to-day economic manifestations. And that’s good enough for these inquiring spirits.

However, as you conclude the 20-hour session with some thoughts on methodology, you detect an uneasiness. In spite of your best efforts, the old, old question still persists: “But, what do we do now?” Your unfamiliar thesis that advancing this way of life is not a selling or a marketing but, rather, a *learning problem*, is greeted with something less than all-out approval; you sense in each hesitant, half-hearted assent a skepticism that won’t down. “Do you really mean to imply, dear teacher, that my part in repairing the world’s woes is limited to improving my own understanding and expositions? That there is nothing more important for me to do than to upgrade me? No friends, no associates, or neighbors to set straight?”

In any event, your ministrations and the quizzical reactions leave the uncomfortable feeling that you are near the end of your explanatory rope. As you ponder what to do—in the dark, so to speak—it occurs to you that the use of symbolism may help to clarify your theory as to right method. Turn off the lights, reducing the lecture room to darkness. Then light a candle. Call attention to the obvious fact that every eye is on that tiny glow in the darkness. *Now, challenge anyone to increase the total light by peddling or selling or marketing or distributing it.* There’ll be no takers! With your point thus defined, suggest that the single light may help some other to locate and light a candle of his own. If only one other succeeds, the light in the room will be increased 100 per cent; if all find and light their own candles, each can then read a book, perhaps even write one! Now, repeat an inscription found on an old tombstone in Scotland: “There is not enough darkness in the whole world to put out the light of one wee candle.”

Assuming the use of a 60-watt incandescent candle, fitted with an electronic dimmer, increase the light from a barely perceptible level to its full brilliance, calling attention to the fact that darkness cannot be pushed or beaten back but recedes easily and naturally as the candle power increases. Of one thing you can be certain: each participant, for the rest of his conscious days, will remember the wee light becoming a brilliant light in that darkened room. And, should some of them have initial doubts about candle-power light being analogous to enlightenment, this dramatization will start them reflecting on the matter; and the more reflection, the more similarly structured will light and enlightenment seem.

The thoughtful person will discover that both are radiations which exert an energizing force, as does a magnet. Eyes that can see and minds that can perceive are energized by light whether it be of the candle-power variety or of the wisdom kind. The reason for this seems obvious: *It is light that brings forth the eye.* Living forms in the ocean's depth, or subterranean animals—those committed to utter darkness—have no eyes. Powers of perception increase in the presence of light! When development of these faculties depends on light, it is in the nature of the evolutive process that the eye is attracted to that which creates it.

I may be able to see a beacon light but it cannot see me. You may perceive the wisdom of a Shakespeare, but that wisdom is unaware of and indifferent to you. The radiating force of a magnet is unseeing. And so is the radiating force of any light you or I may possess. Our lights can no more find their way into the consciousness of another than a candle's light can be found in two places at the same time. *Light cannot see; it can only be seen!* Thus, another may light his own candle by the light of yours, but that is all! Isn't it clear that unless your candle is aglow, no others can be lit from it?

Let's assume, now, that your light does in fact shine forth. Are you fretful as to who will see it? One does well to forget this tantalizing and diverting thought. For, if a person begins to focus on and find out the effect he is having, you can count on it, his answers will be wrong. Furthermore, to the extent that he becomes merely results-minded, he will send scurrying the real seekers of truth; they'll note that his eye isn't cast aright and will cross him off as "not worth the candle." The ones who count will only mutter to themselves something about "a phoney" and go on their quiet quest of those rare souls who are trying only to brighten their own lights. And how well advised they are!¹

The rare souls, be it noted, those who concentrate on increasing their own candle power, and look not for praise among men, experience an inner satisfaction and let it go at that. Having acquired this power of creativity is gratification enough. Indeed, is there any greater richness than this?

Enlightenment or Regression

The idea of employing the term *light* to mean *enlightenment* and darkness to symbolize ignorance is not new; such usage may well go back to the dawn of human consciousness. Light, in this sense, is used time and again in the Bible:

Thou wilt *light* my candle: the Lord my God will *enlighten* my *darkness*.

The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting *light*.

In thy *light* shall we see *light*.

I am the *light* of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in *darkness*.

God is *light*, and in him is no *darkness* at all.

I am come a *light* into the world.

Governor Bradford of Plymouth Colony expressed himself in similar vein:

As one small candle may *light* a thought, so the *light* here kindled hath shone unto many. . . .²

We must now inquire as to why this increasing-of-candle-power theory is so hard to come by, so seldom grasped. I believe the difficulty stems from a confusion of categories. Most people are thinking in terms of securing conformity, when the real goal is to achieve creativity.

