

I EGALITARIANISM AS A REVOLT AGAINST NATURE

For well over a century, the Left has generally been conceded to have morality, justice, and “idealism” on its side; the Conservative opposition to the Left has largely been confined to the “impracticality” of its ideals. A common view, for example, is that socialism is splendid “in theory,” but that it cannot “work” in practical life. What the Conservatives failed to see is that while short-run gains can indeed be made by appealing to the impracticality of radical departures from the *status quo*, that by conceding the ethical and the “ideal” to the Left they were doomed to long-run defeat. For if one side is granted ethics and the “ideal” from the start, then that side will be able to effect gradual but sure changes in its own direction; and as these changes accumulate, the stigma of “impracticality” becomes less and less directly relevant. The Conservative opposition, having staked its all on the seemingly firm ground of the “practical” (that is, the *status quo*) is doomed to lose as the *status quo* moves further in the left direction. The fact that the unreconstructed Stalinists are universally considered to be the “Conservatives” in the Soviet Union is a happy logical joke upon conservatism; for in Russia the unrepentant statist are indeed the repositories of at least a superficial “practicality” and of a clinging to the existing *status quo*.

Never has the virus of “practicality” been more widespread than in the United States, for Americans consider themselves a “practical” people, and hence, the opposition to the Left, while originally stronger than elsewhere, has been perhaps the least firm at its foundation. It is now the advocates of the free market and the free society who have to meet the common charge of “impracticality.”

In no area has the Left been granted justice and morality as extensively and almost universally as in its espousal of massive equality. It is rare indeed in the United States to find anyone, especially any intellectual, challenging the beauty and goodness of the egalitarian ideal. So committed is everyone to this ideal that “impracticality”—that is, the weakening of economic incentives—has been virtually the only criticism against even the most bizarre egalitarian programs. The inexorable march of egalitarianism is indication enough of the impossibility of avoiding ethical commitments; the fiercely “practical” Americans, in attempting to avoid ethical doctrines, cannot help setting forth such doctrines, but they can now only do so in unconscious, *ad hoc*, and unsystematic fashion. Keynes’s famous insight that “practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist”—is true all the more of ethical judgments and ethical theory.¹

The unquestioned ethical status of “equality” may be seen in the common practice of economists. Economists are often caught in a value-judgment bind—eager to make political pronouncements. How can they do so while remaining “scientific” and value-free? In the area of egalitarianism, they

¹John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1936), p. 383.

have been able to make a flat value judgment on behalf of equality with remarkable impunity. Sometimes this judgment has been frankly personal; at other times, the economist has pretended to be the surrogate of “society” in the course of making its value judgment. The result, however, is the same. Consider, for example, the late Henry C. Simons. After properly criticizing various “scientific” arguments for progressive taxation, he came out flatly for progression as follows:

The case for drastic progression in taxation must be rested on the case against inequality—on the ethical or aesthetic judgment that the prevailing distribution of wealth and income reveals a degree (and/or kind) of inequality which is distinctly evil or unlovely.²

Another typical tactic may be culled from a standard text on public finance. According to Professor John F. Due,

[t]he strongest argument for progression is the fact that the consensus of opinion in society today regards progression as necessary for equity. This is, in turn, based on the principle that the pattern of income distribution, before taxes, involves excessive inequality.

The latter “can be condemned on the basis of inherent unfairness in terms of the standards accepted by society.”³

Whether the economist boldly advances his own value judgments or whether he presumes to reflect the values of “society,” his immunity from criticism has been remarkable nonetheless. While candor in proclaiming one’s values may be admirable, it is surely not enough; in the quest for truth it

²Henry C. Simons, *Personal Income Taxation* (1938), pp. 18–19, quoted in Walter J. Blum and Harry Kalven, Jr., *The Uneasy Case for Progressive Taxation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 72.

