

anism, political centralization, utilitarianism, and withal modernity. Joseph de Maistre spoke surely for most conservatives when he wrote: 'We do not want a *counter-revolution* but the *opposite* of revolution.' He was, of course, referring to the type of society conservatives cherished. To build a counter-revolutionary society would be to assume in considerable measure the character of the foe—certainly its militancy. For de Maistre the 'opposite' of the revolutionary society created by the Jacobins was essentially the society that Jacobinism had struck at, not simply the *ancien regime*—that would be too narrow and constrictive a model—but rather the feudal-medieval society that had reached its height in the thirteenth century.

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Dogmatics of Conservatism

Ideologies, like theologies, have their dogmatics: more or less coherent and persistent bodies of belief and value which have determinative influence upon at least a part of their holders' lives. Ultimately, both relate to the individual's proper place under a system of authority, divine or secular. In conformity to a tradition going back to the Renaissance in political thought, the three modern ideologies of socialism, liberalism and conservatism are commonly dealt with in the terms of individual and state; that is, the legitimate, desired, relation between individual and state.

But a more useful perspective adds to the individual-state relationship a third factor, that of the structure of groups and associations which are intermediate to the two polar entities. As we have seen, much of the social drama of the French Revolution consisted of the impacts upon intermediate society of the newly declared rights of the individual and, equally important, the newly declared rights of power of the revolutionary state. The result was of course to put in question the historic rights of such groups as church, family, guild, and social class. Much nineteenth-century jurisprudence takes for its point of departure the rights of both old and new groups against the state on the one hand and individuals on the other. At the end of the century such eminent scholars as Maitland, Figgis and Vinogradov, followed for a time by the youthful Harold Laski, put much of the history of Western Europe, from the Middle Ages on, in the perspective of the triangular relationship of state, corporate group and individual rather than the more conventional dual relationship that had come out of the natural law tradition of state and individual. Maitland wrote of the 'pulverizing and macadamizing' forces of state and individual acting upon everything that lay in between man and state.

In Germany Otto von Gierke and in France Fustel de Coulanges were among the scholars who also made the triangular relationship central. Most of Sir Henry Maine's work with comparative institutions came down essentially to the kind of problem he had made the focus of his *Ancient Law*, the struggle between the state's claimed sovereignty and the traditional authorities of patriarchal family and clan or kindred. Such reform movements in the century as pluralism, syndicalism, gild socialism and cooperatives made the problem of the rights of groups central to larger social reform.

So did the philosophy of conservatism for the most part. More than liberalism and socialism it took to its bosom the rights of church, social class, family and property against the claims of natural rights theory and of the more recent utilitarianism on the one hand and of the national, increasingly democratic state on the other. In every one of the specific areas of conservative faith which follow in this chapter, the constant premise is the right—grown out of history and social development—of the whole intermediate structure of the nation to survival against the tides of both individualism and nationalism.

Socialism, at least in its main and eventually Marxist character, has the least regard among the three ideologies for the traditional rights of intermediate groups. The socialist position on property tended to set the stage for its views on family, local community, and above all social class. How, it was asked, implicitly at least, can the new socialist man be evolved if he remains subject to the historic smaller patriotisms as well as the bourgeois state? Socialism is thus ideologically at the opposite extreme from conservatism.

Liberalism falls about half way. As the result of Tocqueville's impress on Mill, there was an indulgence in certain areas of liberal thought for groups, especially voluntary associations, that added up to a liberal pluralism. But in the main, Mill's 'one very simple principle' together with Benthamite utilitarianism kept liberalism's overriding sympathies with the individual and his rights against the state and social group alike.

History and Tradition

Basic to conservative politics is its view of the role of history. 'History' reduced to its essentials is no more than experience, and it is from conservative trust in experience over abstract, and deductive thought in matters of human relationships that its trust in history is

founded. Perhaps the most celebrated remark in Burke's *Reflections* is the one in which he specifically repudiates the Enlightenment's faith in contract: not merely contract in the sense of the social contract with which Hobbes, Locke, Pufendorf, and so many other political philosophers had drawn upon it as the foundation of the state, but contract in the far more revolutionary sense in which Rousseau had used: that is, as the continuing, permanent, premise of sovereignty. Burke wrote:

Society is indeed a contract... It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection... it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

An almost equally celebrated line in Burke, also from the *Reflections*, is: 'People will not look forward to posterity who never look backward to their ancestors.' Clearly, from Burke's point of view, the present is *not* free, as so much rationalist thought had been devoted to proving, to remake the social structure as fancy or a 'spirit of innovation' might dictate. It is not true that the legitimacy of the state is dependent solely upon the tacit consent, the incessant renewal of the social contract that Rousseau called for. Legitimacy is the work of history and of traditions which go far beyond the resources of any single generation. 'To see things authentically as a conservative,' Mannheim writes, 'is to experience events in terms of an attitude derived from circumstances and situations anchored in the past.' From the point of view of Burke, de Maistre, Savigny, and other early conservatives, true history is expressed not in linear, chronological fashion but in the persistence of structures, communities, habits, and prejudices generation after generation. The true historical method is not just a constant looking back in time, much less the telling of narrative tales; it is the method of studying the present in such a way as to bring out *all* of what lies in the present; and that means a veritable infinity of ways of behavior and of thinking which cannot be understood fully save by recognition of their anchoring in the past.

The *concreteness* of experience and history is a persisting conservative emphasis, to be seen in Burke, in Ranke, and a succession that comes down to Oakeshott and Voegelin in our day. In the Enlightenment the characteristic 'history' employed by the *philosophes*, and also a number of English rationalists, was the self-styled 'natu-

ral,' 'conjectural,' 'hypothetical' or 'reasoned' history by which one or other point was made about the present. These were by design highly abstract, and not really histories at all in the sense either of a contemporary work like Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* or Robertson's *History of Scotland* or of the historiography that would flourish everywhere in the West in the next century. What Rousseau did in his 'hypothetical' history of inequality has to be seen more as forerunner to the social evolutionary schemes of the nineteenth century than as works of history in the strict sense. When Rousseau wrote 'Let us begin by laying the facts aside, as they do not affect the question,' he was not expunging all facts; merely those irrelevant or inconsequential to his effort to demonstrate the iniquity of inequality and the means by which it achieved ascendancy in modern society. 'The investigations we enter into here' wrote Rousseau, 'must not be considered as historical truths, but only as conditional and hypothetical reasonings'—more like the hypotheses of physicists than the chronicles and annals of historians.

Adam Smith, Hume, Ferguson, Helvetius and Condorcet all wrote 'histories' of the kind Rousseau did in his Second Discourse. Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was at bottom as his friend and biographer Dugald Stewart wrote, a form of history 'to illustrate the provisions made by nature in the principles of the human mind ...for a gradual and progressive augmentation in the means of national wealth.' *Natural history* was perhaps the commonest of the labels applied to this form of writing, and the phrase covered works on language, social class, mathematics, wealth, and almost every other element of civilization. Hutton wrote a 'natural history' of the universe and the earth just as Hume wrote a 'natural history' of religion.

But for Burke and the other conservatives this kind of history was worse than useless as the means of understanding the true complexity and concreteness of past and present; it was also a means, quite as abstract and deductive as the social contract theory, of bringing about reckless changes in the present without scrutiny of the details of what was being changed. There is moreover the fact, as Haller stressed, that whereas the progressive-rationalists see the present as the beginning of the future, the true way—the conservative way—is to see it as the latest point reached by the past in a continuous, seamless growth. Society is not a mechanical thing, not a machine the parts of which are both interchangeable and individually separable.

It is organic in its articulation of institutions and interrelationship of functions; also in its necessarily, irreversibly cumulative development over time.

From the conservative point of view social reality was best understood through a historical approach. We cannot know where we are, much less where we are going, until we know where we have been. This is the bedrock positions of the conservative philosophy of history. When Newman decided to respond to modernist critics, he presented his case historically, in his *Development of Christian Doctrine*, showing how current Catholic theology is a historical emergent of a past that goes all the way back to apostolic Christianity. If the past was vital, then it must be searched meticulously and objectively. Thus Ranke's famous adjuration to all historians to recover the past *wie es eigentlich gewesen ist*—exactly as it uniquely and actually happened. Ranke was criticizing, in this apothegm, not only romantic and subjective treatments of the past but also, and even more sharply, the 'natural histories' of the eighteenth century and the 'progressive developmentalism' of such pre-sociologists as Saint-Simon and Comte.

The historical method was, for conservatives, a means too of hitting back at the pestiferous utilitarians, starting with Bentham. Disraeli wrote: 'Nations have characters, and national character is precisely the quality which the new sect of statemen in their schemes and speculations either deny or overlook.' The view of the state set forth by Austin, an abstract, rationalistic, deductive view, was rejected utterly by conservative historians, beginning with Maine. To most conservatives in the nineteenth century, the repugnant effect of utilitarianism was to perpetuate the 'sophisters, calculators, and economists' Burke had treated with scorn in his *Reflections*. Such words as 'soulless,' 'icy,' 'mechanical' and 'inhuman' were regularly applied by conservatives to the Benthamite vision of state and individual. To James Thompson at the end of the century, Benthamite modernity was at bottom 'The City of Dreadful Night.'

Naturally, the conservatives, in their appeal to tradition, were not endorsing each and every idea or thing handed down from the past. The philosophy of traditionalism is, like all such philosophies, selective. A salutary tradition must come from the past but it must also be desirable in itself. It is our link with the past. 'The dead still speak' wrote Bourget in France, citing his contemporary, Vogué. This was

echoed by the great literary critic-historian Brunetiere and later by T. S. Eliot. In religion and law the root word *tradere* meant handing down a 'sacred deposit.'

Some words spoken by Falkland, perhaps the truest hero of the English Civil War, are pertinent: 'When it is not *necessary* to change, it is necessary *not* to change.' Or in homelier phrasing: 'if it aint broke, don't fix it.' It is not, however, change as such that conservatives from Burke on have tended to oppose. There is no reason to doubt Burke's sincerity in the well known words: 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.' We know he virtually adored the Revolution of 1688; and his sympathy for the American colonists rested in great part on their record of the development of English tradition.

What Burke and his successors have fought is what he called 'the spirit of innovation;' that is, the idle worship of change for its own sake; the shallow but pervasive need on the part of the masses for diversion and titillation through endless novelties. Particularly lethal is the spirit of innovation when it is applied to human institutions.

Burke's view that the real constitution of a people lies in the history of its institutions, not in a piece of paper, has been steadily echoed by conservatives to the present day. De Maistre thought the Jacobins' 'constitutions' a bad joke. They are, he wrote, 'made for Man. But there is on earth no man as such. I have seen ...Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, etc. Thanks to Montesquieu I even know that one can be Persian, but I declare that never in my life have I seen a *man*—unless indeed he exists unknown to me.' De Maistre wrote about the American constitution and, in no spirit of inconsistency, praised it and thought it boded well. But, and this is the crux, the *real* constitution in America was, and would continue to be, not the paper document but the whole constellation of customs and traditions which had formed during the two centuries of the Americans' existence in the new world. There was, he thought, admirable correspondence between what the paper constitution said, and did *not* say, and the traditions which Englishmen had brought with them to settle the glorious *New England* of Massachusetts and adjacent areas. Burke's idea of the true constitution of a people, any people, would become one of the most powerful of ideas in the nineteenth century: embodied in the multitude of English, French and German studies of constitutions and, interestingly, in the convictions of Rus-

sians like Dostovesky who came to believe so deeply in a historic, unalterable and sacred 'constitution' that was inseparable from Russia, that a lasting animadversion to Western values was built up that remains to this day.