Communists can and do teach the party line; millions can be taught to read and write words, or to repeat the multiplication table, or to sing songs, fix motors,

¹ This thought is portrayed with great clarity in "Isaiah's Job" by Albert Jay Nock. (Irvington, N. Y.: The Foundation for Economic Education, Inc., 1962). Complimentary copy on request.

² William Bradford; Samuel E. Morrison, Ed. *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620–1647*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), p. 236.

stew prunes. Monkeys can be taught tricks. Duplicated things like autos, cornflakes, facial veneers, or whatever, can be sold. This sort of thing bulks large in the category of our experience, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the theory at issue. Even more: Whatever is in the category of things that can *only* be sold or taught won't advance the practice of freedom one whit! Creativity is not in the same realm as imitation, repetition, conformity, selling.

Skilled musicians can play a Brahms' *Concerto*, but who has the light to compose such a work? Many can act the parts in *Macbeth*, but where are the Shakespeares? A third grader knows the answer to 12 times 12, but where are the geniuses among us who could have conceived of zero? A child can be taught to recite "All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights," or eloquently to repeat the Preamble to the Constitution, but who among our contemporaries has the candle power to do this level of creative thinking?

A Continuing Requirement

Freedom is declining, despite the fact that previously conceived principles and practices can be and are being taught. The point is that freedom can never be sustained by imitation or repetition or preservation of the status quo, or by the recovery of a past accomplishment. Light is Creation's first and most important means, and its corollary is the freedom to be enlightened, progress being measured by the growth in candle power of the individual—continuous enlightenment. Individuals and thus the species decline whenever light fails to pierce the darkness. *Freedom dies on the vine whenever darkness is not giving way to light.* Think of freedom not as a static condition but as a flowering process, the life-giving source of which is not mere light but a perpetually increasing enlightenment. It is difficult to conceive of any ideal value which, to confer its blessings, demands so much of its beneficiaries.

Now then, does this mean that we do not qualify as effective workers in the vineyard unless we attain the creative stature—the candle power—of a Milton, Bacon, Da Vinci, Beethoven, Goethe, Adam Smith, Bastiat, Menger? Perish the thought! I firmly believe that were every citizen to attain the level of these few, but with their creativity at a standstill, freedom would decline as it is presently declining. It is not the level that matters; what counts is a constantly rising level—the light getting brighter! The meaning of this for the individual who would

help? Primarily that he light his own candle and do his best—go in pursuit of excellence in all things.

This self-improvement method is no Trappist Monk theory. Indeed, it requires of the individual that he not “hide his light under a bushel.” It is a well-known fact that the more one shares his ideas with others (as distinguished from shoving his ideas at others) the more and better are his own ideas, that is, the greater becomes his own candle power. Using your light to help those attracted by it to find and light their own candles is the effective way to advance freedom and, thus, to serve the interest of others as well as self.

Candle-lighting in this area consists of an increasing perception of authoritarian fallacies and of freedom truths. It means, also, a strengthening of the will to stand, four square, for what one in his innermost soul believes to be right. Do these things—they *are* the candle power!

* * *

The realist, the one who sees clearly the extent to which our liberties are suffering political erosion, will, unless he takes command of his attitudes and emotions, become despondent and ineffective. Is there a way rationally to overcome such a plight? . . .

Chapter XVII

A Formula for Happiness

A West Coast physician had spent a day at FEE. On returning home, he wrote, "Probably no one is more conscious of what's happening to our country than you folks. Yet I found all of you calm and in good spirits. I, on the other hand, get literally ill whenever I read the newspapers. How come?"

The Greeks observed sagely that "those whom God wishes to destroy, he first deprives of their senses." It is impossible to be in full possession of one's faculties when angry, distraught, depressed, unhappy, hopelessly pessimistic. No man, in such a state, can work effectively for sound principles; it is appropriate, therefore, to reflect on how not to get this way. Or, better yet, how to mature into a rationally structured optimist.

I suspect the desired improvement rests partly with orientation, that is, how a person permits himself to look at things. For instance, the pessimist dejectedly remarks, "The cup is half empty," while the optimist elatedly observes, "The cup is half full"!

The pessimist views the current vandalism, racial strife, political chicanery, moral looseness, disrespect for the rights of others as he would cigarette burns on a tablecloth—irreparable blemishes; the optimist thinks of these depredations as only stains that fade in the presence of light. The pessimist and the optimist may agree that a blight exists, but they differ in their reactions to it: the former concedes defeat; the latter sees a challenge.

