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## Privilege and Liberty

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# Privilege and Liberty

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## I. THE "COMMON MAN" VERSUS "PRIVILEGE"

The cult of the "Common Man" and the corresponding hatred of "Privilege" constitute the classic ideological bridges, connecting-links, or portages as it were, between equalitarian "progressive" Democracy and Communism — or to put it with greater precision, *from* Democracy to Communism. The principle of social levelling and monism they express (in the language fashionable to-day) is what underlies the logic of that final and suicidal surrender of Democracy to Communism which powerful forces in the midst of our society are seeking to bring about: a surrender to be experienced, at the same time, as a dialectical self-fulfilment, an historical consummation, a self-transcending apotheosis of Democracy. Those among us who object to Communism radically and essentially, on principle and not merely on tactical and temporary grounds or by reason of psychological inhibitions, — a handful of men only, perhaps, in an actual but very many more in a virtual sense, seeing that the "plain" or "ordinary" man, a far more real creature than the "Common Man" which is a construct of subversive sophists and seekers for power, cannot but dread Communism as the blighting tyranny it is, though in default of any intelligent leadership in resistance he may be inclined to submit to it half-heartedly, — true and integral anti-communists, in a word, should not only abstain from verbal celebrations of the idol of the "Common Man" but actively set about its destruction, and not merely subdue their voices when joining in the ritual chorus of abuse against "Privilege" but make bold to demand and to acclaim a downright philosophical apologia of Privilege in regard to both the frail remnants of it that have survived to this day and the more vital new types of it which, we trust, will emerge again in more civilized epochs to come. Nor should they suffer to be deterred from their task by the allegation of the Marxists and their "progressive" flunkies, mendacious in its spirit but not altogether false in its substance, that whoever opposes Communism relentlessly must inevitably oppose Democracy itself in a certain sense and to a certain degree; that whoever fails to worship the "Common Man" and to abhor "Privilege" is ineluctably tainted with heresy concerning such fundamental dogmas as that of Equality and "The People's Will."

In serene impassivity towards all "tactical" preoccupations in our own minds and all "psychological" stratagems of the Enemy, then, not swerving from our path either in the directions of "Liberal" compromise and diplomacy or in those of reactionary aestheticism or Fascist hysteria (which under a "Rightist" flag tends to oppose Leftist totalitarianism

by a noisy and ineffectual caricature thereof), let us inquire into the meaning of the dominant theme in the process that surrounds and threatens to submerge us: the theme of "The Common Man versus Privilege."

Again, our enquiry must not be guided by any arbitrary and particularist "group bias," in favour of this or that still-powerful or menaced or *ci-devant* "oligarchy," that is to say; from our main argument, we may draw sympathetic applications to any or all of these, but in a secondary and accidental sense only: neither a relationship of being "commandeered" nor one of sentimental piety, for instance, must oblige us towards "Western capitalists," "Prussian junkers," or any "suchlike things." The Marxian adversary, of course, will say (and has to say) that we cannot but be so "commandeered" and "committed"; but we must, with a view to safeguarding our intellectual honesty, diligently train ourselves to mind such reflex sounds of his no more than the buzzing of a moth, indeed not to give them a moment's attention. Thus, if "The Common Man versus Privilege" were meant to express the evident objective truth — which in fact it is deceitfully intended to "suggest" and to "evoke" — that a great multitude of people *as such*, in regard to its rights, interests, welfare, security, perfection, and so forth, is more important than a tiny "minority" of people *as such*, we should indeed have to side (as philosophers and citizens or Christians, *at least*) unequivocally with the "Common Man" as against "Privilege"; the objection that "*we*" are somehow specifically tied up with the "tiny minority" in question would be, even though a true description of our state of consciousness, altogether invalid as an objection. To put it in different terms, if the "Common Man" stands for the Common Good, and if Privilege means simply what is "good for" the "privileged few" and accordingly "bad for" the "underprivileged" or the "disinherited masses," we in these pages have no case at all. Of course, the contention reposes on baseless presuppositions concealed by the verbal sleight of hand of contrasting a great number *simpliciter* with a small number *simpliciter*.

The false presuppositions we have in mind are, roughly, threefold in nature. The first is the most obvious and the easiest to lay bare; the second consists in a classic equivocation about justice, which has worked immense harm; the third, more recondite, carries us — once we have seen through it — straight to the core of the matter.

First, we have the fallacy of "class conflict" in the broadest sense of the term: the error that "goods," generally and universally, cannot be other than "goods for consumption" in the strictest and narrowest meaning of the word; that, therefore, the "possession" of one man necessarily and exactly corresponds to the "want" of another, and that what is "given to" one group of people is by definition "taken away from" another. In other words again, the problem of the good life (along with history, politics, and culture) revolves round the number and the size of the "slices of cake" falling to this or to that other person, or "collective" taken as a unit in its contest with other "collectives." In sane philosophy, the father is primarily the person who provides for the children (having, incidentally, engendered

them and placed them in the fabric of an ordered life); in the insane philosophy of Subversion, the father is primarily the "class enemy" or "exploiter" who carves out for himself the largest piece of meat off the common joint.

Secondly, then, the slices or pieces or rations should all be equal *per capita*; or again, if not arithmetically equal, at least strictly proportioned to everybody's "contribution" towards their "production"—the proportion being "measured" by the "amount of labour" or some other "evident test." This must be so under pain of "injustice," by which is meant a breach of the "social contract" which allegedly regulates all (or all but private and intimate) relations between individuals. If my neighbour owns a larger property or inhabits a larger house than I, he has stolen it from me: it is as though he had defrauded me when "dividing up" between us, "on equal terms" as had been stipulated, the possession referred to. Or again, it may be lawful for him to own more and to live on a larger scale: but this can be so on the condition only, and only so long as he can prove at any moment before the tribunal of mankind's actualized consciousness—of Descartes's *idées claires et distinctes*, or of Kant's *Bewusstsein überhaupt*, perhaps—, that his greater capacity of work or at any rate his appreciable surplus of "creative genius" (useful in terms of "needs" revealed by the market or decreed by the competent Department of the Bureau of Human Consciousness) confers upon him the right of owning and enjoying, say, half as much again as I do. Otherwise, he is a leper sundered from the body of "common men," an outcast blighted with the sin of "privilege"; whereas I the "common man" go afflicted with a grievous wrong, am curtailed of my rights, and am indeed not only entitled but obliged to concentrate all my thoughts and efforts on obtaining redress (not without a vengeance, to be sure). The fallacy is manifest enough; the legitimate moral problem of equality and inequality in social relationships is not, of course, settled therewith, but need not detain us longer at this stage.<sup>1</sup>

Thirdly, we have already indicated above, if only in vague outlines, the most basic of the false presuppositions underlying the crusade against Privilege on behalf of the Common Man: the interpretation of the "Common Good" in terms, *if not* of class-war, contest, quarrel, envy and mutual exclusion, *then* of a *sameness* of reference, use, enjoyment and immediacy: a principle that lies deeper and has farther-reaching implications than the mere narrow-minded jealousy of equalitarianism proper. As the subversive mind is essentially individualist and isolationist, so also is it essentially collectivist and identitarian: on the view inherent in it, the curse of division and of being "set against one another" cannot be surmounted except by a "fusion into one"; an actual identification of consciousness, of qualities and of interest. In fact, individualism (tending towards equalitarianism) prefigures collectivism from the outset, and again, collectivism is only individualism raised to the high power of an absolute monism centred in "all and every one." No man must hold more or be more than

<sup>1</sup> See note on p.98.

his fellow man; but in whatever sense he may (or, indeed, shall, as we observe in to-day's communist society, and in a different form, in the liberal-democratic concept of a mere equality of "chances") hold more or represent more, this must be — in a direct, massive, mathematically plain, and instantly verifiable sense — on behalf, in the name and under the jurisdiction of Society as an actual Unit of Consciousness, an actual Subject of Will entirely contained in the collective thoughts, moods and decisions of the Moment. It is, needless to say, a Moment that apes the Eternity of God — as the "common mind" of the "Common Man," with all the artificial idiocy imparted to it by the tricks of a naturalist psychology and a lowering-down glorification, is nothing but a formal substitute for the Mind of God; as the *Sic volo* supposed to be "naturally good," the "People's Will," is certainly the product of a fetishistic attempt to expropriate the *one* Will that is in truth Good because it expresses an Essence absolutely Good. To put it briefly, then, the Common Man is not merely the plain or ordinary man "wronged" by "master men" (or in danger of being so wronged); he is, above all, Man good and valid and confirmed — in virtue, purely and simply, of being "nothing more than Man": and accordingly, Privilege is not merely an "injustice" which favours "the few" to the detriment of "the many" but above all, a symbol of the imperfection of Man as compared with God, a symbol of the part played in human life of what is contingent and "unaccountable-for," a symbol of the "irksome," "irritating," "humiliating" transcendence of the Good in relation to human Will as such.

The Common Man means Man aspiring to "have" all goods and to "be" all that is good in the simple, ultimate and selfsame sense of having and being: any one man attaining, through the oneness of Society actualized into a common Subject, all that any other men attain, according to the mode of *Identity*. Inversely, Privilege means the social projection, the institutional recognition, the traditional embodiment of the essentially insurmountable dividedness, imperfection and subjectivity (in the face of a transcendent Object and Good) of Man, and by the same token, the really existent — though always limited and again, in its own way, imperfect — remedy or correction of that metaphysical smallness, failure and fallenness of Man: the fact that a few or rather, very many men in different ways transcend the "common level" of mankind, as though that in man which points beyond man took shape in them, in this or that limited respect, so that through their instrumentality others reach out beyond their own immediate possession or proper nature, and enrich themselves by a contact with higher values primarily alien from them and not properly theirs, according to the mode of *Participation*<sup>2</sup>. It is, ultimately, because we are merely creatures and "guests" of God even on earth, not in any sense "claimants" on Him and much less, "particles" or "concretions" of His mind that notwithstanding the strict rights and duties we undoubtedly do have and owe among ourselves we are *also*, ineliminably and most fortunately for us all, guests and hosts, beneficiaries and benefactors,

<sup>2</sup> See note on p.99.

servants and masters, pupils and teachers, imitators and exemplars of one another: in most different manners, to be sure, and by an apparent paradox rooted in our creaturely status, always in a more proper sense as receivers and followers than as "privileged" spenders or leaders.

It is, then, interpreting Privilege in terms of the Common Good as attained by Participation that the present article chiefly aims at. But in view of the undeniable (if extremely vulnerable and, perhaps, short-lived) historic achievement of liberal-democratic Society in the realization of the Common Good inasmuch as the specific human value that goes by the name of "political liberty" is concerned, we propose to envisage Privilege most of all in its close interrelation with Liberty.

## II. "IDENTITY" AS CONTRASTED TO "PARTICIPATION"

The principle of Identity involves what we may call the principle of the negation of — isolation from, and hostility to — whatever is "non-identical" or irreducible to identity. It means the exclusion of participation in whatever presents itself as "transcendent," not in the sense of a prolongation or technical implementation, but in the sense of qualitative otherness, and in particular, superiority, to the private "self." (A superiority, be it noted, which at the same time carries relevancy to him.) Whatever would appeal to him as representing some specification of the Common Good, in its distinctness from the scheme of private goods, he is summoned to reject and refuse to recognize as *his* good. Such are all things, not (as some have put it) which he fails to understand — for he neither understands nor (generally speaking) pretends to understand "science" —, but which he cannot immediately and univocally "place" in the scheme of his pursuits or "subsume" under the categories of value with which he is fully familiar. Often, in various changing respects, the "plain man" (the "ordinary," the "average" man) similarly avoids contact with "higher values" to whose appeal he happens to be exposed; but whereas he does so in a spirit of mere personal indifference and renunciation, the "common man" proper would either eliminate (inasmuch as their concrete quality and peculiar flavour are concerned) such "transcendent" values or human realities as useless and offending or (and this is the more ideologically significant aspect) "annex" and re-model them, suit them to his system of primary "needs" and bend them to the measure of his "requirements," with the pretension of thus enhancing and intrinsically "improving" them also. The new Caliph Omar will not content himself with having the library of Alexandria burnt but cause most of the books to be "edited" so as to form "future" chapters in the progressive Koran.

For many years it has been one of the favourite parlour games of "progressive" dealers in "spirit" and culture-mongers, especially in Central Europe, to assure one another that Dostoyevsky — the author of *The Possessed*, the most profound, most accurate and most appalling indict-

ment of Subversion that has ever been drawn — was not really a “reactionary” but merely took on the appearance of one, either to delude the Tsarist authorities into leaving him alone or to drive home his “essentially Socialist” truths with greater artistic effect. For the more cheerful and sanguine sort of equalitarian — for the “Common Man,” precisely, as distinct from the sallow, tight-lipped, cynical or holy-rollerish professional revolutionist — it is *a priori* impossible to believe that anything “intellectual,” “cultural,” “literary,” “educational,” etc. (indeed, anything “nice and expensive,” to use an idiom not uncommon in certain free-thinking circles) has ever been meant for anything but “to serve The People.” Thus sings Browning, the scatter-brained rhymester of a “bright future,” in *The Lost Hero*, a rebuke addressed to Wordsworth for having seceded from the “Left”:

Shakespeare was of us, Milton was for us,  
Burns, Shelley were with us; they watch from their graves:  
He alone breaks from the van and the freemen,  
He alone sinks to the rear and the slaves.

The slipshod metaphor about “the van and the freemen” is of no little illustrative value to students of the mentality in question. Whether the poet would class all apparent “reactionaries” of repute — such as Plato, Euripides, Tacitus, Luther, Hegel, Johnson, Balzac, the Goncourts, Schopenhauer, Burckhardt — with Shakespeare the Bard of Progress, or relegate some of them into the limbo where the “lonely” Wordsworth dwells, is a matter for speculation. Anyhow, he confidently predicts that the “lost hero” himself will finally be “pardoned by Heaven,” — for the Deity of The Cause has an invincible foible for literary celebrities and will allow none of his pet children to perish. (Some Catholics, too, would fain baptize all impressive Pagans from Goethe to Nietzsche and from Jefferson to Lenin, “Christians in their hearts though not with their lips.”)