³John F. Due, *Government Finance* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, 1954), pp. 128–29.

is scarcely sufficient to proclaim one's value judgments as if they must be accepted as tablets from above that are not themselves subject to intellectual criticism and evaluation. Is there no requirement that these value judgments be in some sense valid, meaningful, cogent, *true*? To raise such considerations, of course, is to flout the modern canons of pure *wertfreiheit* in social science from Max Weber onward, as well as the still older philosophic tradition of the stern separation of "fact and value," but perhaps it is high time to raise such fundamental questions. Suppose, for example, that Professor Simons's ethical or aesthetic judgment was not on behalf of equality but of a very different social ideal. Suppose, for example, he had been in favor of the murder of all short people, of all adults under five feet, six inches in height. And suppose he had then written: "The case for the liquidation of all short people must be rested on the case against the existence of short people—on the ethical or aesthetic judgment that the prevailing number of short adults is distinctly evil or unlovely." One wonders if the reception accorded to Professor Simons's remarks by his fellow economists or social scientists would have been quite the same. Or, we can ponder Professor Due writing similarly on behalf of the "opinion of society today" in the Germany of the 1930s with regard to the social treatment of Jews. The point is that in all these cases the logical status of Simons's or Due's remarks would have been precisely the same, even though their reception by the American intellectual community would have been strikingly different.

My point so far has been twofold: (1) that it is not enough for an intellectual or social scientist to proclaim his value judgments—that these judgments must be rationally defensible and must be demonstrable to be valid, cogent, and correct: in short, that they must no longer be treated as above

intellectual criticism; and (2) that the goal of equality has for too long been treated uncritically and axiomatically as the ethical ideal. Thus, economists in favor of egalitarian programs have typically counterbalanced their uncriticized “ideal” against possible disincentive effects on economic productivity; but rarely has the ideal itself been questioned.⁴

Let us proceed, then, to a critique of the egalitarian ideal itself—should equality be granted its current status as an unquestioned ethical ideal? In the first place, we must challenge the very idea of a radical separation between something that is “true in theory” but “not valid in practice.” If a theory is correct, then it *does* work in practice; if it does not work in practice, then it is a bad theory. The common separation between theory and practice is an artificial and fallacious one. But this is true in ethics as well as anything else. If an ethical ideal is inherently “impractical,” that is, if it *cannot* work in practice, then it is a poor ideal and should be discarded forthwith. To put it more precisely, if an ethical goal violates the nature of man and/or the universe and, therefore, *cannot* work in practice, then it is a bad ideal and should be dismissed as a goal. If the goal itself violates the nature of man, then it is also a poor idea to work in the direction of that goal.

Suppose, for example, that it has come to be adopted as a universal ethical goal that all men be able to fly by flapping

⁴Thus:

A third line of objection to progression, and undoubtedly the one which has received the most attention, is that it lessens the economic productivity of the society. Virtually everyone who has advocated progression in an income tax has recognized this as a counterbalancing consideration. (Blum and Kalven, *The Uneasy Case for Progressive Taxation*, p. 21)

The “ideal” vs. the “practical” once again!

their arms. Let us assume that “pro-flappers” have been generally conceded the beauty and goodness of their goal, but have been criticized as “impractical.” But the result is unending social misery as society tries continually to move in the direction of arm-flying, and the preachers of arm-flapping make everyone’s lives miserable for being either lax or sinful enough not to live up to the common ideal. The proper critique here is to challenge the “ideal” goal itself; to point out that the goal itself is impossible in view of the physical nature of man and the universe; and, therefore, to free mankind from its enslavement to an inherently impossible and, hence, evil goal. But this liberation could never occur so long as the anti-armfliers continued to be solely in the realm of the “practical” and to concede ethics and “idealism” to the high priests of arm-flying. The challenge must take place at the core—at the presumed ethical superiority of a nonsensical goal. The same, I hold, is true of the egalitarian ideal, except that its social consequences are far more pernicious than an endless quest for man’s flying unaided. For the condition of equality would wreak far more damage upon mankind.

What, in fact, is “equality”? The term has been much invoked but little analyzed. A and B are “equal” if they are identical to each other with respect to a given attribute. Thus, if Smith and Jones are both exactly six feet in height, then they may be said to be “equal” in height. If two sticks are identical in length, then their lengths are “equal,” etc. There is one and only one way, then, in which any two people can really be “equal” in the fullest sense: they must be identical in all of their attributes. This means, of course, that equality of *all* men—the egalitarian ideal—can only be achieved if all men are precisely uniform, precisely identical with respect to all of their attributes. The egalitarian world would necessarily be a world of horror fiction—a world of faceless and identical creatures, devoid of all individuality, variety, or special creativity.

