Also by Hannah Arendt

BETWEEN PAST AND FUTURE
THE HUMAN CONDITION
ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM

On Revolution

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Chapter Two

THE SOCIAL QUESTION

Les malheureux sont la puissance de la terre.
—S A I N T - J U S T

I

The professional revolutionaries of the early twentieth century may have been the fools of history, but they certainly were themselves no fools. As a category of revolutionary thought, the notion of historical necessity had more to recommend itself than the mere spectacle of the French Revolution, more even than the thoughtful remembrance of its course of events and the subsequent condensation of happenings into concepts. Behind the appearances was a reality, and this reality was biological and not historical, though it appeared now perhaps for the first time in the full light of history. The most powerful necessity of which we are aware in self-introspection is the life process which permeates our bodies and keeps them in a constant state of a change whose movements are automatic, independent of our own activities, and irresistible—i.e., of an overwhelming urgency. The less we are doing ourselves, the less active we are, the more forcefully will this biological process assert itself, impose its inherent necessity upon us, and overawe us with the fateful automatism of sheer happening that underlies all human history. The necessity of historical processes, originally seen in the image of the revolving, lawful, and necessary motion of the heavenly bodies,
found its powerful counterpart in the recurring necessity to which all human life is subject. When this had happened, and it happened when the poor, driven by the needs of their bodies, burst onto the scene of the French Revolution, the astronomic metaphor so plausibly apposite to the sempiternal change, the ups and downs of human destiny, lost its old connotations and acquired the biological imagery which underlies and pervades the organic and social theories of history, which all have in common that they see a multitude—the factual plurality of a nation or a people or society—in the image of one supernatural body driven by one superhuman, irresistible “general will.”

The reality which corresponds to this modern imagery is what, since the eighteenth century, we have come to call the social question and what we may better and more simply call the existence of poverty. Poverty is more than depravation, it is a state of constant want and acute misery whose ignominy consists in its dehumanizing force; poverty is abject because it puts men under the absolute dictate of their bodies, that is, under the absolute dictate of necessity as all men know it from their most intimate experience, and outside all speculations. It was under the rule of this necessity that the multitude rushed to the assistance of the French Revolution, inspired it, drove it onward, and eventually sent it to its doom, for this was the multitude of the poor. When they appeared on the scene of politics, necessity appeared with them, and the result was that the power of the old regime became impotent and the new republic was stillborn; freedom had to be surrendered to necessity, to the urgency of the life process itself. When Robespierre declared that “everything which is necessary to maintain life must be common good and only the surplus can be recognized as private property,” he was not only reversing premodern political theory, which held that it was precisely the citizens’ surplus in time and goods that must be given and shared in common; he was, again in his own words, finally subjecting revolutionary government to “the most sacred of all laws, the welfare of the people, the most irrefragable of all titles, necessity.” In other words, he had abandoned his own “despotism of liberty,” his dictator-

ship for the sake of the foundation of freedom, to the “rights of the Sans-Culottes,” which were “dress, food and the reproduction of their species.” It was necessity, the urgent needs of the people, that unleashed the terror and sent the Revolution to its doom. Robespierre, finally, knew well enough what had happened though he formulated it (in his last speech) in the form of prophecy: “We shall perish because, in the history of mankind, we missed the moment to found freedom.” Not the conspiracy of kings and tyrants but the much more powerful conspiracy of necessity and poverty distracted them long enough to miss the “historical moment.” Meanwhile, the revolution had changed its direction; it aimed no longer at freedom, the goal of the revolution had become the happiness of the people.

The transformation of the Rights of Man into the rights of Sans-Culottes was the turning point not only of the French Revolution but of all revolutions that were to follow. This is due in no small measure to the fact that Karl Marx, the greatest theorist the revolutions ever had, was so much more interested in history than in politics and therefore neglected, almost entirely, the original intentions of the men of the revolutions, the foundation of freedom, and concentrated his attention, almost exclusively, on the seemingly objective course of revolutionary events. In other words, it took more than half a century before the transformation of the Rights of Man into the rights of Sans-Culottes, the abdication of freedom before the dictate of necessity, had found its theorist. When this happened in the work of Karl Marx, the history of modern revolutions seemed to have reached a point of no return: since nothing even remotely comparable in quality on the level of thought resulted from the course of the American Revolution, revolutions had definitely come under the sway of the French Revolution in general and under the predominance of the social question in particular. (This is even true for Tocqueville, whose main concern was to study in America the consequences of that long and inevitable revolution of which the events of 1789 were only the first stage. In the American Revolution itself and the theories of the founders, he remained curiously
uninterested.) The enormous impact of Marx's articulations and concepts upon the course of revolution is undeniable, and while it may be tempting, in view of the absurd scholasticism of twentieth-century Marxism, to ascribe this influence to the ideological elements in Marx's work, it may be more accurate to argue the other way round and to ascribe the pernicious influence of Marxism to the many authentic and original discoveries made by Marx. Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the young Marx became convinced that the reason why the French Revolution had failed to found freedom was that it had failed to solve the social question. From this he concluded that freedom and poverty were incompatible. His most explosive and indeed most original contribution to the cause of revolution was that he interpreted the compelling needs of mass poverty in political terms as an uprising, not for the sake of bread or wealth, but for the sake of freedom as well. What he learned from the French Revolution was that poverty can be a political force of the first order. The ideological elements in his teachings, his belief in "scientific" socialism, in historical necessity, in superstructures, in "materialism," et cetera, are secondary and derivative in comparison; he shared them with the entire modern age and we find them today not only in the various brands of socialism and communism but in the whole body of the social sciences.

Marx's transformation of the social question into a political force is contained in the term "exploitation," that is, in the notion that poverty is the result of exploitation through a "ruling class" which is in the possession of the means of violence. The value of this hypothesis for the historical sciences is small indeed; it takes its cue from a slave economy where a "class" of masters actually rules over a substratum of laborers, and it holds true only for the early stages of capitalism, when poverty on an unprecedented scale was the result of expropriation by force. It certainly could not have survived more than a century of historical research if it had not been for its revolutionary rather than its scientific content. It was for the sake of revolution that Marx introduced an element of politics into the new science of economics and thus made it what it pretended to be—political economy, an economy which rested on political power and hence could be overthrown by political organization and revolutionary means. By reducing property relations to the old relationship which violence, rather than necessity, establishes between men, he summoned up a spirit of rebelliousness that can spring only from being violated, not from being under the sway of necessity. If Marx helped in liberating the poor, then it was not by telling them that they were the living embodiments of some historical or other necessity, but by persuading them that poverty itself is a political, not a natural phenomenon, the result of violence and violation rather than of scarcity. For if the condition of misery—which by definition never can produce "free-minded people" because it is the condition of being bound to necessity—was to generate revolutions instead of sending them to their doom, it was necessary to translate economic conditions into political factors and to explain them in political terms.

Marx's model of explanation was the ancient institution of slavery, where clearly a "ruling class," as he was to call it, had possessed itself of the means with which to force a subject class to bear life's toil and burden for it. Marx's hope, expressed with the Hegelian term of class-consciousness, rose from the fact that the modern age had emancipated this subject class to the point where it might recover its ability to act, while its action at the same time would become irresistible by virtue of the very necessity under which emancipation had put the working class. For the liberation of the laborers in the initial stages of the Industrial Revolution was indeed to some extent contradictory: it had liberated them from their masters only to put them under a stronger taskmaster, their daily needs and wants, the force, in other words, with which necessity drives and compels men and which is more compelling than violence. Marx, whose general and often inexact outlook was still firmly rooted in the institutions and theories of the ancients, knew this very well, and it was per-
haps the most potent reason why he was so eager to believe with Hegel in a dialectical process in which freedom would rise directly out of necessity.

Marx's place in the history of human freedom will always remain equivocal. It is true that in his early work he spoke of the social question in political terms and interpreted the predicament of poverty in categories of oppression and exploitation; yet it was also Marx who, in almost all of his writings after the Communist Manifesto, redefined the truly revolutionary élan of his youth in economic terms. While he had first seen man-made violence and oppression of man by man where others had believed in some necessity inherent in the human condition, he later saw the iron laws of historical necessity lurking behind every violence, transgression, and violation. And since he, unlike his predecessors in the modern age but very much like his teachers in antiquity, equated necessity with the compelling urges of the life process, he finally strengthened more than anybody else the politically most pernicious doctrine of the modern age, namely that life is the highest good, and that the life process of society is the very center of human endeavor. Thus the role of revolution was no longer to liberate men from the oppression of their fellow men, let alone to found freedom, but to liberate the life process of society from the fetters of scarcity so that it could swell into a stream of abundance. Not freedom but abundance became now the aim of revolution.

It would, however, be unjust to blame this well-known difference between the early and the later writings of Marx upon psychological or biographical causes and to see it as a real change of heart. Even as an old man, in 1871, Marx was still revolutionary enough to welcome enthusiastically the Parisian Commune, although this outbreak contradicted all his theories and all his predictions. It is much more likely that the trouble was of a theoretical nature. After he had denounced economic and social conditions in political terms, it very soon must have dawned upon him that his categories were reversible and that theoretically it was just as possible to interpret politics in economic terms as vice versa. (This reversibility of concepts is inherent in all strictly Hegelian categories of thought.) Once an actually existing relation between violence and necessity was established, there was no reason why he should not think of violence in terms of necessity and understand oppression as caused by economic factors, even though originally this relationship had been discovered the other way round, namely by unmasking necessity as man-made violence. This interpretation must have appealed very strongly to his theoretical sense because the reduction of violence to necessity offers the undeniable theoretical advantage that it is much more elegant; it simplifies matters to the point where an actual distinction between violence and necessity has become superfluous. For violence can indeed be easily understood as a function or a surface phenomenon of an underlying and overruling necessity, but necessity, which we invariably carry with us in the very existence of our bodies and their needs, can never be simply reduced to and completely absorbed by violence and violation. It was the scientist in Marx, and the ambition to raise his "science" to the rank of natural science, whose chief category then was still necessity, that tempted him into the reversal of his own categories. Politically, this development led Marx into an actual surrender of freedom to necessity. He did what his teacher in revolution, Robespierre, had done before him and what his greatest disciple, Lenin, was to do after him in the most momentous revolution his teachings have yet inspired.

It has become customary to view all these surrenders, and especially the last one through Lenin, as foregone conclusions, chiefly because we find it difficult to judge any of these men, and again most of all Lenin, in their own right, and not as mere forerunners. (It is perhaps noteworthy that Lenin, unlike Hitler and Stalin, has not yet found his definitive biographer, although he was not merely a "better" but an incomparably simpler man; it may be because his role in twentieth-century history is so much more equivocal and difficult to understand.) Yet even Lenin, despite his dogmatic Marxism, might perhaps have been capable of avoiding this surrender; it was after all the same man who
once, when asked to state in one sentence the essence and the aims of the October Revolution, gave the curious and long-forgotten formula: "Electrification plus soviets." This answer is remarkable first for what it omits: the role of the party, on one side, the building of socialism, on the other. In their stead, we are given an entirely un-Marxist separation of economics and politics, a differentiation between electrification as the solution of Russia's social question, and the soviet system as her new body politic that had emerged during the revolution outside all parties. What is perhaps even more surprising in a Marxist is the suggestion that the problem of poverty is not to be solved through socialization and socialism, but through technical means; for technology, in contrast to socialization, is of course politically neutral; it neither prescribes nor precludes any specific form of government. In other words, the liberation from the curse of poverty would come about through electrification, but the rise of freedom through a new form of government, the soviets. This was one of the not infrequent instances when Lenin's gifts as a statesman overruled his Marxist training and ideological convictions.

Not for long, to be sure. He surrendered the possibilities for a rational, non-ideological economic development of the country together with the potentialities of new institutions for freedom when he decided that only the Bolshevik party could be the driving force for both electrification and soviets; he himself thus established the precedent for the later development in which the party and the party apparatus became literally omnipotent. However, he probably surrendered his earlier position for economic rather than political reasons, less for the sake of the party's power than for the sake of electrification. He was convinced that an incompetent people in a backward country would be unable to conquer poverty under conditions of political freedom, unable, at any rate, to defeat poverty and to found freedom simultaneously. Lenin was the last heir of the French Revolution; he had no theoretical concept of freedom, but when he was confronted with it in factual reality he understood what was at stake, and when he sacrificed the new institutions of freedom, the soviets, to the party which he thought would liberate the poor, his motivation and reasoning were still in accord with the tragic failures of the French revolutionary tradition.

