

Democratic Theory: Essays in Retrieval

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basic assertion is not that man *does* behave in a certain way (although it may make this assertion), but that his *essence* can only be realized by that behaviour. An assertion about man's essence is surely a value assertion. One can agree that man as shaped by market society does behave in a certain way, and even that man in market society necessarily behaves in a certain way, but this tells us nothing about the behaviour of man as such and nothing about man's essence.

Since postulates about essence are value postulates, they may properly be discarded when they are seen to be at odds with new value judgments about newly possible human goals. The discarding, now, of the postulate of man's essence as infinite consumer, infinite appropriator, infinite antagonist of scarcity, comes within the category of allowable discards. The rejection of the market concept of man's essence is thus logically possible as well as now technically possible.

But there is one great difficulty. The technological revolution in Western nations, if left to develop within the present market structure and the present ideology, would have the immediate effect of strengthening the image of man as infinite consumer, by making consumption more attractive. As technology multiplies productivity, profitable production will require the creation of new desires and new amounts of desire. (What will be required may properly be described as *creation* of new desire, in spite of what I said above about advertising not creating new desire, if we reject, as I have argued we should reject, the factual accuracy of the postulate that man as such is naturally infinitely desirous.) Since profits will increasingly depend on creating ever more desire, the tendency will be for the directors of the productive system to do everything in their power to confirm Western man's image of himself as an infinite desirer. Efforts in that direction are evident enough in the mass media now. Thus in the West the immediate effect of the technological revolution will be to impede the change in our ontology which it otherwise makes possible and which I have argued is needed if we are to retain any of the values of liberal-democracy.

What then should we do? I hope that as political theorists we may widen and deepen the sort of analysis here sketched. If it stands up, we shall have done something to demolish the time-bound and now unnecessary and deleterious image of man as an infinite consumer and infinite appropriator, as a being whose rational purpose in life is to devote himself to an endless attempt to overcome scarcity. Scarcity was for millennia the general human condition; three centuries ago it became a contrived but useful goad; now it is dispensable, though we are in danger of having it riveted on us in a newer and more artificial form. We should say so. If we do not, the liberal-democratic heritage of Western society has a poor chance of survival.

ESSAY III

Problems of a Non-market

Theory of Democracy

IN the preceding essays I proposed a recasting of liberal-democratic theory by dropping from it the market assumptions about the nature of man and society and building on the more democratic assumptions which are also contained in it. The central defect of the justificatory theory of liberal democracy was found to consist in its attempt to combine two concepts of man, and to make both of the corresponding two maximizing claims: the claim to maximize utilities and the claim to maximize powers in the sense of ability to use and develop essentially human capacities. Reasons were given for thinking that it is now becoming possible for liberal-democratic theory to drop the first concept (man as consumer) and the first maximizing claim, and to base itself increasingly on the second concept of man (as essentially a doer, an actor, an enjoyer, and developer of his human attributes) and the second maximizing claim.

Any attempt to rebuild a democratic theory on this basis raises a new range of questions. For example, can the concept of power as ability to use and develop essentially human capacities be made precise enough to be of any use? Can we assume that all men's essentially human capacities can be exercised not at the expense of each others? Can the ability to exercise these capacities be sufficiently measured to entitle us to make its maximization the criterion of a fully democratic society?

Such questions are not easy. If their difficulties flowed entirely from our formulating democratic theory as a matter of maximizing powers, we might be well advised to abandon that formulation. But it will be seen that the difficulties are inherent in any democratic theory: our formulation simply enables them to be seen more clearly and dealt with more openly.

In exploring these questions, the first task is to clarify the central concept: power as ability to use and develop human capacities. I shall come at this by examining (in section 1 of this essay) the contrast between that concept of power and the one more usually employed in political theory. In section 2, the concept of 'essentially human capacities' is further considered and is shown to be both less and more demanding than appears at first sight. Sections 3 and 4 take up problems

of the measurement of powers. In section 3, I argue that a man's power, in the sense required by a democratic theory, must be measured in terms of impediments to the use and development of his human capacities and must be measured as a deficiency from a maximum rather than (as utility is commonly measured) in relation to a previously attained amount. Section 4 examines what are to be counted as impediments and how they are to be measured, and shows that the 'net transfer of powers' is not, as my previous treatments had let it be understood to be, a sufficient measure of the impediments. Finally, in section 5, I consider how powers, unlike utilities, can be aggregated, and conclude that the difficulty of so doing arises only in the *transition* to a fully democratic society, and is not insuperable.

1. *Two Concepts of Power: Extractive and Developmental*

In the first essay I distinguished between two concepts of human power, one of which was central to the democratic humanist ideal and the other to the classical liberal individualist tradition. The first was called an 'ethical' concept: it was a man's power seen as his ability to use and develop his essentially human capacities. The second was the 'descriptive' concept of a man's power as his present ability to procure satisfactions by whatever means. The point of that distinction was to show that as soon as one thinks of a man's power in the ethical sense it becomes apparent that his power must include his access to the means of using his capacities, and that his power is diminished, and some of it transferred to others, by lack of such access,¹ whereas those who neglect any considerations of human essence or essentially human capacities commonly fail to see any such diminution or transfer, since they measure a man's power *after* that has taken place.

The distinction there drawn remains useful. But it is not entirely satisfactory, for it diverts attention from a very important fact, and it raises one question which it leaves incompletely answered.

It diverts attention from the fact that a man's access to the means of using his capacities is a component part of his power *whether or not* his power is seen to have an ethical dimension. The fact that access is integral to a man's power is only *seen* when the ethical dimension is seen, but access is integral in any case. The *amount* of a man's power, in the most neutral descriptive sense, always depends on his access to the means of exerting his actual capacities.

The question raised but incompletely answered by the distinction between the ethical and descriptive concepts of power is the question, precisely what kind of power is diminished or transferred by lack of

¹ The same point was made earlier in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford, 1962), p. 56, and *The Real World of Democracy*, p. 43.

access to the means of using capacities? There is no difficulty about what is *diminished*. That is obviously a man's power in the ethical sense: he loses some of his ability to use and develop his own capacities under his own conscious control for his own human purposes. But this cannot be what is *transferred*, for clearly no one can transfer to another his ability to use his own capacities under his own control. Equally clearly, what is transferred cannot be a man's power in the descriptive sense as that has been defined, for that power is measured *after* any transfer.

What is transferred is not caught by either of the two concepts proposed so far. This is not surprising, for they are not two categories of power: they are two ways of looking, from two different stand-points, at the same power—the ability to use human capacities to do or to produce what people want to do or produce. What is transferred is some of a man's ability to use his capacities in a neutral sense, abstracted from any consideration of *whose* purposes that exercise of his capacities serves, his own or another's. What is transferred is some of his ability to do things and make things. That power, if it serves his purposes, is part of his ethical power; if it does not serve his purposes it is what is transferred. The same ability to use the same capacities is counted as ethical power in the one case and as transferred power in the other.

Since neither 'ethical' nor 'descriptive' powers, as defined, are what is being transferred, it is evident that those two concepts alone are not enough to categorize the 'net transfer of powers'.² We may say, then, that while the distinction drawn hitherto between the ethical and descriptive concepts of a man's power is valuable, it is nevertheless insufficient. It is valuable in indicating why no transfer is seen by those who employ only the descriptive concept, and in pointing out that the descriptive concept, because it embodies no standard of essentially human needs or purposes, is an inadequate one for use in a democratic theory. But those two concepts together are not by themselves sufficient for a fuller analysis of the problems of democratic theory.

Of the two, the ethical concept remains essential: without it, or something like it, no fully democratic theory is possible. But a name other than 'ethical' is perhaps more appropriate for purposes of further analysis of the place of the concept of power in a democratic theory, if only because the emphasis which that term gives to the qualitative character of the concept tends to obscure the fact that the concept is quantitative as well, that the *amount* of that power that men have is what is important in a democratic theory. Since that power is defined as

² The concept of the 'net transfer of powers', previously formulated in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* (pp. 56-7), in *The Real World of Democracy* (pp. 40-3), and in Essay I of this volume (pp. 10-14, 16 ff.), is further developed later in this essay (below, pp. 64-66).

a man's ability to use and develop his capacities, it may concisely be called a man's *developmental power*.

The 'descriptive' concept of power, useful as it is, will not carry our analysis much further. We need, in addition to it, a more precise one which will allow us to separate the two components of which a man's power may consist: his ability to use his own capacities, and his ability to use other men's capacities. The latter ability is power over others, the ability to extract benefit from others. We need a name for it. I shall call it *extractive power*. It is central to an understanding of the liberal individualist tradition, and so deserves close attention.

A man's extractive power is evidently not identical with the whole of a man's power in the general descriptive sense, for the latter includes whatever ability he may have to use his own capacities as well as whatever ability he may have to extract benefit from the use of others' capacities. But as we shall now see, the individualist tradition from Hobbes to James Mill did, increasingly explicitly, treat the two as virtually identical: the whole of a man's power was seen as nearly equivalent to his extractive power. We shall see also that, with the transformation of classical utilitarianism into modern pluralist empirical theory, part of this insight was lost.

Most of the literature of modern political science, from its beginnings with Machiavelli and Hobbes to its twentieth-century empirical exponents, has to do with power, understood broadly as men's ability to get what they want by controlling others. Hobbes put it succinctly in 1640: after defining a man's power as his ability to produce some desired effect, and hence as his faculties of body and mind and such further powers as by them are acquired, he concluded: 'And because the power of one man resisteth and hindereth the effects of the power of another: power simply is no more, but the excess of the power of one above that of another.'³ Having thus made every man's power contentious and comparative, he went on in effect to make it consist of each man's power over others, by showing that man in his market-like model of society can secure power in comparison with others only by getting power over others.