De Maistre was amused and scornful at the idea of the Americans forsaking already built cities like New York and Philadelphia to go down to the swamp and wilderness of a piece of Maryland in order to construct *ex nihilo* the very *capital* of the new nation. It would never last, said de Maistre. But before rushing too quickly to jeer at de Maistre the prophet, it is not amiss to cheer de Maistre the traditionalist-sociologist. The by-turns pathetic and grandiose history of Washington D.C., its unending struggle for identity, and its lifelong sense of inferiority as a city compared with New York, London and Paris is fair tribute to Burke and de Maistre and their theories of constitutions and capitals.

There is another attribute of conservative veneration of the old and traditional: belief that no matter how obsolete a given structure or *modus vivendi* may be, there may be in it a continuing, still vital, *function* that man profits from, psychologically or sociologically. Surely much of the deeper thinking of Conservatives toward Liberal reform bills in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries reflected this belief. For all the *apparent* archaism and also corruption of the 'rotten boroughs' and the seemingly impotent House of Lords after its real powers had been taken away by the Liberals, was it not *possible* that these entities still performed a valuable function to society, to the social bond, and to what Burke had in mind when he wrote: 'The nature of man is intricate, the objects of society are of the greatest possible complexity, and therefore no simple disposition or direction of power can be suitable either to man's nature or to the quality of his affairs?'

History for the conservative has been very much the kind of force that natural selection is for the biological evolutionist. No individual has ever lived, or could possibly be, says the evolutionist, with the powers of decision which could bring into being the species. It is the operation of processes of selection through chance, through repeated trial and error, which alone makes possible the splendor of the biological world. There is ingrained in evolutionary selection a wisdom astronomically superior to any wisdom imaginable in a man. Efforts of breeders to do more than work *with* these natural processes of change and development are manifestly farcical.

But are not the efforts of men to do more than work with the comparable processes in human history equally farcical? Was it not at bottom farcical and also tragic for men to seek to build a new society and new human nature in France in 1789 and Russia in 1917? Such is the conservative theory of history.

John Morley somewhere likened the conservative's philosophy of life to a pale hope that things might well be better, weakly shivering alongside a gigantic conviction that things might well be a great deal worse. There is something in that of course. But in truth not very much. One does not think of the great conservatives – Burke, Disraeli, Churchill and de Gaulle – weakly shivering before anything, physical or mental. Nor do we think of Max Planck, who made one of the two or three greatest and boldest of modern discoveries in physics, shivering before the new and uncertain, though he worshipped the past and insisted that his theory had emerged from and been found in, both the old and traditional and the current in physical thought. T. S. Eliot in his essay on individual talent and tradition has written as confirmed traditionalist as well as revolutionist in poetic form and imagery. The individual talent is simply impotent, condemned to spinning of wheels, without a chosen tradition to work with.

Prejudice and Reason

One of the more audacious of Burke's attacks on the Revolution lies in his notable treatment of prejudice in *Reflections*:

I am bold enough to confess that in this enlightened age we are generally men of untaught feelings; that instead of casting away all our old prejudices we cherish them to a very considerable degree...and the more generally they have prevailed, the more we cherish them.

For Burke, 'prejudice' is a distillation of a whole way of knowing, of understanding, and of feeling; a way he saw as being in total contrast to the ways of thought which flourished in the French Enlightenment and then, momentarily, in the Revolution. Those ways put a premium on pure reason, on strict deduction of the kind found in geometry, and held up the light of *individual* truth-seeking against what was inscribed in tradition and experience. To the Revolutionists it was enough to declare a thing 'against nature and contrary to reason' to banish it forever from the polity.

But, Burke countered, much as Vico had a century earlier, the geometric way of reasoning has but the most limited of uses in human affairs. Human beings require for their nurture and advancement a different kind of reasoning, one that comes from feelings, emotions, and long experience as well as pure logic. Prejudice has its own intrinsic wisdom, one that is anterior to intellect. Prejudice 'is of ready application in the emergency; it previously engages the mind in a steady course of wisdom and virtue and does not leave the man hesitating in the moment of decision, skeptical, puzzled, and unresolved.'

For Burke prejudice is an epitomization, in the individual mind, of the authority and wisdom which lie in tradition. This was the kind of wisdom that the natural law philosophers and especially the *philosophes* took delight in exposing as mere superstition. 'With them,' wrote Burke, 'it is a sufficient motive to destroy an old scheme of things because it is an old one. As to the new, they are in no sort of fear with regard to the duration of a building run up in haste; because duration is no object to those who think little or nothing has been done before their time.' Clearly what Burke is challenging is a type of thinking that burst into prominence with the Italian humanists in the fifteenth century, that emerged again with the *philosophes*, and that would be closely associated with the intellectual mind throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; to be seen in Burke's despised 'sophisters, calculators, and economists,' ever engaged in trying to think for all society and all government without stirring from their chairs.

Burke's assault upon pure rationalism through laudation of the unconscious, the pre-rational, and the traditional, found support in a great deal of nineteenth-century thought. Ironically, the Burkean idea of prejudice fed the gathering democratic idea of the will of the people, for Burke's idea was a reference above all to the kind of sense, understanding and knowledge that is *common* among individuals in a nation, not something that is the special preserve of an intellectual elite. Burke's 'prejudice' was designed to counter gnosticism, the disease of Western intellectuality that Burke's twentieth-century successor Eric Voegelin devoted a long life to tracking down from primitive Christianity to Renaissance humanists, Enlightenment rationalists, and, in our own time, Marxian socialists and Freudians. The very idea of a *gnosis* and of an intellectual elite alone qualified

to express and interpret it, was repugnant to Burke. In that respect alone, there is doubtless an affinity between him and Rousseau, author of the *General Will*. But there is a difference. The *General Will*, for Rousseau, was the collective will *after* it had been purged of the traditional and purely experiential. For Burke any true 'general will' had to be of a growth of the traditional in popular consciousness.

Not many after Burke used 'prejudice,' but on its basis a durable legacy was formed, one that completed the rout of the superficial rationalism begun by the natural rights thinkers of the Enlightenment and brought to utilitarian shape by Bentham and his followers. The ever-growing interest we find in the nineteenth century in the pre-rational, in the sources of motivation and judgement which lie either outside the individual mind or else at depths within the mind which were simply unknown to Voltaire and Diderot, and, not least, in the whole sphere of folk or popular sense and sentiment, can be traced back to currents set in motion by the first conservatives.

Tocqueville clearly was proceeding from Burke's use of 'prejudice' when he wrote: 'If everyone undertook to form all his own opinions and to seek for truth by isolated paths struck out by himself alone, it would follow that no considerable number of men would ever unite in any common belief.' Newman, in his *Grammar of Assent*, meant in his 'Iative sense,' with its explicit inclusion of the 'good sense' and 'common sense,' precisely what Burke had meant by 'prejudice.' It was also Newman who observed that men will die for a dogma who will not even stir for a conclusion. And later Chesterton warned that the merely rational soldier will not fight and the rational lover will not marry. Early in the century Disraeli had declared his war on those statesmen who seek 'to form political institutions on abstract principles of theoretic science, instead of permitting them to spring from the course of events.'

At stake in the conservative appeal to prejudice in human behavior is a whole type of knowledge. It is the kind of knowledge that William James described as 'knowledge of' in contrast to 'knowledge about.' The first is the knowledge we acquire simply through experience, through direct exposure to life or at least major areas of life. Its essence is practicality. It becomes an integral part of our characters because its origin lies in the process of habituation, of converting to generalized pre-disposition or 'instinct' the knowledge gained through experiment, conscious or unconscious, and ordinary

trial and error. The second type of knowledge James adduced is that we acquire from the textbook, from learning *about* something that can be presented in the form of abstract or general principle, something that is susceptible to prescriptive formulae, and is at its most resplendent when it can be set forth in logical fashion. If immediacy and practicality are the crowning virtues of the first type of knowledge, abstractness and generality are of the second type. Knowledge *about* music or painting can be had by anyone through study. But the knowledge *of* music or art requires, in James' sense, the kind of personal experience that only musicians and painters or sculptors have and can have. Any lively imagination can come up with asserted principles or laws of government, but only someone rich in knowledge *of* can provide the practical means of leading or otherwise participating in some actual government.

This is the distinction between types of knowledge that lies behind conservative criticism of all political utopianism and a great deal of political reform. The utopian and the reformer are all too likely, argues the conservative, to be long on principle and ideal but grievously short on sense of expediency, on practicality, and the 'know how' that we expect in every artisan, from longshoreman to surgeon. From habitual devotion to rules, principles and abstractions, there is an inevitable tendency to deal with masses of people rather than with people as we actually find them as concrete individuals, as parents, communicants, workers, consumers and voters.

Michael Oakesott has put the matter nicely in a notable essay on 'rationalism in politics.' Oakeshott makes essentially the same distinction between types of knowledge that James did, using the words 'knowledge of technique' for the one and 'practical knowledge' for the other. The first is what may be acquired through intelligence, through the book or classroom, and skill in ratiocination. It is large in rules, prescriptions and generalizations. The second is strictly limited to experience, to the doing of something, and to the making of what is learned an inalienable part of one's very mind and personality. Oakeshott argues that what we call political rationalism in modern Western thought is the summation and glorification of technical knowledge, of what James called knowledge about.

The modern history of Europe, Oakeshott says, is 'littered with the projects of the politics of Rationalism.' Behind every utopia, every grand generalization about the 'course of history' or 'the nature

of man,' every instant constitution for a new state or association of any kind, and every sweeping reform bill there lies the politics of Rationalism, in Oakeshott's formulation. Moreover, 'Rationalism is the assertion that what I have called practical knowledge is not knowledge at all, the assertion that, properly speaking, there is no knowledge that is not technical knowledge.' Thus the source of the familiar wail in human history that governments be in the hands of engineers, technocrats and other academic specialists. Thus the large blessing that political rationalists such as the *philosophes* in the eighteenth century bestowed upon 'enlightened despots.' It was so much more convenient to impose one's rules of political behavior upon a population if one had a pliant despot to begin with. But if one did not have such a despot already made, it would not be amiss to create one if possible. For the transmission of rationalist inspiration to the people can be slow and fitful at best if we rely on ordinary processes of participation or representation. Throughout history, therefore, wherever the rationalist mind has flourished, there has been the dream of either a single great intelligence or some small class of intelligences to rule directly and comprehensively over the people conceived as a homogeneous mass, and to be rid once and for all of the kinds of government which are founded upon mere use and wont, habit, custom and tradition, and upon representative bodies, semi-public commissions and other bodies, judicial buffers, and other restraints upon pure deductive reason.

Burke was one of the first to see that the mind of the political rationalist inclines naturally toward a kind of internal imperialism: 'democratic imperialism' as Irving Babbitt puts it in his *Leadership and Democracy*. That is, given the arrogation to individual reason of capacity to rule directly over the people, it is an easy, tempting, step forward to increase what it is that this reason is ruling – from the purely political and legal to the economic, social, moral and spiritual. It was with liberal and socialist intellectual groups in mind that Babbitt wrote: "No movement illustrates more clearly than the supposedly democratic movement the way in which the will of highly organized and resolute minorities may prevail over the will of the inert and unorganized mass."

From the conservative point of view, only prejudice, in Burke's sense, can keep a citizenry united in opposition to the kind of tyranny that rationalism in government sometimes imposes upon people.

Burke had the Jacobin rationalists in mind when he wrote the following words: "It is impossible not to observe that in the spirit of this geometrical distribution and arithmetical arrangement, these pretended citizens treat France exactly like a country of conquest." That is the criticism of bureaucracy and of the bureaucratic rationalist mentality from conservatives, and indeed from time to time liberals and socialists, that has risen constantly and sharply ever since Burke directed it against the Jacobin 'geometricians.'