II

The idea that poverty should help men to break the shackles of oppression, because the poor have nothing to lose but their chains, has become so familiar through Marx's teachings that we are tempted to forget that it was unheard of prior to the actual course of the French Revolution. True, a common prejudice, dear to the hearts of those who loved freedom, told men of the eighteenth century that "Europe for more than twelve centuries past, has presented to view . . . a constant effort, on the part of the people to extricate themselves from the oppression of their rulers." But by people these men did not mean the poor, and the prejudice of the nineteenth century that all revolutions are social in origin was still quite absent from eighteenth-century theory or experience. As a matter of fact, when the men of the American Revolution came to France and were actually confronted with the social conditions on the continent, with those of the poor as well as of the rich, they no longer believed with Washington that "the American Revolution . . . seems to have opened the eyes of almost every nation in Europe, and [that] a spirit of equal liberty appears fast to be gaining ground everywhere." Some of them, even before, had warned the French officers, who had fought with them in the War of Independence, lest their "hopes be influenced by our triumphs on this virgin soil. You will carry our sentiments with you, but if you try to plant them in a country that has been corrupt for centuries, you will encounter obstacles more formidable than ours. Our liberty has been won with blood; yours will have to be shed in torrents before liberty can take root in the old world." But their chief reason was much more concrete. It was (as Jefferson wrote two years before the outbreak of the French Revolution) that "of twenty mil-
lions of people... there are nineteen millions more wretched, more accursed in every circumstance of human existence than the most conspicuously wretched individual of the whole United States.” (Thus Franklin before him had found himself in Paris thinking “often of the happiness of New England, where every man is a Freeholder, has a vote in publick Affairs, lives in a tidy warm House, has plenty of good Food and Fewel...”). Nor did Jefferson expect any great deeds from the rest of society, from those who lived in comfort and luxury; their conduct in his view was ruled by “manners,” the adoption of which would be “a step to perfect misery” everywhere. Not for a moment did it occur to him that people so “loaded with misery” — the twofold misery of poverty and corruption — would be able to achieve what had been achieved in America. On the contrary, he warned that these were “by no means the free-minded people we suppose them in America,” and John Adams was convinced that a free republican government “was as unnatural, irrational, and impracticable as it would be over elephants, lions, tigers, panthers, wolves, and bears, in the royal menagerie at Versailles.” And when, some twenty-five years later, events to an extent had proved him right, and Jefferson thought back to “the canaille of the cities of Europe” in whose hands any degree of freedom “would be instantly perverted to the demolition and destruction of everything private and public,” he had in mind both the rich and the poor, corruption and misery.

Nothing could be less fair than to take the success of the American Revolution for granted and to sit in judgment over the failure of the men of the French Revolution. The success was not due merely to the wisdom of the founders of the republic, although this wisdom was of a very high caliber indeed. The point to remember is that the American Revolution succeeded, and still did not usher in the novus ordo saeclorum, that the Constitution could be established “in fact,” as “a real existence... in a visible form,” and still did not become “to Liberty what grammar is to language.” The reason for success and failure was that the predicament of poverty was absent from the American scene but present everywhere else in the world. This is a sweeping statement and stands in need of a twofold qualification.

What were absent from the American scene were misery and want rather than poverty, for “the controversy between the rich and the poor, the laborious and the idle, the learned and the ignorant” was still very much present on the American scene and preoccupied the minds of the founders, who, despite the prosperity of their country, were convinced that these distinctions — “as old as the creation and as extensive as the globe” — were eternal. Yet, since the laborious in America were poor but not miserable — the observations of English and Continental travelers are unanimous and unanimously amazed: “In a course of 1200 miles I did not see a single object that solicited charity” (Andrew Burnaby) — they were not driven by want, and the revolution was not overwhelmed by them. The problem they posed was not social but political, it concerned not the order of society but the form of government. The point was that the “continual toil” and want of leisure of the majority of the population would automatically exclude them from active participation in government — though, of course, not from being represented and from choosing their representatives. But representation is no more than a matter of “self-preservation” or self-interest, necessary to protect the lives of the laborers and to shield them against the encroachment of government; these essentially negative safeguards by no means open the political realm to the many, nor can they arouse in them that “passion for distinction” — the “desire not only to equal or resemble, but to excel” — which, according to John Adams, “next to self-preservation will forever be the great spring of human actions.” Hence the predicament of the poor after their self-preservation has been assured is that their lives are without consequence, and that they remain excluded from the light of the public realm where excellence can shine; they stand in darkness wherever they go. As John Adams saw it: “The poor man’s conscience is clear; yet he is ashamed... He feels himself out of the sight of others, groping in the dark. Mankind takes no notice of him. He rambles and wanders unheeded. In the midst of a crowd,
at church, in the market... he is in as much obscurity as he
would be in a garret or a cellar. He is not disapproved, censured,
or reproached; he is only not seen... To be wholly overlooked,
and to know it, are intolerable. If Crusoe on his island had the
library of Alexandria, and a certainty that he should never again
see the face of man, would he ever open a volume? 12

I have quoted these words at some length because the feeling
of injustice they express, the conviction that darkness rather than
want is the curse of poverty, is extremely rare in the literature
of the modern age, although one may suspect that Marx’s effort
to rewrite history in terms of class struggle was partially at least
inspired by the desire to rehabilitate posthumously those to whose
injured lives history had added the insult of oblivion. Obviously,
it was the absence of misery which enabled John Adams to dis-
cover the political predicament of the poor, but his insight into
the crippling consequences of obscurity, in contrast to the more
obvious ruin which want brought to human life, could hardly be
shared by the poor themselves; and since it remained a privileged
knowledge it had hardly any influence upon the history of revolu-
tions or the revolutionary tradition. When, in America and else-
where, the poor became wealthy, they did not become men of
leisure whose actions were prompted by a desire to excel, but
succumbed to the boredom of vacant time, and while they too de-
veloped a taste for “consideration and congratulation,” they were
content to get these “goods” as cheaply as possible, that is, they
eliminated the passion for distinction and excellence that can ex-
ert itself only in the broad daylight of the public. The end of
government remained for them self-preservation, and John Adams’
conviction that “it is a principal end of government to regulate
the passions for distinction” 13 has not even become a matter
of controversy, it is simply forgotten. Instead of entering the
market-place, where excellence can shine, they preferred, as it
were, to throw open their private houses in “conspicuous con-
sumption,” to display their wealth and to show what, by its very
nature, is not fit to be seen by all.

However, these present-day worries of how to prevent the
poor of yesterday from developing their own code of behavior and
from imposing it on the body politic, once they have become rich,
were still quite absent from the eighteenth century, and even
today these American cares, though real enough under the condi-
tions of affluence, may appear sheer luxury in comparison with
the cares and worries of the rest of the world. Moreover, modern
sensibility is not touched by obscurity, not even by the frustration
of “natural talent” and of the “desire of superiority” which goes
with it. And the fact that John Adams was so deeply moved by
it, more deeply than he or anyone else of the Founding Fathers
was ever moved by sheer misery, must strike us as very strange
indeed when we remind ourselves that the absence of the social
question from the American scene was, after all, quite deceptive,
and that abject and degrading misery was present everywhere in
the form of slavery and Negro labor.

History tells us that it is by no means a matter of course for
the spectacle of misery to move men to pity; even during the long
centuries when the Christian religion of mercy determined moral
standards of Western civilization, compassion operated outside
the political realm and frequently outside the established hierarchy
of the Church. Yet we deal here with men of the eighteenth cen-
tury, when this age-old indifference was about to disappear, and
when, in the words of Rousseau, an “innate repugnance at seeing
a fellow creature suffer” had become common in certain strata
of European society and precisely among those who made the
French Revolution. Since then, the passion of compassion has
haunted and driven the best men of all revolutions, and the only
revolution in which compassion played no role in the motivation
of the actors was the American Revolution. If it were not for
the presence of Negro slavery on the American scene, one would
be tempted to explain this striking aspect exclusively by American
prosperity, by Jefferson’s “lovely equality,” or by the fact that
America was indeed, in William Penn’s words, “a good poor
Man’s country.” As it is, we are tempted to ask ourselves if the
goodness of the poor white man’s country did not depend to
a considerable degree upon black labor and black misery—
there lived roughly 400,000 Negroes along with approximately 1,850,000 white men in America in the middle of the eighteenth century, and even in the absence of reliable statistical data we may be sure that the percentage of complete destitution and misery was considerably lower in the countries of the Old World. From this, we can only conclude that the institution of slavery carries an obscurity even blacker than the obscurity of poverty; the slave, not the poor man, was “wholly overlooked.” For if Jefferson, and others to a lesser degree, were aware of the primordial crime upon which the fabric of American society rested, if they “trembled when [they] thought that God is just” (Jefferson), they did so because they were convinced of the incompatibility of the institution of slavery with the foundation of freedom, not because they were moved by pity or by a feeling of solidarity with their fellow men. And this indifference, difficult for us to understand, was not peculiar to Americans and hence must be blamed on slavery rather than on any perversion of the heart or upon the dominance of self-interest. For European witnesses in the eighteenth century, who were moved to compassion by the spectacle of European social conditions, did not react differently. They too thought the specific difference between America and Europe lay “in the absence of that abject state which condemns [a part of the human race] to ignorance and poverty.”

Slavery was no more part of the social question for Europeans than it was for Americans, so that the social question, whether genuinely absent or only hidden in darkness, was nonexistent for all practical purposes, and with it, the most powerful and perhaps the most devastating passion motivating revolutionaries, the passion of compassion.

In order to avoid misunderstandings: the social question with which we are concerned here because of its role in revolution must not be equated with the lack of equality of opportunity or the problem of social status which in the last few decades has become a major topic of the social sciences. The game of status-seeking is common enough in certain strata of our society, but it was entirely absent from the society of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and no revolutionary ever thought it his task to introduce mankind to it or to teach the underprivileged the rules of the game. How alien these present-day categories would have been to the minds of the founders of the republic can perhaps best be seen in their attitude to the question of education, which was of great importance to them, not, however, in order to enable every citizen to rise on the social ladder, but because the welfare of the country and the functioning of its political institutions hinged upon education of all citizens. They demanded “that every citizen should receive an education proportioned to the condition and pursuits of his life,” whereby it was understood that for the purpose of education the citizens would “be divided into two classes—the laboring and the learned” since it would be “expedient for promoting the public happiness that those persons, whom nature hath endowed with genius and virtue, should be rendered . . . able to guard the sacred deposit of the rights and liberties of their fellow citizens . . . without regard to wealth, birth, or other accidental condition and circumstance.”

Even the nineteenth-century liberals’ concern with the individual’s right to full development of all his gifts was clearly absent from these considerations, as was their special sensitivity to the injustice inherent in the frustration of talent, closely connected with their worship of genius, let alone the present-day notion that everybody has a right to social advancement and hence to education, not because he is gifted but because society owes him the development of skills with which to improve his status.

The realistic views of the Founding Fathers with regard to the shortcomings of human nature are notorious, but the new assumptions of social scientists that those who belong to the lower classes of society have, as it were, a right to burst with resentment, greed, and envy would have astounded them, not only because they would have held that envy and greed are vices no matter where we find them, but perhaps also because their very realism might have told them that such vices are much more frequent in the upper than in the lower social strata. Social mobility was of course relatively high even in eighteenth-century America, but
it was not promoted by the Revolution; and if the French Revolution opened careers to talent, and very forcefully indeed, this did not occur until after the Directory and Napoleon Bonaparte, when it was no longer freedom and the foundation of a republic which were at stake but the liquidation of the Revolution and the rise of the bourgeoisie. In our context, the point of the matter is that only the predicament of poverty, and not either individual frustration or social ambitions, can arouse compassion. And with the role of compassion in revolutions, that is, in all except the American Revolution, we must now concern ourselves.

III

To avert one's eyes from the misery and unhappiness of the mass of humankind was no more possible in eighteenth-century Paris, or in nineteenth-century London, where Marx and Engels were to ponder the lessons of the French Revolution, than it is today in some European, most Latin American, and nearly all Asian and African countries. To be sure, the men of the French Revolution had been inspired by hatred of tyranny, and they had no less risen in rebellion against oppression than the men who, in the admiring words of Daniel Webster, "went to war for a preamble," and "fought seven years for a declaration." Against tyranny and oppression, not against exploitation and poverty, they had asserted the rights of the people from whose consent—according to Roman antiquity, in whose school the revolutionary spirit was taught and educated—all power must derive its legitimacy. Since they themselves were clearly politically powerless and hence among the oppressed, they felt they belonged to the people, and they did not need to summon up any solidarity with them. If they became their spokesmen, it was not in the sense that they did something for the people, be it for the sake of power over them or out of love for them; they spoke and acted as their representatives in a common cause. However, what turned out to remain true through the thirteen years of the American Revolution was quickly revealed to be mere fiction in the course of the French Revolution.

