

## EQUALITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY\*

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Not even the most doctrinaire egalitarian will deny that heredity affects, if it does not determine, individual intelligence, strength, vitality, and the capacity to develop certain skills. There are three other dimensions of inequality, however, which are universal, and yet commonly over-looked or even denied. To what extent their basis is phylogenetic may be open to debate, but beyond question is the fact that all three are deeply entrenched in acquired human nature.

First, everywhere and in all times males are dominant over females—despite current fads in American cartoon humor. The so-called matriarchal societies have been cited as an exception, but these are in fact only matrilineal. There as elsewhere, in Lionel Tiger's words, the public forum is a male forum. Institutional life is controlled by males; only males apparently have the capacity to "release followership behavior" in the critical areas of economic activity, defense against outside invasion, and maintenance of internal order. Only men form those "bonds" upon which hierarchical arrangements are founded.

Second, children are universally subordinate to their parents. Like male dominance, this condition can also be found among the other social animals, notably non-arboreal apes. The human case is, of course, complicated by slower maturation and the peculiar need to master the arbitrary symbols of language. The young must be inculcated with the basic values and traditions of the inclusive group while being

trained in those skills required for taking their place in that group as functioning adult. Adults are motivated to expend time and energy in these tasks by an expectation that some measure of authority and normative respect will accrue to them.

Third, there is a universal struggle for dominance among adult males. The ethologists have conjectured that such behavior is "programmed" in male behavior phylogenetically; it can be found among all those apes who presently face ecological conditions similar to those man's proto-hominid ancestors experienced. Individual fighting ability has its place, but most of the fighting *within* the troop, territorial group, or clan, is "ritualized," and it is not clear that size and strength are in every species of paramount importance. Strength of "will" may be the sovereign factor, supported by an ability to enlist the aid and cooperation of other males within the hierarchy of dominance.

According to Robert Ardrey and Konrad Lorenz, aggressiveness and the establishment of dominance serve many essential functions. Individuals thereby are spaced over an available habitat. The frequent breeding of genetically superior males is ensured. An order of dominance provides leadership and discipline. Quarreling and sporadic fighting are reduced in scope. Females and juvenile males find protectors. The problem of defense against intra- or inter-specific enemies is more readily handled since the disposition of, say, a baboon troop, is settled in advance; the dominant males face the foe directly, those lower in rank position themselves at the flanks, and the ones needing protection huddle in the middle. A sort of noblesse oblige price is paid for dominant status, an obligation to run

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the major risk in defense and, in some instances, cooperative hunting of dangerous game.

Dominance once achieved—and in all animal societies rank is competitively settled fairly early in the male career—is not vulnerable to continuous challenge, and is in fact granted a kind of “legitimacy.” When a dominant baboon approaches senility, for example, his leadership may be increasingly disregarded as younger males achieve prominence, yet he will still be accorded what can only be described as respect and a measure of deference.

Perhaps the most important fact to note about primate status and dominance—and presumably about our proto-hominid ancestral ranking as well—is that it is all achieved. Apes and monkeys pass on only genetic superiority or inferiority. They do not transmit status as such, so that social life affords a scope to equality of opportunity that is unknown among men. The uniquely human inheritance of status has played a complex role in history, at once buttress to continuity and order and also a constant potential for envy, resentment, and even rebellion.

A minimal interference with primordial equal opportunity is inevitable. Whether the basic family organization is consanguineal or conjugal there is an obvious tendency as well as motivation to aid close relatives, especially one's own children, in the struggle for status or rank. Under the simplest of conditions, most fathers encourage and teach their sons to excel if possible in whatever economic and warrior skills are prized. With the advent of extensive property relations both the effort and the transmission became much more marked.

For the same reason even the modern division of labor, which vastly expands opportunity, cannot grant completely equal opportunity. Certain specialized skills and especially supervisory functions require a preliminary training and conditioning that cannot be—at least are not—delayed until either a small child's talents or his capability as a natural leader have been manifested. In one family but not in another a child will be encouraged, taught, prepared for and subjected to standards of behavior such as thrift, application, deferred gratification, personal achievement, and the discipline of impulse

required to manipulate the personalities of associates. The nursery can bestow a competitive advantage even when inheritance of both superior genes and class status are lacking.

Throughout history *direct* inheritance of status, however, has been the general rule. The stage has constantly been set for a status-envy and status-hostility which are lacking, so far as can be described, among social primates. The types of inequality previously noted, male vs. female, child vs. parents, and male vs. male *without* ascriptive privilege have throughout most of history been accepted or at least tolerated. All of them and others are now bitterly contested, but that is an emergent condition of the modern world.