The reduction of power to power over others had become even more explicit by the nineteenth century. The high point was reached in the propositions James Mill announced in 1820 as undisputed: 'The desire . . . of that power which is necessary to render the persons and properties of human beings subservient to our pleasures, is a grand

³ *Elements of Law, Natural and Politic*, Part 1, chap. 8, sections 3 and 4. The same point is made, though less noticeably, in *Leviathan*, chap. 10, paragraphs 1 and 2, where a man's power ('his present means to obtain some future apparent good') is stated to consist of the *eminence* of his faculties of body or mind and the further powers acquired by such eminence.

governing law of human nature . . . The grand instrument for attaining what a man likes is the actions of other men. Power, in its most appropriate signification, therefore, means security for the conformity between the will of one man and the acts of other men. This, we presume, is not a proposition which will be disputed.'⁴

The increasingly explicit reduction of a man's power to power over others should not be ascribed to carelessness or lack of rigorous consistency of definition on the part of the theorists. It may better be seen as a reflection of the changing facts. With the growth and predominance of capitalist market society it became increasingly the case that the whole of a man's power was nearly equivalent to his extractive power. In a fully developed capitalist society the two come to much the same thing. For, at least in the classical economists' model of a fully competitive capitalist market economy, the relation between owners and non-owners of land and capital puts each member of both categories in the position of having his whole power nearly equivalent in amount to his extractive power. This can be seen by a simple analysis.

(a) Those who in a market society have no land or capital have no extractive power.⁵ They also may be said to have, at any given time, no power (or only negligible power) of any other kind. For their productive power, their ability to use their capacities and energies to produce goods, has continuously to be sold to someone who has land or capital, and sold for a wage which goes to replenish the energy which makes their capacities saleable next week. They are left continuously with no productive power of their own. If they have any leisure, and any energy left for leisure pursuits, they have indeed some power left, some ability to use and develop their own capacities for themselves. But in the classical capitalist model, with wages always tending to a subsistence level and energies tending to be fully absorbed by the

⁴ James Mill: *An Essay on Government*, section IV (ed. E. Barker, Cambridge, 1937, p. 17).

⁵ This is strictly true only for a model of a *lawful* market society in which there is no private violence, corruption, or misuse of office (governmental or non-governmental), for all of these do of course give extractive power regardless of ownership of capital. The amount of such extractive power, as distinct from the amount due to ownership of capital, in any actual market society is impossible to calculate. But since present capital is partly the product of past private violence and misuse of office, and since current gains from unlawful extractive power tend to be consolidated as capital, the amount of extractive power based on capital may be allowed to be at any time an approximation to the whole amount of extractive power. One other non-capital kind of power may be noticed and dismissed as irrelevant here. Lawful and proper use of office gives some personal power to those with leadership and organizational talents. But if it is lawful and proper, i.e. used in the interests of those on whose behalf it is exercised and subject in some degree to their control, it is not extractive.

productive work for which the energies have been purchased, the amount of such power could be treated as negligible. Thus the whole power of each non-owner could be taken to be virtually the same amount as his extractive power: the latter is zero, the former is negligible.

(b) Those who have the land and capital have extractive power. In a full capitalist society, with its substantial concentration of ownership of capital and productive land, a few men have extractive power over many; hence each of the few has extractive power equivalent to the whole (or virtually the whole) power of several other men. The greater the concentration of capital,⁶ the greater the proportion of each owner's entire power consists of his extractive power. This can be readily seen if we follow James Mill in expressing the amount of benefit a man is able to extract from others as the (whole or fractional) number of men he is able to 'oppress'.⁷

Thus we may calculate, treating capital as extractive power, that if, for instance, all the capital were owned by 10 per cent of the people, each of the owners on the average would have extractive power equivalent to virtually all the powers of 9 other men. Or, to come nearer to the usual distribution in capitalist society,⁸ if two-thirds, say, of all the capital is owned by 5 per cent of the people, then each of those owners on the average has an extractive power equivalent to virtually the whole power of $2/3$ of 19 other people, i.e. of about 12 other people. Smaller owners (those among the other 95 per cent of the people, who between them own the other $1/3$ of the capital) have of course less extractive power. There is also the complication that some extractive power is normally being transferred continuously from smaller to larger owners, as for instance from tenant farmers or other tenant entrepreneurs to landlords, and from any except the largest entrepreneurs to creditors; but this does not affect the total amount of extractive power of owners.

If, as seems probable, the order of magnitude of the extractive power is in the neighbourhood of 9 (each owner of capital, on the average,

⁶ For brevity, 'capital' is used to include land used for production.

⁷ James Mill: *An Essay on Government*, section VIII (Barker ed., p. 50). Equating the vote with political power, and political power with power over others, Mill pointed out that if more than half the people had the vote, each voter would have 'something less than the benefit of oppressing a single man', and that if two-thirds of the people had the vote each voter 'would have only one-half the benefit of oppressing a single man'.

⁸ Cf. J. E. Meade: *Efficiency, Equality and the Ownership of Property* (London, 1964), p. 27. It is there estimated that 75 per cent of 'total personal wealth' in the U.K. in 1960 was owned by 5 per cent of the population. Although 'personal wealth' is not identical with capital and productive land, the distributions are presumably not very different.

having an extractive power equivalent to virtually the whole power of 9 other men), then much the largest part of the whole amount of the power of each owner is his extractive power. If we assume that the natural capacities of the members of the two classes are roughly equal (i.e. that, setting aside the advantages or handicaps people start with by being born into an owning or non-owning class, the capacities of the members of the two classes are not significantly different), it follows that, on the average the whole power of each member of the owning class consists of one part of his own natural power plus nine parts of his extractive power. So, the extractive power of the owners is nearly equivalent to their entire power.

Thus, in a full capitalist model, the whole power of everyone is nearly equivalent to his extractive power. Each non-owner's whole power is near zero, and his extractive power is zero. Each owner's whole power is about 9 parts extractive power to 1 part non-extractive power. How clearly the classical economists and Utilitarians saw this is a matter of conjecture. The increasingly explicit identification of a man's whole power with his extractive power, culminating in James Mill's formulation, does correspond to the increasingly near actual equivalence of the two as unqualified competitive capitalist society was reaching its zenith. Later in the nineteenth century as capitalism began to go on the defensive ideologically, the acknowledgement and the very perception of extractive power declined.⁹ It is still present, though modified, in John Stuart Mill; later it disappears almost entirely.

When we move on to the twentieth-century empirical political theorists we find the same assumption that the only significant power in any political view is one man's or one group's power over others. Thus Laswell and Kaplan write in 1950: 'power in the political sense cannot be conceived as the ability to produce intended effects in general [the reference is to Bertrand Russell's definition of power], but only such effects as directly involve other persons: political power is distinguished from power over nature as power over other men'.¹⁰ So Easton in 1953: power is 'a relationship in which one person or group is able to determine the actions of another in the direction of the former's own ends... [Power] is present to the extent to which one person controls by sanctions the decisions and actions of another'.¹¹ So Friedrich in 1963: '[political] power is always power over other men'.¹² So Dahl in 1964, defining power as one kind of influence, namely 'coercive influence', defines influence as 'a relation among actors in which one

⁹ Cf. below, p. 72, and Essay XI.

¹⁰ Laswell and Kaplan: *Power and Society* (New Haven, Conn., 1950), p. 75.

¹¹ David Easton: *The Political System* (New York, 1953), pp. 143-4.

¹² Carl J. Friedrich: *Man and his Government* (New York, 1963), p. 160.

actor induces other actors to act in some way they would not otherwise act'.¹³

The current empirical theorists are on the whole less perceptive about political power than were the classical political theorists from Hobbes to Mill. They see that political power is power over others, but generally they do not see (as the earlier theorists had seen) that power over others is, in a market society, mainly extractive power of the sort just analysed; nor do they see that political power is the means of consolidating the extractive power of the owners of land and capital. Perhaps because the empirical theorists have been so concerned to map out a political science independent of political economy, or perhaps because they are trying to set up a framework of analysis which will be valid for all kinds of society, not merely for capitalist market societies, they generally overlook the extent to which in the latter societies political power is a means of maintaining a system of extractive power. They recognize of course that wealth is sometimes used to get political power and that political power is sometimes used to get economic power, but they do not treat these relations as central to the nature of political power. They move within a pluralistic model of society which has no use for the axiom of earlier statecraft 'with men we shall get money and with money we shall get men'. Far from treating political power as primarily a means of consolidating extractive power, they are apt to insist on a disjunction between the two. Thus Friedrich rejects Hobbes's definition of a man's power as his 'present means to obtain some future apparent good' because it does not distinguish between power and wealth, whereas he holds that 'it is operationally important today to draw this distinction in order to differentiate political from economic concerns and thus politics from economics'.¹⁴ The extreme separatist position is stated, and endorsed, by Easton in his reference to 'a long line of [modern] writers who see that the characteristic of political activity, the property that distinguishes the political from the economic or other aspect of a situation, is the attempt to control others'.¹⁵ There could hardly be a clearer indication of the distance the empirical political theorists have put between themselves and the reality of power, than this assumption that political power differs from economic power in being power over others.

The trouble with the current empirical theorists' concept of power may be stated as follows. Instead of starting, as Hobbes and James Mill did, from an analysis of a man's power, showing how it amounts to power over others, and then moving on to political power as one kind of

power over others presumptively closely related to and interdependent with other kinds, they start by looking for a concept of *political* power, and look first for characteristics which distinguish it from other kinds of power. They see that political power is power over others, the ability to make others do what you want. Then, looking for differentiae of political power, they are apt to fasten on the state's monopoly of physical coercive power. What is interesting then is the means by which those who have this political power manage to maintain it. Attention is focused on the *source* of the power-holders' power: how do they recruit and renew their power? What are the conditions for the maintenance of a stable system of inputs to and outputs from political power? Hence the main interests of current empirical theory: analysis of models of democratic elitism, pluralist equilibrium analysis, systems analysis. What is lost sight of is that political power, being power over others, is used in any unequal society to extract benefit from the ruled for the rulers. Focus on the *source* of political power puts out of the field of vision any perception of the necessary *purpose* of political power in any unequal society, which is to maintain the extractive power of the class or classes which have extractive power.

We cannot say, then, that the current empirical theorists follow their Utilitarian forbears in treating the whole of a man's power as nearly equivalent to his extractive power. They do not do so, since they neither start from a concept of a man's whole power nor recognize the fundamental category of extractive power. Yet they still do treat political power as power over others.

We may say at least that power has been treated for the last three centuries, by all those who have considered themselves political realists, as power over others. Power as control over others has been treated as a central, if not the central, fact of political society. It has been taken as an observed phenomenon, and generally as a necessary phenomenon. It has been assumed that all human beings more or less desire power, and that in any society some men have more power than others. The questions that have been (and are) asked are: how is power to be measured, where and in what proportions is it located within given societies, and (if the theory is, like Hobbes's and James Mill's, prescriptive and not merely empirical) how can power be directed to, or prevented from frustrating, certain social goals held to be desirable?