In France the downfall of the monarchy did not change the relationship between rulers and ruled, between government and the nation, and no change of government seemed able to heal the rift between them. The revolutionary governments, in this respect not unlike their predecessors, were neither of the people nor by the people, but at best for the people, and at worst a "usurpation of sovereign power" by self-styled representatives who had put themselves "in absolute independence with respect to the nation." The trouble was that the chief difference between the nation and its representatives in all factions had very little to do with "virtue and genius," as Robespierre and others had hoped, but lay exclusively in the conspicuous difference of social condition which came to light only after the revolution had been achieved. The inescapable fact was that liberation from tyranny spelled freedom only for the few and was hardly felt by the many who remained loaded down by their misery. These had to be liberated once more, and compared to this liberation from the yoke of necessity, the original liberation from tyranny must have looked like child's play. Moreover, in this liberation, the men of the Revolution and the people whom they represented were no longer united by objective bonds in a common cause; a special effort was required of the representatives, an effort of solidarization which Robespierre called virtue, and this virtue was not Roman, it did not aim at the res publica and had nothing to do with freedom. Virtue meant to have the welfare of the people in mind, to identify one's own will with the will of the people—il faut une volonté UNE—and this effort was directed primarily toward the happiness of the many. After the downfall of the Girondes, it was no longer freedom but happiness that became the "new idea in Europe" (Saint-Just).

The words le peuple are the key words for every understanding of the French Revolution, and their connotations were determined by those who were exposed to the spectacle of the people's sufferings, which they themselves did not share. For the
first time, the word coverd more than those who did not participate in government, not the citizens but the low people.\textsuperscript{18} The very definition of the word was born out of compassion, and the term became the equivalent for misfortune and unhappiness—le peuple, les malheureux m’applaudissent, as Robespierre was wont to say; le peuple toujours malheureux, as even Sieyès, one of the least sentimental and most sober figures of the Revolution, would put it. By the same token, the personal legitimacy of those who represented the people and were convinced that all legitimate power must derive from them, could reside only in \textit{ce zèle compatissant}, in “that imperious impulse which attracts us towards les hommes faibles,”\textsuperscript{19} in short, in the capacity to suffer with the “immense class of the poor,” accompanied by the will to raise compassion to the rank of the supreme political passion and of the highest political virtue.

Historically speaking, compassion became the driving force of the revolutionaries only after the Girondins had failed to produce a constitution and to establish a republican government. The Revolution had come to its turning point when the Jacobins, under the leadership of Robespierre, seized power, not because they were more radical but because they did not share the Girondins’ concern with forms of government, because they believed in the people rather than in the republic, and “pinned their faith on the natural goodness of a class” rather than on institutions and constitutions: “Under the new Constitution,” Robespierre insisted, “laws should be promulgated ‘in the name of the French people’ instead of the ‘French Republic.’”\textsuperscript{20}

This shift of emphasis was caused not by any theory but by the course of the Revolution. However, it is obvious that under these circumstances ancient theory, with its emphasis on popular consent as a prerequisite of lawful government, could no longer be adequate, and to the wisdom of hindsight it appears almost as a matter of course that Rousseau’s volonté générale should have replaced the ancient notion of consent which, in Rousseau’s theory, may be found as the volonté de tous.\textsuperscript{21} The latter, the will of all, or consent, was not only not dynamic or revolutionary enough for the constitution of a new body politic, or the establishment of government, it obviously presupposed the very existence of government and hence could be deemed sufficient only for particular decisions and the settling of problems as they arose within a given body politic. These formalistic considerations, however, are of secondary importance. It was of greater relevance that the very word “consent,” with its overtones of deliberate choice and considered opinion, was replaced by the word “will,” which essentially excludes all processes of exchange of opinions and an eventual agreement between them. The will, if it is to function at all, must indeed be one and indivisible, “a divided will would be inconceivable”; there is no possible mediation between wills as there is between opinions. The shift from the republic to the people meant that the enduring unity of the future political body was guaranteed not in the worldly institutions which this people had in common, but in the will of the people themselves. The outstanding quality of this popular will as volonté générale was its unanimity, and when Robespierre constantly referred to “public opinion,” he meant by it the unanimity of the general will; he did not think of an opinion upon which many publicly were in agreement.

This enduring unity of a people inspired by one will must not be mistaken for stability. Rousseau took his metaphor of a general will seriously and literally enough to conceive of the nation as a body driven by one will, like an individual, which also can change direction at any time without losing its identity. It was precisely in this sense that Robespierre demanded: “Il faut une volonté \textit{UNE}. . . . Il faut qu’elle soit républicaine ou royaliste.” Rousseau therefore insisted that it would “be absurd for the will to bind itself for the future,”\textsuperscript{22} thus anticipating the fateful instability and faithlessness of revolutionary governments as well as justifying the old fateful conviction of the nation-state that treaties are binding only so long as they serve the so-called national interest. This notion of \textit{raison d’état} is older than the French Revolution for the simple reason that the concept of one will, presiding over the destinies and representing the interests of
the nation as a whole, was the current interpretation of the national role to be played by an enlightened monarch whom the revolution had abolished. The problem was indeed how "to bring twenty-five millions of Frenchmen who had never known or thought of any law but the King's will to rally round any free constitution at all," as John Adams once remarked. Hence, the very attraction of Rousseau's theory for the men of the French Revolution was that he apparently had found a highly ingenious means to put a multitude into the place of a single person; for the general will was nothing more or less than what bound the many into one.

For his construction of such a many-headed one, Rousseau relied on a deceptively simple and plausible example. He took his cue from the common experience that two conflicting interests will bind themselves together when they are confronted by a third that equally opposes them both. Politically speaking, he presupposed the existence and relied upon the unifying power of the common national enemy. Only in the presence of the enemy can such a thing as la nation une et indivisible, the ideal of French and of all other nationalism, come to pass. Hence, national unity can assert itself only in foreign affairs, under circumstances of, at least, potential hostility. This conclusion has been the seldom-admitted stock-in-trade of national politics in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries; it is so obviously a consequence of the general-will theory that Saint-Just was already quite familiar with it: only foreign affairs, he insisted, can properly be called "political," while human relations as such constitute "the social." ("Seules les affaires étrangères relevaient de la 'politique,' tandis que les rapports humains formaient 'le social.'")

Rousseau himself, however, went one step further. He wished to discover a unifying principle within the nation itself that would be valid for domestic politics as well. Thus, his problem was where to detect a common enemy outside the range of foreign affairs, and his solution was that such an enemy existed within the breast of each citizen, namely, in his particular will and interest; the point of the matter was that this hidden, particular enemy could rise to the rank of a common enemy—unifying the nation from within—if one only added up all particular wills and interests. The common enemy within the nation is the sum total of the particular interests of all citizens. "'The agreement of two particular interests,'" says Rousseau, quoting the Marquis d'Argenson, "'is formed by opposition to a third.' [Argenson] might have added that the agreement of all interests is formed by opposition to that of each. If there were no different interests, the common interest would be barely felt, as it would encounter no obstacle; all would go on of its own accord, and politics would cease to be an art'" (my italics).

The reader may have noted the curious equation of will and interest on which the whole body of Rousseau's political theory rests. He uses the terms synonymously throughout the Social Contract, and his silent assumption is that the will is some sort of automatic articulation of interest. Hence, the general will is the articulation of a general interest, the interest of the people or the nation as a whole, and because this interest or will is general, its very existence hinges on its being opposed to each interest or will in particular. In Rousseau's construction, the nation need not wait for an enemy to threaten its borders in order to rise "like one man" and to bring about the union sacrée; the oneness of the nation is guaranteed insofar as each citizen carries within himself the common enemy as well as the general interest which the common enemy brings into existence; for the common enemy is the particular interest or the particular will of each man. If only each particular man rises against himself in his particularity, he will be able to arouse in himself his own antagonist, the general will, and thus he will become a true citizen of the national body politic. For "if one takes away from [all particular] wills the pluses and minuses that cancel one another, the general will remains as the sum of the differences." To partake in the body politic of the nation, each national must rise and remain in constant rebellion against himself.

To be sure, no national statesman has followed Rousseau to
this logical extreme, and while the current nationalist concepts of citizenship depend to a very large extent upon the presence of the common enemy from abroad, we find nowhere the assumption that the common enemy resides in everybody's heart. It is different, however, with the revolutionists and the tradition of revolution. It was not only in the French Revolution but in all revolutions which its example inspired that the common interest appeared in the guise of the common enemy, and the theory of terror from Robespierre to Lenin and Stalin presupposes that the interest of the whole must automatically, and indeed permanently, be hostile to the particular interest of the citizen. One has often been struck by the peculiar selflessness of the revolutionists, which should not be confused with "idealism" or heroism. Virtue has indeed been equated with selflessness ever since Robespierre preached a virtue that was borrowed from Rousseau, and it is this equation which has put, as it were, its indelible stamp upon the revolutionary man and his innermost conviction that the value of a policy may be gauged by the extent to which it will contradict all particular interests, and that the value of a man may be judged by the extent to which he acts against his own interest and against his own will.

Whatever theoretically the explanations and consequences of Rousseau's teachings might be, the point of the matter is that the actual experiences underlying Rousseau's selflessness and Robespierre's "terror of virtue" cannot be understood without taking into account the crucial role compassion had come to play in the minds and hearts of those who prepared and of those who acted in the course of the French Revolution. To Robespierre, it was obvious that the one force which could and must unite the different classes of society into one nation was the compassion of those who did not suffer with those who were malheureux, of the higher classes with the low people. The goodness of man in a state of nature had become axiomatic for Rousseau because he found compassion to be the most natural human reaction to the suffering of others, and therefore the very foundation of all authentic "natural" human intercourse. Not that Rousseau, or Robespierre for that matter, had ever experienced the innate goodness of natural man outside society; they deduced his existence from the corruption of society, much as one who has intimate knowledge of rotten apples may account for their rottenness by assuming the original existence of healthy ones. What they knew from inner experience was the eternal play between reason and the passions, on one side, the inner dialogue of thought in which man converses with himself, on the other. And since they identified thought with reason, they concluded that reason interfered with passion and compassion alike, that it "turns man's mind back upon itself, and divides him from everything that could disturb or afflict him." Reason makes man selfish; it prevents nature "from identifying itself with the unfortunate sufferer"; or, in the words of Saint-Just: "Il faut ramener toutes les définitions à la conscience; l'esprit est un sophiste qui conduit toutes les vertus à l'écha-faud." 26

We are so used to ascribing the rebellion against reason to the early romanticism of the nineteenth century and to understanding, in contrast, the eighteenth century in terms of an "enlightened" rationalism, with the Temple of Reason as its somewhat grotesque symbol, that we are likely to overlook or to underestimate the strength of these early pleas for passion, for the heart, for the soul, and especially for the soul torn into two, for Rousseau's âme déchirée. It is as though Rousseau, in his rebellion against reason, had put a soul, torn into two, into the place of the two-in-one that manifests itself in the silent dialogue of the mind with itself which we call thinking. And since the two-in-one of the soul is a conflict and not a dialogue, it engenders passion in its twofold sense of intense suffering and of intense passionateness. It was this capacity for suffering that Rousseau had pitied against the selfishness of society on one side, against the undisturbed solitude of the mind, engaged in a dialogue with itself, on the other. And it was to this emphasis on suffering, more than to any other part of his teachings, that he owed the enormous, predominant influence over the minds of the men who were to make the Revolu-
tion and who found themselves confronted with the overwhelming sufferings of the poor to whom they had opened the doors to the public realm and its light for the first time in history. What counted here, in this great effort of a general human solidarization, was selflessness, the capacity to lose oneself in the sufferings of others, rather than active goodness, and what appeared most odious and even most dangerous was selfishness rather than wickedness. These men, moreover, were much better acquainted with vice than they were with evil; they had seen the vices of the rich and their incredible selfishness, and they concluded that virtue must be “the appannage of misfortune and the patrimony” of the poor. They had watched how “the charms of pleasure were escorted by crime,” and they argued that the torments of misery must engender goodness. The magic of compassion was that it opened the heart of the sufferer to the sufferings of others, whereby it established and confirmed the “natural” bond between men which only the rich had lost. Where passion, the capacity for suffering, and compassion, the capacity for suffering with others, ended, vice began. Selfishness was a kind of “natural” depravity. If Rousseau had introduced compassion into political theory, it was Robespierre who brought it onto the market-place with the vehemence of his great revolutionary oratory.