Direct inheritance of status, which narrowly restricts and confines a majority of men in the social struggle, has never gone uncontested. The Covenant of the ancient Hebrews guaranteed all men equal justice in the sight of God, whatever inequalities might be preserved among men, and it was the inequality of slavery which most stirred their conscience. The idea of one man owning another never went unquestioned among the Greeks, despite the sophistical reasoning presumably based upon assumed economic necessity that was indulged by Plato and Aristotle. Indeed the Stoics characterized slavery as an unnatural condition and affirmed the equality of all men—by which they meant that common humanity takes precedence over human differences, which they did not deny.

Even earlier Isocrates had noted one key distinction between equality and equal opportunity: that which gives to each man his due. This notion, of each man's due, has provided continuous tension in the Western tradition. The almost equally continuous effort to restrict the notion of what is due to already established rank has never gone unchallenged for long. A man's due has generally been compromised by his birth into one stratum or another, but the record of protest on one hand and strenuous attempts to rationalize things-as-they-are on the other makes plain that uneasiness never has been quelled when some men have been categorically denied the opportunity to strive to attain to this or that standard, when, in short,

they have not received their due.

At the same time, we know that the human being has an innate tendency to form social hierarchies, a phylogenetic impulse that Lionel Tiger has called the male-bonding propensity. But we also know that in the hunting - gathering stage of human development, as presumably among the proto-hominids, any hierarchy had an extremely low profile and was never hereditary: each individual had to prove his capacity to lead or stand in a special relationship to the leader that was earned. Hereditary status awaited both settled horticulture and an economic surplus. In Africa, Asia, Europe, and South America much the same kind, and extent, of hereditary status independently emerged. Rigid class orders, of an inclusive straight-line type, were superimposed upon the division of labor. The fact of their universal appearance indicates that they, too, were probably inevitable.

Under conditions of advanced industrialization, however, neither classes as such nor an inclusive straight-line organization of occupational status are functionally appropriate, and perhaps they are not even possible. Arthur Koestler's dictum, "Wherever there is life, it must be hierarchically organized," applies to social as well as organic life. But organization in complex entities of neither kind is of the inclusive straight-line type. Within complex organisms there are holons, subordinate anatomic-physiological configurations which assume temporary independence and precedence in certain situations, and "feed back" consequences and information to higher centers of control.

Likewise, in complex industrialized societies the inclusive straight-line hierarchy, which characterized later pre-industrial societies, is replaced by several interlocking hierarchies, and control by higher authority is both specific and limited. To some extent each holon—school district, water authority, fire brigade, local factory of a corporation—operates, must operate, as an autonomous, self-contained unit. The worried master class in the Soviet Union, faced with the threat of systematic breakdown, have with whatever ideological reluctance increasingly sacrificed inclusive straight-line control.

Even in Russia, the government can no longer

remain the sole power center. Organizational interdependence, as Peter Drucker has pointed out, is the major pressure now being exerted within advanced economies. Further, he says that across such "pluralisms" worry fades about precedence or place in the general scheme of things. There is no "power elite," or any other kind of elite for that matter, in modern America. The successful businessman, the top rock musician, academician, or Air Force general, knows where he stands, and can be placed, only within his own bailiwick. No one really outranks anyone else, except in his own field, and for that reason the etiquette of precedence has become a lost art.

And so, while inequality is necessary and inevitable, it need not be rigidly organized, nor in an inclusive straight line. Most certainly, inequality need not be spelled out on the basis of social class. We hear a great deal about social class today, but interest in a social phenomenon, as Pitirim A. Sorokin pointed out, more often than not tends to wax with the decline of that phenomenon. In any event, whether Marx, or W. Lloyd Warner or C. Wright Mills is called to testify, no good case can be made for America as class society.

The weight of the evidence is on the side of the nay-sayers. Inheritance of status has been reduced to perhaps a minimal degree, and could be reduced much further only by the elimination of our family system—a rather Draconian measure. A class system is always supported by law, but American law has stripped away almost all special privileges or "immunities"—except those of labor unions, which have been expanded. The drift in law now questions the right of testation, protects tenant at expense of landlord, and sanctions a political redistribution of income. The "socialization of law," according to Roscoe Pound, has been achieved in the United States and Great Britain.

A continuous high rate of mobility, in space and status, has broken the ancient identification of person with place, which even in the past was never so secure in this country as it had been in Europe. But a class system requires something more than legal support, and that is inheritance of estate by the few and a sort of "inheritance" of Old Home Town by the many. Psychologi-

cally, class is maintained by recognition of social inferiority and superiority within a community where people have known one another for years, even generations, and where such acknowledgement is attached to and assumed by total personalities. Today, very few people off the job. The social world off the job feriority or superiority acknowledged relates to the job, and very uncertainly to those same people off the job. The social world off the job does not encompass them in a structure of status. In a highly mobile world anyone, off the job, can readily be avoided, and he cannot command deference.