Burke, and conservatives generally, have seen that almost all of the will to resist that is commonly claimed to result from inner knowledge of natural rights or from inner instincts to freedom, results instead from prejudices slowly built up historically in a people's minds: prejudices about religion, property, national autonomy and long-accustomed roles in the social order. These, not abstract rights, are the motive powers in the struggles of peoples for freedom which we honor.

Authority and Power

Authority is, along with property, one of the two central concepts in conservative philosophy. This is not to displace liberty as a conservative value; after all, Burke's repeated concern in his speeches on the American colonists, and in those on the peoples of India and Ireland, was the freedom of human beings to live by their own customs and traditions. This was the unvarying basis of his indictments of Lord North, Grenville, and Lord Hasting: their use of 'coercive power' to destroy or weaken autonomy.

But it is still necessary to see the priority of order and authority in Burke's treatment of liberty. 'The only liberty I mean,' he declared in *Reflections*, 'is a liberty connected with order; that not only exists along with order and virtue, but which cannot exist at all without them.' The first requisite of a society, Burke continues, is that means exist for the restraint of men's passions. It is important that 'the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought into subjections.'

The fatal flaw of the natural rights school Burke thought, had been its indifference to the walls of authority represented by traditions and social codes. Rousseau and others dealt with freedom only in the light of the claims of individual and state. But this, Burke and the other conservatives argued, is to ignore the claims of other enti-

ties, those of family, religion, local community, guild, and other institutions which are all structures of authority and which all require a substantial degree of autonomy—that is, a corporate freedom—in order to perform their necessary functions. The problem of freedom, Burke insisted, is inseparable from a triangle of authority, one involving individual and state but also the groups intermediate to these two entities.

There is an inexpugnable element of feudalism in the conservative theory of authority. Almost all conservatives in the nineteenth century—Burke, Bonald, Coleridge, Hegel, and Disraeli included—were unabashed admirers of the Middle Ages. Few changes of thought were more abrupt in the century than that from the Enlightenment's hatred of the feudal to conservative love for it and for the model it provided to cope with the political and economic pressures of modernity. Otto von Gierke, later in the century, wrote of the Middle Ages in a way that nearly all conservatives would have accepted:

From the fundamental idea of the social organism, the Middle Ages deduced a series of other ideas. In the first place, the notion of membership was developed to portray the positions filled by individual men in the various ecclesiastical and political groups ...so that the individuals who were the elements in these bodies were conceived, not as arithmetically equal units, but as members of social groups and thereby differentiated from each other.

For Burke and other conservatives, modern history could be properly seen as a sustained decline from the medieval-feudal synthesis of authority and liberty. In medieval law 'liberty' was in the first instance the right of a corporate group to its due autonomy. The whole panorama of Western history could be seen as the disintegration of this social, corporate conception into one dominated by masses of individuals. Tocqueville's underlying philosophy of history in his *Democracy in America* is one in which both the political state and the individual advance in importance at the expense of the social bonds within which both were largely confined in the Middle Ages. Authority then was manifest in a chain, one analogous to the chain of being that dominated medieval theology. Both liberty and authority were inescapable aspects of a chain of groups and associations rising from the individual to family, parish, church, state, and ultimately to God. This sense of authority as a chain or hierarchy played a major role in the conservative view of society.

Burke's view of the proper design of authority within the state is lucidly and pointedly set forth in his *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, written in 1795 at the request of Pitt, the then Prime Minister. Pitt had asked Burke for his recommendation of the desirable approach that government should take in the event of an internal disaster such as a severe famine. What organization of government powers should prevail? Burke's answer was crisp and to the point. Organization should remain the same, whether in normal or exceptional times:

The State ought to confine itself to what regards the State or the creatures of the State, namely the exterior establishment of religion, its magistracy, its military force by land and sea, its revenue, the corporations that owe their existence to its fiat; in a word, everything that is truly and properly public, to the public peace, to the public safety, to the public order, and to the public property.

But *not*, Burke emphasizes, to problems and necessities of the private sphere. In this there is not the slightest distinction between Burke and his friend Adam Smith. Indeed in Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, government may legitimately take on education and certain other actions which are necessary to the public weal and which may not commend themselves to private initiative. But Burke is silent on any such additions to the government's responsibility to its citizens. Despite the occasional intimations from time to time among self-styled Burkean conservatives that Burke followed a different drummer than Adam Smith, there is in fact no serious difference between them on the function of government. It is a matter of record that Burke's admiration for Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was immense, fully as great as for Smith's earlier work, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which Burke had reviewed with almost extravagant praise in his *Annual Register*.

The feudal-conservative structure of political authority is also strong in Burke's *Thoughts and Details*. Burke is writing about government powers:

As they descend from the state to a province, from a province to a parish, and from a parish to a private house, they go on accelerated in their fall. They cannot do the lower duty, and in proportion as they try it, they will certainly fail in the higher. They ought to know the different departments of things; what belongs to laws and what manners alone can regulate. To these, great politicians may give a leaning, but they cannot give a law.

Laissez-faire and decentralization are sovereign in Burke.

The essentially feudal view of authority prevailed in Germany, France, and other parts of Europe in conservative writing. Bonald's *Theory of Power*, published a year before Burke's death, and with acknowledgement of the stimulus of Burke's *Reflections*, advanced a philosophy of authority and power that might have come straight from Thomas Aquinas. Sovereignty, Bonald declared, exists in God alone. He delegates this sovereignty more or less equally between family, church and political government. Each share of this divinely distributed authority is to be regarded as supreme in its own realm. The authority—and thereby the freedom or autonomy—of the family is sacrosanct; neither the state nor the church may rightfully transgress upon the prerogatives belonging to kinship. The same precisely holds for government and church. Each has its own due and proper authority over its own. Tyranny consists, Bonald wrote, in the transgression of one sphere upon another. The total power of the Revolutionary state in France had come from its wanton invasion of the spheres of family and church.

This was a common view. In Germany, Hegel presented, in his *Philosophy of Right*, a substantially similar view. The powers of church, aristocracy, family, and political government are set forth pluralistically. The state must never transgress upon the rights and autonomies of the major social groups and strata. Haller built his entire, monumental *Theory of the Political and Social Sciences* around this pluralism, this separation of spheres, and the rights of all groups and associations beginning with the family. Again it is instructive to remember de Maistre's injunction to build a society, not merely counter-Revolution but the *opposite* of the Revolution. And this the conservatives did, beginning with Burke.

Nor have these principles of state and society ever left conservatism, save under the spurs of emergency and sheer political necessity. Disraeli, Newman, Tocqueville, Bourget, Godkin, Babbitt, all of them, down to such conservatives of our own day as Oakeshott, Voegelin, Jouvenel and Kirk, have stressed nothing if not the bounden necessity of the political state holding as far back as possible from meddling in economic, social and moral affairs; and, conversely, in *doing* all that is possible in strengthening and broadening the functions of family, neighborhood, and voluntary, cooperative association. And in practical politics over the last two centuries, in America as in European countries, the hallmark of conservative politics has

been its greater affection for the private sector, for family and local community, for economy and private property, and for a substantial measure of decentralization in government, one that would respect the corporate rights of the smaller unities of state and society. However bizarre it may seem at first thought to attach the label of feudal to such American products as Coolidge, Hoover, Goldwater and Reagan—and their British counterparts—their philosophies of government earn the label all the same.

What Burke, Bonald and Hegel began in this respect remained a sturdy heritage all through the nineteenth century. Newman, in one of the few pieces on government that he ever wrote, saw proper authority in the state as based upon the four principles of *coordination, subordination, delegation and participation*—in that order. They are, in concert, feudal to the core. In France, the critical writings of Bourget and the novels of Barrés offer like perspectives of authority. In both we find the stress on the social bond, the relative insignificance of the individual, love of tradition, hierarchy, and heroism; and withal, as Bourget stated, 'the disposition to feudalize and decentralize everything political.'

One of the legacies of the conservative-feudal view of government and society is that of semi-public autonomous bodies in the realm, freed of direct responsibility to legislature or the people. Lord Keynes acknowledged conservative wisdom in this respect, calling for greater use of such bodies in the economic and social affairs of a nation, thus taking a load off the state and at the same time perhaps cutting off the roots of what would otherwise be endless bureaucracy. The Middle Ages had of course been rich in such groups as these, and more than a few of them remained intact in Europe for a long time after the idea of the centralized, direct state had come into circulation. Such groups as the University Grants Commission in England and the Federal Reserve in the United States are obvious instances here, though neither appears likely to remain for long, given the constant opposition of populist and direct democracy elements. Courts had had extraordinary privileges in medieval society, and they have continued in the West to have at least a degree of feudal autonomy, certainly as compared with the status of courts in the totalitarian nations. The Supreme Court—also the object of almost incessant attack by populists and social democrats—has always been in many respects the favorite branch of government in the hearts of

American conservatives. It was the voice of conservatism that made possible until early in the twentieth century the indirect election of U.S. senators. The Senate was designed by the Framers as the 'conservatives' chamber, comparable in its way to the House of Lords in Britain. Better, then, for senators to be spared campaigns directly among the voters, and to mandate their elections by state legislatures, another example of conservatism's preference for indirect government and its inevitable buffering institutions and safeguards. One will search the history of conservative thought in vain for anything resembling a 'one man, one vote' philosophy. Conservatives fought as hard in the United States for indirect elections of officials, in the local communities and the states as well as the national government as English conservatives had fought for 'rotten' boroughs and the strength of the House of Lords. The highly democratic measures of initiative, recall and referendum which came into being in the American states around the turn of the century were opposed every step of the way by conservatives—whether Democrat or Republican.

The Constitution of the United States was a very conservative piece of work when its drafters concluded their labors in Philadelphia. The conservative principles of division of powers, of checks and balances, of indirect government, and built-in limitations generally upon possible tendencies of the national government to go the way of European governments, were to be seen in almost every part of the Constitution. The liberties of individuals would be best guarded by making certain that national government could not, save in the rarest circumstances, interfere in any way with the authorities of the states and, within them, local communities. When the idea of a special bill of rights came up, Alexander Hamilton spoke for almost all conservatives in his opposition. Such a bill was unnecessary in the first place; in England, Magna Charta and later petitions of rights were appropriate and valuable simply because there was at the time little if any power of the people recognized; it had been surrendered to the monarchy. 'Here,' wrote Hamilton, 'the people surrender nothing; and as they retain everything, they have no need of particular reservations.'

The freedom of individuals and of local and regional bodies could best be protected, and combined with opportunities for their freer development and prosperity, by careful avoidance of prescription

for them in the Constitution. Liberties, individual and communal, existed, as it were, in the interstices of the Constitution. Hence Hamilton's opposition to a separate bill of rights.

Why declare that things shall not be done which there is no power to do? Why, for instance, should it be said that the liberty of the press shall not be restrained when no power is given by which restrictions may be imposed? Moreover if gratuitous mention of such a liberty were to be made in the constitution, it would in the first place threaten to elevate it above other possible liberties, no less important, but penalized by their omission from the document.

In any event, Hamilton continued, 'What signifies a declaration that the liberty of the press shall be inviolably preserved? What is the liberty of the press? Who can give it any definition which would not leave the utmost latitude for evasion?' The long and often tortured history of the First Amendment suggests that Hamilton and his fellow conservatives were not without a certain prophetic insight. At bottom, their doctrine of liberties was essentially that of medieval law: that these are best served within the doctrine of the maximum liberty for corporate bodies, such as family, domain, corporation; and served also by the principle of separation, of localization or regionalization, and of competition among powers. Over and over again constitutional history in America is one of conflict between those insisting upon maximization of *individual* rights and those insisting upon the autonomies of the *corporate* rights of states and local communities.