It was perhaps unavoidable that the problem of good and evil, of their impact upon the course of human destinies, in its stark, unsophisticated simplicity should have haunted the minds of men at the very moment when they were asserting or reasserting human dignity without any resort to institutionalized religion. But the depth of this problem could hardly be sounded by those who mistook for goodness the natural, “innate repugnance of man to see his fellow creatures suffer” (Rousseau), and who thought that selfishness and hypocrisy were the epitome of wickedness. More importantly even, the terrifying question of good and evil could not even be posed, at least not in the framework of Western traditions, without taking into account the only completely valid, completely convincing experience Western mankind ever had with active love of goodness as the inspiring principle of all actions, that is, without consideration of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. This consideration came to pass in the aftermath of the Revolution, and while it is true that neither Rousseau nor Robespierre had been able to measure up to the questions which the teachings of the one and the acts of the other had brought onto the agenda of the following generations, it may also be true that without them and without the French Revolution neither Melville nor Dostoevski would have dared to undo the haloed transformation of Jesus of Nazareth into Christ, to make him return to the world of men—the one in Billy Budd, and the other in “The Grand Inquisitor”—and to show openly and concretely, though of course poetically and metaphorically, upon what tragic and self-defeating enterprise the men of the French Revolution had embarked almost without knowing it. If we want to know what absolute goodness would signify for the course of human affairs (as distinguished from the course of divine matters), we had better turn to the poets, and we can do it safely enough as long as we remember that “the poet but embodies in verse those exaltations of sentiment that a nature like Nelson’s, the opportunity being given, vitalizes into acts” (Melville). At least we can learn from them that absolute goodness is hardly any less dangerous than absolute evil, that it does not consist in selflessness, for surely the Grand Inquisitor is selfless enough, and that it is beyond virtue, even the virtue of Captain Vere. Neither Rousseau nor Robespierre was capable of dreaming of a goodness beyond virtue, just as they were unable to imagine that radical evil would “partake nothing of the sordid or sensual” (Melville), that there could be wickedness beyond vice.

That the men of the French Revolution should have been unable to think in these terms and therefore never really touched the heart of the matter which their own actions had brought to the fore, is actually almost a matter of course. Obviously, they knew at most the principles that inspired their acts, but hardly the meaning of the story which eventually was to result from them. Melville and Dostoevski, at any rate, even if they had not been the great writers and thinkers they actually both were, certainly
were in a better position to know what it all had been about. Melville especially, since he could draw from a much richer range of political experience than Dostoevski, knew how to talk back directly to the men of the French Revolution and to their proposition that man is good in a state of nature and becomes wicked in society. This he did in *Billy Budd*, where it is as though he said: Let us assume you are right and your "natural man," born outside the ranks of society, a "foundling" endowed with nothing but a "barbarian" innocence and goodness, were to walk the earth again—for surely it would be a return, a second coming; you certainly remember that this happened before; you can't have forgotten the story which became the foundation legend of Christian civilization. But in case you have forgotten, let me retell you the story in the context of your own circumstances and even in your own terminology.

Compassion and goodness may be related phenomena, but they are not the same. Compassion plays a role, even an important one, in *Billy Budd*, but its topic is goodness beyond virtue and evil beyond vice, and the plot of the story consists in confronting these two. Goodness beyond virtue is natural goodness and wickedness beyond vice is a depravity according to nature which "partakes nothing of the sordid or sensual." Both are outside society, and the two men who embody them come, socially speaking, from nowhere. Not only is Billy Budd a foundling; Claggart, his antagonist, is likewise a man whose origin is unknown. In the confrontation itself there is nothing tragic; natural goodness, though it "stammers" and cannot make itself heard and understood, is stronger than wickedness because wickedness is nature's depravity, and "natural" nature is stronger than depraved and perverted nature. The greatness of this part of the story lies in that goodness, because it is part of "nature," does not act meekly but asserts itself forcefully and, indeed, violently so that we are convinced: only the violent act with which Billy Budd strikes dead the man who bore false witness against him is adequate, it eliminates nature's "depravity." This, however, is not the end but the beginning of the story. The story unfolds after "nature" has run its course, with the result that the wicked man is dead and the good man has prevailed. The trouble now is that the good man, because he encountered evil, has become a wrong-doer too, and this even if we assume that Billy Budd did not lose his innocence, that he remained "an angel of God." It is at this point that "virtue" in the person of Captain Vere is introduced into the conflict between absolute good and absolute evil, and here the tragedy begins. Virtue—which perhaps is less than goodness but still alone is capable "of embodiment in lasting institutions"— must prevail at the expense of the good man as well; absolute, natural innocence, because it can only act violently, is "at war with the peace of the world and the true welfare of mankind," so that virtue finally interferes not to prevent the crime of evil but to punish the violence of absolute innocence. Craggart was "struck by an angel of God! Yet the angel must hang!" The tragedy is that the law is made for men, and neither for angels nor for devils. Laws and all "lasting institutions" break down not only under the onslaught of elemental evil but under the impact of absolute innocence as well. The law, moving between crime and virtue, cannot recognize what is beyond it, and while it has no punishment to mete out to elemental evil, it cannot but punish elemental goodness even if the virtuous man, Captain Vere, recognizes that only the violence of this goodness is adequate to the depraved power of evil. The absolute—and to Melville an absolute was incorporated in the Rights of Man—spells doom to everyone when it is introduced into the political realm.

We noted before that the passion of compassion was singularly absent from the minds and hearts of the men who made the American Revolution. Who would doubt that John Adams was right when he wrote: "The envy and rancor of the multitude against the rich is universal and restrained only by fear or necessity. A beggar can never comprehend the reason why another should ride in a coach while he has no bread"; and still no one familiar with misery can fail to be shocked by the peculiar coldness and indifferent "objectivity" of his judgment. Because he was an American, Melville knew better how to talk back to the
false the idealistic, high-flown phrases of the most exquisite pity sound the moment they are confronted with compassion.

Closely connected with this inability to generalize is the curious muteness or, at least, awkwardness with words that, in contrast to the eloquence of virtue, is the sign of goodness, as it is the sign of compassion in contrast to the loquacity of pity. Passion and compassion are not speechless, but their language consists in gestures and expressions of countenance rather than in words. It is because he listens to the Grand Inquisitor’s speech with compassion, and not for lack of arguments, that Jesus remains silent, struck, as it were, by the suffering which lay behind the easy flow of his opponent’s great monologue. The intensity of this listening transforms the monologue into a dialogue, but it can be ended only by a gesture, the gesture of the kiss, not by words. It is upon the same note of compassion—this time the compassion of the doomed man with the compassionate suffering felt for him by the man who doomed him—that Billy Budd ends his life, and, by the same token, the argument over the Captain’s sentence, and his “God bless Captain Vere!” is certainly closer to a gesture than to a speech. Compassion, in this respect not unlike love, abolishes the distance, the in-between which always exists in human intercourse, and if virtue will always be ready to assert that it is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, compassion will transcend this by stating in complete and even naïve sincerity that it is easier to suffer than to see others suffer.

Because compassion abolishes the distance, the worldly space between men where political matters, the whole realm of human affairs, are located, it remains, politically speaking, irrelevant and without consequence. In the words of Melville, it is incapable of establishing ‘lasting institutions.’ Jesus’s silence in “The Grand Inquisitor” and Billy Budd’s stammer indicate the same, namely their incapacity (or unwillingness) for all kinds of predicative or argumentative speech, in which someone talks to somebody about something that is of interest to both because it is interest, it is between them. Such talkative and argumentative interest in the world
is entirely alien to compassion, which is directed solely, and with passionate intensity, toward suffering man himself; compassion speaks only to the extent that it has to reply directly to the sheer expressionist sound and gestures through which suffering becomes audible and visible in the world. As a rule, it is not compassion which sets out to change worldly conditions in order to ease human suffering, but if it does, it will shun the drawn-out wearisome processes of persuasion, negotiation, and compromise, which are the processes of law and politics, and lend its voice to the suffering itself, which must claim for swift and direct action, that is, for action with the means of violence.

Here again, the relatedness of the phenomena of goodness and compassion is manifest. For goodness that is beyond virtue, and hence beyond temptation, ignorant of the argumentative reasoning by which man fends off temptations and, by this very process, comes to know the ways of wickedness, is also incapable of learning the arts of persuading and arguing. The great maxim of all civilized legal systems, that the burden of proof must always rest with the accuser, sprang from the insight that only guilt can be irrefutably proved. Innocence, on the contrary, to the extent that it is more than “not guilty,” cannot be proved but must be accepted on faith, whereby the trouble is that this faith cannot be supported by the given word, which can be a lie. Billy Budd could have spoken with the tongues of angels, and yet would not have been able to refute the accusations of the “elemental evil” that confronted him; he could only raise his hand and strike the accuser dead.

Clearly, Melville reversed the primordial legendary crime, Cain slew Abel, which has played such an enormous role in our tradition of political thought, but this reversal was not arbitrary; it followed from the reversal the men of the French Revolution had made of the proposition of original sin, which they had replaced by the proposition of original goodness. Melville states the guiding question of his story himself in the Preface: How was it possible that after “the rectification of the Old World’s hereditary wrongs . . . straightway the Revolution itself became a wrong-doer, one more oppressive than the Kings?” He found the answer—surprisingly enough if one considers the common equations of goodness with meekness and weakness—in that goodness is strong, stronger perhaps even than wickedness, but that it shares with “elemental evil” the elementary violence inherent in all strength and detrimental to all forms of political organization. It is as though he said: Let us suppose that from now on the foundation stone of our political life will be that Abel slew Cain. Don’t you see that from this deed of violence the same chain of wrong-doing will follow, only that now mankind will not even have the consolation that the violence it must call crime is indeed characteristic of evil men only?

IV

It is more than doubtful that Rousseau discovered compassion out of suffering with others, and it is more than probable that in this, as in nearly all other respects, he was guided by his rebellion against high society, especially against its glaring indifference toward the suffering of those who surrounded it. He had summoned up the resources of the heart against the indifference of the salon and against the “heartlessness” of reason, both of which will say “at the sight of the misfortunes of others: Perish if you wish, I am secure.” But while the plight of others aroused his heart, he became involved in his heart rather than in the sufferings of others, and he was enchanted with its moods and caprices as they disclosed themselves in the sweet delight of intimacy which Rousseau was one of the first to discover and which from then on began playing its important role in the formation of modern sensibility. In this sphere of intimacy, compassion became talkative, as it were, since it came to serve, together with the passions and with suffering, as stimulus for the vitality of the newly discovered range of emotions. Compassion, in other words, was dis-
covered and understood as an emotion or a sentiment, and the sentiment which corresponds to the passion of compassion is, of course, pity.

Pity may be the perversion of compassion, but its alternative is solidarity. It is out of pity that men are “attracted toward les hommes faibles,” but it is out of solidarity that they establish deliberately and, as it were, dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited. The common interest would then be “the grandeur of man,” or “the honor of the human race,” or the dignity of man. For solidarity, because it partakes of reason, and hence of generality, is able to comprehend a multitude conceptually, not only the multitude of a class or a nation or a people, but eventually all mankind. But this solidarity, though it may be aroused by suffering, is not guided by it, and it comprehends the strong and the rich no less than the weak and the poor; compared with the sentiment of pity, it may appear cold and abstract, for it remains committed to “ideas”—to greatness, or honor, or dignity—rather than to any “love” of men. Pity, because it is not stricken in the flesh and keeps its sentimental distance, can succeed where compassion always will fail; it can reach out to the multitude and therefore, like solidarity, enter the market-place. But pity, in contrast to solidarity, does not look upon both fortune and misfortune, the strong and the weak, with an equal eye; without the presence of misfortune, pity could not exist, and it therefore has just as much vested interest in the existence of the unhappy as thirst for power has a vested interest in the existence of the weak. Moreover, by virtue of being a sentiment, pity can be enjoyed for its own sake, and this will almost automatically lead to a glorification of its cause, which is the suffering of others. Terminologically speaking, solidarity is a principle that can inspire and guide action, compassion is one of the passions, and pity is a sentiment. Robespierre’s glorification of the poor, at any rate, his praise of suffering as the spring of virtue were sentimental in the strict sense of the word, and as such dangerous enough, even if they were not, as we are inclined to suspect, a mere pretext for lust for power.