Naturally, the attitude of “expropriation” instead of plain “elimination” not only implies no step towards real Participation but precludes it even more securely. A man who has never heard of Shakespeare has more access to him than Browning had; the Soviet rigorists who have proscribed Dostoyevsky certainly know more about him than his “democratic” admirers; nay, if we think of the words “I would thou wert cold or hot: But because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth” (*Apoc.* III, 15-16) we might be tempted to say that they who persecute the name of Our Lord are, though in no sense “Christian,” in some sense indeed nearer to His spirit than the “broad-minded” Christians who would stick on them a label of “Christianity.” The “common man” is a modern King Midas: whatever he touches turns, not indeed to gold, but to dross, and with much the same effect of complete uselessness. In its very formulation, the “conquest of culture” bears the pledge of its impossibility. The “control of moral and spiritual forces” which we have “not yet” achieved so satisfactorily as we have the control of physical forces yields by itself, as a phrase, a sufficient

explanation of the fact thus denounced. The higher a value is the more sardonical is its response (if the expression may be passed) to the contention that man—better still, all men—have a “right” to “possess” it. The ideal of Identity precludes the reality of Participation: in other words, Pantheists or Anthrotheists cannot realize, or live by, their status as children of God.

The same thing is true of hierarchical order as projected onto the plane of social relationships. To be sure, all such projection is essentially one-sided, limited and distorting: man’s contact with God—under the Christian dispensation, in particular—radically transcends the system of cöordinates (as it were) that determine his place in the social hierarchy; but that is only to say that to reach the kingdom of Heaven he needs neither “abundance” nor “culture.” Nor does the Gospel hold out the faintest trace of a promise of universal prosperity or of an education “made available for all.” It must, however, also be admitted—and emphasized—that social hierarchy does not, and is not meant to, correspond univocally with the hierarchy of moral, intellectual or even aesthetical values in a purely natural context, either: in “normal” society, many a “plain man” of the lower orders may, and often does, excel many an “aristocrat” in natural intelligence or in genius of some kind, in fortitude or in kindness, or in no matter what other dimension of personal virtue—including even that of “nobility” or “distinction of bearing.” Great statesmen, too, as well as great soldiers or great industrial organizers, have often “risen from the ranks.” Yet it should be remembered that—in spite of all differences as to presuppositions and structure—this “antinomy” also largely applies to the hierarchy of the Church militant herself. A peasant girl may be a saint, and a pope may not; any humble parish priest may in the end rank higher in Heaven than his bishop. The Catholic equalitarians are right in asserting that a parliamentary form of government, while not suitable for the Church, may suit a given nation in the given circumstances; but in suggesting that while the principle of hierarchy as such is right for the visible Church on earth it is wrong for the body politic they stretch the contrast to fictitious and illegitimate lengths. Secular hierarchy, far from providing the ultimate standard for the judgment of human worth, is in need of being viewed in a perspective implying limitation, reserve and correction; but so is ecclesiastical hierarchy, without therefore ceasing to be salutary and indispensable. Hierarchy means that a certain personnel, by virtue of its very constitution and in a sense penetrating its distinctive “being” as it were, is *primarily ordained* to actualize and to cultivate a certain set of higher values; to attend to, and serve, certain aspects of the common good—or again, *the* common good of a given “perfect society” in the central and comprehensive sense of the term. This fundamental requisite of human proficiency, ascent and civilization (of man’s relationship with his goal, indeed), with its manifold implications of privilege, authority and reverential habits and customs—inevitably entailing a great deal of tensions and incongruities in concrete cases—, arises from the fact that the Common Good is everybody’s good



yet not identical with everybody's private good nor simply "resolvable" into the private aims and volitions of all (or into their "average value"); that while every high value is "meant for me," not only in the sense of benefiting me as a recipient of its causal effects but of perfecting me through an appreciative response on my part, — in the sense, that is, of contributing to inform my conscious behaviour, — yet it is "meant for me" according to a mode of transcendence, *not* as an immanent function of the unfolding of my volitions, needs or capacities.<sup>3</sup> Hierarchy is the expression, not (as some Pagan aberrations would have it) of the intrinsic and necessary "betterness" of some men, of their metaphysical superiority to the rest, but of the bondage of men — of all men — to what is intrinsically better than they, to what essentially transcends their scope yet enters into the constitution of their goal, as conceived *modo humano*: the "objective" goal transcending but addressing their "subjectivity." The Pope is "Holy Father" not in spite of, but because of being at the same time *servus servorum Dei*: specifically called and appointed, not to serve our "religious needs" or interests or fancies, nor perhaps even — so far as his most specific office, his *potestas gubernativa*, is concerned — to serve God Himself pure and simple, but to subserve, as it were, our service of What we are all ordained to serve. Though some persons, religious or even secular, may be more saintly personally than the Holy Father, we approach him with a degree of reverence not otherwise practised among Christians, as the symbol and guardian, not so much of human saintliness as of our corporate supernatural "subjectness" to the Most Holy One. Generally speaking, all legitimate "authority" is destined to serve "our good": it is because "our good" — except in so far as it is defined merely by our "good pleasure," though this does not in itself imply any objective "badness" — is *above us* that the "authority" can only fulfill its function if its character, in relation to us, is not merely "functional" or "instrumental" but (in varying measures and forms) embodies a claim to subordination on our part. To put it briefly, Hierarchy stands for the submission of man to what is highest in man and higher than man but claiming his attention: ultimately, along many necessary or complete avenues of approach, to God; whereas "Emancipation" stands for the subjection of man to man, and his bondage to what is lowest in him: or again, ultimately, to the Spirit that seeks to destroy him. Hierarchy and Privilege, establishing a primary dependence of man's road to perfection on special human agents "consecrated" to the service and cult of what transcends man (in its multiple aspects), reflect the principle of *Participation*: they are linked to the basic truth that *response*, not *fiat*, is the prime gesture of the human person; on the contrary, "Emancipation" and "Equality," proclaiming the equal and joint sovereignty of men, speak the idiom of Identity: they taunt man with the mirage of "positing" and "generating" reality including his own, of absorbing the infinite into one human Consciousness, of supplanting or, indeed, "creating" God. Participation is another word to express man's affirmation of — or loyalty to — Being, Form, and Limits, implied also by his true relationship with Being

<sup>3</sup> See note on p.100.

Infinite; inversely, man's craving for identity not only conjures up the nemesis of annihilation which is bound to follow the prideful illusion of omnipotence, it is inherently tainted with the *eroico furore* of the suicidal, and carries within it the developing germ of a radical enmity to Being.

In a general perspective, then, we may lay down that the religion of the Common Man suppresses the principle of Participation in that it negates, and tends to abolish, that in which man—every man, any man, this or that man—might participate. Though in itself a half-truth only, the trite anti-socialist argument, stating that "the Socialists would kill the goose that lays the golden eggs," quite fittingly expresses what we mean; to be sure, what the "Socialists" (in the broadest sense of the term) really propose to do is not to kill the goose or rather the geese of "Capital" (again in the broadest sense of the term, in which it becomes a synonym of Civilization and of Man's enhanced Estate) but to absorb them into One super-geese which is themselves—identified with all "the people," all "common men," and ultimately, all mankind—and which is to lay golden eggs of unlimited size and of an inconceivable splendour. The metaphor might be stretched, further, to the effect that in their heart of hearts they wish to supplant the geese by a fabulous swan,—which in reality turns out to be a sanguinary and sterile vulture. By claiming Identity we estop ourselves, as it were, from Participation; by asserting man's absolute and all-comprehensive Actuality we foil the manifold real potentialities in man which can only thrive in spheres remote from a totalitarian concentration on the "evident needs of the Moment," and prevent them from actualization; by "emancipating" man from the "divisions," "tensions," "contradictions," "*Verdinglichungen*" and "alienations" that are inherent in his natural status we isolate, "divide" and "alienate" him *integrally* from his proper humanity, set him against whatever represents the reality of freedom and dignity—of nobility and sovereignty, of virtue and wisdom, of perfection and progress—*within* him (and can never be simply *he*, any more than *his*), and reduce him to a mere abject Thing while inflating him into a self-styled Deity. The "common man" is the troll in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* who ekes out his motto: *Troll, suffice unto thyself* with the Christian *Omnia vestra* (their fusion resulting in something like *Mihi, et ego, omnia*); the Cynic of old who, gone mad on the heady wine of Christianity—the elixir of life eternal, yet the deadliest of poisons if adulterated—would expand the barrel in which he has shut himself up into an empyrean of humanity and build out of that wretched cask a Palace to be the sole abode of Man. By "conquering" the earth he is transforming it into a universal hell; by "creating" out of himself the sham heaven whose only—though myriad-headed—dweller he aspires to be he dissolves humanity into the All whose true name is Naught.

Our thesis, that man's participation in the reality of human "value" or "excellence" (in every sense of the term) as opposed to the licentious dream of man's identity with Value and Power, or again, the full participation of "the individual" (and "the people") in the common good as opposed to the nightmare of an identity between the individual and the collective

consciousness, essentially involve the principle of social Hierarchy — with its political and economic implications —, might seem puzzling to many minds, even Catholic, reared in present-day habits. Our argument is, briefly, that a social conception based upon the exclusion of Privilege, a conception entrenched in the duality of “the person” as such and “the community” as such, ineluctably tends to reduce the person to naught in the face of the community, and by the same token to divinize the person by virtue of his envisioned identity with the community. The movement aimed at the destruction of social hierarchy is really a movement of metaphysical Subversion: not that social hierarchy — in its historical contingency and multiformity — embodies a reflexion or a component part of the order of nature itself; but the subversion of social hierarchy negates that order inasmuch as it aspires to surmount the individuation, plurality and contingent inequality of men, inherent in the specific imperfection of man and his position in the order of being. Without that “*exemplary*” — tentative and limited, variable and concrete — participation of “the person” in the common good (including the possibility of a particular, “lived” and “experienced” reference to values above the preoccupations of society *hic et nunc*) which is ensured — and meant — by “privilege” as distinct from a mere “hierarchy of office,” Man is liable to lose hold of the leverage of Participation altogether and to fall a prey to the mirage of Identity.

In another sense yet, “identity” involves man’s exclusion from “participation.” The Common Man is ill disposed to tolerate, not only that pretension to be “better,” that virtual adumbration of an intrinsic superiority which confronts him in the shape of “privilege,” but the mere fact of otherness or alienness, too. The intolerance of the Marxist “labour movement” for workers of another persuasion, labelled as “traitors to their class” — to say nothing of its hatred of the peasant and the “petty bourgeois” mentality —; the ideology of the “closed shop”; the merciless treatment, at the hands of the Communist State, of so many millions of poor and plain men who in some way or other have shown themselves unworthy of the stern kingdom of terrestrial heaven; the “democratic” conception of a political world uniformity and schematic “universality”; the Demo-Fascio-Communist procedure (initiated by Mustafa Kemal’s nationalist and “bourgeois,” but certainly Leftist, revolution) of securing national uniformity by the uprooting and transfer of “minority” populations; the very idea of that religious “tolerance” itself whose underlying supposition is that “denominations” differ only in the meaningless ceremonies and verbal mumbo-jumbo attaching to each, while at bottom all kinds of believers “worship the same God” (which is man’s “needs”):— here are facts that hardly require to be dwelt upon. Whether the idol of Identity bears a particularist or a universalist sign; whether it inspires a tendency towards the isolation of self from “alterity” or towards the active suppression (or again, the “optimistic,” illusory ignorance) of what is “alien” to self; whether it demands the branding of what does not “belong” to “us” as an impure and eternally damned set of “pariahs” or “outcasts,” or their treatment as an “immature” section of mankind in need of “rè-

education": it invariably implies the negation of all communion with "alien" humanity, as experienced in its alienness; the exclusion from participation of what fails to identify itself with "our own kind." To the "common man," every human face in which he does not recognize his own reflexion as in a mirror appears crazy, uncanny, in some way impure; in short, it might be said that any face endowed with a personal character, with "contours" or a "profile," is an irritant to him. In this respect as in others, the dull self-infatuation underlying his "universalism" contrasts significantly with the wisdom and humour of the "plain man" at his best, who rises above all "aristocracies" and "elites" of the world in enunciating his subtly philosophical "I knows a gentleman when I sees 'im." In fact, the same mentality to which the inequality of "classes," let alone "estates" (a debased remnant of which survives in the "classes") constitutes an intolerable outrage will, paradoxical though it might seem, find it much easier to tolerate the presence in society of "castes" proper — especially in the form of diverse categories of outcasts, slaves, groups "unfit for" Socialist "citizenship"; perhaps, even, in the "scientific" society of the future, with that element of a Christian mood which lingers in Marxist humanism itself being displaced by the supreme ideal of "conditioning," the presence of diverse human "species," "planned" and "bred" for different social purposes. We may discern the germ of this "new inequality"<sup>4</sup> attendant upon the movement towards Equality in the Puritan interpretation of "the rich" — the socially successful — as a body of "the elect," and of "the poor" — the social "failures" or "refuse" — as a body of "the reprovéd." The "equalitarian" mind being really "identitarian," the inequality it particularly detests is that *within* a community proper; the inequality that is the basis and the stimulus of participation: whatever the equalitarian "We" (to borrow one of the Nazis' pet terms) cannot or for some reason would not absorb or assimilate into its sovereign oneness it tends to *exclude from the unity of mankind* (which it equates to its own subjectivity).

The reason why Atheist Humanitarianism, in contraposition to religious principles of community — notwithstanding the tendencies to seclusion and to persecution they may entail —, is bound to concentrate on a quasi "entitative" oneness of mind and a uniformity of "type," a "qualitative" sameness — largely alien to the religious attitude, and in particular, to Catholic universalism — as principles of social cohesion, lies precisely in the *indetermination* of its concept of the "common good." There being, by supposition, no Entity and no Law *above* man, no definite and subsistent good *outside* man to measure and to direct his corporate action, the concept of ultimate values and obligatory principles is confined to what is assumed to be "self-evident" to everybody and anybody: which amounts to saying that any human subjectivity as such is — equivalently to others — a judge of truth, and similarly any human need an immediately sovereign determinant of the good; hence, anarchy cannot be averted except by the actual sameness and *if* fusion of human thoughts and volitions *as such*;

<sup>4</sup> See note on p.101.

unity, no longer a function of the convergency of minds towards a transcendent Cause, Measure and End, becomes a self-contained *theme* of society; whoever questions the evidence of the "self-evident" or fails to fit in with the "typical" constitution of "needs" places himself (virtually at least, but perhaps with massive consequences) outside the bounds of recognized humanity. To a Catholic believer, who knows the Faith to be a specific virtue and prays for the special grace of perseverance, it appears natural that one may lack or even lose the Faith; whereas he who believes only in what should be evident to every man will be apt to regard men inaccessible to the alleged evidences as no men at all. We know that we are all called to attain ends of (true) perfection, difficult of attainment, and know that we are all poor sinners; yet where human will — with its implication of human needs, emotions, urges, and apparent "rationality" — is in itself a pledge of (sham) perfection, whatever is reluctant to fall in with the system of human will and mental complexion as collectively existent may hardly count on mercy. Unlike the comparatively harmless tyrants of old who contented themselves with being obeyed, the *Sic volo* of the Sovereign Subject in which all subjectivities are supposed to be fused, the *Sic volo* that pretends to be an ultimate standard of truth and right, will insist not only on enforcing the allegiance but on determining the wills and creating the souls of all: on being a *Sic volo* not only respected but actually uttered by every man.