Let it not, though, be thought that conservatives have been or are in favor of a weak central government. Far from it. The distinction that Tocqueville made in *Democracy in America* between *government* and *administration* is implicit at least in almost all conservative thought. The former, Tocqueville wrote, must be strong and unified. It is the latter that must, in the interest of liberty and order alike, be as decentralized, localized, and generally inconspicuous as possible. De Maistre declared the public executioner the very cornerstone of proper governmental power over the people. We tend, he writes, to shrink from him: 'And yet all grandeur, all power, subordination rests on the executioner; he is the horror and the bond of human association.' De Maistre mocks the public's common praise of the soldier and its repugnance for the executioner. The soldier kills and kills; his cause changes constantly; there are never enough of him; and he is the constant threat to civil government. The executioner,

however, is small in number, inconspicuous, and constant in purpose: he is there to prevent as well as punish crime. 'Since crime is part of the world's order,' wrote de Maistre, 'and since it can be checked only by punishment, once deprive the world of the executioner and all order will disappear with him.' But from centrality of government it does not follow that it must be omniscient, responsible for daily existence, and ever in our lives, and, worst of all, pretended moral teacher, guide to virtue, and mother of spirit.

The price, Burke warned, of the eradication or erosion of all the natural authorities in a society, is increasing military domination of the government. There is no alternative to this, he writes at the end of the *Reflections*, 'for you have industriously destroyed all the opinions and prejudices...all the instincts which support government.... You lay down metaphysical propositions which infer universal consequences, and then you attempt to limit logic by despotism.' Most of the conservatives of the mainstream have put the problem of authority in these Burckhardt terms. Burckhardt, who loathed the kind of individualism he had found in the Italian Renaissance, in its 'rootless' humanists in war against everything traditional and communal, ever eager to serve the new money and the new power of Renaissance Italy, saw the future of the West in Burckhardt terms. He thought the glorification of human nature, the belief in the intrinsic goodness of individuals, a force in itself capable of destroying the social fabric, thus leaving human beings in time the helpless subjects of a new race of 'booted commandoes.'

There was no real conflict, the conservatives argued, between the needs of political government and the claims of the social and moral spheres to autonomy. 'Such divisions of our country as have been formed by habit and not by a sudden jerk of authority, were so many little images of the great country in which the heart found something it could fill. The love to the whole is not extinguished by this subordinate partiality.' Those words were written by Burke in his indictment of the French schemes of 'geometrical symmetry' in the state, of a centralization of power in the name of reason that would not only destroy all the 'inns and resting-places' and 'our neighborhoods and provincial connections' but 'confound all citizens ... into one homogeneous mass.'

What kept Burke's and Bonald's visions of state and society alive in the nineteenth century was the pervasive impact of Benthamite

utilitarianism. The hatred of this philosophy that we find in the pages of Newman, Disraeli and almost all other conservative thinkers was the successor to Burke's and Bonald's earlier hatred of natural rights and natural law individualism generally. Bentham possessed a far greater brilliance of mind, and also of the Messianic, than any of the *philosophes* with the exception of Rousseau; and he was able to attract followers, many of them exemplary reformers of government, as Rousseau never could—save in so far as his nihilistic attitude toward all inequality in society furnished generalized inspiration to revolutionists and powerseekers. For Bentham the sight of pluralistic diversity, of the old and new mixed, of the purely local or regional, above all of the traditional—'sordid fingers of the past'—was enough to inspire rage. His panopticon principle, at first limited to prisons, became before his death the epitome of his icy rationalism with respect to all human arrangements— asylums, schools, factories, etc. His 'greatest good for the greatest number' was quite literally given detail through a 'felicific calculus,' and Bentham seems never to have doubted that the 'two sovereign masters' of man were desire for pleasure and recoil from pain. Social, cultural, even racial or ethnic, characteristics were, in Bentham's view, irrelevant and immaterial.

Tocqueville could have had Benthamite democracy in mind when he wrote of the kind of power over human lives that democracies have most to fear in themselves:

an innumerable multitude of men, all equal and alike, incessantly endeavoring to procure the petty and paltry pleasures with which they glut their lives ... [above it] an immense and tutelary power ... absolute, minute, regular, provident and mild ... till each nation is reduced to nothing better than a flock of timid and industrious animals, of which the government is the shepherd.

Conservative thought has had this view of democratic despotism in the forefront of its consideration of democracy from Burke on. 'A perfect democracy,' Burke wrote, 'is the most shameless thing in the world. As it is the most shameless, it is also the most fearless.' The most fearless, that is, with respect to the social order and its inherent authorities and autonomies. Bonald wrote: 'Monarchy instinctively recognizes society and its constitutive groups, whereas democracy constantly seeks to supplant them.' Irving Babbitt in his study of democracy and leadership saw in democracy an ineradicable 'imperialism' that seeks constantly to bring the diversity of society under its own uniform, equalitarian mould.

Burke and Bonald both blamed the democratic forces of the Revolution for the vast increase in government bureaucracy. Once the state begins to substitute its own authority and distinctive pattern upon the myriad forms of society, there is no alternative to an ever-widening bureaucracy. Tocqueville went so far as to declare that so close are democracy and bureaucracy in spirit that one may predict the advance of democracy by the advance of bureaucracy, and vice versa.

So too is there a close affinity between democracy and the widening and leveling of warfare. It was the Revolution, as all the early conservatives pointed out, that instituted for the first time in history, a national conscription, the famous *levée en masse*. Warfare, all of a sudden, lost the limited character it had had in the pre-Revolutionary age, with more or less finite purposes—usually dynastic or territorial—a fixed order of battle, and a great deal of post-feudal ceremony. With the Revolutionary armies on the march, war became the crusade for freedom, equality and fraternity that inevitably brought with it the ever-larger armies and ever-expanding purposes seen in the nineteenth century. Taine observed that democracy puts a knapsack on every male while it gives him the ballot. In the twentieth century mass warfare of the kind that had engendered only forebodings before, became a reality in the First World War, with millions of men locked in a military slaughterhouse, with all the ancient art of war supplanted by huge, nearly motionless armies systematically raining shells upon one another, the prize being little more in a given battle than an advance of a few hundred yards. Winston Churchill wrote: 'War, which used to be cruel and magnificent, has now become cruel and squalid.' All, Churchill added, because of science and democracy, each a great leveller. It was the conservative Major General Fuller in England between the world wars who gave historical length and breadth to Churchill's words, showing in detail the close relation historically between the expansion of the demographic and political base of the national state and the expansion also of the whole pattern of war in the West: its mass in purely human terms, the ever-more lethal weaponry, and, especially, the widening of the aims of war from the simple territorial and dynastic to the ideological and moral. In the feudal era, as Fuller, Dawson, Churchill and other conservatives have stressed, war was limited in almost every respect: by its technology, the number of those involved, by its code

of chivalry, by limited contract or obligation to serve, and by church interdictions. By contrast, at the onset of the Second World War, the democratic societies of the West had achieved limitless objectives, unconditional terms of surrender, a weaponry that could kill by the hundreds of thousands, and death and devastation greater in a single year than of all previous wars combined.

The masses represent yet another perspective of the conservative treatment of political power; the masses and their relationship to the centralization and thickening of power in the Western state. I use 'masses' here in the sense in which we find it in the writings of Ortega y Gasset and Hannah Arendt, among many others: an aggregate discernible less by numbers than its lack of internal social structure, integrating tradition, and shared moral values. One of the effects of the Revolution's peculiar form of nihilism, Burke thought, was its effective desocializing of human beings, its atomizing of the population by virtue of its destructiveness toward traditional social bonds. Thus Burke refers to the Revolution 'tearing asunder the bands of their subordinate community and [dissolving] it into an unsocial, uncivil, unconnected chaos of elementary particles.' Elsewhere he writes that the Revolutionary government has 'attempted to confound all sorts of citizens, as well as they could, into one homogeneous mass, and then they have divided this amalgam into a number of incoherent republics.'

The idea of the mass developed and spread widely in the nineteenth century. It is strong in Tocqueville, who thought one of the great dangers of democracy was its creation of the mass in the first place—through emphasis upon the majority and through egalitarian values which tended to level populations—and then its increasing dependence upon the mass, leading to plebiscitary dictatorship. Burckhardt, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, all wrote in apprehension of the coming of mass society and its desocializing effect upon the individual; an effect that would make government a combination of guardian and despot.

There was thus a considerable tradition of the use of the 'masses' in Western thought before Ortega y Gasset brought forth his *Revolt of the Masses* in 1929. There is a close, symbiotic relation, Ortega thought, between the creation of the masses in modern life and the creation of the totalitarian state. How can the state not be total in its power and responsibility, Ortega asks, when the population it gov-

erns has become denuded of all the forms of authority and function which once made a social organization of it? In turn, though, 'the masses feel the power of the state to be theirs. Through and by means of the State, the anonymous machine, the masses act for themselves.' Peter Drucker somewhat later, and with Hitler's Germany primarily in mind, wrote that 'the despair of the masses is the key to understanding fascism.' No 'revolt of the mob,' no 'triumph of unscrupulous propaganda,' but 'stark despair caused by the breakdown of the old order and the absence of a new one.' This, Drucker concluded, in *The End of Economic Man*, is the origin and the *raison d'être* of the totalitarian state. Hannah Arendt only echoed this conservative lity on the masses in her monumental *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

Liberty and Equality

There is no principle more basic in the conservative philosophy than that of the inherent and absolute incompatibility between liberty and equality. Such incompatibility springs from the contrary objectives of the two values. The abiding purpose of liberty is its protection of individual and family property—a word used in its widest sense to include the immaterial as well as the material in life. The inherent objective of equality, on the other hand, is that of some kind of redistribution or leveling of the unequally shared material and immaterial values of a community. Moreover, individual strengths of mind and body being different from birth, all efforts to compensate through law and government for this diversity of strengths can only cripple the liberties of those involved; especially the liberties of the strongest and the most brilliant. This is, in brief, the view which conservative writers have unfailingly taken, from Burke on, on the relation between liberty and equality.

Burke's indictment of the French Revolution and his rigorous differentiation of it from the American Revolution rested in large measure upon what he perceived as the diametrically different resolutions of liberty and equality in the two events. The earlier revolution was, Burke thought, motivated solely by the desire for freedom: freedom of the colonies from British rule and, through its constitution, freedom of the people from a government that might seek to impose its will illegitimately upon the inherent rights of individual citizens. But the French Revolution from the beginning, Burke thought, made

equality and the nation the two dominant values, both possible instruments of tyranny, and correspondingly worked toward the erosion of the social and moral conditions of the liberty of citizens.

Burke saw the French Revolution, its Declaration of Rights, its successive constitutions, and a multitude of its laws, as an unprecedented and hateful effort to transfer the primary locus of freedom from the individual to the nation. The Revolutionary slogan for the nation, *une et indivisible*, left no crevices, no openings in the body politic through which energetic individuals might rise. The freedom that the Jacobins celebrated, Burke believed, was essentially the freedom of the people as a national community to act against all groups, beginning with the aristocracy and the monarchists, which sought to limit or qualify in any way this monolithic community. The highest kind of freedom was not 'freedom from' but rather 'freedom to;' in a word, to participate in some community or cause larger than one's self. This had been the essence of Rousseau's revolutionary treatment of freedom in his *Social Contract*. Everywhere, Rousseau wrote electrifyingly, man is in chains though he was born free. To strike off the chains was the objective Rousseau sent to all future revolutionists and reformers, but with this message went another, more subtle but more powerful. True freedom lies in the individual's total surrender of self and all possessions, including rights, to the absolute community. From Rousseau to Lenin, that has been the essentially collectivist—or communal—interpretation of true freedom.