This is not to say that rank has disappeared, only that rank in any real social-class sense is gone. Obviously some people still have more money, prestige, and power than others. But superior rank in the modern context is a function of the division of labor, not of social class, and the operation of such rank does not tread heavily on the lives of others. At the same time, it has become of paramount importance. Research shows that occupation is precisely the sovereign tag with which modern Americans rank themselves and others, even though, as we have already seen, who ranks whom in a different field or organization is becoming difficult to ascertain. It is not who you are (family) or where you are from (place of birth) which serves as primary identification: it is what you do, and this you can do as readily in one place as another.

No social system is ever going to achieve completely equal opportunity so long as the family institution endures. Nevertheless, the range of inequality continues to contract, along with family influence. Inheritance tax policy weakens family retention of status. Inter-generational studies have shown a rapid deterioration of wealth-transmission from father to son and especially a tendency for top-ranking professionals and business executives to be drawn from families where the father worked in a different field, or held an unrelated and lower post, or both. The availability of tax-paid higher education to all who can qualify, and many more besides, makes access to high occupational position relatively easy. The evidence is clear that being "born well" less controls one's opportunity to succeed than ever before.

The achievement of nearly equal opportunity does not destroy inequality. The division of labor cannot dispense with it: the irreducible minimum is that required to get the world's work done. There are some who must do an organization's detailed and routine work. Others must supervise and integrate that work. Still others, very few, must plan the organization's goals and enforce norms of operational efficiency. No holon is exempted from these necessities, any more than is the inclusive organization of which it may be a part. If not exactly command, there must be autonomy and capability to enforce direction of the activities of others. The general upgrading of skills and income has for many tended to obscure one point: the proportion of those in leader or manager roles remains constant, and by the very nature of organisation must remain constant. Ideology does not affect the matter nor does revolutionary yearning.

In the absence of social classes by any significant definition, can the division of labor by itself form the basis of social as well as occupational organization? Yes, provided that the ranks within it are understood to be legitimate, especially if the belief is widespread that those who occupy high positions deserve them by reason of their indispensable contribution to the common good. But with the accelerated egalitarian drift this belief is much less widely held than heretofore; it deteriorates in those who hold high position as well as those who do not.

The evidence appears in manifold guise. Many, particularly younger, business executives shirk their essential tasks in order to spend time and energy upon "social problems" for which they have neither competence nor responsibility. Studies which compare older and younger executives indicate a diminishing urge to strive for both personal aggrandizement and organizational efficiency. Salaries and wages, *before* "progressive taxation," are tending to contract among various layers: as between professor and instructor, between skilled worker and immediate supervisor. More important, the educated young in large numbers are in flight from where the action is, business management, to tax-maintained protected slots in the educational - welfare

bureaucracy. When did you ever hear one of those bright kids on College Bowl announce that he intended to go into business? They all want to teach, head for a foundation, or work for the government. Whether the misinformed cliché used for rationalization be executive suite or gray-flannel suit or stultifying conformity, an increasing number and proportion of our college graduates want no part of business and industry. Such distaste runs highest in the large eastern prestige universities, and one consequence is the steady displacement of old-school tie types in the highest echelons of management with first-generation collegians who graduated with a technical training from some state university.

How much the leftist ideologues who have dominated our liberal arts faculties for four decades are personally responsible would be difficult to prove, but the fact is clear enough: a growing majority of college youngsters at least verbally scorn striving for success—and by statement or implication those who have succeeded—in favor of what they call service or helping others. Not many will consider the possibility that they might serve and help others more effectively by helping to augment the national wealth, and not too incidentally their own, than by signing petitions or taking case records of the voluntarily unemployed or even by joining the Peace Corps.

The thought of striving hard for self-gain, of being dissatisfied with a modestly comfortable career, in short of achievement, stirs deep guilt in many of them. Such guilt reflects an inner struggle between older values of self-validation in career success, for which the Protestant Ethic serves as shorthand, and newly emergent values, egalitarian-leveling values which contest any mark of superiority in self, other, or even way of life. These new values are not structured, indeed are almost inchoate, but what lies behind an apparent floundering after this or that specific neo-liberal fad is consistent enough: a gathering urge to destroy the standards of civilization and institute a greater uniformity than is possible even in a primitive tribe. Phrased somewhat differently, the theme of equality is challenging that of equal opportunity to an extent and degree not previously known in this

country.

There are those who insist that nuns must dress like other women and priests must marry like other men. Parents should listen to their children, who have much to teach them, say the more progressive child-development people. Beat the drum in the company band and prove you are one of the boys, one book on how to be a successful executive advises. Female radicals insist that all male retreats—clubs, bars, lodges—must go; some of them are hot-foot to kick the primordial female habit of striving to become sexually attractive.

