Free Society: Its Basic Nature and Problem

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ITS BASIC NATURE AND PROBLEM

FOLLOWING a venerable precedent, which has become rather hackneyed usage, we may begin by observing that "man is a political animal." But it is more in keeping with modern ideas and knowledge to say a "social" animal; and we must immediately add that social "animal" is misleading, for it is the differences between human and animal societies that especially need to be emphasized. The only highly organized nonhuman societies of separate organisms are those of certain "colonial" insects, which are based on a physical (anatomical and physiological) specialization not found in man. Their patterns of behavior and of social order are fixed by instinct, which is also true of the crudely organized "herds" or other groups among the higher mammalian species. The notion of pure mechanism, without intelligence, cannot be strictly accurate, even for ants and termites, but it must be close to the truth; in the absence of speech, there can hardly be any "thinking," properly so named, or anything whatever of group deliberation. The social animals do not feel conflict between the interests of individuals or between individual and group interests, and do not solve, or confront, group problems.

Man is as completely social as a termite in being unable to live at all outside a group of considerable size and of complex yet fairly stable structure (even a Crusoe is no real exception); but the reasons and the accompanying phenomena are utterly different. Human evolution did not start from a highly socialized animal; man and the insects represent the culmination of two different lines that separated far down in primitive marine life. "Our" line was socialized for the most part long after the final achievement of the physical basis of a high intelligence and after other profound physical changes, notably in the reproductive system, that occurred between the highest known animals and

homo. Of these physical changes, excluding brain size and general form, no record is likely ever to be found, as they affected only the ephemeral flesh, not the bony structure, or any durable artifacts. Very little if any human behavior is biologically inherited in a pattern at once definite enough and complex enough to be properly called an instinct. Man's original nature has been dissolved and diluted into vague urges or "drives," whose specific manifestations are acquired after birth by learning, in one form or another. They are "cultural" in the anthropological sense of custom, mores, or institutions, i.e., derived from the community in which the individual grows up — not necessarily that in which he is born. The patterns are subject to modification by individual experience, and the activities traceable to particular drives have become overlapping and more or less interchangeable. They change gradually by the process of unconscious drift (spontaneous variation and selection), with invention at a minimum until very recent times. On the other hand, such "culture" is scarcely found among animals; some exception may be made for the birds, which are not in the evolutionary sequence leading to man (and which, interestingly, are the only animals that can even be taught to imitate speech).

We can imagine social life operating entirely on this principle of custom and conditioning. It is as mechanical as instinct, but has the biological advantage of a flexibility and adaptability greater than the accidents of gene mutation. But we have no knowledge of any actual society of this simple kind. In the most primitive human society, at least three other principles are operative, all more or less connected with intelligence (in the instrumental sense). The most ancient seems to be authority or leadership. In addition, there is informal or conversational discussion, not rationally directed but undoubtedly contributing to modification, by drift, both of language itself — the basic and typical institution — and of attitudes and overt behavior. Finally, among men there is always some formal deliberation, with explicit formulation of issues and "discussion" leading to agreement on a conclusion — or, if this fails, either to compulsion or to disintegration of the group. The mores never function by themselves, for human nature is antisocial as well as social; intelligence seems to be inherently individualistic, conceiving of ends and modes of their pursuit in forms

that involve conscious conflict with other units. Consequently, usages or protolaws are not merely scientific principles but are also laws in the higher sense of being felt as imperative, and they always require enforcement by various sanctions. It seems impossible to think of man as not characterized by these traits or to call by that name any creature that is without them.[1]

The reference to sanctions suggests the fact that whatever arrangements are established in human society seem practically always to be "sanctified" by *religion,* an elaborate and various institutional phenomenon almost as important as language, and like it much more important than any concrete usage or custom. (Naturally, religion itself is peculiarly conservative, resistant to drift; but it is subject to more or less considerable mutation through the agency of "prophets.") It normally includes much ritual, partly of the nature of play, but of varying supposed potency over supernatural powers, conciliatory or coercive, and over natural events and the efficacy of various acts. In addition to a quasi-religious reverence for their customs as such, primitive peoples believe in occult forces and invisible powers — totems, ghosts of ancestors, and other spirits, living in the objects

[1] Interrelationships among these several social principles are almost infinitely various. It would be of the greatest interest and value to know something of the evolution and historical development of the complex, particularly the development of speech and the differentiation within the primitive harem herd (said to be characteristic of the anthropoid apes) of fairly definite and stable *families.* If we only knew how protomen learned to talk and what they said, especially the relation between imparting useful information and emotional expression. Speech may well have begun with love song or inspirational "oratory"; and ballad history, lament, and jest are doubtless older than logical discourse. Again, sex relations and family life, within a large organized group, would seem to be the crucial point at which mores and authority replaced instinct; and they are basic for the higher emotional life and for all civilized, hence all human, social order.

