

**MAN'S THREEFOLD  
WILL TO  
FREEDOM**



**T. V. SMITH**

# MAN'S THREEFOLD WILL TO FREEDOM

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TO

the Educational Statesmanship of the  
Chancellor Dunning Trust and to the  
Hospitality of Queen's University, which  
Implements that Wisdom with perspec-  
tive and grace—these Lectures for 1953  
are gratefully dedicated.

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## INTRODUCTION

IF THE FACT OF FREEDOM were not so prized a possession, we might well call its symbol a weasel word. Freedom is an ambivalent term not only in that it is made in the contemporary world to name its historic opposite and not only in that among its constant conditions are onerous impositions not nominated in the deed of gift—"No rights," we say, "without duties!"—but also in that the possession of liberty by some ordinarily implies denial of liberty to others. Because of this latter limitation—a sort of cosmic fault, as it were—the distribution of freedom becomes the chief meaning of justice and the main problem of man. We may phrase it thus: *Who is to get how much freedom and at what cost to whom?* With the answer to that question—i.e., with the distributive aspect of value—we shall be primarily concerned. Freedom never comes entirely gratis—that we know, to begin with.

### *Freedom Is Good, but for Whom?*

There has never been a real doubt as to the value of freedom. It is indeed all but a synonym for value. Even the communists want freedom for somebody; and, they say, for everybody (everybody, that is, who remains unliquided) "come the Revolution." Allowing for the perspective of Marxist dialectics, with the charity William Wordsworth brought to the grave of the Scottish bandit,

Rob Roy, might one not say of the late Stalin, child of Georgia—

For thou, although with some wild thoughts,  
Wild Chieftain of a savage Clan!  
Hadst this to boast of; thou didst love  
the *Liberty* of man.

But *which* man now, and when to begin for *all* men?

General Eisenhower, in his *Crusade in Europe*, quotes Marshal Zhukov as damning our system of liberty as "selfish" and calling the Soviet system "unselfish." The Anglo-Americans, he said, "induced a man to do things by telling him he might keep what he earned, might say what he pleased, and in every direction allowed him to be largely an unoriented entity within a great national complex." In the Soviets, on the other hand, the Marshal said, "An attempt was made to substitute for such motivations the devotion of a man to the great national complex of which he formed a part." "There was no doubt in my mind," adds General (now President) Eisenhower, "that Marshal Zhukov was sincere." But sincerity only cements enmity, we may add, when definitions are at war. Here, as elsewhere in question is: Liberty for Whom? The crux of libertarianism is the proper placement of the individual in society.

Beginning now with liberty as intrinsically good, it is easy to assume that since liberty is good for one, it is good for all. This is the essence, it will be recalled, of Henry Sidgwick's major intuition, "the Maxim of Benevolence." But for all Sidgwick's heroic hammering out of self-evident duties, the patent odds remain with his student, G. E. Moore, who declares flatly that "It is plain that no moral law is self-evident." Sad as it is to remark so unpleasant a truth, that previous saying—that what is good for any man is good for every man—requires further logical recommendation. Nothing follows as a matter of fact—whatever may follow

as a matter of ideals—from the simple, and admitted notion, then, that liberty is good. We must face head-on, as our major consideration, this matter of differential access by diverse men to the great good of liberty.

### *Two Classic Maxims of Distribution*

It is easy for us Anglo-Americans to hold, with the historic Utilitarians, that the greatest good of the greatest number is principle enough to regulate the dispensation of freedom. Jeremy Bentham thought so; and he was surprised, and chagrined, that many who credited the principle seemed to accept it in such manner as to leave undisturbed a feudal distribution of freedom. So Bentham added the distributive prudence that under the general utility principle "each should count for one." That simple addition was a radical thrust, but still not potent to transform the prevailing system. His dictum then took the final more bellicose form, according to John Stuart Mill—though I have nowhere found the statement in Bentham's own words—that in applying the "felicity maximizing principle," as Bentham preferred to call it, "*nobody [was to count] for more than one.*"

That does not sound revolutionary to us; for we share, formally at least, Bentham's presupposition as to the distribution of freedom. But Bentham and his disciples had to wage a heroic parliamentary struggle against those whose notions of distribution were of a contrary sort.

The phrase that has best come to connote that other chief notion of access is that of Bradley's famous essay, "My Station and Its Duties." This formulation does not so obviously prescribe a distributive canon as does Bentham's "each to count for only one." Yet under the aegis of "My Station," the rearguard action was fought for the remnants of feudal privileges in England.

What a man's duties were could not be derived from the mere fact that he was a man. One had first to know what kind of a man—indeed *whose* man—he was; for duties differed with the differences in social location—and rights, too, of course. A lord was a Lord, a vassal, a Vassal, and a villein was, by time and attribution, a Villain. The man above had the best of the “rights” and the man below had the worst of the “duties.” Liberty was—and had been through historic time—distributed differentially.

This is in fact mostly what all the revolutionary ferment has been about age after age. This is what Colonel Rainboro intended in the Putney debates: “the poorest he in England hath a life to live as the richest he.” This is what Thomas Jefferson intended in America a century later by what he called “the palpable truth”: “that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs nor a favoured few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately by the grace of God.” The practical struggle for the equalizing of advantages is always accompanied by the theoretical struggle to re-define the principle of distribution. Among all things to be distributed, freedom is first.