Whereas in all previous epochs the life-style of those in the lower ranks aspired upward, aspiration now moves in either direction. Attempted emulation of one's so-called betters has until recently been constant, in dress, deportment, recreation—every sport, including baseball and roller-skating, was first introduced in this country by the "upper classes." Now, the pot, clothes, speech cadence and argot, the blatant sex and "cool," not of the Negro striver but the Negro who embodies "soul", are being adopted or at least being toyed with by white youngsters who range from declared hippies to those unwilling to compromise their careers to the point of disaster.

There is much more than youthful revolt involved. Behavior of this kind reflects rather than challenges a general and deepening guilt-cussants of delinquency insisted upon society's lines of exclusion, and affirm standards. There is, for example, the social problems literature in sociology. In it, "society" has always been at fault. But whereas until recently most discussants of delinquency insisted upon society's responsibility to so change the delinquent's circumstances that he might be led to accept the life of ordinary respectability, of law-abiding citizenship, the more fashionable line now is to condemn the life of ordinary respectability as a hypocritical sham against which delinquents justifiably rebel. And the recent Negro *volte-face* in favor of separatism was preceded by a white-liberal propaganda effort to redefine integration as a shoddy goal for a "racial subculture" that is on innumerable counts superior to a racist, chauvinistic, puritanical and uptight "white society."

Western civilization itself has been called villain. As Frank S. Meyer has pointed out, for several decades intellectuals have been expanding the doctrine that all is relative, that the worth of any belief or institution is in the eye of the beholder. Push-pin is as good as poetry, so that when Cornell University in the spring of 1968 was visited with violence, office-seizure, and a display of guns, Dean Stuart M. Brown, Jr. condoned these student activities and condemned the claim of an economics professor—that Western civilization is superior to all others, which had angered members of the professor's class—as “a special and specifically obvious case of the racism which black people find throughout the white community.”

What this and a multitude of similar incidents signify is a crisis of authority. The gut propositions that nothing is better than anything else (relativism) and no one is better than anyone else (equality) create noise in the streets but, far worse, they insidiously erode the will of men whose responsibility it is to order, direct, supervise, and lead. There is no intent to sound the alarm. Doubtless the retained faith of the American majority in their traditional values and in the continuity of the American experience will survive for some time. Nevertheless, the diminishing self-confidence of those charged with the responsibility of wielding authority is impressive.

Business leaders sound like defendants in court when they deny what they are and what they are trying to do, when they confusedly talk about social justice, about how they must become educators, improve the cultural life of the community, and the like. When they stammer like this they question their own authority, because providing goods and services at a profit needed for expansion and contingency planning is the only function that could conceivably justify their authority.

In a similar way, Marine officers commit slow role-suicide when they accede to “social conscience” and special treatment for the Negro recruits in such apparently minor but symbolically enormous matters as rebellious haircuts and salutes. Among academicians, however, can be found some who appear to grovel in abdication. Those administrators and profes-

sors who submit to student-dictated demands for “relevance” (that is, instantaneous and total dissent from whatever is) in course offerings or content, or who invite students to advise them on curricular goals, declare their own unfitness and admit they have no function to perform. If students arrive on campus already equipped to decide what and why they should study, is there any point in maintaining institutions of higher learning?

Authority as such, wielded by anyone anywhere, is in retreat. Contrary to liberal mythology, authority cannot be defended by the art of verbal persuasion alone, not even in the form of dialogue. In the final analysis, it cannot be proven that anyone *should* obey or respect anyone else, any more than it can be proven that someone *should* have more money than anyone else, or more talent. Differences of this kind can only be rejected out of hand, resented with bitter impotence, or accepted with or without reserve.

It is an unstable combination of inner compliance and outer restraint which motivates him who is under control of authority. At some indeterminate point in the rejection of authority, inner compliance lapses into anarchy and outer restraint is transformed into totalitarian force. The urge to equality, carried to its logical conclusion, first spreads anarchy and then calls forth reactions, for the child is left with no acceptable basis for obeying his parents, the soldier to obey his officer, the student to read what is assigned, the citizen to obey his country's laws, or even the employee to perform the task allotted to him.

Rhetoric and fact stand in uncertain relationship. The inflated rhetoric of egalitarianism, which attempts to justify the destruction of authority, condemns all inequalities to a decibel level unheard in previous epochs. The fact that there is now less inequality in America than heretofore, the fact that there is less social inequality here than in, say, Great Britain, or France, or Germany, and a great deal less than in Soviet Russia, or India, or any of the so-called underdeveloped nations, does not affect the matter—a theme enlarged upon below.

The chief reason why there is less social inequality in America than anywhere else in the

world is America's preeminence in capitalist development. Henry Ford was the chief—albeit totally unaware—revolutionary. He and a few others forsook the old “class-market” and instead sought to build and supply a “mass market.” Then and only then did social class in any historic sense finally depart from America. The major shift to a “classless society” comes not with Marxist dogma but when the capitalist market is attuned to the big numbers. Privilege was a gulf when turn-of-the-century automobile manufacturers sold only luxury models. Privilege becomes a series of minute graduations when GM offers cars for every pocketbook, cars that are similarly styled.

