

Reps on Chapter One
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HUMAN NATURE AND POLITICS

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The iron curtain across Central Europe was drawn by power politics and not by political theory, though ideology has played its part in justifying it. Ideology from dynamic red to dynamic white does not fall by any means evenly on each side of this line, for theoretical breaks and shadings pervade societies as corpuscles pervade the circulatory system. Political theorists are, ultimately, in search of central issues. They want to find the issues that most effectively divide and most surely avoid the greatest amount of overlapping. The search for such issues is not, however, a simple taxonomic exercise, for implications flow in action in a continuous stream from both articulate and inarticulate premises. These issues are issues of thought; they are appreciations of man in the cosmos. They deal with universals and with traits of thought that have endured through long periods of intellectual effort in clarifying social metaphysics.

In the embittered debates of contemporary politics in Europe, as well as in the United States, the fundamental and dividing issues often fail to come to the surface. Our concern with men and the immediate symbols of politics forces us toward the superficial, and we may follow like avid sport fans the changes of tactical line and the zigzags of ideology. Thus epithet is often the summation of the fluid and superficial drift of political symbolism. It avoids the difficult task, the larger intellectual enterprise, of putting the narrow controversy into a larger context. Ideological argument is, quite frankly, the emphasized vice of modern politics, and we must separate this form of discussion from the true philosophical climate of thought.

Ideology was, in origin, a term of contempt; it was a word used to describe the superficial, the doctrinaire, remoteness from experience, and sandy philosophical foundations. Napoleon is said to have introduced the word into

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our Western speech as an epithet for the theoretical and the impractical, but it was Marxian analysis that fixed it in our vocabulary. The Marxians have used it to describe especially the rationalizations of the bourgeoisie in the defense of their position. Marxians have urged that an ideology is the direct result of an objective economic and social situation. Thus ideology is in practice less than a philosophy; it is a justification of immediate action or demands for action. It is fragmentary in its political analysis, and by its nature it usually fails to be profound. It may be the gateway to a larger view, but its primary concern is action or the defense of an immediate program.¹

One issue that is surely central and that often is glimpsed through ideological fog is the interpretation of human nature. What kind of a creature is man? Is he timid and staring as Hobbes and Bolingbroke described him, or is he with Isaiah just a little lower than the angels? This issue separates the fundamentals of modern ideological chaos more effectively than other statements of the problem. Even the Idealistic analysis of society, that argues we are part of a moral organism, does not avoid this question, and certainly all individualistic theories must begin with it directly. What the defenders of democracy must have is a firm assurance of the dignity of man, and such assurance can be found only in some interpretation of human nature. Those who want neither tyranny nor anarchy must find their answer here. The democrat, for example, need not assume that all of human nature is static, for the end of social effort is the perfection of man, as Aristotle once argued. Human nature, as a dynamic concept, thus spreads itself along a course that reason and morality may plot. Most of us would, likewise, assume that in some degree this perfecting of human nature is to be found in society and the state without admitting by any means the complete fluidity of man's qualities.

The American Unitarian Association had this question in mind when, in 1946, it issued a statement attacking the

¹ See F. G. Wilson, "The Structure of Modern Ideology," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 1, pp. 382 ff. (1939).

neo-orthodoxy of Barthian theology and the philosophy of Reinhold Niebuhr, for the Unitarians asserted that the inevitability of sin is a gospel of despair. But they were, no doubt, too comprehensive when Calvinistic theology was lumped together with the Catholic doctrine of the sinfulness of man. American Unitarianism has supported with little reservation the innate goodness of man, admitting only that he must struggle against his passions and his earthly heritage. A belief in sin is, in this view, an admission of totalitarianism in religion.

Yet it is the scientific point of view that in these latter days has based its case chiefly on the malleability and fluidity of human nature. Scientific thinkers, like John Dewey, cannot be accused of any great intellectual modesty, for those who seek to assign limits to science are freely charged with being obscurantists or reactionaries. Open-mindedness and modesty on this matter are not qualities of the scientific approach. Those who believe that reason can secure against psychological or materialistic attack an area of values basic to the dignity of men, or as the foundation of a moral cosmos, are accused of supporting pre-conceived ideas and of being unwilling to evaluate germane evidence. To those who defend reasonable values as the standard of development in human nature, individuals are unique and spiritual; they stand over against society and the state, which are natural in structure and administration, and are, therefore, subject to scientific discussion. When this dualism is denied by an imperial science, when the individual is subjected to the "natural" there remains ultimately no defense against the growth of morally unpreceptive power. Because the individual in Christian thinking is unique and spiritual, the absolute state can never find wide acceptance among men who live in its tradition, though some, both conservative and revolutionaries, may accept such political authority. But as life is changing in its conditions, there must always be new applications of what is constant in human nature. "We are bound," said Paul Elmer More, the greatest American intellectual conservative, "in any clear sighted view of the larger exigencies of the relations

of man with man, to fortify ourselves against such a perversion of the institutions of government as would adapt them to the nature of man as he ought to be, instead of the nature of man as he actually is, and would relax the rigor of law, in pity for the degree of injustice inherent in earthly life."²