Indeed, it is precisely in horror fiction where the logical implications of an egalitarian world have been fully drawn. Professor Schoeck has resurrected for us the depiction of such a world in the British anti-Utopian novel *Facial Justice*, by L.P. Hartley, in which envy is institutionalized by the State's making sure that all girls' faces are equally pretty, with medical operations being performed on both beautiful and ugly girls to bring all of their faces up or down to the general common denominator.⁵ A short story by Kurt Vonnegut provides an even more comprehensive description of a fully egalitarian society. Thus, Vonnegut begins his story, "Harrison Bergeron":

The year was 2081, and everybody was finally equal. They weren't only equal before God and the law. They were equal every which way. Nobody was smarter than anybody else. Nobody was better looking than anybody else. Nobody was stronger or quicker than anybody else. All this equality was due to the 211th, 212th, and 213th Amendments to the Constitution, and to the unceasing vigilance of agents of the United States Handicapper General.

The "handicapping" worked partly as follows:

Hazel had a perfectly average intelligence, which meant she couldn't think about anything except in short bursts. And George, while his intelligence was way above normal, had a little mental handicap radio in his ear. He was required by law to wear it at all times. It was tuned to a government transmitter. Every twenty seconds or so, the transmitter would send out some sharp noise to keep people like George from taking unfair advantage of their brains.⁶

The horror we all instinctively feel at these stories is the intuitive recognition that men are *not* uniform, that the

⁵Helmut Schoeck, *Envy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1970), pp. 149–55.

⁶Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., "Harrison Bergeron," in *Welcome to the Monkey House* (New York: Dell, 1970), p. 7.

species, mankind, is uniquely characterized by a high degree of variety, diversity, differentiation; in short, inequality. An egalitarian society can only hope to achieve its goals by totalitarian methods of coercion; and, even here, we all believe and hope the human spirit of individual man will rise up and thwart any such attempts to achieve an ant-heap world. In short, the portrayal of an egalitarian society is horror fiction because, when the implications of such a world are fully spelled out, we recognize that such a world and such attempts are profoundly antihuman; being antihuman in the deepest sense, the egalitarian goal is, therefore, evil and any attempts in the direction of such a goal must be considered evil as well.

The great fact of individual difference and variability (that is, inequality) is evident from the long record of human experience; hence, the general recognition of the antihuman nature of a world of coerced uniformity. Socially and economically, this variability manifests itself in the universal division of labor, and in the “Iron Law of Oligarchy”—the insight that, in every organization or activity, a few (generally the most able and/or the most interested) will end up as leaders, with the mass of the membership filling the ranks of the followers. In both cases, the same phenomenon is at work—outstanding success or leadership in any given activity is attained by what Jefferson called a “natural aristocracy”—those who are best attuned to that activity.

The age-old record of inequality seems to indicate that this variability and diversity is rooted in the biological nature of man. But it is precisely such a conclusion about biology and human nature that is the most galling of all possible irritants to our egalitarians. Even egalitarians would be hard put to deny the historical record, but their answer is that “culture” has been to blame; and since they obviously hold that culture is a pure act of the will, then the goal of changing the

culture and inculcating society with equality seems to be attainable. In this area, the egalitarians slough off any pretense to scientific caution; they are scarcely content with acknowledging biology and culture as mutually interacting influences. Biology must be read out of court quickly and totally.

Let us ponder an example that is deliberately semi-frivolous. Suppose that we observe our culture and find a common dictum to be: "Redheads are excitable." Here is a judgment of inequality, a conclusion that redheads as a group tend to differ from the nonredhead population. Suppose, then, that egalitarian sociologists investigate the problem, and they find that redheads do, indeed, tend to be more excitable than nonredheads by a statistically significant amount. Instead of admitting the possibility of some sort of biological difference, the egalitarian will quickly add that the "culture" is responsible for the phenomenon: the generally accepted "stereotype" that redheads are excitable had been instilled into every redheaded child from an early age, and he or she has simply been internalizing these judgments and acting in the way society was expecting him to act. Redheads, in brief, had been "brainwashed" by the predominant nonredhead culture.