The pessimist insists that "time is running out; it is too late!" The optimist thinks of each new moment as a blessing and an opportunity of which he should take an ever greater advantage; now is the time.

What accounts for the rash of current pessimism? A possible explanation: Persons who blame their country's ills on the masses, the man in the street, the teachers, preachers, politicians, communists—in short, on the ignorance and misinformation of others—blind themselves to any remedy beyond setting straight these deficient souls; in a word, reforming others. Unaware of any alternate remedy, these reformers initiate personal and institutional mass-education programs, one

after another. But their intended correctives have no more effect on the masses than yapping dogs have on a passing parade—there being no mass mind. Eventually, the recurring failures leave our reforming friends in the doldrums, angry, distraught, discouraged, distressed—bereft of their highest senses—hopelessly pessimistic, and useless insofar as enlightenment is concerned. And all because of an incorrect orientation of self—tilted toward repairing the human situation!

How, then, can one become a rationally structured optimist? The formula may go something like this: I have not been given mankind to manage; I am not the Cosmic Author. What then? Let's see what I can do about becoming my own man, flexing and strengthening those faculties uniquely mine. Consciously, even prayerfully, strive to stretch and expand awareness, perception, consciousness—explore how much I can see, determine how nearly I can bring myself into a harmony with Creation. Can there be any higher reason for existence than this?

If one orients himself in this manner, he must inevitably experience growth. Success, in some measure, is certain to attend such efforts. And will he not learn that the more he pursues this course, the more he will grow? Knowing this, how can he be other than optimistic? Is not his eye then centered on what he most desires and on what is demonstrably attainable? And all because of a correct orientation: the improvement of self! Growth! "Every living creature is happy when he fulfills his destiny, that is, *when he realizes himself*, when he is being that which in truth he is."¹

The Essence of Growth

Optimism and happiness are of a piece, and they are the by-products of growth. Let us, then, reflect on growth, for, in this context, it is the key reality.

Growth is implicit in the evolutive process, and how it might and should project itself in one's life span can be deduced from simple observations. The first observable event in the earthly life of a human being is the union of microscopic seeds. During gestation, with Creation or Nature in charge, growth—size, weight, cells—undergoes a multiplication measured in billions. Following birth, this

¹ José Ortega y Gasset, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1961), p. 16.

physical growth slows down to the point where its multiplication is measured in tens; it comes to a halt at adulthood.

At birth, however, a supraphysical faculty, having growth potential, puts in an appearance: *consciousness*. With Nature in command at the outset, it shows first as simple consciousness, growing, rather quickly, into self-consciousness. But observe that Nature gradually withdraws her authority in favor of parental direction which, in turn, retires during adolescence, leaving the individual to his own resources and on his own responsibility. The adolescent does or does not take it from there; he does or does not heed the instructions which Creation has already given so clearly: the evolutive process is to take the form of a growth in consciousness, a growth of the *individual* mind—but self-managed growth! Indeed, evolution would seem senseless were its aim less than self-improved souls: men coming to think for themselves and to will their own actions, and so to share in Creation.

Evolution, as related to species, appears to have had no truck with failures. Many have ceased to exist. Nor is there any reason to believe that its stern ways are modified as pertaining to individual consciousness, evolution in its most advanced stage. Grow or face dismissal, seems to be its dictum. And why not? Evolution, logically, cannot consist of anything less than perpetual development. In short, growth in individual consciousness appears to be harmonious with the Cosmic Design. And were we in need of any more persuasion than these simple observations, we have only to review some exemplary figures, men who have clearly pointed the way, individuals who managed their own growth after Nature and parental authority relaxed their powers, persons who caused themselves to grow in thinking and willing, to the very end of long lives.

Aristotle put it well: “Happiness is activity of soul.” This is to say that happiness is activity in thinking and willing, such activity itself being growth. Growth and happiness are less cause and effect than concomitants, forming together a rationally structured optimism.

The Power of Attraction

Why is the developing, happy, optimistic individual importantly related to sound principles? Only these individuals exert that power of attraction which causes others to seek such enlightenment as they may possess. The discouraged, distraught, angry, pessimistic person is in a disharmonious, nondeveloping state and repels seekers

after Truth, as daily experiences attest. Nor does the IQ or level of knowledge have any bearing on the matter—what counts is growth. Any person, even a baby, *when growing* in awareness, exercises attractive influences—excites the desire to embrace. While an angry or power-drunk man of intellectual attainments may gain converts, the followers are not seekers of light. Sound principles are revealed only in light.

