Freedom, Self-Interest, and the Common Good

by Richard J. Connell

DEMOCRACY [1] has long been described as providing freedoms to individuals that other governments restrain, and throughout its history the United States has been seen as the land of the free, its image inspiring immigrants in large numbers to come to its shores. Yet when we look at what freedom is currently taken to mean, we find that it is regarded as the right to pursue one's own interests without interference from one's neighbors or the civil authorities. Society does, of course impose some restraints on our actions, restraints which are still recognized by the conventional wisdom and by the law. Still, many restrictions have been removed where once they existed. A few years ago, for example, a highschool basketball player instituted (and won) a lawsuit against his coach and school because the coach told him to cut his long hair shorter. The student refused, maintaining that he had a right to wear his hair as he pleased without having to abide by rules laid down by his coach. In short, he set his own interest against the interest of the team, as that interest was subject to determination by the coach, claiming that the latter's jurisdiction did not extend beyond guiding the actions of the team on the floor. The instance is one of many that are similar, instances of which the reader will be aware without reminders. Speaking generally, the "doing of one's own thing," the "seeking one's own fulfillment," the "getting high on one's self" seems to be ac-

[1] It is necessary to say before the first sentence is completed that what is sound in this essay is as much the work of my colleague, James Stromberg, as it is mine. Many of the refinements are his work; the faults should be attributed to me alone.

companied in recent years by conflicts of individuals against authorities of every kind and in institutions of every kind, whether civil, religious, or any other having anything like a public status. To be sure, people with particular self-interests gather together in numbers for the purpose of pressuring authorities into admitting their claims. But multitudes of individuals each with a specific self-interest do not make a common good, except in a sense inimical to the public welfare; and that is the topic we shall discuss. But first, let us look at another matter.

As attacks on the restrictions on individual actions increase, one also finds the number of lawsuits increasing in which someone other than the person who acted is held responsible for an evil the action produced. The illustrations are many, but we shall mention only the boy in Redding, California, who injured himself breaking into the local highschool. Despite the immorality and unlawfulness of his action, he successfully sued the community to recover damages for his injuries, which obviously means he was not held reponsible for his actions; otherwise on what ground did he recover damages from a court of law? It seems that as the pursuit of self-interest becomes more widespread, so does the refusal to accept responsibility for one's actions.

But voices are beginning to be raised against this state of affairs, and we hear more frequently about the common good and our responsibilities toward it. Just what the common good is, however, does not get an airing, at least not in the way in which it ought. And therein lies a danger because people tend to assume that the common good is just the collection of individual goods, which, we shall seek to show, is not the case. So our aim in what follows will be to discuss three things: (1) freedom; (2) the social character of man, and (3) the common good, in that order. We must discuss the three together because in our judgment they are inseparably intertwined.

Our procedure, however, will depart in some measure from ordinary philosophical custom, for we do not intend to quote from other authors, past or present, in arguing either about freedom or about the character of the common good. We expect the reader will be familiar enough with such literature. Instead, our aim will be to make our case empirically, founding ourselves on observation and the regularities it reveals. We think philosophy has become a dialectic without anchors and has cut itself off from its true starting points. On that account, our discussion will attempt to remedy this kind of defect in regard to the present issues. Throughout our essay, we shall say many things the reader already knows precisely because our argument starts from very common experience. Still, the order according to which regularities—that is experience—are put together determines the character of the argument and the light it sheds, so on that account, we shall not hesitate to repeat the common and the obvious. With that, let us turn now to our observations and to the first principles they will yield us.