#### *Outer Freedom Depends upon Inner*

But rights, which totalize as liberty, are, for the most part, intangible things. Property may be bequeathed; but rights have to be won. Even if they be proffered on a platter, the beneficiary must be of a certain sort before he can receive them, and particularly before he can keep them. The War between the American States, for instance, emancipated the slaves, but it could not free the Negroes. The freedom that one gets depends in large part on something that one is. Negroes were not then—and after nearly a hundred years are barely now—prepared to take what the abolitionists offered them overnight and in full.



The distribution of liberty must actually, so to say, attend upon some inward grace. It is inward harmony of the pressures of life which, up to some far point, conditions the success of every effort to distribute the intangible things of life, and most of all the great intangible good called liberty.

It is often said that if property were distributed equally today, leaving human nature as it is, the distribution would promptly revert to the status of inequality. Little doubt that it would. Recall Edmund Burke's wise remark that "Those who intend to level, never equalize." Nor is it less so as touching liberty than as touching property.

"Tell me," said Socrates, "do you believe that freedom is one of the greatest possessions both for the individual and the state?"

"Certainly!"

"But do you think a person is free who is a slave to bodily passions, such as one who is sex-mad?"

"Not at all."

"Is it not true that he who is hindered from doing what is pure and is constrained to do what is foul, is a slave to the worst master?"

"Yes."

"The incontinent therefore are enslaved to the worst slavery," concludes Socrates.

It is old and sound wisdom that if we would effect permanently and well a distribution of liberty, we must understand what in the nature of man are the aids and what the hindrances to freedom. That understanding is difficult but is indispensable to the discharge of the mission.

### *Man's Triune Will*

These inner conditions of freedom would appear to be threefold. There can be, that is, (1) little freedom without prowess, only (2) a poor freedom without aspiration for

excellence, and certainly (3) a precarious freedom without appreciation of the sources of prowess and the orientation of aspiration. There must be, in short, a "push," a "pull," and a "field" to house the two.

Let me now explain the manner in which through successive chapters I mean to pursue this tripartite theme of human nature, since the best synthesis of power, perfection, and piety spells maximum freedom within, and promises maximum freedom without.

Man is a complex entity, and his energies often work at odds. There is no perfect concordance of his several powers, however fortunate an individual may be by nature or nurture. Individuality is always unfinished business. Only the direction of progress can we discern. The traditional division of the soul into three parts is more adequate than the usual duality of human nature. Nowhere is this triune accounting done more picturesquely than in Plato's famous myth of the Charioteer. Man is both horses—the high-spirited and the steady steed—and the driver, whose business it is to see that the horses pull together, despite their noisy criss-cross.

This tripartite theme we wish now to present in our own idiom, by memorializing man's nature in terms of three wills: the Will to Power, the Will to Perfection, and the Will to Piety. We wish to do justice to the full repertoire of man, and particularly we desire to correct historic wrongs that have been done man by an over-emphasis here, an under-emphasis there, upon equally authentic aspects of human nature. Invidiousness is all but indigenous to aspirational literature. Particularly, is there a continuing tradition—old in Orphic form even when Plato reinforced it—to play down the physical powers of man in the interest of elevating something in him called the "spiritual." I do not doubt that the contrast intended has meaning, but

that meaning should not be allowed to turn into meanness. To crucify the flesh is not fair to flesh, or to man. Every aspect of man we propose to treat with respect, not limiting reverence to this or that reputed "higher" power. It is liberty which we serve, and we would serve it disinterestedly.

In treating man dynamically—for such is the implication of our choice of the term "will"—we would nevertheless, use, but not surrender to, the "travel image," under which the human race has long laboured. Because time itself is both transitive and irreversible, it is natural and even inevitable that we think of man, himself a temporal agent, as a sojourner. Bunyan's great allegory represents man as a "pilgrim," not so much on earth as *away* from earth. This our habitat is seldom allowed to be our beloved home. Without committing ourselves unreservedly to the dogma of Baker Brownell's beautiful book, *Earth is Enough*, we must nevertheless reiterate our respect for all the tendrils that tie man to nature. If earth were enough and even if it were all, human life would still be capable of glory.

#### *A Classic Example from Plutarch*

There is in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* a marvellous, if partial, play upon man as a creature of dual, yea by implication, of triune will. In the story of Pyrrhus—he of "Pyrrhic victory" fame—Cineas, his wise man and lieutenant, becomes the symbol of man's will to perfection, as Pyrrhus himself is left to represent man's will to power. The third aspect the reader will in good time supply for himself, in order to enframe the moral.

Cineas, to return to the story, pushed Pyrrhus from one proposed conquest to another with the ever repeated prod: "Yes, Sire, but where do we go from there?" At length, tired of his extemporized answers to the question, Pyrrhus,

discerning that his conquests must sometimes end, admits that at last, "We will sit down and take our ease!" Thereupon, comes the climax prepared by Cineas: "If that is all the reason we have for squandering treasure and spilling blood—to advance from Italy to Sicily, to Carthage, etc.—that we eventually sit down and take our ease, Why, oh why, Pyrrhus, do we not sit down *here* and take our ease *now*?"