As mentioned in Chapter XV, one of the greatest civilizations sprung up in Athens twenty-four centuries ago, so remarkable that it is said that we ourselves are part Greek. Suffice it to say, Socrates and his remarkable lot did not have the eye on “a little centre of white-hot spiritual energy” or on “a new civilization.” These things were not even seen by them; they were only recapitulations as seen by historians, evaluations in retrospect. Had these things been their conscious, overriding aim, these things would not have come to pass. Each eye, rather, was on the pursuit of Truth, on individual growth. Cast the eye aright, so goes the promise, and “these things shall be added unto you.” These things are but delayed, impersonal, inevitable responses to right individual activities.

I cannot reverse the decline of our civilization or retrieve a waning freedom. Nor can you, whoever you are. But each can, if each so decides, improve in thinking and willing, that is, increase “activity of soul.” Herein lies happiness in its highest form, a rationally structured optimism. Give us enough optimists of this stripe and we may rest assured that freedom with its concomitant, a higher civilization, will follow, sooner or later, as a matter of course. That’s the promise.

Self-Improvement Is Possible

And that’s the lesson which history teaches so clearly: Waste no time or energy on repairing mere recapitulations—humanity, society, civilization, the masses—over which the individual is utterly powerless. Dismiss the impossible! Instead, fasten the eye on that enormously potential entity which falls within one’s own control, namely, self. Concentrate on the possible!

And time? Instead of running out, it is now in more abundant supply than ever—but only for those who know how to take advantage of this precious resource.

In far too many instances, our thousands upon thousands of time-saving devices have only induced an unprecedented busy-ness. Most moderns fritter away time; they find less of it than their ancestors did for affairs of the mind, for growth in consciousness. In short, they are hypnotized and thus enslaved by the gadgets.

But these same creations serve to free, release, make available more and more time for thoughtful pursuits to those who can think for themselves and will their own actions. These individuals are, by definition, the rationally structured optimists, the happy libertarians—progenitors of the good society, this being but a recapitulation of growing individuals.

* * *

A final question: How can we measure or test ourselves as libertarian thinkers, writers, talkers? Perhaps the best test, and the one that has the harshest answer in store, is to observe how much one's tutorship on the freedom philosophy is sought by others. Is it one person on one point on one occasion, or are the ones slightly or greatly multiplied? And perhaps the most sobering of all: How are we doing in our efforts to teach freedom principles and behaviors to children? For, in part, upon us depends their future. . . .

Chapter XVIII

Economics for Boys and Girls

*Train up a child in the way he should go: and
when he is old, he will not depart from it.*

PROVERBS 22:6

Time and again we have been asked to devise economic instruction for the youngsters, the thought being that it's the oncoming generation that counts. And, just as often, we have shaken our heads, pleading ignorance of how to go about it.

Trying to devise economic lessons for grownups has seemed difficult enough, for only now and then is there an adult who shows any interest in or aptitude for the subject. But we have tried, and over the years of trial and error, it has seemed that our best approach to adults is to leave them alone until they seek such instruction or light as we may come to possess. In other words, our job, as we now see it, is to concentrate on improving our own understanding and practice of freedom, with faith that others will be attracted precisely to the extent that we are able to show self-improvement.

Thus, we are constantly striving to better understand and explain and apply the economics of specialization and the division of labor, freedom in transactions, the marginal utility theory of value, and reliance on the orderliness of the free market as a guide to creativities and exchange.

Is there a way to present such complex ideas to children so that they might be attracted toward the free market way of social behavior? Perhaps. But first, let us consider our raw material, the youngsters we would teach.

Developing the Potential

There are those who contend that every baby starts life as a little savage; that he is equipped, among other things, with organs and muscles over which he has no control, with an urge for self-preservation, with aggressive drives and emotions like anger, fear, and love over which he likewise has practically no control, and that in the process of growing up, it is normal for every child to be dirty, to fight, to talk

back, to disobey, to evade. “*Every child has to grow out of delinquent behavior.*” So runs this argument. For my part, however, I take small comfort in this Freudian view of the genesis of the human race. I would much prefer to think of the child as a budding plant with all the potential for beauty and happiness which such a growing organism portends. In each case, of course, there may be from the adult point of view, apparent disorganization, lack of coordination, and disharmony. Yet, the potential for harmony and beauty is there.

Whether the child be considered a brutal barbarian or a budding beauty, the challenge is to help him emerge from a state of ignorance as to his relationship with others and into harmony with the universal laws which govern the human situation. The child is an extension of the parent’s responsibility, and that responsibility includes pointing the child in the direction of sound economic understanding. I shall hint at, but by no means exhaust, the possibilities:

If you drop something, pick it up.