Recent study of animal groups suggests for protohuman society a large role of authority in the brutal form of "dominance," established by fighting — for food, for sex (among the males), and for dominance itself or prestige. It is not a nice process, by our moral and aesthetic standards, but that is characteristic of nature's methods. It would be effective in bringing to the top intelligence, courage, and other leadership qualities, and whether our gentler ways are as effective, or effective enough, is a question still to be answered by history. Savage peoples now living are organized predominantly through *mores* (customary law), along with all sorts of leadership forms, themselves customary, or *ad hoc* devices. What we know of the beginnings of civilization indicate a tendency toward authority and status inherited in family lines, but hereditary monarchy is always vulnerable to family decadence, intrigue, and insurrection. High civilization has also shown a tendency to general moral decadence, and it is certainly open to doubt whether our own will prove an exception to the rule.

and phenomena of nature or hovering about the tribal habitat. These are concerned with rewards and punishments (operating in this world) to enforce conformity to custom and obedience to authority, serving to counteract the antisocial tendencies of man as an instrumentally intelligent being. Fear alone may be effective, or there may be action by special authorities or the general mob. For innate human nature apparently includes an urge to force others to conform, or to extirpate those who do not, as well as both a love of ritual for its own sake and an impulse to break any law, with a craving for sociability and for power and more specific selfish desires.

The philosophic basis of any soundly descriptive or useful discussion of man and society must be recognition of a complex and subtle *pluralism* of fundamental categories. The most important fact about man is that he is at the same time a number of kinds of being, which are not only different but in theory mutually incompatible. He seems to be the product of "emergent evolution," in which many new traits have been successively superimposed upon an extending series without, in the main, eliminating the earlier. First, of course, he is a physicochemical mechanism. And it cannot be proved experimentally that any of the laws describing the behavior of nonliving matter are inoperative or operate in any special or peculiar way in the human body, though, unless there is some exception, these laws should exhaustively account for all that a man is or does (including the writing, and the reading, of this essay!). Secondly, he is a biological organism, in which, again, the main facts and processes of other life, plant and animal, are exemplified. Scientists generally reject the idea that anything is involved in life beyond physics and chemistry; but even the botanist, dealing with unconscious life, cannot talk sense without using teleological terms such as will or urge to live and reproduce, adaptation, struggle, competition, economy.

As to the emergence of novelty, the sharpest break in continuity seems to be the appearance of consciousness. However, its more primitive manifestations and the relations of its different aspects — awareness, feeling, intelligence, and will — are so uncertain that no clear lines can be drawn. It is impossible to doubt the existence of a complex conscious life in the higher animals, but no tolerably definite account can be given below the level of men, who communicate by

speech. Within the range of human life, anthropologists speak of savage, barbarian, and civilized, emphasizing the breaks that come with writing, the use of metals, and other technical achievements. Several of these steps represent considerable and fairly sudden advances. But for our purposes, and within the compass of a brief sketch, the discontinuities that seem to call for recognition, after the appearance of animal life, are two. The first marks the advent of primitive human society, based on the principles already described, but with intelligence virtually inoperative (suppressed) in the social order (our third level). The final discontinuity is that which ushers in the fourth level, modern free or democratic civilization. The essential change is the replacement of sanctified custom and authority, socially inherited and transmitted through cultural conditioning, by the still-experimental attempt to base social order on secular rationality — "government by discussion," in the words of Lord Bryce's famous definition of democracy.