Whether or not injustice is inherent in earthly life, it is ultimately an understanding of values that enables us to see it. Thus those who believe that reason can suggest the contours of the moral order can ask the positivist or the pragmatist where he gets his values or his sense of the injustice of life, and on what foundation he bases it. Did Huxley's moral notions spring from his science? Does the acute social conscience of John Dewey arise from his Instrumentalism? The moral and religious interpretation of human nature says no, though its dualism would not deny the role of positive science or the utility of scientific knowledge. We cannot deny that there is a war today between religion or theistic philosophy and some social theories that claim a scientific foundation, but the old conflict between Darwin and Genesis plays no role in present-day intellectual discussion. The problem of the nature of man, however, pervades today every important issue; it has led every one who talks of the atomic bomb to consider man and society, just as the cold disregard of human life in authoritarian Europe has forced every defender of justice to postulate a moral or a natural order. Now that the state and even most of civilization has disappeared from many parts of the world because of war and famine, the restoration of peace, civilization and the state is demanded in the name of the nature of mankind. The phrase "crimes against humanity" as it was used in the war criminal trials has meaning only as there is a natural moral order or a human nature that strives for its own perfection.³

² Robert Shafer, *Paul Elmer More and American Criticism* (New York, 1935), pp. 199, 196.

³ The vigorous discussion of politics and ethics in the recent pages of *The American Political Science Review* is worth the careful consideration of every student of the question. See William F. Whyte, "A Challenge to Political Scientists," *Ibid.*, Vol. 37, pp. 692-697 (1943),

Central in the scientific view today is the contention that human nature is malleable and that it is subject to cultural alteration. But even if one grants that not all parts of human nature are fixed, and that man's reaction to changing conditions can be all but infinitely variable, the question must still be faced as to what is the source of the standards used in judging that variant reaction. How does one judge the cultural pattern? On what basis do we say that we make progress or retrogression? Even if we respond variously to time and circumstance, how do we reflect on justice but in terms of the qualities of men? The leap from the collection of natural information to the assessment of men in their social relations is often a clumsy performance. For to pass from one to the other involves a change of pace, a shifting of method, and another application of reason. The collection of descriptive data or the taxonomic treatment of experience has a profound value only if one knows what should be done with such results. Those who reject the scientific denial of "human nature" cannot admit that experience in and of itself produces norms, or that the ends of man can be determined by such an orthodoxy of method as science professes. "There is nothing whatever," says Murphy, "in the progress of reliable knowledge in the context of physical, chemical or biological inquiry which can dictate in advance the categories in terms of which social behavior is most adequately to be understood."⁴

Marxists have loudly expressed their pride in being abreast of the movement of science, though some Russian investigators have adversely measured bourgeois science by the yardstick of dialectical materialism. Marxism represents, no doubt, an extreme position, but it can

and the reply by John H. Hallowell, "Politics and Ethics," *ibid.*, Vol. 38, pp. 639-655 (1944). These two articles have been followed by "Politics and Ethics—A Symposium," *ibid.*, Vol. 40, pp. 283-312 (1946). Obviously, the present writer's sympathies are with what he considers to be the very able argument offered by Professor Hallowell.

⁴ Arthur E. Murphy, *The Uses of Reason* (New York, 1943), p. 57.

be argued by those who defend the principle that human nature involves a moral order, that such extremism is a logical outgrowth of scientific materialism. Marxists contend that man's nature is a product of culture, and that culture is the result of the economic system or mode of production. Patriotism, law, morality, art and religion have, therefore, no autonomous existence. These central and often consuming interests are mere ideological symbols hiding the realities of the relations of production. They are in no sense expressions of the enduring nature of man. If one is not a Marxian, there is little historical evidence or reason to support this blue-print of the future of human nature. The utopian element in Marxian revolutionary thought, the concept of a changed human nature in a future classless and stateless society, is its most dangerous element. Without this utopianism Marxism can have little appeal to the masses, and with it those who exercise power may justify action that denies the liberty and rights of ordinary men.