The question phrased and pressed by Cineas will no doubt strike most readers as final, as indeed merely rhetorical. That for the sake of which all else is done, need not itself be done: *it* should be enjoyed. Since life rises highest in celebration, life exists for the sake of celebration. Contemplation is exercise of man's powers at the highest; or, as Aristotle phrases it, "Where there are ends apart from the actions, it is the nature of the products to be better than the activities." Aristotle's dictum is a dogma, not the deliverance of a final truth. And the answer expected from Pyrrhus is far from being as final as it sounds to the Cineas of any and every age, tired as he is of heroic action and in love as he is with ease. Nor is the question itself entirely rhetorical, human nature being complicated as it is. Man is an animal as well as a spirit; and as an animal, he must always intermittently be laying "waste his powers." If in our "travelling" we ever reached a vantage of utter "ease," we would hardly be long *at ease*, because of the persistence of that aspect of our nature which had urged us on in the first place. Plutarch's story discloses at the end the proper moral; for as a man of the world he remarks that though Pyrrhus apprehended the moral, he did not profit from it. "Such reasoning," in Plutarch's words, "rather troubled Pyrrhus with the thought of the happiness he was quitting, than any way altered what [conquests] he so much desired."

The lesson will always thus somehow obtrude itself,

impressively if not so nakedly: since we are animals with a will to power we must in our striving go from action to action, even from conquest to conquest—and go on endlessly even if not repetitiously. Our hold on happiness as an end is secure, and appears final, only when it is in contrast with tension. The pursuit of happiness must always enshrine the happiness of pursuit. Finish the will to perfection off with finality, and it would prove as illusory as would the will to power if effort were sometime inflicted upon one without any respite.

### *A Modern Moral from Marx*

This illusion—that any aspect of human nature, however authentic, is enough—gets revivification, in all its agony, if we look, nearer home, at a certain neglected aspect of Marxism. Capitalism must, in the Marxist appropriation of the “travel image,” give way to socialism, and socialism just as surely give way to communism. From the initial maxim “to each according to his ability,” we travel to the further distributive maxim, “to each according to his services,” and on inevitably to the maxim of moral climax, “to each according to his need.”

Now, in Marxism, that is made the end of man's quest for the perfect distribution of freedom: fulfilment of all needs. Only, in the outworking, Marx forgets how complex these needs are. The finalism of Marxist “ease” accepted, who can believe that it would remain as perfect in the possession as it had appeared in the long pursuit? Certainly the Hegelian dialectic, prototype to Dialectical Materialism, called for endless on-going. Marx, however, presumes to believe that the process will end in a variety of play-activities, without any accompanying responsibilities. But his report upon the picture gives us to guess that its

perfect possession would have to turn again into arduous and purposeful pursuit, or fail of its glittering promise. A static heaven moored to a dynamic earth, spells neither earth nor heaven; it spells hell. To see this, one need be only slightly wise to the ways of the world. "Come the Revolution," says Marx, the pay-off will be of this order:

To hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, to carry on cattle-breeding in the evening, also to criticize the food—just as I please—without becoming either hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic.

There we have the out-spelling of what is taken to be ideal. Idyllic it is, indeed, to one who is tired of all disciplined activity, who now wishes for eternity to freeze his juvenility in marbled frieze. But try to imagine the earnest Marx himself enjoying such trifling forever! criticizing of a cook who cannot retort does not make the food better; it makes it worse! The perpetual amateur is but an adolescent getting what he wants when he wants it, and never doing anything which is not then and there its own reward. Eternal play would probably turn out as worse than any earthly work. We call Marx's picture "idyllic" with malice; for it is finally good only in heaven; and then only as an alternative to what has been a hard earth. Standardized on earth as a daily diet, such an easeful infliction could only provoke what happened in Milton's heaven. Why, even the devil could not take what was putatively perfect: life without pain, without discipline, without character, without letting oneself out to the limit in competition with deity! That would be the play with Hamlet himself left entirely out. The perfect ends of Marxism would prove as intolerable as its means are odious. The only place for the heavenly is in the hypothetical, as Mark Twain found out in Captain Stormfield's visit thereunto. Determination to bring utter perfection statically to

earth creates on earth a hell: "at least not a heaven," says Captain Stormfield after some experience with it, "that a sane man could stand a week and remain sane." For the animal which is man freedom is fulfilled only in struggle.

The only ideal which can keep its integrity through continuous use must be either an opportunely timed alternation between man's discrepant wills or a complete integration of all man's powers all at once. Since there is no perfect and static integration, we must rely chiefly upon "pass and repass" as between the wills of man, achieving in their overlapping a balanced stress. Such activity may become a process which, contrary to Aristotle, is its own end and reward. We shall presently speak of *Skill* as man's nearest approach to the functional felicity of power and perfection interacting and alternating. Such stress locates the favourite habitat of freedom.

#### *Anteus as Model*

Meanwhile there is another classic character which may yield us a model more realistic than that of Plutarch, certainly less romantic than that of Marx. It is the character of Anteus who, you will remember, was invincible against all comers, so long as he could keep even one foot upon the ground. Once levitated, however, the hero became as weak as was that other strong man, Sampson when shorn of his virile locks.

