

Toward a Conservative Theory of Justice • T.L. Hulsey

Despite overwhelming factual evidence of its failure, and despite its refutation by the majority of economists dedicated to liberty and freedom, socialism, the doctrine of hostility to market forces, remains the political ideal of most of the world's people. What is its strange and vital appeal? The answer to that question is fundamental to a conservative theory of justice.

Let us begin with the obvious. Socialists generally concede the usefulness of the market in determining prices, which they use to determine the allocation of resources according to their own standards. Indeed, the central problem of socialism is the reconciliation of market price valuations with non-market standards of distribution. Its adherents want to broaden the scope of the latter under the term "social justice;" a very few conservative economists want to broaden the scope of the former under the term "praxeology."

For those few conservatives who understand economics as a branch of praxeology, there is no concern to define a social justice in their own thought. The term "social justice" is either nonsensical¹ or merely the synonym for the superior wisdom of a superhuman dictator.² Even ethics cannot resolve conflicts between society and the individual;³ ethics is only a hortatory influence at best.⁴ The socialist hostility to market forces, implicit in the term "social justice," has "nonrational fantasies"⁵ at its source: the conflation of economic and moral valuation is the expression of the adherent's longing for a world which recognizes his essential superiority. It is a world very different from that which rewards men according to their valuation by all the other members of society.

Such a limited theory of justice is demanded by the essential distinction which founds economics as a science: the distinction between economic and moral valuation. It is precisely because of this distinction that all disputants are willing to yield to the dispassionate reasoning of economics. Yet whether the distinction is purely formal, as in the Austrian school, or effective, as in positivism, socialists benefit by it; for it lumps together “optative ejaculations,” “social justice,” “heteronomous”⁶ ethics, and genuine ethics under a single category of positivist pejorative. By this distinction, those who are most hostile to the market are able to make a presumptive claim to superiority in ethics.

However, socialists hold this moral superiority only by conservative default. Conservatives refuse the rationalism of praxeology not only because they consider it a defense of capitalism with little chance of political success, but because they too feel compelled to defend some form of social justice. They refuse to offer a definition of reason which might be used as a standard in moral arguments; they appeal to faith as others appeal to passion. For conservatives, rhetoric and polemic is in a sense reasoned, but their chief tool is a method whose effect is to undermine reason as an arbiter of disputes. Their method may be called the architectonic manipulation of symbols. By this I mean that they attempt to promote a certain moral effect by appealing to tradition and religiously sanctioned behavior where they are embodied in social institutions, rather than by directly appealing to the moral judgment of each citizen. This approach proceeds from a preoccupation with effects (the objects of science) joined with a vagueness or a presumption about motives (the positivistic view of ethics). Robert Nisbet defines this approach in an early article. He claims that “society is a reality *sui generis*;⁷ that it is primary to the individual “historically, logically, and ethically;”⁸ and that *societas in parvo* (viz., communities and

family) is the irreducible social unit.⁹ He defends “the indispensable value of the sacred, nonrational, nonutilitarian elements of human existence.”¹⁰ The starting point is not the rational individual, but the mystically sanctioned group. The groups are hierarchic. Indeed, a mystically sanctioned hierarchy is probably the most typical element in the conservative architectonic manipulation of symbols. Thus Thomas Molnar, in his book on the subject, defines authority in society as coercion,¹¹ institutionally structured because of the only occasional presence of the charismatic leader,¹² and hierarchically structured because of the inequality among men,¹³ and rationally directed to some social good.¹⁴ But he says that authority also has a mystical element because “[a]uthority, hierarchy, and inequality transcend us... .”¹⁵ Peter Berger applies the method in his explanation of the appeal of socialism as a myth of fraternity, a positive myth which presently has no rival. As he puts it, socialism is “the only good myth going.”¹⁶ Berger’s use of “myth” in the sense of an institutionally mediating device is an example of perhaps the broadest use of the architectonic method. An approach that is broad in the sense of defending fundamental institutions is employed by George Gilder. He thinks that everyone agrees that the material effects of capitalism are good by any standard and so he proceeds to an apology for the motives of capitalists as n being good by altruistic standards. But his use of the term “altruism” is perplexing. Altruism is meaningless if it does not insist that capitalists should behave differently than they would under a laissez-faire system: it demands real sacrifices in the form of redistribution, not purity of motive or salubrity of effect.¹⁷

Conservative architectonics is a concession to socialists because it founds its ethical argument upon the mystical, the mythic, and the “positively” nonrational. Not only does socialism enjoy a relative superiority in ethics, as explained earlier; it also profits from the

conservatives' putting rationalism in the enemy camp. Without reason as the arbiter of disputes, a political battle is encouraged. Conservatives possess a temporary advantage in this battle in that most Americans are essentially conservative.¹⁸ But while they repose upon the currently prevailing conservatism and religiosity of the public, most of the religious leadership are preparing a very unconservative and irreligious future for their followers.

