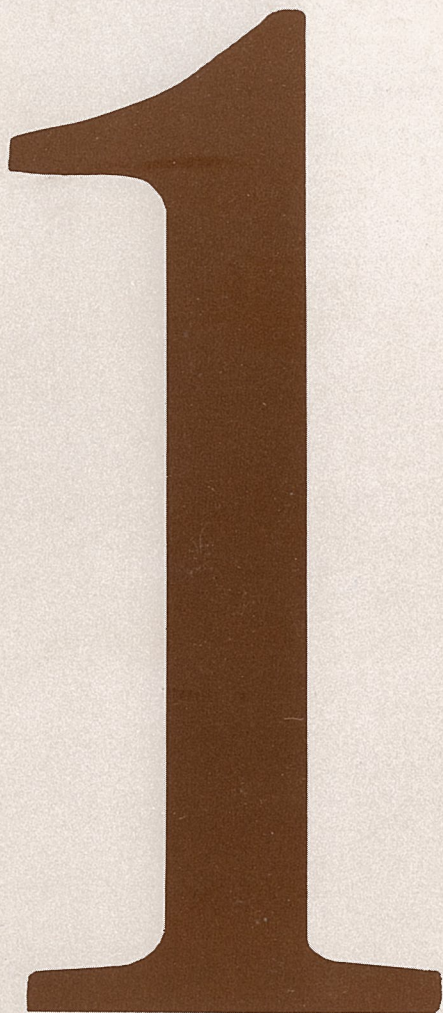


Liberty, Equality
and Unhappiness

Lauchlan Chipman



The Centre for Independent Studies

Occasional Papers

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LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND UNHAPPINESS

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The Author

LAUHLAN CHIPMAN was born in 1940 and educated at Essendon High School, The University of Melbourne and at Oxford, studying law and philosophy. He attained his M.A., LL.B. (Melb.) and B. Phil., D. Phil. (Oxon), degrees.

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Professor Chipman currently is also a sponsor of the Australian Council for Educational Standards.

Preface

This is the first of a series of *Occasional Papers* to be published by the Centre for Independent Studies with the aim of bringing to a wider readership, essays and addresses judged to be of interest to audiences other than those to which they were originally addressed.

Occasional Paper 1 reproduces the Eddy Memorial Lecture sponsored by the Illawarra Division of the Workers' Educational Association delivered at the University of Wollongong by Professor Lauchlan Chipman on October 7th, 1977.

In considering the content of human happiness — truly a personal and individual quality — Professor Chipman feels that a major ingredient enabling happiness to be achieved, is liberty. Along with liberty, equality is also mentioned as a further ingredient in the achievement of human happiness, and yet, liberty, equality and happiness are terms which are used by political philosophers of all persuasions when describing the kind of society that they propose.

Characteristically, Professor Chipman takes a liberal view of society, one in which liberty is enhanced by a lack of State interference, equality is found within the rule of law where no person or group can use legislation to gain some advantage or impose some burden on other members of society and where happiness is a condition entirely unpredictable from individual to individual. He suggests then, that in a society where there *is* liberty and equality, the opportunity for human happiness to be achieved, is greater.

There are trends however, in our modern society which, if fully developed will not only erode liberty and obstruct equality, but have consequent adverse effects on human happiness. These trends are collectivist and paternalistic and the pressures exerted in order to realise these trends are increasingly being legitimised by our established institutions, particularly the government. The strengthening of the State is becoming all the more apparent, and the use of its mechanism by groups desirous of advancing the cause of their collective interest, batters away at the liberal society, the rule of law and the basic freedoms previously guaranteed to individuals.

Professor Chipman uses his experiences in the field of education to amply illustrate the problems that he feels now face those who believe in individual liberty in contrast with those who seek solutions to social problems by resorting to collectivist measures and who he feels historically have adopted totalitarian methods rather than admit their error.

Whilst the Centre cannot endorse the conclusions of its authors, it strongly recommends Professor Chipman's paper as a valuable contribution to the discussion of social issues.

July 1978

Gregory Lindsay.

LIBERTY, EQUALITY AND UNHAPPINESS

By Lauchlan Chipman

Human happiness in the broad Aristotelian sense of *eudaimonia* — a generalized contentment and confidently assured feeling of well-being — is often cited as the end or proper goal of political society. For Plato it is the condition to be enjoyed by the just man in the ideally just state. For Jeremy Bentham its probable increase or decrease in quantity is the moral gauge with which the desirability or undesirability of legislative change is to be measured. For many anarchists its attainment is the ultimate reason why all forms of the corporate state must be dismantled. For totalitarians it is a condition which is unattainable except by the positive and sustained intervention of the state.

Liberty and equality are often mentioned in the same breath as happiness. This is hardly surprising, for all of us can cite examples of illiberalism and inequality which have been casually connected with particular absences of happiness. The illegal illiberalism of the Soviet Union, which has continually violated its own constitutional guarantees of freedom of speech and religious worship, and the legislatively enforced racial inequalities of South Africa, are well known and relatively uncontentious examples of unhappiness sustained by wilful denials of liberty and equality.

It is tempting to think that if we could construct and preserve a free and equal political society human happiness would be, if not guaranteed, at least brought closer to steady realization. It would not be guaranteed, of course, if for none other than the obvious reason that the political form a society takes cannot automatically ensure that it has ready access to those resources necessary for its members' survival, not to mention a modest enjoyment of life. Nonetheless the temptation is one to which I think we may casually yield if, but only if, the following three interpretations are understood.

(1) By a **liberal** society is meant one in which there is minimal, in a sense to be explained, state regulation, state direction, state control, state monopoly, or state protection and disbursement of monopolies.