It is now become clear that a proper distribution of liberty must begin on earth, with man as he is in all his complexity and contradiction. There is much home-work to be done in learning the lesson of liberty. Before we can have freedom well distributed externally as a political increment, we must have freedom properly developed and rightly appropriated internally as a psychological increment. After all is said and done, freedom is threefold, because

man's will is triune: it is (1) a will to power; it is (2) a projection of high ideals, since man is an end-guided spirit; it is (3) an orientational exercise in what we dare call reverence, since man is characterized by a third will, a *tertium quid* which reconciles his elemental dualism. This third thrust to harmonize the other thrusts, we shall treat as the Will to Piety. Under its mild sway freedom reaches its maximum proportion and achieves its justest distribution.



# I

## FREEDOM AND THE WILL TO POWER

### *Power is also Perfection*

THERE IS A NOTION abroad in the world, elegantly articulated for modern times by Lord Acton, that power is poison. This notion would tend to condemn the will to power to perpetual suspicion, if not to downright degradation. How much the alliteration of the phrase may be responsible for the currency of the adverse judgment, we only remark but do not seek to determine. The noble Lord qualified the categorical by saying that "All power *tends* to corrupt." But so does everything else tend toward ill if underdone, if overdone, or if wrongly done. It is just as true, and much more fecund for our thesis of liberty, to say that all power tends to *perfect*. Indeed, that is flatly and fundamentally what power appears to do: it tends to fulfil the centre of energy whence it issues, whether that centre be animal, under the impact of urgency, or human, under the clairvoyance of ideality. If we keep first things first, we may be able to put last things last, and to dispose of all things between in some proper order. Of this we may be certain: man's freedom will not be found, whether inside or outside society, to be independent of man's total nature, including his elemental will to power. Power will be found at the very least to condition the distribution, if not the very constitution of freedom.

Now the custody of human nature is, admittedly, a large order; but it is not an assignment to be escaped by feigning modesty or to be exhausted by conniving at omni-com-

petence. We shall begin our analysis where human nature manifests itself the most simply, as an offshoot of nature; and we shall proceed as cautiously as may be to where human nature achieves an independence that is, or appears to be, transcendental. We shall presume, however, as far as not checkmated by the facts, that what we call human nature is continuous with nature itself.

### *Dynamic Continuity*

There is certainly some obvious continuity, whether of diagnostic worth or not, between the form of power which in nature reveals itself terribly as tidal waves, earthquakes, survival of the fittest, and that form which in society abounds little less terribly in the feline ferocity of gossip, in the cut-throat competition of rapacious business, and in the bloody carnage of international war. It would be intriguing, though not here requisite, to pursue the analogy between a tycoon and typhoon, between a ranting Hitler, who levels Germany in a generation, and Mexico's bellowing Paracutin, which intermittently blows its top and chronically devastates the countryside. What manifests itself as destructive in nature may erupt as convulsive in man; what shows itself as growth there, may flower beneficently here through all the rungs of culture. Insofar as our presumption of continuity holds, power will be seen to be ubiquitous throughout the whole world and to be continuous as between the inanimate and the animate. Before developing the more constructive, the more perfectionistic, aspect of power, let us now pay passing deference to the adverse side.

### *Genesis of the Will to Power*

Man begins his career as barely more than an animal body, but a body with the potential to be more than something space-bound and time-held. Thus limited, this

animal, like other bodies, has as its fate to be pulled and pushed around, though there is in it from the beginning something quick, that which is instinct with vast promise. At the first, we *are* our bodies; and even at the later stage of language, we continue for a time as something all but purely objective. It is: "Baby wants so and so," rather than "I want so and so." This identification of ourselves with a mere animal body, admittedly does not outlast infancy; but it is initial and is diagnostic. It is only when we call the roll and hear a voice within answering present, that something more than body supervenes upon body. The eventual subjectivity of mature personality is a far cry from the thinghood of baby's first address. The soul is busy all the while "selecting her own society." Even the ego, however, must crawl before it walks; and the subjective appears first in form objective: "Me wants so and so."

From the get-a-way of the self as body, we proceed rapidly to power personalized *through* body. Conscious now of something within, baby nevertheless budes his way with his body, pushing and shoving. Prowess is at the beginning the chief or only meaning of human aspiration. The cruelty of children, everywhere remarked, arises largely from what must seem to the little animals the narrow options of activity. Since two bodies cannot occupy the same space and since two babies cannot have the same toy at the same time, baby bullies his way utilizing the effective instrumentality of his muscular frame. He takes pride in his fists, he asks you to feel his biceps, his ego must be fed on remark and approval of his prowess in its various developing forms.

Through mediation of others, attendant in part upon this continuous inspection of what he's about, baby comes presently to see himself as something other and something more than his body. There is awakened, can easily be awakened, in him a pride in surmounting the muscular.

There must, indeed, be deep rootage in human nature for this transcendence of the bodily. Otherwise, asceticism would be rarer than it is; and monasticism would prove downright impossible. Mortification of the flesh is not only easy, but it often gets identified with the fortification if not the very definition of spirit. We reach the high water mark of the solitary, on the pilgrim's push toward perfection, when individuality is set apart from body and is then made sovereign over the body. So deep is the rootage of this impulse to transcend that we cannot easily escape the Pauline plaint: "What I would, I do not; and what I would not, that I do." This dualism appears early and lasts as long as life itself.