This is easily taught, especially by parents who observe this dictum themselves. It is elementary training in assuming a responsibility for one’s own actions, that is, of not burdening others with one’s behaviors. A child who takes this simple first step in self-control—should the steps continue and become habitual—will likely, when attaining adulthood, look to himself rather than to the rest of us to bail him out of economic difficulties brought on by his own mistakes. He will, more than likely, not be a burden on society.

A genuine mastery of self-control tends to develop a rare and valuable faculty: the ability to will one’s own actions. Such a person will not be tempted to shift his position by reason of pressures, fickle opinions, popular notions, and the like. He will become his own man.

Picking up what you drop has its reward in orderliness of mind. When it becomes second nature, it is a joyous habit and on occasion leads to picking up after others. Projected into adult life, this shows up as a charitable attitude—in the Judeo-Christian sense—one’s personal duty toward the less fortunate.

If you open a door, close it.

This is a sequel to the above; it is merely another practice that confirms the wisdom of completing each of life’s transactions.

An inevitable dualism bisects nature, so that each thing is a half, and suggests another thing to make it whole; as spirit, matter; man, woman; subjective, objective; in, out; upper, under; motion, rest; yea, nay.¹

For child training, I would add: drop, pick up; open, close; and others.

If you make a promise, keep it.

Social chaos has no better ally than broken promises. Children not brought up to keep their word will be the authors of treaties written not to be observed; they'll run for office on bogus platforms, cancel gold contracts, use the political means to expropriate property; they'll sell their souls to gain fame or fortune or power. Not only will they fail to be honest with their fellow men; they will not even heed the dictates of their own conscience. On the other hand, children brought up to keep their promises will not go back on their bond, come hell or high water. Integrity will be their mark of distinction!

Whatever you borrow, pay back.

This is an extension of promise keeping. An adherence to these admonitions develops a respect for private property, a major premise in sound economic doctrine. No person, thus brought up, would think of feathering his own nest at the expense of others. Welfare statists and social planners are not born of this training, that is, if the training really sinks in. True, a socialist will honor debts incurred in his own name but will disregard any indebtedness he sponsors in the name of "the public." He has not been brought up to understand that the principle of compensation applies "across the board."

Play the thank-you game.

It will take a brilliant parent and a mighty perceptive child to get anywhere with this one. I can set forth the idea but not how to teach it. The idea, once grasped, is simple enough, yet so evasive that, in spite of the 33,000 years since Cro-Magnon man, it was only discovered a bare century ago: The value of a good or service is determined not *objectively* by cost of production, *but subjectively* by what others will give in willing exchange. Economic science has no more important concept than this; the free market has no other economic genesis than this subjective or marginal utility theory of value. Indeed, it is most accurately identified as the free market theory of value.

¹ Excerpted from *Compensation* by Ralph Waldo Emerson.

To repeat an illustration used earlier: When mother exchanges 30¢ for a can of beans, she values the beans more than the 30¢ and the grocer values the 30¢ more than the beans. If mother valued the 30¢ more than the beans, she wouldn't trade. If the grocer valued his beans more than the 30¢, he wouldn't trade. The value of both the 30¢ and the beans (excluding other considerations) is determined by the two subjective judgments. The amount of effort exerted (cost) to obtain the 30¢ or to acquire the beans has nothing to do with the value of either the beans or the 30¢.

I repeat, the value of any good or service is determined by what it will bring in willing, *not forcible* or unwilling, exchange.² When the 30¢ is exchanged for the beans, the grocer concludes the transaction with "Thank you," for, in his judgment, he has gained. There is precisely the same justification for the mother to say, "Thank you," for, in her judgment, she has gained. It wouldn't be at all amiss to describe this as "the thank-you way of economic life."

This concept of value, be it remembered, was practiced off and on by the common man ages before economic theorists identified it as the efficacious way of mutually advancing economic well-being. And, by the same token, the child can be taught to practice it before he can possibly grasp the theory. In exchanging toys or marbles or jacks or whatever with another, can he not play the thank-you game? Can he not be taught to express the same "thank you" himself as he expects from his playmate? That something is wrong with the trade if this is not the case? That both have gained when each says, "Thank you"? Accomplish this with a boy or girl and you have laid the groundwork for sound economic thinking.

Do nothing to a playmate you wouldn't enjoy having him do to you.

Moral philosophy is the investigation into and the study of what's right and wrong. Economics is a division of this discipline: the study of right and wrong in economic affairs.