It is no accident that so many conservatives are Catholic: this architectonic manipulation of symbols is the method of one field of study in theology, not of other scholarship. Its misapplication in other fields, especially sociology, not only invites failure; it leads to ever-growing demands upon faith. The conservative public must not question too closely, lest reason tear away the delicate veil of mystery.¹⁹ Those who practice the method are thus led toward either a silly notion of consciousness as doom, or worse: toward what is perversely a smug and desperate misuse of the divine, toward something akin to a Robespierre's Cult of The Supreme Being.

On the other hand, those who refuse this method altogether and who restrict the influence of reason by identifying it with science must face that temptation to fatalism which afflicts so many conservative economists. It is the knowledge that the first principle of economics has become a concession to the enemies of the market. This is what is felt to be the lie at the heart of things, the contradiction of capitalism, and, one may say with a smile for those heavy-browed defenders of capitalism, the fatal worm gnawing at the root of Yggdrasil.

However great this conservative concession, it cannot alone explain the appeal of socialism, although the conclusion will show that this a necessary if not sufficient cause. It seems that socialism draws its life force from the atavistic forms of three principles of

social cohesion. Those principles are race- thinking, crowd thinking, and envy.

II

Jacques Barzun has observed that race-thinking occurs when someone implies one of the following:

1) “That mankind is divided into unchanging natural types, recognizable by physical features...”²⁰

2) “That the mental and moral behavior of human beings can be related to physical structure...”²¹

3) Or that individual and cultural spiritual qualities are obvious products of social entities, of which “race” is one, without further inquiry into definitions and causes.²²

He also points out that W. F. Edwards in 1829 was the first to shift the emphasis from “color division” to “shape-division” by joining historical and physiological ideas of race. What is surprising is that he does not go on to point out the more abstract emphasis to race-thinking which was to be given by dialectical materialism. Part of Marx’s genius lies precisely in that change of emphasis: he broadens nineteenth century racial thought in a powerful political analysis. In Marx, *class* is substituted for physical structure in the determination of mental and moral behavior; history is substituted for the genetic transmission of mental contents; capitalist organization is for him the obvious product of social entities; and – what is most important for us – proletariat, bourgeois, and capitalist form the three evolving if not unchanging natural types.

The Marxian emphasis, like so much of race-thinking, is essentially *image-thinking*. Everyone has an immediate, if vague, image of proletariat, bourgeois, and capitalist, just as the literate person of the nineteenth century had an immediate notion of Asian, Aryan, and Semite. Both have in common a use of mental images which are paradoxically lively and vague. This type of racism as

image-thinking is at the heart of modern socialism. In the modern version at least, this paradox of liveliness and vagueness is explained by the taboo against the expression of envy. Anyone who has ever felt slighted by the shopkeeper knows what a bourgeois is; anyone who has ever received a paycheck from the boss knows what a capitalist is – the images are lively. But they are rendered simultaneously vague (and thus widely applicable), not by a broad *sensum communis* image such as “Aryan” or “Kymri,” but by a taboo against the expression of malice which extends even unto our imaginings. We feel that any enjoyment of malice is so contemptible that we are reluctant to even visualize our cruelly turning the tables on our modern, negligent servants (the shopkeeper) or on the unsanctioned lords (the boss) of our day. This, and not his frequent use of the words “kike,”²³ “nigger,”²⁴ and “water-Polack Jew,”²⁵ is the legacy of race-thinking from Marx.

It is the sense of racism as image-thinking and not the white-trash variety with which George Gilder charges “liberals” in their attitude toward blacks.²⁶ The black male of “liberal” fiction is supposed to be unlike the male of all the other American races who has in every case led his group out of poverty by working harder.²⁷ The “liberal” hostility to the market is said to be aimed at altering the market in order to help the black, although Gilder shows that the effect is to protect the status quo against black and other classes beneath them which have been insurgently successful without, or in spite of, such help.²⁸

A free example of “liberal” racism as image-thinking is provided by the Janet Cooke debacle. Her lies could have been easily exposed, had the editors of the *Washington Post* answered the challenges to her veracity. But they were not interested in the truth. Their image-thought of blacks as an abidingly oppressed people forbade a reasonable inquiry. Indeed it is as if their *inability* to otherwise

conceive blacks exculpates them. Nevertheless, they are culpable because their blindness and that of others in the media is what abets irresponsible charges of racism, which are usually leveled at the middle class. Their image-thinking may be morally less heinous than blatant racism, but its effects are more broadly disruptive. Their mild racism encourages the bestial form which would threaten society. They make it difficult to address the problems of blacks through reason.