But the revolutionary, by paradox, has shown little actual respect for human beings. One may observe that many revolutionaries who shout the loudest about their superstition of the future and about democracy are the ones who show the greatest contempt for men as they are. Yet in a perverted way this is logical, since men today are the product of an iniquitous economic culture. If men have no inborn nature the reality of political ethics is outside of them, and in the last analysis they may be killed for mere political aberrations. The whole history of the Russian myth may be used to illustrate this point, for that debate has been, probably, the most bitter of our time. And now with the results of the late war coming in, the rise and fall of Fascism may appear as but an interlude in this struggle. The ideological children of Marx are strange, for the greatest intensity of this conflict is found among those who follow the socialist ideal. To those who are Communists, Russia is the true socialist society; nothing it does can be wrong or subject to criticism, for all it does is a defense of the socialist principle against the

plans of capitalist imperialism to overthrow the workers' revolution. Democratic socialists in all the countries outside of Russia, from the Scandinavian states to "down under", are regarded as the most irreconcilable enemies of the workers' revolution. Moreover, the Russian position constantly approaches the assertion that all who criticize the Soviet pattern of life are just plain Fascists.

Under these conditions the very useful concept of "Fascist" is drained of most of its meaning, for it becomes a slogan or an epithet in the internecine battles of socialism. But what must one say who sees in human nature the moral values that enable civilization to be? He sees the most elemental values of human dignity violated in the name of political absolutism, and an intransigence that poisons and corrupts the political life of the West. He will say that in this controversy scientific techniques for observation have meant nothing, and that through all the years since 1917 it has been impossible for men of honest will to agree on the most simple facts about the Russian regime. The sober conservative may refuse to be greatly concerned about the perfections of the Soviet regime, since he is not likely to admit that any governmental system can have the utopian qualities that Russian leaders themselves proclaim. For the democratic socialist the case is different, for he must rest his case on the possibility of creating a new and just society. To him the admission that the Russian dictatorship is what socialism means is a denial of socialism itself. He must attack the Russian myth in order to have any reason for his own existence. He must assert in the end the historic and Christian liberties men have as moral beings, and thus he must confess that socialism is simply an extension of the moral tradition of the West. In this the democratic socialist is pretty much like a respectable conservative.⁵

⁵ The democratic socialist position is presented week by week, for example, in the socialist *Call* and *The New Leader*. The refusal of the British Labor party to admit Communists, and the party struggles on the European continent since the War document the issue.

The revolutionary view, however, reaches back in origin to the eighteenth-century "discovery" that men are inherently good, or, if uncorrupted, they are the supporters of a moral order and of social justice. Thus institutions rather than the nature of men cause the trouble of the world and conflict arises because of ignorance and political coercion. The central conflict between liberty and authority, therefore, cannot be evaded by those who assert the inherent goodness of human nature and its degradation by social institutions. Yet it is only the anarchist and pacifist, the thinkers who condemn the machinery of coercion, who can believe in the unlimited freedom of men to their opinions and to the enjoyment of their conscience. William Godwin was probably the first to draw all or nearly all of the conclusions that might be drawn from the notion of the natural goodness of men. His *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*, in 1793, is probably the first modern work to argue for a full and uncoerced freedom of opinion, for he thought that if we take away the perverting institutions of the state, mankind would blossom into steady supporters of justice. Many thinkers come close to the anarchist view, but few reach it, and there is always a point at which they say the individual aberration must be suppressed, if necessary by the sword.

Revolutionary thought, which carries in it the idea of a malleable and progressive human nature, is mixed with deterministic ideas that suggest the impossibility of changing men at least until the new society is formed. The pattern of Malthus' thinking is, in an inverted way, reminiscent of the Marxian dialectic, especially when it considers the historical function of the bourgeoisie and the inherent tendencies of capitalism. We might say, likewise, that Malthus was probably the first to deny categorically the new doctrine of progress that emerged from the Enlightenment, for the principle of population in relation to food was a permanent limit on what might be done through human will and purpose. Malthus with a sword, rather than his Book of Common Prayer, would fit into the pattern of modern autocracy. While modern revolutionary thought

inspires the masses with its own version of the Sorelian myth, it justifies its denial of human dignity, the perversion of liberty and the dictatorial state on some theory of deterministic process. Such theories assume, in fact, a fixity of human nature, of behavior and motives, that precludes the ethical development of the individual and excludes the natural participation of human nature in the moral cosmos.⁶