The free market is the Golden Rule in its economic application, thus free market economics is dependent on the practice of the Golden Rule.

² TVA, Post Office, and a thousand and one other deficits, are paid for by forcible exchange. Moon specialists are paid by forcible, not willing, exchange. This goes, also, for all governmental subsidies.

That the Golden Rule can be phrased and taught so as to be completely perceived prior to adolescence is doubtful. Its apprehension requires a moral nature, a faculty rarely acquired earlier than teen-age—in many instances, never!

But the effort to teach the Golden Rule to boys and girls will, at a minimum, result in a better observation of it on the parent's part. Children—highly impressionable—are far more guided by parental conduct than by parental admonishments. Thus, the attempt to teach this fundamental principle of morality and justice, *resulting in highly exemplary behavior*, may lead the child first to imitation and then to habitual observance and practice.

Writing the above, which only hints at how boys and girls may get off to a good start in economic thinking, has supplied the missing explanation to something I have known for several years: *women are more hopeful prospects than men in the contest between free market and authoritarian ideas!* In our seminar activities, we have found the distaffers better students than the mill run of males, as well as more idealistic and less compromising. Beyond this, it is the mothers, rather than the fathers, in whose care the citizens of tomorrow are largely committed. It is primarily the mothers who will refine the methods for getting boys and girls on the track of sound thinking.

But mothers or fathers, it is the parents who are responsible for the generations to come and who also are responsible for the kinds of people who assist in teaching their children.

The problems are numerous and deeper than you think. Finding better answers is what parents are for, now and always!

Epilogue

Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

PROVERBS 16:18

Do pride and a haughty spirit dispose man to act against himself? Are these weaknesses responsible for the strife amongst ourselves, our repeated invasions of others' rights, political coercion, the policy of armed conflict as a corrective for social ills, the subsidizing with extorted funds of weaknesses and failures, the mass slaughter of our kind? The decline and fall of nations?

Examine the whole animal kingdom and try to find any species whose members are as mean—or as kind—to each other as man is to man.³ While Dr. Konrad Lorenz acknowledges that “the worker in comparative ethology does well to be very careful in applying moral criteria to animal behavior,” he adds:

But here I must myself own to harbouring sentimental feelings: I think it a truly magnificent thing that one wolf finds himself unable to bite the proffered neck of the other, but still more so that the other relies upon him for this amazing restraint. Mankind can learn a lesson from this. . . .⁴

In a word, even wolves do not kill wolves! An explanation of the meanness-kindness complex, peculiar to human beings, has been sought for ages—without much success. Never should the quest be forsaken! It being my contention that kindness exists in the absence of meanness—pride by another name—I shall confine myself to some reflections on the origins of meanness.

Let us begin this quest by referring again to the collapsed calendar set forth in Chapter IV. Previous to the last few hours of a long year, no organism had anything

¹ This problem is splendidly posed in “On Being Mean” by Marston Bates, Professor of Zoology, University of Michigan. *American Scholar*, Winter, 1966–67.

² See “Morals and Weapons,” the final chapter in *King Solomon's Ring* by Konrad Z. Lorenz, who, according to Julian Huxley, is “one of the outstanding naturalists of our times.” In paperback (New York, N. Y.: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1961).

more to go on than what we call instinct. Then, of a sudden, homo sapiens appeared on the scene bearing a brand new, exclusive feature, a trait never before known to life on earth: the distinguishing characteristic of being human is the ability to think, to choose, in a word, the power to will one's own actions. Robert Ardrey puts it this way: "Man's uniqueness among species rests on his capacity to perfect the arrangements for his own Judgment Day, instead of waiting for nature to do it for him."⁵ True, even in the twentieth century, this is only a budding trait but, relative to the rest of the animal kingdom, it is a fantastic leap forward.

In the subhuman state, instinct controls both actions *and reactions*. Survival of wolves, for instance, requires of instinct that it attend not only to reproduction but to the nondestruction of wolf by wolf. Wolves, no matter how provoked, do not react to the provocation by tearing each other apart. *Intraspecie destruction is an instinctual taboo among most subhuman species.*

Man, as distinguished from other life, has some but far from all of the instincts that guide animals. As man evolves he has to rely more and more on reason and the power of self-will. Thus man is on his own—to a marked extent.

The above is a sufficient sketch or backdrop from which to speculate on a distinctive type of pride seldom touched upon. But before introducing that specific type, let me illustrate the general nature and prevalence of pride.

Common to subhumans and humans is the territorial instinct. Sticklebacks, howling monkeys, cardinals, and ever so many other species stake out their territory—property—and protect it. They just will not abide others of their own species moving in on them. Interestingly, they achieve this protection without resort to lethal means.