While not denying the possibility of such a process occurring, this common complaint seems decidedly unlikely on rational analysis. For the egalitarian culture-bugaboo implicitly assumes that the "culture" arrives and accumulates haphazardly, with no reference to social facts. The idea that "redheads are excitable" did not originate out of the thin air or as a divine commandment; how, then, did the idea come into being and gain general currency? One favorite egalitarian device is to attribute all such group-identifying statements to obscure psychological drives. The public had a psychological need to accuse *some* social group of excitability,

and redheads were fastened on as scapegoats. But why were redheads singled out? Why not blondes or brunettes? The horrible suspicion begins to loom that perhaps redheads were singled out because they *were* and are indeed more excitable and that, therefore, society's "stereotype" is simply a general insight into the facts of reality. Certainly this explanation accounts for more of the data and the processes at work and is a much simpler explanation besides. Regarded objectively, it seems to be a far more sensible explanation than the idea of the culture as an arbitrary and *ad hoc* bogeyman. If so, then we might conclude that redheads are biologically more excitable and that propaganda beamed at redheads by egalitarians urging them to be less excitable is an attempt to induce redheads to violate their nature; therefore, it is this latter propaganda that may more accurately be called "brainwashing."

This is not to say, of course, that society can never make a mistake and that its judgments of group-identity are always rooted in fact. But it seems to me that the burden of proof is far more on the egalitarians than on their supposedly "unenlightened" opponents.

Since egalitarians begin with the *a priori* axiom that all people, and hence all groups of peoples, are uniform and equal, it then follows for them that any and all group differences in status, prestige, or authority in society *must* be the result of unjust "oppression" and irrational "discrimination." Statistical proof of the "oppression" of redheads would proceed in a manner all too familiar in American political life; it might be shown, for example, that the median redhead income is lower than nonredheaded income, and further that the proportion of redheaded business executives, university professors, or congressmen is below their quotal representation in the population. The most recent and conspicuous manifestation of this sort of quotal thinking was in the

McGovern movement at the 1972 Democratic Convention. A few groups are singled out as having been “oppressed” by virtue of delegates to previous conventions falling below their quotal proportion of the population as a whole. In particular, women, youth, blacks, Chicanos (or the so-called Third World) were designated as having been oppressed; as a result, the Democratic Party, under the guidance of egalitarian-quota thinking, overrode the choices of the voters in order to compel their due quotal representation of these particular groups.

In some cases, the badge of “oppression” was an almost ludicrous construction. That youths of 18 to 25 years of age had been “underrepresented” could easily have been placed in proper perspective by a *reductio ad absurdum*, surely some impassioned McGovernite reformer could have risen to point out the grievous “underrepresentation” of five-year olds at the convention and to urge that the five-year-old bloc receive its immediate due. It is only commonsense biological and social insight to realize that youths win their way into society through a process of apprenticeship; youths know less and have less experience than mature adults, and so it should be clear why they tend to have less status and authority than their elders. But to accept this would be to cast the egalitarian creed into some substantial doubt; further, it would fly into the face of the youth-worship that has long been a grave problem of American culture. And so young people have been duly designated as an “oppressed class,” and the coercing of their population quota is conceived as only just reparation for their previously exploited condition.⁷

⁷Egalitarians have, among their other activities, been busily at work “correcting” the English language. The use of the word “girl,” for example, is now held to grievously demean and degrade female youth and to

Women are another recently discovered “oppressed class,” and the fact that political delegates have habitually been far more than 50 percent male is now held to be an evident sign of their oppression. Delegates to political conventions come from the ranks of party activists, and since women have not been nearly as politically active as men, their numbers have understandably been low. But, faced with this argument, the widening forces of “women’s liberation” in America again revert to the talismanic argument about “brainwashing” by our “culture.” For the women’s liberationists can hardly deny the fact that every culture and civilization in history, from the simplest to the most complex, has been dominated by males. (In desperation, the liberationists have lately been countering with fantasies about the mighty Amazonian empire.) Their reply, once again, is that from time immemorial a male-dominated culture has brainwashed oppressed females to confine themselves to nurture, home, and the domestic hearth. The task of the liberationists is to effect a revolution in the female condition by sheer will, by the “raising of consciousness.” If most women continue to cleave to domestic concerns, this only reveals the “false consciousness” that must be extirpated.