When we observe individual animals of various species, we discover that they behave according to patterns which are uniform from one individual to another. Beavers in Minnesota behave like one another and like those in Ontario, as well as those in Maine, and crows are alike everywhere, as are black bears, otters, mud turtles, and every other animal species we might name. *Within their behavioral patterns* the members of more advanced species do show greater variability and complexity than the members of less advanced species yet the basic kinds of actions of each class are uniformly the same. Thus what we may call the "occupational behavior" of animals is uniform in its kind, which is to say, the "good life" is the same for all members of a species. Animal actions are also uniform in their exercise, by which we mean that unless they are sick, animals do not shirk their species-behavior. Such then, is the regularity that observation reveals and from which we

infer that animals have inborn, instinctive patterns of behavior, the inference founding the biological science of ethology.

Man, however, stands in contrast to other animals, and observation does not reveal in him a corresponding uniformity of occupational behavior. On the contrary, we see variations in such behavior not only from one individual to another but also from one society to another and from one historical period to another. Human occupations also have to be learned, sometimes over very extensive periods of time. Hence, from these empirical propositions we easily, almost unconsciously, infer that men lack inborn behavioral patterns. That is to say, we infer that men lack instincts which are sufficient to govern the whole of their occupational behavior. Of course we all do have some instincts, but *by themselves they are not adequate directives for the good life,* as is the case in animals. Moreover, just as the term " occupational behavior " applied to other animals signifies the entire ordered set of activities directed to the continuance of the species, so too, the occupational behavior of men includes the begetting and rearing of children, or more generally, all those activities required for the continuance and well being of the species. On that account " occupation " in its more limited vocational or professional sense is but a part of the whole of human occupation in the broader sense of the term as we are employing it here. To sum up the occupational behavior of man, unlike that of other animals, is both varied and acquired. Additionally men can shun their activities without being sick, which is to say, they can refuse to work and in this too men differ from other animals. Hence we may come to our point: freedom is rightly seen to be the absence of congenitally determined instinctive behavior patterns such as those which govern the behavior of non-human animals. Furthermore, this congenital indetermination is rooted in what we call " human intelligence," as is plain to all.

Let us repeat that man is appropriately said to be " free " as

opposed to "determined" in his behavior: man is a "free agent," and a free agent is one who lacks inborn patterns that determine both the kind and the exercise of his behavior. Stated still another way, observation shows that a free agent is one which is self-determining both in regard to his kind of occupational behavior and in regard to his exercise of that behavior. He is cause of his own actions and therefore responsible for them. Only if he were not their cause could he escape responsibility for them.[2] To be sure, we do have internal experience of being able to choose to do one kind of thing rather than another and of being able to put off doing anything at all but external experience is more illuminating and certain, especially for reflective considerations, on account of which it anchors more determinately what in a more imprecise way we experience internally. So to repeat: what we observe externally provides us an understanding of what it means to say *men are free agents* which statement is one of our first principles,

Of course "free," especially when seen in relation to its empirical foundation, does not imply that human actions are without obstacles. Life's circumstances do vary, and human actions even the simpler ones, are more or less difficult more or less surrounded by hardship according to both the genetic and environmental conditions in which different individuals find themselves. But difficulties are not constraints, and we are expected to overcome them, in evidence of which we may note that when it is asked whether one ought to bring up his children to be strong or weak, the answer comes without hesitation; for no one claims he intends to bring up his children to be weak. Furthermore, human strength is of three different kinds:

[2] Taken at face value, the statement that "the structure of society" is the cause of what certain people do is absurd. To be true the "structure" would have to be the consequence of instincts, and men would not differ from other animals. Furthermore, allowing criminals to plead insanity as a defense is irrational under such a view; to be consistent one would be obliged to plead instead the derangement of the social structure.

physical, intellectual, and emotional or affective; and of the three, the latter is most fundamental.

Although we must admit that we are all weak in one way or another, nonetheless we all have an obligation to become as strong as our circumstances will allow, which is to say that we have no *right* to be weak. When our weaknesses do come out, our friends may well show us compassion; still, they do neither us nor society a favor if they "tolerate" them, that is, if they do not expect us to surmount them. We pity those who succumb, but we do not admire them. On the other hand, biographies of people who have overcome severe handicaps appear often on television and such people have the admiration of most of us.[3] But having made our point, we must now consider something else that is relevant to the notion of freedom and responsibility.