Socialism was born at a time when capitalism was sustaining the largest population growth in the history of the West. It was aimed at winning the minds of this growing mass of people, especially the mass of supposedly increasingly impoverished workers. It is useful to study the pre-industrial crowd in order to abstract the effects of indoctrination from the atavistic impulse, if any, of crowds. After this time period it is difficult to distinguish the two; before this time period there are no proletarian crowds except in a few special cases.

George Rudé has studied the crowd in history from about 1730 to 1848 to find only one dubious instance of a proletarian crowd:

In the French Revolution, we find only one occasion in which wage earners, as opposed to other groups among the sans-culottes, appear to have predominated in what was not primarily an industrial dispute; but that was in the Reveillon riots of April 1789, where the issue of wages, though secondary to that of food prices, played a certain part.²⁹

Rudé finds it very difficult to determine an identity of interest among members of any industrial crowd. Also, “[o]ther variables, such as age, literacy, religion, or geographical and occupational distribution, may be equally significant”³⁰ in characterizing a crowd. What he has been able to establish is that, contrary to LeBon’s preconceptions, crowd members were generally “of fixed abode and

settled occupation,”³¹ – they were not criminal^a or vagrant; that neither their own nor recruited leaders were “morbidly nervous, excitable, [and] half-deranged;”³² and that they usually showed great self-restraint. The self-restraint of English crowds is all the more impressive because of the absence of a regular police force. Rudé sums up: “In our particular context [1730-1848], the famous ‘blood-lust’ of the crowd is a legend, based on a few carefully selected incidents.”³³

As for industrial disputes, Rudé observes that they occurred typically not at moments of greatest (capitalist) oppression, “but rather on the upswing of a boom... .”³⁴ The great benefit of capitalism in terms of crowd mentality was that it narrowed the focus of grievances toward economic concerns, and so facilitated their possibility of redress.³⁵

In stark contrast to the above two types of crowd is the agrarian, and usually pre-industrial, crowd. Pre-industrial agrarian life was characterized by brutal toil, by the vivid precariousness of life, especially in the threat of crop failure, by the subjugation of purposive activity to agricultural cycles, and by illiteracy and general lack of opportunities for mental stimulation. It is only under these conditions that chiasm is possible. For we define chiasm as the conflation of economic grievances with aspects of the unchangeable human condition, using unlimited means to effect a redress. Industrialism and a wide market preclude chiasm. E. J. Hobsbawm, no champion of capitalism, has been unable to discover a single instance of a chiliastic city mob in the last 200 years.³⁶ The conservative fear of an outbreak of chiasm in industrialized countries is completely unfounded.

^a I observe that LeBon’s criminal crowd applies most typically to the *armies* of this period, which were composed of the lowest classes. Also, as Rudé shows, the army or militia inflicted far greater carnage than did the French or the English mob.

Is there any sense in which crowd-thinking animates a belief in socialism? Yes. And again a venial error has potentially atavistic results. Everett Dean Martin has defined crowd mentality as a psychosis – “that *the crowd-mind is a phenomenon which should best be classed with dreams, delusions, and the various forms of automatic behavior* [his emphasis].”³⁷ However that may be, his description of the essence of crowd mentality is striking. He says that there are essentially two paths for the resolution of conflict between the ego and impulses: the “solitary path” of the neurotic and “...*that of occasional compromise in our mutual demands on one another* [his emphasis].”³⁸ He calls the second one “crowd-mind.” Without evaluating the psychological implications, we may say generally that the way of compromise in our mutual demands on one another is the modern method of crowd-mind. Since there are no reasoned standards of behavior for us, only emotive ones, we have no criteria for excluding any behavior. In the modern proposition, the two words create a strange disconcinnity, but the only ideal we may “insist” upon is “tolerance.” We have no right to show the ill effects of homosexuality, if it is self-chosen; we have no right to express horror at suicide, especially if it is labeled “euthanasia;” we have no right to show disgust at a ship container full of 17,000 corpses of aborted fetuses.³⁹ Whether we call them “psychic epidemics” or merely “intellectual fashion,” we have nothing to hold in check those waves of vulgar fickleness which can prove harmful. Yet our difficulty is with neither a lurid blood-lust nor a supposed chiliastic impulse which must be held in check by myth and faith in unknowable mysteries. Our difficulty is with the absence of an ideal of justice which insists upon reason.

