Both-And, Toward Democratic Socialism, and the Communist Ideal

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I. Both-And: Thinking Dialectically 2-27
II. Toward Democratic Socialism 28-61
III. The Communist Ideal 62-88
I.

Both-And: Thinking Dialectically

1. Non-dialectical reasoning operates in either-or terms: the mind is distinct from the body or more generally from material reality; either the mind controls and determines material reality through the exercise of free-willed will power, or mindless and therefore will-less material reality controls and determines both the mind and itself; truth is either objective, factual, discovered or at least discoverable, or else it is subjective, value-laden, and interpretively and imaginatively created. Dialectical reasoning, on the other hand, understands these dualities less as either-ors than as both-ands. The world is at one and the same time both objective and subjective, truth is both discovered and created, mind and body/materiality are interdependent and inextricably intertwined.

2. Does two become one, or does one become two? This is a central question in a theory of struggle and contradiction. Two becomes one when a contradiction is resolved. Most resolutions, however, particularly in social and political life, are inherently incomplete or unstable, and thus either do not fully resolve the contradiction or continually threaten its revival or create new contradictions. Moreover, contradiction means that the opposite of any synthesis is always present in reality or potentiality, and will remain so until that final synthesis which resolves all contradiction—a state we are unlikely to experience in the foreseeable future. Two becomes one, therefore, as one becomes two, in an on-going process of unity and division.

3. The unity of opposites is well illustrated by mass and energy. Mass and energy are properties of things. They are not the same, but they are interconnected. Mass is the inactive or potential energy of a thing, whereas energy is the active force that emanates from a thing’s mass. Though not the same, each is the other in another form, each is convertible into the other, and neither
would exist without the other or at least the potentiality of the other. On the one hand, therefore, mass and energy have distinct and absolute or universal qualities. Mass has substance consisting of atoms and molecules, whereas energy consists of photons with no such substance to it—which is a way of saying that mass is that property of a thing that is not energy, and vice versa. On the other hand and at the same time, though, mass and energy are relative or contingent, in that under different conditions the one becomes the other. This means, at least with respect to mass and energy, that to pose absoluteness and relativity, or universality and contingency, as either-or alternatives is incorrect. Rather mass and energy stand in a both-and relationship to each other.

Can the same be said of social phenomena, say of democracy and dictatorship? Pure dictatorship refers in the extreme to a situation in which one person rules over others without having to respond or account to them in any way. Pure democracy refers to a situation in which people govern themselves, with everyone participating on equal terms. So stated, democracy and dictatorship appear as either-or. In fact, though, democracy and dictatorship are as interconnected as mass and energy. There has, first of all, never been a state of pure democracy nor of pure dictatorship, at least on a mass scale. No collective has ever achieved universal participation on an equal basis, nor has any one person ever been all-powerful. In the real world there has always been some type of power imbalance; some have always been able to rule over or dominate others to a greater or lesser extent. At the same time, those with greater power have always had to share power with others, either begrudgingly in the face of competing power or willingly in pursuit of mutual advantage. The less powerful, of course, must join forces to gain the advantage of numbers; mass power, or the potential or threat of mass power, has always forced a degree of responsiveness from even the strongest and most insulated of rulers. So all collectives, therefore, have both democratic and dictatorial features; and if the pure form were
ever to come about, it would arise out of the other and be convertible into the other again should conditions change. Democracy and dictatorship, like matter and energy, are both-ands which could not exist without at least the potentiality of the other.

4. Does the contradiction of opposites inhere in the material world, or is it an aspect of the realm of ideas? This question is the same as asking whether there is any such thing as objective truth or merely subjective interpretation, or whether there is any such thing as fact or only value judgment. The answer dialectically is both-and, and pragmatically that it is a moot point because the issue is of no practical consequence.

A starting point for analysis is to ask whether there was contradiction before there were beings capable of formulating ideas. If so, then contradiction inhere in the material world. An initial question is whether during that period of time anything happened at all. Unless this reality is a total illusion and the findings of modern science erroneous, then the answer is clearly yes. Objectively speaking, there was not a state of nothingness; something occurred; at one time the earth was a burning, explosive mass, and then cooled down; once it was covered with water, and then land appeared; once it was lifeless, and then life began. But to say that something happened is not necessarily to say there was contradiction. Today we characterize what happened back then as an initial state of chaos followed by a gradually developing order. But the chaos/order distinction is an interpretation of what happened from the perspective of a being whose existence depends on what it characterizes as orderliness. To some entity equally at home in both situations, what happened back then would not represent contradiction but a neutral state of affairs. There is thus an inextricable interrelationship between the objective facts of the material world and some observer’s subjective evaluation of those facts. Contradiction inhere in the material world in the sense that what happens there provides the objective data on which
subjective evaluation depends.

Contradiction also inheres in the realm of ideas in the sense that the perception of contradiction in objective data depends on the subjective vantage point of some observer. Furthermore, as a practical matter it makes no difference whether contradiction inheres in the material world or the realm of ideas or both. Contradiction is no more nor less real one way or the other. Moreover, the recognition of contradiction is of significance only as an impetus to change; and whatever the source contradiction can be resolved by changing the material conditions which constitute or give rise to the perception of contradiction, or by changing one's interpretation of those material conditions, or by both in conjunction. Consider, for example, the contradiction between the will to survive and the inevitability of death. Pragmatically and dialectically, materialism views this contradiction as inhering interdependently in both the material world and the realm of ideas. On the one hand, both the will to survive and the inevitability of death are genetically ingrained and thus material aspects of existence; on the other hand, these facts are contradictory only because humans are consciously aware of them and view them as relevant to their choices in life. But be that as it may, the contradiction can be resolved, or at least mediated, on both a material level, as by efforts to prolong life, and on an idea level, as by looking at death as a passage to another form of existence. Even just accepting death as inevitable is a form of resolution or mediation, in that once death is truly accepted it ceases to be an issue in life. Once that state of mind is reached, whether a contradiction continues to exist or not in the material world is of no practical significance.

5. Does the material world determine the world of ideas, or is it the other way around? The theory of contradiction, of the unity of opposites, suggests that these two worlds are mutually interdependent and interconnected, that each gives rise to and determines the other, and that at
the same time each has a degree of autonomy or a life of its own. Prior to the advent of life, to
the existence of beings capable of forming ideas, there was only the material world, which at that
point was thus totally self-determined. With the coming of life, and particularly of human life,
the world of ideas developed. Initially, it seems likely that the material world had primacy over
the world of ideas, and that the latter developed as an aid to survival as against the hostile aspects
of the material world. During that period of history the material world must have seemed like,
and as a practical matter was, an all-powerful force to be responded to as a given. Under those
conditions the material world was the determining factor. The situation changed, however, once
the world of ideas developed to the point where it became possible to manipulate the material
world. Undoubtedly the will to do so arose from the desire for a more pleasant life than the
previously all-powerful material world furnished; but once it was possible for beings, through the
use of ideas, to alter the material world to their advantage, then the relationship between the
material world and the world of ideas became two-way and interdeterminative. For to
manipulate the material world, even as the desire to do so arises from it, is at the same time to
determine that world.

This does not mean that the material world and the world of ideas necessarily stand on equal
footing. Since material struggles—searching searching for food, overcoming disease, combating
exploitation, and the like—have dominated history, it seems fair to say that for most if not all of
history to date the material world has assumed primacy over the world of ideas. Perhaps at some
future time humankind will have so ameliorated the material struggles of life that the world of
ideas will predominate and people, or whatever those beings call themselves, will spend their
time in philosophic contemplation. The issue of which is primary, though, is largely irrelevant.
For once the interdependence of the material world and the world of ideas is apparent, then
understanding history requires the study of both worlds; and, more importantly, changing the
course of history requires people to recognize both how their ideas are influenced by the material
conditions of life and how it is possible to improve those conditions through their ideas and the
actions emanating therefrom.

6. At times Marx saw the material world as dominating mental life. "It is not the consciousness
of men that determines their existence, but on the contrary their social existence determines their
consciousness." Historical materialism was a reaction against the idealistic view that it was
possible to discover absolute truths concerning morals or human nature or existence through the
operation purely of the mind and that history was an inexorable progression to a higher state of
consciousness. "(T)he ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind
and translated into forms of thought." Idealism, so viewed, is an abstract and detached
perspective of life which overlooks the harshness of day-to-day existence, much as religious
fundamentalism counsels endurance of the tribulations of life in faith of a better life hereafter.
Marx, on the other hand, was above all a humanist, although he may have rejected this label, in
the sense that his foremost concern was the welfare of real, every-day human beings.

It is possible to find in historical materialism a thoroughly deterministic view of life. Not
only is mental life determined by the material conditions of life, but material life is also
determined by itself—as it must be if mental life is not a determining factor. Under this view
capitalism is an inevitable stage of history to be followed first by socialism and then by
communism. And if it turns out that some societies are able to by-pass capitalism or socialism
and move straight to communism, then that too can be explained deterministically—it’s just that
earlier analysis didn’t consider or have access to all relevant factors so as to make an accurate
forecast. And so it has to be once mental life is placed in a subordinate position. All of which
has practical consequences for revolutionary theory. Since people's thinking is determined by
their material conditions, it becomes crucial, indeed imperative, to change those conditions,
forcibly if necessary, in order to change ways of thinking. In fact, if people's way of living is
changed, their way of thinking will inevitably change too. And though mental life is
subordinate, it is important to change people's minds because divergent ways of thinking can
interfere with the establishment of a new material order. Thus the tendency in some
revolutionary societies to try to stamp out contradictory ideas. Yet as in the long run life under
developing communism creates widespread belief in the faith, divergent thinking should be
minimal enough as not to amount to much of a threat. Or if belief in communism does not arise,
then perhaps one must conclude either that the material conditions necessary for communism to
flourish were not present, or that what was called communism was not the genuine article and
that attempting to stamp out contradictory ideas is antithetical to communism's development.

But, as Marx recognized at other times, this determined view of mental life is overdone, with
mental life also determining materiality—“The materialist doctrine that men are products of
circumstances and upbringing...forgets that it is men that change circumstances”—or more
dialectically with the two being interconnected in some symbiotic, though perhaps unfathomable,
way. Perhaps at one stage of history the material conditions of life predominate, though do not
completely control, while at another stage mental life predominates. Perhaps there is a degree of
autonomy to mental life and a natural curiosity of the mind which leads it always to question
how everything works, to dream up new ways of doing things, to try out new ideas just for the
sake of trying them out or in search of the meaning of life or in the pursuit of happiness or power
or whatever. Now fundamental change in social relations demands a campaign of ideas,
convincing arguments, melodic metaphors. Now it becomes less important to stamp out
competing ideas than to demonstrate their inadequacy. Now it may be appropriate not to look at life as determined nor history as inevitable, but as the product of choice, commitment, and assumption of responsibility. Now idealism becomes less the search for absolute truth than the creation of a utopian vision of what can be, or at least of what is worth striving for. Thus the communist ideal—“from each according to one's ability, to each according to one's needs.”

7. To say that human beings have an essential nature is not to say that this nature is an absolute and unchangeable truth. As presently constituted humans are, to some extent at least, essentially social animals. Both reproduction and child-rearing, which is to say the survival of the species, demand some degree of social life. Beyond that it may be that social interaction is a function of other factors such as environment, culture, and choice. But at least in that respect humans have an essential nature. This does not mean, though, that it will always be so. Quite apart from our evolution into a form of life so different from us that it could no longer be said to be human, scientific developments may enable humans to carry on previously essential functions in other ways. It is already possible to reproduce without the social interaction necessitated by the mating process. Someday it may be possible to reproduce using artificial sperms and eggs, or to reproduce one's self through cloning. At that point the essential nature of human beings will have changed. As Marx put it: "(A)ll history is nothing but a continuous transformation of human nature."

Likewise it might be said that there are essential moral or ethical truths, which hold under given conditions and are consequently at least temporary absolutes, but which are subject to change as social conditions change. That cannibalism is an immoral practice is most certainly viewed as a universal truth in modern society; but if fellow humans were to become the only available source of food, that moral principle would soon be modified. The dialectics of
pragmatic materialism does not deny, therefore, the possibility of absolute truth. Rather it posits that truths of all types reside not in pure reason or the material world alone, but in the interaction between reason and the material world; and that since both the material world and the process of reasoning are always changeable, so is truth. Truth, in other words, may be both absolute and relative at the same time.

8. To what extent are the facts of human existence the product of human nature and to what extent culturally produced? This is thought to be a significant question in that human nature is seen as more immutable, less a matter of choice, and thus less open to moral approval or disapproval than culture. Humans must eat to survive. Given this as the nature of the beast and assuming (a debatable point) the goodness in general of human survival, it would be senseless to condemn humans for eating—although it might be desirable to make judgments about and changes in the particular eating habits of particular cultures. It is not fair to say, though, that human nature is unchangeable. In fact, it is constantly evolving in response to the facts of existence. The human brain today is more complex than that of early homo sapiens. It is becoming increasingly possible to make fundamental changes in even the most seemingly basic of human traits. Sex changes are reasonably common these days and genetic engineering may be just around the corner. On the other hand, aspects of life generally deemed culturally produced may be very difficult to change. While the tendency to adopt spiritual beliefs of some type may or may not be an aspect of human nature, the variety of spiritual beliefs in the world suggests that particular belief systems are culturally produced. Yet once in place belief systems have tremendous staying power; the dominant religions have endured now for thousands of years. So at best the mutability of human nature vis-a-vis human culture is a matter of degree.

To the extent that there is a human nature, the most clear-cut examples relate to physical or
genetic traits such as the necessity to eat, gender, or brain capacity. Whether the facts of social life are also the product of human nature or are more culturally produced is more problematic. Assuming that human nature is fairly uniform across the species, the diversity of social facts at any point in time and over time suggests that cultural differences are at play. The variety of languages in the world seems unrelated to any innate differences among people but rather totally the product of culture. Yet there also seems to be a dialectical relationship between nature and culture. Languages may differ, but the universality of communication through language of some type suggests that the capacity and the desire to communicate is an aspect of human nature. Thus a comparison of differing societies might disclose that human nature produces functionally comparable characteristics common to all societies but varying in their particulars as a result of cultural factors.

Take the issue of aggression, a commonplace in human affairs and a source of much that is undesirable in social life. To the extent that aggression is an innate human trait, i.e., an aspect of human nature, then until such time as that nature changes all societies must find some way to cope with aggression either by accepting its negative consequences, controlling or sublimating it somehow, or channeling it into positive directions. Thus the manifestations of aggression in social life will largely depend on culture. One would expect to find far different manifestations where the amenities of life are in short supply or unequally distributed, and where access to these amenities is governed by a competitive and survival-of-the-fittest ethic, than in a more egalitarian and nurturing environment. Perhaps in the latter instance aggression would disappear entirely, either because aggressiveness is not human nature after all but a response to social conditions which require aggression as a coping mechanism or because human nature would become less aggressive under social conditions not requiring aggression. For human nature, too,
is ultimately socially produced. Human physical make-up is an evolutionary response to the environmental conditions facing pre-human life. To the extent that aggressiveness is genetically ingrained, that too is a product of social/environmental conditions. Under conditions where aggression is no longer necessary, one could expect genetic changes eventually eliminating aggression as a human trait.