How much democratic ideology merely rationalized the contraction of inequality within industrial society, and how much democratic ideology itself contributed to the emergence of a classless society, is open to debate. In either event, democratic ideology is somewhat contradictory, and on the basic issue of equality: all men are equal, and they should have an equal chance to excel. Equality, nevertheless, has consistently played second fiddle to equal opportunity. The majority gave, they continue to give, this notion their primary loyalty: men may not be literally equal, either in socio-economic condition or by genetic inheritance, but all men have or should have equal opportunity to succeed.

Factual inequality, in other words, contracted in company with maintained allegiance to the dominance-striving of our photo-hominid ancestry, defined for most as equal opportunity. To do what? To surpass one's competitors. Stated that baldly, and carried to conceivable limits, there could only be a few winners and a multitude of losers. Nothing of the kind ever happened, because the reference points of success for the majority were never very high. The reference was impoverished compatriots in the homeland for successive waves of immigrants, and they reached success by attaining average American standards of education, housing, speech, dress, and comportment. For most of their children and grandchildren success has meant more education than their parents acquired, and perhaps suburban living to accompany a better job. For most Americans of any

vintage success has meant visibly moving up and out in terms of standards already established at a previous point in the life-cycle. Since rapid mobility has accompanied a constant rise of average standards, in a modest sense a majority have been enabled to succeed.

But just as individuals close open doors when they make a choice in marriage or career, so does some price have to be paid for whatever apparent gains a social system affords. Equal-opportunity ideology exacts a psychic toll on those who cannot succeed or who might otherwise remain reasonably contented. In an age of abundance, resentment can no longer be directed against a few who are rich, only against the many who have good jobs. In other words, the number of people with whom the unsuccessful person compares himself to his own disadvantage constantly increases.

“It is rather discouraging to consider the possibility,” says Jackson Tody, “that the expansion of educational and occupational opportunities in the contemporary world may *increase* the feeling of deprivation in the also-rans.” According to Helmut Schoeck: “Only the existence of unequal external opportunities makes it possible for the unsuccessful individual to live with himself.” The failure can no longer blame bad luck or “the system” when the pressure he feels is not to remain where he is but to accept unwanted free job training.

But if equal opportunity fosters discontent among a minority, the drive to literal equality creates far worse and more discontent for minority and majority alike. Consider, for example, current attempts to provide “compensatory justice” to Negroes for injuries done to their ancestors by whites whose descendants are themselves a minority. Negroes can be made equal by *lowering* standards for them alone in education and on the job? This is an elusive and impossible goal. Instant achievement cannot be conferred by this or any other means. Efforts to supply it can only lead to a re-definition of social inferiority in terms of charity and protection. To inform another person, even indirectly, that he is not capable of meeting standards of dress, punctuality, manner and performance that are applied to others is to deny his humanity. Lowered standards only

perpetuate racism with a condescension that supplied the Black Panthers with much of their fury.

Curiously enough, the drive to literal equality is perceived as a greater threat by those who are marginally well-off than by those who are wealthy—among whom can be found many of the publicists of equality, who presumably believe they will be left unscathed. But the discontent of the former is growing, even though it remains virtually unremarked in the media and the college. It will inevitably continue to grow, because demands that everyone should be treated alike violate the most basic of all subjective standards of justice: he who by his own effort measures up to a declared standard should be rewarded, while he who fails to do so should be penalized or at least go unrewarded. This is how children in every known society are socialized within the family, and prepared for and brought into the larger community outside the home.

Those who have criticized various schemes to guarantee everyone, whether he works or not, a fixed level of comfortable living with tax money miss the point when they argue that more people than ever would remain voluntarily unemployed. Of course they would, but that condition alone would not have disastrous consequences. People on welfare can already reject unwanted jobs, and thousands of women are imported every year from Mexico, Canada, and Ireland for domestic service. But the protective measures which insulate the social worker's charges from distasteful labor are not trumpeted in the headlines, and most taxpayers remain ignorant of them.

The guaranteed annual income is a different matter. Everyone would know exactly what the provisions are; they could not be hidden from public view. And it would be an experiment unique in history: to reward equally those who meet no generally accepted standard of striving or accomplishment and those who must do those repetitive or distasteful or dirty jobs which are essential for the preservation of social life—washing dishes, sweeping floors, collecting garbage, attending hospital wards, maintaining sewerage lines, guarding prisoners, pumping gasoline, and the like. Counter-resent-

ment would rise; there would be steady recruitment into embittered idleness of those who at one time boasted they they were poor but honest, who said they might not be rich but owed no man, who kept their heads high because they had never accepted, or had to accept, public charity. Meanwhile, those essential but bottom-drawer jobs would go unfilled.