At the third level, that of premodern man, the emergence involved more supersession than was true at the earlier break, from the physico-chemical process to life or consciousness. The principle of instinct was largely replaced by the other types of action pattern already considered — mores, authority, and lower forms of intelligence. Various combinations of these superbiological social forms characterize the cultures or civilizations of world history, including prehistory, prior to the advent of free society, as an ideal and more or less an achievement. Not only did biological evolution cease long before the dawn of history; more important still, human development has to be discussed in terms of new purposive directions or ends as well as new processes. The changes we refer to as "progress," even before this was consciously recognized and pursued, are described in relation to qualitative differences and norms, which bear no clear relation to the apparent intention of nature — mere quantitative increase of life — and often seem to clash with the latter. On the whole, human life must have been more efficient than the lower forms, as shown by its actual increase at their expense or through their control and utilization. But, prior to modern times, civilized society has evinced increasing instability of organization, apparently due to a tendency of individualistic intelligence to break out of institutional and authoritarian — and intelligent

moral — control and become predatory, or even to turn explicitly against life and pronounce it an evil. In consequence, cultures, if not the peoples as biological entities (that have become primarily bearers of culture), have typically flourished for a time only to become decadent and disappear, or be absorbed in a new development from a more primitive start. (But each new wave has typically risen higher than the preceding.) In this process a large role has of course been played by organized war, a phenomenon nearly or quite peculiar to man and an activity in which he has been somewhat especially inclined to use intelligence.

The final great "emergence" and, as far as we know, the last (unless some form of totalitarianism turns out to be really the "wave of the future") is modern free society — the setting of the problems we are concerned to characterize. Practically speaking, it is a phenomenon of the past few centuries in the history of west-European civilization. The development occurred through the diffusion of power in a new wave of development achieved as usual through consolidation and centralization, but with important differences. The Renascence was actually much more the birth of a new and historically unique civilization than the rebirth of the Greco-Roman civilization that became decadent over a millennium earlier. The crucial differences centered in the place and role of religion, its relation to politics, and back of that to intellectual and economic life. The prime key to understanding what happened is the fact that in the period of decadence of the classical world, Europe had taken over Christianity, a new universal (i.e., dogmatically and violently intolerant) religion, a blend of Judaism with elements of contending mystery cults of the period, plus an infusion of Greek philosophy, all by this time "organized" on an imperial-authoritarian pattern. In other words, the key to postclassical European history lies in the twin notions of orthodoxy and heresy (distinguished from personal and political loyalty), the heresy issue nearly (not quite) always a clash between rival orthodoxies. Of course all religions have taught that morality, law, and order depend on religion, and all true morality on acceptance of that particular one, and many of the protagonists have sincerely believed both doctrines; and, of course also, the leaders in all the contests, on both sides, have stood to gain or lose heavily in power and perquisites of power, which have been objects of desire to most human beings always and

in all circumstances. And of course (finally, and the real heart of the matter) all orthodoxies are *in principle* adhered to and supported uncritically, irrationally. As Lord Bacon said, "The more absurd and incredible any divine mystery is, the greater honor we do to God in believing it."

The great result of several centuries of war of the most terrible kind, of "treasons, stratagems and spoils," was the birth of liberty. But few indeed of the contestants or perpetrators wanted liberty or thought it good or possible; they wanted — and in a sense believed in — their own power and formal right to coerce all who disagreed. The twin ferments of change were the growth of science and the economic interest, the desire to get ahead in terms not only of wealth but of political power, social position, and culture. What human ends, good or bad, are not dependent more or less directly upon material means, in spite of all the nonsense talked and written about materialism and the economic motive? But of these two factors, the one logically if not historically prior is science. For the crucial fact is the freedom of the mind; if thought and expression are free, freedom of action and of association follow inevitably. The historical and moral relation in the sociological sense is far from simple, because the distinctive and crucial feature of the modern scientific movement is a close tie-up with practice, again not merely in technology but in warfare, medicine, and the fine arts. In earlier times, the crafts had been traditional and science extremely aristocratic and snobbish. The modern relationship to commerce and industry involved a new respect for the ordinary affairs of men, for work, and for ordinary men themselves.

As a matter of course, too, the basic freedom and the faith and respect that it presupposes imply political democracy, of which the formation of public opinion by discussion open to the participation of all is the essential part. Representative machinery is a corollary as the only way of assuring that government will do things the mass of the people want done and will not do things they oppose. Further, it just as inevitably implies the open market as the main general form of economic organization. One of the major "discoveries" of the revolutionary age, the Enlightenment or Age of Reason, into which the Renascence inevitably merged, was the self-evidence of a harmony of interests in *free* relationships, excluding force and fraud and presupposing mutual respect for the freedom and the competence of the

other party. Previously, the best minds had held the absurd notion that any gain by one trader must mean an equal loss by the other. It is quite false to allege, as is so commonly done, that the new economics of *laisser faire* rested on an assumption of a "natural harmony of interests" apart from this condition of mutual respect for one another's rights, and, if this should not be rendered voluntarily, its enforcement by whatever legal and political measures might prove to be required. It is unfortunate, though natural in view of the historical development, that the term *laisser faire* became distinctively attached to economic freedom. It means simply "freedom," and was supposed to apply as a matter of course to all individual and associative life. By this time the burning issue of religion was in abeyance, through loss of interest, in favor of politics, trade and industry, science and culture, and other concerns (good or bad) of this world.