### III. THE PRINCIPLE OF "IDENTITY": THE TOTALITARIAN CONCEPT OF LIBERTY

About 1935, the following anecdote was reported in the public press. A young Soviet Russian student of engineering was living in Paris, sent there by the Soviet authorities with the view of his learning certain technological procedures of French invention. Once, when being asked the classic question — "Been here how long? *Like it?*" — which is the scourge of most people living in foreign parts, the young man answered with praiseworthy candour and courtesy. He pointed out that indeed he not only "liked" the French climate, food and wine, and feminine fashion, but even felt compelled to admire and envy several elements of economic and scientific progress which French (and "Western") society had already achieved but which were as yet unknown in the Soviet fatherland. Pressed further, however, the young man declared that these considerations by no means prevented him from essentially preferring Soviet to Western life. "Well, what *is* your 'essential' objection to our way of life?" — his interlocutor persisted. Upon some reflection, the young man thoughtfully answered: "True, you have got many a fine thing here which we still lack... but on the other hand, *you* lack what is most precious to *us*: I mean, *freedom*."

This young student, even though he may have enjoyed a kind of "privileged" position in Soviet society, was not Stalin in person, nor a member of the Politburo; he could not, in stressing Soviet "freedom," mean that in his own country he enjoyed unlimited personal power or

was at liberty to "order" people to do anything he wished to see done. He obviously could not mean either that at home he could allow himself to talk more freely than in France (where, in fact, his tongue and his every action continued to be under *Soviet* supervision). Nor is it probable that by "freedom" he really meant "equality" or the absence of "class distinctions" as such; for he might well have expressed this more adequately and less misunderstandably in his familiar Marxist terminology. "There is a fundamental perversion of language here," a Liberal critic will say: "the Communists simply call Liberty what we call Tyranny." Very well; but yet there must be some point hidden in that perversion. No Communist would call *Fascist* tyranny, boundless as it may be, a consummation of "liberty"; even the Nazi rank and file in the Third Reich he would call "intoxicated slaves" rather than "free" as compared with the citizens of a "capitalist" democracy. Because, in old times, the Tsar was (supposedly) free to do as he pleased and to make the people do what he chose to, the Communists would not suggest that there was more "freedom" in Tsarist Russia than, say, in Switzerland. Again, the hero of our anecdote may hardly have meant by "freedom" the subjection of the whole people to a "benevolent" tyranny, a "paternal" absolutism bent on serving the welfare of the people as it were. And yet, significantly — and not quite in keeping with the "dialectical" concept of the social revolution, perhaps — he was not referring, either, to "freedom" as a blissful appurtenance of the "State of the future" which the present Soviet rule, with all its "hardships" and "harshness," is designed to bring about, but to "freedom" as a glorious thing already existing in Soviet society — and vainly to be sought for in the West. He could not, then, mean anything other than the "total" power of the "State" — of its supreme rulers, that is —, *quid* a power *identifiable*, by virtue of its distinctive nature and presuppositions, with the power of the people as such. In a liberal-democracy, and in fact largely even under Fascism, the power of the paramount "will of Society" is hampered — and therefore, all human freedom is made unreal — by all kinds of divisions, reservations, privileges, taboos, conventions, traditions and so forth; whereas in Soviet society "freedom" is real because the supreme power is unlimited *and* embodies the power of "every one and all" — with the exception of the "reproved," of course: those unfit for identification with the will of Society, those outside the pales of humanity. (It is, to quote a recent statement by a high official of the "Labour" regime, only the organized workers that "matter.") The two axioms — that government shall be omnipotent "and" that it shall represent the identical thought, will and power of all — are not, moreover, simply combined with each other, but postulate each the other: they condition not only "liberty" but each other as well. Only a power that springs from the identical will of all members of society can be really unlimited: dispose, that is, of all particular wills "at will," as it were, beyond all mere outward constraint as appears in the "oppression," "suppression," "exploitation" and even mental "violation" exercised by un-democratic "tyrannies" in the proper sense of the term; again, the illimitability and totality of the supreme State-power constitute a necessary guarantee of its real identity with the

power of The People: for immediately it recognized any autonomous principle of power outside its own and agreed to respect any self-subsistent particular "right" or "will" it would reduce itself to a status of particularity, too — become the mere power of a particular privileged group as opposed to The People. Thus, in the logic of totalitarian Socialism, Power by granting any "liberty" which could be made valid against it would cease to be "everybody's power" and so destroy the principle of Liberty according to its only possible and relevant conception. To put it briefly and somewhat paradoxically, the despots of old were tyrants because their tyranny, even though politically absolute, knew limits (arising from the "given" order of society); whereas the total emancipation of the tyrant from any conceivable social restraint makes him a symbol and an instrument of universal Liberty.

The totalitarian conception of "liberty," then — the conception of Communism as an ineluctable implication, the only possible concrete pattern, of Anarchism —, is based on the definition of liberty in terms of human power unrestrained and omnipotent. The ruled have no "rights" in face of the ruler's power *because* they have a claim to be themselves the sovereign Subject of "self-rule," to be invested with the fulness of power. Liberty "under the Law" is a contradiction in itself, because "Law" pretends to be an extraneous measure of my will and means a check placed on my sovereignty, and hence its recognition cannot but foil my liberty; in so far as, in an empirical sense, I obey the commands and conform to the directions of an authority "above" me, it must be nothing but Myself raised to a higher "power." My own will is the only valid "law"; but then it must be "totally" valid for me. Similarly to, but again unlike, God in the Thomist doctrine Who is "nearer to me than I am myself" but at the same time is absolutely *distinct from me*, Socialist Society is "nearer to me than I am myself" and it is in the subjectivity of its Power Centre that my own self is reproduced and truly realized, and becomes actually operative. Accordingly, to blame Communism for "clinging to Atheism" is like blaming a tree for "clinging to vegetability" instead of "accepting" an animal or a mineral nature. Nor is it true — in spite of the verbal equivocations inherent in the Communist doctrine as propounded to a not yet communistic mankind, or even deliberately used as a weapon by the wielders of Communist power — that the meaning of the term "freedom" in Communist parlance is *simply* the inverse of, or *entirely* unconnected with, its meaning in current usage. I wish I were "free" from the burden of taxation, "free" from nasal trouble, "free" from beverage prohibition, "free" from onerous professional duties: the subject-matters have nothing to do with one another, but yet in none of these cases is the use of the term "freedom" purely arbitrary and unrelated to its use in other contexts. Communism is nothing but the determinate attempt to take seriously, and to actually realize, the one true and ultimate Freedom of the Common Man: man's "Freedom from God," his emancipation from *die Gottespest* — "the plague of man's allegiance to God" —, as Johann Most, a more forgotten German Communist in the nineteenth

century, has put it. In no wise does this mean that the Communist dictator is "a god" like the antique Roman Emperor: one of the multiple personifications of a transcendent Divine order according to the Pagan conception of Divinity, an object of the "natural" worship of men. It means that *Man as such* is elevated to the rank of godhead: "Society," that is, in its identity with the individual; the "State," in its identity with Society; the ruling group and the dictator, in their specifically "guaranteed" identity with "socially organized Man"; and in a sense, indeed, universal Matter in its ultimate identity with rational humanity. Man's "emancipation from God" is coined out, as it were, in the concrete scheme of his emancipation from his "self-forged chains": from the "natural law" and "moral order" on the one hand, from the limiting and paralysing fact of his substantial dividedness and his multicentric will on the other: the division of "individual" and "society," of "the private citizen" and "the State"; the "split" which is itself only a function of man's impotence and imperfection, as well as an obstacle barring his "progress." The metaphysical core of the concept of social Totality is the concept of Identity; and the postulate of Identity, again, is implicit in man's pretension to metaphysical sovereignty, his aspiration to be God: for if I admit any entitative "otherness" of mind and will on a footing with myself, if I am aware of any human consciousness and purpose really distinct from my own, if I recognize any valid law and authority over and above my will — and not an efflux and manifestation thereof — I cannot be God. Yet the empirical limitation, frailness and tenuity of my ego, taken in itself, must be evident to me unless I am a madman in the clinical and trivial sense of the word. "Society" may pretend to divinity with quite another plausibility to mask the illusion, with quite another range of effectiveness in which to impose the paranoid conception upon reality and to work the presumptuous madness of the Fool of Scripture into the tissue of nature as it were; and "Society," to be sure, shall not be an overwhelming "organization" to which I am "subject": it shall be *I*, as "*socially organized*" — the human person "aware" of his actual identity with human personality as such, and thus pretending to constitute the omnipotent Divine Personality. Naturally, this conception of "freedom" entails the nemesis of a socio-political tyranny infinitely surpassing in its immensity and comprehensiveness any other tyranny possible among men: God's omnipotence, which is real and not illusory, is generative of liberty in the creature; whereas man's omnipotence, a downright imposture and delusion, in the attempt of its "realization" (which, like a raving lunatic's actions, does affect reality notwithstanding its basic illusiveness) cannot but annihilate the real liberty of man. However, it does so in the utmost measure *not* because it is a mere *vulgar* trickery practised on "the masses" by a pack of astute self-seeking criminals — which would be a harmless and pleasant thing by comparison —, but *because* it is underlain by an actual human experience of "liberty," as psychologically real as it is perverse. Of course, "Moscow" enslaves reluctant populations by violence, as other tyrannies did before. But were it only that, the thralldom would be an incomparably lighter and less diabolical one. The intimate core, the tap-root, the deep content, the constitutive meaning, the *logos*



(as it were) of Communism is not "cynical imperialism," "unbridled power policy," "the smooth-running machinery of the Police State," "aggressive militarism" or any similar evil,—it is what may well be called the *self-enslavement of Man*. That is why the adventure of enslavement must be universal in width as well as in depth.

But have we not wandered far, along the alluring paths of the Marxist-Leninist dialectics, from our own homelier, humbler and cockier Common Man? *He*, after all, is reared in a tradition that embraces man's freedom "from," "versus" or "in face of" the State no less than man's freedom "through" the State and "by" his identity with Society. If on the one hand he wants the State to do everything possible for his "security" and "welfare" and "culture," tends to regard all men as essentially alike and interchangeable, believes himself capable of deciding about the destinies of the world (without being much interested therein), and keenly expects the total conquest of the universe by Man owing to the progress of science, organization, technology and psychotechnics,—on the other hand he also insists on his immediate and tangible personal freedom and "rights," on the "freedom of worship" (indifferent as he may be to its content and Object), and on "speaking his mind" freely, without having to tremble before the Secret Police and to endure living in a society in which all opinions other than those imposed by Government are penalized.

It might be suggested, then, that even though the "common man" ideology is calculated to dissolve the structure of Liberal-Democracy and pave the way for its total self-surrender to (and supersession by) Communism, at least the Common Man entertains the illusion, specific to him, that he may get the advantages of Communism (a flawless mechanical organization of society for securing the perfect and equal welfare of all) without its drawbacks (practical inefficiency, present "hardships," excessive regimentation) of which he is dimly aware; that, accordingly, the "democratic" Common Man, however imbued with a more potential and rarefied type of totalitarianism, still clings to the Liberal "experience of freedom" in preference to the paradoxical one that fans the hell-fire of Communist tyranny.

Without intending to deny this contention altogether, we propose to point out briefly 1) that in the current "common man" ideology of Democracy the liberal conception of freedom has in fact been strongly eroded by more virulent motifs, which act as vehicles of the totalitarian as opposed to the liberal conception; 2) that that liberal conception itself is tainted with a virtual aspect of identitarianism.