The anarchist and pacifist positions have assumed, thus, that changeable and malleable human nature is corrupted by institutions, and that the removal of such institutions provides the basis upon which freedom of opinion may be granted without the coercive machinery of the state. So freed, human nature will move toward perfection, which means in its elemental sense that men can live with each other without conflict. Most contemporary revolutionary thought assumes that after some period of coercion against those who are governed by an inevitable social process, the coercive element can be eliminated or greatly reduced. By contrast the conservative moral tradition of the West denies the deterministic imputation of evil to men, or to certain groups of men, and it asserts that reason may discover and develop the moral consciousness that is inherent in human nature. Such a moral order is an order fixed in its outline or principle although its application changes in accordance with historical situations. But the ethical tradition is dualistic in its notion of human nature, for men are a mixture of irrational or recalcitrant behavior, on the one hand, and of rational behavior, on the other, for the development of individual and social nature implies the use of reason to attain the moral standards implicit in men.

In any discussion of freedom of opinion, however, we must distinguish this freedom from the historical growth of the idea of the "people" as it appears in the theory of democracy. The broadening of political participation, the emergence of a political public, has not meant the complete freedom of individuals, of any or all people, to think just

⁶ It is worth remembering that it was W. Y. Elliott's *The Pragmatic Revolt in Politics* (New York, 1928) that pointed out early the undesirable consequence of contemporary anti-intellectual thought.

as they want about anything they want to. Tradition and historical standards of morality still are present in the older and more stable social systems to limit opinion, as we see in the inevitable limitations on civil liberty. Yet a denial of all reasoned morality suggests that man's opinion may be managed by the techniques of persuasion and propaganda. Such a position is, likewise, a denial that men have any "nature" worth mentioning, for to say that man's nature is discoverable by reason implies forthwith limitations on what we ought to do. To say that man is by and large a product of psychological conditioning does not mean democratic government at full tide, for those who hold such views can say that men may be controlled in the interest of an ideology, and that there is no other than a purely propagandist basis for any opinion of the opposition.

The modern students of public opinion are only beginning to understand the theoretical issues involved in it. But only a scattered few have been willing to say that the public interest, truth or social justice, is what the majority says it is. To say that the majority must be found through constitutional procedures, that ignorance is not as useful as knowledge, or any other similar position, denies the whole idea, for limitations based on reason are imposed. And this says nothing more than that the form and content of a majority decision must accord with man's moral nature. Beyond this the whole range of judgments on particular issues is constantly brought into the discussion. The most extreme position today is, of course, the assertion of a ruling class that it may kill a morally innocent person just because a so-called "majority" has declared that something is the truth. Instead of democracy we have here the grossest form of tyranny. The disregard of any constitutional procedure, the suppression of the opposition, the one-party state, and the ruthless censorship of the press, are only immediate implications of saying that the public interest and social justice are defined by what the majority says it is. Constitutional procedure, like the rights of men,

must arise from some insight into the inherent and lasting qualities of human nature.⁷

Because of its ambivalence between utopian justice and deterministic or scientific process, revolutionary thought constantly approaches in practical politics the assertion of the absolute rights of fictional majorities. The individual can save himself only by struggling to become part of the ruling order which in turn creates or declares just what the majority has determined the truth to be. The suspicion has arisen in the minds of some who defend human dignity and constitutional morality that such political tyranny has resulted from the absolutism of science, the repudiation of religion, the rejection of all forms of political theology and permanent moral standards. Those who defend the Western tradition of Hellenic moderation and of Christian love, of political restraint and respect for the individual member of society, thus point to the difficult positions faced by revolutionary ideology.

Most revolutionary thought assumes that human nature is good, or, at least, that it is trustworthy under the influence of knowledge. A pliable but institutionally corrupted man can, therefore, see truth and see it whole. Yet what happens if "truth" created by a ruling order is not accepted by certain individuals? A corruption of human nature, far worse than original sin and predestination⁸ asserts, is in practice re-introduced into the daily contours of politics, for there is no hope whatever for such

⁷Harwood L. Childs, *An Introduction to Public Opinion* (New York, 1940), pp. 22 ff., is among the very few, perhaps the only writer on public opinion, to say that the public interest is what public opinion says it is. Professor Childs might reply by saying: How else will you define it? But even he would not agree that if a majority says that all red-headed people should be killed in the public interest, the public interest has been defined. Some of the implications of Professor Childs' position are rather caustically suggested in Wyndham Lewis, *The Art of Being Ruled* (New York, 1926).