Of course, one neglected reply is that if, indeed, men have succeeded in dominating every culture, then this in itself is a demonstration of male “superiority”; for if all genders are equal, how is it that male domination emerged in every case? But apart from this question, biology itself is being angrily denied and cast aside. The cry is that there are no, can be no, must be no biological differences between the sexes; all historical or current differences must be due to cultural brainwashing. In his brilliant refutation of the women’s liberationist

imply their natural subservience to adults. As a result, Left egalitarians now refer to girls of virtually any age as “women,” and we may confidently look forward to reading about the activities of “a five-year-old woman.”

Kate Millett, Irving Howe outlines several important biological differences between the sexes, differences important enough to have lasting social effects. They are: (1) “the distinctive female experience of maternity” including what the anthropologist Malinowski calls an “intimate and integral connection with the child . . . associated with physiological effects and strong emotions”; (2) “the hormonal components of our bodies as these vary not only between the sexes but at different ages within the sexes”; (3) “the varying possibilities for work created by varying amounts of musculature and physical controls”; and (4) “the psychological consequences of different sexual postures and possibilities,” in particular the “fundamental distinction between the active and passive sexual roles” as biologically determined in men and women respectively.⁸

Howe goes on to cite the admission by Dr. Eleanor Maccoby in her study of female intelligence that

it is quite possible that there are genetic factors that differentiate the two sexes and bear upon their intellectual performance. . . . For example, there is good reason to believe that boys are innately more aggressive than girls—and I mean aggressive in the broader sense, not just as it implies fighting, but as it implies dominance and initiative as well—and if this quality is one which underlies the later growth of analytic thinking, then boys have an advantage which girls . . . will find difficult to overcome.

Dr. Maccoby adds that “if you try to divide child training among males and females, we might find out that females need to do it and males don’t.”⁹

⁸Irving Howe, “The Middle-Class Mind of Kate Millett,” *Harper’s* (December, 1970): 125–26.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 126.

The sociologist Arnold W. Green points to the repeated emergence of what the egalitarians denounce as “stereotyped sex roles” even in communities originally dedicated to absolute equality. Thus, he cites the record of the Israeli kibbutzim:

The phenomenon is worldwide: women are concentrated in fields which require, singly or in combination, housewifely skills, patience and routine, manual dexterity, sex appeal, contact with children. The generalization holds for the Israeli kibbutz, with its established ideal of sexual equality. A “regression” to a separation of “women’s work” from “men’s work” occurred in the division of labor, to a state of affairs which parallels that elsewhere. The kibbutz is dominated by males and traditional male attitudes, on balance to the content of both sexes.¹⁰

Irving Howe unerringly perceives that at the root of the women’s liberation movement is resentment against the very existence of women as a distinctive entity:

For what seems to trouble Miss Millett isn’t merely the injustices women have suffered or the discriminations to which they continue to be subject. What troubles her most of all . . . is the sheer existence of women. Miss Millett dislikes the psychobiological distinctiveness of women, and she will go no further than to recognize—what choice is there, alas?—the inescapable differences of anatomy. She hates the perverse refusal of most women to recognize the magnitude of their humiliation, the shameful dependence they show in regard to (not very independent) men, the maddening pleasures they even take in cooking dinners for the “master group” and wiping the noses of their snotty brats. Raging against

¹⁰Arnold W. Green, *Sociology* (6th ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1972), p. 305. Green cites the study by A.I. Rabin, “The Sexes: Ideology and Reality in the Israeli Kibbutz,” in G.H. Seward and R.G. Williamson, eds., *Sex Roles in Changing Society* (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 285–307.