So strong indeed is this anti-material flowering that we must sometimes make it a special order, as with *Rabbi Ben Ezra*, to keep unimpaired or to get restored a modicum of the body's rights: "Nor soul helps flesh more, now, than flesh helps soul!"

As in babyhood we identify ourselves at first with body, so in our social nonage we identify ourselves with other bodies, swaying with them wheresoever the will to power lists. To be found different in such nonage is to be in difficulty. Not least with one's own insipient self; for the only element of sociality yet dependably achieved is animal gregariousness. How to be *in* a group and yet not wholly *of* it, this is as yet the blank page in childhood's picture book. The "solitude of society" is still a long way off.

From gregarious beginnings, however, there slowly supervenes a group purpose more prescient than group osmosis. It may come through the enforced discovery that our childhood "gang" has rights which come to be respected merely because they have at first to be observed. Or it may come in heightened consciousness of individual purpose, and the realization that only through gregariousness is there to be found strength for individual ends. Come when and

how it may, the promotion from "with" the group to "through" the group, makes a long step in the collective idiom of power.

*Power Gone to Seed*

A long step this, but not the final step. A later stage awaits: the stage of realizing the will to power over bodies. This may be collective in constitution, as when a gang becomes conscious of purposes wider than gangdom and dedicates itself to civic ends that involve individual discipline as means. It is more likely to come as individualization through collective instrumentality. Tammany Hall has been to many a youthful "Al" Smith a path to distinguished citizenship. A member of the gang discovers in himself a purpose that is different from, may even be higher than, the purpose of the group. He may boost himself up to a rung of dominance. He may indeed become boss of gangdom, leader of Boy Scouts, revelling in his individual power over others and fulfilling his purpose through congealing their wills into an agency for the projecting of his own ambition. Whether the sense be thus corporate or individual, the will to power has promoted itself mightily when purpose dominates bodies and budges them toward an end that has individual strength from the union.

The progression thus impressionistically sketched eventuates with power as a perfecting process, though poisonous enough in some of its by-products. Its imperfection, so far as yet appears, derives chiefly from the immediacy of its end. Such imperfection finds cure in perspective. A *gang* is a "gang" because it serves low ends. When a gang achieves a purpose more worthy, it becomes a civic organization devoted to this or that "service." If the low end persists and succeeds in enlarging the agency nevertheless, then we come to the final poison of power in the mob-spirit,

dominated, as Plato foresaw, by a "mobbish" man, a tyrant soul.

Such dominance may consolidate itself for a long career, as appears in the cold prudence of Stalin's successful drive for power "with" the party but "over" all the party membership. What appears to be an evolution in the process of perfection—from "with" to "through" and then to "over"—may but body forth at the end a devolution by power's intersecting and cancelling out all other powers. Power, which we have assumed to be intrinsically good as and because it fulfils its own impetus, can thus become so extrinsically evil as to provide hard if not deep ground for the wry notion, with which we began, that all power tends to corrupt. We may now correct that severe saying with a more discriminating judgment: *Power poisons men with narrow purpose; it perfects men with progressive purpose.*

#### *Another Approach to Power*

Let us now pursue the same tack but from the opposite direction. We start again with the observation that power is indeed ubiquitous. Its very definition makes that much clear; for power is no mysterious and elusive phantom: it is, forthrightly speaking, *the capacity to effect results*. No domain is immune from it. If it seems to be absent from the quiet country graveyard—where antecedents and consequents closely resemble each other—even there it only seems so; for the cemetery is but a sad if conspicuous sign that inanimate potency is having its way with the vital. Resident in the womb, power stands guard also at the tomb. Beginning before the beginning, power does not end with any known ending.

How this ubiquitous and continuous phenomenon called power, came to be we do not know, though we ebb with its

ebbing and flow with its flowing. As the Canadian poet, Edwin J. Pratt, says,

It's not for us to understand  
How life on earth began to be.

Nevertheless, from the womb of the primordial, the prior world of power has arisen and functions coincident with the very world of being. "Any power," says Plato, "is a sufficient definition of being." We have already said that power conditions the distribution of freedom; we are now face to face with the more radical notion that power constitutes freedom.

Since, at any rate, power is the capacity to produce results, we may fruitfully distinguish between results unintended and those intended. It is with power as progenitor of intended results that we must now engage ourselves; for this is the aspect of power in which perfection finds regal residence and career. Power, which is, then, any and every capacity to produce results, passes from mere causation to super-causation as it becomes fully conscious of its effects. When consciousness, in turn, becomes conscientiousness, power passes from the conative to the cognitive. Power now transcends the realm of might by achieving the vantage of the right. In short, perfection is the goal of the will to power, but it is approached only by a change of pace and a reinforced motivation.