⁸See, e.g., Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, No. 446. The Lutheran and Calvinist position seemed to be that human nature is so corrupted that it is evil, while the long-run Catholic argument is that men have only a tendency to evil. In the one case man fell from a tower to the earth, and in the former he fell from the ground into a well. The Manichean issue is perennial.

individuals. It is true the corruption they suffer is institutionally imposed, but given the chronic need of haste in revolutionary thought and its unimaginative reliance on force where propaganda has failed, the rebellious individual must be treated by the complete therapy of the total state. In contemporary revolutionism the person who is not supposed to have any inherent nature is considered as impossible of reform, and he becomes a heretic or a witch to be burned at the modern stake. Modern intolerance, based on the denial of the moral "nature" of men makes the intolerance of the era of religious wars look mild indeed.

Of course, we have been speaking of the extreme position to which positivism and the scientific atmosphere may lead in the treatment of those subject to a particular government. The central question in this line of argument is whether the revolutionary or totalitarian position is a logical or a probable result of more moderate theories. A reformer or a humanitarian would hold, no doubt, that the dignity of the person can be defended on a scientific or experimental basis without assuming that men participate by their nature in a reasonable moral order. The revolutionary, liberal and progressive arguments all have this, at least in some degree, in common: they assume that people can reach their full social stature by absorbing the teachings of scientific wisdom and that through this process they can be remade for the new society. In part it is an argument between education and propaganda, but if these two procedures are difficult to separate, their spirit is clearly different. For educational spirit presumably attempts to develop what already is in men, while propaganda is a technique for reconstructing individual minds in the interest of an ideology whose validity is wholly external to the individual. Propaganda seeks to impose by social or governmental controls the order of validity accepted by those who seek power.

Yet where do ethical values come from? We may say that any one individual accepts certain ideas because of psychological, economic or cultural forces, yet even granting this the question still remains whether a given ethical

or moral value is true, and how the validity of it is established. The Marxian, for example, who in reflective moments, preaches the iron law of the social consequences of systems or modes of production, in turn appeals to justice in human consciousness as a creative force. There has emerged, therefore, a kind of proletarian natural law as the basis of the mass movement of discontent that we now observe as the after-birth of war. The Marxian would argue the truth of the justice he preaches; he must contend that his proletarian moral cosmos is true, but can he also argue that its validity arises from the inevitable process of economic history? In logic at least, proletarian justice of economic history cannot be a quality of human nature that to the Marxian cannot be a quality of human nature that arises before or beyond any given social system. His ethical validities, so far as they arise from historical materialism, seem to be an ethical nominalism of the most tenuous character.

Moreover, it may be well to recall here the nineteenth-century controversies over the nature and tendency of liberalism.⁹ Liberalism at that time showed in a moderate form the ambivalence of which we have spoken, for it did assert both the dignity and the freedom of men and the propriety of a scientific or positivistic analysis of society. In retrospect, we can see that the question liberalism raised was essentially whether positivism could build a moral order that would in practice sustain the freedom of individuals, that would assert in rational balance the eternal dualism of liberty for the person and authority for the state. It was the religious mind of the time that prophesied the ultimate failure of liberalism in this ancient and heroic endeavor. For if the failure of the modern world to save liberty is a failure of the scientific spirit to provide a moral foundation in the Christian criticism of liberalism, to be remembered in the Christian criticism of liberalism, it became customary to view the Christian doubts concern-

⁹ Cf. Guido de Ruggero, *The History of European Liberalism*, (trans. by R. G. Collingwood, New York, 1927); William A. Orton, *The Liberal Tradition* (New York, 1945); John H. Halliwell, *The Decline of Liberalism as an Ideology* (Berkeley, 1943).

ing scientific optimism about progress as obscurantist and reactionary, and the nostalgia of the old-fashioned for the world in which they had power and prestige.