Pity, taken as the spring of virtue, has proved to possess a greater capacity for cruelty than cruelty itself. “Par pitié, par amour pour l’humanité, soyez inhumains!”—these words, taken almost at random from a petition of one of the sections of the Parisian Commune to the National Convention, are neither accidental nor extreme; they are the authentic language of pity. They are followed by a crude but nevertheless precise and very common rationalization of pity’s cruelty: “Thus, the clever and helpful surgeon with his cruel and benevolent knife cuts off the gangrened limb in order to save the body of the sick man.” Moreover, sentiments, as distinguished from passion and principle, are boundless, and even if Robespierre had been motivated by the passion of compassion, his compassion would have become pity when he brought it out into the open where he could no longer direct it toward specific suffering and focus it on particular persons. What had perhaps been genuine passion turned into the boundlessness of an emotion that seemed to respond only too well to the boundless suffering of the multitude in their sheer overwhelming numbers. By the same token, he lost the capacity to establish and hold fast to rapport with persons in their singularity; the ocean of suffering around him and the turbulent sea of emotion within him, the latter geared to receive and respond to the former, drowned all specific considerations, the considerations of friendship no less than considerations of statecraft and principle. It is in these matters, rather than in any particular fault of character, that we must look for the roots of Robespierre’s surprising faithfulness that foreshadowed the greater perfidy which was to play such a monstrous role in the revolutionary tradition. Since the days of the French Revolution, it has been the boundlessness of their sentiments that made revolutionaries so curiously insensitive to reality in general and to the reality of persons in particular, whom they felt no compunctions in sacrificing to their “principles,” or to the course of history, or to the cause of revolution as such. While this emotion-laden insensitivity to reality was quite conspicuous already in Rousseau’s own behavior, his fantastic irresponsibility and unreliability, it became a political
factor of importance only with Robespierre, who introduced it into the factional strife of the Revolution.\textsuperscript{31}

Politically speaking, one may say that the evil of Robespierre's virtue was that it did not accept any limitations. In Montesquieu's great insight that even virtue must have its limits, he would have seen no more than the dictum of a cold heart. Thanks to the doubtful wisdom of hindsight, we can be aware of Montesquieu's greater wisdom of foresight and recall how Robespierre's pity-inspired virtue, from the beginning of his rule, played havoc with justice and made light of laws.\textsuperscript{32} Measured against the immense sufferings of the immense majority of the people, the impartiality of justice and law, the application of the same rules to those who sleep in palaces and those who sleep under the bridges of Paris, was like a mockery. Since the revolution had opened the gates of the political realm to the poor, this realm had indeed become "social." It was overwhelmed by the cares and worries which actually belonged in the sphere of the household and which, even if they were permitted to enter the public realm, could not be solved by political means, since they were matters of administration, to be put into the hands of experts, rather than issues which could be settled by the twofold process of decision and persuasion. It is true that social and economic matters had intruded into the public realm before the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, and the transformation of government into administration, the replacement of personal rule by bureaucratic measures, even the attending transmutation of laws into decrees, had been one of the outstanding characteristics of absolutism. But with the downfall of political and legal authority and the rise of revolution, it was people rather than general economic and financial problems that were at stake, and they did not merely intrude into but burst upon the political domain. Their need was violent, and, as it were, prepolitical; it seemed that only violence could be strong and swift enough to help them.

By the same token, the whole question of politics, including the then gravest problem, the problem of form of government, became a matter of foreign affairs. Just as Louis XVI had been beheaded as a traitor rather than as a tyrant, so the whole issue of monarchy versus republic turned into an affair of armed foreign aggression against the French nation. This is the same decisive shift, occurring at the turning point of the Revolution, which we identified earlier as the shift from forms of government to "the natural goodness of a class," or from the republic to the people. Historically it was at this point that the Revolution disintegrated into war, into civil war within and foreign wars without, and with it the newly won but never duly constituted power of the people disintegrated into a chaos of violence. If the question of the new form of government was to be decided on the battlefield, then it was violence, and not power, that was to turn the scale. If liberation from poverty and the happiness of the people were the true and exclusive aims of the Revolution, then Saint-Just's youthfully blasphemous witticism, "Nothing resembles virtue so much as a great crime," was no more than an everyday observation, for then it followed indeed that all must be "permitted to those who act in the revolutionary direction."\textsuperscript{33}

It would be difficult to find, in the whole body of revolutionary oratory, a sentence that pointed with greater precision to the issues about which the founders and the liberators, the men of the American Revolution and the men in France, parted company. The direction of the American Revolution remained committed to the foundation of freedom and the establishment of lasting institutions, and to those who acted in this direction nothing was permitted that would have been outside the range of civil law. The direction of the French Revolution was deflected almost from its beginning from this course of foundation through the immediacy of suffering; it was determined by the exigencies of liberation not from tyranny but from necessity, and it was actuated by the limitless immensity of both the people’s misery and the pity this misery inspired. The lawlessness of the "all is permitted" sprang here still from the sentiments of the heart whose very boundlessness helped in the unleashing of a stream of boundless violence.

Not that the men of American Revolution could have been ignorant of the great force which violence, the purposeful viola-
tion of all laws of civil society, could release. On the contrary, the fact that the horror and repulsion at the news of the reign of terror in France were clearly greater and more unanimous in the United States than in Europe can best be explained by the greater familiarity with violence and lawlessness in a colonial country. The first paths through the “unstoried wilderness” of the continent had been opened then, as they were to be opened for a hundred more years, “in general by the most vicious elements,” as though “the first steps [could not be] trod, . . . [the] first trees [not be] felled” without “shocking violations” and “sudden devastations.” But although those who, for whatever reasons, rushed out of society into the wilderness acted as if all was permitted to them who had left the range of enforceable law, neither they themselves nor those who watched them, and not even those who admired them, ever thought that a new law and a new world could spring from such conduct. However criminal and even beastly the deeds might have been that helped colonize the American continent, they remained acts of single men, and if they gave cause for generalization and reflection, these reflections were perhaps upon some beastly potentialities inherent in man’s nature, but hardly upon the political behavior of organized groups, and certainly not upon a historical necessity that could progress only via crimes and criminals.

To be sure, the men living on the American frontier also belonged to the people for whom the new body politic was devised and constituted, but neither they nor those who were populating the settled regions ever became a singular to the founders. The word “people” retained for them the meaning of maniness, of the endless variety of a multitude whose majesty resided in its very plurality. Opposition to public opinion, namely to the potential unanimity of all, was therefore one of the many things upon which the men of the American Revolution were in complete agreement; they knew that the public realm in a republic was constituted by an exchange of opinion between equals, and that this realm would simply disappear the very moment an exchange became superfluous because all equals happened to be of the same opin-

ion. They never referred to public opinion in their argument, as Robespierre and the men of the French Revolution invariably did to add force to their own opinions; in their eyes, the rule of public opinion was a form of tyranny. To such an extent indeed was the American concept of people identified with a multitude of voices and interests that Jefferson could establish it as a principle “to make us one nation as to foreign concerns, and keep us distinct in domestic ones,” just as Madison could assert that their regulation “forms the principal task of . . . legislation, and involves the spirit of party and faction in the operations of the government.” The positive accent here on faction is noteworthy, since it stands in flagrant contradiction to classical tradition, to which the Founding Fathers otherwise paid the closest attention. Madison must have been conscious of his deviation on so important a point, and he was explicit in stating its cause, which was his insight into the nature of human reason rather than any reflection upon the diversity of conflicting interests in society. According to him, party and faction in government correspond to the many voices and differences in opinion which must continue “as long as the reason of man continues fallible, and he is at liberty to exercise it.”

The fact of the matter was, of course, that the kind of multitude which the founders of the American republic first represented and then constituted politically, if it existed at all in Europe, certainly ceased to exist as soon as one approached the lower strata of the population. The malheureux whom the French Revolution had brought out of the darkness of their misery were a multitude only in the mere numerical sense. Rousseau’s image of a “multitude . . . united in one body” and driven by one will was an exact description of what they actually were, for what urged them on was the quest for bread, and the cry for bread will always be uttered with one voice. Insofar as we all need bread, we are indeed all the same, and may as well unite into one body. It is by no means merely a matter of misguided theory that the French concept of le peuple has carried, from its beginning, the connotation of a multiheaded monster, a mass that moves as one
body and acts as though possessed by one will; and if this notion has spread to the four corners of the earth, it is not because of any influence of abstract ideas but because of its obvious plausibility under conditions of abject poverty. The political trouble which misery of the people holds in store is that manyness can in fact assume the guise of oneness, that suffering indeed breeds moods and emotions and attitudes that resemble solidarity to the point of confusion, and that—last, not least—pity for the many is easily confounded with compassion for one person when the "compassionate zeal" (le zèle compatissant) can fasten upon an object whose oneness seems to fulfill the prerequisites of compassion, while its immensity, at the same time, corresponds to the boundlessness of sheer emotion. Robespierre once compared the nation to the ocean; it was indeed the ocean of misery and the ocean-like sentiments it aroused that combined to drown the foundations of freedom.

The superior wisdom of the American founders in theory and practice is conspicuous and impressive enough, and yet has never carried with it sufficient persuasiveness and plausibility to prevail in the tradition of revolution. It is as though the American Revolution was achieved in a kind of ivory tower into which the fearful spectacle of human misery, the haunting voices of abject poverty, never penetrated. And this was, and remained for a long time, the spectacle and the voice not of humanity but of human-kind. Since there were no sufferings around them that could have aroused their passions, no overwhelmingly urgent needs that would have tempted them to submit to necessity, no pity to lead them astray from reason, the men of the American Revolution remained men of action from beginning to end, from the Declaration of Independence to the framing of the Constitution. Their sound realism was never put to the test of compassion, their common sense was never exposed to the absurd hope that man, whom Christianity had held to be sinful and corrupt in his nature, might still be revealed to be an angel. Since passion had never tempted them in its noblest form as compassion, they found it easy to think of passion in terms of desire and to banish from it any connotation of its original meaning, which is πάθος, to suffer and to endure. This lack of experience gives their theories, even if they are sound, an air of lightheartedness, a certain weightlessness, which may well put into jeopardy their durability. For, humanly speaking, it is endurance which enables man to create durability and continuity. Their thought did not carry them any further than to the point of understanding government in the image of individual reason and construing the rule of government over the governed according to the age-old model of the rule of reason over the passions. To bring the "irrationality" of desires and emotions under the control of rationality was, of course, a thought dear to the Enlightenment, and as such was quickly found wanting in many respects, especially in its facile and superficial equation of thought with reason and of reason with rationality.

There is, however, another side to this matter. Whatever the passions and the emotions may be, and whatever their true connection with thought and reason, they certainly are located in the human heart. And not only is the human heart a place of darkness which, with certainty, no human eye can penetrate; the qualities of the heart need darkness and protection against the light of the public to grow and to remain what they are meant to be, innermost motives which are not for public display. However deeply heartfelt a motive may be, once it is brought out and exposed for public inspection it becomes an object of suspicion rather than insight; when the light of the public falls upon it, it appears and even shines, but, unlike deeds and words which are meant to appear, whose very existence hinges on appearance, the motives behind such deeds and words are destroyed in their essence through appearance; when they appear they become "mere appearances" behind which again other, ulterior motives may lurk, such as hypocrisy and deceit. The same sad logic of the human heart, which has almost automatically caused modern "motivational research" to develop into an eerie sort of filing cabinet for human vices, into a veritable science of misanthropy, made Robespierre and his followers, once they had equated virtue with the qualities of the heart, see intrigue and calumny, treachery and
hypocrisy everywhere. The fateful mood of suspicion, so glaringly omnipresent throughout the French Revolution even before a Law of Suspects spelled out its frightful implications, and so conspicuously absent from even the most bitter disagreements between the men of the American Revolution, arose directly out of this misplaced emphasis on the heart as the source of political virtue, on le cœur, une âme droite, un caractère moral.

The heart, moreover—as the great French moralists from Montaigne to Pascal knew well enough even before the great psychologists of the nineteenth century, Kierkegaard, Dostoevski, Nietzsche—keeps its resources alive through a constant struggle that goes on in its darkness and because of its darkness. When we say that nobody but God can see (and, perhaps, can bear to see) the nakedness of a human heart, “nobody” includes one’s own self—if only because our sense of unequivocal reality is so bound up with the presence of others that we can never be sure of anything that only we ourselves know and no one else. The consequence of this hiddenness is that our entire psychological life, the process of moods in our souls, is cursed with a suspicion we constantly feel we must raise against ourselves, against our innermost motives. Robespierre’s insane lack of trust in others, even in his closest friends, sprang ultimately from his not so insane but quite normal suspicion of himself. Since his very credo forced him to play the “incorruptible” in public every day and to display his virtue, to open his heart as he understood it, at least once a week, how could he be sure that he was not the one thing he probably feared most in his life, a hypocrite? The heart knows many such intimate struggles, and it knows too that what was straight when it was hidden must appear crooked when it is displayed. It knows how to deal with these problems of darkness according to its own “logic,” although it has no solution for them, since a solution demands light, and it is precisely the light of the world that distorts the life of the heart. The truth of Rousseau’s âme déchirée, apart from its function in the formation of the volonté générale, is that the heart begins to beat properly only when it has been broken or is being torn in conflict, but this is a truth which cannot prevail outside the life of the soul and within the realm of human affairs.