#### IV. TOTALITARIAN ASPECTS OF LIBERAL-DEMOCRACY

Just as an anecdote has provided us, above, with a starting-point for the analysis of the Communist conception of "freedom," another joke — less witty but of greater renown — may serve us as a key to the degrada-

tion of the Liberal idea of Liberty in the democratic society of Liberal inspiration. We mean the slogan *Freedom from Want*, an item in the well-known piece of demagoguery that went by the name "The four freedoms." Why substitute "Freedom from Want," an inherently nonsensical phrase — for suppose I should like to have a horse: it will certainly not occur to me to describe my desire as a yearning for the "freedom from horselessness" — for the good old crudities about Plentiful Abundance and the like? To be sure, because it has a novel, a somehow elegant and "streamlined" air about it; but that formal superiority over the trite catchwords of a more "dated" sophistry is far from exhausting its meaning. Another reason for its choice lies in the psychological fact, keenly grasped by the politician's genius, that the fancy of our industrial populations is less allured by the picture of all the various sorts of pleasure that wealth can procure than agitated by the dread of misery owing to unemployment — the spectre of "insecurity." A century after the promise of economic liberalism to supply us with the maximum of wealth, we are preached a new gospel according to which economic "planning" shall save us from starvation. Of course, the meaning of "want" is very elastic; it tends to include the mere absence of whatever luxuries are accessible to the wealthiest members of society. "Freedom from Want" does not disavow the claim to "Abundance for All"; it ambiguously stresses the alleged fact that the only alternative to a chiliastic equal "abundance" is the abject misery of a considerable minority and the constant dread thereof haunting the vast majority of the people, and tickles the palates of its dupes with the notion that whatever falls short of a maximum and equal "abundance" is intolerable "want" justifying "divine discontent" and calling down the "wrath of the people." But more important still is the new, the "developed" and "expanded" interpretation of liberty that the formula "Freedom from Want" connotes. That good government is intent on protecting the citizen's liberty has for long been held by most of us; that it endeavours to promote the people's material welfare has been believed perhaps even more universally. What is new, however, is the *subsumption of "welfare" under the category of "freedom."* Welfare is not simply a "good," howsoever important, but one of the "freedoms." In the old liberal-democratic conception, a poor man seemed invested with human dignity, had a claim to honour and was entitled to freedom no less than a prosperous one; the refurbished ideology denies him the capacity for freedom unless or until he is also made wealthy. In the stead of Liberalism, we have Marxism diluted and sloppy, — Marxism shorn of its monolithic grandeur and its maniacal monumentality. In the Common Man's mind, then, the straight Liberal emphasis of freedom no longer occupies a central place. What he craves for is security, comfort, and the bliss of never being denied the gratification of a need; but in view of the liberal traditions with which Democracy claims continuity, of the verbal fetish of "freedom" which the minds reared in this milieu tend to overemphasize rather than formally renounce, the increasing prevalence of an entirely different set of values (such as security and material need-gratification) will be aptly camouflaged by their rhetorical assimilation to the concept of liberty. The "Freedom from Fear," another of the

"four," points in a similar direction. Freedom from oppression — the repudiation of a regime based on terror — does indeed correspond with the classic concept of political liberty; but "freedom from fear" proper we used to call "courage," and regard as a virtue in the citizen (in some sense, perhaps, a duty on his part), not as a boon he could demand from the State. Now "Freedom from Fear" as one of the individual's basic and inalienable "freedoms" does, no doubt, primarily convey the picture of a decent state of things in which there is no place for such horrors as the torture-chambers of the Gestapo (the Cheka is another matter: the people they tackle are not "common men" but reactionary monsters); along with that, however, it connotes the suggestion that people cannot be really "free" so long as they are in any sense subject to fear: until, that is, the State has removed all cause for their being afraid of economic insecurity, or even made psycho-analytic treatment freely available for every one suffering from "anxiety neurosis." "Liberty" thus imperceptibly comes to mean, no longer the "Constitutional State" (implying certain checks placed on public power, be it state-power as such or class oligarchy) but the "Welfare State" (with "welfare" including *psychic* "welfare," which opens up the perspective of the so-called "*conditioning*" of the citizen, and thus involves a tendency running counter even more fundamentally to the original meaning of civic liberty). In other words, Democracy has progressively come to look upon "freedom" no longer as a high good in itself, as the signature of the civic status of man, but as a title-deed to "real" goods only, a mere "formal" or promissory scheme which acquires its true value, indeed its actual meaning, by its "implementation" with tangible need-gratifications also to be guaranteed by social organization as such, to be furnished by public power itself. If I suffer from an ambition that is out of proportion with my gifts, or from an unrequited passion of love; if I am unhappy in my marriage or dissatisfied with my children; if I am subject to criminal impulses, oppressed with boredom, or in other ways "maladjusted" — there also the guilt lies with "Society," and the evil is traceable to some neglect on the part of the State: which means that Government ought to "do something about it," and that state-power should be exercised over my possessions (in every sense) and the application of my capacities, over my "development," my conduct and my moods so as to make me "happy." Otherwise, my civic "freedom" is a mere "empty shell." Liberty takes its value from what it can be "used for"; what threatens to mar it is not (or not principally) encroachment by authority but the limitation of its material range. To be free is to be rich and "comfortable," in the comprehensive sense of the term; but as "common man" I can only be that jointly, or rather in the same act, with the rest — in such a manner, that is to say, that "I am Society" and "Society is I."<sup>5</sup>

To be sure, the new-fangled "democratic" conception of liberty only approximates to the communistic one (based on Identity and human om-

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<sup>5</sup> See note on p.102.

nipotence), it does not strictly coincide therewith: for it proceeds from a modification (however profound), an ostensible "extension" of, not from an express breach with the original liberal-democratic conception. Hence the peculiar air of breezy illusiveness and soft sentimentalism about it, which so strikingly contrasts both with the dismal fervour, the sombre but in some sense respectable "logic," the apocalyptic bestiality of the Communist mind, and with that trait of virile austerity which cannot be altogether denied to the old liberal-democratic spirit. The womanish softening of the head and shrinkage of character that constitute the distinctive note of the Western "common man" explain why it is by no means always the least worthy intellects nor the least brave hearts that turn to Communism. In the "common man" world of silly matrons, meddling maiden aunts, vociferous viragos and literate wenches of both sexes — the world of a Puritanism sunk down to the morasses of pacifism, prohibitionism, psycho-analysis and milksop promiscuity — "the opposites interblend" not on the high plane of a tense revolutionary dialectic but in the sense of a paradise "available" here and now, of an "ideal" society designed to be at once a department-store, a brothel and a nursery. Surreptitiously, as if by legerdemain, the meaning of "liberty" is perverted into its opposite in such a fashion that the flavour attaching to its original meaning is ostentatiously maintained. To the "sovereign" Common Man of the West, "liberty" in the Liberal sense — the liberty of the "individual" *versus* the "government" — still appears "self-evident," but in itself, meaningless: it seems to "include" liberty *through* government, that is to say, the omnipotence (and sovereign validity) of the One identical Will of the People. Rather than being hated as a totalitarian tyranny, Communism is despised by many on the ground of its "inefficiency" — its inability to achieve its own supreme purpose. No doubt, it is partly the survival of the Liberal dogma that accounts for this firm belief in the incurable inefficiency of the Communist system. If not the "common man" proper, the "average man" of the West not only holds to-day that wealth is the meaning and entelechy of freedom but still holds, even to-day, that freedom is the condition of wealth, the bringer of prosperity and comfort. It must in fairness be conceded, then, that the ambiguity cuts both ways. On the one hand, the "common man" of democracy is ready to abandon freedom for the sake of the alleged meaning, purpose and fruit of freedom: to abandon the "form" of democracy for its "substance" — of which, as one could read so often in the American press (not the professedly "pink" one, either) in the honeymoon days of 1944-45, "the Russians have more." On the other hand, were the productive achievements of the Communist system, and its display of military might, to grow ever so impressive, the more stolid "average man" of democracy might still be easily persuaded that, *since* Communist society knew no freedom, it *could not* bring forth real prosperity. But the question is whether we can afford to base our spiritual defence on an obsolescent prejudice of questionable truth, with all the inherent "dynamism" of our own system subserving the enemy's purpose and breeding out in our souls that shy and half-hearted inward surrender which is the preparatory step towards a formal and integral one; driving on the

process of maturation that shall make us "ripe to the reaping," the "evolution" that shall reach its fulfilment in our revolutionary conquest by the enemy. Within Democracy, the progress of the Common Man's sovereignty is hampered by the burden of an alien tradition (even though it be not a wholly unrelated one, and be one that is wearing ever thinner); seeing the existence of a massive Communist power impinging upon us from the outside, the natural course of things—supposing that with us the accent *remains* on the Common Man's sovereignty—cannot but sweep aside the mendacious artifices of a debased post-liberalism (when its demagogic claptrap has accomplished the task of our moral softening and evisceration) and drag us ultimately to the point where we shall shed our "democratic" scales and in benumbed helplessness bend our necks under the Communist yoke. This, again, will constitute but one phase of "the self-enslavement of Man"—not foreign conquest *pure and simple*; not an accidental calamity.

Yet the reason why totalitarian subversion can, however deceptively, disguise itself under a cloak of "freedom" and "democracy"; why Communist tyranny is able to claim, with a semblance of legitimacy, the "heritage" of Liberal-Democracy; why Communism may choke Democracy to death while summoning it to "fulfill its promise," to "foot the bill" as it were—the reason for that lies in the totalitarian aspect implicit in Liberal-Democracy itself. The combination of "popular sovereignty" with the "rights of the individual" is not, in principle, a purely arbitrary mixture of two contradictory schemes, seeing that they are both meant to express one basic dimension, respectively, of the sovereign self-determination of man, as shared equally by every man as such; but the equilibrium between the two "lines" of man's self-assertion, with their disparate logic and the tension that must appear between the sets of institutions corresponding to each of them, is a delicate and precarious one, which in fact is kept in being not by the automatic mechanism of the construction but by the presence of such remnants of a concrete order of society—of such pre-liberal traditions, that is—as are ideally negated and condemned by the very conception of man's unlimited self-sovereignty. In other words, the liberal-democratic social order reposes on axioms, conventions, traditions and habits (whether they be expressly held or tacitly respected) which transcend the liberal-democratic framework itself and impose certain "material" or "objective" limits on both individual liberty and popular sovereignty, thus helping to maintain a kind of accord among the multiple individual "wills"; between the free citizenship of the individual on the one hand, and the "General Will," as monistically embodied in state-power, on the other. This is what some champions of constitutionalism have succinctly—and justly—termed "liberty under God"; a formula implying the admission that the abstract idea of freedom cannot be the only source and mainstay of a social order in which freedom is to thrive. We might paraphrase the same thought by saying that no organization of freedom *quâ* freedom can in itself constitute a guarantee of freedom; or again, that civic liberty is rather a precious fruit than a foundation or a mainspring

of Civilization; or in other words again, that the freedom and self-government of man, both individual and corporate, must be grounded in some other principle than the specious "evidence" of an unlimited validity of the subjective human *placet* or *fiat*, of the ego's *bon plaisir* or *sic volo*, of one's "right" to "do what one likes" subject to the "identical right of others." What "liberty under God" implicitly means is that an element of freedom — of an *intrinsically limited* freedom —, susceptible to be developed in concrete social institutions, is inherent in man's rational nature as created by God, and inseparably attached to the moral order in which he has been placed, as a responsible agent, by the Divine legislator. But in its historical course, Liberalism — a specific offspring of humanist emancipationism; of an essentially Atheist attitude, a mood of debased and prideful "Renaissance" pseudo-Christianity; unwittingly reinforced and given a mightier scope by the Protestant heresy, with its Manichean negation of a meaningful order of nature and of morality — Liberalism, we say, has fatally misinterpreted the concept of "liberty under God" in the sense of an autonomous and self-contained scheme of social relations made up simply out of the concept of freedom as such (of an *essentially unlimited* freedom, that is) under the mere extrinsic sanction of a complaisant Godhead: the God of Deism or of Kantism, an obliging caterer to man's "religious need," who deserves to be mentioned with respect and whose moral recommendations may be considered with some profit. The fact is that Man's true freedom, including his civic liberties, his constitutional self-government, and his right to an "equal" justice, has its proper place in a *Conservative* conception of society, in the framework of which (and in the measure made possible by the given favourable circumstances, such as stability, the tradition of "law-abidingness," a certain pattern of the division of ownership, and others) a particular *stress* may be put on civic liberties, regional and other group autonomies, the participation of a broad electorate in the business of State, and similar points of view cherished by many of us; whereas a *Liberal* conception of society in the systematic and comprehensive sense of the term, as opposed to that "Conservative conception with a particular emphasis on Liberty," cannot support and protect liberty except in a precarious and self-contradictory fashion, at the price of relying on Conservative values unofficially tolerated yet continually harassed, and eaten away, by the immanent dialectic, the "law of evolution," of liberal-democratic society as such. To be sure, the Communist conception of liberty is not a mere modernization or modification but verily and truly a lethal enemy — as well as the nemesis — of the Liberal one; but its "dialectical" chrysalis is hidden from the outset (if the metaphor be allowed) in the tissue of the latter, ready to develop while feeding, by virtue of that original kinship of stuff, on the flesh of its host, until it may assume full life and cast away the carcass of its devoured relative altogether. In fact, humanistic "individualism" and "collectivism," so widely believed to form the great basic "point and counterpoint," the antithetic theme round which modern history revolves, are not only "essentially" the self-same thing but actually united, at the inception of the modern adventure, in the princely absolutism of the Renaissance world with Machiavelli as

its inspired bard and Hobbes as its systematic philosopher; their unity reappears, with more ambiguity but greater depth, in Rousseau's autonomous "Citizen" as a monad of the "General Will" as well as in Kant's "categorical imperative" revealing the identity of the individual's "intelligible will" with a principle of "universal legislation"; until the supreme level is reached with Marxist totalitarianism directed towards a tension-less freedom beyond the State, the immediate omnipotence of Man absolutely "Socialized." The firstfruits of Statism as well as of utopian Socialism precede the historical elaboration of liberal-democracy, and on the other hand, Marxian communism would be nothing without its anarchistic eschatology. And again, what has made the concrete reality and duration of liberal-democracy, with its manifold compromises and elements of sanity, possible and practicable has been the "Conservative"—the Christian, hierarchic, pluralistic and realistic: as it were, "finitistic"—substance of our civilization, radically alien to the spirit of humanistic "individualism" and "collectivism" alike, relegated to the background and well-nigh deprived of formal expression or explicit defence but still for a time surviving and capable of vital reactions in liberal-democratic society.<sup>6</sup>

However, the *logic* of the Liberal principle of "absolute freedom for the individual, not limited by anything except the equally absolute freedom of others" is ineluctably suicidal, and conducive to the Communist principle of an absolute freedom of the individual in the sense of an actually identical absolute power of "all." For the Liberal axiom conceives of human units of life as a welter of discrete "points" which "meet," accidentally as it were, in an empty space; whereas, in reality, man is a social animal, and men in society live— notwithstanding their respective possession, in a sense, of a "sphere of privacy"—in a world of essentially *interpenetrating* ranges of power and influence, of action and passion, of thought and interest, of reference and allegiance: hence a working "compromise" is effected, not by a mutual respect of "absolute sovereignties" (whose "delimitation" against one another is *a priori* impossible) but only by a common recognition of qualitatively determined "goods" and "laws," and of "objective authorities," which implies the attribution of a merely relative validity to each subjectivity as such. Thus the assertion of an "equally absolute freedom"—the divinization of the subjective human will as such, in the sense of a rigorous formalism, independently of its intrinsic quality and its specific object—must needs take a turn towards Identity in the place of mere mutuality; towards an actual fusion in the place of mere "harmony" or "arrangement." There is nothing affecting, or forming part of, the individual's life but has some tangible and demonstrable "social" reference; whatever man does is in some way "conditioned" by society and again reacts upon society and "limits" the freedom of others unless it is cōordinated from the outset with *their* line of action. But first, no such cōordination is possible without a virtually all-powerful

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<sup>6</sup> See note on p.103.

central authority which embodies, as it were, the "conscious self of Society" as such; and secondly, the "individuals" are not fit to furnish a "raw material" of thoughts, feelings and aims susceptible of such a cōordination unless they are fashioned *a priori* by the concept of identity — cast, that is to say, in the mould of the "common man." The particularly manifest "contradiction" of liberal "bourgeois" or "capitalist" society, again and again pointed out with malicious pleasure by both Marxian and "Rightist" critics — the "senseless" and "revolting" gulf between the rich and the propertyless, as seen against the background of the supposed "equality" of their "rights" and their "chances"; a sometimes exorbitant "factual" inequality with no socially meaningful inequality of status, no qualitative "pretensions of value" to support it — that "contradiction" is only one aspect, the most salient one perhaps, of the suicidal dialectic inherent in the Liberal conception. Similar "contradictions" appear between the liberal emphasis of an unrestricted "freedom of opinion" and the democratic need of mental homogeneity; or again, between the national organization of the "General Will" and the infinitist universalism of the "humanistic" appetite. Hence the trend towards a compulsory uniformity of education; hence the nightmare of "One World," the barbarous vision of a world-wide super-state on top of the National States, and modelled on their own barren and barbarous scheme.