Actually, the above sequence of events is not likely to occur. This one is more probable: at some point a reversal of policy would have to be started, and social reinforcement of the desire to be honest and non-indigent supplied by opening instead of closing the gap between those near the bottom and those at the bottom. But the price that would have to be paid in dislocation and disruption before that could be slowly and painfully done would come high.

Why is equality demanded and all inequalities denounced, if not by everyone then by enough people to rip tears in the fabric of order? To ask the question is to take a stand, and those who do ordinarily point to what they believe is a breakdown of controls. The family, it is said, has become child-centered and permissive, depriving children of the psychic freedom from want on impulse that only a set of principles can bestow. The courts are blamed for erasing distinctions between literature and obscenity, individual legal rights and special privileges for minorities, innocence and guilt, and for themselves raising questions about the right to punish, the right to affirm even that unequal treatment.

Religion, the argument continues, no longer guides and restricts. The loss of religious faith, according to British sociologist John Plamenatz, has removed Providence as the ultimate arbiter of that arrangement whereby some men are placed higher than others, in which "the most lowly placed in that order may find it easy to resign themselves to it and may acquire deep loyalties inside it, if not exactly to it." When instead, that arrangement is held to be something men may alter for their own good and benefit of others, then it loses legitimacy. All differences in rank and income must be justified, and repeated efforts to do so become futile. "It comes to be widely held that, if (inequality) cannot be justified, it ought to be abolished."



The breakdown of controls, in turn, is customarily traced to two emergent conditions of the modern era. The first is affluence. A failure to strive, even a disinclination to work, is no longer penalized. On one hand are welfare applicants who are not required to take any job that is beneath their subsidized dignity. On the other are non-working retired students whose parents supply money for pot, pills, beads, and expensive cars that head for those periodic rock festivals, where guttersnipe millionaires sing songs of protest against materialism.

With such conditions—which may be somewhat less permanent than many observers believe—only highly motivated individuals can reasonably be expected to exert more than marginal effort. Miraculously enough, most people continue to be so motivated, a fact which prompts the suspicion that striving may be the natural state of the human animal. But it has been claimed that the pressure of an economy of scarcity, that requires the work of all hands, is no longer exerted. In consequence, work for an increasing proportion of those who continue to strive—as always for private ends of self-respect—is less buttressed by the knowledge that each man's contribution is essential to the general welfare. Modern affluence offers a temptation to waver between idleness and purposeful effort, and thereby weakens for many that application in work which Freud said is necessary to bind men to reality.

The above view has merit, but more as reasonable inference than demonstration. While some categories of persons work much less than heretofore, others work much more. A general state of affluence, then, can have no uniform effect upon motivation.

A dual category of parasites has emerged, one near the top and the other at the bottom of the income scale, of a size that dwarfs any "leisure class" that ever existed when social classes were real. The toleration, indeed glorification, of these parasites has done more to discredit the notion that work is needed than any demonstrable fact. The obfuscation that is rife among us was illustrated by a well-known scholar's recent prediction that the labor force in a few years will be drastically reduced while the level of living continues to rise. In a separate

section of his report he predicted that moonlighting will increase by 50% in 5 years. In other words, in effect he is saying that we can well afford more parasites because some people are elected to work longer and harder.

Some of those elected are highly-competent technicians the demand for whose work far exceeds foreseeable supply. Others are business executives and professionals. "Class structure" has been turned upside down. For centuries those at the top of the heap worked less than others, if indeed they worked at all. But now, according to the detailed researches of Harold L. Wilensky, professionals and especially business executives work longer and harder than any other category in the division of labor, and he predicts they will have even less opportunity to enjoy leisure time in the immediate future. And no one, not even Professor Wilensky, has tried to explain why those who are victims of this "social injustice" should continue to submit. In any event, the present gross imbalance between effort and reward could lead to a breakdown of controls not envisioned in the usual discussions of affluence and its effects.

The second emergent condition most often associated with the breakdown of controls is the unprecedented tempo of change in the modern era. Peter Gay makes much of the German "son's revolt against the father" in the post-World War I decade. German youth, he says, lived in a world whose values and even assumptions departed from those of their parents. Some American social psychologists have raised the ante, insisting that "cohort gap" must replace generation gap, because the values and assumptions of youngsters separated by 5 - 7 years are now as disparate as they were between parents and all adolescents a decade ago.

The present rate of change is so rapid that middle-aged people, looking back to their own youth and what people believed and thought they knew at that time, feel the ground shifting beneath their feet in a prevalence of the strange and the temporary. Many of them are not sure any longer what they believe in, or whether what they cling to is, in the pervasive cliché, any longer relevant. A sense of bafflement erodes their faith in what they have accomp-

lished, even in what they are. The sheer noise of disputation around them, of claim and counter-claim, can make them uneasy about their own or anyone else's authority.