In economic life itself there was no implication of restriction of ends to "lower" wants or to any particular category. Moreover, men would be free to co-operate on any terms other than those fixed by the open market, to whatever extent they might agree on such terms as more equitable or preferable for any reason. This explicitly covered use of the state as an organ of co-operation, provided only that it restricted itself to such public works and other functions as would command general agreement, i. e., require a minimum of coercion. Logically, the extent of the sphere of state action might be indefinitely large, even to socialism in any form that would use the open market as a general framework; this proviso is necessary because the market is the one possible form of organization that permits of individual freedom in consumption and production, including provision for the future.

The establishment of freedom, rooted in the liberation of the mind from traditional dogma and mythology, enforced by ecclesiastical and political authority, is the greatest revolution of all time, or since the dawn of conscious life. Stated in abstract terms, the doctrine and program are very appealing. And for a time the change seemed to be fully justified by its fruits. Free science and free enterprise, with general cultural freedom, led to much the most rapid advance yet seen, not merely in the conquest of nature by mind and the harnessing of the forces of nature to the purposes of man, but in humanitarianism, the unification of the world's peoples, and the diffusion of the advantages

of civilized life among the populations of the advanced nations, and among others as fast as they were able to join in the movement. But only for a time, and no one would now make the period very long. The liberation had not gone far toward completion (if the notion can be given tolerably definite meaning) before evils forced themselves on the public attention, and evils affecting the lower classes, not those who had lost a position of special privilege through the change. The close of the Revolutionary epoch (so called from rather overdramatized political events in British North America and in France) saw the beginnings of violent criticism of the new individualism, of socialistic propaganda, and of measures making the state more responsible for the life and well-being of the weaker members of society. And it is a notable fact that in the same year, 1848, still in the first half of the nineteenth century, were published the *Political Economy* of J. S. Mill and the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels. The nature and significance of this coincidence does not need to be spelled out here; nor does any reader need to be reminded of the later course of events leading in the twentieth century to world wars and the relapse of much of the European world into totalitarianism, with ominous portents for the future even of formal democracy in the small part of it that remains nominally committed to what a short generation ago was liberalism but is now called conservative (if not reactionary) social doctrine.

The causality of this astounding counterrevolution, or yearning for counterrevolution — rooted in a feeling not that the ideals of free society were wrong but that historical liberalism has made a mockery of them — is the mystery that cries for explanation. A little candid inquiry will show that the graver moral and intellectual problems of a free society have not been faced or even stated. This is in part because of a Pollyanna optimism on the part of the more articulate classes that is natural to a period of rapid progress, together with an innate aversion to hard thinking (and the problems are forbiddingly hard); the tendency to oversimplification and wish thinking is an obvious trait of human nature, which in general is more romantic than it is rational. But it remains true that in essential ways the liberal movement went wrong, partly because of the failure to think out its problems, hence in ways more or less subject to correction, but especially because it generated expectations and implied promises im-

possible of fulfillment. This again was partly for the same reason, a moral failure to face problems. Partly it was because of the limited competence of human intelligence, its proneness to err and blunder in ways that later become evident, or are even discerned at once by minds especially competent or favorably placed for seeing pertinent facts and escaping prejudices that are part of the reason others do not see them. From this point of view, the failure of several generations of liberal education to get the articulate and influential strata of the public to understand the mechanics of free enterprise and its merits, and the relation of natural science to the various levels of value problems, is indeed discouraging. But further, it is clearly of the nature of life and thought insistently to pose questions that are insoluble by minds of any kind or any degree of competence that we can imagine.