In the process of his equating himself to the Deity, Man comes to debase, denature and distort himself into a Common Man; in his pursuit of freedom misconceived as "human power unlimited by any supra-human agency, order or institution," he entangles himself into an ever straitening web of self-enslavement; pridefully impatient of the union of Participation, he resorts to the conceptions and techniques of the union of Identity, which cannot but annihilate all freedom except one: that of feeling "at one" with the Tyrant; of the experience of being "represented" with all one's substance, thought and will — lock, stock and barrel, as it were — by the omnipotent state-power, the brain-centre of a "Society" supposed to "be every one." In the democratic sector, we are endeavouring to confine ourselves to the cult of the Common Man, without an explicit cult of State omnipotence and of absolute Tyranny interpreted as absolute Freedom — which means, in one sense, a more specific concentration upon, a more consistent form of the cult of the Common Man, since (for a time, at any rate: during the dictatorial "phase" of the revolutionary process) that new and unique "experience of freedom" is open to an "elite" only, whereas our democratic "common-manhood" is, so to speak, more commonly accessible and easier to slip into. However, this is bought at the price of an incomplete sovereignty of the Common Man and the continued presence, entrenched in the Liberal system of rights and closely intertwined with the traditional institutions of Democracy in its historic reality, of various Conservative forces and conceptions acting as a brake on our progress towards the "kingdom of the Common Man." This twilight situation, with the impatience it evokes in many minds and the power conflict to which its subsistence is linked, presents "democratic" society with an



obvious alternative — that between the maintenance of institutional freedoms and the full acceptance of the religion of the Common Man: the dropping of the liberal or semi-liberal in favour of the totalitarian brand of "Democracy" — and with the necessity of a decision in one or the other sense which may not, in all likelihood, be dodged indefinitely.

#### V. THE PRINCIPLE OF "PARTICIPATION": THE TRUE MEANING OF LIBERTY

Let us now turn to the Conservative substance of "liberty" in the accustomed sense of the term, particularly in reference to the political liberty that obtains in constitutional Democracy itself.

The historical root of that liberty undoubtedly lies in "Privilege" and its extension: that is to say, the "privileges" of the "Barons" as against the "Crown," and their extension, as against the "Barons" and largely through the operation of the "Crown," to "Commons," "Burghesses," and generally, the "broader masses of the people." The process of "democratization," according to its classic pattern at least, has consisted in the "enfranchisement" of ever widening "circles of the population": their "admittance into the precincts of the constitution." It would seem, in consequence, that political liberty must begin with the assertion and culminate in the disappearance of privilege; for "privilege," by its definition a status of being "set apart," cannot but whittle away by its "extension." But again, viewed from another angle, the "extension" of privileges seems to mean, not so much the gradual elimination of the prerogatives of a set of "lords" over "the people" as the actual conferment of certain rights, possessed at first by "a few" *as against "the Crown"* (as a restraint imposed on the central power of State, to be more exact), upon the "citizenry" as a whole. A preparatory and transitory function in the service of liberty might thus be accorded to privilege — much as the Marxian doctrine of historical "dialectic" attributes a necessary function to "capitalist democracy" as a preparation for the Socialist revolution, and to feudalism as a preparation for capitalism.

But if we take a less "dialectical" view of history, and incline to see in it a play of human realities or social forces enduring, developing and decaying rather than a necessary process of Man's ascent or an automatic "unfolding," by degrees and turns, of the "unique Self" of humanity, we shall find ourselves asking certain obvious questions. How far is the "simple citizen" able to make his "rights" valid, relatively to state-power, similarly as the "baron" exercises his "privileges"? Are not all "citizens' rights" — in reality, if not in formal stipulation — geared to and dependent upon the subsistence of certain "exemplary" privileges in the stronger sense of the term, necessarily limited to a minority? What structural change is "the Crown" itself, in passing from the character of "overlordship" (in other words, the supreme one among privileged social positions) to that of a state-power with "the whole people" as its "subject" (in the sense of "owner") likely to undergo?

In fact, the evolution of Democracy presents from the outset two contradictory aspects, corresponding as it were to the *quid pro quo* between "Identity" and "Participation," and most pregnantly — not to say, most tragically — expressed in the lapidary formula of Sieyès: "What is the Third Estate at present? Nothing. What should it be? Everything. What does it aspire to? To be at least something." When Sieyès wrote, the Third Estate was not in reality "nothing," but we may readily admit that it was entitled to enhance its position. The essential thing, however, is that he was as fully right in stating the concrete claim of the Third Estate "to be something" as he was wrong in asserting its abstract claim "to be everything," and particularly, in making the former dependent on the latter. In no other manner are the "social reforms" in latter-day capitalist society, subservient to the just aim of helping the "proletariat" to "become something" — to the aim, that is, of "deproletarianizing" it — warped by the underlying equivocation between that right conception and the false one according to which the proletariat "should be everything," and every measure destined to make it "something" only a momentary compromise between what "should" be and what can be "attained" here and now, a step in the revolutionary process directed to the goal of an elimination of all social distinctions. For an equilibrium among finite, limited and unequal weights is not, from the point of view of social liberty, a paltry expedient, a hybrid makeshift, a *pis aller* only acceptable with a mental reservation in the sense of "surpassing" it as soon as possible, but an optimum and an end in itself; all social liberty consists in being "something," whereas being "everything" is synonymous with being — in a certain fashion — "nothing." It is the "mixed form of government" that Aristotle considers the *ideal* one, it is his acceptance of a preponderantly democratic regime what is conceived in a spirit of time-conditioned, "realistic" compromise; on the other hand, ochlocracy — "full" democracy, where the "common man" is "sovereign" —, though still preferable to tyranny, the worst of regimes, invites tyranny as the all but inevitable "next step." *Mutatis mutandis*, these considerations are applicable to the economic as well as the political constitution of society (both being but facets, though the most important ones and endowed with a certain autonomous reality, of the structure of social group relationships as such), and to modern Christian as well as to ancient Hellenic society. Only, as Christian society is graced with an entirely new and *sui generis* dimension of Liberty and Participation — grounded in the universal brotherhood of men as "children of God," the supernatural reference of the soul transcending all social inequalities, the concrete duality (the tension and cōordination, distinction and interpenetration) of Church and State (of spiritual and secular community and authority) —, so also is Christian society in its aberrant evolution fraught with the specific danger of Tyranny and Identity of a depth and virulence inconceivable outside its presuppositions: a plague rooted, so to speak, in the humanistic misreading of the Gospel as a promise of man's terrestrial paradise and perfection (with a stolen flavour of true Heaven about it), as a divinization of man's abstract "reason" and "will" (a travesty of the beatific vision), as a doctrine of

supernatural grace being taken for granted and a part of man's natural constitution itself, as a declaration of man's entitative communion with man (enabling human nature to create itself anew), as a gospel of human omnipotence and omniscience and universal "justice"—of man's union with Divinity in the sense of Its expropriation and absorption by the autonomous "energy" of mankind.

In its manifold positive manifestations, however, Democracy emphasizes—primitive or inadequate as the formulations often are, and blurred by an influx of Cartesian rationalism, subjectivist voluntarism, naturalistic misconceptions: all of them representing the "counter-aspect" of a prideful identitarianism—not the concept of an undivided human "absolute" nor that of an equality tending towards sameness, but the ideas of division, limitation, and cōoperation on a base of distinctness. Whereas the "common man" conception of democracy envisions the rule of *one* arbitrary human will which (after the suppression of "non-common" factors of derangement) is *everybody's*, and as such coincides *en bloc* with absolute "rationality" and "justice" (representing, also, a fusion of "flawless" necessity with "total" freedom), such concrete elements of the democratic tradition as "the rule of Law," the respect for customs and statutes—and religious and historical allegiances—over and above the rulers' "whims," the postulate of "responsible" government, the theory of "checks and balances," the appreciation of "independent ownership" as a background for "independent character" and "moral backbone" in a civic sense, the federalistic motif of municipal "self-government" as well as the principle of "government by consent" are meant to *curb* all arbitrary rule of man by man, not by equating freedom to arbitrary power on a supreme plane of monistic human self-worship but by *protecting* freedom, on a diversity of planes, *against* the temptation to an arbitrary use of power. All these schemes of political thought—to whatever degree they may be tainted with an ingredient of shallow mechanism or automatism, of fictitious formalism—presuppose and maintain a fundamental distinction between the Common Good and any human appetite as such, linked to an equally fundamental distinction between the will (and interest) of one individual (or group, or corporation) and that of another: although they legitimately vindicate the right of particular human wills as such to be made valid in certain limits, as required by the Common Good itself. Thus the doctrine of "government by consent" presupposes a "ruler"—a ruling personnel—*distinct* from the people, with whose "consent" (ascertained and obtained, preferably, on several levels: that of a basic moral consensus, of a formal constitutional technique, of a cōordination with intermediary social allegiances . . .) they should "govern"; similarly, the doctrine of "social contract" in its older and sounder form presupposes a prominent social power whose political prerogatives acquire full legitimacy by an express "agreement" with the multitude of its "subjects"; again, concepts like that of "independent citizenship" or "franchise" or "representation" (in the traditional, pluralistic sense of parliamentarism) essentially presuppose the ideas of

distinction or eminence, of manifoldness and inequality, of exemplariness and participation, of an occurrence and recognition as well as of an extension of "privileged positions."

The Marxist critic of "liberal-democratic" "capitalist" society is right in asserting that despite the rigorous "formal" equality that obtains in such a society, socio-economic and with it, political "privilege" of a kind survives there — albeit his thought, steeped in demagogic resentment and a mythology no less uncontrolled for being dismally drab, preposterously minifies the real import of "formal" equality and exaggerates as well as distorts the rôle of economic inequality. Much more desirable forms of "privilege" than that of the "plutocratic" type have actually existed and could be "devised" (and still exist, of course, in an atrophied and shame-faced way): more explicit and more closely linked to qualitative distinctions, less unilinear and less anonymous, and precisely for these reasons more intrinsically limited and more objectively justified than is possible in the framework of liberal formalism and the brand of democratic constitutionalism that has sprung from it. Again, the defenders of capitalist — economically "unequal" — society, so far as their casual and apologetic train of argument (mostly saddled with an equalitarian "guilty conscience") is not confined to a mere assertion of the greater "productive capacities" of "private enterprise," are apt to go too far in identifying the commercialist system of economy with the cause of personal freedom as such: the formula that a power controlling one's base of subsistence controls one's existence altogether is not so convincing as they think — much depends on the *quality* and the *spiritual backgrounds* of the power in question — ; also, in modern industrial capitalism the great majority of people are wage-earners, and might thus appear to be at best slaves endowed with a certain possibility of choosing their masters; finally, in every organized society the security of private property and in many ways even its distribution and use depend on the political constitution and corporate action of society to a far higher extent than the Liberal system of formalistic fictions would allow it, or be able to account for it. Still, it remains true that capitalist democracy, — with its flexible but by no means necessarily moribund social stratifications (in the sense of "classes" and of more imponderable but still important shades of differentiation), linked to the institutions of private property, of capital concentrated in a pluralistic instead of a monistic fashion, of the family and the right of testation, of civic rights and of a competitive sphere in the ordering of political power itself, — essentially involves a degree of Privilege and *inseparably from that*, an appreciable measure of Liberty. The Communist enemy, cherishing a radically antithetic conception of liberty, is fully aware of this, and accordingly intent on an integral destruction of "our" type of society in the widest sense of the term: including both such more hierarchic societies as may survive in the shadow of the capitalist democracies, and such constitutional societies as are governed by "Socialist" parties clinging to a residue of liberal-democratic habits. The specific "privilege"-hunters and "common-man" idolaters *within* the democratic mansion, however, are essentially muddle-headed and unaware of the fact

(or dimly aware of it, trying to slur over its meaning) that their activity strikes at the very root of the order in which they are themselves domiciled, and is destined to hasten its collapse under the blows of the Conqueror whom most of them in fact love in all their fibres, but whose cause they are too deficient in intellectual clarity, moral courage and capacity for discipline to embrace, and whom their fancy consequently misrepresents in their own wretched image.