But again, as in the case of affluence, there is no simple cause - effect relationship. A very large majority of middle-aged citizens manage to stay on a fairly even keel. They don't abdicate to their own children. They try to obey even those new laws they cannot understand. They don't swap wives in the suburbs, no matter how "adult" the cinematic treatment of suburban sex. They work hard, remain patriotic enough to worry about what is being done to their country, and remain religious enough to ignore or misapprehend the whipper-snapper young clergymen who snidely preach atheism.

Much the same can be said about their children, albeit that majority is somewhat smaller and their general commitment to continuity with the past somewhat less. Amidst hedonic and anarchic blandishments there is continued allegiance to the Protestant Ethic. Watered down and compromised it may be, but most American youngsters are still willing to work hard, in school or out; they welcome the continuity of forming another family in their turn, and reach for self-validation in a career.

Despite affluence and perhaps chaotic change, only a minority albeit in the perspective of history a large one, by deed and belief seek to smash whatever is or, synonymously, to reject all inequalities. Only a minority renounce the opportunity to strive, and simultaneously seek the humiliation and destruction—at a conscious or unconscious level—of their own country. Be reminded also that they are either the special targets or special audiences of the professional wreckers operating out of the media, Congress, the academy, and the pulpit.

But why the minority? Why have they reacted to a total social setting in ways the majority have not? The answer cannot be found in emergent conditions and the impairment of controls alone, because history discloses gnostic heresies in every century. There were destructive chiliastic uprisings by, it is true, very small minorities, in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries, times conventionally associated with fixed standards of belief and unassailable hierarchical

arrangement.

Perhaps the modern era has not so much caused as it has released disaffection and alienation on a larger scale than in the few preceding decades. And if that is so, the scene before us might be at least partly explained in terms of a constant in human nature which varies in intensity from one individual to another as does striving for dominance, another constant in human nature. The hypothesis offered is this: the human propensity to create and maintain hierarchy is accompanied by a wish to see hierarchy destroyed. A majority of shifting size are tempted but quell the impulse. A minority of shifting size succumb. In this light, the salient difference between our time and the immediate past is the size of the minority.

There is a persistent error in social thought: if facts and changes in facts can be traced, then the attitudes which men adopt to their world can be explained, along with reorientations of thought and behavior. Actually, the relationship between social conditions and behavior is a tenuous one; it does exist, but in no simple or direct way. The reason why separates man from all other animals, including the primates. Alone possessing language, man acts and reacts not in terms of facts or things-as-they-are or even things-as-they-have-become. He acts and reacts to the *meaning* which those facts have for him, and such meaning cannot be directly ascertained in any study of either persisting or changing fact.

The "facts" man finds in his social world are mainly derived from pictures in his mind. For example, the staff of the *New Republic* are totally committed to John Galbraith's article of faith that unlimited spending in the public sector (tax money) will open the gate to a shining, if earthly, city. They warn that economic depression threatens because of the *fact* that the federal government is not taxing and spending enough money. Other writers have warned that depression threatens because of the *fact* that government taxing and spending have assumed monstrous proportions.

Ten years ago some of our most influential opinion makers worried about the problems of affluence. Today these same gentlemen warn about the seriousness of American poverty, at a time when poverty is infinitesimal by any con-

ceivable standard or comparison, when Negroes, for example, enjoy a higher median annual income than the population of Canada. Dissent was never more fashionable nor meticulously protected by law, but the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence frets that "the existing remedies to aggrieved persons" to speak, assemble, and protest, "are not adequate." Does fact have anything at all to do with the current inflation of impassioned rhetoric? A bewildered and frightened college dean, desperately and ineffectively trying to please everyone is, of course, in some academic circles a fascist - racist bastard.

Changes of meaning result from rhetorical manipulations of the passions and not from facts, not even changing facts. In turn, much of that manipulation stems from protest, not against this or that oftentimes relatively trivial deprivation or claimed injustice, but against the human condition.

Whatever sense of selfhood or ego other animals, including primates, may possess, must be rudimentary indeed, for they are locked into an eternal present. Only man, because of language, can in imagination both separate himself from and associate with others, far and near, in past and future as well as present. His ego isolates him from all others of his own kind; at the same time in imagination he associates himself from the self outward, in a time-expanded identification with the fate of nations, with history and the universe.

But his own time, to him, is that in which *the* critical events are taking place, the binding decisions are being formed. Every generation believes that the future will never forget what was done here and now. In Jakob Burckhardt's words: "Everyone regards all times as fulfilled in his own, and cannot see his own as one of many passing waves." As a corollary, each man at some level of consciousness either regards himself as irreplaceably important in his own time or bitterly resents the evidence that he is not. And Camus insisted that every man harbors a secret grudge against the ring of contesting wills which prevent him from becoming all that he could have been if those others could have been trampled down.