Now man goes to great lengths—with his formal, legal institutions and other measures—in response to this identical instinct. Man's territory, however, is more than so many acres of land; man's territory includes personal as well as real property. The point to emphasize: ". . . man is a territorial animal. . . . The territorial nature of man is genetic and ineradicable."⁶

The territories of man are more than geographical, and the ways of invading his territories are thus compounded.

³ See *Territorial Imperative*, *op. cit.*, p. 268.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

As one sage expressed it, “I am as much corrupted by my loves as by my hates.” Invasions of man’s territory by man masquerade under the labels of love, kindness, compassion, even charity. Greed plays a comparatively minor role as a motivating force. Merely observe that millions of highly respected citizens resort to the police force of government to take the territory—property—of everyone to provide “security” for all and sundry “from the cradle to the grave.” And much of this in the name of virtue!

The individual who sponsors this sort of thing stands in contempt of his fellow men, not only in contempt of those who are legally looted but also of those on whom the “benefactions” are conferred.⁷ The individual who resorts to coercion to do good is contemptuous of the ability of the “beneficiaries” to look out for themselves, of their knowledge, of their own self-interest, of their self-reliance.⁸ And as to those looted, he is contemptuous of their territorial rights, their rights to the fruits of their own labors. Anyone who sponsors coercion as a means of helping others suffers from excessive self-esteem; his lordly position is by self-appointment. He is the victim of that type of pride which weakens and destroys the “beneficiaries,” and against which territorial man rebels, eventually, in lethal strife. Neither man nor most subhuman species will stand passively by in the face of contempt and invasion of territory. This is a type of pride that brings about the decline and fall of nations and their inhabitants.

⁵ Uncontemptuous, of course, are those wholly lacking a sense of process, utterly unaware of what they do to others. Such people, for all they know, have hit upon a jinni.

⁶ A mother drove up to a mail box so that her 3-year-old son might put a letter down the chute. A stranger, thinking to relieve the child of so difficult a task, offered to do it for him. A frown crossed the little fellow’s face. He looked appealingly to his mother and she, thanking the stranger, said, “I think Billy can manage.” And manage he did! The stranger went on his way somewhat embarrassed. Then he realized that had he carried out his intention, he would have taken something from both Billy and his mother: he would have deprived Billy of accomplishment, and the mother of an opportunity to teach her little son a valuable lesson in self-reliance.—Condensed from “Don’t Give Till It Hurts—Someone Else,” by Samuel A. Siciliano. *The Freeman*, April, 1962.

Controlling One's Reactions

Let us now examine another and perhaps an even more destructive type of pride. As previously noted, evolving man develops an increasing ability *to will his own actions*. This unique ability, if pride and destruction are to be averted, must be accompanied by a commensurate ability properly *to will one's own reactions* to provocation. Is there any reasoning to support this hypothesis? For unquestionably, this is a problem that must be tackled at the rational level.

Now reflect on a phase of human behavior having to do with the form of provocation in question, the results of which are disgust and anger, weaknesses that lead to overt conflict—man's inhumanity to man.

Picture in the mind's eye an individual who has progressed no further in intelligence than to believe in and stand sponsor for tossing virgin maidens into deep wells as a means of causing rain.⁹ Here is an example of a willed action. Now, assume that this individual advances in intelligence to the point where he looks as unfavorably on this heathenish practice as you or I. What will be his reaction toward those who still believe in and stand sponsor for such actions? What would be yours and mine? Unless such a man has advanced to the stage where he can will his own *reactions*, he will be filled with disgust and contempt, these being akin to anger which, along with pride, is one of the "deadly sins." Provocation! And how will he react to the provocation? We do not need to go back to the Crusades to find the answer. The evidence is all about us: he, as many of us, will rid the world of heathenism by exterminating the heathens. Do not ever so many of us try to be done with communism by shooting the communists, and so on? All because man has the power to will his own actions without having developed, at the same time, a commensurate ability to will his own reactions. Instinct takes care of the balance in other species; only self-will can attend to it in the case of man.

Observe what goes on here: an increase in intelligence leading to disgust, contempt, anger; enlightenment in one direction resulting in madness in another! It takes but the barest reflection to see that this is pride and haughtiness pure and simple; *it is one's self-assessed superiority* that breeds a contempt destructive of self and others alike. Daily personal experiences and observations, as well as the decline and fall of nations, testify to the fact that pride goeth before a fall.

⁹ See p. 1.