When reason becomes the cause, power reaches its motivational maturity; but when the reason for intended results becomes a pure demand for rightness, power has ascended to its zenith. Without sacrificing its original alliance with the devil, power reaches now to deity. We can see, dimly at least, from the very outset, that there prevails a certain distinction between conscience and causation. But we will also see, in the event, that this distinction, though important enough, need not fritter itself away in such

radical dualism as is suggested by Bishop Butler's characteristic plaint: "Had [conscience] strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world." The fact that conscience *would* do just that, is perhaps enough to suggest, what we shall argue, that its own complexion is not wholly alien to the power-motif, though this motif it characteristically, as here, demears and bemoans.

Given power-ubiquity, we must find the roots of perfection in the sub-soil of power, or no ideal fulfilment ever know. The pathos of power—and we suspect in the event its poison, too—arises not from its incidence but from its accident, so to say: from our having to accept results that were not intended, though they may have been foregone all the while. To be thus slipped up on by oneself is for man the final slip-up. We laugh to hide tears over the story of the humble trainman, at banquet, felicitated by the superintendent for having saved many lives through the humdrum but faithful tapping of train wheels. Before the banqueters, the surprised trainman thanked the superintendent profusely for this clarification of his humble role; for, said he, he had all his life been wondering why he had to tap "them damn wheels" every time a train stopped in his yard.

In our efforts to maximize the "intendability" of results by spelling out the continuity of causation in general and its alliance with conscience in particular, we cannot with full scrupulosity allow ourselves the easy leeway of the theologian, who holds power to be perfectionistic merely because it is divine, or the slothful leniency of the idealistic philosopher, who holds that power is perfectionistic because it is rational. Power that is poisonous on earth is poisonous in heaven, as Robert Frost's *Masque of Reason* makes out before the wondering eyes of Job; and power that is fully rationalized, as in communism, may be more odious than power in the raw, like Mussolini's, so to say.



The perfection of power must be found, if at all, in what is indigenous to power, not in what is adventitious. No mere change of venue of power can affect its nature. The divine and the diabolical are justly suspect of connivance behind the thin semantic veil that separates them. As Job says in Frost's drama, dedicated to that suffering Sage:

The chances are when there's so much pretence  
Of metaphysical profundity  
The obscurity's a fraud to cover nothing.

The intersection, indeed the overlapping, of power and perfection we must further remark; and this purpose we now pursue through the strategy of a triple affirmation:

1. Conscience is itself a bid for power, and so cannot provide proof for its own claim to perfection.
2. Morality matures through political power, as consciences-in-conflict are seen to find fulfilment only through the accommodation of counter-claims.
3. Civilization is, therefore, the progressive enlargement of compromise-areas, so that power will not so easily and so fatally cancel itself out.

1. *Conscience itself is a bid for power.* Let it be clear what it is that under this heading we now undertake: it is no less than to rob what normally passes as man's will to perfection of the domain of conscience and to transfer this domain to the jurisdiction of power. This we do, like Robin Hood, for ends of justice: to show how the ideal aspect of power may be treated full constructively. The *prima facie* evidence for the thesis that conscience is best classified as a power phenomenon is so strong that no *ultima facie* evidence against it suffices. The simple and obvious evidence is that equally authenticated consciences sometimes are—and, alas, sometimes remain through all efforts of reconciliation—in conflict with one another. When it is so, the saints prove as stiff-necked as the most

obdurate sinners, and even more ready to resort to noose and stake.

Illustrations of the thesis are everywhere at hand. Let us pass by the obvious Christian examples of how power winds its serpentine way through the Eden of conscience—Cromwell and Cotton Mather, not to allude to the present and persistent logistics of the Roman Catholic Church. Let us pass, too, high tensional moments in Canadian history, centring in and around Quebec. Pass by these to find perspective in a Mohammedan story and pathos in an illustration from my own country.

Maimonides tells a sad story much to our point, an incident in the Mohammedan conquest of Spain. A certain victorious hero, animated with the high aims of his faith, one Ibn Tamurt, came to the gates of Cordova, a city in which lived the ancestors of Spinoza. He demanded, did Tamurt, the death of all Jews (even as St. Thomas at the same general period was invoking death against his own preferred types of Christian heretics), if they did not immediately proclaim their conversion to the new and opportune orthodoxy.

“It is because I have compassion on you,” Tamurt assured the supplicating Elders of the Jews, “that I command you to become Muslim; for I desire to save you from eternal punishment.” When they pleaded with him further, and even invoked the lethal fruits of their “heresy” to fall on their own heads, not his, he reaffirmed his edict in the universal idiom of conscience now enflamed with power, and closed the dire colloquy in these classic words: “I do not desire to argue with you, for I know you will argue according to your own religion.”

So much for an example, from the field of comparative religion, of the thesis that conscience is itself a snake lying in wait upon the road to perfection. Men everywhere and at all times have thus used claims of rightness to effect

priority for their own beliefs and to secure dominance for themselves. Nearer home, and no less infected with pathos, is a secular illustration from American politics.

It is a notion current among historians and certainly one with strong internal support, that the Civil War between the States came as a result of the power-impasse between consciences of the North and the South. Though slavery had been an issue, one may say a dominant issue, since the foundation of the Republic, it did not for three-quarters of a century lead to internecine strife. It did not lead to war, in fact, until it became such a bone of contention between equally adamant consciences—abolitionists on the one side and apologists for slavery on the other—that the politicians, merchants as they are of mediation, were not longer able to find any common ground, however low, for conciliation. Partisan consciences had turned all disinterestedness into partisan prowess.