As has been suggested above, the movement of revulsion and revolt arose first in connection with the "free" economic order, the open-market organization, including that specialization of responsibility and risk in the hands of entrepreneurs, which gives it the name, "enterprise economy." Some denunciation of freedom in natural science and demand for curbs has arisen, but it has come later and has only currently become strong enough to prompt any serious effort to bring about action to this end, and only in connection with the wartime development of methods for releasing the incredibly destructive powers of intra-atomic energy (wth some disposition to include biological weapons of war). Accordingly, we turn our attention first to the problem of economic organization, postponing to the next section the few remarks that may be offered with respect to science and intellectual freedom.[2]

It must be briefly remarked that the economic problem is far from being fundamental in the sense that is generally taken for granted. No conceivable economic reform would by itself go far to achieve general social contentment, or probably even peace. Motives that cannot reasonably be called economic are more important causes of war than any that can be so classed. If the gift of some Aladdin's lamp

[2] It goes without saying that the tradition of orthodoxy in religion is still very much alive in the western world; also, that any church in the Semitic-Christian tradition that is strong enough to do so will (logically must) struggle to control intellectual, social, and private life.

were to give all men power to satisfy all cravings dependent on the use of means (but without power over other persons!), it is quite certain that in the absence of other equally revolutionary changes in man's nature discontent and social friction, animosity and conflict, would be increased and not diminished, and in ultimate essentials would hardly be changed in form. Games and even arguments (on any subject) have to be policed, as well as markets! Even casual conversation has a tendency to run into altercation and then into a fight. But this sketch must be limited to the issues in the economic and intellectual life (in the fairly narrow meaning of science and closely related activities), ignoring play, sociability, cultural pursuits, and sex and family relations, all of which are intrinsically at least as important.

In our consideration of economics we are concerned with the political policy of *laisser faire,* i.e., simply *free* co-operation or mutual consent in all joint activity in the use of any means to achieve any end. (The categories of end and means, hence that of economy, cannot be given any really satisfactory definition.) The policy rests on the *ethical* principle of freedom, the *right* of any person to choose his own ends and to pursue them in his own way, and, as an obvious corollary, the *duty* or moral obligation of each to respect the same right in others. The "science" (if it should be called such) of economics (here, economic theory) is relative to this policy and this ethic. Its function is to show by analysis of market competition how freedom of exchange works out automatically (without central control) to an organization of production and distribution on a national and world scale, to show the kind of system that results under specified conditions, and to show the results of interference in specified ways by the state or other agencies. (Market competition presupposes purely impersonal behavior; hence involves no "competition" in the common meaning of rivalry.) The analysis shows how, under the conditions necessary for its existence, this organization achieves *efficiency* in the utilization of resources and *justice* in the distribution of the joint product, efficiency being defined by the ends chosen by individuals and justice by the principle of equality in relations of reciprocity, giving each the product contributed to the total by his own performance ("what a man soweth that shall he also reap"). But, as we have seen, any "higher" form of justice is provided for by freedom to co-operate on any other terms

or through any other form of organization on which the parties may agree.[3]

In the face of the theoretical appeal of the principle of free enterprise, and its period of conspicuous and recognized success, and the noncomprehension and incompetence of the general public in relation to it, with the resulting stupidity of much of the criticism to which it has been subjected, there still are theoretical and practical considerations that weaken and go far toward destroying the case in its favor. As the theory of the system has been more fully worked out in the light of criticism and of experience, in the generations since Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was published in 1776, more and more implicit assumptions have been brought to light, conditions more or less contrary to fact, that must be fulfilled if the working of the system is to be such as can be ethically approved. Many of these conditions could be established only by social action going far beyond the *laisser faire* ideal of policing against force and fraud, even in the broadest definition of terms that have no objective or precise meaning; others could never be established by any human means. The issue, which may be stated before going further and should be kept in mind from here on, centers in the fact that social action means "politics" of some variety, conducted by the same frail human nature that performs with such unsatisfactory results in economic relations. This fact raises doubts as to whether the remedy may not involve the same evils in a form as bad or worse, or others intrinsically worse. The romantic character of political power and the psychological law that distance lends enchantment create a systematic temptation to imagine a political system as much or more idealized in comparison with probable reality than the most extreme conception of open-market economic

[3] Full scope is allowed for life devoted to contemplation or ascetic ideals, subject only to the condition of self-support or voluntary support by others. As a matter of historical fact, of course, the whole movement for freedom was an incident of a revolution in the mores that discredited idleness or parasitism and all submissiveness and credulity, in favor of activity, independence, and responsible self-assertion. The good life came to be conceived in terms of ends achieved through intelligent use of means (the meaning of "economy") and especially in terms of *progress* through the accumulation of resources and knowledge, and growth of taste. But this is not logically essential. What is essential (after recognition that important truth can be discovered by critical investigation) is the gradual discovery that there is a presumption of mutual advantage in all free association, resting on a new faith in human intelligence and morality, which replaced the dogma of original sin.

order ever was. Incidentally, our inherited religious tradition has always treated the position and powers of rulers as sacred (without suggesting the rule of law, other than the "Law of God," necessarily interpreted by rulers themselves) and has regarded as sinful the use or quest of economic power, if not its possession.