Race-thinking, group-thinking, and envy are closely related principles. The most significant evidence for this close relation

comes from Bruno Bettelheim in his study of prejudice, undertaken over the twenty years immediately after the Second World War⁴⁰ He has found that the increased cultural opprobrium against racism^b during these years has resulted in an increase in envy. More exactly, he finds that the suppression of hatred toward members of the out-group has resulted in a more open show of envy toward prominent members of the in-group. This increased envy seems to him to come from an unwillingness of members of the in-group to make temporary sacrifices for the sake of the group when those sacrifices receive less cultural support. It seems that there are broader reasons for the growth of the temptation to destructive envy.

The temptation to destructive envy seems to be a development from the more primitive solutions of the problem of social cohesion, namely witchcraft and the evil eye.⁴¹ The three form a continuum of solutions to the problem, witchcraft being the most primitive. Belief in the evil eye grew with the development of complex cultures, i.e., peasant-urban cultures (especially those with dairy animals as moveable property) rather than hunting societies or societies of shifting cultivators.⁴² It is also noteworthy that “sexual restraint, obedience, industriousness, responsibility, trust, threats of punishment, and atonement are particularly important in the evil eye complex... .”⁴³ What the three have in common is their suspicion or punishment of deviants from the group and their reinforcement of norms, especially sexual norms. The three differ from other forms of cultural reinforcement in the following way: *each of the three supposes that the deviant possesses the power to destroy the group.*

The trend of development within this continuum parallels the evidence of Bettelheim: the potentially destructive deviant becomes progressively internalized by the group. In witchcraft the deviant

^b The middle class mania for genealogy is probably the innocuous vestige of the old racial prejudice in that class.

(the witch) is usually banished from the group and is often destroyed where possible. In the evil eye belief, the one afflicted with the destructive glance “in most cases”⁴⁴ does not know that he has the power and nearly always does not desire the power. Not knowing of one’s destructive power allows one to blame a curse, or an accident of childhood,⁴⁵ or some other involuntary agency, so as then to be allowed a believable demonstration of adherence to the group’s norms. It seems that this protestation and show of adherence is the process peculiar to the evil eye complex, for it is the lack of knowledge of the power which distinguishes it from envy, more than any other characteristic. In the case of envy, the potentially destructive member has been completely internalized by the group, with his baleful power held in check by the taboo against the show of envy. The taboo is generally effective, except that it admits of choice in a way that is precluded by the evil eye complex. That is to say, if one is accused of destructive envy, one cannot blame an agency outside oneself – one can only deny the charge. To accept the charge or to openly defy the taboo is to make an almost irreconcilable choice for evil. Each time the charge of envy is made, that element of choice is posed again.

The political terrorists of our day have defied the taboo. Their superficial political claims are significant for only one element, upon which they all are in agreement: they want the annihilation of capitalists and of market forces generally. Claire Sterling has described some of these terrorists and many are obviously destructively envious. Giangiacomo Feltrinelli is a conspicuous example. However, more telling is the observation by Helmut Schoeck that a high perceived status joined with low real social influence is a formula for destructive envy.⁴⁶ In Italy and Germany, where the possession of a diploma once conferred immediate status and influence, a hotbed of student terrorism flourishes. Interestingly, Gabriele Krocher-

Tiedemann, double murderess at the 1975 Vienna OPEC summit, attended the University of Bochum, which Miss Sterling describes as “a diploma mill with 25,000 students and the country’s highest student suicide rate...”.⁴⁷ This status/influence disjunction may be a more important explanation than the oft-cited history of fascism in those two countries.

We do not of course identify terrorists with socialists. Indeed, it is generally useless to accuse anyone of destructive envy, not only because it implicitly asks if one is choosing evil, but because the accusation ends rational discussion: one no longer entertains his reasons because they have been judged to proceed from an evil motive. Neither do we seek to give the impression that envy is a beast crouching in the unconscious: envy distinguishes itself from hatred in that it contains an implicit agreement that the enviable one possesses a positive value.⁴⁸ Clearly, envy is an ambivalent emotion.

Our concern here is with a temptation to destructive envy more subtle than that to terrorism. To understand it, we must proceed in the following way: by defining envy, then by examining the subtle temptation to destructive envy, then finally by considering the six primary institutions which attempt to control envy.