If once again we look at actions empirically, we see that human occupational behavior is social, for men depend on one another to supply their many needs. Stated simply, because men live and act together, they obtain benefits they would not otherwise have. Neither a solitary state nor a primitive society is adequate for providing the hierarchy of goods that make up a civilized, cultured human life. Because each of us concentrates on one profession, trade, or kind of vocational activity, we must exchange the fruits of our labors with one another. You and I exchange what we produce, your potatoes for my shoes, your instruction in grammar for my wiring of your house, etc., to our mutual benefit; and in principle such an illustration represents what society is all about.[4] Because his

[3] We cannot pass up the opportunity to note that too many parents "instinctively," without understanding what they are doing, remove *ordinary* obstacles from the lives of their children. They shower amusement-privileges upon them without demanding the ordinary social responsibilities that ought to precede the privileges.

[4] Of course we no longer are a society of individual craftsmen, but that does not affect our point. A factory is merely a complex cause made up of many individuals acting in a concerted manner. The complex cause does make shoes, however; and instead of dealing with an individual person, many of our exchanges take place between "complex-cause persons."

intelligence extends man's needs beyond his individual capacity to produce, he must live in a political society to attain a full economic, educational, and cultural life; and that is the fullest sense in which he is socially dependent. Men must contribute to the political society to which they belong, and they benefit themselves by first contributing causally to the common welfare. Thus, to say that man is a political animal is to say that *he is a social agent* in the sense that he is a partial cause of the welfare of the whole.

If, now, the two empirical propositions we have discussed are taken together, namely " Man is a free agent," and " Man is a social agent," we see that freedom is fundamentally a capacity for self-determination in regard to the means by which individuals contribute to society. To repeat: freedom is first of all the ability to be self-determining in regard to the way in which individuals contribute to the common welfare, as a consequence of which contributions they are entitled to receive benefits in return. Let us not be misunderstood, however. Since human intelligence is universal in the sense that it can consider realities in their most general character, and since actions are always concrete, taking place in an infinity of circumstances, it follows that freedom of judgment and its consequent freedom of choice must take into account not only the general character of an occupation but the variety of circumstances in which it is exercised as well. On that account our internal experience of freedom is multifaceted and often more tumultuous than we like. Emotions do not readily submit to governance by intelligence, and we are subject to many ups and downs, to many changes of mood on account of them. But back to our point.

Many years ago now, Charles Wilson, then president of General Motors, and Jackie Robinson, one time third baseman for the Brooklyn Dodgers, were quoted in the newspapers on about the same day. Charles Wilson was reported to have said " What is good for General Motors is good for the country,"

while Jackie Robinson, when asked how he liked being moved from third base to left field, replied, "What is good for the Brooklyn Dodgers is good for Jackie Robinson." Though not momentous the remarks illustrate a profound difference in attitude toward the relation of the part to the whole. Wilson's remark [5] indicates the "me first" mentality: what is good for me is good for others, and one is asked to presume that if the part pays attention to itself the good of the whole will follow. Jackie Robinson's remark, however, indicates a diametrically opposed view of the relation of whole to part; for according to his words the good of the individual comes about through and as a consequence of the good of the whole. Of course, the individuals who are parts of the whole must each do his job, but together they aim at the success of the common enterprise, which, in the measure it is achieved, procures the good of the parts which contribute towards it. Such people are "team players," as the sports commentators are wont to say, whereas the person who seeks his own success first is often called a "hot dog," his success coming at the expense of the common good, namely, team victory. In short an attitude which seems all to prevalent today is: as long as I or my company or my union or my banded-together-group-with-the-same-interest gets mine the rest is of little concern.