The message has been the unfailing object of conservative assault. Power is power, Tocqueville said in effect: it does not matter whether the power is wielded by one man, a clique, or the whole people. It is still power and therefore oppressive. From this position, set forth from the beginning by Burke and echoed immediately by de Maistre and Bonald, rose the conservative insight into the potentially despotic nature of popular government. The seductive thought that enlargement of the base of power would be automatically to diminish use of power, since the people would not tyrannize themselves, would lead, conservatives argued, to a novel form of despotism in which the entire people, or a simple majority, might impose its tyrannical will upon minorities, creative elites, and other lesser bodies of human beings in society. A conservative mocked the Rousseauian-Jacobin view of freedom by writing: Each morning the

citizen would look into the mirror while shaving and see the face of one ten-millionth a tyrant and one whole slave.

I mentioned earlier in this section the conservative fondness for the intermediate social groups and communities in the social order: those which mediate between individual and the larger political power. That was in the context of a theory of authority. Here it is important to stress the degree to which the same emphasis upon intermediate groups became the basis of a conservative view of freedom. Groups of individuals—classes, communities, guilds and corporations—seemed to Burke and Tocqueville alike to have been the principal victims of the Revolution in France: these rather than abstract individuals. Burke repeatedly referred to violations of the corporate and communal rights of Frenchmen by the Jacobins: rights in kinship, religious, economic, and other kinds of associations.

There is thus implicit in the conservative defense of groups against the sovereign a pluralism that would become one of the more distinctive philosophies of the later nineteenth century. At various times this pluralism—and also syndicalism—could be taken up by conservative, liberal, and radical causes alike—visible in Proudhonian anarchism and in the anarchism of Kropotkin later and the liberalism of Mill as well as the conservatism of Hegel, Tocqueville and Taine. The thesis common to all these causes is the very reverse of that enunciated by Rousseau and the Jacobins. The claims of intermediate groups upon their members do not add up to tyranny but to the reinforcements necessary to the liberty of individuals. If the rights of such groups as family, community and province are invaded by the central state—and almost predictably in the name of individuals assertedly robbed of their natural rights—the true walls of individual freedom will in time crumble. The conservative position, set forth most eloquently by Tocqueville, is that intermediate associations are valuable as mediating and nurturing contexts for individuals and equally valuable as buffers against the power of the state. In democracies especially, declared Tocqueville, these intermediate associations are necessary, for they offset, by their very existence and the loyalties they win from their members, the ever-mesmerizing power of the social democratic state and its creed of equality.

The conservative stress on such groups as family, church and local community is in practice a stress too upon the several social roles which exist perforce in these groups. There has been a mini-

mum of support, consequently, from the conservative wing for the varied liberationist movements of the twentieth century. Given apprehension of the masses, of threatened break-up of social molecules into atoms, of a generalized nihilism toward society and culture as the result of individualistic hedonism and the fragmenting effect of both state and economy upon the traditional communities, it is hardly matter for surprise that conservatives have from the beginning been in the forefront of resistance to feminist movements. To cherish and respect the woman in her role of mother, wife, daughter is one thing, the conservative might be heard saying; it is something unacceptably different to see the woman being separated from her historic roles by modern liberalism. Much the same position is characteristically taken in religion, education, not to forget political citizenship itself where conservatives for long opposed voting rights (and economic too) for women on the ground that their presence on the hustings would at once defeminize them and feminize the roles and issues of politics. Probably nowhere has the innate feudalism of the conservative ethic been more visible than in the recurrent response of conservatism to the successive liberationist movements of the modern world. Where the liberal sees a probable increase in freedom and creativeness the result of these liberations, the conservative is more likely to see, or at least fear, insecurity and alienation.

The chief accusation made against liberalism by conservatives is, and has been from Burke to Dawson, Eliot and Kirk among moderns that liberalism is a kind of Judas goat for totalitarianism. By its incessant liberationist work on the traditional authorities and roles in society, liberalism, it is argued, weakens the social structure, encourages the multiplication of 'mass-types' of human beings and thus beckons in its way to waiting totalitarian masters. 'By destroying the social habits of the people,' wrote Eliot, 'by dissolving their natural collective consciousness into individual constituents....Liberalism can prepare the way for that which is its own negation.' It was during the heyday of Mussolini that Christopher Dawson pronounced Italian Fascism the work basically of modern liberalism.

Equality is no more popular in the conservative tradition than the liberal view of individual freedom. I have stressed the feudal model for a great deal of conservative thinking about society and state. Nowhere is this model more visible than in the treatments of equal-

ity, leveling, and of uniformity, the absence of vital differentiation, the mass character of which equality run rampant can bring about in a society. As we have noted, feudalism is the translation into politics of the theology of the chain of being. Inequality of function, role and power is as necessary to the social order as a whole as to the family. 'Take but degree away, untune that string, and hark! what discord follows; each thing meets in mere oppugnancy.' Thus the familiar view of Shakespeare toward the leveling of ranks.

It is the view of all conservatives. Social differentiation, hierarchy, and functional rather than mechanical consensus are as vital to freedom as to order. This is the nub of the conservative philosophy of freedom and equality. The socialist may see the latter as fundamental to the former. The liberal is more and more disposed to agree. But, save only for the kind of legal and constitutional equality which England was the first to reach, in the seventeenth century, most forms of equality—or, better, of mechanisms of achievement of equality—seem to the conservative to threaten the liberties of both individual and group, liberties which are inseparable from the built-in differentiation, variety, and variable opportunity that are so often the target of the equalizer.

'Those who attempt to level, never equalize,' Burke wrote in a famous line. He concedes readily the importance of vertical as well as horizontal channels of individual movement in a creative and productive society. 'Woe to the country which would madly and impiously reject the service of the talents and virtues' of the common people. There must be ways for individuals of lower station to rise to higher. But such rise must not be too easy. 'If rare merit be the rarest of all rare things, it ought to pass through some sort of gradation.'

In *Coningsby* Disraeli wrote to fellow Jews that equality would be particularly oppressive to them, given their history. 'Their bias is to religion, property, and natural aristocracy; and it should be the interest of statesmen that this bias of a great race should be encouraged and their energies and creative power enlisted in the cause of existing society.' Only, Disraeli suggests, when Jews are denied the privileges of citizenship and of protection of their natural aristocracy and property and religion, are some Jews forced into aberrant, radical behavior.

Much of the conservative veneration for the family lies in the historic affinity between family and property. It is usually the rule

for any family to seek as much advantage for its children and other members as is possible. The medieval laws of primogeniture and entail by which family property could pass intact to the oldest son and by trust and could not be alienated from the family line obviously bespoke a high regard for the family as the best possible means of protection against dissipation and fragmentation of property, its center of gravity almost invariably land. There is no issue over which conservative has fought liberal and socialist as strenuously as on threats through law to loosen property from family grasp, by taxation or by any other form of redistribution. The argument against the hoary protections of family privilege came down to the unfair advantage one set of children would have over another by reason of differential inheritance.

But, answers the conservative, we do not protest the unequal advantage given one set of children by virtue of genetic transmission of qualities of strength and acuity; why, then, should we protest the inheritance of cultural-material qualities—which may have required several generations in the formation—which are equally a part of what we think of as family and ancestry? Hayek puts the conservative case succinctly:

To admit this is merely to recognize that the belonging to a particular family is part of the individual personality, that society is made up as much of families as individuals, and that transmission of the heritage of civilization within the family is as important a tool in man's striving toward better things as is the heredity of beneficial physical attributes.

Further, given the presumably ineradicable desire everywhere of parents to seek as much preferment for their own children as possible, the simple transmission of property is less costly overall to a society than is—in societies such as Communist nations where inheritance of property has been forbidden—the scurrying around of parents to get their children in the best jobs, at whatever cost to the good of society. T. S. Eliot has noted that the now-familiar competition, often vicious, of parents to get their children a place in the best schools and colleges, at whatever loss to both child and curriculum, is the frenzied recourse people have to ways which may compensate for loss of older and recognized strata of position in the social order.

But Carlyle had said it earlier for conservatives. Recognized or not recognized, a man has his superiors, a regular hierarchy above him; extending up, degree above degree to heaven itself and God

the Maker, who made His world not for anarchy but for rule and order. Before money—cash—had become 'the universal sole nexus of man to man,' the lower classes, Carlyle went on, had those to whom they could more or less naturally look up to. 'With the supreme triumph of Cash, a changed time has entered; there must a changed aristocracy enter.' Carlyle was not pleading for restoration of the semi-feudal aristocracy of the eighteenth century in England but rather one of mind and heart. But his outlook on the new world around him was pure, Burkean conservatism.

Conservatives recognized early the leveling, egalitarian potentialities of law—formal, statute law. As Halévy wrote: 'It may be said of all laws that they are in their essence equalitarian and individualistic insofar as they tend to consider all individuals as equal and to equalize the conditions of all individuals.' Law is in short more often the destroyer of custom than it is the creator.

Conservative opposition—almost tropistic from the very beginning—to redistribution, special entitlements, and Affirmative Action programs, springs from the inevitably devastating effects in the long run of these upon the diversity and variety of society as much, if not more, as its hierarchies. Hierarchy of one kind or other will never be wiped out by law. As efforts to this effect in the socialist societies have shown, and nowhere more grossly than in the Soviet Union, there is little if any eradication of hierarchy; only a massive shift in the bases of class-power and class-wealth. But what is wiped out, on the clear evidence, is the cultural, social, psychological and social-ecological *diversity* of a people when serious redistribution takes effect. Jouvanel has written on this in his *Ethics of Redistribution*:

I for one would see without chagrin the disappearance of many activities which serve the richer, but no one surely would gladly accept the disappearance of all the activities which find their market in the classes enjoying more than £500 of net income. The production of all first-quality goods would cease.

And the further consequences?

Firstly, personal hardship for individuals of original tastes; secondly, the loss to society of the special effort these people would make to satisfy their special needs; thirdly, the loss to society of the variety of ways resulting from successful efforts to satisfy special wants; fourthly, the loss to society of these activities which are supported by minority means.

Of all conservatives writing during the past two centuries on 'leveling,' 'homogeneity of the mass,' and the 'sterilization of rank and

status' in modern democratic society, no one has yet outdone Tocqueville in the matter. In *Democracy in America* he pretended to an Olympian detachment that he did not in fact ever hold personally. His *Recollections*, the memoir he wrote on his participation in the Revolution of 1848 in Paris, makes clear his antipathy to the kind of equality that 'penetrates into the minds of the people in the shape of envious and greedy desires and sow the seed of future revolutions.' It is almost comical at times in *Democracy in America* to see the author over and over again come up with brightest countenance, so to speak, to equality and then, after perfunctory praise, lapse into the general mood of pessimism and fear that hangs over that classic, especially Part II—which should have been published as a separate book with the title *Equality*. Readers have no difficulty in finding stated in Tocqueville—often turgidly and anfractuously but with power all the same—the secular theology behind Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

Property and Life

'To the civilized man,' wrote Paul Elmer More in 1915, 'the rights of property are more important than the right to life.' After all, More goes on, life is a primitive thing; that is, no more than the biological basis of the values we cherish as civilized. 'Nearly all that makes it more significant to us than to the beast is associated with our possessions—with property, all the way from the food we share with the beasts, to the most refined products of the human imagination.'

It is interesting to know that these words were written by their author in direct excoriation of John D. Rockefeller; however, *not* of Rockefeller's role in the so-called Ludlow Massacre in Colorado, when workers were killed on Rockefeller mining property for their refusal to disperse when ordered by the police; not at all for this. More's declaration that property is more vital than life was provoked by what he felt to be Rockefeller's mealy-mouthed, uncertain and wavering *defense* of his actions in the protection of his private property.