Envy is a directed emotion with a familiar, or at least proximate, person as its target; it seeks to acquire neither an object nor a personal advantage – it seeks the destruction of the superiority of that person, whom the envier falsely evaluates as an equal and whom he perceives as the cause of his own inferiority.⁴⁹

According to Foster’s theory of limited good,⁵⁰ the material goods of society, while not the objects of envy, are certainly the *occasions* of it. The limitation of these goods, or the perceived limitations of them, increases the incidence of envy. This observation may help explain America’s relative freedom from envy, until

recently, in comparison with other countries: it has enjoyed an ever-expanding material prosperity throughout most of its history. Even today, members of the American middle class freely compare the relative merits of their possessions without any feelings of envy, their cars or trucks especially being the ceaseless topic of such conversation. This is quite unlike many undeveloped countries, where talk about the merit or desirability of one's possessions is taboo. The middle class American who learns from his fellows that his possessions are inferior can look forward to the day when he too will own an enviable car or gadget. On the other hand, American upper classes are more tempted to envy, because they can afford a finer discrimination and especially because the objects which occasion envy cling more to their possessor. For example, most members of the upper classes would consider a doctorate from an Ivy League university more enviable than a garage full of Mercedes. The doctorate cannot be detached from the possessor and the envier can seldom hope to possess a similar one, not even in the distant future.

Fewer middle class jobs depend upon the shifting winds of political favor. This reduces a tendency to personalize the power over one's employment in one's superior. Middle class employment is more in the power of impersonal market forces. In terms of envy-reduction, this impersonalization is a beneficial development. It is gross image-thinking which inspires the image of workers as cogs in a machine, as alienated robots.⁵¹ It is true that there are tedious, repetitive, assembly-line jobs and that the advance of capitalism has offered and is continuing to offer more alternatives to them. Yet there are many people who enjoy such jobs, just as there are people who enjoy hour after hour of the mechanical movements of crocheting in their leisure time. However, the word "alienated" does not function to describe a vapidly bored worker of modern industry, although he is the image that is supposedly conjured up by the term.

“Alienated man” is an image-thought which is a conflation of the two intolerable deviants from the group in modern times: the capitalist and the man who does not share in the capitalist melioration of life. The latter is the man bored with his work, whether it be on the assembly line or at the desk, and who is unable or unwilling to derive benefit from his leisure; the capitalist is the one responsible for it all. The bored, vacant man is “intolerable” because it does seem intolerable that material prosperity should overflow and yet men be spiritually empty. The capitalist is intolerable as the prosperous and successful have always been intolerable. The two are the upper- and lower-extreme deviants who are homologous to those of the highest class and those of the lowest class who were once accused of having the evil eye, and before that, of practicing witchcraft.

A “no-growth economy,” which is a contradiction, is now being advocated by many members of the upper classes. Such a policy threatens to spread destructive envy among the middle class because, as we saw above, their freedom from envy depends upon an expanding economy. The adoption of a policy of “no-growth” would actualize what seems to be a projection of envy by certain members of the upper classes. Note that the motive of attempting to resolve the insecurity of being upper class is joined with a policy that would perpetuate the current membership of that class. One is reminded of the reason why Arthur Koestler became a communist: the doctrine resolved the guilt he felt from being above others.⁵²

When we consider the middle class’s greater freedom from destructive envy, and when we consider the myth of alienation and the destructive no-growth policy (both fabricated by the upper class), it seems as if *ressentiment* has been stood on its head. The loss of will and moral assurance of our upper class has been realized, not through the triumph of a “slave morality” in which the

dominant ones have at last been unnerved by the piteousness of the slaves, but through upper class conviction of and envy for the superior virtue of the “slaves.” Why else would the current portrayal of “middle class malaise” in cinema and theater be so completely unconvincing? The cultural elite can manufacture accurate characters as well as perfect detective-thriller plots, but it finds it difficult to draw the American *honnête homme* in his true situation. Also, why do the elite insist upon legislative encouragement of non-traditional roles for women among middle class and lower middle class occupations? Traditional sex roles in these classes have limited ruthless competition to the males, while the upper class has in every age offered more opportunities for its ambitious women. Do the modern elite resent the relatively greater freedom from rivalry which the lower orders enjoy?

It seems as if the modern elite have been forced to this projection of envy because of the absence of an agreed standard sanctioning their status as chosen cultural leaders. The former sanctions of birth and wealth have been entirely replaced by the sanction of achievement.⁵³ However, the sanction of achievement only intensifies rivalry without lessening the strain upon social cohesion. It heightens rivalrous tensions without offering a cultural purpose or ideal which would resolve it. Nevertheless, our elites are not without their protective institutions. Besides the several devices which project their envy upon the middle class, the cultural elite of the upper class have hit upon a more unconscious resolution of the tensions of rivalry: the cult of glamour worship.