Robespierre carried the conflicts of the soul, Rousseau’s âme déchirée, into politics, where they became murderous because they were insoluble. “The hunt for hypocrites is boundless and can produce nothing but demoralization.” 37 If, in the words of Robespierre, “patriotism was a thing of the heart,” then the reign of virtue was bound to be at worst the rule of hypocrisy, and at best the never-ending fight to ferret out the hypocrites, a fight which could only end in defeat because of the simple fact that it was impossible to distinguish between true and false patriots. When his heartfelt patriotism or his ever-suspicious virtue were displayed in public, they were no longer principles upon which to act or motives by which to be inspired; they had degenerated into mere appearances and had become part of a show in which Tartuffe was bound to play the principal part. It was as though the Cartesian doubt—je doute donc je suis—had become the principle of the political realm, and the reason was that Robespierre had performed the same introversion upon the deeds of action that Descartes had performed upon the articulations of thought. To be sure, every deed has its motives as it has its goal and its principle; but the act itself, though it proclaims its goal and makes manifest its principle, does not reveal the innermost motivation of the agent. His motives remain dark, they do not shine but are hidden not only from others but, most of the time, from himself, from his self-inspection, as well. Hence, the search for motives, the demand that everybody display in public his innermost motivation, since it actually demands the impossible, transforms all actors into hypocrites; the moment the display of motives begins, hypocrisy begins to poison all human relations. The effort, moreover, to drag the dark and the hidden into the light of day can only result in an open and blatant manifestation of those acts whose very nature makes them seek the protection of darkness; it is, unfortunately, in the essence of these things that every effort to make goodness manifest in public ends with the appearance of crime and criminality on the political scene. In politics, more
than anywhere else, we have no possibility of distinguishing between being and appearance. In the realm of human affairs, being and appearance are indeed one and the same.

V

The momentous role that hypocrisy and the passion for its unmasking came to play in the later stages of the French Revolution, though it may never cease to astound the historian, is a matter of historical record. The revolution, before it proceeded to devour its own children, had unmasked them, and French historiography, in more than a hundred and fifty years, has reproduced and documented all these exposures until no one is left among the chief actors who does not stand accused, or at least suspected, of corruption, duplicity, and mendacity. No matter how much we may owe to the historians’ learned controversies and passionate rhetoric, from Michelet and Louis Blanc to Aulard and Mathiez, if they did not fall under the spell of historical necessity, they wrote as though they were still hunting for hypocrites; in the words of Michelet, “at [their] touch the hollow idols were shattered and exposed, the carrion kings appeared, unsheathed and unmasked.” They were still engaged in the war which Robespierre’s virtue had declared upon hypocrisy, just as the French people even today remember so well the treacherous cabals of those who once ruled them that they will respond to every defeat in war or peace with nous sommes trahis. But the relevance of these experiences has by no means remained restricted to the national history of the French people. We need only remember how, until very recently, the historiography of the American Revolution, under the towering influence of Charles Beard’s Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (1913), was obsessed by the unmasking of the Founding Fathers and by the hunt for ulterior motives in the making of the Constitution. This effort was all the more significant as there were hardly any facts to back up the foregone conclusions. It was a matter of sheer “history of ideas”—as though America’s scholars and intellectuals, when in the beginning of this century she emerged from her isolation, felt they must at least repeat in ink and print what in other countries had been written with blood.

It was the war upon hypocrisy that transformed Robespierre’s dictatorship into the Reign of Terror, and the outstanding characteristic of this period was the self-purging of the rulers. The terror with which the Incorruptible struck must not be mistaken for the Great Fear—in French both are called terreur—the result of the uprising of the people beginning with the fall of the Bastille and the women’s march on Versailles, and ending with the September Massacres three years later. The Reign of Terror and the fear the uprising of the masses caused in the ruling classes were not the same. Nor can terror be blamed exclusively upon the revolutionary dictatorship, a necessary emergency measure for a country at war with practically all its neighbors.

Terror as an institutional device, consciously employed to accelerate the momentum of the revolution, was unknown prior to the Russian Revolution. No doubt the purges of the Bolshevik party were originally modeled upon, and justified by reference to, the events that had determined the course of the French Revolution; no revolution, so it might have seemed to the men of the October Revolution, was complete without self-purges in the party that had risen to power. Even the language in which the hideous process was conducted bore out the similarity; it was always a question of uncovering what had been hidden, of unmasking the disguises, of exposing duplicity and mendacity. Yet the difference is marked. The eighteenth-century terror was still enacted in good faith, and if it became boundless it did so only because the hunt for hypocrites is boundless by nature. The purges in the Bolshevik party, prior to its rise to power, were motivated chiefly by ideological differences; in this respect the interconnection between terror and ideology was manifest from the very beginning. After its rise to power, and still under the guidance of Lenin, the party then institutionalized purges as a means of checking abuses and incompetence in the ruling bureaucracy. These two types of
purges were different and yet they had one thing in common; they were both guided by the concept of historical necessity whose course was determined by movement and counter-movement, by revolution and counter-revolution, so that certain "crimes" against the revolution had to be detected even if there were no known criminals who could have committed them. The concept of "objective enemies," so all-important for purges and show-trials in the Bolshevik world, was entirely absent from the French Revolution, and so was the concept of historical necessity, which, as we have seen, did not so much spring from the experiences and thoughts of those who made the Revolution as it arose from the efforts of those who desired to understand and to come to terms with a chain of events they had watched as a spectacle from the outside. Robespierre's "terror of virtue" was terrible enough; but it remained directed against a hidden enemy and a hidden vice. It was not directed against people who, even from the viewpoint of the revolutionary ruler, were innocent. It was a question of stripping the mask off the disguised traitor, not of putting the mask of the traitor on arbitrarily selected people in order to create the required impersonators in the bloody masquerade of a dialectical movement.

It must seem strange that hypocrisy—one of the minor vices, we are inclined to think—should have been hated more than all the other vices taken together. Was not hypocrisy, since it paid its compliment to virtue, almost the vice to undo the vices, at least to prevent them from appearing and to shame them into hiding? Why should the vice that covered up vices become the vice of vices? Is hypocrisy then such a monster? we are tempted to ask (as Melville asked, "Is envy then such a monster?"). Theoretically, the answers to these questions may ultimately lie within the range of one of the oldest metaphysical problems in our tradition, the problem of the relationship between being and appearance, whose implications and perplexities with respect to the political realm have been manifest and caused reflection at least from Socrates to Machiavelli. The core of the problem can be stated briefly and, for our purpose, exhaustively by recalling the two diametrically opposed positions which we connect with these two thinkers.

Socrates, in the tradition of Greek thought, took his point of departure from an unquestioned belief in the truth of appearance, and taught: "Be as you would wish to appear to others," by which he meant: "Appear to yourself as you wish to appear to others." Machiavelli, on the contrary, and in the tradition of Christian thought, took for granted the existence of a transcendent Being behind and beyond the world of appearances, and therefore taught: "Appear as you may wish to be," by which he meant: "Never mind how you are, this is of no relevance in the world and in politics, where only appearances, not 'true' being, count; if you can manage to appear to others as you would wish to be, that is all that can possibly be required by the judges of this world." His advice sounds to our ears like the counsel of hypocrisy, and the hypocrisy on which Robespierre declared his futile and pernicious war indeed involves the problems of Machiavelli's teaching. Robespierre was modern enough to go hunting for truth, though he did not yet believe, as some of his late disciples did, that he could fabricate it. He no longer thought, as Machiavelli did, that truth appeared of its own accord either in this world or in a world to come. And without a faith in the revelatory capacity of truth, lying and make-believe in all their forms change their character; they had not been considered crimes in antiquity unless they involved willful deception and bearing false witness.

Politically, both Socrates and Machiavelli were disturbed not by lying but by the problem of the hidden crime, that is, by the possibility of a criminal act witnessed by nobody and remaining unknown to all but its agent. In Plato's early Socratic dialogues, where this question forms a recurring topic of discussion, it is always carefully added that the problem consists in an action "unknown to men and gods." The addition is crucial, because in this form the question could not exist for Machiavelli, whose whole so-called moral teachings presuppose the existence of a God who knows all and eventually will judge everybody. For Socrates, on the contrary, it was an authentic problem whether
something that “appeared” to no one except the agent did exist at all. The Socratic solution consisted in the extraordinary discovery that the agent and the onlooker, the one who does and the one to whom the deed must appear in order to become real—the latter, in Greek terms, is the one who can say δεόμαι μοι, it appears to me, and then can form his δεόμαι, his opinion, accordingly—were contained in the selfsame person. The identity of this person, in contrast to the identity of the modern individual, was formed not by oneness but by a constant hither-and-thither of two-in-one; and this movement found its highest form and purest actuality in the dialogue of thought which Socrates did not equate with logical operations such as induction, deduction, conclusion, for which no more than one “operator” is required, but with that form of speech which is carried out between me and myself. What concerns us here is that the Socratic agent, because he was capable of thought, carried within himself a witness from whom he could not escape; wherever he went and whatever he did, he had his audience, which, like any other audience, would automatically constitute itself into a court of justice, that is, into that tribunal which later ages have called conscience. Socrates’ solution to the problem of the hidden crime was that there is nothing done by men, which can remain “unknown to men and gods.”

Before we proceed we must note that, in the Socratic frame of reference, there exists hardly any possibility of becoming aware of the phenomenon of hypocrisy. To be sure, the polis, and the whole political realm, was a man-made space of appearances where human deeds and words were exposed to the public that testified to their reality and judged their worthiness. In this sphere, treachery and deceit and lying were possible, as though men, instead of “appearing” and exposing themselves, created phantoms and apparitions with which to fool others; these self-made illusions only covered up the true phenomena (the true appearances or φανάρια), just as an optical illusion might spread over the object, as it were, and prevent it from appearing. Yet hypocrisy is not deceit, and the duplicity of the hypocrite is different from the duplicity of the liar and the cheat. The hypocrite, as the word indicates (it means in Greek “play-actor”), when he falsely pretends to virtue plays a role as consistently as the actor in the play who also must identify himself with his role for the purpose of play-acting; there is no alter ego before whom he might appear in his true shape, at least not as long as he remains in the act. His duplicity, therefore, boomerangs back upon himself, and he is no less a victim of his mendacity than those whom he set out to deceive. Psychologically speaking, one may say that the hypocrite is too ambitious; not only does he want to appear virtuous before others, he wants to convince himself. By the same token, he eliminates from the world, which he has populated with illusions and lying phantoms, the only core of integrity from which true appearance could arise again, his own incorruptible self. For while probably no living man, in his capacity as an agent, can claim not only to be uncorrupted but to be incorruptible, the same may not be true with respect to this other watchful and testifying self before whose eyes not our motives and the darkness of our hearts but, at least, what we do and say must appear. As witnesses not of our intentions but of our conduct, we can be true or false, and the hypocrite’s crime is that he bears false witness against himself. What makes it so plausible to assume that hypocrisy is the vice of vices is that integrity can indeed exist under the cover of all other vices except this one. Only crime and the criminal, it is true, confront us with the perplexity of radical evil; but only the hypocrite is really rotten to the core.

We may now understand why even Machiavelli’s counsel, “Appear as you may wish to be,” has little if any bearing upon the problem of hypocrisy. Machiavelli knew corruption well enough, especially the corruption of the Church, on which he tended to blame the corruption of the people in Italy. But this corruption he saw in the role the Church had assumed in worldly, secular affairs, that is, in the domain of appearances, whose rules were incompatible with the teachings of Christianity. For Machiavelli, the one-who-is and the one-who-appears remain separated, albeit not in the Socratic sense of the two-in-one of conscience and
the period when all political developments had fallen under the influence of Louis XVI's ill-fated cabals and intrigues. The violence of terror, at least to a certain extent, was the reaction to a series of broken oaths and unkept promises that were the perfect political equivalent of the customary intrigues of Court society, except that these willfully corrupted manners, which Louis XIV still knew how to keep apart from the style in which he conducted affairs of state, had by now reached the monarch as well. Promises and oaths were nothing but a rather awkwardly construed frontage with which to cover up, and win time for, an even more inept intrigue contrived toward the breaking of all promises and all oaths. And though in this instance the king promised to the extent that he feared, and broke his promises to the extent that he hoped, one cannot but marvel at the precise appositeness of La Rochefoucauld's aphorism. The widespread opinion that the most successful modes of political action are intrigue, falsehood, and machination, if they are not outright violence, goes back to these experiences, and it is therefore no accident that we find this sort of Realpolitik today chiefly among those who rose to statesmanship out of the revolutionary tradition. Wherever society was permitted to invade, to overgrow, and eventually to absorb the political realm, it imposed its own mores and "moral" standards, the intrigues and perjuries of high society, to which the lower strata responded by violence and brutality.