'It is the contempt for property,' Burke wrote in a letter in 1793, 'and the setting up against its principle certain pretended advantages of the state (which by the way exists only for its conservation) that has led to all the other evils which have ruined France and brought all Europe into the most imminent danger.'

Repeatedly, in the *Reflections* and almost everything else Burke wrote about the French Revolution and the European crisis produced by the Revolution, he makes Jacobin assault upon private property, through obliteration, national appropriation or severe regulation, a crime equal to anything done to Christianity or monarchy and aristocracy. Nothing affords better illustration of the medieval-realist element in the conservative mind than Burke's defense of corporate ownership of property under the *ancien regime*: property held in both deed and historical tradition by the great semi-public ecclesiastical and civil foundations, including the monasteries, universities and charitable institutions. In the name of natural rights individualism, the Jacobin rulers declared corporate property non-existent in as much as, under natural law theory, only individuals could hold proper title to property. On this Burke waxes sarcastic. When Henry VIII had robbed the monasteries, he had at least gone through the motions of having a commission find or pretend to find obliquities in monastic rule. But he did not and could not, know what

an effectual instrument of despotism was to be found in that grand magazine of offensive weapons, the rights of men.... Had fate reserved him to our times, four technical terms would have done his business, and saved him all this trouble: he needed nothing more than one short form of incantation—*Philosophy, Light, Liberty, the Rights of Men*.

There is in conservative theory of private property a strong Roman character. Property is more than external appendage to man, mere inanimate servant of human need. It is, above anything else in civilization, the very condition of man's humanness, his superiority over the entire natural world. Not, the Roman argument goes, until a human being, at some time in the remote past, took a piece of earth for himself and declared 'This is mine,' was it possible for man's sovereignty over the earth and all that lay on it to assert itself and thus become the first step in the development of civilization. In Roman Law, especially in the original tables and in the law of the Republic, the root, and essential, meaning of *familia* is property—real property; land, foremost, but all property that is in the hereditary possession of the *patria potestas*, the law of the household. Property could never be alienated from the family line save as the consequence, determined by the Senate, of grievous and imperishable crime. All through the Republic, any *individual* right to property was not so much repudiated as simply unknown and therefore un-

imaginable. It was under the Empire, beginning with the Caesars, that family control of property began to erode away and individual rights to family inheritance multiply.

The whole essence of the conservative view of property, and of the strongly Roman-feudal component of this view, is to be seen of course in the customs and laws of primogeniture and entail. Both were designed to protect the *family* character of property, to save it from becoming the uncertain, possibly transitory, possession of the individual alone. Almost everything about the medieval law of family and marriage, including the stringent emphasis upon chastity of the female, the terrible penalty that could be exerted against adultery by the wife, springs from a nearly absolute reverence for property, for legitimate heritability of property. So far as the inauguration of modernity is concerned in Western history, the abolition of the laws of entail and primogeniture will do as well as any single cause of the Great Transformation.

So deeply impressed was Tocqueville by the crucial role of the family-property molecule in history that he saw the *real* American Revolution as being, not the events comprising the Revolutionary War against Great Britain, but rather the profound changes made almost immediately after the Revolution by the new states' legislatures in the nature of property. Without exception, those states in which primogeniture and entail, elements of the English colonial heritage, still existed when the new republic was born, acted swiftly to abolish these ancient traditions. Tocqueville thought that the death of primogeniture and entail, to be replaced by 'equal partition of property,' could have only one result: 'the intimate connection is destroyed between family feeling and the preservation of the paternal estate; the property ceases to represent the family.' From this dissolution, this smashing of the family-property molecule, came, Tocqueville thought, much of the *egoisme* and *individualisme* that he believed he saw over the American landscape. 'Where family pride ceases to act, individual selfishness comes into play. When the idea of family becomes vague, indeterminate, and uncertain, a man thinks of his present convenience; he provides for the establishment of his next succeeding generation and no more.' As is so often the case in Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, it is not so much America he is really thinking about in these words as it is his fellow-French, but the essential point is the same.

Tocqueville, it can be added here, reveals himself in his *Recollec-tions*, a memoir of his experiences in the French legislature during the revolution of 1848, as a conservative of the first order. He voted regularly with the propertied class as a legislator; he espoused completely *laissez-faire*, seeing the 'laws of commerce' as 'the laws of God;' he took Nassau Senior as his model economist, not his own friend John Stuart Mill; he was contemptuous of the 'deluded' people who thought government could mitigate misfortune that was caused by Providence; he excoriated Lamartine, head of government, for not dispersing with armed force the crowds of unemployed massed around the legislative building; and finally he was a strong admirer of Edmund Burke.

He might well have been, for Burke too was an apostle of *laissez-faire*. The final part of *Reflections on the Revolution in France* is taken up almost exclusively with the evils produced by the Jacobin philosophy of government, one that mandated scheme after scheme for direct use of government power and revenue in the economic, social and moral affairs of the people. In his *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*, in which we have already seen a strict philosophy of localism and decentralization, the recommendation is the same when it comes to the possible role of government in time of famine or other crisis in the lives of the people.

To provide for us in our necessities is not in the power of Government. It would be a vain presumption in statesman to think they can do it. The people maintain them, not they the people. It is in the power of Government to prevent much evil; it can do very little positive good in this, *or perhaps in any thing else.* (Italics added)

But what, Burke asks himself, 'if the rate of hire to the labourer comes far short of his necessary subsistence, and the calamity of the time is so great as to threaten actual famine?' Burke remains sternly consistent.

In that case, my opinion is this. Whenever it happens that a man can claim nothing according to the rules of commerce, and the principles of justice, he passes out of that department, and comes within the jurisdiction of mercy. In that province the magistrate has nothing at all to do; his interference is a violation of the property which it is his office to protect. Without all doubt, charity to the poor is direct and obligatory upon all Christians, next in order after the payment of debts, full as strong, and by nature made infinitely more delightful to us...

Charity is, then, for Burke, an obligation of church, as it is of family and village or neighborhood, but never of the government.

The cry of the people in cities and towns, though unfortunately (from a fear of their multitude and combination) the most regarded, ought *in fact* to be the *least* attended to upon this subject; for citizens are in a state of utter ignorance of the means by which they are to be fed, and they contribute little or nothing ... to their own maintenance.

Try as we may, we find little if anything—besides adroit party tactical maneuvering—to offset Burke's position when we turn to Disraeli. That he wanted, and eventually got, a mass constituency for the Conservative Party says nothing in itself about a philosophy of charity or welfare. He was vastly more interested in using this electoral base for the strengthening of crown, aristocracy, and church than for anything directly improving the lives of the indigent and suffering. He got the mass base for his party in 1867, and when, after becoming Prime Minister, he introduced reform bills in 1874, they were hardly the stuff of popular welfare. They were mostly concerned with sanitation, and Disraeli's own wry, self-mocking comment upon his 'reform' bills was: *Sanitas sanitatum, omnia sanitas*. Beyond sanitation the bills concerned some shrewd redistricting of voters and contracts between employers and employees.

Disraeli's latest and best biographer Robert Blake writes: 'Like all politicians of his era, Disraeli had to trim his sails to the 'liberal' wind Many Conservative leaders have had a hankering for Disraeli's precept, but have usually followed Peel's practice—and so did Disraeli.' Blake continues: 'He was perhaps unlucky or unwise in adumbrating any Tory "philosophy" at all....For it gave his enemies the opportunity of pointing out that he did very little to carry it into practice when in power...'

The origin of the still existent belief that Disraeli was at heart a Tory socialist seems to lie in his brief and only half-interested association in the 1840s with Lord Manners and George Smythe, two youthful Tories fresh from Eton and Cambridge, eager for recognition in the House of Commons, who founded what became known as 'Young England.' This was a small movement that sought to undo the influence in England of the utilitarians and the factory owners. Robert Blake, in his history of the Conservative Party, writes: 'This possibility appealed particularly to idealists, romantics, escapists, all who harked back to a largely imaginary pre-industrial golden age.' Young England did not last long. Even its founder, Manners, came to a rather drastic change of mind. His earliest recommendation for Manchester was that it adopt a form of monasticism. But he came to

see, after a visit to Lancashire, that the proprietorial tie in the mills was nothing but a new and promising form of feudalism. 'There was never so complete a feudal system,' he wrote, as that of the mills; soul and body are or might be at the disposal of one man, and that to my mind is not at all a bad state of society.' It was not a bad way either to end 'Young England,' though it did have something of a resurrection at the end of the century in a tiny group of Tory politicians led by Randolph Churchill, Winston's father, among whom the conceit of a 'Fourth Party' gave a little lift to life. Blake gives them decent burial: 'Neither Young England nor the Fourth Party achieved anything significant, but their memory will always beckon to those incurable romantics too whom political life is something more than a humdrum profession.'

We do no better in any search for a Tory vein of welfarism when we turn to John Henry Newman. The only thing he ever published on public policy was *Who's To Blame?* in 1855. It addressed itself to the crisis in England brought on by Crimean disasters. There are some trenchant observations on the natural susceptibility of a people to panic in time of emergency that has in its recent past known too much 'participation' in government and not enough of its protective authority. In the main, Newman's excellent work is a strong defense of the English constitution, a defense that has a great deal in it of the philosophy of Burke, whom Newman, like Disraeli, revered. But one must strain indeed to find a suggestion of governmental policy in welfare matters that differs from Burke's. Newman had the same veneration for property and aristocracy that Burke and Disraeli had. He had little appetite for reform, citing Wellington's question in his opposition to the Reform Bill of 1832: 'How is the King's Government to be carried on?

Bismarck is often hailed as the true 'father of the modern welfare state,' but as with Disraeli, evidence is hard to come by. He instigated his bills for unemployment and sickness insurance solely to frustrate and weaken the pestiferous, Bebel-led Socialists—in which he succeeded. But so little did Bismarck, the quintessential conservative Prussian Junker, think of his bills, that there is no mention of them in his copious memoirs. Those bills bore about as much relation to Bismarck's philosophy as Churchill's escapade in 1909, when he bolted party and supported Lloyd George's near revolutionary budget, did to his life-long convictions. In 1909 Churchill actually

joined in the support of the emasculation of the House of Lords, even in support of some temperance measures then before the House. But whatever his motivations then, substantial and lasting change in his very conservative ideology of government was not one of them. Somehow he managed to suffer Stalin's and the Soviet Union's embraces—or rather his embraces of them—during the second World War. But the war had barely ended, as had his wartime comradeship with Socialists Attlee and Bevin among others, when in an early campaign speech for reelection he declared: 'There can be no doubt that Socialism is inseparably interwoven with totalitarianism and the abject worship of the State.' To which he added his conviction that a Socialist government in Britain would quickly invoke a 'Gestapo-like' secret police. That was the authentic Churchill, the Burkean Churchill, the Churchill of boundless devotion to landed property, to aristocracy, to monarchy, and empire.

None of what I have written on conservatism and property—and on social welfare—is intended to imply that conservatives are thereby, necessarily, indifferent about the plight of the indigent and the miserable. Their argument may be stated easily: There are groups beginning with the family and including the neighborhood and church, which are duly constituted to render assistance, and in the form of *mutual-aid*, not high-flown charity from a bureaucracy. Such groups are mediating bodies by nature; they are closer to the individual and in their very communal strength natural allies of the individual. The primary purpose of government is to look to the conditions of strength of these groups, in as much as they are by virtue of ages of historical development the best fitted to deal with the majority of problems in individuals' lives. But to bypass these groups through welfare aid addressed directly to designated classes of individuals is, conservatism argues, at once an invitation to discrimination and inefficiency and a relentless way of eroding the significance of the groups. Disuse and atrophy apply very well indeed to social evolution. Lamennais put it well: Centralization creates apoplexy at the center and anemia at the extremities. This, and most especially in welfare matters, has been historically and *mutatis mutandis* remains the conservative position.