Perhaps this is enough—since my present purpose is to illustrate rather than to argue the matter—enough, that is, to recommend the hypothesis that the dicta of conscience represent the continuity of the power principle, being themselves always claims for the primary of certain beliefs and, of course, for the dominance of preferred believers. There appears to be, in fact, a fearful undertow of power in all projected claims made by earnest men in the name of duty.

Conscience cannot provide its own legitimacy because it is always an interested party, nor can any change of venue, from earth to heaven, for instance, as I have said, clothe it with disinterestedness. From the throne of omniscient judgment conscience chronically annihilates its enemies and intimidates the world with its *ought* and *ought not*; and it follows hard upon its verbal thunderbolts with the artillery of action, clearing a path for duty by coercion. In short, the ubiquity of power leaves conscience so crucially exposed that we do well, I suggest, to impute to conscience

an invariable will to coercion. Thomas Hobbes, who of course made this notion current for British ethics, combines the sacerdotal and the secular motifs in one of the most impressive exemplifications of our contention. Replying to his three major types of critics, each of whom thought to monopolize for itself the high ground of disinterestedness, Hobbes devastated them all together with one fell sentence:

These things I found most bitterly excepted against: That I made the civil power too large, *but this by ecclesiastical persons*. That I had utterly taken away liberty of conscience, *but this by sectaries*. That I had set the princes above the laws, *but this by lawyers* [italics supplied].

The ubiquity of power restored by this effective imputation of universal partiality, Hobbes drew the inevitable conclusion: that so-called *private* conscience, by the very fact of its privacy, becomes a power-claim rather than a demonstration of its own legitimacy. And so of course, as he says, "In such diversity as there is of private consciences, which are but private opinions, the Commonwealth must needs be distracted, and no man dare to obey the Sovereign Power, farther than it seems good in his own eyes." Power is here made to appear poisonous not in its essence but in the plurality and so in the conflict of its drives. And, so saying, we are already brought to our second thesis.

2. *Morality matures through politics, since consciences-in-conflict find no relief from inter-cancellation save through Compromise.*

This priority of politics in the spiritual life, Abraham Lincoln, for instance, took for granted. Any man of the world, who has always, like the politician, to be dealing with the unlike-minded, will be driven to entertain it eventually if not to accept it initially. The *prima facie* evidence prevails, by default if not by design. How else explain "religious wars"? The fact is observable, and stubborn, the

fact of differences so radical as to grow lethal between good men. Since values, however high, are debased to conflict by being diversely defined in different minds, politics must effect some agreement before duty can ever prevail over "duties," unless we make as prime the savage, the simple "duty," of each man to do all men to death over differences as to what duty is. I say "politics" must effect the agreement, because politics becomes by default the undisputed king of all that is in dispute, in serious dispute among men. Politics settles what can no longer remain unsettled but cannot be settled by any nicer means. Call the process by any other name and it will appear no less inevitable, and little less odious to sensitive and partisan consciences.

Moralists do differ; and when the differences persist, moralists are quickly at extremity. When the assertion of a duty arouses a counter-assertion of duty, a situation has arisen in the very moralizing process which morality alone is not equipped to resolve, save lethally. It is, again, the pluralism of power-centres which converts the impetus to perfect into a poison prescribed in the name of each monistic claim. Moralists, by the very impotence of their method to effect amity, beg the question of unity. When what they beg is not bequeathed, moralists are at an impasse. The politician cannot beg the ambiguous question; he is stuck with it until he can *create* an acceptable answer. So it is that the moralist's extremity becomes, willy-nilly, the politician's opportunity.

If we seem to labour the point it is because there is here a difficulty deeper than any semantics, which we must acknowledge and mitigate if not fully remedy. The inherited morality of any age is the sum-total of agreements which have arisen through custom or have been created in legislative activity. It is easy for the moralist to assume universal agreement, because much of commonalty *is* inherited by each generation. The question of agreement

can be begged, however, only after the question has been raised and laid. Where it is raised but not laid, to try to beg the question does not suffice; it only exasperates the asker of the question. Where the exasperation is mutual, because each is trying to beg the question, which neither will allow, there arises necessarily the extremity already remarked. Politics exists to break impasses created by answers from one set of partisans which still pose questions to other equally insistent partisans.

Not all is confusion, however, which confuses the dogmatic. Groups with a common purpose have historically enlarged its extension. "Thirty-nine articles" are better than no "article" in any creedal war. Men may still function in an orderly manner, moreover, who have but a single purpose in common, with many, many more at variance. Sectarians are held together by things much more formal than affection—a constitution, by-laws, public relations counsels and maxims, and legal advisers—and always and ever by the push of fear to augment the pull of hope. The "Free World" is today filled with organizations operating well below the ceiling of brotherly love but well above the floor of communistic hate. Such plural organizations come to be on the principle that later sustains them: a balance of power.