#### VI. PRIVILEGE, AN EXPRESSION AND SUPPORT OF LIBERTY

"Privilege" is nothing but an "established" positional value *in* Society which — unlike "rank" in the hierarchy of State officialdom — is relatively independent of the "unique" actual "will" of Society, yet fundamentally "in tune" with the political constitution of Society, with the "habitual will" of state-power itself. So far as state-power is set upon achieving omnipotence over Society and becoming a total embodiment of social order as it were, actualized in one unit of consciousness and receiving its determinations from one centre of will; so far as state-power does not itself connote some character of "privilege" (which it does by institutions like hereditary monarchy, a "senatorial nobility," a "political class" of some kind that is not defined exclusively *in terms of* state-power and official "appointment") — so far, in a word, as the State is based on conceptions radically opposed to privilege and the "positional values" naturally forming in society are rigorously debarred from unfolding into the sphere of political power, the existence of Privilege is impossible or precarious, according as state-power succeeds in establishing its totality (which is more or less fully the case under Communism) or is compelled to recognize, provisionally at least, a limited set of extra-official power relationships in society (as is true, in different manners, of Democracy and of Fascism). Privilege means, then, a pattern of concrete and specialized "points of interblending" between the private and the common good; an expression of the fact that man cannot rightly tend towards the private and the common good by splitting uniformly and schematically into a private and a civic personality, the latter forming with the rest an "indivisible" Public Will globally co-ordinated to and representative of the common good (and this Liberal dualism succumbing finally to the monism implicit therein: the wholesale identification of the private and the common good in the concept of the Common Man), but only in a manifold system of particular "group" perspectives, insights and devotions, virtues and loyalties, responsibilities and vocations, standards of honour and accumulations of values. Privilege is necessarily open to abuses — as is, of course, every form of official power or of professional authority —, and their correction in given cases, as well as a limitative remoulding of disproportionate or outworn social prerogatives in general, is often a meaningful theme and sometimes a necessary task of political activity; but the concept of preventing the possibility of abuse from the outset — that is to say, of *abolishing* privilege as such, and substituting for it a formally ascertainable "rule of the best," a system of

continuous competition "on equal conditions," an abstract "aristocracy of talent, efficiency and probity" outside the natural attraction and influence of contingent "social positions"—is a fundamentally mistaken one, for at closer inspection it again reduces to making the entire order of society *the function of One all-determining central consciousness, the object of One omnipotent arbitrary human will*. Privilege constitutes, not the only and exclusive but one eminently necessary leverage for the penetration of men's lives and consciousness by the aspects of the common good and by high objective values; for men's participation in what essentially transcends the scope of governmental power *hic et nunc*, or any other specified human will and subjectivity of the moment; for the liberty of Man in the face of state-power or of what is "the" predominant power in the society in which he is placed (be it formally identified with state-power or not).<sup>7</sup>

Privilege is a rampart of liberty, — not the liberty of "the privileged" only, but of all classes of the people, of the whole multitude, — because it expresses and safeguards the existence of relatively independent persons as quasi *finite* parts of society, as "principles" of the community (in the Scholastic sense of the term) which are quasi *commensurable* with state-power, even though inferior to it in strength and dignity, and subject to its jurisdiction; whereas the equal "citizen" of Jacobin democracy, whatever the "rights" he is invested with, is merely an anonymous molecule of society, a drifting spark of the "universal reason," an *infinitesimal* entity of the political calculus. It is only because *some* people, in different manners and different respects, "*weigh*" something in the scale as against state-power that the "individual" as such, the "plain man" who is not in any sense a "master," may also "count for something" and make an active contribution to the life of the State. It is by privilege and counter-vailing privilege, by the finiteness and limitation of privilege, and not by an equal distribution of abstract rights, which from the outset portends their massive identity — by a hierarchy of multiple hierarchies, and not by the abolition of hierarchy, which really points to a totalitarian monopoly of command — that liberty, limited and in many ways unequal liberty to be sure (vital and not merely verbal liberty, that is) comes into being. It is because "rich men," relatively independent centres of capital and authors of "private initiative," exist that "I," a "poor man," may have a dignity of my own and in certain matters and certain situations set myself apart from the collective and withstand the pressure of dominant forces as though I were rich myself; again, I may (supported by the laws of the State and the planes of social equality they ensure) repel encroachment by private "masters" upon my "rights" and resist attempts at my enslavement by "money-power" not only with a much greater chance of actual success but in a much more meaningful and real fashion, with much greater courage and hope, than I might ever think of defying the Single Power that is "ours." Without doubt, liberty has a far greater scope and stronger subsistence in a true Conservative democracy, where there is established an express recognition of socially relevant values outside and above the

<sup>7</sup> See note on p.105.

sphere of "prosperity" and accordingly a set of more qualitative privileges besides mere "wealth," than in a Liberal pluto-democracy, where everything is virtually referred to the one abstract category of "need-gratification" (for "profit" is nothing but "welfare" short of collectivist regimentation). Yet even in "monopoly capitalism" their very origins, nature and constitution prevent the "masters of economy" or "kings of production" from coalescing into one single unit of will and from "buying up" the State altogether and reducing "the people" to collective slavery; on the contrary, their power—obnoxious as are many of its effects, and howsoever desirable its curtailment may be in itself—is radically inseparable from a certain groundwork of division, independence and competition of the liberal bourgeois type, as inherent in the structure of market economy: hence, though social reforms *as such* (that is, an establishment of "privileges of the poor") may mean a vindication of human and civic liberty against plutocratic oppression, the case of Capitalism (however monopolistic and plutocratic, however "autonomous" and therefore prone to the barbarity of "value monism") versus *Socialism* represents much more essentially the case of human dignity and political liberty, of Constitutional Society, as against the self-enslavement of man.<sup>8</sup>

The ostensibly non-communistic advocates of the "common man"—self-styled "Liberals," in present-day American usage at least—, who assert that they really endeavour to protect the genuine "freedom of competition" by urging government action against capitalist monopolies (and for the strengthening of trade-union monopolies) are either mere crypto-communistic hypocrites or canting vote-catchers, or else pursuers of a utopian mirage. With privilege existing in society, the freedom of some men will inevitably be trespassed upon and unduly circumscribed or narrowed down by others; with privilege eliminated from society, there will be no one possessing any substantial kind of freedom—and capable of using it—at all. The collectivistic "securing of equal conditions" for free competition will be everything, and free competition itself reduced to an abstract shadow—that ghost of "free competition" which resides in the unequal efforts within a uniform set of factory hands, or in the emulation of slaves vying for the grace of their master. If we seek for freedom through cleansing the tissue of society from power relationships—from relations of dependence and from "vertical" principles of articulation; from established authorities, inequalities and presumptions of distinctive value—we in fact seek to concentrate all power in society into the hands of "One Subject" of consciousness and will: the subjectified, totalitarian Collective; to make all social order dependent on the decrees of one human Agent supposed to incarnate the "rational will" of "us all." Though prevented by our aversion to terroristic methods, or other more or less accidental circumstances, from integrally adopting the Marxist position, we are then virtually Communists. The only conception of political liberty opposed to the communistic one is, in truth, the conception of freedom based upon

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<sup>8</sup> See note on p.107.

the *division* of social power, in the comprehensive and structural sense of the term: far transcending, on the one hand, the formalistic scheme of the "division of powers" in liberal jurisprudence, and quite distinct, on the other, from the equalitarian fetish of "well-divided ownership" as cherished by the so-called Distributists, oscillating between the reactionary utopia of a virtual negation of society (the earth as a paradisiac desert of quasi isolated rural family units: a much more "atomistic" conception, in spite of its Catholic sponsorship, than is Liberalism) and a circuitous re-affirmation of State omnipotence as the guarantor of equal and uniform "private ownership." A society in which liberty is to thrive can only be a society rich in privileges, affording manifold means of redress and opportunities of ascent (*not* devised in a spirit bent upon *effacing* the framework of privileges) to the "underprivileged"; a society "capitalistic" in the sense of containing and recognizing finite power factors and formative influences in their own right, *besides* State-power and the prevailing mood of "the collective"; a society ennobled and oriented by a plural system of "hierarchies" pervading it with supra-social value references as contrasted with its totalitarian self-worship — hierarchies limited in their scope, but also sustained, by their mutual action and interpenetration, and again balanced by, but on their part helping to support and vitalize (as social realities), the constitutional design of public power, the validity of the universal moral Law, the protection of general human and civic rights, and the plane of Christian equality among men.

It is evident, then, that while Privilege is essential to Liberty and the war declared upon privilege is identically a war of extermination waged against liberty, privilege as such is not identical with liberty, not a "proportionate" measure (as it were) of liberty and by no means the only safeguard thereof. Neither the principle of objective value and moral obligation over and above human desires nor man's submission to God and His holy Will — the ultimate and supreme presuppositions of all liberty — can be described in terms of social privilege; even the "rule of Law" and the postulate of a "constitutional society" cannot be so described, though these involve more immediately the problem of the *type of men* congenial to the working of institutions informed by such principles, and therefore the problem of the *class* of men made *capable*, by their organic position in society (dependent on their personal character and accomplishment but also on their wealth of tradition and their antecedent authority), of carrying on and securing the function of those institutions in a *primary* and *specific*, an "exemplary" fashion. But our point is merely that privilege, *too*, is a prerequisite for liberty, and a fundamental one inasmuch as we are concerned, no longer with the religious and philosophical presuppositions of the "good life" of society nor even with the juridical formulation of the ideal of liberty but with the problem of a *concrete social order* conducive to human dignity, decency and liberty. Apart from that, what we have tried to elucidate is the fact that the Jihad conducted against privilege by the dervishes of the "common man" is not so much a struggle for equality as such, inspired as it were by an aesthetical craving for a symmetrical



pattern of figures of the same size, as an undertaking destined to achieve the god-like omnipotence of man and a gigantic attempt to uproot wholly man's allegiance to God.

In this context, it is perhaps needful briefly to signalize what might be called "the federalist fallacy": the belief that social manifoldness and liberty can repose on the plurality of forms and subdivisions of community alone (as contrasted with centralization), without the concurrence of "privilege" (as opposed to equalitarianism). That these things—sometimes denoted, in sociology, as "federalistic" principles of construction—are not *per se* identical with "privilege," and that they are eminently necessary for manifoldness and liberty, is perfectly true; that they can work out fruitfully without "privilege," or rather, that they can well subsist together with equalitarianism, is a fallacy. Equalitarianism always tends to centralization and uniformity; and inversely, autonomous principles of community or "corporation" necessarily tend to breed out specific relationships of authority and to call into being hierarchies of their own—thus stultifying the monistic conception of a unique social authority reduced to identity with every one's "sovereignty." The principle of "popular election" as the only source of dignity and power, applied with schematic uniformity at several levels or to various sub-wholes of society, can only give rise to a system of so-called "administrative decentralization" (not valueless in itself, to be sure), never to anything like a substantial "federalism" or "pluralism." For a group of voters defined in local or even "functional" terms cannot amount to more than a section of the vaster electorate that stands for "the whole people": a "minority" essentially liable, even though on the legal plane its decisions may not be simply overridden by the "indivisible" will of the Republic, to be "submerged" psychologically by the "majority." What lends substance and savour to any particular "corporation" within Society is its particular structure of authority, of loyalty and allegiance, of tradition and formative power, of "rulership" and obedience. "Democratize," for instance, the Church; or again, a great autonomous University: and they will become simple functions of national "public opinion," if not—indirectly, at least—governmental departments. And thus their salutary mission in the given nation's life—a mission (aside from the primary and more important tasks of the Church, needless to remark) of inoculating the national mind with the seeds of objective value-reference, of a vision of things "sub specie aeterni," of intellectual independence and moral backbone—will soon fall into decay, to the mortal peril (among other precious things) of civic liberty itself. In other words, wholesale equality is inconsistent with qualitative distinctness, and "federation" (in the widest sense), to be effective and rich in content, implies the presence of particular positions of "authority," "direction," "privilege" or "mastery" (however restricted in scope). On the other hand, it is the "personal union" existing between parts of the diversified elites that gives reality to the "integrational" aspect of "federalism," and provides Society as a whole with an organic unity, not dependent *exclusively* on either the juridical and administrative

unity of the State or the ideological consensus derived from certain "minimum presuppositions" (religious, moral, cultural, and national) "common to all."

To sum up: "federalism" falling short of a repudiation of the equalitarian fallacy constitutes, along with "distributism" (whatever the relative merits of both), a fundamentally insufficient and illusory — or at least, a most inadequately formulated, and therefore self-paralysing — reaction to the mounting peril of totalitarianism. As private property without "wealth" is possible in pure logic but not in social reality, so also a federal "unity in manifoldness" is thinkable in pure abstraction only, not as a concrete conception of the social order, unless it is made to include a tissue of "vertical" relationships: a pattern, in other words, of "privilege" positions. We cannot secure liberty by "eliminating" power but only by dividing power; nor can we divide power by cutting it up into equal shares as it were, but merely by instituting and encouraging a system of *divided "centres of power"* commensurate in a sense, even though inferior, to "the" central power itself.<sup>9</sup> Otherwise, we can get nothing but a monistic central power tending to omnipotence, and compassing the death of liberty. It is all very well to combat that omnipotence on Christian grounds, emphasizing the Law of God as transcendent to, and binding upon, all human power, and again, the aspect (which is only one among others, however) of every soul's "direct relation with God"; and even on Liberal-Democratic grounds, emphasizing the "rights of the individual" *quâ* a member of society; yet all political thought *restricted* to these points of view, evading the problem of social power as such, can only result in two-dimensional, illusory and irrelevant constructions — giving free pass to the expansion of omnipotent monistic power in the sphere of social reality. All such types of thought — whether humanitarian, Protestant, or even inspired by a forced supernaturalism or an excessive pietism (meant to "overcompensate" for the acceptance of certain "modern" principles) in Catholic quarters — are, of course, entirely alien to the Aristotelian and Thomist tradition in regard to political doctrine and in a more general sense, too. They represent, in a style akin to that of the "sublime" anarchist or pacifist *beaux esprits*, the selfsame spirit of presumptuous "idealism" and short-circuited "rationalism", — delirious with the vision of a world cleansed from contingency *quoad nos*, a world so "calculated" or "planned" or "secured" as to appear "justified" and "reasonable", in all its structural features, to *one* human consciousness identifiable with "every one's" subjectivity —, which the power-mad totalitarianism they seemingly contradict makes valid in a serious, consistent and effective fashion.

#### Notes

(1: page 68) Some equalitarian conceptions, as well as the Communist regime in its present stage, leave room for social inequality as regards "exceptional cases": granting, for instance, a higher salary or prefer-

<sup>9</sup> See note on p.108.

ential treatment to "artistic geniuses," "shock-workers," and so forth. But this technical expedient in the service of the exclusive and sovereign determination of man by "society" in no way modifies the framework of essential equalitarianism, precluding "class distinctions" and all socially formative action of natural inequalities. The willingness of the State to "recognize" and to "remunerate" what it chooses to consider "exceptional human worth" means an extension, rather than a relinquishment, of its claim to reduce every value in society to a value "for" society: to a function, that is, of its equal and identical usefulness for "everybody." Concerning the misconception of "justice" implied in the monstrous pretension to determine every one's lot according to his "merit," computed in terms of his "productive achievements," see more in Note (7).