'The relations of groups of men to plots of land,' wrote Namier, 'form the basic content of political history.' Even when it is not land, it is

more likely to be *hard* property, property in the forms of tangible, visible, essentially unconcealable *things*, beginning with the soil itself, rather than the 'soft' kinds of property contained in notes, bonds, debentures and credit. In conservative writing throughout the nineteenth century, on both sides of the Atlantic, there is a strongly feudal cast given to property and to the relation between it and the human community. Disraeli in a general preface to his novels, wrote in 1870: 'The feudal system may have worn out, but its main principle—that the tenure of property should be the fulfillment of duty—is the essence of good government.' Not from the state as hand-out, but from the very bond, the chain, of human association as rooted in property, must come charity and mutual aid. To the present moment, a more or less democratized variant of that dogma is part of the essence of conservatism everywhere in Western society.

To a very large extent, this feudal view of human interdependence was and is based upon the kind of hard property that is anchored in land. Burke knew this and it explains his eloquently expressed anger at the actions of the 'monied interests' in France as well as the laws and decrees against family, class and property from the Jacobins. He believed he saw a link between the two forces.

In this state of real, though not always perceived warfare between the noble ancient landed interest, and the new monied interest, the greatest because most applicable strength was in the hands of the latter. The monied interest is in its nature more ready for any adventure; and its possessor more disposed to new enterprises of any kind....It is therefore the kind of wealth which will be resorted to by all who wish for change.

Tocqueville shared in full Burke's animosity toward fluid, mobile, monied property; but instead of excoriating it directly, he settled for identification of it as one of the 'major causes of that instability which must always attend the middle class in its aspirations.' A true landed class in America was improbable, Tocqueville thought, because the 'fever of speculation' is to be found even in those, whether wealthy or not, who turn to the land. People in democracies see the land not as a basis of a way of life but as a commodity to rise and fall in commercial value. Historically, land had justified itself, Tocqueville and most conservatives thought, by its inseparability, as a form of wealth, from a high degree (however reluctant in some instances) of social and economic responsibility. That is, land, as the economic base of society, required a large number of retainers to cultivate and maintain it. Jobs for the people were thus built into landed wealth.

But this was far from true of softer forms of wealth, found in shares and notes. Lecky, in his *Democracy and Liberty*, observed the unhappy conversion of landed estates to mere pleasure resorts for their owners under the new economic order that rested on business and finance. 'Country places taken for mere pleasure and unconnected with any surrounding property or any landlord duties will be more frequent.'

Struggle between the two kinds of property, landed and financial, hard and soft, has been one of the epics in American history. The squatter and homesteader in the West could fight against government and financial speculator as determinedly as the owner of vast cattle ranges. If nothing quite like the European and Asiatic passion for the land, for soil of any kind or dimension, ever grew up in America, it is nevertheless a side of American life not to be neglected. However unconscious the trust in land and other hard property may have been in the minds of those who fought their battles for it, there was a certain wisdom in the fight. It is far easier, as Burke and every other conservative has known, to instill a sense of the value of order in each citizen, and to encourage his sense of the true values of liberty when he has an overriding sense of holding a 'stake in society.' And such 'stake' is never so pressing on one's conscience as when it is in the form of land, or lacking that, very hard property. From the landed aristocrat and the peasant in the Middle Ages down to the proprietor and the home-owner of our own day, the principle of the stake-in-society has rarely been upset.

It was in full sense of this truth that the conservative Joseph Schumpeter, in *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, warned us that the work of advancing socialism, and of social democracy generally, would be made all the easier by certain erosive forces attending property which were already well advanced in capitalist society. 'The capitalist process, by substituting a mere parcel of shares of the walls of and the machines in a factory, takes the life out of the idea of property.' So attenuated would become the idea of, and faith in, property, Schumpeter concluded, that the will to defend it would die and with this the will to defend other individual freedoms. Let current forces work their way much longer in the erosion of the sense of property, concluded Schumpeter, and when transition to socialism takes place, 'the people will not even be aware of it.'

Yet another aspect of the conservative philosophy of property in modern history is found in the frequent criticisms of capitalism, to-

gether with its industrialism, commerce, and technology, by conservatives. As I have stressed above, conservatism is almost as much a response to the industrial as the democratic revolution at the end of the eighteenth century. Even before Burke wrote the *Reflections* there was a substantial body of traditionalist opinion in Western Europe that included factories and mines in its indictment of modernism, referring to them often as the 'English system.' There is little if anything of this to be found in Burke. So much like his cherished friend Adam Smith was he that he referred to the 'laws of commerce' as being quite as 'eternal' as any of the natural laws of man. Burke, so perceptive in most things, was quite unaware of the sheer irony that lay in his sentimental reference to 'the tenant-right of a cabbage-garden' in the *Reflections* and to the 'ceremonious' treatment of this right by Parliament. For that body, through dozens, even hundreds of enclosure acts was systematically destroying tenant rights to cabbage-gardens in the interests of a new class of first landed, then industrial capitalists.

But Burke aside, criticism of capitalism, of the new economic order generally, is rife in nineteenth-century conservative writing. Coleridge made plain his distrust of 'commerce' and the impersonal identification of human beings by their property status. He based his argument for the supremacy of a 'clerisy' in large part on the 'tearing, rending, and shattering' effects of commerce and industry upon the historic social bond. Southey, in his *Letters From England*, published in 1807, reads like a late nineteenth-century socialist in his indictment of the ills brought upon England by the factory system and the hideously congested towns and cities resulting from this system. In the new towns Southey saw, at first hand, obliquities and infections without precedent in the working class quarters. 'Utterly uninstructed in the commonest principles of religion and morality, they were as debauched and profligate as human beings under the influence of such circumstances must inevitably be.' Disraeli, in almost total agreement with his revered Coleridge, expressed his hatred of 'a sort of spinning-jenny, machine kind of nation.' With much reason, at the end of the century, G. B. Shaw commented on how much fiercer many conservative criticisms of capitalism were than were those of Marxian socialists. The reason is apparent. The Marxians at least accepted the technical framework of capitalism for their coming socialism. For conservatives in many instances, that was the loathsome part of it all.

In France, the conservatives, with Bonald leading the way, saw commerce, industry, and large cities as just as subversive of 'constituted' society as the natural rights doctrines of the Jacobins. In an interesting essay on the comparative effects upon the family and neighborhood of rural and urban life, Bonald rejected the latter on the ground that it increased the social distance between individuals, loosened the bonds of marriage and family, and gave a moneyed character to all life that was not present in a landed-agrarian rural society. In traditional society, Bonald stressed, the very nature of work required an unconscious strengthening of family and cooperation among people. He wrote: 'Urban life brings physical proximity but social distance among its inhabitants. In rural life the people are physically far apart but socially together.' Late in the century, a whole school of sociology would arise on essentially that insight. And throughout the century, in the works of Chateaubriand, Balzac, Flaubert, Brunetiere and Bourget—profoundly conservative—there was a running assault upon the individualism, the secularism, the social disorganization, that capitalism, quite as much as popular democracy, threatened the lives of human beings.

Not later than the 1820s, and largely through the brilliant Lamennais, in the beginning ultramontane Catholic as well as monarchist, the attention of the Roman Catholic Church was fatefully brought to the phenomenon of capitalism. There would be of course bishops and cardinals friendly to urban-industrial life, capable of seeing it as important to the welfare of many millions of people. But from the 1820s down to the present moment there is to be seen a vivid strain of liberationism, egalitarianism, and socialism or social democracy in the Catholic world that made capitalism its enemy, that looked to a 'distributivist' rather than capitalist society, and that had a powerful effect in Europe in the generating of trade union and cooperative defenses against individualistic capitalism. It is instructive that even at the turn of the century, Charles Maurras, whose conservatism reached the very heights of reaction, made capitalism and its plutocrats as guilty as radical democrats and socialists of the destruction of traditional society.

But we cannot close this section without emphasizing again that irrespective of variant conservative attitudes toward capitalism, or any other more or less concrete mode of economy, the philosophy of conservatism has been adamant on the sanctity of property. In the

heart of every true conservative there is, as Russell Kirk properly writes, 'persuasion that property and freedom are inseparably connected, and that economic levelling is not economic progress. Separate property from private possession and liberty is erased.' Irving Babbitt took it farther: 'Every form of social justice ...tends toward confiscation, and confiscation, when practiced on a large scale, undermines moral standards, and, in so far, substitutes for real justice the law of cunning and the law of force.'

Even in our age, in the declining years of century and millenium, when the liberal-socialist principles of the welfare state have become the conventional wisdom of almost all citizens by now, when inroads into once-sacrosanct property have been indelibly made by Burke's 'monied interests' and 'new dealers' as well as by the legislators and bureaucrats he labelled 'political theologians' and 'theological politicians' even now the surest insight into the liberal, the socialist, and the conservative mind, the most certain means of identifying each genus, is the test of property. Rightly did the Romans, and then again medieval aristocrats and peasants alike, see property as but an extension of the human body, as precious as limb and life. To Richard Weaver, often called the morning star of the contemporary renaissance of conservative thought in the United States, property is 'the last metaphysical right.' But even Weaver, passionate foe of the liberal and the socialist, found the modern corporation and novel forms of private property hard to accept as a way of life. 'We are looking,' Weaver wrote, 'for a place where a successful stand may be made for the logos against modern barbarism. It seems that small scale property offers such an entrenchment, which is of course a place of defense. Yet offensive operations too must be undertaken.'

The memory and the dream of hard property, best of all, landed property, and of property not become corporately vast and amorphous, remain firm in the conservative mind. For conservatives the thought of a corporation like AT&T prior to recent divestiture, as big as many a sovereign government on earth, with employees numbering many hundreds of thousands and with several million stockholders, can be as difficult to accept as is the whole Federal bureaucracy. It is no wonder that many conservatives of the Western United States regard the Northeast and its headquarters for hundreds of great corporations as somehow less than genuinely conservative, as verg-

ing on the liberal. The 1964 contest between Nelson Rockefeller and Barry Goldwater in the Republican Party epitomized this.

Religion and Morality

Conservatism is unique among major political ideologies in its emphasis upon church and the Judaeo-Christian morality. All of the early conservatives, and no one more deeply than Burke, were horrified by the Jacobin blows to the Church in France. Reference to these, and correlatively to the vital role of religion in the good society, takes up more pages in the *Reflections* than any other single subject with the possible exception of property. So too did the establishment of religion in the state matter greatly. For Burke the established religion was of course the Anglican faith, although his mother had been a devout Roman Catholic and he himself gave much attention to the plight of Roman Catholics in Great Britain. Bonald, de Maistre, and Chateaubriand chose the Roman Catholic religion for legitimate establishment. But irrespective of denomination, all the conservatives, Hegel, Haller, Coleridge included, made religion a very keystone of state and society.

It is the institutional aspect of religion that is alone germane here to political conservatism. It would be absurd to credit conservatives in the nineteenth century with greater personal religious devotion than liberals. No major conservative of the period wrote as passionately and committedly on Christianity as did the liberal, pro-Jacobin, genius-scientist Joseph Priestley. He was far from alone among scientists—for example, Faraday and Maxwell—or among those who identified with political liberalism or served ultimately liberal and social democratic purposes, as did the Wesleyans.