9. To what extent are humans autonomous and to what extent social beings? The dialectical answer is that they are both at the same time and that their autonomous and social aspects are inextricably intertwined. Humans are autonomous in that each one is genetically different from all others, is conscious of oneself as a separate entity and of others as not fully knowable, and has values and experiences which while they may resemble those of others are unique in their totality. Humans are also social beings in that they are (re)produced by others, are at times totally dependent on others for survival and in general need others for fulfillment in life, and develop a sense of self in contradistinction to others and in a social context into which they are thrust and which unavoidably influences their sense of self.

Neither the autonomous nor the social aspect of human beings is in principle or in the abstract prior to, nor does it have priority over, the other. Rather every society, if it is to be a thriving and cohesive society, must account for both aspects of humanity—although there may be no universally correct balance or blend, with the particulars being dependent in practice on the ever-changing needs and desires of humanity and thus continually in flux.

10. All humans make choices. The free-will/determinism distinction, therefore, is not a question of the capacity to choose, but of the extent to which choices are constrained. To the extent that choices are conditioned, partially or totally, by biological make up, environment or culture, then choices are determined. To the extent that humans have the power to override the influence of
such factors, then they have free will. The free-will/determinism distinction is thus a variant of
the distinction between materialism versus idealism, i.e., whether the world of ideas is a
by-product of material reality or has an independent life of its own.

On a conscious level, humans experience their choices as an exercise of will power. For
every choice that is made, there is an awareness of possible alternatives, however undesirable,
and there is a belief in one's capacity to opt either way. For all practical purposes this
consciousness of free will makes it a reality, just as with one's experience of an external material
world. The notion that the material world may be illusory is an idealistic irrelevancy. What
matters in every day existence is that one can and does interact with the material world in ways
meaningful to existence. The mere experience of it makes it real, since the only reality or the
only knowledge one can have of reality is through experience. So, too, the experience of free
will constitutes the knowledge of its reality.

This does not mean, however, that one's choices are unconstrained. Free will does not
operate in a vacuum but in a context which influences choices in various ways. Some constraints
are biological. That humans are genetically programmed with an instinct to survive biases any
decision where survival is at stake; given a choice of survival or non-survival most humans will
opt for survival, absent the strongest of countervailing considerations. Other constraints are
environmental or cultural. The state of knowledge is one such constraint. One cannot opt for
that of which one is unaware or is incapable of figuring out. In a negative sense at least, then,
environment and culture determine one's choices by confining the available range. Even within
that range, the prevailing or dominant ideologies or ways of thinking, as well as the material
conditions of existence, strongly influence most people's choices. That most people in one
society choose one way of life, while most in another society choose another way, evidences this
conditioning.

From a dialectical perspective, therefore, people's choices are neither fully freely willed nor totally determined, but are the outcome of a decision-making process in which both free will and determining factors play a part. Nor is it fair to say that one or the other governs in the final analysis, any more than that hydrogen or oxygen is a more significant component of water. Without both elements there would be no water. Likewise, there would be no choices without both free will and determination.

From a pragmatic perspective, moreover, the issue is of no practical consequence. It is impossible, first of all, to separate out or distinguish between the free-willed and determined aspects of decision-making. Every choice that every individual makes can as readily be explained on either ground. Moreover, one's responses to the phenomenon of human choices would be the same even if choices were totally determined or free-willed. If one's goal were, say, to alter another's choices in some way, that could be accomplished only by changing the material, cultural and/or ideological factors impacting those choices. If choices are determined, then those factors constitute the determining framework; if choices are free-willed, then those factors constitute the data to which free will responds. Either way, since the point of theory is to better understand the world as an aid to action, and since impacting another's choices demands changes in the underlying framework or data whether those choices are free-willed or determined, the free-will/determinism distinction has no practical significance.

11. The debate over structuralism/functionalism versus methodological individualism as modes of analyzing social life is a variant of the free-will/determinism and absoluteness/contingency debates. Structuralism/functionalism, which analyzes social life from the vantage point of the role of society's various institutions, is critiqued as overly deterministic in paying insufficient
attention to individual behavior and motivation and as overly absolute in paying insufficient attention to historical context. Methodological individualism, which analyzes social life from the vantage point of individual decision-making, is critiqued as paying insufficient attention to the extent to which institutional or systemic factors impact individual choices and to the extent to which individuals are caught up in a flow of history over which they have little or no control as individuals.

From a dialectical perspective both modes of analysis are valid and contribute to understanding. It is helpful to know, for example, that the United States has different levels and branches of government which are interrelated in various ways both on paper and in practice, that these institutions have both formal and informal powers which impact social life in various ways irrespective of the individuals serving there, that these institutions are interrelated in various ways with the process of capitalist exploitation and accumulation, and that other societies which at first blush look very different from the United States have functionally equivalent institutions. This knowledge is an aid to action in the struggle to transform society. It may contribute, for example, to deciding whether it is possible to move from capitalism to socialism through the existing governmental structure, which if any governmental institutions are consistent with one's socialist vision and therefore worth retaining under socialism, and what alternative ways there are of designing a socialist society.

Likewise, it is helpful to know as much as possible about what motivates people to act, what rational and irrational, psychological and social, economic and political factors, move differentially situated people, be they white or blue collar workers, industrial workers or farmers, employed or unemployed, male or female, or a host of other factors and situations which make every individual to some degree unique in his or her responses, yet due to resemblances and
commonalities also make it possible to predict to some degree how people are likely to respond. This knowledge is also an aid to action in the struggle to transform society, since social change can only come about through the actions of people who are willing to act. Thus one should not view structuralism/functionality and methodological individualism as competing and mutually exclusive modes of analysis but as complementary modes providing a more complete picture of social life from alternative vantage points, both of which are necessary aids to understanding and change.

12. Selfishness: concern for one's personal well-being. Selflessness: concern for the well-being of others. So defined, selflessness is generally regarded more favorably. The saint is preferred to the sinner by virtue of the former's sacrifice of personal well-being to the well-being of others, as against the latter's disregard for others in pursuit of personal gratification and aggrandizement. Yet there is a sense in which all one's actions, whether inner or other directed, are selfish in that concern for others, since it evidently provides psychic gratification to the individual, is ultimately concern for self. This collapses selflessness into selfishness; every action is by definition selfish. Mother Teresa is every bit as selfish as the most uncaring hedonist or the most oppressive exploiter.

This line of reasoning neutralizes the pejorative contrast between concern for self and concern for others. There is no reason to prefer the one over the other. Still the pejorative contrast exists in practice, thus calling for explanation. Why, in short, regard concern for others more favorably than concern for self? The answer boils down to the claim that concern for others produces a happier state of affairs, both for society as a whole due to the cooperativeness which concern for others stimulates and for the individual as well because concern for others engenders connections with others through which one realizes one's humanity. Moreover,
concern for self in the inner directed sense can be self-defeating per the conflicts which arise with other inner directed persons and which may undercut everyone's well-being.

Yet the preference for selflessness is not absolute in that total disregard for one's personal well-being may impede one's ability to empathize with others and thus to understand their interests well enough to show genuine concern, and may open oneself up to abuse by selfish others. More affirmatively, concern for self can be beneficial not only for the individual but also for others who incidentally benefit from one's actions in pursuit of personal well-being. Under this dialectical approach both concern for others and for self have merit, and the issue is less the either-or choice of one attitude over the other and more the proper blending of the two into a unified whole. Neither selfishness nor selflessness is preferable per se or in the abstract, both should always be present, and which should have priority and to what degree depends on the context. Ultimately lurking here are fundamental tenets concerning human nature and social reality.

13. It is said that every human being is entitled to respect from and owes respect to one's fellow humans. It is also said that respect is earned, implying that it can be withheld or lost based on one's lack of deservingness. Most of us probably hold both of those sentiments to some degree. What is at play here are different conceptions of humans as moral beings, or perhaps it is more accurate to say different aspects of the same conception.

To say that everyone is entitled to respect is to say that everyone has an innate or inherent worthiness as a human being. It is the sentiment that all people are created equal, not in their actual capacities but in their deservingness of love, kindness, sympathy, and all the finer emotions. It is to say that as people they have certain inalienable rights which cannot be given away, lost, or taken from them. This sentiment explains one's unconditional affection toward a
new born baby, and explains as well the intensity of the anti-abortionist who truly believes a fetus to be a being morally equivalent to that baby. This sentiment also underlies the condemnation of arbitrary discrimination based on people's immutable and irrelevant traits, and efforts to eliminate poverty and to provide people control over their own destinies.

The sense in which respect is earned focuses on one's acts, one's choices. It is to judge one's deservingness of respect in accordance with one's compliance with one's duty to respect others. To wantonly murder a fellow human is the ultimate example of disrespect toward another. To favor capital punishment, accordingly, is to deem the murderer as having forfeited the right to live, which is to say as being unworthy of continued respect as a human. Those opposed to capital punishment, on the other hand, view the right to life as inalienable, not dependent on one's acts, and thus owed even to a murderer. Even most proponents of capital punishment acknowledge some basic human rights due a murderer, if only the right to a painless execution. To believe such is to believe that to that extent at least even a murderer has an innate human worthiness irrespective of his acts.

What, then, is the basis of the distinction between humans as having an inherent worthiness and the notion that respect depends on one's actions? To believe that one's deservingness of respect should be judged by one's acts is to believe that people have free-will and are capable of making choices. To the extent this is not the case, to the extent people's behavior is determined by causes over which they have no control, then it is inapt to say they have forfeited their right to respectful treatment. This helps explain the insanity defense in criminal law. The insane person, having lost control, is not subject to the same penalties as the sane wrongdoer, unless perhaps the person is somehow responsible for his own insanity. The person may be confined, not however for punishment's sake but to protect others or to afford him the rehabilitative treatment he
deserves as a human being. Or if the insane person is to be executed, it is rationalized, a la euthanasia, on the ground that the person having become so debilitated as to have lost his essential humanity is no longer really a person, or that respect for his essential humanity justifies putting him out of his misery.

To believe, on the other hand, that one is owed respect as a human being irrespective of one's acts is to believe that there is a sense in which everything that happens to anyone also happens to one's self. Thus to treat others disrespectfully, to fail to accord them the love and understanding all humans need to survive and be happy, is to disrespect one's self and to deprive one's self of those basic human needs. It is to overlook the essential imperfection of all human beings, one's self included; so to judge others too harshly for their failings is to be arrogant toward one's own inadequacies. This is the sentiment which underlies adages like "there but for the grace of God...", "let she who is without sin...", and "people who live in glass houses..." How to tell which, if either, aspect of respect, the conditional or the unconditional, is at stake in particular situations, and to what extent, is another matter. Does a murderer forfeit all right to be treated with respect? Is euthanasia ever justifiable, and if so when? Does an unborn fetus have the right to life? Is everyone entitled to a decent standard of living, and if so of what does it consist? These are questions to which there may be no determinate answers. It is important in addressing them, however, to understand that the answer one gives entails a judgment about what it means or ought to mean to be a human being, and that to act on that judgment is to make it a reality.

14. Tolerance is usually viewed as a virtue, while intolerance is condemned. But if intolerance is defined non-pejoratively as empathy with or at least a willingness to abide differences with which one disagrees, then at times we are all intolerant and all applaud intolerance. Most are highly intolerant when it comes, for example, to child abuse.
This view of the matter neutralizes the virtuousness of tolerance. Tolerance is neither to be favored nor disfavored as an abstract proposition. From a dialectic-pragmatic perspective, it all depends on the merits of the underlying situation. There is even a sense in which this view makes the issue of tolerance versus intolerance seem circular; thus, for instance, to be tolerant toward the practice of abortion is to be intolerant toward efforts to criminalize it, and vice versa.

There is another sense, though, in which tolerance, while not always to be favored in the particular case, is generally to be preferred. One might refer to it as an open-minded attitude, a reluctance to condemn ideas and practices with which one disagrees just because one disagrees or without searching inquiry and considered judgment; value neutrality or value relativity in the sense of a deliberate refusal to take a stand on the correct resolution of at least some issues, or at least a recognition that one's own perspective may be wrong.

This approach counsels one, if not to accept everything, to err on the side of acceptance. In this sense tolerance, though a question of degree, is a positive value, although not one amenable to everyone. One who believes he or she has superior insights as to people's best interests or to right and wrong is less likely to value tolerance than someone who is less certain. Ultimately everyone must choose their attitude toward the world.

15. Is there a correspondence between class issues and racial and sexual issues? If a classless society were created, would that necessarily eliminate racial and sexual oppression? If not, is the creation of a classless society a prerequisite to the elimination of racial and sexual oppression? Or are class and racial/sexual issues essentially independent?

If one defines a classless society as one free of inequity, then it follows that a classless society would be free of racial and sexual oppression. This does not necessarily mean, however, that there is a correspondence between the issues. For given the fact that all existent societies
have class, racial and sexual inequities, and that the elimination of these inequities requires a struggle which will probably take some time, the question is what practical steps are best suited to advancing toward a society free of inequity. It may be that steps designed to combat, say, economic inequities will not suffice as against racial and sexual inequities, and vice versa.

To illustrate, ethnic and sexual inequities have been a primary focus of the civil rights movement. The movement's greatest achievement has been the establishment of formal legal equality for ethnic minorities and women; it is now illegal in most (though not all) circumstances to discriminate against someone on the basis of ethnicity or sex. Formal equality has not, of course, eliminated racism or sexism, which still persist in United States as barriers to advancement. Yet even if racism and sexism were somehow totally eradicated, there would still be great economic inequities in the United States; poverty would still exist, although it would cut across ethnic and sexual lines proportionately as against the great overrepresentation of certain ethnic minorities and women among the poor today.

Likewise, steps aimed at redressing economic inequities may, without more, leave racial and sexual inequities intact. The trade union movement, for instance, while it has enhanced the power of workers, has of itself and with some exceptions done little to alter the hierarchical dominance within the working class of white males over females and ethnic minorities. Many trade unions, particularly in earlier times, practiced overt discrimination, necessitating legal intervention to deter it. Even the establishment of a workers' state would not necessarily guarantee the elimination of racism and sexism, but initially at least would likely carry over within the newly empowered working class the hierarchical relations of the prior order.

These examples illustrate the independence of economic and racial/sexual issues. The issues are interdependent as well, however. Economic inequity derives, essentially, from the
exploitation by some of the labor of others. This is also a primary factor underlying racism and sexism. Blacks, for example, were originally brought to this country to serve as slave labor. Today, Blacks and Hispanics comprise a disproportionate share of the reserve army of the unemployed and underemployed. Sexism, too, entails the exploitation of women's labor by men. Women prevented from entering the workplace become the servants of men, enchained by dependence on male financial support and cowed by male physical dominance. Upon entering the work force, women are disproportionately channeled to lower paying jobs, thereby reserving the higher paying jobs for men. Indeed, so long as this remains a society with great economic inequities—where one's material well-being is dependent on how much one is paid for one's labor, where lack of success in the competitive economy can mean living in abject poverty—racism and sexism are in the interest of the white majority, and of men, so as to ensure that the economic risks of the society are disproportionately borne by ethnic minorities and women and thereby lessened for them. In this sense, ethnic/sexual and economic/class issues are intimately interrelated.

This interrelationship does not, however, merge the issues. That economic inequities are interrelated with racism/sexism does not necessarily mean that racism and sexism are attributable entirely to economic factors. Social and cultural factors may also contribute. It may be, for example, that the historical evolution in different parts of the world of divergent cultures, whose members are readily identifiable through differing physical features, produces an ethnocentrism which develops into racism when the divergent cultures interact. And it may be that sexism is rooted in part in religious dogma or in an era when brute force was the norm in male-female relationships. Even if such social and cultural factors are themselves ultimately materially based, they may take on a life of their own or linger on after the underlying material conditions have
changed.