As the reader will know, Wilson's remark is Hobbesian. Thomas Hobbes viewed the political society as a collection of individuals each seeking his own self-interest. In Hobbes's mind the function of the state was to curb the fear that individuals have of one another, to curb the worst human tendencies so that a reasonable working arrangement could be achieved. The motive in the Hobbesian state, however, is pure self-interest, and according to Hobbes's view individuals are instinc-

[5] Wilson claims to have been misunderstood, and perhaps he was; but the remark is illustrative, even though Wilson may not have meant it as it was quoted.

tively combative and in conflict with one another insofar as their many self-interests are incompatible. Hobbesian individuals do not deliberately seek as a first priority the common welfare; that is, their labor or occupation is not first of all a contribution directed to the whole. On the contrary, in a Hobbesian society, the common good can be no more than the collective pursuit of individual self-interests, which does not truly merit being spoken of as a common good.

It is not news, of course, that Hobbes's view of the political society is reflected in laissez-faire economics insofar as the latter adopts the self-regulating market mechanism as its fundamental principle. The theory tells us that a marketplace of individuals seeking their own self-interest will automatically bring about the common welfare, a notion which helped make the pursuit of self-interest the driving power of the democratic West. In the words of Adam Smith:[6]

> . . . man has almost constant occasion for the help of his brethren, and it is in vain for him to expect it from their benevolence only. He will be more likely to prevail if he can interest their self-love in his favour, and show them that it is for their own advantage to do for him what he requires of them. Whoever offers to another a bargain of any kind, proposes to do this. Give me that which I want, and you shall have this which you want, is the meaning of every such offer; and it is in this manner that we obtain from one another the far greater part of those good offices which we stand in need of. It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest. We address ourselves, not to their humanity but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our own necessities but of their advantages. Nobody but a beggar chooses to depend chiefly upon the benevolence of his fellow-citizens. The charity of well-disposed people, indeed, supplies him with the whole fund of his subsistence. But . . . it neither does nor can provide him with them as he has occasion for them.

Smith makes himself perfectly clear: the exchange of goods and services functions because of self-interest. Each man is

[6] *The Wealth of Nations*, c.1.

looking after his own advantage when he goes to the marketplace, and by implication he cares not at all about the benefit to be derived by the other man. Benevolence is the only other possible motive, Smith thinks, and he sees it as playing a role only in the demands of a beggar. Benevolence he sees as charity which expects no return. But this sort of division of social motives into self-interest and the pure charity of others is obviously insufficient, for in regard to the marketplace—that is, society—the opposite of self-love is not Smith's benevolence or charity but the kind of good-will we call "justice." If we look at the process of exchange, it becomes plain that the opposite of self-love is the will to promote the mutual benefit of the participants, an attitude which precludes knowingly taking advantage of another's need or ignorance and which wills a genuine good to the other for his own sake. So in political society the opposite of self-love is not charity but justice, by which we seek the benefit of all through the proper exchange of goods and services according to a right order and measure of each.

To make what we mean clearer, let us consider an illustration. An engineer whom we know once assigned an assistant to design an electrical switch for a machine that was being developed, and after a period of time the assistant returned with the switch in hand. There was a problem, however, for the switch would not fit on the machine, and so it had to undergo considerable modification. Now that, we contend, illustrates the difference between pursuing our goods for ourselves alone and pursuing them in view of society as a whole. Just as the switch had to be modified to fit on the machine, so our pursuits of our own legitimate benefits have to be modified according to the requirements of others, according to the requirements which living in society impose on us. The requirements may come from the law or from the ethics of the profession or from our own understanding of what is appropriate, nevertheless, our own interests must be accomodated according to the complex relations we have to others.

Let us emphasize that since individuals by themselves are inadequate for attaining their own personal good, they are by nature parts of a whole, the political society, and like the parts of the body, the parts of society must be ordered among themselves if they are to perform properly and be causative of the common welfare. Fundamentally, then, to promote the common good is to promote the proper order of society, the proper relations of citizens to one another according to the ethical, legal, and customary requirements which direct their occupational activties, taking into account as far as is feasible the real differences of worth in the various occupations.