The cult of glamour worship, which has been created and sustained by the modern cultural elite, is truly an amazing phenomenon of our age. The activities of a crowd of essentially worthless and frivolous people are assiduously followed by millions of people every day. Interviews with movie and television stars, their

inane gossip, and even their photographs all sell millions of tons of newsprint and countless hours of television time. The public's appetite for information concerning these people is insatiable. What can account for this extraordinary interest? The ordinariness of the glamour star is of the heart of it. Their worshipers know that luck or the whimsy of a talent scout could have deified themselves quite as easily as the present star. And who knows? – Maybe tomorrow the unknown who is reading the tabloid or watching the flickering image on the screen will himself be the subject of attention. The one unsanctioned and unquestionable power of our cultural elites is the power to raise up and cast down whomever they please as glamor-subjects. This power remains unquestioned because it works on the principle of a lottery: each person knows that fortune smiles on him more than on his fellows. The principle of an unquestioned elite and the principle of chance have been unconsciously combined in glamour-worship in a way which effectively inoculates the destructive envy which members of the middle and lower classes might harbor against some of the upper class. However, because of the uncertainty of status of the cultural elite in the upper class, only *they*, the elite, and not the capitalists are inoculated. Unless the capitalists toe the cultural line which the elite set down, they are exposed to a virulent, destructive envy.

Let us set aside “alienation,” “no-growth economy,” and the other more conscious envy-controlling policies. We see that our upper class employs two principles for the control or redirection of destructive envy: that of an unquestioned elite (in cultural affairs) and that of chance (in glamour-stardom as a national lottery). Destructive envy is kept within bounds by four other principles or institutions: law, religion, reason, and “encapsulation.”⁵⁴ The first will be ignored, and religion and reason will constitute a conservative idea of justice in the conclusion.

“Encapsulation” is an explanation, in terms of envy theory, of one aspect of conservative architectonics. It also explains its failure. George Foster explains his term as follows:

Encapsulation is a device making use of the egalitarian principle to produce subsocieties within wider civilizations, in which all members ideally have about the same access to what are considered to be the good things in life.⁵⁵

It is supposed to contain envy by narrowing the objects which occasion potentially destructive rivalry. Examples of encapsulation are castes, classes, and communities. Conservative architectonics uses encapsulation in its insistence upon traditional, closely-knit communities as a guarantor of morality. Such communities may indeed encourage a closer mutual enforcement of morals. However, conservatives desire them because they supposedly hold envy in check by the principle of leveling, as just described. This is an *appeasement policy for envy*, and it is doomed to failure. The definition of envy forbids its success. Whenever equality is attempted, whether political or cultural, envy focuses more sharply on the remaining differences.⁵⁶ Envy is more virulent in closely-knit non-industrial communities, in large part because of the proximity and familiarity of the members.

III

Man does not become fully man except within the context of society. Race-thinking, group-thinking, and envy (with its antecedents) are the ambivalent emotions which form the first principles of this truth. The appeal of socialism lies in the atavistic forms of those principles: in gross image-thinking, in the group relaxation of demands for cultural ideals, and in terrorism and in the projection of envy by the upper classes. The three principles must have begun simultaneously with the birth of consciousness, and not simply rational consciousness. Man and certain animals

long for the identity and growth observed in every other living thing. Yet the more rapid growth of some in wealth, knowledge, beauty, or some other characteristic, threatens the identity of the group: *they* are *different* and their difference confers power upon themselves. Race and crowd are almost reflexive categories of identity – some animals have something similar; envy is the first category of growth, and one can emulate the enriching outgrowth from the group, or one can annihilate it. The dual ancestry of the birth of consciousness explains why the principles are ambivalent: they can be used to encourage either a rational consciousness, or a bestial one.

At one time it was possible that one could desire socialism out of an honest desire for justice. Perhaps the last period for such an honest desire was in the 1930s, when, for example, the Depression saw the destruction of food by its producers at a time when people were starving. At this time there was some reason to believe Koestler's tale about capitalists who strangled pigs in front of the starving poor. Canetti has stated the problem well:

Justice requires that everyone should have enough to eat. But it also requires that everyone should contribute to the production of food. The overwhelming majority of men are engaged in the production of goods of all kinds; something has gone wrong with distribution. This, reduced to the simplest terms, is the content of socialism.⁵⁷

The focus on the problem of distribution thus was once a concern for a legitimate kind of justice. Now, however, the problem of distribution conceals a metaphysical dispute between fairness and justice – *themis* and *dike*. It is a metaphysical dispute because it raises questions about the human condition, especially that of equality, which politics and economics can answer only by recourse to atavistic and hence destructive principles of social cohesion. Therefore, the first step for finding a principle of justice is to replace

the *themis-dike* focus with a focus whose initial distinction is between rational ethics and obedience to the law when it upholds individual rights. This is the only way to avoid the unanswerable metaphysical nature of the *themis-dike* dispute.