Relative to this issue, another and even harder truth must imperatively be kept in mind. There are different principles of justice and right, which conflict among themselves, at least in application to the stern facts of life, where alone they have practical meaning. Such conflicts between basic values often underlie the alternative evils mentioned above. The pluralism of human nature culminates in an ethical pluralism, also the product of emergent evolution. It is easy to condemn a social arrangement because it runs counter to some ideal and to endorse another which would or might avoid or lessen that particular evil, without duly considering effects which the change would actually have upon the achievement of other values quite as important. A large part of the social problem centers just here. Especially, freedom and progress, the distinctive values of modern civilization, conflict with the older ones of order and security, but of course do not invalidate and supersede them; and there seems to be no principle of compromise that can be stated in words and that is of much help in making concrete political decisions. Men must be keenly aware of the problems and use judgment, and be tolerant and patient! They must accept the inevitability of gradualness, while striving for possible improvement. Taking moral principles too seriously may be as bad as not taking them seriously enough.[4]

In our present compass it is possible only to present a list of the main grounds for criticizing the free-enterprise organization, grounds which are valid in terms of some ideal, whether or not they are finally valid on balance. First, a rough dichotomy; some of the defects have to do with the mechanics of the system, as it actually operates, "human nature being as it is," in contrast with the assumption of (instrumentally) rational behavior. Others center in ethical principles in relation

[4] The conflict between representatives of these two tendencies is one of the most serious in politics, as the issue itself is one of the deepest in the moral life. Moral absolutism makes discussion impossible, and the situation is indefinitely aggravated when religious absolutism is superadded, as it tends to be. It is the essence of religious belief that all discussion and all questioning of "the truth" is wicked, truth meaning my truth, which is never based on critical examination.

to unalterable social facts, and raise questions regarding the factual as well as the ethical presuppositions of the individualism which is the basis of historical liberalism. Under the head of mechanics, the weakness that is practically and theoretically most serious is the tendency of economic activity to go in waves of expansion and contraction, both in a particular industry relative to others and, especially, in production on the whole — the business cycle. A condition of boom alternates with one of depression, the latter bringing disastrous unemployment and suffering. These symptoms are an expression of an essential weakness in all social relations based on individual freedom. All human conduct is more or less speculative, and when it is directed toward change and improvement it is more so. But when activity is individualistically organized, a far more speculative element is introduced, since what it is rational for any individual to do depends on what others will do, and there is theoretically no solution except to reach a mutual understanding and establish a consensus in advance. Such a result calls for political action of a sort that must largely nullify the principle of individual freedom. The intricacies of the resulting economic and political problem are the subject of intense controversy among specialists and of a voluminous literature.

The only other mechanical problem that can be mentioned here is the familiar one of monopoly. About this we can say only that it is both badly misunderstood and grossly exaggerated in the popular mind. Much monopoly in the technical meaning is not only inevitable in a free and progressive economy; it must be called positively good. The principle is illustrated by the deliberate granting of monopoly power in the patenting of inventions, and a great deal of other monopoly is essentially of the same nature, a stimulus to devising and introducing useful innovations. But much is not, and it is a serious problem to differentiate between the good and the bad (both features are present in the patent system itself) and to make and enforce regulations to secure the best possible balance.

More serious, at least in a philosophical sense, are the evils of the second class, involving social-ethical problems. Only the most essential facts can be noted here. Economic freedom means freedom to use means to achieve ends; the means include one's own personal capacities and external materials and instruments, which one owns or controls — either is useless without the other and both are useless with-

out knowledge of technical processes. Freedom is empty without *power,* and its effective content depends both on the possession of power (in all these forms) and on what the individual actually wants to do with power. But both power and wants or tastes come to the individual chiefly through the processes of the society in which he lives; especially by inheritance, biological and cultural, through the family. Thus social policy cannot possibly treat the individual as a datum in any of these respects, since he is in fact largely the creation of social action. Hence the main social problem becomes that of the kind of individuals, or persons, and primary groups that are to be created. The family is much more real as a social unit than the individual, and itself exists only in a hierachy of larger communities.