Furthermore, because society depends on a diversity of occupations it is necessarily heterogeneous and cannot be egalitarian in the way socialist theories and certain self-interest groups would like. Different occupations require different talents and dispositions, as well as different circumstances for their exercise, which sometimes means differences of physical assets or means. Then, too, some occupations are, as we have said, more important than others or valued more highly according to customs, their real or customary importance deriving from the nature of the product or service, which indicates that a strict equivalence of income is not practically possible or desirable. But that does not mean we are supporting an absence of restraints upon individual incomes. On the contrary, incomes, whether salaries, fees, or profits, can be excessive especially when they are derived from professional services which the ordinary citizen must have. And as early as the Magna Charta it was recognized that taxes must be levied on citizens according to their varying abilities to pay. Moreover Western traditional ethics has always held that the morally upright citizen with a larger income ought to contribute from his abundance to museums, symphony orchestras, and other institutions which serve the public, not the least of which are those organizations that help the

destitute. Thus, our claim that society cannot escape an inequality in incomes is not, as we said, to be taken as an endorsement either of greed or exploitation.

Returning, now to our topic, we may specify freedom further by saying that as a human perfection, freedom is the ability of men to be self-determining with respect to the way they promote justice, the latter consisting in the will to promote the good of all according to the diverse occupations and conditions of the occupations. It is true that being free does allow us to refuse to promote justice and to pursue our own self-interest, without concern for the common welfare, but that is a corruption of liberty. In short, when we look at freedom in the light of what man's constitution tells us, we see that in its very notion freedom implies justice, the kind of justice which promotes the right ordering of occupations in regard to one another and in regard to the hierarchy of their inherent values. (Certainly, if we have our priorities straight, mathematics and grammar, food and housing come before football teams and race tracks.) The facts about the human constitution do not warrant holding freedom to be the right to do as we choose in pursuit of ourselves.

Justice, however, insofar as it is that quality of will which disposes us to seek the right ordering of our activities in view of the common good, presupposes that we are self-disciplined and that we have subjected all our varied, concrete actions and inclinations, both those that belong to us as individuals and those that belong to us as members of a family, to an habitual control regulated by considerations of our obligations to society; and plainly such self-discipline requires a manifold of good intellectual, emotional, and physical habits. Our ability to put the welfare of the whole first does not come easily; on the contrary, it is difficult to achieve and requires much labor. We must battle ourselves, and that battle requires much sweat and pain. Such, it would seem, are the consequences of freedom's orientation to the common good.

A difficulty arises, however, about how effective a motivator the common good is in comparison to self-interest. Is not the common good an abstract ideal that appeals to some but leaves most people cold? And do we not constantly hear about the success of capitalist [7] societies—which promote individual welfare—in contrast to societies which put the common good first; Are not capitalist countries, in which each man looks after his own interest, obviously more successful in promoting every aspect (not just those that are economic) of the good life than are those societies which claim to put the common welfare ahead of self-interest? Have not the socialist states proved themselves not only inadequate but the source of disasters unknown before in the history of the human species? And do we not read that when socialist countries surrender parts of their economy to the profit (self-interest) motive, their productivity, not to mention their *joie de vivre,* increases? Indeed, the accomplishments of democratic, capitalistic societies do seem to suggest that self-interest is the most effective motivator for human actions.[8]

To answer this objection, let us first note the remarks of a biologist who, while speaking about pleasure and pain in animal life, makes the following comments: [9]

> The pleasures derived from eating, for instance, serve a profound purpose. Physiologists once used to judge the value of goods by their calorie contents alone. Each gram of fat, albumin, or carbohydrate that you introduce into your stomach gives you a certain amount of physical energy that can be expressed in units of heat, as so many

[7] "Capitalism" seems to us to be an undesirable term for a free society because of its association with the notion of gain for gain's sake, as well as the notion of class distinctions founded on economic activities. Wealth is a means to ends, and it can hardly be justified as a goal in itself. Hence we prefer the term, "free societies" to "capitalist societies."

