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## Frank Chodorov: Mister Dignity

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*Christ brought to a dispirited world the doctrine of human dignity. His lesson is still to be learned.*

—CHODOROV

FOR ABOUT seven years, during the lifetime of *analysis*, Frank Chodorov was my neighbor. I met and spoke to him almost every day, and soon learned that he was an infectious sort of a guy. If you happened to be near him for a little while, you soon realized that he was a man who dared to think, write, and speak in definite and positive terms. He was not one to shilly-shally. Those who were privileged to read his writings or hear his lectures soon realized that they were "listening to the beat of a different drummer."

Some of my *tete-a-tetes* with him were memorable, especially those in his smoke-filled rear office that faced a blank brick wall or in The Automat on the street floor of the building where he had difficulty meeting his monthly rent. There was a time during this period when, like Thoreau, Frank retired from his family in order to ponder over his own problems. He had left the Henry George School because of his pacifist views. Previously, he had been a salesman, a successful business man who had beaten organized labor when it tried to organize his employees, a teacher, and a writer of lyrics for popular songs. However, always to him, freedom of thought was preferable to security.

The only times that his booming voice was silent was when he was listening to a ball game (or good music) on his wheezy radio. Even then, he would break the silence by lambasting the umpire or the manager. Frank was a great arm-chair manager.

I think that his greatest virtue lay in the fact that he was cognizant of his own faults — faults and strengths — because, as he stated, "I have lived with myself longer than with anybody else." He could be as adamant as a burro or as patient as a nun. He was always ready to encourage those who showed the least

bit of talent, and did not spare his criticism when it was needed. At times, he was the paragon of kindness, and then again, he could be as turbulent as a whirlpool. By his own admission, he had no truck with four-flushers or prejudiced "weisenheimers."

In the first issue of *analysis*, he quoted from Herbert Spencer: "Every man shall be free to do that which he will, provided he does not infringe on the equal freedom of every other man." In the lead editorial of that issue, Frank stated that the objective of conquest is exploitation, and that exploitation is any accepted means of acquiring goods and services without rendering an equivalent. "The use of force is to conquest what plowing is to reaping."

Here are Frank Chodorov's attitude and comments on the question of voting: "A plague on both of your houses!" he used to say about the opposing candidates. "Why should a self-respecting citizen," he wrote, "endorse an institution grounded on thievery? For that is what one does when one votes... Perhaps the silliest argument... is that 'we must choose the lesser of two evils.' Under what compulsion are we to make such a choice? Why not pass up both of them?"

"To effectuate the suggested revolution all that is necessary is to stay away from the polls. Unlike other revolutions, it calls for no organization, no violence, no war-fund, no leader to sell it out. In the quiet of his conscience each citizen pledges himself, to himself, not to give moral support to any immoral institution, and on election day he remains at home. That's all. I started my revolution twenty-five years ago and the country is none the worse for it."

One of Chodorov's favorite quotations came from the pen of Victor Cousin: "Only individuals exist, and in the individual, nothing but the individual."

The following is Frank's view of freedom: "Freedom is indeed an emotional experience, a sense of personal dignity, and this is not meas-

urable in dollars or things. The slave who glories in his servility because he lacks none of the comforts of life is all the more a slave... The spirit of freedom is measured only in the coin of self-respect, and that is not the subject matter of economics."

The distinction between "government" and "State," stated Frank, lay "in the use to which political coercion is put. When it is used negatively, for the protection of life and property, with which must be included the adjudicating of disputes among citizens, it is a service; when it is used positively, in the interests of one group of citizens, including politicians, against the interests of other groups, it is a disservice. In one case it makes for harmony, in the other it is the cause for discord.

"Freedom-lovers confine themselves mostly to scolding and a weak demand for a little reform. They appear to be afraid of the freedom they are thumping for. Their lack of guts is appalling.

"The State cannot be reformed into a social instrument. It originated in iniquity and exists for anti-social purposes only. Either it is destroyed — root and brand — or the individual is doomed to slavery. Those who would destroy it must understand its mechanism, and must be prepared to give up the privileges which the State has conferred on them. That is, if they mean what they say."

Frank believed in Emerson's statement that "no society can ever be as big as one man." He firmly subscribed to Henry George's contention that "the dangers to the Republic come not from without but from within." He admiringly quoted Thoreau on several occasions. One of his favorite Thoreauvian was: "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth."

These, then, are some fragments by which Frank Chodorov can be evaluated. When *analysis* finally had to cease publication, he closed up shop, and stole away — but not silently. It was from here, where he learned about the inner freedom of man, that he went on to greater glory.