(2: page 69) Be it noted that according to its literal and legal sense, the term "privilege" (cf. also the closing Note) means "exemption from the law" granted to a particular category of persons — in a particular and limited context, to be sure. The "privileged" are "set apart" from the range of a specified group of rules applying to the rest; they are not "set above the law," much less is their "will" made to supersede or to generate the universally valid code of laws. Privilege means, in the first place, "distinction," and hence, limitation: in other words, not simply a "favour" to those privileged but also a confirmation of that from which they are "distinguished." (It therefore always implies, though not necessarily in the sense of a strict and direct legal responsibility, an element of enhanced obligations, of standards more difficult of attainment: a hint, indeed, of "privilegium onerosum.") Again, "exemption" denotes an essential limitation imposed on rulership: a recognition, on its part, of "præexistent" facts of the social order which indent, as it were, the scheme of its legislation. The "privileged one" as such, enjoying a status of relative "exemption," stands for the participation of the private citizen *quâ* private citizen — unlike the case of the public officer, or the citizen *quâ* "legislator" or "voter" — in the exalted position of the "ruler" (or ruling personnel): he symbolizes man's relative freedom *vis-à-vis* the man-made concrete system of laws — man's freedom in the face of these laws (whatever their necessity, dignity, and justice), in so far also as he is *subject* to them, and not in so far alone as he is the *maker* of them. Privilege, with its connotation of "exemption," is to Participation (on the plane of sanity) what "the sovereignty of the individual" is to Collective Identity (on the plane of insanity). This "negative" aspect of Privilege as revealed by the etymology of the word itself or by the term "exemption" — carrying a suggestion of "imperfection," "contingency" and "irrationality" — must not be concealed but given its due emphasis in order that we may form the right concept of "social hierarchy" in contradistinction, on the one hand, from a mere organizational scale of public appointments (a mere functional "hierarchy of offices"), and on the other, from that "Platonist" or "romantic" misconception of social hierarchy, dear to a certain type of "Rightist" minds but by reason of its monistic and utopian tinge not wholly alien from the Communist vision of Identity and human "Totality," which would equate

the "ideal" social order to a conformable copy, a reflexion proper, a point-by-point projection of the "celestial" or "metaphysical" Hierarchy. In all true Participation as opposed to Identity, there must be present some element embodying a specific stress on the dissimilarity and distinctness between what participates and what is participated in; this is, indeed, what Privilege chiefly signifies on the level of social reality, in a threefold sense: (a) as regards the participation of the "privileged," *quâ* private parties, in public authority and rulership; (b) as regards the participation of the "common" or relatively "underprivileged" citizens in the possibilities and benefits of a more excellent human mode of life as realized, adumbrated, or tried out by the holders — that is, the *prime* beneficiaries and "trustees," as it were — of privilege; (c) as regards the participation of human reason, by its proper use *including* its acceptance of the "irrational" and "contingent" as well as the fact of its own social "dividedness" (which is what renders its more detached, more ample and more valid exercise possible) in a Reason infinitely surpassing man's own, which is yet Its "likeness."

(3: page 73) It is, we hope, almost needless, but at the same time it may not be wholly useless, to lay down expressly that "high values" as such cannot be defined in terms of the "common good" as such, yet that, on the other hand, the "common good" as such does imply a reference and attention to "higher values" than such as *may* predominate in the sphere of a person's "private goods." In the face of the material "needs" of the individual, the "common good" — itself inseparable from a reference to the material conditions of the people's life — constitutes a prime vehicle of man's advance towards his proper perfection in terms of an apprehension and actualization of higher values (such as intellectual objectivity and accuracy, a concrete order of justice and other basic ingredients of a moral "medium," standards of culture, and other more specific and higher levels of "spirituality"). Again, the true meaning of the common good — implying, essentially, an aspect of "transcendence" in relation with *any* human appetite or state of mind as such —, which underlies its legitimate "primacy", is inevitably obscured and warped by its overstressing at the expense of individual liberty, spiritual and material; what this overstressing really amounts to is the reduction of the "common good" to a mere function of the ruling personnel's "will" or "reason" as such, or again, of the identical desires or moods of a given multitude. In other terms, the "common good" as such is indeed *per se* higher than the "private good" as such; but this is so because an explicit reference to "higher values" — to the "true good" of man, experienced in its transcendent quality relatively to his appetite — is *constitutive* for the very concept of the "common good." The relationship between the "common good" and "high values" (or the "true good" *par excellence*) is a most intimate but a most complex one; the two concepts must never, of course, be regarded as equivalent or interchangeable, though in our present context they may perhaps appear to be lumped together under one and the same point of view. The right order of Society requires that the citizens should "look up to" those in charge of the common good (meaning, "rulers" and

"leaders," "holders of authority," "persons of eminence"); but this, in its turn, no less essentially requires as its foundation, not only that the "exalted" shall show themselves more or less "worthy," by their conduct and achievements, of being thus honoured, but more particularly, that *they* be guided and shaped by an attitude of "looking up to" values over and above *them* — and also, formally speaking, over and above the "common good." Not otherwise can they properly do their duty by the common good itself. The inequalitarian or "vertical" relationship between "the rulers" and "the ruled," while genuine and manifold, and irreducible to a democratic "contract" or "commission," must thus be again embedded in a medium of equality and reciprocity, of a common *nisus* of consciousness and will, to be legitimate and fruitfully subserving the object of Society.

(4: page 76) According to the asseverations of its ungracious critics, Soviet society is blighted with a "*new privilege*": magnificent villas and health resorts, ostensibly destined for "the people", are really an apanage of "People's Commissars" and their divers minions; Party members have many rights which are withheld from the rest, the vast majority of the population; agents of the secret police possess very particular prerogatives indeed. In general, "Rightist" malcontents are quick to point out that every subversion (or the one that has especially affected their interests and sympathies, and evoked their displeasure) replaces the old inequality, not with true equality but a new "and worse" inequality: that it levels only to establish new positions of privilege, often more massive and always less intrinsically justified than those abolished, under a merely verbal sign of democratic equality. Just as the Liberal revolutions have only put the "magnates of finance" in the place of princes and nobles, the Socialist revolution in its turn puts the bureaucratic in the place of the (less harsh and less omnipotent) commercial exploiter. All this, of course, is a tissue of half truths; useful as a first indication of important facts but vitiated by the weakness of the type of polemical argument that involves a yielding on the principle. The truth is that levelling Subversion *does* level, though it certainly introduces, of necessity, new forms of command and prerogative, too; it tends to render inequality more transitory, flatter, and poorer in depth or meaning, and at the same time more unified and concentrated. He who would validly oppose this or that levelling revolution must have the intellectual courage of opposing the principle of levelling itself. As regards the "new privileges" cropping up in the Soviet world, we had better agree with the mouthpieces of that world to the effect that the specific inequalities in question, sometimes indeed very striking but on the whole alien to the spirit of hereditary or quasi-hereditary "class distinctions" and entirely subservient to the supreme object of uprooting privilege altogether, cannot with justice be looked upon as a manifestation of the principle of Privilege being essentially maintained or recrudescing. The fact that Totalitarian Terror continues unabated, if not relentlessly increasing in strength and scope, — so that the mightiest and best placed in Soviet society have every reason to tremble (for their lives, virtually) in the face of state-power as such —, sufficiently indicates that here is a system of *Subversion in Per-*

*manence*, consciously and ingeniously designed to foil the natural tendency of human society towards a deepening of personal and functional inequalities into privileges proper, and to nip in the bud whatever genuine privilege may actually start re-forming.

(5: page 83) The "social obsession"—in other words, a distorted, inflated and maniacal "society-consciousness"—is the basic malady of modern man, the mere symptoms of which are "Statism" and the fury of regimentation and organization, of "providing" and "conditioning," of a "democratic" public health service and "education." This "society-consciousness" on the part of the deified "Ego" of atheist individualism is not, of course, an "exaggerated" consciousness of living *in* Society — with which, rather, it is incompatible —, but a consciousness of living *as* Society; a pretension, if the ugly Germanism may be excused, "to live society." The "social responsibility" drilled into everybody as the primary or sole principle of conscience is only the reverse side of the interpretation of everybody's ills and displeasures as the evil of his being "frustrated" by the faulty, "unjust," or not yet sufficiently advanced organization of society. The "social conscience" which forbids me to indulge in any pure contemplation or enjoyment, or whatever pursuit "un-socially" centred — "while there are others" who are "deprived of the barest necessities of life," unable to afford an expensive treatment, illiterate, and so forth —, by reason of thus "equating" me *to* Society essentially *prevents* me from living fittingly *in* Society, whose good (very definitely including the good of those "underprivileged" at the given period of time, and even more so, of their progeny) requires both my genuine attention (unadulterated, that is, by a forcible social reference and an all-pervading "social anxiety") to various objects, values or interests, even modest or trivial ones, *and* my receptiveness, free from the poison of suspicion and resentment, towards the formative and ennobling action of a similarly "independent" response to truth and value on the part of others. The most characteristic stigma of "social conscience" as a disease consists, neither in the absence of "selfishness" nor in a lack of due respect for one's social or intellectual "betters," but in the mind's incapacity to take a genuine interest in objects, things, problems, artistic tasks (and the immanent correction of their possible solutions) or similar themes *as such*, which requires a phase — though not a final or comprehensive attitude — of complete indifference to any "welfare" or "service" interest as such, social as well as private; and therewith, one's ability to approach a matter in a purely "solitary" and "a-social" mood, which cannot help being an *apparently* selfish one. The victim of the "social obsession," incapable of such a mode of behaviour, is by the same token incapable both of true citizenship and of true charity: he can neither be true man nor be a true Christian. It is very important to note this; for many of our more estimable contemporaries, who are by no means typical sophists or lovers of tyranny, yet succumb to this highly subtle trick of the Enemy, an ostensibly "Christian" or "ethical" appeal to their "social conscience." Let us add, though the matter cannot be here discussed exhaustively, that a special attitude towards *Time* is implied in the "society-

consciousness" of the identitarian mind. "Social-minded" man (in this sense) would place all emphasis on the directly, evidently and precisely foreseeable effects of human actions, viewed in terms of actually and presently prevailing human desires. His "society-consciousness" means a tempering, or more exactly and more essentially, an "implementation" and enlargement, of his *Sic volo* by the concept of a *Sic vultis*. What he pursues is a caricature of the "common good," — distorted into a concept of "what we all want now, and mean to have promptly." Here is an attitude significantly devoid of patience, humility, freedom of mind (with the consciousness of limitations that underlies it), and generosity (not as an equivalent of "altruism" or "cooperativeness" but in the sense of a readiness to sow without being "assured" of the harvest). Admitting that the world of the *anciens régimes* knew not only blatant "abuses" and injustices but even occasional instances of tyranny proper, and that the modern equalitarian world (where the liberal attenuation of its central idea still prevails) may boast of certain moral advantages specific to it, we would still maintain that the intimate spirit of the former was a *spirit of prayer*, whereas that of the latter is a *spirit of command*. Under the King of old, the people derived their freedom from the recognition of what was *above* and of the many things that were *outside* the King's range of power, or indeed, of consciousness; but the goal that modern democracy is heading for is the Dictator who derives *his* freedom from the predominant error that there is *nothing* whatsoever outside or above the people. The self-enslavement of Man is underlain, among other motives, by the illusion that *he* is "the lord over Time"; this corresponds both with a misconception of practical certitude borrowed from the scheme of his "prompt" handling of inert matter, on the basis of speculative certitudes of the "precise" (mathematical) type, and with the tendency to identify individual "consciousnesses" as reflexions or specimens of an all-embracing "consciousness of Society," on the basis of "evident ideas" (and aims) directly "common to all."

(6: page 87) We are anxious to keep our own Conservative criticism of the liberal-democratic — that is, "formalistic" — conception of civic liberty sharply distinct from others, which in our opinion entirely miss the point, and issue from states of mind to which *we* definitely prefer the liberal-democratic one. The Totalitarian critic (in other words, the Communist, or the Fascist who weakly but grandiloquently apes him) chafes "liberal" or "formal" democracy on the ground that its concept of freedom is not really a concept of omnipotence; according to him, "bourgeois" freedom is worthless because it is not effective tyranny. We, on the other hand, owe thanks to liberal-democracy for *not* having as yet realized all its virtual promise of evil, and indeed for cherishing a conception of liberty that is not, so to speak, an unadulteratedly perverse one. Another Leftist line of criticism, represented by "democratic" Socialists or "Common Man" democrats, reproaches "formal" liberty for not being "material" welfare, prosperity, equality and "happiness," — not to forget "culture." This train of argument, dear also to Totalitarians of all brands and to

many materialistic, pagan or un-political (for instance, one-sidedly and un-thomistically "clerical") Conservatives, we simply dismiss here as irrelevant, referring the reader to our main text. Again, a certain "Rightist" type of critics, of a Platonist cast of mind converging on some points with Totalitarianism, would have it that "true" freedom consists only in being "free to do the good," not in the mere "formal" liberty to do what one likes. This is playing with words; if civic liberty means anything it certainly does not mean being free to obey the orders of a ruler who happens to be a good man and a competent ruler. To be sure, civic liberty is not the most important thing on earth; but for what it is worth, its concept includes the "Liberal" note, unjustly mocked at by Socialists and false "Rightists" (be it "romanticists" or devotees of "efficiency"), of being "free from" arbitrary authority; of possessing, in particular, a fair degree of significant freedom *vis-à-vis* government power. Still, the kind of criticism above referred to is right in pointing to the aspect of *moral* freedom which, to be meaningful and enduring, all political freedom must connote. The latter certainly is a "freedom from"; but it is only a good thing (and, we might add, a truly possible thing) as one special value, though a highly important one, attaching to the "good polity"; hence, it properly means the freedom of "good" citizens — who, their goodness being essentially limited, must nevertheless be governed — "from" a "good" government: whose goodness is likewise essentially limited, and which therefore again must nevertheless submit to checks and restraints. The Liberal error, then, as we see it, consists in the puerile belief that this submission of state-power to checks and restraints is itself the ideal fount and the actual guarantee of political "goodness," including its own existence. "Ensure" liberty by punctilious stipulations and jealously circumscribed "rights," the Liberal would say, and you will possess and enjoy it, together with all the good it brings in its train; build on that sane conception of life, we retort, out of which alone the moral substance of liberty can grow — without neglecting, though, a design of arrangements expressly ordained to "ensure" liberty, as an indispensable corollary of that "sane conception." To the Liberal, the "ensuring" of liberty means a self-contained surface mechanism, as it were; to us, it means above all the building of a polity in which men are so minded as to understand and to desire (and, as is involved therein, to respect) liberty: a polity, that is to say, whose concrete pattern of power is qualitatively consonant with the principle of liberty, in that it is permeated at all points by the idea of power multiple in kind and unequal in size, depth and attributions; power finite, limited and non-exhaustive; power opposed in its very conception and structure to the totalitarian perversion. Far be it from us to despise "verbal" statements, "formal" guarantees and "institutional" elaborations of liberty; but with them, the problem ends for the Liberal, whereas it begins for the Conservative lover of freedom: hence the latter will also be inclined to emphasize them less, and generally, to take a different position on many of the standard problems surrounding the theme of liberty. Being interested in the basic reality rather than in an impeccably perfect and fully dressed-out fetish of liberty, he is apt to



be misinterpreted to-day, by shallow "democratic" opponents, as a mere "Rightist" counterpart to the "Leftist" totalitarian, or a mere "rival" type of "Fascist" beside others.