Uniquely human envy and resentment are

accompanied by a unique foreknowledge of personal oblivion, and in an ultimate sense man cannot reconcile himself to his own death. He may deny it with a doctrine of afterlife. He may seek to blunt the finality of it with Arcadian dreams of a perfect past or utopian hopes for a perfected future. But he knows that *he* cannot go back in time or live in that time to come. That is why eschatology, myths of the Final Days, so powerfully grip imagination, whether Armageddon, Götterdämmerung, or nuclear holocaust. If in this supremely important time this supremely important person must die, there should be vindication. If with ego's death all will end, then let all come to an end. This secret wish is the ultimate expression of the will to equality.

Man shares with the other primates a propensity to maintain order by forming hierarchies of status, and in somewhat less degree shares devotion to equality of opportunity. But in developed human nature there is a unique counter-propensity, to contest hierarchy and even welcome disaster and destruction. This urge, impulse, call it what you will, as the above discussion indicates is not synonymous with aggression, striving, or competition, which are all life-affirming. But it can wear such masks. Those hippie communes, for example, ostensibly devoted to the creation of a new way of life, spend what little time can be spared from self-indulgence on plans to survive the destruction of the United States and most of its citizens, a prospect which leaves the expectant vindicated remnant somewhat less than saddened. Those militant females who deny their own sex role and those youngsters who ape the life styles of their social inferiors with much less intensity manifest the same urge.

This revolt against hierarchy, this drive to equality, is not necessarily disclosed in every effort to remove a particular hierarchy. The American Revolution sought only to replace foreign with native rule, and those who seek to equate that movement with what is happening in the streets and on our campuses today should be reminded that the colonists charged the British government with having violated established law and practice. Even our home-grown Communists of the thirties sought to

replace one hierarchical arrangement with another. What has been unleashed in the last few years is something different even from that: a widespread determination to smash order and status themselves, a mindless yearning for chaos. It is useless to ask hippies, Black Panthers, college militants, and Weathermen what they want. Only a few of them have the insight to recognize and the courage to admit that what they seek is destruction.

Revolt against the human condition is not to be assuaged with social reforms, because rebellion against the common fate of death and limited importance in the world is a matter of choice and not of social necessity. If the demoniacal element in human nature is a constant perhaps it can only be contained, in self and others, by those men in whom the counterpropensity for order is predominant. If existential *Angst* promotes a human readiness for breakdown and wreckage, then it is not amenable to control by those two primary fallacies bequeathed to us by Rousseau which dominate present-day ideology and intervention. One, that men become better citizens when they are all equal. Two, that men are born good and become bad only because of evil social institutions.

The evidence is against him and his legion of intellectual descendants. Human social life is possible only with authority, legitimization of hierarchical inequality, and the application of external constraint maintained by institutional rules of the inclusive group. Further, if the blind urge to destroy order lurks in developed human nature, and accompanies the protohominid propensity to maintain order, then a thorough examination of current mythology is surely indicated, most notably that criminality, viciousness, and anarchy result only from the failure of "society" to abolish inequality, erase poverty, and heed the "higher conscience" of those who choose to disobey laws they don't like or find inconvenient.

The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence ignored Tocqueville's warning: "The hatred which men bear to privilege increases in proportion as privileges become fewer and less considerable." Nor could they have paid much attention to one of their

own members, Eric Hoffer, who has consistently denounced all efforts to soften the standards of equal opportunity by supplying unearned "privileges." Anyway, the Commission has urged that \$20 billion of additional tax money be spent each year on "general welfare" in order to reduce "a rising tide of individual and group violence." It is the failure to *provide* the poor with a better life which "continues to be prescription for violence."

The mind boggles, the heart sinks. Does it take several of the best minds in the country several months of study and thought to concoct snake-oil such as this? We must bribe one segment of the population with more unearned privileges, at the expense of those who have earned theirs, in order to be physically safe in our own country. The question of ethics aside, the ploy would not work. And since violence among the poor was by comparison minimal during the Great Depression, when by comparison "general welfare" was also minimal, is it possible that the correct formula has been inverted?

Instead of bribery, would self-righteous repression in the control of violence be more efficacious? Probably not, at least not in the total context of the present time. Such a shift in approach would not as yet find enough support in common sentiment, which is angry enough but lacks cohesion because authority, especially moral authority, has been for too long steadily eroded by too many intellectual, religious, and even political leaders.

A strange situation has emerged. A majority of Americans are reasonably content with what is; their allegiance to the life and ideal of equal opportunity remains virtually undiminished. But many and possibly most of their leaders have abandoned them. Intoxicated with Rousseau's legacy, and determined at whatever cost to enforce their deviant ideas with a shrill sound of pure intention, in answer to the demoniacal element in themselves these leaders release it in favored others. Meanwhile, through their continuous and virtually unchallenged appeals to "reason," they spread confusion and apathy among the majority. Our time is desperately in need of dissent.