From a dialectical perspective, therefore, class and race/sex issues are both independent and inter-dependent at the same time. Their independence means that different steps may be required to redress class, racial and sexual inequities and that a movement toward a classless society must not focus entirely on economic inequities but must also directly attack racial and sexual inequities on both a material and ideological level. Yet since racial and sexual inequities derive in large part, and ultimately perhaps entirely, from economic and material inequities, it would seem that racial and sexual inequities will persist so long as economic and material inequities persist and, therefore, that the elimination of racism and sexism requires the creation of a classless society.

16. Is fundamental change in society possible through evolution or are revolutionary measures required? This is, first of all, in part a semantic issue regarding the meaning of the terms. Whatever the criteria of fundamental change might be, the premise here is that changes on the order economically of a movement from feudal to capitalist or from capitalist to socialist modes of production, or politically of a movement from an autocratic to a democratic form of governance or vice versa, or socially from a class or caste to a classless system, constitute fundamental change. As for whether some fundamental change is evolutionary or revolutionary, the distinction might be to the time frame or degree of upheaval associated with the change; with evolution referring to a longer time frame or a relatively more peaceful process and revolution to a shorter time frame or relatively more violent process. While those terms are often and will be so used here, in other contexts such a distinction in meaning is harder to make; the Industrial Revolution, for example, has been no more violent a process than Darwinian evolution.
Secondly, evolution and revolution are alike in that both are modalities of change. Change, in turn, is a given and a constant in the world; all aspects of existence are continually in a state of flux. Thus, human history in its entirety has been an on-going process of change. This is an integrated process in that the changes in any given era arise out of the conditions and contradictions of all prior eras, and in turn contribute to the changes in all subsequent eras. In the modern era in particular change is an interrelated process throughout the world; all events everywhere are interconnected to one degree or another. In the integrated totality of human history, therefore, both evolutionary and revolutionary eras and events have contributed to the on-going process of change.

Thirdly, change, and in particular fundamental change, never occurs without struggle and upheaval of some kind. Thus, it is incorrect to counterpoise evolution and revolution as opposite modalities of change, the one totally peaceful and the other totally violent. In the course of history human society as a whole, as well as every particular society, experience moments or intervals of both peaceful and violent change; and both peaceful and violent events contribute to the changes in every era of history. The difference is at best one of degree; it is often if not always debatable, even, as to how best to characterize any given change or era. From a dialectical perspective, therefore, evolution and revolution are not either-or alternatives, but complementary and interrelated aspects of a unified whole.

This suggests limitations to the notion of continuous or permanent revolution, if by this is meant an on-going struggle with a high degree of social upheaval. It may be that some changes demand on-going revolutionary struggle for a time. Overthrowing capitalism and instituting socialism or communism may be an example. However, once that task has been accomplished—if it ever is—it may be that evolutionary changes are more appropriate for the long-term
development of full-blown socialism or communism. Moreover, even eras of revolutionary struggle do not entail violent upheaval at every moment of every day, but require periods of planning and consolidation. If capitalism is ever overthrown, the past hundred years or so will be seen in retrospect as part of that era of change. Yet while the past century has certainly been one of the more violent in history, and as a whole perhaps may best be characterized as revolutionary, it has not been a time of continual upheaval either worldwide or in those societies attempting to dismantle or bypass capitalism. So at best the notion of continuous or permanent revolution is applicable or appropriate to particular eras of history and then only as an overall characterization of those eras.

Finally, the evolution/revolution conundrum cannot be resolved in the abstract but only in historical context. The question is whether evolution and/or revolution best characterizes particular events or given eras as a whole, and for the current era whether evolutionary and/or revolutionary tactics are the most appropriate course of action. Consider, for instance, the history of the United States starting with the American Revolution, certainty an example of violent upheaval. There are at least two ways of viewing the Revolution. From one perspective, it was part of the process of the establishment of capitalism in this country. While there are examples of autocratic capitalism, it seems fair to say that at its zenith capitalism has been complemented politically by liberal democracy. This seems related to the fact that both capitalism and liberal democracy are so grounded, at least formally, in an individualistic ethic. But, so viewed, the American Revolution was but one event contributing to the establishment of American-style capitalism. Equally significant were the more evolutionary scientific and technological advances which made possible the capitalist mode of production, as well as many other events both preceding and succeeding the Revolution and of varying degrees of violence.
and upheaval. From another perspective, the Revolution simply involved a political change from a more autocratic to a relatively more democratic form of government, in the context either way of a developing capitalist society. But, so viewed, the American Revolution was again but one of many events contributing to the development of a still far from perfect democracy. The history of American-style democracy has been one of expansion, at least on the formal level, of the right to vote. Initially, only a rather small percentage of the country's adult inhabitants were entitled to vote—mainly propertied white males. Today the franchise is essentially universal. Some of the events contributing to the extension of the franchise, such as the Civil War, were highly violent; others, such as the women's suffrage and civil rights movements and the movement to lower the voting age to eighteen, while not totally peaceful, were far from what is ordinarily considered revolutionary.

So whichever perspective one takes, the American Revolution was but one event in a developmental process which involved both revolutionary and evolutionary measures and is still an on-going process. And whether the Revolution is better viewed as an aspect of the change from feudalism to capitalism or from autocracy to liberal democracy, either way it contributed to a fundamental alteration of the preexisting order.

American-style democratic capitalism having become so well entrenched as a result of this historical process, the question now and for the future is what measures will be necessary to move beyond it to a more humanistic and egalitarian society. It would be overly doctrinaire and dogmatic to assert the impossibility of such movement without a violent overthrow of the government and other state institutions. The universalization of the franchise creates at least the theoretical possibility of fundamental change through electoral processes, and there are at least conceivable scenarios under which masses of Americans might be mobilized to make such a
move. Yet given the political predominance of the power elite, its consequent control of an immense force of arms, and the widespread acceptance of its supportive ideology, and given that those in power never cede power willingly, it would be naively utopian to suggest that American-style democratic capitalism could evolve into socialism or communism without immense struggle and social upheaval, if perhaps less than all out civil war. What will matter then is not the characterization of the change as evolutionary or revolutionary, but the achievement in practice of the desired end—a more humane and egalitarian social order.
II.

Toward Democratic Socialism

1. Three ways of looking at democracy.

   (a). An individualistic perspective. Democracy as a means by which individuals pursue in concert personal goals which they cannot effectively pursue individually or in smaller groupings. Democracy fosters individualism by providing a means for the individual's views to affect the outcome of democratic decision-making through direct participation and/or the election of representatives. However, the individualistic perspective poses a problem of majority tyranny, in that where majority rule prevails the minority may have to endure that which undercuts their values and preferences. Possible solutions to the problem are: (i) a requirement of unanimity, the problem here being minority tyranny in that now the majority may have to endure that which undercuts their values and preferences; (ii) the establishment of individual rights which the majority is not to violate, the problem here being that whatever mechanism is set up to protect these rights, as well as the rights themselves, can always be changed or undermined through narrow or perverse interpretations. On the other hand, the mere fact that the majority prevails need not be seen as tyrannical, so long as over time the process produces a proportionate degree of preference satisfaction. Since on matters of public moment about which there is disagreement it is impossible to satisfy everyone all the time, such that whatever move (including inaction) is made as regards any given disputed matter will displease somebody, proportional satisfaction of preferences seems most compatible with an individualistic perspective. Thus, although there is a definite impetus to the contrary, even an individualistic starting point may require egalitarianism, forced redistribution, the welfare state, etc. The inadequacy, though, of the individualistic perspective is its failure to focus on the extent to which the individual is collectively constituted
both as a concept and in practice. Individual preferences are in a sense collective preferences, especially when the individual adopts those preferences as a result of acculturation by society at large or whatever smaller groups have influenced the individual's choices. Even when an individual rejects collective values, the individual's preferences are collectively determined in that the language in which the individual's preferences are formulated and expressed is collectively created and in that the limitations of that language limit that formulation and expression.

(b). A collective perspective. Democracy as a means by which people develop a collective identity and pursue the good of the whole. A collective identity develops when, through their interactions in the political and other societal arenas, people come to think more in collective than in individualistic terms. This occurs both consensually as people recognize their interdependence and agree on common goals, and spontaneously as people subconsciously and unconsciously connect with each other so as to adopt common goals as their own. A collective perspective does not require that everyone think exactly alike, since all may agree on the value of diversity in some spheres of life and since people may consensually or spontaneously subordinate their differences to common goals. But the collective perspective, too, poses the problem of majority tyranny in that the minority may not be willing to subordinate their difference to what the majority decides to pursue in the name of the good of the whole, in which event the good of the whole becomes a rationalization for domination. Majority tyranny is most likely to occur, in a society where people generally think collectively, when the majority attempts to impose its will so as to preserve or create inequality. A genuinely collective democracy demands, then, either a thoroughly egalitarian social order or if inequality is countenanced a collective justification therefor. Another problem, though, with the collective
perspective is that either by nature or as collectively constituted people may have an
dividualistic side and a collective side, both of which a successful and cohesive society may
have to accommodate.

(c). Some combination of an individualistic and collective perspective. Democracy as a
means by which people develop a collective identity and pursue the good of the whole, while
also concertedly pursuing personal goals and protecting their individuality. This approach
responds to the fact that people are both collective beings, in that they are inextricably dependent
on and interconnected with others and are constituted as beings in a cultural context and in
contradistinction to others, and at the same time individualistic, in that they are aware of
themselves as separate entities with personal needs and desires which may diverge from those of
others with whom conflict is thus unavoidable. It would seem impossible to specify in the
abstract the appropriate balance between individualism and collectivism or the mechanisms for
achieving and preserving that balance. Rather the appropriate balance must be developed
through theoretical praxis and is unlikely to be the same in all contexts. Indeed, individualism
and collectivism may be in a state of perpetual tension and readjustment, as that which promotes
individualism and individualistic thinking conflicts with collective pursuits and thinking. A
tension is possible, in particular, regarding the issue of equality. While egalitarianism is integral
to both, equality may have different meanings for the individualistic and collective perspectives.
In the extreme, the individualistic perspective may be deemed satisfied by a regime of equal
rights or formal equality, whereas the collective perspective may be deemed to require a more
thorough-going egalitarianism. On the other hand, to the extent that formal equality contributes
to factual inequalities which undercut individualism and destabilize society, as seems historically
to have happened, a thorough-going egalitarianism may be deemed necessary from an
individualistic as well as a collective perspective.

2. Socialists and capitalists both lay claim to democracy. Both assert that their economic approaches are necessary conditions for true democracy, and vice versa. This seeming contradiction undoubtedly results in part from the two sides' differing conceptions of democracy. On the most abstract level, though, if not as to the specifics of democracy, there seems to be general agreement that the value underlying democracy is of affording people as much control as possible, subject to factors beyond human control and to everyone else's commensurate right, in determining their own destinies. The question then is, and this is where disagreements arise, what decision-making structure best realizes that value.

Three decision-making models are possible: individualized, collective, and some mixture of the two. Again, both socialists and capitalists would likely agree that some mixture of individualized and collective decision-making is best suited to achieving the value of destiny-control. On the one hand some decisions seem so personal, and to involve or affect others so little if at all, that destiny-control demands reserving them exclusively to the individual. Other decisions, on the other hand, affect many people or everyone, so that destiny-control demands giving all who are affected the opportunity to participate.

Three questions now arise. First, which matters fall into the personal and which into the collective category? Second, what decision-making structure most appropriately allocates decisions among individuals and collectives? Third, what decision-making process is most appropriate for answering the first two questions?

An examination of these questions shows both that they are interrelated and that there is a problem of circularity. They are interrelated, for example, in that the answer to the second question, i.e., the appropriate structure for allocating decisions, depends on the answer to the first
question, i.e., which matters are personal and which collective. Thus if particular decisions are personal, then a private property system or constitutional protections of individual rights may be appropriate; or if they are collective, then nationalization or parliamentary decision-making may be called for; or if they involve both individual and collective aspects, then a private property system subject to public regulation may be most suitable.

The third question illustrates the problem of circularity in that in order to answer the first two questions there must already be in place a decision-making process which itself is interrelated with the answers to those questions. This is so, for example, because the process used to decide which matters are personal and which are collective will affect the outcome of the decision-making process. Thus if collective decision-making based on majority rule is the starting point, then matters which some people believe to be inalienably personal may against their will end up being treated as collective; whereas if the starting point is individualized decision-making with individuals being bound only to those collective decisions they agree in advance to submit to, then collective action as to matters which many or most people believe to be inherently collective may be stymied due to the unwillingness of some individuals to go along.

The solution to the problem of circularity is one of theory and praxis. One must start somewhere; and the choice of where must flow from one's initial theory, whether fully developed or tentative, whether deriving from one's intuition or one's views regarding human nature or the possibility of pure reason or historical analysis, or whatever. One must then be prepared to struggle to make one's theory a reality; but always with the open-minded realization that the experience of struggle may shed new light on the validity or viability of one's initial theory, and with the willingness while attempting to realize one's theory to amend the theory in light of
experience.

3. Theory arises from practice. It is the unique human response to practical existence. All living things experience practical existence and must find ways to cope with it. Humans do so by theorizing about existence. This is because the human brain has developed to the point of awareness of the possibility of making choices about and of directing rather than simply responding to practical existence. This awareness, the recognition that every move one makes is only one of many possible moves, creates a need for guidance and justification in choosing among alternatives. This gives rise to the distinction between what is and what ought to be. What is, is both the material conditions of life which face everyone at every moment in time, as well as the alternative moves which are possible in light of those conditions. What ought to be is the basis of selecting from among the various options.

This is not to deny that human life is to some, perhaps to a great, degree determined nor that human consciousness is conditioned by the material aspects of life. The choices one can make, the alternatives which are available, are always limited by material reality—by environmental factors, by the existing economic and power relations, by the state of human knowledge. Material reality sets the limits within which choices are possible. Within those limits theorizing operates as a guide for making those choices.

Not all humans, of course, have fully developed theories of life. Most of us do not consciously theorize very often; and even those who do make most of our choices almost rotely and without reference to our theories. Implicit at least in all our choices, however, is some underlying theory of life, or more likely bits and pieces of various, often contradictory, theories. This is true on both an individual and societal level. Consequently the less one engages in theorizing, the less one consciously opts from among competing theories, then the more one lives
in accordance with someone else's theory—usually the theory or theories that represent the prevailing ways of looking at things.

The prevailing ways of looking at things are usually the theories of those who are in power politically, economically, socially and intellectually. Not that there is ever a single, fully-developed, coherent, prevailing way, particularly in advanced societies. Rather there are typically a variety of theoretical models or paradigms which vie for people's adherence, and no one of which is universally accepted or reflected in every day practical existence. Indeed, practical existence, as the raw material giving rise to theory, is susceptible to differing theoretical interpretations. In hegemonic periods, though, i.e., in periods when the social order and the existing power relations are relatively stable, there are usually several theories which conform on enough fundamental points, and are widely enough accepted and followed in practice, that together they can be said to constitute the prevailing ways of looking at things. These are the theories which justify on an ideological level, and thereby help sustain, the existing social order and power relations.