Priestley's was an evangelical, millennialist Christianity, with heavy stress upon the Calvinist virtues of inner grace and also knowledge of and devotion to the Bible as God's literal word. This is assuredly not the case with any of the founding fathers of political conservatism: not with Burke, Coleridge, Southey, Disraeli and Newman in England or with Bonald, de Maistre and Chateaubriand in France. Religion for them was preeminently public and institutional, something to which loyalty and a decent regard for form were owing, a valuable pillar to both state and society, but not a profound and permeating doctrine, least of all a total experience. That kind of religion marked the Dissenters, Burke thought – and this he repeatedly wrote

in his letters. His own faith in religious establishment led Burke to take a distinctly troubled view of religious enthusiasm such as that of the Dissenters. They, of course, were deadly enemies of Establishment, and were far from being above the uses of violence against Anglicans. It was on precisely this that one of Burke's most revealing letters was written, to his friend Dr Erskine. Dr Erskine had sent a number of copies of Scottish Dissenter sermons to reassure Burke that these preachers specifically rejected violence in advocacy of their cause of Disestablishmentarianism. Burke, clearly, was not impressed; and his words could be used unchanged at this moment in application to extreme anti-abortionists in America:

To represent a man as immoral by his religion, perfidious by his principles, a murderer on point of conscience, an enemy from piety to the foundations of all social intercourse, and *then* to tell us that we are to offer no violence to such a person under favor, appears to me rather an additional insult and mockery than any sort of corrective of the injury we do our neighbor by the character we give him.

Burke was valiant in his efforts to give the Dissenters their full civil rights, but it is easy enough to draw the conclusion that he regarded them as just short of public nuisances, ever on the verge of carrying enthusiasm to public disorder and to arousal of hate for those who disagreed with them. Burke was remarkably free of religious prejudice. He is speaking of the Dissenters in the following:

My ideas of toleration go far beyond theirs. I would give a full civil protection, in which I include an immunity, from all disturbance of their public religious worship and a power of teaching in schools as well as temples, to Jews, Mahometans, and even pagans; especially if they are already possessed of any of those advantages by long and prescriptive usage, which is as sacred in this exercise of rights as in any other.

In his indictment of Lord Hastings for his abuses of the Indian people and their customs Burke declared the Muslim and Hindu writs in India to be the equal in morality and humanity of Christianity. On an occasion when a group of Indians was visiting London and had been unable to win the assent of Anglican or Dissenter alike to brief use of a church for their own religious services, Burke extended the use of his house for this purpose.

Whether one wishes to call it indifference or tolerance is hardly the question. It is quite possible that Burke and Disraeli, and many other members of the Church of England were, as some said, simply tone-deaf when it came to matters of personal faith. It is possible that each had a deep and indispensable faith in God. We do not

know. Burke, in another letter, wrote: 'I do not aspire to the glory of being a distinguished zealot for any national church until I can be more certain than I am that I can do it honor by my doctrine or my life.'

But faith or lack of faith in religion has nothing to do with the position on religious establishment that most English and some American conservatives held. That position was, and still is in a surprising number of cases, inseparable from the institutional, civil aspect of establishment. Establishment served two major functions: first, it conferred a certain sacredness upon vital functions of government and upon the whole political or social bond. It might be remembered here that even Rousseau, arch-enemy of Christianity and other revealed religions, prescribed in his *Social Contract* a 'civil religion,' one that would celebrate citizenship. And the Jacobins at the height of the Revolution were more than willing to accept this among the other teachings of Rousseau. Secondly, an established, meaning a prominently featured and inevitably strong church, would act as a check upon the power of the state, upon any of its acts of 'arbitrary power.' Burke wrote:

The consecration of the state by a state religious establishment is necessary ...to operate with an wholesome awe upon free citizens; because, in order to secure their freedom, they must enjoy some determinate portion of power. To them therefore a religion connected with the state and with their duty towards it, becomes even more necessary than in such societies where people by the terms of their subjection are confined to private sentiments.

Just before that passage there is another that demonstrates even more clearly the pluralist, essentially equilibrist view Burke took of church and state:

We are resolved to keep an established church, an established monarchy, an established aristocracy, and an established democracy, each in the degree it exists, and in no greater.

The church is established, then, in precisely the same way that government, the social order, and the people are established. Each is inevitably the restraint upon the other, no one more, no one less. There are many indications, starting with his speeches on the American colonies, of Burke's realization of the ease with which government can move into oppressiveness. In a famous paragraph Burke declared that even the aristocracy—which at its best he saw as the true basis of society and certainly of the Whig Party—is intrinsically as prone to evil as good and that only its ingrained tradition and discipline can lead to the common weal. Democracy is no less con-

sidered by Burke in light of need for restraints by church and other institutions upon it.

A substantially similar view of establishment of religion governed the views of the French, Swiss and German conservatives. The great, indeed sufficing aim of Bonald in his *Theory of Power*, was that of restoring the Catholic church to some of the autonomy and internal authority it had had prior to the Revolution and that had only partially been returned by Napoleon in the Concordat. It is Bonald the political scientist as much as Roman Catholic who divides 'legitimate' society into the three spheres of government, church and family, each destined to be sovereign within its own realm. There is almost nothing in Bonald—the same is true of De Maistre and Chateaubriand—about Catholic faith or dogma; but a great deal about the right of the Catholic Church to all due autonomy in the realm. Lamennais, in the full blush of his youthful faith in Christianity, and for some years as brilliant prelate, took a more mystical view of the individual's relation to the Church. But his classic *Essay on Indifference*, in 1817 while he was engaged in nothing else but the furtherance of Catholic interest, is overwhelmingly institutional and historical in content. There must be, he wrote, an ultramontane Church, an established and fully recognized church, or else Europe will plunge into the abyss of unbelief, periodically 'saved' by this or that passing secular enthusiasm.

In very large degree the conservative support of religion rested upon the well-founded belief that human beings, once they have got loose from major orthodoxy, are likely to suffer some measure of derangement, of loss of equilibrium. Religion, Burke wrote in a letter to his son, 'is man's fastness in an otherwise incomprehensible and thereby hostile world.' Tocqueville, whose personal faith in Rome was real but decidedly unobtrusive before his death bed confession, admirably described the value of religion to government and society—and to freedom:

When there is no longer any principle of authority in religion any more than in politics, men are speedily frightened at the aspect of unbounded independence. The constant agitation of all surrounding things alarms and exhausts them... For my part, I doubt whether man can ever support at the same time complete religious independence and entire political freedom. And I am inclined to think that if faith be wanting in him, he must be subject; and if he be free, he must believe.

Tocqueville's words doubtless fit the views of the majority of conservatives as well as any possibly could. Disraeli was born a Jew but

brought into the Anglican church by his father after he had become enraged by his rabbi and broke altogether with formal Judaic belief. We know that Disraeli was a regular attender of Anglican services, accepting communion, but we know also that far from ever seeking to conceal his Jewish origin, he took pride in it and exclaimed throughout his life of the greatness of the 'Judaic race' and the profundity and the truth in Judaic gospel. But as to belief, to real commitment, he was, as his biographer Robert Blake writes, 'curiously hazy.' 'His Christianity did not fit into any ordinary category... It is probably hopeless to extract a coherent body of doctrine from his observations on religion. He believed in different things at different times and failed to see their inconsistency.'

A careful study would undoubtedly reveal that a considerable number of staunch conservatives, disciples to a man of Edmund Burke, had a regard for religion ranging from the indifferent to the outrightly hostile. Such views, including agnosticism and atheism, seem to have mattered surprisingly little to Victorians. Robert Ingersoll, staunch conservative Republican and pillar of bar and bourse, was a militant atheist. H. L. Mencken and Albert Jay Nock, both enemies of socialism, social democracy and political liberalism, both almost devout in belief in the minimal state and in the fewest possible social functions of the state—manifested in the repudiation by both of Roosevelt and the New Deal—were opponents of Christianity. So was Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, though the latter somewhat unenthusiastically in later years. But all of them would doubtless have agreed with Tocqueville that some bulwark of faith, even if in a body of morality that is falsely credited with divine inspiration, is necessary to human beings and a means of saving them from the worst of the consequences of being among the alienated. Chesterton would surely have won assent from all conservatives in his words: 'The danger of loss of faith in God is not that one will then believe in nothing, but rather that one will believe in anything.' There is no need to remind readers of the degree to which Marxism, Freudianism, and other major systems of clamantly secular belief have ended up as religions themselves for a great many Westerners.

It is religion as *civil* religion that seems to be the closest to a common essence of conservative belief, religion in which a transcendental core manifests itself in civil as well as religious garments, one in which the most sacred feast days—such as Thanksgiving, Christ-

mas, Easter, and New Year's Day—all serve religious and civil ends alike. What Tocqueville found in America in 1830—the American Religion—was in almost equal parts Christian (Puritan specifically) and nationalist. Christ the Redeemer and America the Redeemer Nation existed side by side. In that sense, then, America continued to have an 'established' church long after the American states had cut free of Christian denominations.

Conservatives have for the most part believed in the Divine much as all educated people believe in gravity or the spherical shape of the earth—firmly but not ecstatically. The hatred of 'enthusiasm' in the Dissenters and in the Wesleyans in the nineteenth century in England by most Anglicans, was shared in full by just about all conservatives. Religion is acceptable: it is indeed a good thing provided it is not made the base of the intrusion of personal beliefs into the public body of the nation. Doubtless no conservative, in the Burkean sense, has ever lived who could look out on today's Moral Majority with equanimity, what with its so often brazen and calculated confusion of the secular—as manifested by intrusive laws and constitutional amendments—and the transcendently religious. Even T. S. Eliot, who accepted Anglican establishment along with royalism and traditionalism, warned, in his *Idea of a Christian Society*, of the dangers inherent in a religious establishment that is not founded upon powerful and widespread currents of religious history. You cannot have, Eliot wrote, 'a national Christian society ... if it is constituted as a mere congeries of private and independent sects.' Moreover, 'A permanent danger of an established church is Erastianism ... the danger that a National Church might become also a nationalistic church.'

In our day Michael Oakeshott has admirably stated the Burkean, and indeed the whole conservative, view of the proper relation between government and individual morality:

Thus, governing is recognized as a specific and limited activity.... It is not concerned with concrete persons, but with activities; and with activities only in respect of their propensity to collide with one another. It is not concerned with moral right and wrong, it is not designed to make men good or even better; it is not indispensable on account of the "natural depravity of mankind" but merely because of their current disposition to be extravagant.

Doubtless that is what Burke had in mind when he said: 'Politics and the pulpit are terms that have no agreement. No sound ought to be heard in the Church but the healing voice of Christian charity.'

3

Some Consequences of Conservatism

No one acquainted with the history of modern European thought can fail to mark the difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in respect to the thinking in the two centuries about man and society. There are persistences of the eighteenth-century mind, of course. *Individual, state and civilization* are all luminous in the nineteenth century. Individualism remains a clamant voice in almost all political discussions, with utilitarianism replacing for the most part natural law theory. The prominence of what the French had called *la patrie*—the nurturing state—is as evident as ever in the swirling currents of humanitarianism, socialism and social democracy. Although the starkness of the concept of civilization is relieved a good deal by the fascination with *society* as master-concept, there is no want of writing about civilization in the nineteenth century, usually, now, as contrast to the anthropologists' primitive culture.

But the differences between the two centuries vastly outweigh the likenesses. In the first place, most of the apparatus of natural law is gone completely, replaced from the beginning of the nineteenth century by a set of closely related concepts the foundation of which was not the natural but instead the *social*; that is, the complex of *actual* ties and bonds among human beings which were the deposit of historical development, which were manifest in institutions and customs, and which had been so largely scorned by natural law thinkers under the impress of their fascination with the supposed natural atoms of human nature and behavior—atoms, as they believed, which were comparable to those which physical philosophers had discovered by simply ignoring the world of sense and going straight to the hard, unchanging elements of reality.