Power as control over others may thus be the subject both of empirical study which tries or pretends to be value-free, and of admittedly prescriptive study. Most political scientists would admit to some moral concern over the uses to which power is put, however separate they may try to keep such concern from their empirical studies. So they will treat power as a force which is at best ethically neutral, but more likely harmful unless channelled and confined by

¹³ Robert A. Dahl: *Modern Political Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1964), pp. 50, 40.

¹⁴ Friedrich: *Man and his Government*, pp. 159-60.

¹⁵ Easton: *The Political System* (2nd ed., 1971), p. 115.

political institutions and ultimately by beliefs about political rights and obligations. Power, because it is seen as control over others, is certainly not seen as something whose increase or maximization is desirable in itself.

Indeed it is generally assumed that it cannot be increased, that the total amount of power within one set of individuals or groups (e.g. within one nation-state or within one system of nation-states) is a constant quantity. For if power is defined as control over others, one man's or one group's power can apparently be increased only at the expense of others'. The competition for power is seen as a zero-sum game: the total amount of power cannot be increased except by increasing the population. We should notice at once that this is a fallacious deduction.

To define power as control over others does not entail that the aggregate amount of power in a given population cannot be increased. For power as control over others is generally desired and used in order to extract some benefit from the controlled for the controller. The amount of power may therefore be measured by the amount of benefit extracted. If a more efficient method of control is devised enabling the old or a new controller to extract more benefit than before from the controlled, e.g. by making them work harder and produce more, the amount of power within a given population is increased. This has been a frequent occurrence in history: it has been the commonplace of colonial administration, and the normal concomitant of industrial revolutions. Contemporary political science has generally neglected this feature of power as control over others (which we may call the variable-extractive dimension of power): if it thinks of power as an amount at all rather than as simply a relation, it tends to treat it as a constant amount in a given population. This makes equilibrium analysis easier.

Of course, if power is defined not as control over others but simply as ability to get what one wants, without the stipulation that this is to be got by controlling other men, the aggregate in any society can be increased by increasing men's control over Nature. This approach is implicit in some of the current theory of political development and modernization. The power of a whole society is defined as its ability to attain its goals. So defined, the aggregate power of a society can be increased, not at anyone's expense, by a societal reorganization, e.g. modernization of a tribal society, which increases the society's control over Nature. But by and large, modern political science continues to treat power as control over other persons, as it has done from the beginning. That is the phenomenon it chiefly studies.

No one will deny the importance of power as control over others. It will, and should, remain a central concern of political science. One might wish that those political scientists who concern themselves with

power in that sense would not succumb so far to the scientific blandishments of games theory and systems analysis as to treat power as a zero-sum game and so overlook the variable-extractive function of power. And one might wish that those who are concerned with political modernization theory would not so often neglect the humanly extractive function of power over others in favour of the non-humanly-extractive function of control over Nature. These shortcomings of current empirical approaches to politics might be remedied if more attention were given to the other concept of power: power as ability to use and develop essentially human capacities. It is true that the purpose for which it was introduced into liberal theory was to reform, rather than explain, nineteenth-century society: it was clearly part of a value theory. But an understanding of it now should help us to explain, as well as to evaluate, twentieth-century liberal-democratic society.

Indeed, some understanding of the developmental concept of power is now useful for understanding the controversies and conflicts over extractive powers. For the two concepts are in fact synthesized in some political movements of our time which any political science worth the name must try to comprehend: analysis of the developmental concept of power thus appears valuable not only for a justificatory theory of democracy but also for any adequate contemporary political science. It would be a pretty thin political science that did not attempt to deal with the concepts of power which now inform or motivate the political actions of a considerable and apparently increasing proportion of human society outside, and (if less obviously) within, the West. Recognition and study of the realignment of forces in the political world of the second half of the twentieth century ought not to be confined to a branch of political science called area studies or comparative government; it should be brought into a central theoretical position. Since political science as we know it has always been a Western affair, no doubt it is not easy for it to expand its horizon to take in new phenomena occurring elsewhere, except in the form of area studies and the like, which is to treat concepts that are foreign geographically as foreign intellectually. But the effort must be made if political science is to be of any importance in the world of the late twentieth century. To argue that is not to belittle the continuing study of power in the usual extractive sense. The prevailing relations of control and subordination both in Western and non-Western societies obviously need not merely continuous scrutiny but the most thorough scrutiny that can be devised. But if it is to be thorough it should not be conducted in pluralist or behaviouralist blinkers, which are apt to shut out new phenomena of some importance even within the Western world.

The emergence of new phrases in common speech is not an infallible indication of the emergence of new phenomena. Yet it should give us

pause that in the last decade the social fabric of Western liberal democracies has been torn by new movements which have taken, or accepted, such names as 'black power' and 'student power'. No very thorough acquaintance with these movements is needed to see that what they are demanding is, in varying proportions, a hybrid of the two kinds of power. The power they seek is a cross between (i) power as the ability to control others (or not to be controlled by others), so as to increase their share of the satisfactions now available but now distributed unfavourably to them, and (ii) power as the ability to exercise and develop their human capacities in ways and to an extent they believe to be not possible for them, or for anyone, within the framework of existing society, whether they designate existing society as the consumer society, or as capitalist, imperialist, technocratic, bureaucratic, gerontocratic, or (comprehensively) alienated. They may be derided as wishing to opt out of society, or resisted as threatening to disrupt or take over existing societies. But they cannot be disregarded by any realistic political science.

In so far as the power they demand is the ability to use and develop what they sense as presently unusable or denied human capacities, they are the ideological reflection within Western societies of the ferment that has been at work for some time now in much of Eastern Europe and Asia and Africa. In so far as the power they demand is the ability to become the controllers instead of the controlled, they are the practical imitators of the revolutions in that other two-thirds of the world. But whatever the mixture is, the phenomenon has surely made itself sufficiently evident, even within the West, to set a new requirement for Western political science. We must attend to the developmental concept of power, and the democratic claim to maximize that power, if our political science is to be analytically adequate. My main concern here, however, is with the importance of the developmental concept of power in any modern justificatory theory of democracy.

To discuss democratic theory as a claim to maximize men's developmental powers may seem perverse in view of the failure of John Stuart Mill and Green and their followers to build a coherent liberal-democratic theory around their developmental concept of power. Is it worthwhile pursuing the implications of that concept of power? I think it is, on two grounds. First, their failure need not be attributed to any weakness in the concept but, as I have argued, to contradictions in the liberal-democratic society which are now capable of being resolved.

Secondly, I would argue that the developmental concept of power remains, if not essential, at least the most serviceable for the building of any adequate democratic theory in the late twentieth century. Let me put a preliminary case for this view by arguing that what is essential to

a modern democratic theory can most efficiently be formulated in terms of the developmental concept of power; the test of efficiency being how fully the formulation permits the implications of the essential principle to be drawn out, and the difficulties of its application to be faced.

What is essential in a modern democratic theory? As soon as democracy is seen as a kind of society, not merely a mechanism of choosing and authorizing governments, the egalitarian principle inherent in democracy requires not only 'one man, one vote' but also 'one man, one equal effective right to live as fully humanly as he may wish'. Democracy is now seen, by those who want it and by those who have it (or are said to have it) and want more of it, as a kind of society—a whole complex of relations between individuals—rather than simply a system of government. So any theory which is to explicate, justify, or prescribe for the maintenance or improvement of, democracy in our time must take the basic criterion of democracy to be that equal effective right of individuals to live as fully as they may wish. This is simply the principle that everyone ought to be able to make the most of himself, or make the best of himself. I am saying that this not only *was* the principle introduced into predemocratic liberal theory in the nineteenth century to make it liberal-democratic, but that it is now an essential principle of any democratic theory. Moreover I would argue that this principle requires (as Mill and Green thought it did) a concept of man as at least potentially a doer, an exorter and developer and enjoyer of his human capacities, rather than merely a consumer of utilities.

We may here notice and dispose of one apparent difficulty about this concept of man. It may be allowed that some men (especially as shaped by modern market society) might, given the greatest freedom, wish to be no more than consumers of utilities. But it must be allowed that some do wish to be active exorters and developers and enjoyers of their human capacities. And it must be allowed that the others are potentially such. It follows that all must be treated as at least potentially such, by any theory that asserts the right of each to live as fully as each may wish; and we have seen that any democratic theory must assert this. It may be added, although this is not essential to the case just made, that the notion of man, and society, as *developing* entities, is probably more widely held now than even in the late nineteenth century. We live, and are likely for some time to live, in an age of development: man is, for the most part, seen as a striving being.

I conclude that any adequate twentieth-century democratic theory, since it must treat democracy as a kind of society and must treat the individual members as at least potentially doers rather than mere consumers, must assert an equal effective right of the members to use and develop their human capacities: each must be enabled to do so,

whether or not each actually does so. To state such a principle is not enough. It should be stated in such terms as allow all its implications to be drawn out clearly, and its difficulties to be faced directly. The formulation I have offered, of democracy as a claim to maximize men's powers in the sense of power as ability to use and develop human capacities, seems to me to have the advantage by this test.

The following sections of this essay attempt to make good this claim, by examining some hitherto insufficiently examined implications and difficulties of formulating democratic theory as the claim to maximize men's powers in the developmental sense of power. In so far as this claim can be made good, this formulation of democratic theory will serve as a basis for a critical look at some of the leading current justificatory theories of liberal democracy. Such criticism is offered in Essays IV and V.

2. Power and Capacities

The concept of power which I describe as the developmental concept defines a man's power as his ability to use and develop his supposed essentially human capacities. Before we examine some implications of the concept, attention should be drawn to another change in terminology now introduced. In previous references¹⁶ to the ethical (now developmental) as well as to the descriptive concept of power I have used the term 'a man's powers'. It will I think be better now to put this in the singular, and to refer to 'a man's power' (retaining the plural only for 'men's powers'). This will help to avoid a confusion between a man's *power* (understood as his *ability* to exercise his human capacities), and the capacities themselves. One naturally speaks of capacities in the plural, since they are discernibly of several sorts;¹⁷ and it is all too easy to use 'powers' interchangeably with capacities if both are used in the plural. Yet there are two different things here, whatever names we give them, and the difference is important when we are thinking of quantities. For the amount of a man's capacities—physical, mental, and psychic—is neither the same as, nor necessarily correlated with, the amount of his ability to use them. The latter depends on present external impediments; the former on innate endowment and past external impediments.