Theorizing, therefore, is central to any movement attempting to bring about fundamental changes in practical existence. Theorizing must take both a critical and a constructive form. Since most people unconsciously accept the prevailing ways of looking at things, even when prevailing theory rationalizes their own subjugation, it is necessary to debunk and dereify prevailing theory so that it loses its hold on people's minds. This is done by exposing the false assumptions and reasoning in prevailing theory, as well as the contradictions between the theory and the practical conditions of life. In addition, though, to debunking, it is necessary to advance a new theory, a new way of looking at things, both as a means of mobilizing people to work for fundamental change and of furnishing needed direction in what would otherwise be a rudderless
existence. This need for alternative theories is particularly acute in revolutionary eras, since by definition revolution seeks to replace the existing with a new state of affairs; and to do that requires replacing the prevailing with new ways of looking at things. Revolutionary eras, then, are transitional periods when there may be no prevailing ways of looking at things and when widely divergent theories are competing, hand-in-hand with the material struggles they accompany, for primacy.

The present era in the United States, though, is far from revolutionary. Despite the obvious contradictions—poverty and homelessness in a land of plenty, the persistence of institutionalized racism/sexism/classism, widening wealth disparities—the liberal dogma, which diverts people's attention from and justifies the system in the face of these realities, is still firmly entrenched in people's minds. The explanation for this is in part that living conditions for most Americans, while increasingly precarious, are still passably good as compared with elsewhere; in part because of a lack of leadership to mobilize the oppressed; and in part because the liberal dogma, when considered in the abstract, sounds good. There is, however, reason to believe that in the not too distant future, particularly if the current economic decline continues or worsens, more and more rank and file Americans may become sufficiently disgruntled with the material conditions of life to question liberal dogma and seriously consider a socialist alternative. Thus the importance today, in order to help pave the way, of critiquing liberal theory and posing a viable alternative.

4. False consciousness is better viewed, not as beliefs contrary to one's true interests because that assumes, presumptuously, that some wiser or more well informed other is better able to determine the best interests of a person than the person herself—but as beliefs, conditioned by the culture of which one is a part and the information one has access to, and which might well
and probably would differ, perhaps fundamentally, from one's beliefs if one had more complete information and were exposed to a wider variety of perspectives. Thus, while it is not possible in any society to fully inform or expose everyone, respect for self-determination, on both a collective and individual level, demands an open society.

5. Liberal theory operates on two levels. One is the formalized rationalizations and exegeses of professional theorists. This is philosophy on a highly intellectual and academic plane, and is confined to a relatively small number of elites for whom systematic and convincing explication is the criterion of a theory's validity. Only the basics of this theorizing filters through to the second level, the public at large, where it is presented more as a set of high-sounding first principles to be accepted without much debate, i.e., as dogma. Thus the task of the critic is both to engender public debate over liberal dogma and to debunk its more highly developed theoretical underpinnings.

The heart and soul of liberal ideology is the notion, grounded in natural rights theory, of individual freedom and equality. The most cogent expression of this sentiment is in the Declaration of Independence: the self-evident truth that all are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. To disagree with this sentiment, which could probably be recited or would at least resonate with most Americans, is to be un-American. Nor, while the excess baggage of absolute truth and natural rights may need discarding, is it necessary to disagree with the value of individualism. At the time of its development it was a liberating force against the autocratic and feudal oppression of an earlier era, and it is an integral component of democratic socialism as well. What is necessary is to make the abstract concepts of freedom and equality more concrete, and to demonstrate why they have not been and cannot be realized under American-style democratic capitalism.
Freedom posits, first of all, the right or opportunity of individual and collective self-determination. On an individual level this means a zone of privacy within which an individual decides for one's self what is best for one's self, without having to obtain the approval of or to answer to others. Liberalism refers to this zone of privacy per the concept of individual rights, upon which neither the government nor other individuals may intrude without the individual's consent.

Individual self-determination is inextricably intertwined, though, with collective self-determination. First, since equality posits freedom for all, one must not be allowed to exercise one's freedom to the detriment of the freedom of others. Reconciling freedom and equality thus demands the establishment of those particular liberties to be equally exercisable by all. This might be a fairly easy task if it were possible to identify scientifically or through pure reason those individual actions which have no impact on others, in which case everyone's zone of privacy would consist of freedom of choice regarding those actions. But in fact every action of an individual has some potential impact on others, if only an emotional impact should others learn about it. This does not negate the notion of a zone of privacy. It does mean, though, that the designation of the scope of that zone entails the choice to cordon off certain freedoms as belonging to the individual despite their potential public impact, on the ground that they are so central to individual happiness that collective concerns must give way. Individual self-determination requires, then, an on-going collective decision-making process to determine the scope of the individual zone of privacy.

Second, individual and collective self-determination are interrelated because interaction with others enhances, in different ways for different people but in some respects for virtually everyone, the individual pursuit of happiness. Interaction may entail the benefits of intimate
interpersonal relationships such as marriage, friendship and child-rearing; of the increased productivity of cooperative economic activities; or of the provision of so-called public goods for an entire community or society. Each of these interactions requires a collective decision-making process of some type, whether informal, contractual, or political.

Moreover, whatever the collective decision-making process both for mutually beneficial interactions and for designating the individual zone of privacy, everyone (or at least everyone affected) must be able to participate in it on equal terms. If not, i.e., if some have more power than others in collective decision-making, then this would negate both collective and individual self-determination in that those with more power would be able to overwhelm and thereby control the destiny of those with less power.

But this is precisely the weak link in liberal theory. For while in the abstract both individual and collective self-determination logically and in principle demand equal power positions in concrete material reality, there are demonstrable and gross disparities in power in most of this society's decision-making processes—in the family, where male dominance persists in part through brute force, in part because women have less economic opportunity than men and are consequently forced into a dependent position, and in part through acculturation; in the workplace, where private ownership of the means of production and the absolute necessity of a regular income for most workers gives employers ultimate control in bargaining; in the political process, where the concentration of wealth and of control of the means of production in the hands of a few enable the privileged to predominate, and where the structure of the process (e.g., the two party system, winner-take-all elections) preserves the power of the ins and stifles dissenting voices.

6. Individual and collective self-determination are interdependent and mutually exclusive,
complementary and contradictory at the same time. They are interdependent and complementary in that neither can exist without the other. They are mutually exclusive and contradictory in that the pursuit of one unavoidably impinges on the other.

If humans were totally autonomous and self-sufficient, then self-determination would be totally individual. But the interdependence of social life makes this impossible. The pursuit of self-determination by one individual unavoidably impinges on, and therefore to some extent undercuts, others' self-determination: through outright oppression and exploitation, through appropriation of scarce resources, or through the spillover impacts of one's actions. Collective self-determination is thus necessary in order to preserve and promote individual self-determination. But collective self-determination also threatens individual self-determination. As with individual self-determination there is the risk of imbalance, of favoring or disfavoring some individuals or groups. Even absent imbalance, some will be forced to accede to determinations with which they disagree and view as contrary to their own self-determination. In the extreme collective self-determination could totally overwhelm individual self-determination; every significant step in one's life could be determined by some collective body. But this would undermine collective self-determination, not only because it would defeat one of its purposes—i.e., to preserve and promote individual self-determination, which purpose could only be dispensed with if the individual is seen as an integral part of the collective and without independent existence—but also because the experience of individual self-determination is necessary if collective decision-making is to function effectively. Another way of putting it is that individual and collective self-determination are both ends in themselves and means to the achievement of the other.

7. Since people's values always diverge to one degree or another depending on the context,
conflict will inevitably arise among individuals and groups pursuing self-determination. Another way of putting it is that because one is part of a community, every choice one makes affects others and potentially undercuts their self-determination. Respect for individual and group self-determination thus demands both a means of equitably resolving conflicts over choices and people’s tolerance of others’ choices.

Conflict resolution might range from an agreement among the contending parties to an external process established by society at large. The merit of agreement, at least when the discourse is fair, is that the parties choose the outcome, thus promoting their self-determination. But since in advanced society it is not possible to discourse directly with all who are affected by one’s choices, there will have to be some external processes of conflict resolution. Ultimately, in a totally interdependent world, this means processes which are international in scope.

The more one's destiny is beyond one's direct control, then the more one's individual/group self-determination is threatened. Since everything is part of an interdependent totality, collective self-determination could in the extreme swallow up individual/group self-determination even under the most democratic decision-making processes. To be consistent with self-determination collectively determined freedoms and options must at a minimum be open to all—in other words, a principle of non-discrimination. Non-discrimination must be more than formal, however, since too narrow a range of choices would favor those who like the available options over those who don’t. If individual and group self-determination is to be taken seriously, there must also be a principle and social ethic of tolerance. Tolerance means a willingness to abide others' choices with which one disagrees, or better still the non-judgmental acceptance of all as equally entitled to pursue their particular interests. Tolerance cannot be unlimited, though, since there is always the likelihood of some anti-social deviation from even a broadly tolerated range of choices. But
when coercive limits are collectively imposed, self-determination demands that decision-making be democratic.

8. The notion of self-determination leads to the individual right to decide for one’s self, to a zone of privacy within which the individual is sovereign, as to those matters which are personal to the individual and do not injure or adversely affect others. Logically speaking, however, there is no matter which is purely personal; everything that a person does, or even fails to do, can be viewed by others as adverse to them. If you engage behind closed doors in some practice I find reprehensible, the mere knowledge that you are doing so, or might or have the right to do so, may injure my sensibilities. It is not a sufficient response to say that I have no right to feel that way or to try to impose my way of thinking on you, without first establishing a duty of tolerance on my part or your right to engage in the practice despite my perceived injury. But that duty/right cannot derive from the practice’s being purely personal in its effects since my feeling of injury is real to me and is a result of your practice. Nor can it derive from some arbitrary distinction between physical effects, as when you strike me, and mental effects; for not only are mental effects physical in that they relate to the operation of the brain, but there are many so-called mental effects which it is deemed legitimate to find objectionable or injurious—mental abuse of a child, mental suffering as a ground for divorce, mental anguish resulting from racial epithets or libel. There is no logical distinction between these mental injuries and my disturbed sensibilities. Nor can moral reasoning definitively identify rights of privacy and duties of tolerance. For all moral principles carry within themselves their dialectical opposites and are therefore inevitably indeterminate in practice—as, for example, the principle of individual sovereignty, qualified by the duty not to injure others, produces insoluble debates over the scope of individual privacy and the nature of injury.
This is not an argument against individual self-determination, but rather an argument that the scope of individual sovereignty is unavoidably dependent on a collective decision as to what that scope should be and that individual self-determination is thus inextricably intertwined with collective self-determination. True, a collective decision to make all aspects of life public or to impose a uniform way of life on all is conceivable. And it might collectively be thought desirable to protect against such through measures, such as a bill of rights or super-majority requirements, designed to limit collective decision-making. Ultimately, though, there are only two safeguards against tyranny, namely countervailing power and widespread belief in the value of individual liberty. The more that power is concentrated the greater the risk of tyranny, since those in power will be able to impose on others while avoiding the impositions themselves. Even in a thoroughly democratic society a collective decision to generally restrict individual liberty is conceivable, as by people's voluntarily ceding power to some paternalistic authority. Then only a collective belief in it, because life is thought more desirable with than without it, can sustain individual liberty.

9. The political history of the western world has been one of increasing democracy in the formal sense of the right to vote. The two questions which this increase in formal democracy raises are how to explain its occurrence and what its real impact has been. The United States is a case in point. At the time of this nation's founding, with the exclusion of slaves, women and non-property owners from the political process, far less than a majority of the voting age population had the right to vote. There are both social and economic explanations for this exclusion. Slaves, not being recognized as citizens and being widely viewed as inferior, would for those social reasons obviously be denied the vote; but just as obviously a basic rationale for the institution of slavery in the first place was economic, slavery being an integral part of the
South's agrarian economy. The exclusion of women from the political process was tied to the social phenomenon of male dominance of the family and, unmarried women also being excluded, of society generally; this male dominance, despite purported religious and paternalistic justifications for it, is also explained economically in that the subordination of women enabled men to exploit women's labor in various ways. The exclusion of non-property owners, although often rationalized on the ground that property owners, being more highly educated and more cosmopolitan in outlook, possessed the civic virtues necessary for the political process to function in accordance with the common good, was obviously designed as well to preserve the then economic dominance of property owners.

All three excluded groups now have the formal right to participate in the political process, and in that sense the United States is more democratic now than at any point in its history. How to explain this increased democracy? In part it seems that there is in the human heart an innate desire to be free and to control one's destiny. This desire can be suppressed when people are ignorant and therefore more susceptible to such myths as the divine right of kings or authoritarianism as the natural order of things—such myths being fostered, and perhaps believed in, by those in power as a means of perpetuating their power. But with the enhanced possibilities for material well-being resulting from technological development, thereby making the ability to control one's destiny more meaningful, and with the increase in knowledge which necessarily accompanies technological development and exposes people to the possibility of new ways of thinking, thereby undercutting the blind acceptance of the earlier mythology, the desire to control one's destiny tends to emerge. From this perspective the increased political rights of the originally excluded groups emanate from the grass roots demands of these groups and their supporters for greater participation, and represent the realization of a natural or moral human
right to freedom.

At least as viable an explanation, though, of the emergence of greater political rights is the relationship of democracy and capitalism, particularly advanced industrial capitalism. Early American capitalism, while there were some moderately large operations (though small by modern standards) such as the southern plantations and northern textile mills, revolved much more so than today around sole proprietorship and small farms and businesses with few employees. Today, on the other hand, the economy is dominated by mammoth firms. Much of the economy revolves around the automobile industry, which has only three significant domestic operations; the oil industry has only a few large concerns; even as once individualized a business as restaurants has been taken over to a great extent by regional and national franchises. And this process of growth is still in full sway, as evidenced by the demise of the family farm and the continuing conglomerate movement.

Thus, while all capitalists share common interests, much of the history of the development of capitalism in America has been one of conflict, both economically and politically, between the interests of small entrepreneurs and the proponents of bigness. For example, small entrepreneurs would tend to favor a laissez-faire economic system with government intervention confined to the establishment of rules which facilitate exchange (such as contract law) and preserve competition (such as anti-trust law), the latter of which is a direct threat to bigness. The proponents of bigness, on the other hand, would tend to favor government intervention to promote growth through such means as the sanctioning of monopoly, the imposition of regulatory restrictions on entry into the market, imperialistic ventures to open up foreign markets, and direct subsidies such as government contracts and loans—all of which harm smaller entrepreneurs either by giving larger firms a market advantage or draining off from the economy
money that might otherwise be spent on their goods.

The extension of democracy can be seen as an out-growth of this conflict between small entrepreneurs and the proponents of bigness. Despite the historically increasing domination of the economy by large firms, the "owners" of these firms have always been and still are small in number as compared with the number of small entrepreneurs. Even today only a small segment of the population owns the stock of public corporations. Thus limiting the franchise to white male property owners would have favored small entrepreneurs in the political arena; whereas extending the vote to the non-property owning and racially and sexually disenfranchised workers and other dependents of growth industries favored the latter politically, at least to the extent that the workers and dependents perceived a community of interest with or could be controlled by them. It is no accident that the dominance of the economy by big business and the increased democratization of the political process have gone hand in hand.