Consent to this balance, which is born of previous and hard won concessions, is a power manifestation; but it is not coercion. It is a pull of advantage calling to its constant aid the steady promptings of prudence. In the ubiquity of power, power is poison only to the extent that it clogs; it is perfection to the extent that it releases. The self-fulfilment offered to men by the development of the national state, for instance, so completely outweighs what is destroyed by its formation that the balance of power known as nationalism is, up to this point, the hardest and the finest

achievement of the human race. Burke did not oversing its praises.

The balance of power has thus far been achieved by a process which we may interrupt for discussion at three levels. There is, first, the minimal level of accommodation known as *liquidation*. At the very bottom this is "the good old rule, the simple plan" of Rob Roy. Its results are poignantly depicted in Carl Sandburg's lethal lines:

In a Colorado graveyard  
Two men lie now in one grave.  
They shot it out in a jam over who owned  
One corner lot: over a piece of real estate  
They shot it out: it was a perfect duel.  
Each cleansed the world of the other.  
Each horizontal in an identical grave  
Had his bones cleaned by the same maggots.  
They sleep now as two accommodating neighbours.

This level, of liquidation, is for the undisciplined and is, in general, morally unfruitful. It is power nearest to pure poison. The first victim of liquidation is legitimacy itself. Liquidation makes the worst of the bad. There is, then, the maximal accommodation, at the other extreme, known as *love*. It is available for the beatific. It makes the best of the better. But love is for the lucky, as liquidation is for the lost alone. Love comes not by request nor stays for the asking. It knows little, if anything, of the *ought*. It is precious but precarious. Finally, however, there is the mediocre accommodation among men known as *compromise*, though its spread, as we shall presently detail, covers such stages of amity as acquiescence, assent, consent, and collaboration. This type of accommodation is for the disciplined, and marks the whole range of what is morally legitimate, below the level of love. The nearest approach of power to "a surplus of value"—after inter-

cancellation has wrought its diminution—is this lowly form of accommodation.

Compromise becomes, then, the standard form of human accommodation in a world of ubiquitous and conflicting powers. If too civilized to liquidate 'em and too finicky to love 'em, then let your motto be to "jine 'em." Compromise is a sort of universal common-law marriage. It is much less good, we repeat, than the best, which is love; it is much less bad than the worst, which is liquidation: it makes the better of the bad. It is just the right size for common living because it has leeway enough for men too little to sustain constant lyricism, and leniency enough for the normal let-downs of the perfectionistic. "Compromise," as an undergraduate has defined it, "is the highest of evils and the lowest of goods." This outcome brings us now to our third thesis.

3. *Civilization is the progressive enlargement of compromise-areas.*

In the clinches of collective life, politicians become our practising moralists. Diplomats are, of course, but politicians *in extremis*. They are practitioners of the art of "strategic obfuscation," where the concessions that condition consent depend more upon push than upon pull. In other words, diplomacy is the calculated risk of politics at the periphery. Risk or stagnate; calculate or fail.

Theoretically, the moral terrain ahead is not different in kind, not even in an atomic age, from that already traversed and surveyed first by politicians in creating modern nations. The provincialism which long delayed the coming of the national state, even of free commonwealths, like Canada or like the United States, seemed at times as impossible to surmount as do the obstacles now in the way of world peace through international agreements in the United Nations. Unquestionably, we need a new ethics



for an age of atomic power; but, since there is no immaculate conception available for ethics, any improvement must be founded on agreements which await creation by the same uncalloused hands and the same sort of forked tongues that have always been attributed to diplomats.

Those alike who eschew power and who use it only to suppress other power-drives, are both enemies of the value maxima. To achieve such balance and thus make the will to power heir to an unearned increment, no parthenogenesis of power is called for. It is not miracles which we bespeak. Power, which can become poison, is already perfection so far as it does not through inner criss-cross, neutralize itself. The capacity of intending results and of seeing intent through to eventual agreement, this has brought us far on the long path of civilization. It can carry us farther and farther still. "The night my father got me," says the wry poet, "his mind was not on me." Such absent-mindedness is not the path to felicity, populationally or politically speaking. By taking thought man can mightily ameliorate his lot, and this obtains without any limits which we have yet glimpsed. Power rationalized is already power moralized—and is promissory of what our Fathers projected as the "perfectibility of mankind." In such achievement new liberty is created and new and old liberties alike achieve improving distribution.

Freedom in its most elementary sense is the doing of what one wants to do and the becoming of what one wants to be. If power be not identical with freedom, freedom implies power and power fulfils it. Power is the veritable beginning of freedom. One is budged from this elementary level, if not by the discovery that conscience is a power-claim, then by the precarious distribution of freedom which results from the exercise of power unaware of its Gestalt and impercipient of its consequences. Even such short-sightedness yields a sort of freedom—getting what one wants

when he wants it—but a sort that is infirm of foundation and poor in quality. Such freedom is precarious because it shifts with any and every accidental change of power, and it is poor in quality because it is rendered anaemic by its own contradictions. In short, man wants more than merely to get what he wants at a given time. The freedom is poor which ministers to man's minimum rather than to his maximum capacity.

The will to power is formally only one-third of man's capacity to will, and the strongest but the most infecund third. The will to power finds further fulfilment in an honourable alliance with the will to perfection; and the two together achieve final fecundity for freedom only through man's will to piety. Triune by nature, man's demand for freedom finds ultimate realization only in strategic exercise of his total energies.