The economic problem that lies nearest the surface arises out of the unequal distribution of productive capacity. The large if not predominant role of inheritance (not of property alone, as commonly assumed, but equally of capital in the form of personal qualities) runs counter to individualistic conceptions of justice, even of a fair competition, not to mention more idealistic standards. The role of luck must be considered in relation to fair and interesting sport and the distribution of prize money. Because both property and personal capacity are so largely historical creations — neither given by nature nor produced by individual effort — there is a tendency for inequality to increase cumulatively. Those who at any time have more are in that much better position to acquire still more. Through the family, and other institutions, this goes on beyond the individual life. And it should be stressed — because it is generally ignored — that this tendency applies not only to personal capacities but to taste and appreciation, to all culture, which is humanly more important than means of gratification.

Finally, some mention must be made of the limitations of the whole economistic view of life and conduct — the view, that is, in terms of the use of means to achieve ends. There really are no "ends" in any final sense — they are rather milestones on the way ahead and become means as fast as they are achieved — and the qualities of good and bad belong about as much to means as to ends in any right use of the terms. In play, for example, the end-means relation is largely reversed; the objectives are unreal; they are set up arbitrarily to make the activity interesting. In fact, both economic and political relations have about as much the character of play, of competitive sport, as that

of satisfying wants that can be regarded as real. And the notion of economy has very limited application to any explorative or problem-solving or creative activity, where there is no end that can be defined or measured in advance.

As the writer is only too keenly aware, all that has been said in this section sheds little light on the question of what is to be done; it only calls attention, and that inadequately, to the complexities of the problem set by individual freedom in economic activity and relationships. But we must turn to the deeper problem of individual freedom in intellectual pursuits. Here again only a few general observations can be offered. We must ignore what would naturally be the first question, the vitally important economic problem of the "support" of cultural and creative life. We have already pointed out that the whole modern movement of liberation was on one side a doubly indirect consequence of the growth of interest in natural science. On one hand science was bound up with technology, hence economics, which as a direct interest was the other main ferment; and on the other hand the issue overtly argued and fought over in the transitional centuries was tolerance for sectarian religious differences. This has little in common with intellectual freedom rightly conceived, which came out of the struggle as an unintended result. The freedom of natural science itself today is, of necessity, only partial, the role of arbitrary power large; and large also is the role in the minds of scientists themselves of numerous interests much less exalted than the self-sacrificing or wholly unselfish pursuit and dissemination of "pure" truth. Yet comparatively, science is free, and its freedom rests on the general acceptance by its votaries of a rather high and austere ethical ideal. Its phenomenal success has offered a strong temptation to students of the human, historical, or moral disciplines to adopt or imitate its procedure, or pretend to do so, and to clamor for the application of the scientific method to social problems. And there has been much yielding to this temptation. But that is just what it is, and our last few paragraphs must consist of an attempt to expose the error as one of the most depressing signs respecting the capacity of modern man — the best minds — to solve by thinking the problems that now probably have to be solved in that way if any civilized life is to continue on earth. For, critical thinking once started, there seems to be no way quietly

to turn it off (all over the world at once) and revert to older bases of order.

To begin with, natural science in the study of nature itself raises problems far more serious than it solves. Its success lies in yielding *power,* and has made it plain that man is not really fit to be trusted with much power, individually or collectively. If only he were just an instrumentally intelligent animal, he would use power in subduing nature to the support of more and more healthy human beings, biologically speaking, and the matter would be fairly simple. But, as we have noted, the development of intelligence is associated with the proliferation of new ends, or purposes not embodied in particular definable ends. Perhaps the worst case is the erection of power itself into an end — outright dominance over other persons — or pseudo ends that are symbols of power, their concrete form being a historical accident. The real import of economic issues is greatly reduced by the fact that our wants are so largely rooted in a desire to be like other people or to be different, in some way that is a sign of superiority. Each wants to have more of anything, little matter what, of which there is not enough to satisfy everyone.

Moreover, man soon developed ideas of "beauty" or, in general, *quality* of life and its impedimenta that he calls "higher values," the pursuit of which clashes with the "lower" requisites of life itself. With the progress of civilization his tastes become more expensive, without apparent limit, and lead to aristocratic scorn for the means and activities that must support alike the higher and lower pursuits. How far and when the higher values are really higher, or really values at all, and not mere symbols conferring distinction, is a question earnestly and heatedly discussed, without much progress toward agreement on the answer. They certainly contain a large admixture of the second element. And they certainly derive very largely from the particular culture in which they happen to be recognized; hence the issues in social conflict run into the ranking of cultures, where argument is especially difficult and dangerous. The burning and menacing problems of the modern world arise largely in this connection, and by no means only in international relations.