Of course, the interests of large capitalists and their workers/dependents, while they are not entirely antagonistic, do not entirely coincide either. And once the political process has been opened up, it represents, at least in theory, a source of potentially great power to the masses in their struggles against capitalist domination and inequality. And the masses have arguably achieved some successes through the political process, such as the right to unionize and the various components of the modern welfare state. Arguably, because these are to a great extent illusory or pyrrhic victories. Thus, as a device to achieve greater compensation or wealth redistribution, unionism's gains in the past were largely eroded by inflation or were at the expense of non-unionized workers in other sectors of the economy, with the work force's relative share of income being unchanged. Indeed, since the heavily unionized sectors of the economy have been those characterized by bigness, the union movement may actually have contributed to
the growth-capitalists' domination of the economy. As a device to achieve greater input into
decision-making, union power has either been limited by law, as by restricting collective
bargaining to the terms and conditions of employment narrowly defined and leaving other
business decisions beyond its pale, or thwarted by economic exigencies. For as long as
capitalists have access to cheaper labor elsewhere, such as in non-unionized sections of the
country or abroad, or have the ability to avoid bargains made with workers, as in bankruptcy
reorganizations, capitalists will dominate and ultimately control decision-making. Likewise,
while the welfare state cushions against the hardships of the unemployment and inequality
endemic to capitalism, it also mollifies people and thereby undercuts the potential for more
intensive challenges to the system.

10. In some respects democracy works better on a small scale. The smaller the scale, then the
greater the possibility for direct democracy, for widespread and on-going participation in
governance, for intimate interaction among all the participants. It would be impossible, though,
to run a society of substantial size through direct democracy. Thus representative democracy of
some type is an essential element of democratic society in the modern world. But representative
democracy may detract from the democratic ideal of collective self-determination. It may
depoliticize people by removing them from on-going participation in decision-making. This
detracts from their understanding of public issues and makes it easier for representatives to
pursue their own agenda. Indeed it may be impossible, particularly in larger representative
democracies, to design means of assuring much more than a modest degree of responsiveness
and accountability. Thus the argument that the democratic ideal of collective self-determination
demands localized decision-making so as to enable people to be directly involved in governance.

An argument to the contrary might be that representative democracy, when it works well, is a
consensual parentalism consistent with self-determination. Since direct democracy takes time which could be devoted to other desired activities and is in any event impossible in larger societies, the electoral process might be viewed as the selection of surrogate decision-makers to act in the best interests of the people. To be viable, though, consensual paternalism requires effective means of assuring both responsiveness, so as to aid the surrogates in determining the people's best interests, and especially accountability, so as to enable the people to check abuses and to reconsider their consent. Designing truly or even passably effective means is, however, problematical. The United States certainly seems wanting in this regard. While some of the many people who do not participate in electoral politics may choose not to out of basic satisfaction with the system, it seems likely that many do not because they are dissatisfied and do not believe the representative process to be responsive and accountable. And it would be hard to deny the disproportionate political influence in the United States of those with money and social and economic power, thereby undercutting responsiveness and accountability to the masses of the people. And, finally, it would be hard to deny, though the extensiveness might be debated, that those in power undercut responsiveness and accountability both by misinformating the people and by using their power to foster ways of thinking which help sustain them in power despite the system's imperfections. Thus the weak link in the consensual-paternalism argument is the notion of consent, without which consensual paternalism could not be said to entail genuine self-determination.

To the extent that democracy works well on a small scale, and assuming self-determination as a preeminent value, this speaks for decentralizing public decision-making as far as possible so that people can participate more actively and directly and so as to promote greater
responsiveness and accountability of representatives and surrogates. Decentralization could occur through the creation of semi- or relatively autonomous decision-making units within a larger society, in which case the smaller units would ultimately be subject to the democratic decision-making of the larger society; or through the establishment of a multitude of fully autonomous smaller societies which would interact with each other on a contractual or consensual basis. The advantage of the latter approach is that it helps assure local self-determination at least so long as autonomy remains. There are, however, drawbacks to complete autonomy. First, as inequalities exist or develop among the autonomous units, the more powerful and the better off may be able to dominate and exploit the weaker and less-well-off, not only through brute force but also through their advantageous bargaining position. Second, to the extent that the decisions and actions of an autonomous unit affect outsiders, as many if not all will in an interdependent world, then outsiders have a claim to participate lest in pursuit of its own self-determination an autonomous unit undercut the self-determination of outsiders. A possible solution to these drawbacks is semi-autonomy within a larger society which has the authority to equalize conditions among semi-autonomous units, to oversee and check abuses of power, and to remove decisions with widespread impact to broader decision-making levels. The risk here is that the larger society will overwhelm the semi-autonomous units and thereby undercut local self-determination. Thus the rationale for institutionalized and political safeguards of local autonomy; the viability of which safeguards, however, is ultimately dependent on the degree of responsiveness and accountability of the larger society's decision-making. It would seem, therefore, that there is in principle no "best" approach to achieving decentralized self-determination, or self-determination in general, and that what is needed is pragmatic experimentation in particular contexts.
11. Left thinking in the United States, while it is highly critical of the operation of the system, is still largely supportive of the ideal of democracy—defined as the active participation of the people, either directly or through elected representatives, in all aspects of social life. Criticism of American-style democracy is directed not so much at democracy as an abstract ideal, as at the failure of this society to realize the ideal in practice. In the extreme American democracy is viewed as a total sham, as an Orwellian "freedom is slavery" cover-up of a system which is in fact a dictatorship of the bourgeois power elite. Under this view the constitutionalization in this society of a democratic or republican form of government no more represents reality than the professed democracy of the now defunct Soviet constitution.

Nevertheless, most on the left continue to support democracy as a goal worth pursuing. This commitment to democracy derives, it seems, in part from the empirical belief that power tends to corrupt, that benign rule is impossible to sustain, and that the involvement of the people in decision-making is necessary to prevent the concentration and abuse of political and economic power. It seems also to derive from a philosophical belief that involvement in societal decision-making is an integral aspect of human dignity, of every individual's right to participate on equal terms in the decisions which affect one's life and the destiny of one's society.

The right to self-determination—either exclusively as to those matters which are of legitimate concern only to the individual, or as a participant in joint decision-making as to matters of collective moment—is, in fact, central to all major political philosophies currently in vogue in the western world, in particular libertarianism, utilitarianism and egalitarianism. However, all those philosophies are flawed, in that a society organized pursuant to any of them will inevitably contain inequalities in wealth and power, which will inevitably be used by those with more to preserve their privileged status and to dominate to their advantage those with less.
In short, some in such societies, to borrow another Orwellian allusion, will always be more equal than others.

The greater equality of some than others will inevitably degenerate into class and other related struggles between those with more and those with less. So long as inequality continues the end result of these struggles, due to the greater power of those with more, will at best be a perpetuation of inequality, privilege and domination, perhaps with some modest movement up and down the social stratum and some cyclical lessening and widening of socio-economic and political disparities; and at worst in the creation of a rigidly stratified caste system and continually worsening conditions for those at the bottom. And the so-called democratic state, in turn, will at best be a battlefield for these struggles, but with the balance of power favoring the privileged elite; and at worst the elite's instrument of subjugation. True democracy can flourish only where all the goods of social life, including both material well-being and the opportunity to participate in decision-making in all aspects of social life, are equitably distributed among all people.

12. Socialism as public ownership/control of the means of production; capitalism as private ownership/control. Socialism as production for needs; capitalism as production for profit. Socialism as the subordination of the economy to society; capitalism as the subordination of society to the economy. These distinctions, if not alternative ways of saying the same thing, are interrelated and all, when fleshed out, suggest the intimate relationship between socialism and democracy.

Virtually by definition private ownership/control of the means of production entails production for profit, since profit seems the most effective if not the only incentive for private production. The very purpose of public ownership/control, then, is to depart from production for
profit in favor of production for needs. Production for needs rather than profit, in turn, is to subordinate the economy to society in that needs may include both the economic and non-economic, both production and alternatives to production. Socialism subordinates the economy to society in that public ownership/control of the means of production facilitates the blending of productive and other publicly determined social needs, whereas production for profit favors productive over other needs.

Now production for profit is touted by its proponents as production for needs in that profit results from people's demand for production per their willingness to pay for what they need. Thus money becomes a surrogate for need. There are several weaknesses to this way of thinking. One is that private property systems, especially if unregulated, produce great disparities in wealth and ability to pay, such that the needs of those with much money are well met while the needs of those with little or no money are left unmet, not because they have less needs but because they have less money. Another is that private production does not adequately provide for so-called public goods which people really need and are willing to pay for, but which demand more coordination and pooling of resources than is feasible for consumers in a market economy. Third, as a consequence of the financial might in particular of the giant enterprises which tend over time to dominate, production for profit, while perhaps not totally unresponsive to people's needs, creates the very needs on which profit depends and biases private and public decision-making in favor of those needs. This happens not only through advertising and political influence, but also by promoting production for profit as a prime social value. Money, in short, is at best a highly imperfect surrogate for, and a highly imperfect way of expressing, needs.

Democratic socialism responds to these weaknesses through a collective, democratic decision-making process which supplants or supplements production for profit. Democratic
decision-making enables the people, interrelating with each other on equal terms, to determine society's needs, to provide for the appropriate mix of economic and other needs and of public and private goods, and to ensure that everyone's needs are equitably met.

Now democratic capitalism does do some of the foregoing. Business is regulated to some degree so as to deter public harms and promote the collectively determined public interest; government does provide a variety of public goods and some of the needs of those without much money. However, due to the predominant though not total power of business interests and the predominance of the production-for-profit ethic, business is less regulated than is appropriate in the public interest and is often benefited by regulation detrimental to what would otherwise be deemed the public interest. Likewise, public goods and the needs of those without much money are less well provided for than if production for profit did not bias the entire process.

Democratic socialism unbiases the process through public ownership/control of the means of production, thereby subordinating the economy to society. This does not necessarily mean the elimination of all private ownership, however, since the private ownership of some property may actually serve certain social needs other than the production of goods and services, needs such as privacy and self-development. Nor does public ownership/control necessarily mean a centrally planned economy. It certainly does not mean an authoritarianly and bureaucratically planned economy, for this removes the people's participation in determining society's needs in favor of a decision-making process which even if benign cannot possibly fathom the range and diversity of people's needs and which will inevitably degenerate over time into self-interested decision-making unresponsive to people's needs—one of which needs, given that needs are largely socially created, is to participate, in order to be fully human, in the process of creating society and oneself. Even nominally democratic centralized planning may become
bureaucratized, unresponsive and inefficient; consequently, some form of decentralized decision-making may be called for. Thus a market for consumer goods, though one not geared to production for profit, may be the best way for people to express their needs for private goods.

And regional and local planning, though requiring oversight to ensure that it does not undercut the good of the whole, may be the best way to involve people actively in determining those needs which are primarily of regional and local concern. Some goods and services of an intimate and personal nature may best be provided one-on-one, although if a fee is to be charged care must be taken not to devote so much of the economy thereto that a production-for-profit ethic comes to dominate social life, thereby leading to the demise of democratic socialism.

The foregoing illustrates that the distinction between democratic socialism and democratic capitalism is as much one of degree as one of kind. Democratic capitalism has always entailed, and increasingly so under advanced capitalism, some public ownership/control of the means of production and some production for needs, although society has always been subordinate to the economy. And democratic socialism may include some production for profit on a small scale. However, since an economic system is only worthwhile as a means to the end of serving human needs and since production for profit creates imbalance inimical to that end, public ownership/control of the means of production must predominate so that production will fully serve human needs. Moreover, the imbalances endemic to production for profit are inimical to democracy, which is also a means to the end of serving the human need to participate in guiding one's own and society's destiny. Thus socialism and democracy must go hand-in-hand, and are prerequisites for the realization of the other, in society's pursuit of human needs.

13. Socialism is not only a way of organizing economic relations, but is also, perhaps primarily, a way of thinking about the world and about life. Like capitalism, socialism is materialistic but
in a different way. Capitalism is more thoroughly materialistic in that the essence of capitalism is profit. Capitalism therefore pushes as much of social life as possible in a profit-making direction. While relatively passive activities and resource uses can be profitable, by and large profit derives from active resource use, the continual creation and promotion of "new" things to buy. Conservation is difficult under capitalism in part because it makes profit-making more difficult and in part because it requires government intervention. Monied interests thus have the incentive to oppose conservation so as to protect profit-making, and are likely to succeed in curbing it through the enhanced ability which their wealth allows to influence public opinion and the government.

Socialism is also materialistic in that it recognizes that some material things are essential for everyone and do contribute to people's happiness. However, since under socialism there is no need to make a profit, there should be less promotion of materialism as an end in itself, less propaganda if you will. Consequently, it should be easier for society to put materialism in its proper perspective and to decide on the proper balance between materialism and other values. It is unquestionable that passive uses of the environment and spiritual pursuits can be as enjoyable as "things". What it takes to experience enjoyment, though, while perhaps partially innate, is to a great degree culturally conditioned. Capitalist culture overemphasizes materialism and submerges other values, while socialism contains no such ideological and cultural bias.

Capitalism also contains an individualistic bias, whereas socialism has a more balanced view of the relation between the individual and the community. Capitalism emphasizes the individual primarily as a way of justifying private property and the wealth disparities of capitalist society. Private property must be justified because it is an essential component of capitalism, and wealth disparities must be justified because the tendency of capitalism and the incentive of the capitalist
class is to amass great wealth in the hands of a few. Individualism justifies private property as an essential component of what it means to be a fully developed individual. And it justifies wealth disparities as the reward for hard work and expertise, which in turn is said to redound to the benefit of all through the social goods which wealth producing activities provide.

However, a contradiction arises when wealth disparities become so great that some have little or no property of their own and people begin to doubt that all are benefiting. It is possible to counteract the divergence of wealth in capitalist society through redistributive measures such as taxation and social welfare programs, but only so much redistribution is possible in practice and there is a bias against redistribution in part because of the individualistic ethic which predominates under capitalism and in part because the capitalist class' undue influence over the government inhibits redistributive measures.