[8] It hardly need be said that a "pure" state of self-interest does not exist. Self-interest has become extensive enough, however, to have a predominant determining effect on our institutions, even if the majority of our citizens be not so afflicted.

[9] Wolfgang Van Bruddenbrock, *The Senses* (Ann Arbor, MI, 1958), p. 46.

calories. Your body needs this energy as a steam engine needs the energy supplied by coal. But if your cook served you merely a mixture of these substances, even though they are very important per se, you would be highly indignant. The taste of the food has absolutely nothing to do with these sources of energy; flavor is the product of all sorts of admixtures of other substances that although they lack all calorie content, perform an important duty in whetting the appetite. Appetite not only makes the eater "dig into his food" more enthusiastically than he could without it, but aids the proper functioning of his intestinal canal.

The author is clear: pleasure has a determinate relation to the nutritional character of the food. When we go to dinner we do not choose what we shall eat by looking first at the nutritional value of our meal. Flavor and the pleasure good cuisine provides are certainly the proximate motivators, yet they are nonetheless circumscribed by the character of what is served. The nutritional properties of what we eat truly ought to be an objective check on our pleasures; for if they are not, we may suffer from our failure to pay them their due.

And as with pleasure, so with self-interest. The private advantage of the individual, that is, his immediate benefits, likes, tastes, and satisfactions are the first motivators that stimulate his productive, occupational activities and the enthusiasm with which he performs. But just as the nutritional value of food ought to circumscribe pleasure, so, too, the common good ought to circumscribe our self-interest and command a quality-performance. As long as the goods or services we produce are genuine benefits of some sort; as long as we take into account the proper relation of our actions as measured by sound moral principles, law, and good customs; as long as we perform according to the highest standards our tasks require, the common good will be promoted. To repeat, the common good need not be the direct, immediate stimulator, but it certainly must be seen as a directive for and a measure of our actions; it must motivate us in that way. In contrast, the person who pursues his

own activities as though they were final goals in themselves, as though they were empires to be ruled irrespective of everything else—that person is one in whom self-interest dominates, however subconscious and habitual his self-interest cast of mind may be. And as to the sort of regimentation characteristic of socialist countries which tries to pass as a concern for the common welfare, let us note that the notion of freedom we have defended demands observance of the principle of subsidiarity, for the citizens must retain their causal participation in social actions. Government directives are necessary to regulate common concerns, but they ought genuinely to promote each man's causal efficacy vis à vis the common good.

It is not hard to see that self-interest as the principal goal implies that the good life consists in the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, and the modern world has in the main endorsed just such a notion. To be sure, more sophisticated minds have always understood that some pleasures are gross and to be avoided, so they have described the good life as consisting in the rational pursuit of pleasure and avoidance of pain. Rational self-interest—that, some say, is the goal to be pursued. But rational self-interest or enlightened self-interest is still self-interest, and it does not require putting the community in first place *for its own sake.* As the phrase implies, he who acts out of rational or enlightened self-interest promotes the welfare of others only as long as the latter is consonant with his own good; that is to say, he promotes the good of the whole if it serves his interest. Nor does enlightened self-interest lead one to sacrifice his own existence, say, in order to preserve that of the community. Self-sacrifice is self-denial at the expense of immediate self-interest, and it is the mark of the man who genuinely seeks the good of the whole. He who willingly surrenders his own existence for the sake of others rises to the heights we call heroic.

Up to now, we have been discussing the common good which

is the right ordering of occupations within society in view of the mutual benefit of all the participants. This common good is the product of individual actions insofar as they are directed by the civil authority whose business it is to promote the common life. But there are, as we suggested earlier in casual remarks, differences in the inherent value of occupations themselves. To be sure, we cannot really say that the art of the carpenter is superior to the art of the electrician or the art of the plumber. Nor is it our aim to attempt anything of the sort. Instead we wish only to point out a rather general, categorical difference, one the reader will be familiar with but which we need to talk about in the present context. We are speaking, of course, of those goods and occupations which are for the benefit of the intelligence in contrast to those that are productive of material things and services.