To the student, viewing the scene with Olympian detachment, as well as to the publicist or statesman directly up against issues of peace or war, life or death, the problem presents two related aspects, one

general, the other more specific. The obvious general problem is whether men have the capacity to resolve conflicts of values by discussion — meaning in any other way than the "natural" one of fighting it out to the final test of who survives, or what, if anybody or anything with any claim to human concern. (We cannot here develop the close connection between the warfare of nations or alliances and of classes formed on one or another line; machinery exists for limiting fighting between individuals — relatively unimportant anyway.) Now it is a presupposition of any discussion — as more than an ephemeral amusement, a more or less amiable contest tending less or more toward resort to force — that the natural solution must be repudiated absolutely; for we all agree that might does not make right. But agreement on that point does not mean agreement on a peaceful alternative to fighting.

The more specific question is the role of scientific method in relation to value problems, and what has been briefly said on the general question logically disposes of this one. For the scientific solution *is* simply the natural one just suggested, the test of force and survival. Carried into discussion of human conflicts, the categories and procedures of science become self-contradictory and self-destructive. Science here means one of two things — which, incidentally, have been strangely confused in the history of liberal thought. It may mean adopting the Olympian point of view of watch what happens and explain it, without moving to do anything about it. Or it may mean attempting control. But that means somebody controlling something — logically (in this connection) everybody controlling everybody else! And in practice it must mean an unpredictable scramble and fight for control. In any case, we are back to the "grim arbitrament of war," of some sort, on some scale. And, incidentally, or rather fundamentally, the much advocated and attempted procedure of "preaching," either moral idealism or metaphysics, is from the scientific point of view the same thing over again. It is either a phenomenon to be explained or the use of a particular technique — the one the user thinks will work — and leads at once to the same impasse. In fact, the attempt of everyone to convert everyone else could not proceed far on the basis of such gentle arguments as the spoken or written word.

Even the "pure" science program of merely watching, describing, and explaining could not possibly be carried out unless all scientists —

self-selected as a group — were to organize themselves into a party dictatorship and secure the absolute control that is necessary over any subject matter if it is to be studied effectively. Even astronomy and geology do not get far without using the results of laboratory experimentation. Newton's discovery of gravitation rested on Galileo's study of falling bodies. And the sciences of man, insofar as they are sciences, depend on observation of the results of manipulation, especially in medicine (physical and mental), also in politics and other administrative activities, and increasingly in the psychological laboratory. Not much knowledge of man is to be had — or especially to be applied — without his consent and co-operation, which presupposes that consensus upon values which is the main problem. Any attempt at use of the unqualified procedures of natural science in solving problems of human relations is just another name for a struggle for power, ultimately a completely lawless one. Something not too remote from scientific procedure is available in enforcing a given law, hence in connection with the problems of premodern society. But the essence of free society is that it deliberately attempts to change and improve established practice; hence it must find norms somewhere outside the factual space-time world.

Science, pure or pragmatic, is *not* the answer and has no clue to the answer to the essential problems of free society. Unless, that is, they are to be solved by war, which is the only observational and manipulative criterion of values, and we hate to admit that it is any real test of values at all. The various sciences, natural as well as social, have a very great deal to tell us about man and society; it is no service to the doctrine of spiritual freedom to pretend that we are not *mostly* mechanism, physical, cultural, and perhaps psychic. Yet finally we must understand ourselves and each other, and act intelligently in relation to both, in other terms altogether. A simple and conclusive proof, by illustration, is the fact that the scientist cannot apply his science to his own distinctive behavior, or that of another scientist. If the course and result of an experiment or investigation can be predicted in advance, it is no longer a problem and the project will not be carried out. Science can produce fairly conclusive evidence that man is merely a mechanism, that scientific description and explanation can answer all questions about him that can be intelligently asked. But the fact remains that man raises the question and marshals and

appraises the evidence; and mechanism does not have these capacities or traits.

With this chiefly negative result, inadequately grounded and sketchily set forth, limits of space and the difficulty of the constructive side of the problem compel us to be content here, admittedly at the point where the subject begins to get really interesting.

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