It is a man's ability to exercise his capacities which I have called a man's powers, and which I now propose to call a man's power, chiefly in order to mark the difference between power and capacities. The political theorists who introduced the developmental notion of power

¹⁶ Essay I, 'The Maximization of Democracy', section 3.

¹⁷ See below, pp. 53-4.

did not always make a clear distinction. Both Mill and Green were apt to use 'powers' to mean what I am calling capacities.¹⁸ The use of 'powers' to mean latent powers, i.e. capacities, is perfectly intelligible, but it leaves us without a distinct word for actual power, i.e. actual ability to exercise one's capacities. It therefore seems best to keep 'power' for the actual ability to exercise one's capacities, and to use 'capacities' for what is there to be exercised.

The usefulness of the developmental concept of power clearly depends on the adequacy of the concept of 'essentially human capacities'. To put such an imprecise term in our definition may seem to beg a lot of questions. Yet a concept of power which is to be of any use in a justificatory democratic theory must contain a notion of essentially human capacities. Indeed any ethical theory, and therefore any justificatory political theory—whether idealist or materialist, and whether liberal or not and democratic or not—must start from the assumption that there are specifically or uniquely human capacities different from, or over and above, animal ones. Whether the existence of specifically human capacities is attributed to divine creation, or to some evolutionary development of more complex organisms, it is a basic postulate. It is an empirical postulate, verifiable in a broad way by observation. It is at the same time a value postulate, in the sense that rights and obligations can be derived from it without any additional value premiss, since the very structure of our thought and language puts an evaluative content into our descriptive statements about 'man'.¹⁹

But this leaves open the question, what are these human capacities? In 'The Maximization of Democracy' I proposed that, while men's human attributes might be variously listed, they could 'be taken to include the capacity for rational understanding, for moral judgement and action, for aesthetic creation or contemplation, for the emotional

¹⁸ e.g. Mill's approving quotation of Humboldt's statement: 'the end of man ... is the highest and most harmonious development of his powers to a complete and consistent whole' (J. S. Mill: *On Liberty*, chap. III); and Green's definition of 'freedom in the positive sense' as 'the liberation of the powers of all men equally for contributions to a common good' (*Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract*, Works, III.372), and his references to 'the free exercise of his powers' and 'the free play of the powers of all' (*Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation*, sec. 216). Sometimes Green used capacity and power as identical terms, e.g. where in consecutive sentences he described freedom as 'a positive power or capacity of doing or enjoying something worth doing or enjoying' and as 'a power which each man exercises through the help or security given him by his fellow-men ...' (*Liberal Legislation* ..., Works, III.371).

¹⁹ Cf. H. L. A. Hart: *The Concept of Law* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 188-9; and Isaiah Berlin: 'Does Political Theory Still Exist?', in P. Laslett and W. G. Runciman (eds.): *Philosophy, Politics and Society* (Second Series, Oxford, 1962), pp. 26-7.

activities of friendship and love, and, sometimes, for religious experience'.²⁰ And of course the capacity for transforming what is given by Nature is presupposed in this view of men as essentially a doer, a creator, an exertor of energy, an actor;²¹ this is broader than, but includes, the capacity for materially productive labour. It is evident that such a list could be extended or rearranged in many ways. One might add the capacity for wonder or curiosity; one might treat the capacity for religious experience as subsumed under one or more of the others; one might add the capacity for laughter (though not, perhaps, if one agreed with Hobbes's account of laughter);²² one might add the capacity for controlled physical/mental/aesthetic activity, as expressed for instance in making music and in playing games of skill. But some such list as this does I think give the gist of what the liberal-democratic theorists have meant when they have thought of the human capacities whose development or fulfilment was their highest value. And some such list is surely essential to any democratic theory.

Here it may be objected that the very looseness of any such list renders the idea of essentially human capacities unusable. At the very least, it may be thought, the capacities should be shown to be in an ordered relation, with one as the first principle and the others as derivative: we can have *homo faber* or *homo sapiens* or *homo ludens* but not a hodge-podge of all these or more. I do not think that this objection can be sustained when the idea of capacities is being used in a democratic theory. For when capacities are postulated in a democratic theory, the postulate must include a further assumption which incidentally makes hierarchical ordering unnecessary. The further assumption, which at first sight is a staggering one, is that the exercise of his human capacities by each member of a society does not prevent other members exercising theirs: that the essentially human capacities may all be used and developed without hindering the use and development of all the rest.

Now to describe as the essentially human characteristics only those ones which are not destructively contentious is of course to take a fundamentally optimistic view. That view has always been at the root of the democratic vision, and indeed of the liberal vision: one has only to think of the Encyclopedists, with Condorcet as the limiting case. Men's very visible contentiousness might be attributed to intellectual

²⁰ Above, p. 4.

²¹ Cf. J. S. Mill: 'all human action whatever, consists in altering, and all useful action in improving, the spontaneous course of nature' ('Nature', in *Three Essays on Religion*: in *Collected Works*, Vol. X, ed. J. M. Robson (Toronto and London, 1969), p. 402.

²² Hobbes: *English Works*, Vol. II, as quoted below, Essay XIV, p. 240.

error or to scarcity: both conditions were assumed to be removable. That men if freed from scarcity and from intellectual error (i.e. the ideologies inherited from ages of scarcity) would live together harmoniously enough, that their remaining contention would be only creative tension, cannot be proved or disproved except by trial. But such a proposition is basic to any demand for or justification of a democratic society. The case for democratic *government* ('one man, one vote') can indeed be made sufficiently on the opposite assumption: in a thoroughly contentious society everyone needs the vote as a protection. But the case for a democratic *society* fails without the assumption of potential substantial harmony. For what would be the use of trying to provide that everyone should be able to make the most of himself, which is the idea of a democratic society, if that were bound to lead to more destructive contention?

It must therefore be a postulate of any fully democratic theory that the rights or freedoms men need in order to be fully human are not mutually destructive. To put this in another way: it must be asserted that the rights of any man which are morally justifiable on any egalitarian principle are only those which allow all others to have equal effective rights; and that *those are enough* to allow any man to be fully human. They are not the same as the rights anyone might like to have. They do not amount to Hobbes's (self-defeating) natural right of every man to any thing. To translate this from terms of right into terms of power: the power which a democratic theory requires to be maximized is the ability of each to use and develop those of his capacities the use and development of which does not prevent others using and developing theirs. His *human* capacities are taken to be only those; and those—the non-destructive ones—are taken to be enough to enable him to be fully human.

The postulate of the non-opposition of essentially human capacities may be too good to be true. But it is necessary to any fully democratic theory. It is not often stated explicitly, perhaps because it appears to be contradicted by all experience. All societies, including those with democratic systems of government, exhibit perennial contention between opposed desires of their members. Democratic governments are thought to have enough to do in keeping such contention within bounds, and rationing the objects of opposed desires in some tolerable way. No doubt this is so as long as there is scarcity of such objects. A fully democratic society is only possible when both genuine and contrived scarcity have been overcome. But the belief that they can be overcome is at the heart of democratic theory. In any case, the postulate of non-opposition of essentially human capacities cannot be said to be contradicted by experience, for it is asserted of the capacities that would be held to be human in a society as yet nowhere realized. I shall return

to this question later,²³ after more attention has been given to questions of scarcity.

We may now notice two further points about capacities and their exercise. The first is that the concept of human capacities is, in a democratic theory, quantitative as well as qualitative. For the goal in a democratic theory is to let these capacities reach their fullest development, which can only be conceived as a quantity. Thus a man's capacities must be understood to be the *amount* of his combined and co-ordinated physical, mental, and psychic equipment, whether as it actually exists at a given time or as it might exist at some later time or under certain different conditions.

There is a rich source of confusion here. No fewer than three different quantities are liable to be confused in the one notion of a man's capacities: (i) his actual present capacities; (ii) the supposed capacities he might have developed up to the present if society had placed no impediments in his way; (iii) the supposed greater capacities he could develop during his whole life if society placed no impediments in his way. It is easy for a liberal-democratic theory to slip from one to another of these meanings. For if one is thinking of an ideal liberal democracy (i.e. one in which society placed no impediments in anyone's way), (i) and (ii) would be the same, and (iii) would be automatically reached. But in anything short of the ideal, (i) is less than (ii) for some men, and less by different amounts for different men, depending on the different impediments they have confronted; and (iii) is not automatically reached by some men.

The other point to be noticed about the concept of human capacities is that their exercise, to be fully human, must be under one's own conscious control rather than at the dictate of another. This is required by the concept of human essence which holds that a man's activity is to be regarded as human only in so far as it is directed by his own design (an assumption as old as Aristotle's *to logon echon*). To say this is not of course to say that a man should refuse to acknowledge himself to be a social animal who can be fully human only as a member of society. It is rather to say that the rules by which he is bound should be only those that can be rationally demonstrated to be necessary to society, and so to his humanity. Or it may be put that the rules society imposes should not infringe the principle that he should be treated not as a means to other's ends but as an end in himself. With all its difficulties, this is at bottom simply the assertion of the dignity of man.

It may still be asked whether a liberal-democratic concept of men's powers must include the development, as well as the full use, of men's present capacities. Must a liberal-democratic theory in claiming (and a

liberal-democratic state in seeking) to maximize men's powers, claim to maximize the future development, as well as the present use, of each man's capacities? At first sight it might seem enough to claim only to maximize the use of each man's present capacities; indeed this by itself would be a considerable claim and a considerable endeavour. But a democratic theory must assert an equal right of individuals to develop their capacities to the fullest: an equal right merely to use the capacities each has at a given time is not equality as between those whose capacities had been stunted by external impediments and those whose capacities had not been so stunted.

Finally we should notice that this view of capacities and their development, while it does assume that all men are at least potentially exponents and developers of their essentially human capacities, and does therefore treat the development of capacities as a process which would go on if society placed no impediments in anyone's way, does not imply that society is only an impeding agent. It does not deny that society is also a positive agent in the development of capacities. It does not deny that every individual's human capacities are socially derived, and that their development must also be social. Human society is the medium through which human capacities are developed. A society of *some* kind is a necessary condition of the development of individual capacities. A *given* society, with all its enabling and coercive institutions, may be judged more of a help than a hindrance, or more of a hindrance than a help, at any given time. Societies have usually been both, in varying proportions. If my analysis concentrates on the hindrances in modern market societies, it is because this is what requires most analysis if we are to find a way through from a liberal market society to a fully democratic society. The objective is to find a form of society which will be more of a help and less of a hindrance; a help in new ways, without the present hindrances. We must start from the hindrances, but this is in no way to say that society is nothing but a hindrance.