(7: page 94) Because Privilege demands virtue, on the part of the privileged, in a much more eminent sense than does the power of office, on the part of its holder—because, in other words, we rightly expect a nobleman to be a noble man, or a rich man as such, to give proof of both generosity and a refined taste—, the abuse made of privilege is more conspicuous than other abuses no less widespread and inevitable; and all criticism levelled against it seem to imply more directly and fatally a condemnation of the use itself. Just as it is easier (or, rather, a less non-sensical idea) to "train" a man to be a perfect electrical engineer than to "train" him to be an artist of merit, a "perfect" officialdom seems at least to be more imaginable than a truly noble nobility as regards most of its members, or a wealthy "leisure class" behaving on an average "as it should," with the leisure at its disposal proving constantly to be a really "creative" one. The abuse, we might say, is here, though by no means more strictly, yet more closely and visibly involved in the use. With its train of haughty local "potentates" and self-complacent high priests of their own "lineage," of shifty grabbers and selfish misers, of revellers and idlers, of snobs and retainers, of *borné* philistines and *blasé* nihilists (the latter being the suicidal initiators and patrons of Subversion) bred by an illusory sense of over-security, Privilege manifests, in a peculiarly impressive fashion, the inherent imperfection of man as well as the ineliminable part played in his life by irrational contingency. Nor is there any reason why manifold actions, mainly spontaneous and moral but in certain limits even organized and legal, could not or should not be undertaken to thwart the unfolding of these abuses and blunt, as it were, the temptations that incline men towards them. But any comprehensive, radical or "wholesale" programme aiming at the "prevention" of the abuses of privilege is really tantamount to a bid for the abolition of privilege as such, and therewith, of liberty and culture. Whoever revolts from having to submit (in any sense concerning his social environment) to the "whims of Chance" will in due course be called to submit—in a way incomparably more abject, total and final—to the whims of the Tyrant; whoever would cleanse the map of social relationships about him from the manifold islets of "irrationality" with which they are interspersed will pay the penalty of having his life "planned for him" by a human "rationality" which his own reason, if he has any left, may recognize as madness; whoever urges the State to confiscate and "redistribute" all "big" property and all such as appears to be of "doubtful" origin will be surprised to find himself no longer really the "owner" of his own "modest savings," either; whoever is irked by the sight of worthless loungers squandering their "unearned" wealth on trivial or rakish pursuits will be rewarded with the more uplifting spectacle of "organized leisure" and the bliss of living in a society in which culture is obligatory, and accordingly, impossible. For he who is "the Prince of this World" cannot but be more absolutely, more flawlessly so—with all

loopholes except that of eventual collapse being stopped, as it were — under Social Democracy. What the “prevention of the possibility of abuse” really means, then, is the impounding of all the diverse and limited ranges of human sovereignty in an unchecked tyranny exercised on behalf of the omnipresent and all-devouring Common Man; the substitution for “abuses” of the one single and monstrous abuse of the resources of human nature by a fake divinity in which whatever is worst and basest in humanity is fused together. The root of the trouble lies in the ingrained fallacy, from which we need painstaking and sustained endeavour to wean our minds, that it is man’s business to “ensure,” in every respect and in every sense, an exact “placing” or “scaling” of every individual (within a community) “according to” his “merits” or his “intrinsic fitness”: an “ideal” born of a gross misconception of justice, and involving, in the course of its pursuit, a purely subjectivistic reduction of “merits” and “value” to a function of the appetite “in power,” as well as a stamping out of “natural” along with the “artificial” inequalities — of all inequality, that is to say, which does not attach directly to the crude mechanical scheme of command and execution, the hypertrophied *ersatz* for organic principles of order. It is, to put it generally and with a degree of one-sided simplification, *essential* to Privilege to have centred round it a zone of “abuses”: in other words, to be held in trust by a personnel that (in various manners and measures, but always sufficiently to evoke a sense of “anomaly”) fails to “come up to standard”; wherefore, if we are committed to a wholesale extirpation of “abuses” as such, this really means that we are engaged in a war of annihilation against Privilege itself. For, again overstating our case a little in order to be as plain as possible, the chief social task and usefulness of “the privileged” consists, *not* in being “the best” but precisely *in being* “privileged” — with a view, to be sure, not only to preventing the monistic perversion of state-power and the actual tyranny it is bound to breed, but also to providing society with one indispensable framework for the “objective” appreciation of “intrinsic” value and “personal” merit: one primary means of orientation and standard of measure, directly present to men’s consciousness, and undoubtedly, but also *manifestly*, in need of correctives. Non-entities and ne’er-do-weels comfortably placed in life and enjoying various considerations because they happen to be “gentle-born”; men owing their career mainly to family money and influence; splendours of “lineage” or prosperity resulting from a stroke of good luck, or a successful use of “sharp practice”: here are distasteful things we must put up with (though by no means invariably and unreservedly), *for the sake of* a multi-dimensional order of society in which sovereignty is not unlimited, power is not absolute, and what prevails does not extinguish all that is out of tune with it nor obscure all counter-vailing aspects; in which nobility of character can be discerned and honoured in a peasant or a cobbler, artistic genius discovered in the worker’s son and encouraged effectively, and men of humble origin given high posts in virtue of their outstanding abilities and accomplishments rather than of their servile “conformity,” their subaltern industry, or their skill at demagoguery.

(8: page 95) Many minds deserving of a better lot have fallen a prey to the demon of Socialism out of a not unjustified disgust at the tendency, prevailing in capitalist society, to "level down" all values to the "common denominator," the "sordid" category, the "fetish-like" inanity of "Money." What they have forgotten and what we should well keep in mind is that "Money" — owing to its character of conventional abstractness, of empty fictitiousness, of a playfully arbitrary quantification as it were — can never in itself become an instrument of massive levelling, uniformity and "control" comparable to state-power, compulsory "ideologies," or indeed, the measurement of human "needs" and "capacities" in physical and psychotechnical terms such as "working-hours," "calories" or well-being expressed in "points." By definition, money-power implies a scheme of things based on free choice and acts of preference connoting a miniature "sovereignty"; it implies division and competition, a separation from the sphere of compulsory power proper, and an indetermination as to the primary theme of activities or the primary maxim of preferences. "Money" is an adulterator and corrupter (though largely, also, a support) of Liberty and Civilization: not, like the totalitarian power which is taking its place, their assassin. What is really wrong with "Pluto-democracy" is not "plutocracy" but "democracy" (in the "self-made man" and worse, the "common man" sense of it, which latter develops out of the former degeneratively but logically); or to put it differently, the disease of "capitalism" can the less be cured by the poison of Socialism as it is really only a disease in the sense that it prefigures, and carries a diluted foretaste of, Socialism. "Mammon" is still an outgrowth of polytheist heathendom, a many-headed idol, though the heads bear features neither very dissimilar nor very deeply and genuinely spiritual; it is when Man lapses to a mono-atheist worship of himself in the shape of "Society" or "Humanity" that he has reached the nethermost plane of abjection and installed the "Prince of this World" as sole ruler over his soul. In the shoddy articles and sham values (made to perish fast, and by their very novelty to represent the selfsame idea of an ever-increasing vacuity) which fill the scenery of commercialist society, he already cherishes the empty divinity of "his needs" as such; but, being not yet "integrated" into a compact and watertight system exerting an irresistible all-round pressure, these sham necessities and insipid luxuries still act as keepsakes, as it were, of true values — vehicles of a lingering contact with the real needs of man and the real nature of things. It is only when the mechanistic scheme of "Mammon," "incompletely total" by its very conception, has yielded its place to the "unified science" and all-conditioning state-power of Socialism that the soul of man will be ground to dust entirely in the "Satanic mill" of his "ensured need-gratification." Intellectuals, not excluding Catholic and Conservative ones, are often apt to shudder at the idea of "dollars" (which they seldom refuse when offered, though) rather than at the idea of tractor-worship, Stakhanovism, kolkhozes or compulsory State education. Yet in fact, these things — we may forbear from even mentioning their more sinister concomitants, as we are holding no brief for a "humane" Socialism shorn of the possibly "Asiatic" ornaments of the Soviet

regime — are most ugly, whereas a dollar is very nice; if many or most of those who hold and “manage” the largest accumulations of this attractive unit of purchasing power are definitely less so, again let us recall that it is the chief characteristic of money to be divided among many possessors, to change its possessor rather quickly, and to bear no relationship to the distinctive qualities of them who detain this or that quantity of it. The infantile resentment against “dollars,” “finance-power” or money as a “common denominator” is explicable, in part, by mental deficiency and a complete lack of imagination (ten years of Soviet citizenship is what every Westerner who wants “neither Capitalism nor Communism” or dares to name “American imperialism” on a footing with “Russian imperialism” should be inflicted upon, *latâ sententiâ*); on the other hand, this shallow attitude thrives upon the fact that “Money” — especially, the solid currency of a prosperous and economically proficient country — constitutes a more *conspicuous* and self-evident, a more specific and exclusive *symbol* of democratic homogeneity and quantitative mechanism than, say, the factory or the “little red school-house,” this or that national flag, the universal college degree replacing the ancient and more limited forms of illiteracy, or again, the Cheka agent shooting the “kulak” or “saboteur” or “petty bourgeois deviator” in the nape of his neck. But this “total symbolism” proper to Money is due precisely to its superficial and comparatively inoffensive character; to the fact, in other words, that Money is a mere “ideal” mark, sign or counter, not a massive psychophysical reality: — *because* it cannot, properly speaking, “rule” anybody, nor typify material needs or power in any substantial or truly analogical sense (since the craving for money as a motive, or the wielding of it as a means of power, are founded in psychic motives and material objects of a totally different order), it can conveniently provide an “ideogram,” as it were, for a *trend* towards democratic homogeneity and dreary uniformity, and serve as a badge for a world in which the Common Man, not yet actually omnipotent, is groping his way towards total sovereignty. At present, we cannot but hail “money-power” as an obstacle to the establishment of “terror-power,” an exponent of democratic homogeneity interested in averting the triumph of an incomparably more genuine and malignant one; when the “Common Man” nightmare shall be disposed of (for earth is a valley of tears, but not of a nature with hell: though Progress is a myth, the hells on earth engendered by that myth are bound to disappear in time), it is to be hoped that “money-power” will continue in, or return to, existence, and act as a salutary counterweight, in a Liberal sense, to the harsh military regimes then likely to spread over a notable part of the globe.

(9: page 98) We may sum up by saying that the “intermediate organisms” between the purely private sphere and that of the State proper, so persistently stressed by the official social doctrine of the Church, essentially mean (if they mean anything but mere governmental departments: which is clearly not what the Church has in mind) a structure of social authorities not identical, nor in general deriving from, “*the*” central public

authority; and that therefore, whether or no they necessarily involve Privilege in a form closely similar to any of those hitherto prevailing in history, they are attuned to, and congruous with, that principle of a "personal, semi-public, not or not directly political position of power" which we have been defending under the name of Privilege. We believe — though we cannot here afford a more elaborate discussion of the subject — that the constitution of the "intermediate organisms" can on no account be a uniformly democratic one; that such organisms and authorities, to be alive in society, and a mainstay of civilization, must be very largely (in the sense of manifold gradations) *overlapping*; and that this, in its turn, leads to the postulate of "personal unions": that is to say, "key positions" of public import but implying an intense and durable "fusion," a bond in many ways transmissible or communicable and thus of a quasi institutional reality, between the person and the position he holds (with its several aspects of social relevancy and "influence" embedded in partly "inheritable" possessions, qualities and connexions). Nor does this mean anything other than Privilege *per eminentiam*. — Not claiming ourselves to represent "the" social doctrine of the Church as such, we have deemed it right and expedient to take up this term, a term of abuse nowadays and a red rag, as it were, to the "Red" bull whose relentless onslaught must at last make us, reluctant though we may be, turn to bay: to take up this term, then, and raise it as a flag of defiance, conjointly with another word which, unlike it, still faintly stirs the hearts of the men of Western civilization. For we felt it to be our task to defy and to clarify, to delimit our camp and to sever it from the Enemy's, rather than to insinuate ways of conciliation where there can be none,\* to say "acceptable things" when speaking "in the presence" of "The People," to watch anxiously lest we should be mistaken for "reactionaries," or again, to supply well-polished textbook formulations proof against any danger of misconstruction and immediately "teachable." We expect, further, that not a few friendly readers will frown at the "utopian" turn of mind exhibited (they will say) by several of our passages, and with peculiar blatancy, perhaps, by our choice of Privilege as a watchword. To these we reply that while all our thought is directed *against* what is "utopian" in opposition to the Laws of the Creator and Legislator of the Universe, including the unchangeable constitution of human nature, we have no fear whatsoever of being "utopian" from the point of view of "the spirit of the age." This *may* (though there is no telling whether it does) mean that in fact we are "realistic" in the perspective of, say, tomorrow or the day after to-morrow. Be that as it may, — what does it matter? To whatever extent, if to any, we have succeeded in serving Truth and Right, we have responded to the call of the *unum necessarium*. Temporal by-products are sometimes obtained in this fashion, and *such* temporal achievements are the only ones worth achieving. However, although we are weak enough to wish for them fervently (which is no

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\* "...Cum infidelibus nec nomina debemus habere communia, ne ex consortio nominum possit sumi erroris occasio..." — S. THOMAS, *Contra Gentes*, III, c.93.

worse than natural), they cannot amount to more than *curae posteriores*. As Roy Campbell (*The Carmelites of Toledo*, 1936; italics are ours) puts it with insuperable mastery:

“Of the two Camps, from the beginning,  
And long before their tides were hurled,  
I knew which would do all the winning—  
*If not as most regards the world;*  
*Though earthly victory might come*  
As so much backwash, drift or scum  
Its sky-careering wave uncurled.”

AURÈLE KOLNAI

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