Bananas are good for men, as we all know, But a banana is a good that cannot be shared or participated in by more than one person, except of course, it be divided, in which case we no longer have a banana but two halves. Neither the whole banana nor the whole of any other physical good can simultaneously be possessed by more than one person at one and the same time. As soon, however, as we ascend to those goods that address the intelligence directly, what we have just said does not hold. A painting by Rembrandt, for example, can simultaneously be enjoyed by a number of people without in the least their dividing or otherwise modifying it. And if we move on from the fine arts, we find that the systematic disciplines are goods or benefits for men which not only do not suffer division or diminution when possessed by many but which actually profit by such common possession insofar as cooperative reflection and argumentation promote the overall state of the sciences. Thus, looking at human goods in this way we see that some can be possessed without spoliation by only one person at a time, and such a good is called " private " in a sense that

does not automatically imply self-interest. Other goods, however, that can be shared by many are called "common" precisely because they can be the simultaneous possession of many without suffering division or diminution. In short, we now have a second, different, meaning of "common good" which determines the order of justice which we considered first as a common good. But let us look at this point in another way.

Every human activity, whatever its kind, addresses itself to an object outside the operating power. Men are animals that are part of an entire ecological community that includes not only the other biological species but the inanimate environment as well. In short, every human activity is directed toward the environmental community as an object in some way, either to obtain nourishment, clothing, and materials for housing and other manufacturing activities, or simply to obtain a cognitive acquaintance and reflective appreciation of it. The practical and engineering arts and sciences confront the world in the first way, whereas the natural sciences (and philosophy) confront it in the second way, having as their aim the investigation and understanding of nature in terms of its regularities and the causes of such regularities.[10] Insofar as the material universe is an ordered whole it is one thing; and in relation to that one thing we are both an intrinsic part in the measure our physical existence and well-being depend on it, and we are extrinsic "observer-critics" who can contemplate the universe through the medium of our investigative disciplines.

But now we shall ask which again, which goods are better? Assuming the immortality of the intellectual, human soul, which goods are better, those that pertain to the intelligence and hence are permanent or those that pertain to the body and perish with it? Stated still another way, the material universe is a divisible, physical good, and so it is "consumable" to the extent

[10] The social sciences plainly are directed to constituting and improving human societies.

that it supplies each of us our physical needs. But the universe is also an indivisible common good insofar as it is attained by intellectual operations, which do not modify, divide or destroy it in any way.

Once again: the physical universe is at once a collection of private goods insofar as it supplies the many individual, private, physical goods of men. But as knowable, as the object of investigation and reflection, as seen to be one ordered whole related to its cause, the physical universe is the intellectual common good of the human species. Known as the effect of the First Cause the universe is the natural common good par excellence. As an effect, especially by reason of the order among its diverse species of things, the physical universe is the way through which we know its divine Author, who, insofar as He is seen as the first cause at which the examination of the universe-effect terminates, completes and perfects the common good of natural man. On the other hand, when He is known in Himself and not just as the cause of nature, He is the Common Good absolutely and most perfectly so called; namely, the revealed Common Good of the supernatural society.

Nor is this news to the reader, for if he is acquainted with Aristotle, he will be familiar with the Stagirite's contention that contemplation of the universe in terms of its causes, especially its first, universal cause, is what human happiness is. But having said these things, the question arises: what is the relation of this common good, the intellectual appreciation of the universe of which we are a part, to the common good that consists in the right ordering of occupational behaviors which we call justice?