3. The Measurement of Powers

Having seen (in section 1) that any adequate twentieth-century theory of democratic society must assert an equal effective right of the members to use and develop their essentially human capacities, treating all the members as at least potentially doers rather than mere consumers, and that this principle may be stated as the claim that democracy maximizes men's ability to exercise those capacities (which ability we define as their power), and (in section 2) that a democratic theory must postulate that the essentially human capacities are ones, the exercise of which by any one does not prevent their exercise by others, we have now to look at some problems of maximizing powers.

²³ Below, pp. 74.

To formulate democratic theory as the claim that democracy maximizes men's powers is to require that their powers be measurable, at least in terms of greater or less. How is a man's power, defined as his ability to use and develop his human capacities, to be measured? And how can the powers of all the members of a society be added together to give a total (which is what is claimed to be maximized)? There is less difficulty about either of these operations than might be supposed. I shall consider the question of measurement of one man's power in this and the following section of the essay, and the question of aggregating all men's powers in section 5.

A man's power, in the sense required in a democratic theory, is to be measured in terms of the *absence of impediments* to his using his human capacities. For we have seen that a democratic theory rests on the assumption that everyone is at least potentially a doer, an actor, a user and developer of his capacities. His *ability* so to act, which is what democracy claims to maximize, is at its maximum when there are no external impediments to such action. His ability is diminished by the amount of impediments. His ability is therefore measured as greater or less by the lesser or greater amount of impediments.

We shall examine shortly what are to be counted as impediments. But it should be emphasized here that the amount of a man's power must, in any democratic theory, be measured against a maximum, not (as is usually done with the measurement of utilities) against some previously attained amount. Liberal theory customarily measures utilities against a bench-mark of a previously attained amount. This is perfectly appropriate when man is taken to be essentially a consumer: his power is increased by the amount of his increased command of utilities. It is all too easy for liberal-democratic theory to carry this standard of measurement over to the measurement of power in the developmental sense. But it is not an appropriate standard for the measurement of men's powers in a democratic theory; indeed it is not even a proper way to measure utilities when men are seen as primarily doers and only incidentally consumers.

Both these points can be readily demonstrated. A democratic theory must measure men's present powers down from a maximum rather than up from a previous amount because it asserts that the criterion of a democratic society is that it maximizes men's present powers. Consequently the standard by which the theory must judge the democratic quality of any society, and by which its claim that any particular society is democratic must be tested, is how nearly it attains the presently attainable maximum (i.e. the maximum level of abilities to use and develop human capacities given the presently possible human command over external Nature). How nearly a society attains that maximum can only be established by measuring the deficiency, if any, from the

maximum. Utilities also must be so measured as soon as men are seen as primarily doers, exponents, and enjoyers of their human capacities, and only instrumentally consumers. For utilities then become mere means to using and developing human capacities (instead of, as in classical liberal theory, capacities being mere means for acquiring utilities). Utilities as mere means to powers must then be measured in the same way as powers, i.e. measured down from a maximum.

That democratic theory must logically measure men's powers down from a maximum is not always seen by liberal-democratic theorists. The early liberal-democratic theorists were more aware of it than current ones often are. Mill and Green, breaking away from classical liberal utilitarianism, and realizing that their own society fell far short of maximizing men's powers, were apt to measure the quality of society by its deficiency from that maximum. Twentieth-century liberal-democratic theorists, less crusading and more defensive, are apt to argue that present liberal-democratic societies, with slight reforms, would attain the maximum (or that an easily realizable theoretical model of liberal-democratic society *does* attain it).²⁴ Seeing little or no deficiency from the maximum now, they see no need to measure powers down from a maximum. So they can easily slip back into the classical liberal habit of measuring up from a previous level.

4. Impediments and their Measurement

A man's power in the sense required in a democratic theory is, I have argued, to be measured in terms of the absence of impediments to his using his human capacities. What then are to be counted as impediments?

We can dismiss at once those physical impediments which cannot be altered by any action of society. The force of gravity, the obduracy of materials, any innate limitations of the human frame, are indeed impediments to men doing what they might wish. But a social or political theory can only be concerned with impediments which are socially variable.

What then are the socially variable impediments to each man's using and developing his human capacities, which liberal democracy would have to minimize in order to realize its aim of maximizing men's powers? There are more of them than liberal theory has traditionally emphasized. They may be deduced from the human condition under three headings.

(i) Lack of Adequate Means of Life

Since every exercise of a man's capacities is an exertion of energy,

²⁴ See the positions taken by Chapman and Rawls, discussed in Essay IV.

such exercise requires that a man should have energy, and therefore that he should have a continuous intake of the material means of maintaining his energy. Since it is not just physical energy but also psychic energy that is required, this calls for a supply of the material prerequisites for his taking part in the life of the community, whatever the level of its culture may be, as well as for food and shelter. Lack of this is an impediment.

(ii) *Lack of Access to the Means of Labour*

Since every exercise of a man's capacities requires materials to work on or work with, it requires access to such resources. This applies both to the materially productive exercise of capacities (which requires land and/or capital), and to the materially non-productive but equally important exercise of capacities in which activity is not a means of producing utilities but a satisfaction in itself: man as actor must have something to act on or with. Lack of access to such material is an impediment. This impediment may be described as *lack of access to the means of labour* if we take labour in its broadest sense as exertion of human energy.

(iii) *Lack of Protection Against Invasion by Others*

Since every exercise of a man's capacities requires that he should not be invaded or subdued by others while or because he is exercising these capacities, lack of protection against such invasion is an impediment.

Of these impediments, the third can be removed, or reduced, so far as that can be done by social action, by the state guaranteeing civil liberties and providing protection of the person and of such personal property as the society allows. This normally is done, more or less well, by liberal-democratic states. There are certainly many and recurrent problems about this—where should the limits of permissible individual liberty of action be set? what minority rights should be protected?—but the problems are not in principle insoluble if there is agreement on the general principle of the equal right of every individual to use and develop his capacities so far as this does not interfere with others using and developing theirs. It is with these problems that traditional liberal theory has been mainly concerned.

But the other two impediments present difficulties of quite a different kind, which have not been as much explored. Their removal or reduction requires a supply of the material means of life, and access to material resources on which and with which to work. What if the supply, and the resources, are inadequate to provide for everyone? This is the problem of scarcity. We may consider in turn (a) scarcity of the means of life and (b) scarcity of the means of labour.

(a) *Scarcity of the Means of Life*

The niggardliness of Nature has commonly been considered, not only by economists, as a fixed datum. Nature, it has been admitted, could indeed be made to yield more, by human ingenuity and labour, but never enough to meet all human wants, since wants were observed (or assumed) to increase with every increase in the means of meeting them. In that view, scarcity of the means of life (that is, of the means to a full life) is an invariable natural phenomenon, from which it would follow that our first impediment could not be removed or reduced.

On closer examination it can be seen that this is not so. Material scarcity is scarcity relative to some standard of material wants, and the standard assumed in the view that scarcity is a permanent natural phenomenon is not the same as the standard appropriate to a democratic theory.

In the former view, which is implicit in the classical individualism of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries and in classical political economy, the standard of wants from which scarcity is measured is the amount of material goods supposed to be actually desired at a given time by all the members of a given society at its then level of culture. The amount has to be *supposed* to be actually desired; it cannot be *shown* to be so, since the only indicator in a market society is the amount of desire of those who have the money to buy the goods. The classical theorists generally seem to have assumed that everybody else actually desired at least the comfortable material level the theorists themselves enjoyed, or perhaps the even higher level that they themselves might aspire to enjoy. On this assumption it was reasonable to conclude that actual wants were greatly in excess of goods available. And from their own experience and observation in a rapidly advancing commercial and industrial society the theorists could easily make the further assumption that material wants naturally tended to increase with every increase in the material productivity of the society, without limit.

I have argued in the preceding essays that this notion of man as infinite desirer or infinite consumer is itself a culturally determined concept which was needed to get capitalist enterprise into action, but is not needed, and has no warrant, once capitalism has become mature. But the point here is that this standard of supposed or projected actual wants is not the same as the standard of wants entailed in a liberal-democratic theory which justifies liberal-democratic society as maximizing men's ability to use and develop their essentially human capacities and which assumes that men are essentially not consumers but doers. In such a liberal-democratic theory, the standard of material wants from which scarcity is to be measured is the amount of material goods required to enable everybody to use and develop fully his human capacities (rational, moral, aesthetic, emotional, and productive in the

broadest sense). This bears no assignable relation to the amount needed to meet the supposed or projected actual wants of men culturally conditioned to think of themselves as infinite consumers.

We simply do not know what men's 'actual' wants are, even in the liberal-democratic society which is supposed to come nearest to expressing them. What we do know is that, in the liberal-democratic market society, neither the economic market nor the political market measures men's actual wants accurately or adequately. Demand, in the economic market, measures only the wants that have money to back them. The demand which is transmitted by the market-like processes of indirect democracy (in both the cabinet and presidential models) is always diluted and often negated by the operation of the party system and of the bureaucracy, not to mention the power of money in the public opinion industry. The increasing disenchantment with indirect democracy and the increasing desire for something called participatory democracy may be cited as evidence that the political market does not, and is increasingly seen not to, register actual wants. The same disenchantment and desire suggest also that the wants now catered for are no more 'actual' than those not catered for.

The standard of wants appropriate to a democratic theory, then, is different from the standard generally assumed in the liberal theory. But does it not also, like the liberal standard, tend to shift upwards without limit? It is true that the full development of human capacities, as envisioned in the liberal-democratic concept of man—at least in its most optimistic version—is infinitely great. No inherent limit is seen to the extent to which men's human capacities may be enlarged. But there is no reason to think that such indefinite enlargement requires an indefinite increase in the *material* prerequisites. On the contrary, the extent to which an advanced society makes individually owned material increases the main criterion of social good militates against its recognizing the importance of equal development of the essential human capacities.