the notion that such roles and attitudes are biologically determined, since the very thought of the biological seems to her a way of forever reducing women to subordinate status, she nevertheless attributes to “culture” so staggering a range of customs, outrages, and evils that this culture comes to seem a force more immovable and ominous than biology itself.¹¹

In a perceptive critique of the women’s liberation movement, Joan Didion perceives its root to be a rebellion not only against biology but also against the “very organization of nature” itself:

If the necessity for conventional reproduction of the species seemed unfair to women, then let us transcend, via technology, “the very organization of nature,” the oppression, as Shulamith Firestone saw it, “that goes back through recorded history to the animal kingdom itself.” *I accept the Universe*, Margaret Fuller had finally allowed: Shulamith Firestone did not.¹²

To which one is tempted to paraphrase Carlyle’s admonition: “Egad, madam, you’d better.”

Another widening rebellion against biological sex norms, as well as against natural diversity, has been the recently growing call for bisexuality by Left intellectuals. The avoidance of “rigid, stereotyped” heterosexuality and the adoption of indiscriminate bisexuality is supposed to expand consciousness, to eliminate “artificial” distinctions between the sexes and to make all persons simply and unisexually “human.” Once again, brainwashing by a dominant culture (in this case, heterosexual) has supposedly oppressed a homosexual

¹¹Howe, “The Middle-Class Mind of Kate Millett,” p. 124.

¹²Joan Didion, “The Women’s Movement,” *New York Times Review of Books* (July 30, 1972), p. 1.

minority and blocked off the uniformity and equality inherent in bisexuality. For then every individual could reach his or her fullest “humanity” in the “polymorphous perversity” so dear to the hearts of such leading New Left social philosophers as Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse.

That biology stands like a rock in the face of egalitarian fantasies has been made increasingly clear in recent years. The researches of biochemist Roger J. Williams have repeatedly emphasized the great range of individual diversity throughout the entire human organism. Thus:

Individuals differ from each other even in the minutest details of anatomy and body chemistry and physics; finger and toe prints; microscopic texture of hair; hair pattern on the body, ridges and “moons” on the finger and toenails; thickness of skin, its color, its tendency to blister; distribution of nerve endings on the surface of the body; size and shape of ears, of ear canals, or semi-circular canals; length of fingers; character of brain waves (tiny electrical impulses given off by the brain); exact number of muscles in the body; heart action; strength of blood vessels; blood groups; rate of clotting of blood—and so on almost *ad infinitum*.

We now know a great deal about how inheritance works and how it is not only possible but certain that every human being possesses by inheritance an exceedingly complex mosaic, composed of thousands of items, which is distinctive for him alone.¹³

The genetic basis for inequality of intelligence has also become increasingly evident, despite the emotional abuse heaped upon such studies by fellow scientists as well as the lay public. Studies of identical twins raised in contrasting environments have been among the ways that this conclusion

¹³Roger J. Williams, *Free and Unequal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1953), pp. 17, 23. See also by Williams *Biochemical Individuality* (New York: John Wiley, 1963) and *You are Extraordinary* (New York: Random House, 1967).

has been reached; and Professor Richard Herrnstein has recently estimated that 80 percent of the variability in human intelligence is genetic in origin. Herrnstein concludes that any political attempts to provide environmental equality for all citizens will only intensify the degree of socioeconomic differences caused by genetic variability.¹⁴

The egalitarian revolt against biological reality, as significant as it is, is only a subset of a deeper revolt: against the ontological structure of reality itself, against the “very organization of nature”; against the universe as such. At the heart of the egalitarian left is the pathological belief that there is no structure of reality; that all the world is a *tabula rasa* that can be changed at any moment in any desired direction by the mere exercise of human will—in short, that reality can be instantly transformed by the mere wish or whim of human beings. Surely this sort of infantile thinking is at the heart of Herbert Marcuse’s passionate call for the comprehensive negation of the existing structure of reality and for its transformation into what he divines to be its true potential.