The pathologic state of liberalism today implies that one might well study again the criticism of positivism by the religious mind of the last century. Much the same might be said of Catholic and Protestant criticism of secular liberalism, whether of the errors condemned by Pius IX or the reluctance of Protestant theologians to admit that biological science had outmoded the idea of sin and the necessity of redemption. Fascism and totalitarianism in general has made implicit a re-examination of the whole problem, for during these latter years liberals have been forced to reassert in modified form the older principle of natural law as Catholics state it, or of the moral order as Protestants argue it, or of divine justice as Jewish religious leaders assert it.¹⁰ Pragmatism and instrumentalism have seemed like weapons made of soft metal in combating the racialism of Hitler, the moral sterility of Italian Fascism, and the tyranny of the Russian political police. To the Christian thinker, to the author of *Mit Brennen und Sorge* or to a Protestant writer like Reinhold Niebuhr, the burden of proof is on those who now contend that a purely positivist or scientific conception of right and human dignity will preserve the necessary restraint on power and renew the conscience of those who rule.¹¹

Without considering immediate political programs, the antipodal versions of politics are the conservative spirit and the revolutionary faith. But the conservative spirit in politics is divided from the revolutionary idea at the

¹⁰ See *International Conciliation*, No. 394 (1943), for the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant Declaration on World Peace, October 7, 1943. Note especially the wording of the Preambles to the joint declaration.

¹¹ Those who believe that human nature contains within it the participation in a moral cosmos thus contend that men like Lecky, who burst with enthusiasm for science and progress built upon it, misread the future, and that in the light of the contemporary crisis scientific or positivist thinking cannot assume responsibility for the principles of social ethics. Cf. W. E. H. Lecky, *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe* (London, 2 vols., 1866).

core by divergent conceptions of human nature. Through the centuries the conservative spirit has distrusted human nature in some degree, and it has believed in general in its fixity of pattern. The conservative has sought to balance order against progress, and stability against change, though no modern thinker has asserted the possibility of a completely static society. Change is, to the conservative, as inevitable as to the revolutionary, but it is the temper, the substance and the manner of change that is at stake.¹² The conservative has sought to limit reform and utopian revolution by insisting that human nature is a blend of rational and irrational behavior, and that man is also tried to moderate change by insisting since Burke that historical experience, national growth and tradition suggest the limits and the wisdom that may be gleaned from the past. Intellectual conservatism, in distinction from simple traditionalism, defends the long-standing social principles that experience and reason dictate as sound for men as they are. Such a conservatism has defended, on these grounds, property; the Christian standards of behavior; moderation, balance or mixture in the constitution; and it has believed that democracy is possible only on the basis of the Western tradition of constitutional government.¹³ Still, the conservative has loved men as they are; he has supported his historic religions; he has seen value in the traditions that bind men into coherent but voluntary groups. The conservative has, characteristically, believed that historical study is the most certain method by which the nature of men can be discovered, and progress or change, as it is guided by reason, must consult the results of this method of inquiry.

On the other hand, the revolutionary has professed to

¹² See F. J. C. Hearnshaw, *Conservatism in England* (London, 1933); Lord Hugh Cecil, *Conservatism* (London, 1912); Peter F. Drucker, *The Future of Industrial Man* (New York, 1942).

¹³ See Karl Mannheim, "Das Konservative Denken," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Bd. 57 (1927).

trust men, not because of their nature, their moral capacities or intellectual power, but because they are malleable and because they are educable. The revolutionary has assumed that what native tendencies there are, such as self-interest or the desire for happiness as among the utilitarians, are completely consonant with the growth of information and science. Yet whatever the type of the revolutionary tide, there have been certain things in common with all forms of totalitarianism. The right of the individual to judge social issues for himself has been denied, free science as an ideal has become relatively meaningless, and both moral man and scientific man have been subordinated, through a ruling class, to the advancement of national technology. Marx accused the bourgeoisie of doing this very thing through the industrial and commercial revolution they fostered. But as the bourgeoisie are accused of destroying all tradition and every idyllic relation (as the *Communist Manifesto* states it) in order to substitute the naked cash nexus, so the modern totalitarians, whether socialist or not, have rejected all tradition and substituted the naked necessities of technology. Propaganda has attempted, thus, to assume the role of tradition, and every claim of conscience against the needs of the machine have been branded as reactionary.

So it follows that this revolutionary trust in man, the documentation of which studs the pages of the revolutionary dream, is largely theoretical in the worst sense of that abused term. That it is a theoretical and not a practical confidence seems true whether men are thought to be a blank page at the beginning of life or whether there is only a limited set of behavioristic tendencies that conforms to the interests of science. Such theoretical trust is likewise demonstrated by that lofty attitude of the researcher who seeks in value judgments and the claims of conscience only data to be collected, but which in no case need to be evaluated in terms of the valid or the invalid.¹⁴ When not in power, the revolutionary has to denounce constantly what men really think, what they do, the symbols to which they

¹⁴ Cf. Professor Whyte's argument in the symposium cited *supra*.

respond and the kind of power structure they support. Such has been the position of the revolutionary intelligentsia all the way from the Russian nihilists in the early days of their movement to the self-appointed role of many of the artistic and literary minds of contemporary America.¹⁵ Their love for the common man is surely different in quality from that of the conservative who can find some value in historical experience, aside from the brief spasms of revolutionary idealism to which his opponents may point. The revolutionary, in other words, trusts an abstract man that you never see; he trusts men, but he does not love men as they are; men are worthy of respect only as an ultimate potential. Men can be trusted because their nature can be remade by a new ruling order.