War upon hypocrisy was war declared upon society as the eighteenth century knew it, and this meant first of all war upon the Court at Versailles as the center of French society. Looked at from without, from the viewpoint of misery and wretchedness, it was characterized by heartlessness; but seen from within, and judged upon its own terms, it was the scene of corruption and hypocrisy. That the wretched life of the poor was confronted by the rotten life of the rich is crucial for an understanding of what Rousseau and Robespierre meant when they asserted that men are good "by nature" and become rotten by means of society, and that the low people, simply by virtue of not belonging to society, must always be "just and good." Seen from this view-
point, the Revolution looked like the explosion of an uncorrupted and incorruptible inner core through an outward shell of decay and odorous decrepitude; and it is in this context that the current metaphor which likens the violence of revolutionary terror to the birth-pangs attending the end of an old and the coming-into-being of a new organism once had an authentic and powerful meaning. But this was not yet the metaphor used by the men of the French Revolution. Their favored simile was that the Revolution offered the opportunity of tearing the mask of hypocrisy off the face of French society, of exposing its rottenness, and, finally, of tearing the façade of corruption down and of exposing behind it the unspoiled, honest face of the people.

It is quite characteristic that, of the two similes currently used for descriptions and interpretations of revolutions, the organic metaphor has become dear to the historians as well as to the theorists of revolution—Marx, indeed, was very fond of the “birth-pangs of revolutions”—while the men who enacted the Revolution preferred to draw their images from the language of the theater. The profound meaningfulness inherent in the many political metaphors derived from the theater is perhaps best illustrated by the history of the Latin word persona. In its original meaning, it signified the mask ancient actors used to wear in a play. (The dramatis personae corresponded to the Greek τὰ τοῦ δράματος πρόσωπα.) The mask as such obviously had two functions: it had to hide, or rather to replace, the actor’s own face and countenance, but in a way that would make it possible for the voice to sound through. At any rate, it was in this twofold understanding of a mask through which a voice sounds that the word persona became a metaphor and was carried from the language of the theater into legal terminology. The distinction between a private individual in Rome and a Roman citizen was that the latter had a persona, a legal personality, as we would say; it was as though the law had affixed to him the part he was expected to play on the public scene, with the provision, however, that his own voice would be able to sound through. The point was that “it is not the natural Ego which enters a court of law.

It is a right-and-duty-bearing person, created by the law, which appears before the law.” Without his persona, there would be an individual without rights and duties, perhaps a “natural man”—that is, a human being or homo in the original meaning of the word, indicating someone outside the range of the law and the body politic of the citizens, as for instance a slave—but certainly a politically irrelevant being.

When the French Revolution unmasked the intrigues of the Court and proceeded to tear off the mask of its own children, it aimed, of course, at the mask of hypocrisy. Linguistically, the Greek ἰπόκρατης, in its original meaning as well as in its late metaphorical usage, signified the actor himself, not the mask, the πρόσωπον, he wore. In contrast, the persona, in its original theatrical sense, was the mask affixed to the actor’s face by the exigencies of the play; hence, it meant metaphorically the “person,” which the law of the land can affix to individuals as well as to groups and corporations, and even to “a common and continuing purpose,” as in the instance of “the ‘person’ which owns the property of an Oxford or Cambridge college [and which] is neither the founder, now gone, nor the body of his living successors.” The point of this distinction and the appositeness of the metaphor lie in that the unmasking of the “person,” the deprivation of legal personality, would leave behind the “natural” human being, while the unmasking of the hypocrite would leave nothing behind the mask, because the hypocrite is the actor himself insofar as he wears no mask. He pretends to be the assumed role, and when he enters the game of society it is without any play-acting whatsoever. In other words, what made the hypocrite so odious was that he claimed not only sincerity but naturalness, and what made him so dangerous outside the social realm whose corruption he represented and, as it were, enacted, was that he instinctively could help himself to every “mask” in the political theater, that he could assume every role among its dramatis personae, but that he would not use this mask, as the rules of the political game demand, as a sounding board for the truth but, on the contrary, as a contraption for deception.
However, the men of the French Revolution had no conception of the persona, and no respect for the legal personality which is given and guaranteed by the body politic. When the predicament of mass poverty had put itself into the road of the Revolution that had started with the strictly political rebellion of the Third Estate—its claim to be admitted to and even to rule the political realm—the men of the Revolution were no longer concerned with the emancipation of citizens, or with equality in the sense that everybody should be equally entitled to his legal personality, to be protected by it and, at the same time, to act almost literally “through” it. They believed that they had emancipated nature herself, as it were, liberated the natural man in all men, and given him the Rights of Man to which each was entitled, not by virtue of the body politic to which he belonged but by virtue of being born. In other words, by the unending hunt for hypocrites and through the passion for unmasking society, they had, albeit unknowingly, torn away the mask of the persona as well, so that the Reign of Terror eventually spelled the exact opposite of true liberation and true equality; it equalized because it left all inhabitants equally without the protecting mask of a legal personality.

The perplexities of the Rights of Man are manifold, and Burke’s famous argument against them is neither obsolete nor “reactionary.” In distinction from the American Bills of Rights, upon which the Declaration of the Rights of Man was modeled, they were meant to spell out primary positive rights, inherent in man’s nature, as distinguished from his political status, and as such they tried indeed to reduce politics to nature. The Bills of Rights, on the contrary, were meant to institute permanent restraining controls upon all political power, and hence presupposed the existence of a body politic and the functioning of political power. The French Declaration of the Rights of Man, as the Revolution came to understand it, was meant to constitute the source of all political power, to establish not the control but the foundation-stone of the body politic. The new body politic was supposed to rest upon man’s natural rights, upon his rights insofar as he is nothing but a natural being, upon his right to “food, dress, and the reproduction of the species,” that is, upon his right to the necessities of life. And these rights were not understood as prepolitical rights that no government and no political power has the right to touch and to violate, but as the very content as well as the ultimate end of government and power. The ancien régime stood accused of having deprived its subjects of these rights—the rights of life and nature rather than the rights of freedom and citizenship.

VI

When the malheureux appeared on the streets of Paris it must have seemed as if Rousseau’s “natural man” with his “real wants” in his “original state” had suddenly materialized, and as though the Revolution had in fact been nothing but that “experiment [which] would have to be made to discover” him. For the people who now appeared were not “artificially” hidden behind any mask, since they stood just as much outside the body politic as they stood outside society. No hypocrisy distorted their faces and no legal personality protected them. Seen from their standpoint, the social and the political were equally “artificial,” spurious devices with which to hide “original men” either in the nakedness of their selfish interests or in the nakedness of their unbearable misery. From then on, the “real wants” determined the course of the Revolution, with the result—as Lord Acton so rightly observed—that “in all the transactions, which determined the future of France, the [Constituent] Assembly had no share,” that power “was passing from them to the disciplined people of Paris, and beyond them and their commanders to the men who managed the masses.” For the masses, once they had discovered that a constitution was not a panacea for poverty, turned against the Constituent Assembly as they had turned against the Court of Louis XVI, and they saw in the deliberations of the delegates no less a play of make-believe, hypocrisy, and bad faith, than in the cabals of the monarch. Of the men of the Revolution
only those survived and rose to power who became their spokesmen and surrendered the “artificial,” man-made laws of a not yet constituted body politic to the “natural” laws which the masses obeyed, to the forces by which they were driven, and which indeed were the forces of nature herself, the force of elemental necessity.

When this force was let loose, when everybody had become convinced that only naked need and interest were without hypocrisy, the malheureux changed into the enragés, for rage is indeed the only form in which misfortune can become active. Thus, after hypocrisy had been unmasked and suffering been exposed, it was rage and not virtue that appeared—the rage of corruption unveiled on one side, the rage of misfortune on the other. It had been intrigue, the intrigues of the Court of France, that had spun the alliance of the monarchs of Europe against France, and it was fear and rage rather than policy that inspired the war against her, a war of which even Burke could demand: “If ever a foreign prince enters into France, he must enter it as into a country of assassins. The mode of civilized war will not be practiced; nor are the French, who act on the present system, entitled to expect it.” One could argue that it was this threat of terror inherent in the revolutionary wars that “suggested the use to which terror may be put in revolutions”; at any rate, it was answered with rare precision by those who called themselves les enragés and who avowed openly that vengeance was the inspiring principle of their actions: “Vengeance is the only source of liberty, the only goddess we ought to bring sacrifices to,” as Alexandre Rousselin, a member of Hébert’s faction, put it. This was perhaps not the true voice of the people, but certainly the very real voice of those whom even Robespierre had identified with the people. And those who heard these voices, both the voice of the great from whose faces the revolution had torn the mask of hypocrisy and “the voice of nature,” of “original man” (Rousseau), represented in the raging masses of Paris, must have found it hard to believe in the goodness of unmasked human nature and in the infallibility of the people.

It was the unequal contest of these rages, the rage of naked misfortune pitted against the rage of unmasked corruption, that produced the “continuous reaction” of “progressive violence” of which Robespierre spoke; together they swept away rather than “achieved in a few years the work of several centuries.” For rage is not only impotent by definition, it is the mode in which impotence becomes active in its last stage of final despair. The enragés, inside or outside the sections of the Parisian Commune, were those who refused to bear and endure their suffering any longer, without, however, being able to rid themselves of it or even to alleviate it. And in the contest of devastation they proved to be the stronger party, because their rage was connected with and rose directly out of their suffering. Suffering, whose strength and virtue lie in endurance, explodes into rage when it can no longer endure; this rage, to be sure, is powerless to achieve, but it carries with it the momentum of true suffering, whose devastating force is superior and, as it were, more enduring than the raging frenzy of mere frustration. It is true that the masses of the suffering people had taken to the street unbidden and uninvited by those who then became their organizers and their spokesmen. But the suffering they exposed transformed the malheureux into the enragés only when “the compassionate zeal” of the revolutionaries—of Robespierre, probably, more than of anybody else—began to glorify this suffering, hailing the exposed misery as the best and even only guarantee of virtue, so that—albeit without realizing it—the men of the Revolution set out to emancipate the people not qua prospective citizens but qua malheureux. Yet, if it was a question of liberating the suffering masses instead of emancipating the people, there was no doubt that the course of the Revolution depended upon the release of the force inherent in suffering, upon the force of delirious rage. And though the rage of impotence eventually sent the Revolution to its doom, it is true that suffering, once it is transformed into rage, can release overwhelming forces. The Revolution, when it turned from the foundation of freedom to the liberation of man from suffering, broke down the barriers of endurance and liberated,
as it were, the devastating forces of misfortune and misery instead.

Human life has been stricken with poverty since times immemorial, and mankind continues to labor under this curse in all countries outside the Western Hemisphere. No revolution has ever solved the “social question” and liberated men from the predicament of want, but all revolutions, with the exception of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, have followed the example of the French Revolution and used and misused the mighty forces of misery and destitution in their struggle against tyranny or oppression. And although the whole record of past revolutions demonstrates beyond doubt that every attempt to solve the social question with political means leads into terror, and that it is terror which sends revolutions to their doom, it can hardly be denied that to avoid this fatal mistake is almost impossible when a revolution breaks out under conditions of mass poverty. What has always made it so terribly tempting to follow the French Revolution on its forlorn path is not only the fact that liberation from necessity, because of its urgency, will always take precedence over the building of freedom, but the even more important and more dangerous fact that the uprising of the poor against the rich carries with it an altogether different and much greater momentum of force than the rebellion of the oppressed against their oppressors. This raging force may well nigh appear irresistible because it lives from and is nourished by the necessity of biological life itself. No doubt the women on their march to Versailles “played the genuine part of mothers whose children were starving in squalid homes, and they thereby afforded to motives which they neither shared nor understood the aid of a diamond point that nothing could withstand.” 49 And when Saint-Just out of these experiences exclaimed, “Les malheureux sont la puissance de la terre,” we might as well hear these grand and prophetic words in their literal meaning. It is indeed as though the forces of the earth were allied in benevolent conspiracy with this uprising, whose end is impotence, whose principle is rage, and whose conscious aim is not freedom but life and happiness. Where the breakdown of traditional authority set the poor of the earth on the march, where they left the obscurity of their misfortunes and streamed upon the market-place, their furor seemed as irresistible as the motion of the stars, a torrent rushing forward with elemental force and engulfing a whole world.