The general answer is not, of course, difficult to see and has already been mentioned; for insofar as lesser goods are to be subordinated to those that are superior, it follows that in the measure possible preference ought to be given by everyone to the development of the mind. We are not saying that every-

one ought to spend most of his time in contemplating the universe and its first cause. But we are saying that the primary good of any society is to be found in *healthy*[11] culture, the latter consisting first and foremost in the arts and sciences which address themselves to the intelligence and to the issues fundamental to human life. The Grand Canyon, the Grand Tetons, and the Boundary Waters are not primarily physical benefits but contemplative, and that is the principal benefit hiking in the Grand Tetons and canoing in the wilderness provide, howevermuch the contemplation may be semi-conscious and unsystematic. As one man said when asked about a one day trip from a motel to the Grand Canyon: "You won't have enough time to really see it, and think about it." Even architecture and furniture-making, for example, are concerned with producing beautiful works, and to that extent they address themselves to the intelligence and the dispositions dependent upon it. Thus, without attempting to describe culture in more detail, we can say that everyman, no matter what his occupation, can to some extent, at least, in his leisure time if not in his professional occupation, take advantage of (well done, popular) scientific articles and television programs, good drama, music, painting, architecture, etc. The ordinary citizen need not have the expert's gaze; his contemplative considerations can be more general, more confused, more "intuitive" than analytic; nevertheless, such considerations ought to play a determining role by focusing his intelligence on the consideration of things paramount and fundamental to human existence. A noble culture is the good at which society should aim.

There remains but one more point to be made in relation to this second sense of common good, and it is this: it follows from what we have said above that those whose professional

[11] We cannot forego the emphasis, for it is plain that much of what passes as philosophy or as art, for example, is today in a state of corruption.

activities are concerned with goods of the mind are, like the rest of men, obliged to measure what they do in relation to the welfare of the community. An academic, for example, who puts his own advancement, his own reputation, his own "research" ahead of the welfare of the whole is acting in his own self-interest and corrupting the society to which he ought to be contributing. He seeks an intellectual good that by its nature is common, primarily for his own enhancement, and in that regard is no better a citizen than the business man who profiteers. The common good, then, in both senses of the term is the measure of human society; and in both senses of the term it shows self-interest to be destructive of human life.

Having sketched in a general way the main implications of the notion of freedom and the common good, we wish now to make some very general remarks about its implications for welfare programs. The primary inference to be made is, of course, that such programs ought to enable those in need to make a contribution to society, which means the efforts of welfare ought to be directed first of all to training programs that furnish citizens with productive talents. We have argued that in order to receive from society we must contribute: "If a man will not work, then he shall not eat," hence our first efforts on behalf of the indigent should be to make them productive, where that is necessary. To be sure, the dictum quoted applies to those who can work but refuse to; it does not apply to those genuinely unable to work, and we shall never see the time when societies are free of members who are dependent on the good will of others. Emergencies, too, require help for those who suffer; but as we said earlier, we are talking about a general policy directed toward those who are able.

Insofar as someone contributes the fruits of his occupational actions he is a cause of the common welfare and participative of it. Those who only receive from others, those who are wholly or largely passive, play little or no causal role in relation to society

and see themselves as dependent on the beneficence of others. Long term programs of aid unaccompanied by training or education for gainful employment are clearly damaging, something that experience has already shown, quite apart from what our general theoretical principles say. We ought, therefore, to avoid promoting long term passive dependence on the community, a point that abstractly is obvious enough but difficult to implement in practice, especially when the bureaucratic apparatus of the welfare state is already in place. Programs of aid without employment have even reached the point of destroying families, the foundation of community life.

To close, let us note that our efforts in the foregoing pages have been to trace some main implications of commonplace principles that are directive of human life, showing that freedom implies a responsibility to the whole of society, to the common good. In the course of our discussion, we observed that the general principles we introduced are obvious, however complicated and demanding their application may sometimes be. Today, however, they are not much honored by observance. One can only hope that once the love of self is recognized for what it is, the kind of love for the community that we have traditionally called "justice" will rise to take its place.

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