It is, therefore, the conservative who in fact has the greater real trust in human nature. Perhaps the conservative can trust men in practice because there are limits to his distrust. The conservative can see a basic continuity in men through history, from the dawn of conscience in ancient Egypt to the moral imperatives of our own day.¹⁶ While the moral imperative remains as the basic element in tradition, change goes forward endlessly, but it should go forward in accordance with the deeper traditions of a people rather than in accordance with doctrinaire and revolutionary assurance. Order and progress must be balanced in the light of reason. With Henri-Frédéric Amiel, the lonely nineteenth-century philosopher of Geneva, the modern conservative might say: "Let us not, then, condemn prejudice so long as we have nothing but doubt to put in its place, or laugh at those whom we should be incapable of consoling." Amiel argued that a succession of opposing follies gives the impression of change and improvement. "The mode of progress in the moral world seems an abuse of the patience of God."¹⁷

¹⁵ See Oscar Cargill, *Intellectual America* (New York, 1941).

¹⁶ See James H. Breasted, *The Dawn of Conscience* (New York,

1933).

¹⁷ *The Journal Intime of Henri-Frédéric Amiel*, (trans. with an introduction by Mrs. Hymphrey Ward, n.d.), pp. 111, 236-237.

The party of conservatism and the party of innovation "have disputed the possession of the world ever since it was made," Ralph Waldo Emerson observed in 1841. The conflict, he said, is deeply seated in the human constitution. But Emerson's conservatives and innovators correspond to little that might be found in either history or space, for the conservative to him was wholly a defender of the *status quo*, and the innovator was in turn a consistent revolutionary. Conservatism, he said, is "the pause on the last movement," and it is all memory. While the conservative and the innovator each make a good half, each is an impossible whole. Yet the very possibility of reform grows out of universal and necessary history, and conservatism gives innovation its chance.¹⁸

In recent political conflict, it has been observed that a theoretical trust in man has in politics progressed with a practical and unlimited distrust. The modern practices of totalitarianism in summation show an unlimited contempt for man as he is. Respect for men implies respect for some things he does, some of the thoughts he thinks, and some of the symbols he accepts.

The issue we have been discussing may be stated in another way: Conservatism tends finally to be religious in its approach to the politics of human nature, while science, when it reaches its full implication in the revolutionary position, denies that there is anything sacred about man, or about any part of nature. The opposite position, that all institutions are sacred, was reached by the political theologians of the last century, in the defense of monarchy as divinely inspired. But they, too, had overshot the mark. For to assert the validity of the moral precepts of Western civilization does not mean that any given set of institutions must remain unchanged.¹⁹ In the extreme, science denies

¹⁸ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Conservative" (1841), in *Nature, Addresses, and Lectures*, Vol. 1 of *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston, 1876), pp. 295 ff.

¹⁹ Heinrich A. Rommen, *The State in Catholic Thought* (St. Louis, 1945), pp. 91 ff. Speaking of Donoso Cortes, De Maistre and De Bonald, he said: "In opposition to these men the study of history may point to Lord Acton, the famous historian, to Montalembert

that man are the children of God and presumes that they are wholly phases of biological and material process. Under the influence of deterministic thought, the thoroughgoing scientist in politics would solve the issue of recalcitrant behavior by consulting a psychologist, by changing the environment, by eugenical control of heredity, by reforming the institutions of economic production, by killing his opponent, or by reducing him to forced labor.

But religious conservatism would say that men must be taught by reason their moral dignity and the rights inhering in each person. Scientific thought has rejected on many occasions the idea of preaching, or more simply let us say teaching, as the basis for the unfolding of the personality, but it is difficult to see how purely scientific techniques can foster as effectively these high ends, if they are admitted to be such. To the religious tradition, the development of moral responsibility in politics implies that conditions or the environment are important only as they bear on the education of the inherent moral nature. That this is a very important point can be shown by the stubbornness with which it has been contested in the modern ideological battle. The moral sphere in the conservative tradition can never legitimately be absorbed into the structure of power, and when institutions and practices arise directly from principle there is also a limitation on the power of the state.²⁰ For the benefit of the individual conscience, we accept religious freedom, freedom of speech, press and meeting. Due process of law is, perhaps, more than a whim of country gentlemen and lawyers of the eighteenth century, and

and his liberal Catholics in France, to Archbishop Ireland and Father Hecker in America, all known as stout adherents of just such political principles as were strongly opposed by Cortes, De Maistre, and others." (p. 84).