The great increase in productivity brought about by the technological revolution of our time, and the further increases in prospect, do not in themselves end scarcity. No increase in productivity, however great, will end scarcity while people continue to see themselves as infinite consumers. A comparatively modest increase in productivity, or no increase at all in the present productive capacity of the economically most advanced nations, would end scarcity if people came to see themselves (as the justifying theory of liberal democracy must assume them to be) as doers, exponents, enjoyers of essentially human capacities. The economically least advanced nations will indeed need substantial increases in their productivity to overcome the absolute shortage of the material means of life, but they will not need to reach or approach the

productivity of the most advanced except in so far as they are caught up in the market societies' present consumer mentality.

The difficulty to be overcome within the advanced liberal democracies is not primarily material but ideological. For though our liberal-democratic justifying theory does contain (and does require) the assumption that man is essentially an enjoyer and exposer of his human capacities, it also still contains (but does not now require) the opposite assumption, inherited from classical liberal individualism, that man is essentially an infinite consumer. It is only on the latter assumption that scarcity is permanent. Yet now, since the emergence of modern technology, we should be able to see that scarcity, whatever it was for many millennia, is not an invariable natural phenomenon but a human construction. We do not yet sufficiently see this. We still think, like nineteenth-century liberal democrats, that the problem is to redistribute scarcity. It is true that scarcity still is very unfairly distributed, less so now within each advanced Western nation than Mill saw it to be a century ago,²⁵ but more so as between advanced and underdeveloped countries. But the most advanced problem now is not to redistribute scarcity but to see through it: to see that it is not an invariable natural phenomenon but a variable cultural one. Scarcity of the means of life, then, is a socially variable impediment.

(b) *Scarcity of the Means of Labour*

Scarcity of material resources (land, raw materials, implements) on which and with which men can exert their energies, is also a human construction, though of a different kind. This scarcity is not due to the amount of capital being fixed, nor to its being necessarily always short of what is required to enable everyone to use and develop his capacities, for neither of these is the case. The amount of accumulated capital in modern societies tends to increase continually. And one cannot say that the amount of resources must always be short of what is needed, unless one assumes that consumer demand for the products of the use of those resources is infinite, which assumption I have argued is untenable.

The fact that in the most advanced capitalist economies the existing capital resources are rarely fully employed is not strictly relevant, for this shows only that, as the system operates, the resources are generally greater than the amount the entrepreneurs think it profitable to use

²⁵ '... the produce of labour... apportioned as we now see it, almost in an inverse ratio to the labour—the largest portions to those who have never worked at all, the next largest to those whose work is almost nominal, and so in a descending scale, the remuneration dwindling as the work grows harder and more disagreeable, until the most fatiguing and exhausting bodily labour cannot count with certainty on being able to earn even the necessities of life...' (J. S. Mill: *Principles of Political Economy*, Book II, chap. I, sect. 3, *Collected Works*, Vol. II, ed. Robson (Toronto and London, 1965), p. 207).

fully, which amount depends on (among other things) their estimate of the effective demand for the product, and this as we have seen is not necessarily the same as what is needed for the use and development of everyone's capacities. Nor is it relevant that material resources may properly in one sense be said to be scarce as long as entrepreneurs will pay something for them. This is the kind of scarcity economists have in mind when they see economic decisions as choices between alternative uses of scarce means. But this also is scarcity in relation to uses which entrepreneurs expect will yield a profit, that is, in relation to demands that are maintained or created by the entrepreneurial society itself, with its image of man as infinite consumer. No doubt in any foreseeable socialist society also, decisions will still have to be made, however democratically or bureaucratically, about alternative uses of material resources, and so long as this is so the resources may be said to be scarce, in the economists' sense. But this is not to say that the resources are therefore less than enough to enable everyone to use and develop his human capacities.

There is indeed one resource which is absolutely limited in any country, namely, the extent of the land (and water) surface. And with present and probable future population densities it may be said that there is and always will be a scarcity of this, such that society somehow must make choices between various sorts of land utilization—for food production, for building, for recreation, and so on. This scarcity is not entirely a human construction though it is so to the extent that it is a result of uncontrolled land use for profit. But the shortage of this natural resource is not self-evidently such that the amount must always be less than what is needed to enable everyone to use and develop his capacities.

The scarcity of material resources which is fundamental in any democratic theory is that which is felt by those who have none, that is, by those who have none of their own and no free access to any other, on which and with which to work. This distribution of material resources is a human construction. And it is fundamental to any democratic theory because it diminishes some men's powers. The fact is that those who do not own, or have free access to, the resources which are their necessary means of labour, have to pay for the access with a transfer of part of their powers. And, as we shall see, their powers are diminished by more than the amount of the transfer.

Let us be clear what the transfer of powers comprises.²⁶ Most simply, what is transferred, from the non-owner to the owner of the means of labour (i.e. of the land and capital), is the non-owner's ability to labour, i.e. his ability to use his own capacities productively, during the time contracted for. The owner purchases that ability for a

²⁶ Cf. above, pp. 40-1.

certain time and puts it to work. The ability, the labour-power, is transferred. The actual work is *performed* by the non-owner. But in a very real sense the actual work is *owned* by the owner of the capital. He, having purchased the other's ability to labour, has the rights of ownership in the labour that is actually performed. He of course controls the performance; he determines how the energies purchased are to be applied. He also owns the product, including the value added to the materials by the work. And he owns that value added by the work *because* he owns the labour; that is to say, his moral and legal property right in the value added by the work is grounded in his having purchased a property in the labour. Locke got it neatly: 'the Turfs my Servant has cut... become my *Property*... The *labour* that was mine, removing them out of that common state they were in, hath *fixed* my *Property* in them.'²⁷ Because the servant's labour is *my* labour, the product is mine.

What is transferred, then, is both the ability to work and the ownership of the work itself; and, consequently, the value added by the work. The only *measure* of the net transfer of powers which is provided by the market is the excess of the value added by the work over the wage paid; these material factors are the only factors that the market can measure. The importance of this limitation will appear shortly.

The transfer of powers is a continuous transfer between non-owners and owners of the means of labour, which starts as soon as and lasts as long as there are separate classes of owners and non-owners; not a momentary transfer occurring at the time of that separation. Once the separation has taken place, the non-owners of capital must transfer their labour-power repeatedly (week by week or month by month or whatever the contractual period is), so that the transfer is continuous. In other words, the continuous transfer of powers is a result of, but is not to be confused with, the cumulative specific legal transfers of ownership or rights in land and capital that had been made at assignable times in the past, by whatever mixture of conquest, force, fraud, and fair market dealing.

The amount of the continuous transfer of a man's power, the amount he has to pay for access to the means of labour, I have previously described as the amount by which his power is diminished. That, it must now be said, is an understatement of the diminution. To show the extent of the understatement it will be convenient to distinguish between *productive* and *extra-productive* power. A man's productive power (or labour-power, as I have used that term) is his ability use his

²⁷ *Second Treatise of Government*, sect. 28. Locke, holding that almost the whole value of any commodity was created by labour, maintained that the labour entitled its owner to the whole value of the commodity. For Marx's view, see Essay VII, penultimate paragraph.

energies and capacities in the production of material goods. His extra-productive power is his ability to use his energies and capacities for all other purposes, that is, his ability to engage in activities which are simply a direct source of enjoyment and not a means of material production.

The amount of the continuous transfer of power can now be seen to fall short of the whole diminution of a man's power in two respects: it leaves out part of the diminution of his productive power, and it leaves out the whole of any related diminution of his extra-productive power. Let us look at these in turn.

First, the transfer leaves out of account part of the amount by which a man's productive power is diminished by virtue of his lack of access to the means of labour. For the amount of power transferred can be only the amount that is given up by the seller *and received* by the buyer. The amount received by the buyer can only be measured in material terms: it is the amount of exchange-value (whether in money terms or real terms) that can be added by the work to the materials on which it is applied, and be realized in the value of the product. Since that is the only amount that is both given and received, it is the whole amount of the transfer. But that leaves out of account the value that cannot be *transferred* but is nevertheless *lost* by the man who, lacking access, has to sell his labour-power, namely, the value of the satisfaction he could have got from using it himself if he had been able to use it himself. The possibility of this satisfaction is denied to the man who has to sell his labour-power (at least to the extent that the way he is required to use his capacities differs from the way he might have chosen to do, which for most sellers of labour-power is something like the whole extent). But the possibility of this satisfaction is an integral part of a man's power as a democratic theory must define it, that is, of his ability to use his capacities and exert his energies humanly, in accordance with his own conscious design. The seller loses this satisfaction-value, but it is not transferred to the buyer.

In other words, although the seller indeed transfers the whole of his labour-power, the whole control of his productive capacities, for the contracted time, he can transfer only part of the value it would have had if he had been able to keep it; the rest of that value is simply lost, and is lost by virtue of the fact that he has to sell. If he were able to keep his labour-power and use it himself, its value would be the satisfaction value *plus* the value which its application added to the materials on which it was applied. Only the latter value can be transferred; that is precisely the value that is transferred from seller to buyer when labour-power is sold; and that is the amount that the market measures. Thus the amount transferred is only part of the amount lost by the seller: the transfer does not measure the whole diminution of his productive power.

The second respect in which it is an understatement to treat the payment for access to the means of labour as measuring the whole amount by which a man's power is diminished by lack of access, is that the payment for access to the means of labour measures only (some of) the resulting diminution of a man's *productive* power. It leaves out of account the possible effect on his *extra-productive* power; that is, his ability to engage in all sorts of activities beyond those devoted to the production of goods for consumption, to engage in activities which are simply a direct satisfaction to him as a doer, as an exerter of (and enjoyer of the exertion of) his human capacities, and not a means to other (consumer) satisfactions. Yet a man's extra-productive power is, by the democratic concept of man's essence, at least as important as his productive power. Even when we have taken into account the absolute *loss* of human value brought about by the control of a man's own productive capacities being lost to him, as well as the market-measured amount of the current *transfer* of the material value of his productive power, and the two together are treated as the measure of the deficiency in a man's productive power, this still is no measure of the deficiency in a man's whole power, his whole ability to use and develop his capacities.

For the presumption is that the way one's capacities are used in the process of production will have some effect on one's ability to use and develop one's capacities outside the process of production. A man whose productive labour is out of his own control, whose work is in that sense mindless, may be expected to be somewhat mindless in the rest of his activities. He cannot even be said to retain automatically the control of whatever energies he has left over from his working time, if his control centre, so to speak, is impaired by the use that it made of him during his working time. Any such diminution of a man's control over his extra-productive activities is clearly a diminution of his power over and above the amount of the transfer.