Nowhere is the Left Wing attack on ontological reality more apparent than in the Utopian dreams of what the future socialist society will look like. In the socialist future of Charles Fourier, according to Ludwig von Mises:

all harmful beasts will have disappeared, and in their places will be animals which will assist man in his labors—or even do his work for him. An antibeaver will see to the fishing; an antiwhale will move sailing ships in a calm; an antihippopotamus will tow the river boats. Instead of the lion there will be an antilion, a steed of wonderful swiftness, upon whose back the rider will sit

¹⁴Richard Herrnstein, “IQ,” *Atlantic Monthly* (September, 1971).

as comfortably as in a well-sprung carriage. "It will be a pleasure to live in a world with such servants."¹⁵

Furthermore, according to Fourier, the very oceans would contain lemonade rather than salt water.¹⁶

Similarly absurd fantasies are at the root of the Marxian utopia of communism. Freed from the supposed confines of specialization and the division of labor (the heart of any production above the most primitive level and hence of any civilized society), each person in the communist utopia would fully develop all of his powers in every direction.¹⁷ As Engels wrote in his *Anti-Dübring*, communism would give "each individual the opportunity to develop and exercise all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions."¹⁸ And Lenin looked forward in 1920 to the "abolition of the division of labor among people . . . the education, schooling, and training of people with *an all-around development and an all-around training, people able to do everything*. Communism is marching and must march toward this goal, and *will reach it*."¹⁹

In his trenchant critique of the communist vision, Alexander Gray charges:

¹⁵Ludwig von Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1951), pp. 163–64.

¹⁶Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 71. Mises cites the first and fourth volumes of Fourier's *Oeuvres Complètes*.

¹⁷For more on the communist utopia and the division of labor, see Murray N. Rothbard, *Freedom, Inequality, Primitivism, and the Division of Labor* (chap. 16, present volume).

¹⁸Quoted in Alexander Gray, *The Socialist Tradition* (London: Longmans, Green, 1947), p. 328.

¹⁹Italics are Lenin's. V.I. Lenin, *Left-Wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 34.

That each individual should have the opportunity of developing all his faculties, physical and mental, in all directions, is a dream which will cheer the vision only of the simple-minded, oblivious of the restrictions imposed by the narrow limits of human life. For life is a series of acts of choice, and each choice is at the same time a renunciation.

Even the inhabitant of Engels's future fairyland will have to decide sooner or later whether he wishes to be Archbishop of Canterbury or First Sea Lord, whether he should seek to excel as a violinist or as a pugilist, whether he should elect to know all about Chinese literature or about the hidden pages in the life of a mackerel.²⁰

Of course one way to try to resolve this dilemma is to fantasize that the New Communist Man of the future will be a superman, superhuman in his abilities to transcend nature. William Godwin thought that, once private property was abolished, man would become immortal. The Marxist theoretician Karl Kautsky asserted that in the future communist society, "a new type of man will arise . . . a superman . . . an exalted man." And Leon Trotsky prophesied that under communism:

man will become incomparably stronger, wiser, finer. His body more harmonious, his movements more rhythmical, his voice more musical. . . . The human average will rise to the level of an Aristotle, a Goethe, a Marx. Above these other heights new peaks will arise.²¹

We began by considering the common view that the egalitarians, despite a modicum of impracticality, have ethics and moral idealism on their side. We end with the conclusion that egalitarians, however intelligent as individuals, deny the very basis of human intelligence and of human reason: the identification of the ontological structure of reality, of the laws of

²⁰Gray, *The Socialist Tradition*, p. 328.

²¹Quoted in Mises, *Socialism: An Economic and Sociological Analysis*, p. 164.

human nature, and the universe. In so doing, the egalitarians are acting as terribly spoiled children, denying the structure of reality on behalf of the rapid materialization of their own absurd fantasies. Not only spoiled but also highly dangerous; for the power of ideas is such that the egalitarians have a fair chance of destroying the very universe that they wish to deny and transcend, and to bring that universe crashing around all of our ears. Since their methodology and their goals deny the very structure of humanity and of the universe, the egalitarians are profoundly antihuman; and, therefore, their ideology and their activities may be set down as profoundly evil as well. Egalitarians do *not* have ethics on their side unless one can maintain that the destruction of civilization, and even of the human race itself, may be crowned with the laurel wreath of a high and laudable morality.