On the one hand socialism contains no such individualistic bias, but recognizes that people have both an individualistic and communal side and that the proper balance between the two is not preordained but can differ as between people and societies and can change over time. Consequently, an on-going social process of evaluating and deciding upon the proper balance is necessary. Socialism facilitates this process because it is not biased in favor of the individual. On the other hand, however, socialism does recognize the importance of the individual and even allows a fuller conception of the individual than does capitalism. Capitalism is biased in favor of those aspects of individualism which promote profit, such as private property and the meritoriousness of wealth disparities. Being more egalitarian and untied to profit, socialism more easily recognizes the contradiction between an individualistic ethic and great wealth disparities, the non-materialistic aspects of the full development of the individual, and the importance with a commitment to individualism of attending to the full development of all.
14. Actually (or formerly) existing so-called socialist or communist societies have been widely condemned in the west as undemocratic. These societies are not, however, hereditary monarchies or (perhaps with some exceptions) self-perpetuating autocracies. Rather, they are usually one-party states, with membership in the party being the key to full involvement in governance. Thus, it is more accurate to label them as oligarchies—government by the few, i.e., the party or those who control the party. Democracy, on the other hand, can be defined as governance by the many; not, however, by everyone, as there is no nation in which everyone is entitled to participate in governance. Thus, as the distinction between the few and the many is a matter of degree, and the boundary between them indistinct, so too then as between oligarchy and democracy. Nor is it the label that counts, but the numbers involved and the genuineness of the involvement. So although at its founding the United States called itself democratic, most people—women, slaves, Indians, non-property owners—were denied the right to vote. The eligible electorate, consisting mainly of propertied white males, probably represented no more than 10-15% of the total populus. Democracy or oligarchy? The struggle to extend the franchise in the United States and other so-called western democracies has been a long and arduous one. Civil wars have been fought over it, people murdered and jailed. And despite the fact that after all these years, indeed centuries, substantially universal franchise now prevails in these societies, they can hardly be called models of self-governance. People in the United States, for example, have either become so disaffected with their lack of real political power, or have been subliminally convinced by the powers-that-be that they lack power, that hardly a majority of eligible voters participate in even the most important elections. The process is skewed even further by the importance to the effective exercise of political power of money, education, connections, and other privileges.
Democracy or oligarchy? What counts, then, is not how many parties there are, but how many people have the right to and do participate and exercise effective power in the controlling aspects of the governance process. A careful analysis, more careful perhaps than has yet been done or is possible to do, is necessary to evaluate how many people exercise effective power in socialist/communist societies. Suffice it to say that it is entirely possible within a one-party structure for there to be more genuine choice than in a two or multi-party system whose parties are, relatively speaking, tweedledum and tweedledee. In fact, however, only a small fraction of the population has belonged to the ruling party in most one-party states; for example, only 5-6% or so of the populus are estimated to have belonged to the Communist Party in the Soviet Union, and in China only 3-4% or so belong. Within these parties it may be that most party members have had as much influence as most of the citizenry in the so-called western democracies. Moreover, socialist/communist societies often provide for citizen participation in governance outside the electoral process. In some, for instance, there has been more worker involvement in decision-making than is generally the case in capitalist societies. The ideal, though, the long term goal, must be universal participation on equal terms in all aspects of governance in socialist/communist society. The failure to live up to or even move toward this ideal certainly helps explain the collapse of Soviet and Eastern European socialism/communism. Nevertheless, given their own inadequacies, the capitalist critique of socialist/communist societies is at best a biased comparison of the two systems, resulting from ignorance and an incomplete analysis of what is really going on not only in socialist/communist societies but in their own societies as well, and at worst outright propaganda designed to distract attention from the injustices of capitalism in the on-going power struggle between the two ideologies.

15. If all actions and decisions are interrelated, if whatever happens in one society impacts all
societies, then genuine self-determination requires a thoroughly democratic and socialized society worldwide. While the workings of such a society cannot be detailed in advance, it is possible to view human history as moving, with many fits and starts, in that direction.

Two historical developments might be cited in this regard. First, is the development over the past several centuries of the nation-state. While nation-states have been and still are instruments of subjugation and exploitation both internally and externally, and while the existence of a multitude of self-interested nation-states may in many ways inhibit worldwide democratic socialism, one can view the nation-state process as moving in that direction by bringing together diverse and even warring peoples into a unified society with at least the potential of a more broadly based collectivity than previously existed. The European social democracies, although still predominantly capitalist, might be cited as examples of broader democracy and egalitarianism than would be achievable without a structure like the nation-state. And the European Community might be seen as a movement toward a still broader collectivity which might one day lead to a European-wide social democracy or full-blown socialism. Even the break-up of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe can be seen as the result in large part of the failure of those societies to democratize and as a precursor to a united Europe if those now balkanized nation-states eventually become part of the European Community, as many seem to want to do. In Africa, as well, although the nation-state process is less complete because more recent and less spontaneous because of its colonial imposition, and although (perhaps consequently) many of those nations are more authoritarian than democratic and are fraught with internal strife, we may be seeing the early stages of pan-African unity. If all this were to occur, the next question would be whether these and other regional conglomerations elsewhere in the world could evolve into a worldwide government of some kind. Perhaps the United Nations,
which as a loose confederation of formally sovereign states is a germinal world government at best, is a step in that direction.

Second, is the internationalization of the economy over the past several centuries. Virtually the entire world today is economically interconnected and interdependent. While so far this movement represents to a great extent the triumph of international capitalism and has produced ever deepening exploitation of the less well off sectors of the world, it may be that an internationalized economy is a prerequisite to a movement toward worldwide democratic socialism. Perhaps international competition will lead, as it seems to be doing, to increasing exploitation and a lowering standard of living of workers in even the well off capitalist nations, and perhaps this trend will delegitimize capitalism and help bring about international solidarity among all the workers of the world in their struggle against capitalist exploitation. Perhaps the lack of new markets to conquer and the despoliation of the environment resulting from the drive for profit pose capitalism's final accumulation crisis. As a dying star glows brightest before it explodes, perhaps the triumph of capitalism actually represents its death knoll. But in struggling to move beyond capitalism, we must strive as well to ensure that its death does not bring with it some nuclear or other holocaust which also destroys humanity.

16. Is the peaceful, or at least relatively peaceful, evolution of democratic socialism possible, or is violent revolutionary struggle inevitable? In the quasi-feudal underdeveloped countries, while there may be some exceptions, e.g., Allende's election in Chile, history suggests that peaceful change is difficult. In most such societies the machinery for peaceful change is not in place. Rather these societies are ruled, often without even the semblence of democracy, by elitists who dominate and oppress the people for their own advantage and are often propped up by the developed capitalist countries in furtherance of their imperialistic objectives. Where elections
occur, and they occur only when necessary to placate their own oppressed masses or the populus of their capitalist sponsors, these elections are typically a sham: the opposition is intimidated if not killed, the presentation of opposing views is thwarted, the balloting process itself is corrupt. And should a socialist government happen to win office, e.g., Allende again, then all the covert capitalist apparatus will seek to overthrow it. Thus democratic socialism will most likely come about in underdeveloped countries only through revolutionary grass-roots struggle, and once in place will have to protect itself through force of arms and with the support of the more established socialist states. This is truly unfortunate because an emergent socialist system under siege will be unable to focus all its energies in establishing the just socialist society, and in order to protect itself may often have to resort to repressive measures which are inconsistent with its ideals and provide fodder to its capitalist critics.

As for the developed capitalist societies, the situation is cloudier. In theory, the democratic electoral process which prevails in these societies could produce a socialist victory; indeed, socialist parties have achieved a degree of power in several capitalist countries. However, although all capitalist societies have their downtrodden classes, they have been able by exploiting the rest of the world to provide enough of their people with a sufficiently high standard of living to make the emergence of full-blown democratic socialism through the ballot box unlikely, at least in the short run, absent some cataclysmic event. If, for example, there were in the near future a sudden collapse of the world economy, causing hardship in the capitalist nations surpassing even the so-called Great Depression, their electorates could turn quite rapidly to socialism, the capitalist system having been so thoroughly discredited. Or, as in the past, they could as easily turn in their panic to fascism, insanely seeking scapegoats for their anger and as a panacea world conquest. Without guidance the latter path is all too likely, particularly in the
United States given the extreme anti-socialist sentiment prevailing there. If, on the other hand, the capitalist economies were to steadily but gradually decline over a period of years, it could be that enough people would become radicalized that socialism could come about with a minimum of violence; something short, at least, of all-out civil war. This is a scenario worth planning for—by supporting the liberation of underdeveloped countries from imperialism, thereby increasing the pressure on the capitalist economies; and by educating the people of the capitalist states about the merits of socialism. It is worth planning for because, while the powers that be have been quite successful in keeping the system afloat thus far, the gradual decline of capitalism is a real possibility. It is worth planning for as well because under any other scenario a nuclear holocaust seems all too likely. Were that to occur, who is to say what those, if any, who were left to pick up the pieces could create out of the rubble.
III.
The Communist Ideal

1. The ultimate end, the overriding goal, the true ideal of communism must be the achievement of a world in which all the benefits of life—material well-being, self-respect, creative expression, participation in governance, the opportunity to serve—are equitably shared among all people according to their needs and abilities.

2. In communism the community is at one apex, the individual at the other—twin peaks to be scaled, twin idols worshiped. The good of the community is paramount. Individual selfishness and self-interest must never override the welfare of all. Each and every individual is likewise paramount, and must be valued, and respected, and allowed to develop as an individual in all her uniqueness.

3. The communist society is a classless society, a society without privilege, in which everyone willingly and joyfully participates, out of love equally of oneself and one's fellow humans, in the collective creation and equitable sharing of a good life for all.

4. Specialization is inevitable in a complex communist society. This means some degree, perhaps a great degree, of division of labor. Division of labor in turn threatens to degenerate into class struggle. This threat arises in part from the inequalities—in material well-being, knowledge, status, and all the many other goods of life—which inevitably result from a division of labor, even in a society striving toward an equal sharing of these goods. When some have more than others this is privilege; when they seek to maintain their status by exercising the power that privilege confers, this is class struggle. The threat of class struggle also arises from the differing consciousness which results from a division of labor—a worker mentality, a bureaucratic perspective, an intellectual bias, and so on. The risk is that the communitarian and
egalitarian consensus on which the ideal communist society depends may come asunder. To prevent the reemergence of class struggle, to preserve a classless point of view in the face of diversity, is the great communistic task.

5. A classless mentality is the only sure way to eliminate class struggle. People who fully understand their interdependence with, and who truly feel the equal worthiness of, all human beings will not seek to dominate others, because to do so would be contrary both to their interests and their beliefs. The question is how to produce a classless mentality. Factual equality—in material things, political participation, job assignments—might be the ideal way. A communal life in which everyone shares equally in all its aspects is more likely to produce a classless mentality than a society rife with inequalities. Yet total equality is probably impossible to achieve except on a small scale—the family, a commune—or in a simple, homogeneous society—a tribe, perhaps a local community. The more complex the society—the more that people have differing values, needs and desires, and the more that a variety of specialized skills is necessary—the more difficult it is to achieve factual equality. In the complex society, therefore, it will be necessary to experiment with various methods of producing and maintaining a classless mentality. If all the goods of life are not to be shared equally, in part because people don't value them all equally, then there must be assurances, despite the difficulty of comparing the values of diverse goods, of rough overall equality of material well-being. If there are more tasks to be performed than any individual could possibly be exposed to or accomplish in a lifetime, then everyone should have the opportunity to perform a sufficient variety of society's tasks as to develop a broadly-based collective perspective of life. If the identical education is not to be provided to everyone, because there is more knowledge than any one person could absorb or because some highly specialized tasks require intensive, long-term training, then everyone must
still receive a high level and broadly-based general education so that knowledge will not become privilege. In short, as inequalities develop in a classless society, there must in order to forestall class struggle be built-in equalizers.

6. Baking the largest pie possible is not the goal of communism, but rather the equitable distribution of the pie. Consistent with equitable sharing, however, the goal is to make the pie, in both a material and spiritual sense, as large as possible so as to increase the size of everyone's equitable share. For the greatest threat to the maintenance of a classless society, to people's willingness to view life from a collective, egalitarian perspective, is the absence of enough goods to satisfy everyone's basic needs and wants. Communism is not in favor of equal privation but of equal well-being.

7. From each according to ability, to each according to needs. This is the communist credo. What, then, is the connection between sharing equitably in the social product according to one's needs and contributing to society in accordance with one's abilities? Is sharing in the social product dependent on one's willingness to contribute, and is the size of one's share dependent on the extent to which one exercises one's abilities? Or is everyone entitled to an equitable share of the social product irrespective of their contributions? This issue would not arise in the ideal communist society, since all would willingly contribute according to their abilities; indeed, contributing to society would be viewed not just nor even primarily as a social responsibility, but as one of life's prime wants, as an opportunity which people need in order to feel fulfilled and which society must afford everyone so as to enable them to meet their needs. The notion that one's share should be dependent on one's contribution is a byproduct of capitalism's competitive/individualistic ethic, whereby all relationships are ultimately based on the quid pro quo, everyone is ultimately responsible for their own welfare rather than everyone's welfare.
being a societal responsibility, and disparate rewards are essential as a means both of inducing the exploited to work harder so as to produce more surplus value and of enabling the exploiters to pocket that surplus value as justified by their greater contribution to society. Malingering occurs under capitalism on the part of the exploited when they come to realize, if only subconsciously, that they are exploited, and either give up the struggle to get ahead due to their demoralization or rebel against the system by seeking ways to get by without subjecting themselves to exploitation. Malingering occurs on the part of those exploiters who value nonproductive over productive activity and whose wealth and power enable them to prosper without having to contribute to society. Malingering should cease or be minimal when communism eliminates exploitation and a communitarian ethic comes to prevail, since then the social conditions which produce malingering will no longer exist. However, as this is a process which will take time, malingering may still persist under developing communism as a lingering carry-over from capitalist culture. One response to this problem would be to tie people's share of the social product to their contribution to society. The drawbacks to this approach are first that it resembles the exploitative wage relationship of capitalism and thus may promote a competitive atmosphere inimical to the institution of non-exploitative relationships, second that it tends to authoritarianism and thus may inhibit the development of a communitarian ethic under which people voluntarily contribute to society, and third that it blames people for the attitudes and habits produced by and carried over from their prior exploitative culture. It would seem far more supportive of developing communism to try to induce malingerers to voluntarily contribute to society by providing them with an equitable share of the social product despite their unwillingness to do so, thereby affirmatively demonstrating and hopefully fostering society's communitarian ethic. Only experience will show which of the two approaches is in fact a more
viable way to foster communism, and the affirmative approach may be impracticable when there are too many malingerers. Where, however, one's share is to be tied to one's contribution, everyone must at least be furnished the basic necessities of life, for to allow anyone to be destitute would totally contradict communism's humanistic ideal. If despite the elimination of exploitation and want people are unwilling to contribute to society and to adopt communitarian values in numbers sufficient to enable communist society to thrive, then unfortunately we may have to conclude that humanity is not yet ready for communism.

8. The hallmark of capitalism is private ownership and control of society's resources. This includes natural resources like land, air, water, and minerals; tangible resources created by productive human effort, like buildings, machinery, food and clothing; and intangible resources like knowledge and leisure time. Private ownership of natural resources is inapt and unjust because these resources belong to everyone; they are valuable, and to award them to particular individuals is to enrich those individuals at the expense of everyone else. The individual who extracts these resources on behalf of the community is entitled to an equitable share of the social product, but not to the value of the resources themselves to which the individual contributes nothing. Created tangible resources are no different; they are simply natural resources converted through productive labor into a different, more useful form. Again, the individual is entitled to share in the social product, but the newly created resource itself, since it is composed of natural resources belonging to everyone, continues to belong to everyone; otherwise the individual is unjustly enriched at everyone's expense. The same holds true for intangible resources, even for as seemingly individual a resource as a so-called original idea. The creator of an idea that is of benefit to the community is entitled to share in the social product, but once created the idea itself belongs to everyone. This is because there is no such thing as a truly original idea, at least not in
the sense of its being the product of one person's efforts. New ideas are the outgrowth of the social setting in which an individual exists—of the knowledge which the educational system makes it possible for an individual to attain, of the earlier ideas that form the foundation of new ideas. Ideas belong to everyone because knowledge and understanding are a cumulative, community venture.

9. The hallmark of communism is equality. Private ownership of resources, particularly of the means of production, is inconsistent with communism because it breeds inequality and exploitation. It breeds inequality and exploitation in the work place because private ownership confers the authority to control use. The authority to control use in turn empowers the private owner through superior bargaining power to control workers, and in any event is inconsistent with the right of all who participate in production also to participate in production decisions. Private ownership also breeds inequality and exploitation in society at large because it inevitably produces disparities of wealth and status, and therefore of economic and political power. Those with more power use it to maintain their privileges, to assure their continued dominance, and to prevent the less-well-off from rising. Finally, and perhaps most significantly, private ownership breeds an individualistic ethic, a competitive state of mind, which leads people to accept and thereby perpetuates the inequalities and exploitation associated with the private ownership system. Private ownership, particularly of the means of production, must therefore be abolished so as both to eliminate the inequalities and exploitation it causes and to set the stage for a new communitarian, egalitarian ethic.