Before concluding the argument on impediments and their measurement we should consider the possibility that a change in men's productive powers might be offset by an accompanying change in their extra-productive powers. It might be argued (and this argument is implicit in some liberal theories²⁸ which seek to reconcile capitalist market society with democratic values) that when men's extra-productive powers are brought into account there may be a gain in their whole power in spite of the diminution of their productive power.

Suppose—and this is historically a realistic supposition—that the separation of labour-power and capital has the effect of increasing the

²⁸ e.g. Chapman's; discussed in Essay IV.

level of productivity, so that less exertion of human energy is needed to provide an acceptable level of material means of life, thus leaving more energy for the extra-productive use and development of capacities. The men whose productive power had been diminished by their loss of access to capital might then be said to have had their extra-productive power increased; and it could be supposed to have been increased by more than the amount of their loss of their productive power, thus leaving a net increase in their power.

This kind of calculation, typically utilitarian, overlooks the unreality of dividing a single human being's activities into two separate parts as if they had no effect on each other. Such a calculation not only separates analytically, productive and extra-productive uses of capacities, but treats them as independent variables. It sets up two profit-and-loss accounts, one for each of the two departments into which the operations of the maximizing individual (now divided) are separated, and adds them together to get a net profit or loss. This does some violence to the human individual. But we cannot on those grounds dismiss any such calculation out of hand. For the market society in fact does just this violence to the individual: he is compelled to see himself as thus divided, and to make that kind of calculation.

Let us grant, then, that changes in the amounts of men's productive and extra-productive powers may be balanced. Let us grant also the historical accuracy of the supposition that capitalism, which requires the separation of labour-power and capital, and hence a continuous transfer of powers, has, by inducing technological progress, on the whole released some human energies for other than productive uses (a proposition which Mill, for one, would not grant).²⁹ It still does not follow that there could be, in spite of the transfer of powers, a net increase in men's powers in the sense required by the liberal-democratic theory. For as we have seen, the democratic concept of man's essence requires that men's powers be measured by their deficiency from a supposed present maximum, not by their increase over some previous level. Historical comparisons are beside the point.

This is not a trick of definition. It is simply another way of saying that democratic theory requires that gains in productivity and leisure be treated as gains made by, and to be enjoyed by, the whole society, and that therefore the reckoning of men's ability to use and develop their capacities must be made, at any time, against the standard of what that society as a whole can at that time afford to do by way of enabling all its members to use and develop their capacities.

²⁹ 'Hitherto it is questionable if all the mechanical inventions yet made have lightened the day's toil of any human being' (J. S. Mill: *Principles of Political Economy*, Book IV, chap. 6, sect. 2 (*Collected Works*, Vol. III, ed. Robson, p. 756)).

To demonstrate that men's present powers are greater than they would otherwise be because of the present separation of labour-power from capital, and in spite of the consequent continuous transfer of productive powers, one would have at least to show that the system of production based on that separation is more productive (and more productive of the kinds of goods needed to enable people to use and develop their extra-productive capacities) than any other presently feasible system. Attempts are made from time to time to show this, but in any sober view of the comparative growth rates of capitalist and socialist economies, and of the kinds of goods that are produced (and the kinds of consumer demands that are contrived) by capitalist economies, such attempts are unconvincing.

Moreover, one would have to show that the deficiency in most men's power because of their lack of control over their own productive labour (which lack is inherent in capitalist organization) does not carry over into lack of a controlling mind or will—the mindlessness I referred to above—in their extra-productive pursuits, and so to a cumulative deficiency in their power as a whole. The overall deficiency, or changes in it, cannot simply be measured by looking at changes in the length (or length and intensity) of the working day (or week). There is no simple linear relation between them, although there may be a discontinuous relation between them. A reduction of the working week from, say, sixty to forty hours may not result in any perceptible reduction of the overall deficiency. A reduction from forty to, say, ten hours a week, even though the ten hours remained mindless, might release so much time and energy as to offset, or more than offset, the debilitating effects of the mindless work. But whether it did so or not would depend on other factors, especially whether or not men had ceased to conform to the image of themselves as essentially consumers.

No simple case can be made, then, for there being an overall increase in men's powers as a result of the increase in productivity and leisure accompanying the separation of the means of labour from labour. The presumption remains that the human powers of the non-owners are diminished by their lack of conscious control over their productive and other activities.

We may notice finally an apparent difficulty about the measurability of impediments and hence of a man's power. I have argued that liberal-democratic theory must treat a man's power, in the developmental sense, as a quantity, and must measure it in terms of external impediments to the exercise of his human capacities, that is, impediments to the maximum attainable in principle at any given level of social productivity and knowledge. One impediment, namely, lack of access to the means of labour, has been shown to diminish a man's power in three respects. First, it sets up a continuous net transfer of the material

value of the productive power of the non-owner to the owner of the means of labour, the amount of which transfer, in each of the repeated transactions, is the excess of the value added by the work over the wage paid. Second, it diminishes each non-owner's productive power beyond that market-measured amount, by denying him the essentially human satisfaction of controlling the use of his own productive capacities: this value is lost, not transferred. Third, it diminishes his control over his extra-productive life. Of these three deficiencies in a man's power, the first is numerically measurable and is in fact measured by the market. The other two are not so measurable.

It may seem, then, that in recognizing the last two deficiencies we have made it impossible to measure the whole deficiency. But this is not so. For the last two are measurable in the only sense required by a democratic theory. They can be seen to be greater or less in different individuals, and greater or less for classes of individuals in different models of society. Since those deficiencies are the result of lack of access to the means of labour they can in principle be increased or decreased for any class of individuals by the society altering the terms on which access is to be had. And increase or decrease is the only degree of quantification needed by a democratic theory, whose claim is to increase (or provide the maximum) ability to use and develop human capacities.

We are left, however, with the question whether increases and decreases in the powers of all the individual members of a society can be added together to reach an aggregate which can be shown to be greater or less under one set of arrangements than under another. If we cannot do this we cannot speak of the maximization of powers within a whole society.

5. *The Maximization of Aggregate Powers*

We may begin by noticing that the well-known logical difficulty of maximizing aggregate *utilities*³⁰ does not apply to maximizing *powers*, in the developmental sense of powers. The difficulty about maximizing utilities is that it involves estimating whether changes in the distribution of different goods between persons would add more satisfaction for some persons than it would subtract from them and from others. One would have to be able to add and subtract changes in the amount of satisfactions or utilities enjoyed by different persons. One would therefore have to have a single measuring scale on which to compare utilities between persons. But this is impossible in principle, since the measure of satisfactions is inherently subjective: each person's judgement of his

³⁰ Above, p. 7.

own satisfaction is unique, and is incommensurable with others' judgement of theirs.

This difficulty does not apply to the maximization of powers. For a man's power, defined as the quantity of his ability to use and develop his human capacities, is measured by the quantity of external impediments to that ability, which is not a subjective quantity. It is indeed true that each person's judgement of the direct satisfaction he gets or would get from different exercises of his own capacities is a subjective judgement, and is incommensurable with others' judgement about theirs, just as incommensurable as are different persons' judgements about any utilities. But what has to be measured here is not the satisfaction they get from any exercise of their capacities but their *ability* to exercise them. And that depends on the quantity of external impediments, which quantity is objectively though not always numerically measurable. The basic logical difficulty of inter-personal comparison of satisfactions is thus irrelevant to the maximization of powers.

Nevertheless, there may still remain a difficulty about the conception of maximizing powers: What if the increase of some men's powers (ability to use and develop their essentially human capacities) is possible only by a reduction of others'? This need not generally be the case with powers in the developmental sense, though it is generally so for powers in the extractive sense. Some general rules which increase some men's developmental powers also increase, or at least do not decrease, everyone else's. This is most evident in relation to our third category of impediments, the direct invasion of one man by others. An improvement in the laws, or the enforcement of the laws, against the direct invasion of one man by another, affects everyone in the same direction. What increases my protection against you increases your protection against me. No man's power to use his human capacities is diminished, but every man's power is increased, by laws which prevent the direct invasion of one man by another.

But a change in the rules governing access to the means of labour or in the rules governing the distribution of the means of life, that is, a general change in the first or second category of impediments, might alter in opposite directions the ability of different individuals to use and develop their human capacities.

The most important case to consider is a change in the terms of access to capital in the direction of more nearly equal access. That would reduce the net transfer of powers, and increase the ability of those who had had inferior access. It would reduce the controlling and extractive power of those who had had superior access. It would also reduce their developmental power, their ability to use and develop their essentially human capacities, if the full exercise of those capacities could be shown to require the level of control of resources, or the level

of income and leisure, which they had had by virtue of their extractive power. But this cannot generally be shown, for the income and leisure resulting from extractive power are not automatically conducive to the development of essentially human capacities. The presumption, I think, is to the contrary. I should argue that they can be so conducive only in a special case, or in what was once but is no longer the general case. A century or two ago, and for centuries before that, it could honestly be held that the cultivated man was the extractive man: that without a class which lived by its extractive power there could be no development of human excellence. Even that proposition was sometimes denied in the earlier centuries, notably by the spokesman of the yeomanry and small independent enterprisers in seventeenth-century England.³¹ But generally, until the nineteenth century, it could reasonably be maintained that, with the apparently inexorable material scarcity, there could be no significant development of human capacities except by members of an extractive class. Spokesmen of that class might be quite conscious, as Adam Smith and Burke, Diderot and Bentham were, that the developmental power they valued was based on extractive power, but, in the circumstances of confined economic productivity they saw about them, they judged that this was inevitably the price of any human progress.

In the twentieth century, however, which even the pessimistic now see as an era of potential plenty, this is no longer the case. The justification of extractive power by developmental power no longer holds. The only case where it might still be argued that income and leisure resulting from extractive power can be conducive to the extractor's developmental power is when he lacks any consciousness that his income and leisure are being extracted from others. That was the position of most of the extractors in the nineteenth century, and they were supported in that position by the nineteenth-century economists, who could argue that capitalist enterprise was so productive that everyone was better off, and who could quite lose sight of the transfer of powers it involved. It is still the position of some twentieth-century liberals, who thus offer moral support to the continuance of at least a modified extractive power. Their inability to see the transfer of powers or the extractive power may be traced to their still thinking of men as infinite consumers, whose essential human wants are best served by a system highly productive of consumer goods, rather than as essentially exerts and developers of their uniquely human capacities. I have argued that this position is increasingly untenable in the twentieth century. Those who find it untenable will also think that the extractors' lack of consciousness of the extractive base of their own income and leisure is now

³¹ Notably the Levellers, cf. *Political Theory of Possessive Individualism*, chap. III.

scarcely consistent with a fully human use of their capacities: in other words, that their power can scarcely be called developmental power. At least, on the assumption which I have argued is required in any fully democratic theory, namely, that essentially human capacities are only those which can be exercised without denying or impeding other men's exercise of theirs, activities which were seen to be made possible only by the exercise of extractive power could not be called an exercise of essentially human capacities.