²⁰ A significant issue in religious social theory is the function of human reason in discovering the moral order. In Thomism natural law is ascertained by the participation of human reason in the eternal law of God, as distinguished from revealed or divine law. Because of the corruption of human nature in Lutheran and Calvinist thought, Protestant theories of natural law have been much more closely associated with Biblical revelation.

consent of the governed balanced against the rights of the individual may be more than just a slogan, for it may be the foundation of legitimate communities. Some rights of property and certain rights and duties of the family may be more than just a concession of political authority. These are some of the things that a conservative would say citizens may be taught; but they are to be taught these principles, not because the rulers of a state desire it, but because reason and social metaphysics consider them to be true. Society is dual at least as between social and coercive relations and the moral qualities of the individual. Justice is never in this connection a simple Erastian statement of policy.²¹ Even the most detached of social observers, those who assert in words that their principles have no relevance to their investigations, hardly reach the position of accepting a perpetually changing and subjectivist order of ideas. The unfettered mind never quite becomes sovereign against the social and moral world.²²

If we grant the central nature of the issue presented here, what conclusions can we draw for political scientists? To a large extent our ideas of public policy arise ultimately from the assumptions we make about the nature or the quality of men. The reformist zeal of Americans has often tried to deny the limiting factor of recalcitrant behavior. Emerson symbolizes, for example, a host of idealists who have tried always to see man at the commanding height of his nature. Humanitarianism has not often been interested in sin, and it has believed very often in the perfectibility of man.²³ But in response Reinhold Niebuhr has noted that the liberal democrat has underestimated the capacity

²¹ Professor Charles E. Merriam in his recent *Systematic Politics* (Chicago, 1945), pp. 29-31, speaks of the knowledge of human personality we have gained from the various social sciences. On the other hand, one might suspect that Professor Merriam may not draw his ethical principles, which show a deep respect for human being, from the social science that he so highly praises.

²² Misunderstanding is very easy in these matters. In the sphere of techniques none questions the value of detached or objective methods of research, but evaluating the work so done in terms of ends or purposes is another matter.

²³ Cf. Charles A. Beard, *The American Spirit* (New York, 1942).

of men to do evil, and Niebuhr thus has affirmed the humblity of another day when men were more conscious of their limitations and their imperfections. Conservative and gradualist democracy has never quite believed in human perfectibility; it has assumed, however, that progress is possible and real.²⁴

The most serious issue for the political theorist is how he arrives at his conception of the nature of man. Will he take for revival the notions of the Enlightenment as they have culminated in anarchism and Marxism? Will he assume a scientific positivism with a dose of inarticulated metaphysical optimism? Will he adopt this same scientific basis, like Georges Sorel, with pragmatic realism or pessimistic distrust of mankind? Or, finally, will he accept the religious tradition that has nourished the idea that values are inherent in the nature of men? Short of a firm assurance of the dignity and right of the personality none can rest content. Socialism is constantly forced away from the sterilities of the dialectic; pragmatism becomes real as it becomes warmly normative; and practitioners of positive methods can be saved only by wooing eternal charity.²⁵ Intellectual modesty on the part of scientists will lead them to accept the dualistic principle of human nature, and they can thereby minimize the ethical implications of statistics, the laboratory, and the body of known scientific procedures. For the existence of a moral order or a system of values implies a corresponding principle of human nature.²⁶

²⁴ See Ralph Barton Perry, *Puritanism and Democracy* (New York, 1944), pp. 496-497, 637-638.

²⁵ *Human Events*, Vol. 3, May 8, 1946, quotes from the argument of J. Middleton Murray for the feeding of the Germans in the British occupied zone: if they are not fed, the foundations of English life will be sapped. "We shall be engulfed—not perhaps by actual starvation and pestilence—but by a deeper and more incurable evil. We shall lose the will to live. It is not superabundant among us, even today; we are living, so to speak, on what remains of our moral capital."

²⁶ For example, Charles Darwin was very cautious in the application of his findings to ethics and morality, though he finally moved in that direction. Cf. Vladimir G. Simkovitch, "Approaches to History II," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 45, p. 499 (1930).