Toqueville (in a famous passage, written decades before Marx and probably without knowledge of Hegel’s philosophy of history) was the first to wonder why “the doctrine of necessity . . . is so attractive to those who write history in democratic ages.” The reason, he believed, lay in the anonymity of an egalitarian society, where “the traces of individual action upon nations are lost,” so that “men are led to believe that . . . some superior force [is] ruling over them.” Suggestive as this theory may appear, it will be found wanting upon closer reflection. The powerlessness of the individual in an egalitarian society may explain the experience of a superior force determining his destiny; it hardly accounts for the element of motion inherent in the doctrine of necessity, and without it the doctrine would have been useless to historians. Necessity in motion, the “close enormous chain which girds and binds the human race” and can be traced back “to the origin of the world,” 50 was entirely absent from the range of experiences of either the American Revolution or American egalitarian society. Here Toqueville read something into American society, which he knew from the French Revolution, where already Robespierre had substituted an irresistible and anonymous stream of violence for the free and deliberate actions of men, although he still believed—in contrast to Hegel’s interpretation of the French Revolution—that this free-flowing stream could be directed by the strength of human virtue. But the image behind Robespierre’s belief in the irresistibility of violence as well as behind Hegel’s belief in the irresistibility of necessity—both violence and necessity being in motion and dragging everything and everybody into their streaming movements—was the familiar view of the streets of Paris during the Revolution, the view of the poor who came streaming out into the street.
In this stream of the poor, the element of irresistibility, which we found so intimately connected with the original meaning of the word “revolution,” was embodied, and in its metaphoric usage it became all the more plausible as irresistibility again was connected with necessity—with the necessity which we ascribe to natural processes, not because natural science used to describe these processes in terms of necessary laws, but because we experience necessity to the extent that we find ourselves, as organic bodies, subject to necessary and irresistible processes. All rulership has its original and its most legitimate source in man’s wish to emancipate himself from life’s necessity, and men achieved such liberation by means of violence, by forcing others to bear the burden of life for them. This was the core of slavery, and it is only the rise of technology, and not the rise of modern political ideas as such, which has refuted the old and terrible truth that only violence and rule over others could make some men free. Nothing, we might say today, could be more obsolete than to attempt to liberate mankind from poverty by political means; nothing could be more futile and more dangerous. For the violence which occurs between men who are emancipated from necessity is different from, less terrifying, though often not less cruel, than the primordial violence with which man pits himself against necessity, and which appeared in the full daylight of political, historically recorded events for the first time in the modern age. The result was that necessity invaded the political realm, the only realm where men can be truly free.

The masses of the poor, this overwhelming majority of all men, whom the French Revolution called les malheureux, whom it transformed into les enragés, only to desert them and let them fall back into the state of les misérables, as the nineteenth century called them, carried with them necessity, to which they had been subject as long as memory reaches, together with the violence that had always been used to overcome necessity. Both together, necessity and violence, made them appear irresistible—la puissance de la terre.

Chapter Three

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

NECESSITY and violence, violence justified and glorified because it acts in the cause of necessity, necessity no longer either rebelled against in a supreme effort of liberation or accepted in pious resignation, but, on the contrary, faithfully worshiped as the great all-coercing force which surely, in the words of Rousseau, will “force men to be free”—we know how these two and the interplay between them have become the hallmark of successful revolutions in the twentieth century, and this to such an extent that, for the learned and the unlearned alike, they are now outstanding characteristics of all revolutionary events. And we also know to our sorrow that freedom has been better preserved in countries where no revolution ever broke out, no matter how outrageous the circumstances of the powers that be, and that there exist more civil liberties even in countries where the revolution was defeated than in those where revolutions have been victorious.

On this we need not insist here, although we shall have to come back to it later. Before we proceed, however, we must call attention to those men whom I called the men of the revolutions, as distinct from the later professional revolutionists, in order to

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33. In his speech of February 5, 1794, op. cit., p. 543.
34. The Federalist (1787), ed. Jacob E. Cooke, Meridian, 1961, No. 11.
36. See “Author’s Introduction” to Democracy in America: “A new science of politics is needed for a new world.”
37. Griewank—in his article cited in note 24—noticed the role of the spectator in the birth of a concept of revolution: “Wollen wir dem Bewusstsein des revolutionären Wandels in seiner Entstehung nachgehen, so finden wir es nicht so sehr bei den Handelnden selbst, wie bei der Bewegung des Beobachtens zuerst klar erfasst.” He made this discovery probably under the influence of Hegel and Marx, although he applies it to the Florentine historiographers—wrongly, I think, because these histories were written by Florentine statesmen and politicians. Neither Machiavelli nor Guicciardini was a spectator in the sense in which Hegel and other nineteenth-century historians were spectators.
38. For Saint-Just’s and incidentally also Robespierre’s stand on these matters, see Albert Ollivier, Saint-Just et la Force des Choses, Paris, 1954.

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6. In a letter from Paris to Mrs. Trist, August 18, 1785.
8. In a letter to John Adams, October 28, 1813.
11. Ibid., pp. 267 and 279.
12. Ibid., pp. 239–40.
13. Ibid., p. 234.
16. A recent study of the opinions of working-class men on the subject of equality by Robert E. Lane—“The Fear of Equality” in American Political Science Review, vol. 53, March 1959—for instance, evaluates the lack of resentment on the part of the working men as “fear of equality,” their conviction that the rich are not happier than other people as an attempt “to take care of a gnawing and illegitimate envy,” their refusal to disregard their friends if they came into money as lack of “security,” et cetera. The short essay manages to turn every virtue into a hidden vice—a tour de force in the art of hunting for non-existent ulterior motives.
18. Le peuple was identical with menu or petit peuple, and it consisted of “small businessmen, grocers, artisans, workers, employees, salesmen, servants, day laborers, lumpenproletariern, but also of poor artists, play-actors, penniless writers.” See Walter Markov, “Über das Ende der Pariser Sansculottenbewegung,” in Beiträge zum neuen Geschichtsbild, zum 60. Geburtstag von Alfred Meusel, Berlin, 1956.
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20. Ibid., pp. 365 and 339.
22. Ibid., Book II, chapter 1.
24. This sentence contains the key to Rousseau’s concept of the general will. The fact that it appears merely in a footnote (op. cit., II, 3) shows that the concrete experience from which Rousseau derived his theory had become so natural to him that he hardly thought it worth mentioning. For this rather common difficulty in the interpretation of theoretical works, the empirical and very simple background to the complicated general-will concept is quite instructive, since very few concepts in political theory have been surrounded with a mystifying aura of so much plain nonsense.
25. The classical expression of this revolutionary version of republican virtue can be found in Robespierre’s theory of magistracy and popular representation, which he himself summed up as follows: “Pour aimer la justice et l’égalité le peuple n’a pas besoin d’une grande vertu; il lui suffit de s’aider lui-même. Mais le magistrat est obligé d’immoler son intérêt à l’intérêt du peuple, et l’orgueil du pouvoir à l’égalité. . . . Il faut donc que le corps représentatif commence par soumettre dans son sein toutes les passions privées à la passion générale du bien public. . . .” Speech to the National Convention, February 5, 1794; see Oeuvres, ed. Laponneraye, 1840, vol. III, p. 548.
27. R. R. Palmer, Twelve Who Ruled: The Year of the Terror in the French Revolution, Princeton, 1941, from which the words of Robespierre are quoted (p. 265), is, together with Thompson’s biography, mentioned earlier, the fairest and most painstakingly objective study of Robespierre and the men around him in recent literature. Palmer’s book especially is an outstanding contribution to the controversy over the nature of the Terror.
29. Rousseau, A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality, p. 226.
30. The documents of the Parisian sections, now first published in a bilingual edition (French-German) in the work quoted in note 3, are full of such and similar formulations. I have quoted from no. 57. Generally speaking, one may say that the more bloodthirsty the speaker the more likely that he will insist on ces tendres affections de l’âme—on the tenderness of his soul.
31. Thompson (op. cit., p. 108) recalls that Desmoulins told Robespierre as early as 1790, “You are faithful to your principles, however it may be with your friends.”
32. To give an instance, Robespierre, speaking on the subject of revolutionary government, insisted: “Il ne s’agit point d’entraver la justice du peuple par des formes nouvelles; la loi pénale doit nécessairement avoir quelque chose de vague, parce que le caractère actuel des conspirateurs étant la dissimulation et l’hypocrisie, il faut que la justice puisse les saisir sous toutes les formes.” Speech in the National Convention, July 26, 1794; Oeuvres, ed. Laponneraye, vol. III, p. 723. About the problem of hypocrisy with which Robespierre justified the lawlessness of popular justice, see below.
33. The phrase occurs as a principle in the “Instruction to the Constituted Authorities” drawn up by the temporary commission charged with the administration of revolutionary law in Lyons. Characteristically enough, “according to the Instruction, the Revolution was especially made for ‘the immense class of the poor.’” See Palmer, op. cit., p. 167.
35. In a letter to Madison from Paris of December 16, 1786.
38. Quoted from Lord Acton, op. cit., Appendix.
39. The lack of factual evidence for Beard’s famous theory has recently been demonstrated by R. E. Brown, Charles Beard and the Constitution, Princeton, 1956, and by Forrest McDonald, We the People: The Economic Origins of the Constitution, Chicago, 1958.
40. The quotations from La Rochefoucauld’s Maxims are given in the recent translation by Louis Kronenberger, New York, 1959.
41. J. M. Thompson once calls the Convention during the time of the Reign of Terror “an Assembly of political play-actors” (op. cit., p. 334), a remark probably suggested not only by the rhetoric of the speakers but also by the number of theatrical metaphors.
42. Although the etymological root of persona seems to derive from per-zonare, from the Greek προσωπος, and hence to mean originally
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“disguise,” one is tempted to believe that the word carried for Latin ears the significance of *per-sonare*, “to sound through,” whereby in Rome the voice that sounded through the mask was certainly the voice of the ancestors rather than the voice of the individual actor.

43. See the very illuminating discussion by Ernest Barker in his Introduction to the English translation of Otto Gierke’s *Natural Law and the Theory of Society 1500 to 1800*, Cambridge, 1950, pp. lxx ff.

44. Ibid., p. lxxiv.
46. Lord Acton, op. cit., chapter 9.
47. Ibid., chapter 14.

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1. I am paraphrasing the following passage in the *Esprit des Lois* (Book VIII, chapter 8): “La plupart des peuples d’Europe sont encore gouvernés par les mœurs. Mais si par un long abus du pouvoir, si, par une grande conquête, le despotisme s’établissait à un certain point, il n’y aurait pas de mœurs ni de climat que l’on puisse retarder au de la nature humaine souffrirait, au moins pour un temps, les insultes qu’on lui fait dans les trois autres.”
4. In a letter to Niles, January 14, 1818.
5. In the Letter to the Abbé Mably, 1782.
6a. John Adams especially was struck by the fact that “the self-styled philosophers of the French Revolution” were like “monks” and “knew very little of the world.” (See Letters to John Taylor on the American Constitution (1814), *Works*, vol. VI, p. 453 ff.)
9. Toqueville, op. cit., p. 195, speaking about *La condition des écrivains* and their éloignement presque infini . . . de la pratique, insists: “L’absence complète de toute liberté politique faisait que le monde des affaires ne leur était pas seulement mal connu, mais invisible.” And after describing how this lack of experience made their theories more radical, he stresses explicitly: “La même ignorance leur livrait l’oreille et le cœur de la foule.”
10. The “happiness” of the king’s subjects presupposed a king who would take care of his kingdom as a father would his family; as such, it ultimately derived, in the words of Blackstone, from a “creator [who] . . . has graciously reduced the rule of obedience to this one paternal precept, ‘that man should pursue his own happiness.’” (Quoted from Howard Mumford Jones, *The Pursuit of Happiness*, Harvard, 1953.) Clearly, this right guaranteed by a father on earth could not have survived the transformation of the body politic into a republic.
12. In the important letter on the “republics of the wards” to Joseph C. Cabell, February 2, 1816. Ibid., p. 661.
13. See James Madison in *The Federalist*, no. 14. How felicitous Jefferson’s pen was may be seen by the fact that his newly found “right” came to be included in “approximately two-thirds of the state constitutions between 1776 to 1902,” regardless of the fact that, then as now, it was “by no means easy to know what either Jefferson or the committee meant by the pursuit of happiness.” It is tempting indeed to conclude with Howard Mumford Jones, from whose monograph I have quoted, that “the right to pursue happiness in America had as it were, grown up in a fit of absence of mind . . . .”
17. These are the words of John Dickinson, but there was generally a consensus in theory among the men of the American Revolution on this subject. Thus, even John Adams would argue