Nevertheless, the extractors themselves, or at least their liberal supporters, still regard their power as developmental power, as ability to use and develop their human capacities. Let us therefore pursue the question on that assumption. Let us set aside any dehumanizing or counter-humanizing effect of the extractive basis of a man's power and treat his whole power as developmental power. We are back then at the position that a change in a society's arrangements about access to the means of labour in the direction of more nearly equal access, which would reduce the extractive power of those who had had superior access, would reduce their developmental power. Moreover, having set aside any counter-humanizing effects of extractive power, we should have to assume that on the whole those who had had a superior position had enlarged their own human capacities. And it could be presumed that the full exercise of those enlarged capacities would require the continuance of the level of income and leisure they had had by virtue of their extractive power. Thus a reduction of their extractive power would be a reduction of their higher-than-average developmental power. Clearly, then, a change to more nearly equal access to the means of labour, which would increase the developmental powers of those who had had inferior access, would decrease the developmental powers of those who had had superior access, and the decrease would be in enlarged powers. This is a genuine difficulty for a democratic theory which sets as its goal the maximization of powers of the members of a society as a whole, at least if the necessary step of moving towards equal access to the means of labour is contemplated before there is general agreement that developmental power is inconsistent with extractive power.

The difficulty amounts to this: we do have to make inter-personal comparisons, to add and subtract quantitative changes in different persons' powers. It is a real difficulty, but not an insuperable one. We have already seen that inter-personal comparison of powers, unlike inter-personal comparison of utilities, is not impossible in principle. How great is the difficulty of weighing some men's decrease against some men's increase of powers?

In the first place we should notice that the difficulty arises at all only in the *transition* from an unequal to a more nearly equal society (or

indeed from an unequal to an even more unequal society). It would not arise in a society which had already established equal access to the means of life and the means of labour. For the difficulty consists in having to weigh against each other some men's increase and some men's decrease caused by a given change in the institutions, and the only change that can bring about simultaneous decreases and increases is a change in the level of extractive power, that is, in the permitted extent to which some have power over others for the former's benefit. But extractive power is a function of unequal access to the means of labour and of life: extractive power can only be maintained (short of permanent military occupation) by maintaining unequal access. In a society which has achieved equal access, there is no extractive power. In such a society, men's developmental powers might still be increased, but this increase would be achieved by increased command over external Nature, not (by the hypothesis of equal access) by increased command over others. An increase in the ability of any persons to use and develop their capacities would not be accompanied by a decrease for any others. The problem of weighing decreases against increases would not be present.

When this is understood, it can be seen that there is no inconsistency between (i) our recognition that in certain circumstances a change which increases some men's ability to exercise their human capacities may decrease others', and (ii) the assertion, made earlier,³² that it is a necessary postulate of a fully democratic theory that the exercise of his essentially human capacities by any member of a society does not hinder any other members exercising theirs. The two positions are consistent in that the possible opposition of the exercise of capacities recognized in (i) is to be found only in the transition to a fully democratic society, not in a fully democratic society; whereas (ii), although asserted perfectly generally, could be realized only in a fully democratic society (in which extractive powers, which by the democratic concept are not required for the exercise of essentially human capacities, are reduced to zero).

The postulate of the non-opposition of the use of essentially human capacities appears, in the light of this analysis, to be less presumptuous and more tenable than it may have seemed when first stated. For it comes down to the postulate that a fully democratic society cannot permit the operation of any extractive power, and that a society without any extractive power is possible. The serious difficulty about a democratic society is not how to run it but how to reach it.

We are left, then, with the difficulty of weighing increases against decreases of developmental powers in any move from a society of unequal access to the means of life and labour to a society of equal

³² Above, p. 55.

access. The difficulty, we saw, was that the beneficiaries of extractive power in an unequal society may be assumed to have developed their human capacities further than the non-beneficiaries could have done, so that any reduction of their extractive power and hence of their command of resources and leisure would reduce their developmental power, their ability to use and develop their already expanded capacities fully. The question is whether such a loss would be as great as the others' gain.

The question can be answered, and is answered in the negative, on two grounds. First, in the society of unequal access, as we have seen, those who lacked access had their powers diminished by *more* than the amount of the net transfer, i.e. by more than the amount extracted. They were continuously losing more of their powers than those who had access were gaining. There was an absolute loss of human powers. In the postulated move to a society of equal access this loss would disappear. Those who had lacked access would gain not only the amount of power which had been extracted and transferred from them (which is all that those who had had superior access would now lose) but would gain, in addition to that, the human power which had been absolutely lost. Thus the aggregate gain would be greater than the aggregate loss. Secondly, we must notice that the gains and losses are in abilities to use and develop human capacities fully. By hypothesis, the beneficiaries of extractive power in the unequal society have developed their capacities further than have the non-beneficiaries. Now even if we assume that there are differences in different men's maximum capacities (an assumption which some liberals would not make),³³ we cannot know at the given time what those differences are. But the presumption must surely be that the capacities of those who had had inferior access to the means of life and labour would be more underdeveloped, would have more deficiency to make up, than the capacities of those who had had superior access. A move to more nearly equal access, which is a move to more nearly equal ability to use and develop capacities, will therefore be expected to bring more gain than loss in the aggregate ability to develop human capacities. In short, to equalize access, which is to equalize developmental powers, is to maximize developmental powers.

A final difficulty may be noticed about the concept of maximization of powers. All these calculations of gains and losses, it may be objected, are much too mechanical. They purport to deal with ability to use and develop essentially human capacities, but they do so only in terms of the

³³ Cf. Adam Smith: 'The difference of natural talents in different men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of... The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education' (*Wealth of Nations*, Bk. I, chap. 2, penult. para.).

external impediments to that ability. What, it may be asked, of internalized impediments? What of the phenomenon of men hugging their chains? And what of those who have become slaves of their own possessions? No such internalized impediments, it is true, are directly taken into the calculus of maximization as set out here. And clearly, in any operational view, they are of great importance, as thinkers from Rousseau to Marcuse have pointed out.

To this objection the first reply must be that the impediments were external before they were internalized, that they could only be internalized because they already existed as external impediments. The external impediments, palpable, rooted in class, remain basic and deserve the first attention. This is not of course a sufficient reply to the objection. For it does not follow that the internalized impediments will disintegrate in the measure that the external impediments are shown to be no longer required by or consistent with civilized society. They must not only be *shown* to be no longer required, they must be *seen* to be no longer required, and seen so by the very people in whom they have been internalized, before any action sufficient to remove or reduce the external impediments can be expected.

We appear to be in a vicious circle: neither kind of impediment can be diminished without a prior diminution of the other. It may be so. It may be that the impediments have been so internalized, backed by all the resources of those who think it their interest to reduce men to infinite consumers, that there is no way out, or no way short of an indefinite destruction of some of the freedoms essential to a fully human society. But this is not necessarily so.

It may also be that the process of reciprocal reinforcement of external and internal impediments, which has been going on in one way or another since the beginning of modern market society, can work reciprocally in reverse. A partial breakdown of the political order (national or international) of the market society, or a partial breakthrough of consciousness, might either of them put the process in reverse, setting off the other, provided that the other was ready to respond. Partial breakdowns of the political order have become frequent in market societies, and can be expected to continue so. Pressures against the image of a man as consumer, and against the cult of economic growth at whatever cost to the environment and the quality of life, are also building up, so that a sufficient partial breakthrough of consciousness is not out of the question. In these circumstances it seems well worthwhile to press rational analysis of the external impediments, which are analytically more manageable than internalized impediments, in the hope of contributing to the breakthrough of consciousness, and so to a cumulative reciprocal reduction of both kinds of impediment, and a cumulative realization of democracy.

ESSAY IV

Revisionist Liberalism

THE preceding essays are I hope sufficient to demonstrate (i) that the traditional justificatory theory of liberal-democracy is in some disrepair; (ii) that this is due largely to its attempt to carry into the period of mature capitalist society a combination of market postulates and egalitarian humanist principles which were not strictly tenable together even when first compounded a century or more ago, and which are now more evidently incompatible; and (iii) that a non-market democratic theory which retains the ethically valuable liberal principles is, although not without difficulties, conceivable.

I should put it, on the basis of Essay III, that the difficulties of any non-market theory of democracy which can still significantly be called liberal, are demanding but not insuperable: this will be argued further in Essay VI in the context of the political theory of property. But it will be appropriate now to consider some current attempts to reformulate liberal-democratic theory while retaining market principles. I shall suggest that the difficulties of these attempts *are* insuperable.

There is a considerable range of reformulations of liberal-democratic theory which might be discussed under the head of revisionist liberal theory. It could properly include the current empiricist theories of democracy, for although superficially they are of a different order from the justificatory liberal theories they seek to replace, claiming (as they do) to be explanatory only, they are ineffect justificatory as well. They offer, as realism, a savage revision, almost obliteration, of the democratic content of traditional liberal-democratic theory, with a view to reformulating its liberal market content: it is revisionist liberalism at its most extreme,¹ though a travesty of what used to be thought of as democracy.

However, I shall not attempt to review here either the empirical theory or the current counter-attack on it, which is being ably conducted by a number of penetrating critics.² My main concern will be with some of the principles of leading contemporary normative theorists who are reformulating something like the traditional liberal-

¹ Except for Milton Friedman's liberalism, discussed in Essay VII.

² Mostly in journal articles, many of them conveniently brought together in three recent collections: Charles A. McCoy and John Playford (ed.): *Apolitical Politics, a Critique of Behaviouralism* (New York, 1967); William E. Connolly (ed.): *The Bias of Pluralism* (New York, 1969); Henry S. Kariel (ed.): *Frontiers of Democratic Theory* (New York, 1970).