10. As an abstract proposition so-called democratic capitalism can in theory be designed on an egalitarian, non-exploitative basis and in accordance with general rather than selfish private interests. The starting point would be to parcel out as private property equal shares of the goods
of life, accompanied by a fully open one-person-one-vote political system. The asserted purpose would be to enhance human dignity by assuring everyone as much control as possible over one's destiny, and by dispersing equally both economic and political power so as to prevent imbalance, stratification, and exploitation. To prevent self-aggrandizement and the use of property rights for selfish rather than general interests, there would be the checks of the marketplace, people expressing their preferences by their willingness to pay, and if need be of public regulation, people expressing their preferences in the political process. Should inequalities arise, the political process would periodically intervene to rectify them through such measures as redistributive taxation and regulation of the political process. All fine in theory perhaps, but as a practical matter it cannot work. First of all, all capitalist systems are already highly stratified, and those in power will never willingly cede their privileged status. Only a revolution, ideally peaceful but most likely violent, will ever produce, even approximately, the necessary equal starting point. Second, even with a revolution, a competitive individualistic ethic is so fundamental to a private property system that the initial equality will inevitably degenerate into inequality that will be difficult to rectify due to that very ethic. Only by replacing capitalism's competitive, individualistic ethic with communism's communitarian, egalitarian ethic will it ever be possible to achieve and maintain true equality.

11. While all resources in a communist society belong to everyone, this does not necessarily mean that everyone must or should participate in the decision as to the usage of each and every resource. Although direct democracy may work well on a small scale, it is totally impracticable in a large, complex society. Nor does belonging to everyone necessarily mean that all decision-making must or should be by some democratically elected central authority acting on everyone's behalf. The larger and more diverse a society is, then the more remote any central
authority even if democratically elected, the greater the likelihood that it will misperceive the interests of all the people, and the less meaningful the people's participation in decision-making. The larger the society, then the more people that each representative will have to represent lest the representative body become unwieldy; the more people a representative represents, then the less the ability to communicate with and thus to understand the interests of one's constituents. From the people's perspective, the more one's participation consists of electing representatives rather than direct involvement in resource use decision-making, then the more removed people feel and actually are from control over their own and the society's destiny. In order to assure responsiveness and meaningful participation, some degree of decentralized decision-making over resource usage is therefore called for in the large communistic society. This means regional, local, and even neighborhood control over at least some, perhaps many, of society's resources. Some decision-making may even be best decentralized down to an individual level; some resources may be most efficiently handled, some goods and services most effectively provided, as a monopoly of one. This decentralization, even at the individual level, is not inconsistent with the notion that society's resources belong to everyone, so long as it is understood that all resources, whoever may in fact possess and control them, are held in trust for the benefit of all, may not be used to the detriment of others, and in order to prevent abuse are subject to regulation and even appropriation by higher authority. What mix of centralized and decentralized decision-making is appropriate depends on the circumstances of the particular society, and cannot be determined as a matter of abstract principle but only through pragmatic experimentation and continual readjustment as knowledge increases and times change. What can be said on principle, though, is that some decentralization of the complex communistic society is required by the egalitarian, communitarian values which underlie communism.
12. The principle that everyone in a communist society is entitled to an equitable share of society's goods presumes some individual possession and control of resources. As a practical matter some goods are amenable only to individual usage. The food one eats, for instance, cannot also be eaten by another; and privacy, a valuable good to most everybody, can be shared in the sense that everyone is entitled to some, but by definition must be enjoyed singly. Further, since people tend to differ in their tastes, equitable distribution requires some mechanism, perhaps even a market system, of affording people choices of the mix of goods they prefer, subject to overall equitable sharing. Put another way, equal sharing of each and every good is not equitable where tastes differ, since equal sharing will satisfy the interests of some more than others. To the extent that people in a communist society are accorded the right of individual possession and control of goods, even though subject to collective regulation and appropriation, it could be said that they are to that degree the private owners of those goods. Thus the sophisticated trend in capitalistic societies is to view private ownership as less a question of title and more a matter of the rights title confers, which rights can exist even absent formal title. Individual rights to goods in a communist society may be the functional equivalent of capitalistic private property so defined, but in order to avoid private property's individualistic bias should probably be referred to by another name—such as, communal property held in trust, the individual trustee having the right to use such property, even for personal use, only in accordance with and subject always to appropriation for the common good.

13. The dominant rationale for capitalism and the private property system is that they foster individual freedom, defined generally as the individual right to control as far as possible one's destiny. But why should individual freedom be valued? Capitalism's answer is the assertion that people have some natural or moral right to decide for themselves what is best for themselves. If
so, this is a right that belongs to everyone, an egalitarian right that is fully compatible with communism's overriding goal of human dignity. Furthermore, if all have the equal right to be free, it follows that all must also respect each others' comparable right; for to define freedom to justify an individual's exercise of his freedom so as to violate another's would make a mockery of freedom. To enslave another against her will, for example, would be an obvious and extreme violation. But violations of others' freedom could occur as well in many far subtler ways. Any unfair advantage taken of another would qualify—whether through superior physical strength, fraud, psychological intimidation, etc. How then can any advantages which some have over others be justified? Why should the fact someone is well educated, or well-to-do, or in a thriving society entitle one to more of the goods of life than anyone else, any more than having one's way through brute force, particularly since such advantages necessarily translate into superior bargaining and political power over the less advantaged? Capitalism's answer is that inequalities in wealth, status, power, and the like are necessary as incentives for people to be productive, so that in bettering themselves, even though they may end up with more than others, they will incidentally benefit others too. This is tied to the notion of the ever expanding pie, to the possibility of increasing everybody's well-being. Conversely capitalism asserts that beyond some point egalitarian efforts to equalize everyone's share of the goods of life will operate as a disincentive to productivity and thus ultimately hurt everybody. That incentive is necessary to the success of communism cannot be doubted. Incentives need not, however, be of the capitalistic type, in the form of disparate economic and social rewards and hardships. In fact, while in its earlier stages the possibility of amassing great wealth may have contributed to industrialization, capitalism in advanced societies actually discourages incentive. This is because capitalistic incentives are really incentives to exploit other people to one's own
advantage; and because the disparate wealth and power resulting from capitalism leads to rigidly stratified class systems in which the less advantaged, some of whom are in state of perpetual poverty even in the most well-off capitalist societies, have no realistic opportunity to improve their relative social standing. The realization that such is the case produces not productivity but demoralization. Far preferable as incentives, because fairer to all and more stable in the long run, are the incentives of communism—the communal spirit that flows from the knowledge that one’s efforts will benefit not only one's self and one's family but the entire society; the sense of responsibility that results from the knowledge that one is an integral part of a collective endeavor whose success depends on everyone's participation. Capitalism's individualistic incentives are self-defeating because they drive people apart and give rise to the baser human feelings—greed, covetousness, arrogance, insensitivity, and so on. Communism's collectivistic incentives, on the other hand, draw people together in a joint venture whose benefits are equitably shared by everyone, and create a spirit of commonality under which the most beautiful in humanity—love, empathy, good-will, and the like—flowers.

14. Capitalistic incentives—competition, the profit motive, variable wage rates, and the like—are premised on a view of the human animal as an acquisitive, self-centered being whose self-worth depends on achieving and attaining more than others. People who constantly want more and more, and who feel good when they can say they are better than the other person, are indeed likely to be motivated by capitalistic incentives. Apologists of capitalism even go so far as to make a virtue of greed. Communism views it the other way around. It is not the competitive nature of the animal that necessitates capitalistic incentives; rather capitalism produces and perpetuates competitiveness because competitiveness is necessary to capitalism, as a means to induce people to work harder so as to create profits for capitalists and as a justification for the
privileges which capitalists enjoy. Evidently it is easier to accept, or to be fooled into accepting, inequality when one is taught to believe that it is the natural order of things, a by-product of the way humans simply are, and that everyone will suffer from stifling the competitive instinct that inexorably produces inequality. To communism the greedy, self-centered competitiveness of capitalism is not a natural state of affairs; for the human animal has no inherent nature as a social being. The societies we have, the ethics we live by, our modes of human interaction, ultimately derive from the choices we make or have imposed on us; and we can change our societies, albeit not without great struggle, by making new choices. So communism does not say, in contrast to capitalism's competitive view of humanity, that humans are inherently selfless beings. It does assert that people will be happier, and the race as a whole better off, if we choose to approach life as a cooperative rather than a competitive endeavor and to redesign society in accordance with communism's communitarian, egalitarian ethic.

15. Some apologists of capitalism make a radical distinction between freedom, in the sense of every individual's right to decide her own destiny, and equality, in the sense of every individual's right to an equitable share of the goods of social life. To the extent that equitable sharing entails taking from some to give to others, this is said to violate the primary right of individual freedom, including the right to control the fruits of one's labor. In communism, freedom and equality go hand in hand; one is not possible without the other; indeed freedom without equality necessarily leads to the loss of freedom of those without. Take two individuals, one who has inherited wealth and the other who is mired in poverty. In only the most technical sense can it be said that these individuals are both free; for the possessor of inherited wealth has infinitely more opportunity to control his destiny than the poverty-stricken individual, who may have none. Without the opportunity to exercise freedom, however, freedom is meaningless and worthless.
Recognizing this, some capitalist thinkers assert that to be meaningful freedom must be accompanied by equality of opportunity, though not necessarily equality of results, and therefore advocate limited wealth redistribution for the purpose of equalizing opportunity. But equal opportunity is impossible without equality of results, i.e., without equitable sharing of the goods of social life. Those who have more will always be able to provide for themselves and their children opportunities that those who have less cannot provide. Worse yet, as long as capitalistic inequalities remain, those with more will always be able to use their superior position to the detriment of the freedom of the less-well-off, even to the point of causing the less-well-off to give up their freedom in order to survive. In the extreme case of no forced sharing of the goods of life, for example, the poverty stricken individual may in order to eat have to sell herself into bondage to the possessor of inherited wealth. Even under a regime of equal opportunity, with everyone guaranteed at least a minimal standard of living, the less-well-off will in order to improve their lot have to cede their freedom; as, for example, when to secure employment workers must concede to the capitalist the right to control hiring and firing, the use of the firm's resources, and other business decisions. Under capitalism, in short, because it rejects equality, some are freer than others. Communism, on the other hand, truly believes in everyone's right to be free, because communism recognizes the interdependence of freedom and equality and is willing to do that which is necessary to bring them both to fruition.

Equality under communism means that everyone is entitled to employment, in part because individual dignity and self-worth demand the opportunity to support one's family and to feel productive, and in part because full employment is beneficial to the entire society. Employment, then, as well as a right is also a responsibility; a responsibility which most people in the ideal communist society will willingly undertake. They will do so not just because they need to make
a living, but because communism will create conditions under which people will want to work for the common good—the knowledge that one's efforts entitle one to an equitable share of the product of the common venture, that one will have the opportunity to develop one's talents and pursue one's interests, that everyone's work-product is valued equally, and that everyone is responsible for equitably sharing society's work-load according to their abilities.

17. Communism recognizes, of course, that people have differing talents and interests, and that it makes sense to match people with jobs accordingly; both because this will enhance the social product available for equitable sharing among all, and because in light of people's differences equitable sharing of the benefit of employment demands responding to these differences lest some receive more in employment benefits than others. So, for example, if a doctor and a truck driver derive equal satisfaction from their work, and would feel less satisfied if their roles were reversed, enabling them to pursue their respective careers, at least primarily if not exclusively, is fully consistent with communism's egalitarian ethic. The question is whether, as under capitalism, the doctor and the truck driver should receive differing compensation. Capitalism says yes, and typically rewards the doctor more, on the ground that being a doctor is more important to society or harder than being a truck driver, and that it is therefore necessary to pay doctors more, or allow them to earn more, in order to induce people to enter the profession.

There are, however, other possible explanations of why some earn more for their labor than others under capitalism—such as that some people possess unique skills and are thus in a position to demand more, not because it is necessary to induce them to use their skills but because they have monopolistic bargaining power; or that those in lucrative professions use the enhanced political and economic power which their greater wealth confers to restrict entry into those professions as a means of maintaining artificially high prices and of perpetuating their
privileged status. There can be little doubt that monopoly and artificial restriction of competition often occur and explain much of the wage differential under capitalism. At the same time, it is undoubtedly true that in every society some tasks are harder or riskier or less desirable than others, and that some people are more productive than others or more suited temperamentally, physically or intellectually for particular tasks. While many people may voluntarily work harder or assume the riskier or less desirable tasks out of a sense of obligation to the community, it seems likely, even in a communist society where a communitarian ethic prevails, that many will not without some inducement to do so. One possibility is mandatory community service, with everyone having the obligation to perform an equitable share of certain tasks, particularly the less desirable or riskier ones. In addition to providing for tasks people would not otherwise perform voluntarily, mandatory community service also has a leveling effect supportive of communism's egalitarian ethic and helps create the communitarian spirit essential to communism's success. Mandatory service is not likely, though, to be a sufficient inducement to perform well tasks which are especially risky or undesirable, nor to perform up to one's ability when others are less productive. Consequently, affirmative incentives may be necessary in the communist society. Incentives need not, however, be financial, and communism must strive to find other types of incentives so as to avoid the inequalities, and the consequent exploitation and social stratification, which result from disparities in wealth and the power wealth confers. Thus those who are willing to work harder or to assume the especially risky or undesirable tasks might be rewarded, rather than with money, with more leisure time or social approbation. Such incentives are likely to work best in societies which already have a generally high standard of living or where people value non-material more than material rewards. Moreover, even non-material rewards pose problems of inequality; esteem, for example, by enabling one to
influence others more out of respect for one's accomplishments than the merits of one's ideas, may be abused for personal advantage. A communist society may therefore be faced with a difficult choice: whether to allow disparate rewards, financial or otherwise, as an incentive to productivity, thereby risking class struggle; or to accept a somewhat lower general standard of living in order to preserve egalitarianism, thereby risking social discontent. Which is the best way to go is less a matter of principle than of pragmatism and experimentation, the bottom line being how best to improve everyone's quality of life consistent with communism's egalitarian ideal.

18. To the extent that a communist society allows any disparities—in earnings, leisure time, decision-making responsibility, etc.—either as incentives to productivity or for other reasons, and some such inequalities are probably inevitable at least in the short run, there must be built-in levelers designed to ameliorate their destructive impact. For inequality is inimical to human dignity, and if unchecked will eventually lead to the demise of communism as those with more use their advantages to preserve their privileged status over those with less. Levelers can be of many types and must be geared to the particular needs of each communist society. Participatory democracy at all levels of power is one important leveler. Unchecked power, while it may be exercised benignly, is subject to abuse by those vested with decision-making authority. Democracy, whether direct or representative, checks abuse of power by broadening the decision-making base or holding decision-makers accountable to the electorate. Education is another important leveler. When some are educated and others are not, or when some have knowledge or access to information others do not, then education becomes a source of power subject to abuse. A generally well educated public counters the abuse of knowledge by making information more widely available and by undercutting the mystique of intellectualism. Still
another important leveler if some are allowed to earn more than others, important because money is power, is controls against amassing excessive wealth and against the use of one's superior financial position to take advantage of others or exercise undue influence over decision-making. Where there is division of labor, mandatory community service, with everyone being required at every stage of life to perform a representative cross-section of society's tasks, is an important leveler against feelings of superiority and promotive of the understanding of society as a joint venture to whose success everyone's contribution is equally important. More radical levelers, such as a cultural revolution, may even be necessary when privilege becomes overly entrenched, the social structure too stratified, and milder levelers unavailing. Finally, a leveler most important for communism's flourishing is a genuine belief by the people in the communist ethic; for those who believe in the ethic are more likely to be committed to the success of the venture. The organization of the society as a communist system, so that people actually live in accordance with communist principles, helps promote belief in the ethic. Communism's adherents must also promote the communist ethic through open dialogue, continually discussing, debating and defending the values of communism throughout society and in every generation. For genuine dialogue creates a sense of and is an actual involvement in the establishment and renewal of society's values. Genuine involvement in turn creates adherence, without which no society can survive for long except by brute force, nor should it if its members ultimately remain unconvinced of the truth of its basic values.