The wolf and other subhuman species are instinctively governed. Instinct rules both sides of their survival problem: procreation as well as nondestruction of the species. Man must perforce rely on reason, but according to this hypothesis, he is the victim of a one-sided development in his rationality. He rationally procreates and produces goods and services to satisfy his wants, these being self-willed actions. But he irrationally destroys himself because he has not as yet developed the ability to will his own reactions. He has solved only a part of his survival problem.

A Suggested Procedure

How can a person—when intellectually growing, when the self-willing of actions are on the increase, when he is becoming more and more his own man—keep from being disgusted with or contemptuous of or angry at other persons who stand for ideas he has, in his progress, come to regard as false? How can one who sees the flaws in medicare or the guaranteed annual wage, for instance, view the sponsors dispassionately and with an unobtrusive equanimity? This is by way of asking, how can one rationally reach the same level in willing his reactions as he has attained in willing his own actions.

The first step is to recognize that the proper willing of reactions is one of the keys to solving the problem of man's inhumanity to man. We can unlock the door only if we have the right key.

Next, reflect on the explosive last few moments so impressively demonstrated when all of earthly life is collapsed into a single year. Clearly, *expanding* powers of reason and intelligence are implicit in the Design. Therefore, when one observes what appears to be instances of inferiority, this should signify no more than Nature at work in her infinite chore; inferiorities and superiorities at sixes and sevens are all a part of the Scheme; it is meant to be this way. When any man experiences a breakthrough into a higher level of awareness, this should be the occasion for gratitude toward the creative process, not contempt for those who do not yet share one's new enlightenment. For it is grossly irrational to permit contempt and disgust—emotional manifestations—to accompany enlightenment—a rational achievement. Emotion, it seems, takes residence in the soul whenever reason is not at home.

Another helpful exercise is to recognize that some of the "inferiority" we observe all about us can be accounted for by our differences, our varied talents. If we are

adept at what we do and others are less so, we feel superior. The cleaning woman must regard the college professor inferior because she can perform her specialty so much better than he can. Now reflect on what the professor thinks of the cleaning woman relative to his skills. And many of us, mind you, evidence disgust on occasion at some professors! Of us all, who is inferior? And who superior, the victim of pride? It depends, quite irrationally, through whose pair of eyes one is staring.

Another way to impress upon ourselves how irrational this pride is—how important it is to replace emotionality with rationality—is to reflect on the Creator. Suppose God were to become disgusted with his creation, contemptuous of and angry at all that is inferior, regarding as stupid every human thought and behavior not up to a par with Infinite Wisdom; then God would be the Supreme Raving Maniac! But God, instead, is Love, Truth, Enlightenment, Light. Is it not the height of rationality to emulate the Ideal?

Finally, if we react irrationally against “inferiority,” and are interested in remedying our pride, we can make headway only as we learn how properly to will our reactions. This ability becomes conclusively desirable once we realize that to react with disgust, contempt, anger, and armed might is but to harden in their sins the ones who “know less.” We defeat our own ends, make worse what we disapprove of by such irrational reactions.

The ignorance we decry is perpetuated by emotional and irrational reactions. Our interests are never served by having any part in the type of tension on which ignorance thrives. Give ignorance nothing to scratch against!

Respond to everyone who seeks our tutorship, by all means. But, otherwise, relax that tension which is the accomplice of man’s inhumanity to man.

Konrad Lorenz, in his *King Solomon’s Ring*, acknowledges that he learned from observing animals what we should easily learn from observing ourselves:

I at least have extracted from it [wolf behavior] a new and deeper understanding of a wonderful and often misunderstood saying from the Gospel which hitherto had only awakened in me feelings of strong opposition: “*And unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek offer also the other.*” A wolf has enlightened me: not so that your enemy may strike you again do you turn the other cheek toward him, but to make him unable to do it.¹⁰

Here we have an instinctual reaction that prevents a provoked wolf from killing his kind!

Is it not possible for a rational, self-willed human reaction to accomplish as much? The Gospel instruction, followed in faith, proves to be correct more often than not.

But how, in day-to-day living, do we put this ideal into practice? Two simple steps seem to suggest themselves: first, give no heed to the angry barbs cast at us by our “superiors” and, second, avoid becoming self-appointed “superiors” ourselves, that is, find no satisfaction—pride—in looking down on the flounderings of our fellow men.

By turning our backs on these irrationalities, *we face the Light* and are enlightened thereby; we are transformed from adversaries into benefactors. Harnessing our pride leaves us less inclined to be mean to each other and removes a major obstacle to personal emergence.

⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 197.