Because conservatives cling to the *themis-dike* formulation of the question of justice, they are unable to successfully refute the current media posturing about justice. Currently the charges of any hateful detractor or clearly irresponsible group are given a presumption of truth by the media, while the one so charged is immediately suspected of guilt if he holds a position of authority. This false presumption of justice is sometimes so powerful that it seems to absolve the obvious guilt of an irresponsible detractor who speaks in the holy name of the avenging media. As in the case of Rita Jenrette, repentance before a television camera becomes nothing less than media antinomianism.

The evidence has shown that otherwise venial errors concerning the principles of social cohesion can have destructive effects. These errors constitute the modern appeal of socialism. The conservative argument from faith to the exclusion of reason is a concession which is the necessary cause for that appeal; for should the conservatives make reason a cultural ideal, the errors and their effects would vanish. These errors do not have a repulsive aspect in themselves, as do their effects. Racism no longer has a broad acceptance; lower class envy is negligible or at least amenable, and middle class envy is currently non-existent. The common man does not want the condescension of "social justice"; he wants justice pure and simple. A rational ethics would satisfy his desire and remove the subtle temptation to socialism.

Now we can use these findings about socialism to suggest a conservative theory of social justice. This essay maintains that such a theory will hold those atavistic temptations in check. It maintains

that failure to construct such a theory will leave the field to socialism, which at least offers a solution, howsoever destructive.

Now “rational ethics” is not a contradiction in terms; “religious ethics” is. Religion does not make ethical claims – it is the *pre-condition* of ethics. In the Christian religion, its theologians have supposed that Christ made an ethical statement in his one commandment to love thy brother as thyself. But the closest thing to ethics in Christianity is the example of Christ, whose lesson is the indispensable precondition of ethics, the lesson of profound acceptance. It says that no matter who you are or where you are, no matter how crushed or degraded you may be, there is always sufficient material for your happiness and that to forsake a transiently painful trial for your happiness is an ugly surrender to the evil of despair.

Christian theologians have assumed that Christ’s one commandment implied the ethics of altruism. They are victims of an error of priority. Religion is prior to ethics, not in naming the beneficiary (the purpose), but in insisting upon *conscientiousness*, i.e., the willing of thought in beings who are volitionally conscious. Christianity insures an unchangeable human nature, not through its doctrine of the Fall of Man (the inescapable temptation to sin), but through its recognition that men must be vigilant in every waking moment to make the effort of thought, or at least to know what one’s mind is doing. Only when one first knows the objects which are being entertained in the imagination can one make a judgment of their truth or falsity or their goodness or evil, and do so in the only way which is in accord with man’s nature.

The above approach solves the central contradiction of “liberalism” by strictly defining a changeless human nature. “Liberals” say that human nature is plastic with indefinite potential for progressive development. But when it adds that it is basically rational, a contradiction follows.⁵⁸ For then reason becomes a standard of indefinite

potential for revision, instead of the standard of truth. Conservatives contribute to the contradiction by placing rationalism in the enemy camp.

The suggested approach also closes the dichotomy between faith and reason. Ayn Rand perpetuates this dichotomy, as do the Christian theologians, by claiming the Christianity has an implicit ethic and that it is altruism. However she is completely right in recognizing the evil of altruism. Conservatives perpetuate the dichotomy when they employ architectonic reasoning. That is a method of theology: the manipulation of symbols to effect the good. But science and exact reasoning, especially in ethics, are recapitulative; religious truths, like the human nature they defend, are changeless.

The faith-reason dichotomy is similar to the medieval psychology which viewed man as a beast held in check by reason. But we have seen that the three ambivalent principles of social cohesion lose their bestial aspect when there is a cultural insistence upon reason as the essence of a changeless human nature and as a cultural ideal. Under the influence of insistence upon reason, the envious Erinyes can become the Eumenides of social cohesion. Reason shows in its definition of envy that envied and envier are in agreement about a positive, enviable value. Then by economic science it proves that under capitalism the wealth and virtue of the highest classes benefit all classes. All of this must grow from the axiom, which should be assured by religion, that there is no contradiction at the heart of things. Any notion of transcendence or justice which claims that faith and reason must collide is contemptible, and it deserves from free men their proud, contemptuous laughter.

¹ William F. Buckley's *Firing Line* interview with Friedrich Hayek. "Firing Line with William F. Buckley Jr.: Is There a Case for Private Property?" televised November 7, 1977. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p6FJR0Tf-US>>

² Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics*, Henry Regnery Company, 1966, p. 853.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 725.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵ Ernest van den Haag, ed., *Capitalism: Sources of Hostility*, Epoch Books, 1979, p. 27.