19. Capitalist societies overemphasize individualism—to the degree that some accumulate great wealth while others are impoverished, some wield great power while others are powerless, some have opportunity while others have none, and all in the name of individualism. Yet despite the inequities associated with capitalistic individualism, individualism nonetheless has a place, an
important place, in the communist society. Some of the most cherished goods of life—privacy controlling one's destiny, the expression of one's opinion, creativity—emanate from individualistic values. Nor is it likely that these goods would lose their value even in a totally classless society. If not, then communism's humanistic focus demands their recognition and accommodation. Indeed, to do so is an aspect of and serves the common good. For to respect others, to have a communitarian spirit, one must feel both self-respect and the respect of others, neither of which are possible if one's most cherished values are denied. There thus must be in the communist society a sphere within which the individual is to a great degree sovereign. Individualism must, nevertheless, be kept in its proper perspective. It must not become a bastion of privilege, nor a means by which some dominate and exploit others. When this occurs, individualism no longer serves but runs counter to the common good. The task, in short, is to achieve a proper balance among individualism, communalism, and egalitarianism. Finding that balance is a line-drawing problem that demands experimentation and which will not necessarily be resolved the same way at all times or in every communist society. Not to make the attempt, however, in reaction to capitalism's overemphasis on individualism, to accommodate individual values in communist societies, would be to deny the humanistic ethic which gave rise to communism in the first place.

20. Shall communism's radical restructuring of society totally eradicate all that went before? Shall all the books be burned, all institutions be destroyed—vestiges of an evil empire to be discarded, so to speak, on the ash heap of history? Or despite the gross inequities and oppression of earlier systems, did they nevertheless produce some insights which communism can use in equitable, non-exploitative ways? Religion, for example, has assuredly been an opiate, lulling the downtrodden into obeying unquestioningly the most abusive orders of so-called higher
authority and passively accepting blatant injustice in the hope of a better life hereafter—e.g., the story of Abraham and Isaac, the Book of Job, render unto Caesar. These must be exposed for what they are: the devices of domination. But what of such maxims as love thy neighbor or do unto others? Are these not, when divorced from their exploitative underpinnings, beautiful expressions of the humanitarian sentiment which gave rise to communism? If everyone in a communist society truly believed in and lived by these sentiments, would that not foster communism's goal of a classless society? Is not communism, perhaps, the prerequisite for the realization of these high ideals? Or consider capitalistic democracy, that mirage which enables the rich and powerful to dominate through the illusion of universal participation and self-governance. But are not genuine participation and self-governance the goals of communism? And is not democracy, in the sense of direct involvement in decision-making where feasible or where not of decision-making by truly responsive and accountable representatives, perhaps the most viable means of assuring participation and self-governance and of preventing the corruption of power? And does not communism, again, provide the communal and egalitarian foundation that is the prerequisite for genuine democracy? Sometimes one can learn even from one's enemies.

21. If communism and capitalism alike are the result of historical evolution, then it is important to study what went before in order in planning for the future both to avoid the mistakes of the past and to understand where one is now. Decisions are not made in the abstract and against a clean slate. They are attempts to solve particular, real-world problems, which problems are the byproduct of historical events which must be explored and understood in all their ramifications if decision-making is to be wise. Thus, for instance, capitalistic thinking must be studied in the communist society; not just communist critiques of capitalism but capitalist thinkers themselves,
lest the errors or incompleteness of present-day critics perpetuate misinterpretations and
misunderstandings of the past; nor necessarily with a preconceived negative bias but with as
open a mind as possible, so that any positive contributions of earlier thinkers can be tapped for
use today. Open inquiry is essential to progress in the communist society.

22. It is amazing, when capitalist thinkers are carefully studied, how glaring are the inadequacies
of their reasoning and how much support one can find therein for communism. Consider, for
example, Locke, whose philosophy is at the foundation of capitalist democracy. Locke posited a
pre-social state-of-nature in which humans existed in a free and independent status and from
which societies arose through mutual interest and accord. From this starting point he concluded
that humans have certain natural or inalienable individual rights, including freedom,
self-determination, and self-preservation. With these rights communism can have no quarrel; so
long as they are not abused, they are essential to human dignity and thus to the common good.
The difficulty is that the state-of-nature's atomized view of humans risks a bias in favor of the
individual as against the whole, to the point that some have derived from Locke the notion that
people are morally bound to participate in collective ventures only when they personally agree
and otherwise have no morally enforceable responsibility for the welfare of others. Even if all
this followed from the state-of-nature starting point, which is highly debatable, it is unlikely that
the state-of-nature ever actually existed for any being with a brain advanced enough to be called
homo sapiens. In other words, by the time there were beings capable of making the free-willed
choice to form a society, they were probably already social beings with collectively determined
roles and responsibilities. Indeed, they may have functioned quite like an ideal communistic
commune. Moreover, a close reading of Locke, despite the radical individualistic bias which has
been derived from the state-of-nature, discloses substantial support for communism. In the
state-of-nature, according to Locke, all resources were communal in nature, that is as in communism they belonged to everyone. However, since the right of self-preservation demands the individual use of resources, Locke concluded that people have the right through their labor to appropriate resources from the commons as their private property so long as there is "enough and as good left in common for others." This is a thoroughly egalitarian sentiment which leads inexorably to communism. For the best way to ensure that the commons, i.e., the resources of life, benefit all, and that the "enough and as good" proviso is not undercut by greed and the will to power, is collective ownership of all society's resources as a starting point, coupled with collective decision-making as to who gets access to these resources, such access to be governed by the principle of equitable sharing and subject to the understanding that communal resources under an individual's control are held in trust for and may be used only in accordance with the common good. The failure of capitalism is that it has discarded the Lockean proviso and allowed individual appropriation to overwhelm the common good through gross disparities in wealth and power, opportunity and well-being. Only communism can assure the proper balance between the rights of the individual and those of the whole.

23. Capitalistic democracy produces false consciousness. It teaches the privileged they have earned and therefore deserve their privileged status, when in fact it is the result of exploitation and oppression; the disadvantaged they have the opportunity to advance, and thus are to blame if they don't, when opportunity is really denied; the society as a whole they are well-off, when instead it is crumbling around them. It is easy to see why the elite classes develop false consciousness: the oppressor, the beneficiary of exploitation, must find ways to rationalize their privileges to themselves, or else admit that their privileged status is unjustified. So most come to believe in the lie of their own superiority. Of course, there are elites who recognize the injustice
of privilege; for one can deny reality only for so long. Some, upon seeing the light, renounce privilege and seek radical social change; most, however, find it difficult to give up their privileged status, for privilege is a narcotic, and succumb instead to the malaise which results from living what one knows, if only dimly and subconsciously, is a lie. As for the disadvantaged, some, ignorant of the relationship between the capitalistic social structure and their disadvantaged condition, passively accept their status, and even in their ignorance come to believe the elitist propaganda which blames the victim for his plight; others, while aware of the injustice of it all, become demoralized by their inability to advance and by their apparent powerlessness to change the system. Powerlessness in the face of injustice in turn produces anger and frustration, and eventually futile attacks because isolated and disorganized in the face of the ruling class' great might. Thus the need for leadership to educate the oppressed to the true cause of their plight and to organize them for the mass collective action needed to combat their oppressors, throw off their shackles, and reorganize society. Radical social change is difficult, though, in the more highly developed capitalist countries. Despite the presence there of a downtrodden class, most people fall into the vast middle class which, although also oppressed in the sense that capitalism's competitive, survival-of-the-fittest, dog-eat-dog, individualistic ethic makes a truly satisfying life impossible, does still benefit from the material well-being resulting from capitalism's technological innovation and imperialistic exploitation of the rest of the world. This contradiction—being used and a user, exploited and an exploiter, at the same time—only adds to the malaise that persists in even the most well-off capitalist countries. People try neurotically to deny the contradiction, to immerse themselves in materiality, to convince themselves that all is well, while around them the economy stagnates, the family deteriorates, and violence abounds. For it is not easy to face the uncertainty of change when the status quo is
at least passable; nor to reject one's culture, despite its inadequacies, since to do so is to reject a part of oneself. Leadership, again, is necessary to awaken people to the possibilities and benefits of fundamental change, to help them overcome their fears, and to guide the way.

24. It may be tempting in the communist society, in order to avoid the problem of false consciousness, to deny people access to false ideas and to centralize decision-making in a benign, self-perpetuating vanguard which acts paternalistically on behalf of the people and in accordance with their true interests. Tempting, but precarious; for the risk is too great that an unchecked vanguard will misperceive the interests of the people, become wedded to and attempt to impose its own erroneous ideas, or even disregard the people's interests in favor of its own. Egotism and the will to power are still too prevalent in the human animal, and truth still too uncertain, to run that risk. This not to denigrate the importance of leadership in the communist society, nor to deny that paternalism has its place. People often look to those whose views they respect for guidance, defer to the better judgment of those who have demonstrated their wisdom and expertise, and even cede to them power over their lives. But the ideas of those in power and the paternalistic exercise of power must, in order to prevent abuse and preserve a reciprocal relationship between the vanguard and the people based on mutual respect, be subject to the checks of free and open debate and of democratic accountability to the people. To be sure there are risks here as well: the people may adopt false ideas or select charlatans as their leaders. The communist society must strive to avoid this by structuring society along egalitarian lines, and by providing everyone with a high level education and the opportunity for a decent life. Ultimately, however, there may be no escaping human fallibility, and consequently the necessity for on-going or periodic revolutionary struggle against corruption and abuse of power. This was Mao's rationale for the cultural revolution, and is a view with which even Jefferson was
sympathetic. Revolutionary change, though, is most difficult to accomplish when there is too much power at the top and not enough at the base.

25. There can be no doubt about the centrality of freedom of expression under communism. Free expression is central, first, because of its importance to individual growth and development. To express one's self is to create one's self as a person. To each according to one's needs thus implies the opportunity for all to satisfy this basic human need on equal terms, as well as mutual respect for each others' creative expressions. Secondly, a fully communized society would be truly and completely democratic—far more so than any society today. All people would have a genuine opportunity to participate on equal terms in collective decision-making, to participate equally in guiding their collective destiny. While everyone might not necessarily be equally active in collective affairs at all times, communism presupposes a generally high level of public awareness about and involvement in public affairs. Such would naturally flow, given the common human interest in self-determination, in a society where one's participation is both meaningful and valued by others. Public awareness and involvement presuppose in turn the free flow of information and free and open discourse, as well as a highly educated populous, none of which is possible without freedom of expression. Free expression, then, is not in essence some phony bourgeois right to be done away with upon the overthrow of capitalism. Free expression as practiced in bourgeois society may be phony, since what passes as free expression is far from fully free. For truly free expression requires equal access to the means of effective communication, and that is not possible in an inegalitarian society where money talks and power is entrenched. Thus the goal of communism is not to abolish free expression but to abolish free expression as bourgeois right. As bourgeois right free expression means two things, both of which testify to the lack of its full realization. First, the bourgeois right of free expression, as
legal right, is used, sometimes successfully but often not, to deflect attempts to stifle free expression. Second, the right of free expression, as one of formal equality though not of equal opportunity, is used by those with greater access to dominate, though not completely control, the means of communication and thereby to assist in perpetuating bourgeois ideology. Under communism free expression would not operate as bourgeois right, since as such right signifies conflict and inequality, but would be an amenity of life both widely exercised and available to all on equal terms.

26. Free expression and participatory democracy are essential under communism because human dignity and communism's egalitarian ethic demand social and political equality for everyone. They are not, however, without their risks, particularly in communism's early stages; notably, the risk that people will adopt non-communist ideas, oppose communist development, and even reinstitute oppression and exploitation. It is not a sufficient response, to put it in capitalistic terms, to say that the test of communism's validity is whether it can gain acceptance in the marketplace of ideas. This might hold true if the competition were open and unbiased, but it is not. In no capitalist country is there a neutral examination of capitalism versus communism. Rather, children are taught in school from their earliest and most impressionable years that capitalistic democracy is good and communism is bad. The entire culture of capitalist societies is biased against communism; the very fact that capitalistic institutions are in place creates a bias in their favor. Indeed, most people actually know very little about and have never even been exposed to the theory and practice of genuine communism. The situation is even worse in the quasi-feudal underdeveloped countries, where the masses are deliberately kept illiterate and uneducated as a means of controlling their thinking. In no such society can communism get a fair hearing. Even in a communist society, particularly in the transition stage from capitalism or
quasi-feudalism to communism, the lingering mind-set of the prior culture, coupled with the bombardment from within and without of anticommunist propaganda, may undercut the new order. It thus may be necessary in the emergent communist society to control the flow of information and to limit political participation until communist institutions and a new way of thinking are in place. Such restrictions must, however, be as minimal as is necessary to consolidate the new order and as short-lived as possible. For open inquiry and democratic decision-making are essential to the long run success of communism, as a guard against dogmatism, stagnation and oppression. To be sure the new culture will be biased in favor of communism and against competing ideas, but every culture is inevitably biased towards itself—all the more reason not to fear open inquiry and the people's judgment. Moreover, however much ideas are suppressed, the truth will ultimately prevail; the human animal is too much an independent thinker for it to be otherwise. And who, after all, is to say that communism is the final word, the last stage in the evolution of human thought. We must be open-minded enough to recognize that most likely it is not.

27. Does the end justify the means? Is the end to be achieved by whatever means necessary? Yes indeed, provided the end is properly defined. If eliminating capitalism is the goal, blowing up the world would accomplish it. But eliminating capitalism is not a complete statement of the goal of communism. More fully defined, the end is to replace capitalism with communism. Since blowing up the world would defeat that end, it is therefore not a valid means. Is armed struggle, then, a valid means of establishing communism, even though it inevitably causes death and suffering to innocent people? If it were possible to achieve communism through nonviolent means as readily as through armed struggle, then the answer is no. For by definition communism recognizes the worth of all human beings. So to cause more human suffering than is necessary to
establish communism, or to maintain it once established, is not a valid means because it violates
the true communist ideal. If, on the other hand, nonviolent change is unavailing, then armed
struggle is not only necessary and justifiable, but obligatory. For in that context to forsake armed
struggle would be to countenance, and therefore by inaction to become a party to, human
suffering even greater than that caused by the struggle. The true end of communism is human
dignity, the communist system itself being a means toward that end rather than an end in itself.
Whatever is done, therefore, in the name of establishing and maintaining communism must, to be
a valid means, accord with and advance the ultimate end of human dignity.