⁶ von Mises, p. 148.

⁷ Robert Nisbet, "Conservatism and Sociology," *American Journal of Sociology*, 18 #2, Sept., 1952, pp. 167-175.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

¹¹ Thomas Molnar, *Authority and Its Enemies*, Arlington House, 1976, p. 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹⁶ Peter L. Berger, *Facing Up to Modernity*, Basic Books, 1977, p. 67.

¹⁷ An application of the arguments of von Mises, p. 728.

¹⁸ *National Review*, 34 #11, June 11, 1982, p. 671. The Gallup Poll report showed that 95 per cent of Americans believe in God, 71% in life after death; 71% are willing to fight for their country; and 84% take great pride in their work.

¹⁹ Berger, p. 19.

²⁰ Jacques Barzun, *Race: A Study in Superstition*, Harper & Row, 1965, p. 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Nathaniel Weyl, *Karl Marx: Racist*, Arlington House, 1979, p. 83.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

²⁶ George Gilder, *Wealth and Poverty*, Basic Books, Inc., 1981, p. 65.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 101.

²⁹ George F. Rudé, *The Crowd in History, 1730-1848*, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964, p. 206.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 208.

³¹ Ibid., p. 200.

³² Ibid., chapter 15.

³³ Ibid., p. 255. He has in mind the killing of 600 Swiss at the Tuileries and the killing of 1100-1400 prisoners thought to be conspirators with the Prussians. I observe that it was the Swiss who were particular victims of the fury of Parisian mobs. Was it racially inspired, or was it simply that Swiss happened to be the king's guard?

³⁴ Ibid., p. 218.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 234. Once the ideas of rights of man and popular sovereignty gripped the popular imagination, riots "tended to acquire a new dimension and to assume a stable social-ideological content that they had lacked before." Also compare Barzun (p. xix): "If in the teeth of such an old reflex [i.e., race-thinking] there is to be any hope of averting riot or civil war, it lies in turning group antagonisms into consciously economic or political struggles by removing their racist covering."

³⁶ Helmut Schoeck, *Envy*, Random House, 1966, chapter 21.

³⁷ Everett Dean Martin, *The Behavior of Crowds*, Harper & Brothers, 1920, p. 19.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 71.

³⁹ *The American Spectator*, 15 #7, July 1982, p. 7; also *National Right to Life News*, June 29, 1982.

⁴⁰ Bruno Bettelheim and Morris Janowitz, *Social Change and Prejudice*, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964.

⁴¹ Clarence Maloney, ed., *The Evil Eye*, Columbia University Press, 1983; article by Vivian Garrison and Conrad M. Arensberg, p. 324.

⁴² Ibid., Clarence Maloney interpreting the findings of John M. Roberts, p. 144.

⁴³ Ibid., article by John M. Roberts, p. 250.

⁴⁴ Ibid., article by Clarence Maloney, p. 138.

⁴⁵ Ibid., article by Howard F. Stein about Slovak-Americans.

⁴⁶ Schoeck, chapter 14.

⁴⁷ Claire Sterling, *The Terror Network*, Henry Holt & Company, 1981, p. 85.

⁴⁸ Ayn Rand, *The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution*, New American Library, 1971, chapter "The Age of Envy."

⁴⁹ The definition is essentially that of Schoeck. See "Man the Envier," chapter 1 in *Envy*.

⁵⁰ George Foster, "The Anatomy of Envy: A Study in Symbolic Behavior," *Current Anthropology*, 13 (1972), pp. 165-202.

⁵¹ See Harold Rosenberg's "The Orgamerican Phantasy" (in Alfred Kazin's *The Open Form*) and Daniel Bell's "The Theory of Mass Society: A Critique," *Commentary*, July 1956, p. 77 & ff.

⁵² Richard Crossman, ed., *The God That Failed*, Bantam Books, 1965, p. 14.

⁵³ The basic idea here is taken from T. S. Eliot's *Notes Towards a Definition of Culture*, Gardners Books, 1972.

⁵⁴ All except encapsulation are from Schoeck, "The Sense of Justice and the Idea of Equality," chapter 14 in *Envy*.

⁵⁵ Foster, p. 185.

⁵⁶ See Schoeck's analysis of L. P. Hartley's *Facial Justice* in "The Envious Man in Fiction," chapter 10 in *Envy*.

⁵⁷ Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, The Viking Press, 1962, p. 191.

⁵⁸ This is the central argument of James Burnham's *Suicide of the West*, Arlington House, 1975.