(2) By **equality** is meant the absence of state legislation imposing burdens or benefits on some only of the governed in virtue of their membership of classes (e.g. classes based on colour, sex, wealth, health, age, religion) formed "non-violationally"; i.e. where membership of such a class is not a consequence of an act of violence or coercion, theft, deception or fraud against another of the governed.

(3) By **human happiness** is not meant a happiness of a sort embodied (whether they know it or not) in the 'real' or 'true' aspirations of all human beings.

In other words, if by happiness is understood something that can, and does, vary substantially and unpredictably from individual to individual, by equality is understood something which means the absence of quite specific sorts of legislative discrimination, and by liberty is meant a condition in which state activity is limited to frustrating interferences by some of the governed with the liberties of others of the governed — i.e. which is minimized to frustrating the use of violence and coercion, theft, fraud, and deception — then it is probably true that a society in which there is liberty and equality is more likely to be one in which human happiness is achieved. Why this is so we shall see below.

The interpretations of liberty as legislative non-interference, equality as legislative non-discrimination, and happiness as neither constant nor uniform but a variable condition, differing in content and pursued differently from individual to individual, are all interpretations which fit within the individualistic picture of society: a vision of society according to which the state exists only to provide for the protection of its individual members against externally or internally initiated violations of the sorts listed above. The fundamental social units of such a society are what I shall call bonded individuals; individuals networked to one another in over-lapping ways through voluntarily acquired bonds (marriage contracts, employment contracts, purchase contracts, service contracts, and so on) together with such consequential bonds as arise foreseeably (e.g. obligations to children, and obligations to creditors) from conduct voluntarily entered into.

It is common, and I think broadly correct, to contrast the individualistic picture of society with the collectivistic picture. For the collectivist some at least of the fundamental social units are not individuals, even in my enhanced sense of bonded individuals, but what I shall call bands of individuals. Trade unions, races, social classes, economic classes, age cohorts, ethnic groups,

and sexes, for example, may be construed as even more basic than (bonded) individuals by the collectivist, in one or more of the following three senses.

First, if those who claim to speak for the collection or band believe that a member's commitment to what the spokesmen see as the band's interest need not result from voluntary association, then that band is construed as a basic unit. Thus many trade unions believe, and act on the belief, that they may legitimately frustrate the attempts of non-unionists to voluntarily enter into certain, or even any, contracts of employment. We are also familiar with the ways in which many of those who claim to speak for particular races or ethnic groups, age groups, social and economic groups, or sexes, claim a mandate for their views by appealing to e.g. the quantitative size of the relevant band or even their own membership of it, as if their genetic, ethnic, age, social, economic, or sexual similarity with the rest of the band is itself evidence of special knowledge of the peculiar circumstances of the band, which it is not, or, more significantly, confers an implied agency to act in the name of the band, which it does not. Thus one form of collectivism lies in the conviction that a band may be a basic unit of society, in the sense that its interests are not a function of, and may therefore be determined independently of, the declared or soundly inferred wants of each of its individual members, as revealed through their individual voluntary acts.

A second and stronger sense in which a band may be constructed as basic, in accordance with the collectivist picture, is if it is held that what its spokesmen take to be the band's interests, or certain of them, may legitimately forcibly displace the voluntary execution of non-violational acts by individual members of the group. Thus when women militants break up voluntarily entered beauty contests, or trade unionists destroy the work done by 'scab' labour, or a professional association disbars someone from practising law or medicine for consistently 'undercharging' according to its approved scale of fees, the band on behalf of which they act is construed as relatively more basic, in this second sense, than the individuals which constitute it.

The third and ultimate sense in which a collectivist picture may assign a band a basic position is if whole areas of government are *de facto* possible only with the consent of the spokesmen of the band. According to some English commentators this situation has already been reached in the United Kingdom, where implementation of the Budget for 1977-78 — the ways and means of government — was effectively contingent upon the response of the trade union movement. There is evidence that the Australian trade union movement will acquire such a role for itself, unless the Australian government can quickly demonstrate that the

implementation of its policy on the export of uranium is not contingent upon the trade union movement's consent.

Those who describe the actual 'achievements' of the trade union movement in the United Kingdom, and their possible equivalents in Australia, as 'threats to democracy' are commonly sneeringly rejected as over-reacting alarmists; an emotional dismissal which overlooks the incontrovertible fact that insofar as the conduct and execution of the lawful business of government is contingent upon the will of some external body, then to that extent sovereignty resides with that external body. To the extent that the other body is not democratically elected from those who are subject to its decisions, they are governed non-democratically.

It is only when a band becomes basic in this third sense that collectivism results in a displacement of sovereignty. Whether this really has happened in Australia already, or even in the United Kingdom, is decidable only after a detailed analysis of particular events, into which I do not propose to enter. As a philosopher who is increasingly persuaded that liberal individualism is that social philosophy which is most consistent with the humility which should flow from awareness of human fallibility, the enterprise which should flow from awareness of the power of thought, and the tolerance of variation which should flow from recognition of the inevitability of uncertainty, I cannot but abhor what I fear is the current vogue for collectivism; a vogue which shows few signs of passing despite repeated exposures of the absurdities commonly used to justify its various forms.

I propose to argue that both liberty and equality are, at this very moment, seriously at risk in this society; and that it is collectivist pressures and more importantly their covert (but increasingly overt) recognition as legitimate by our established institutions, including governments, which are eroding liberty and eroding equality.

When movements which are logically, historically, or morally indefensible capture the spirits of people who, independently, appear to be quite reasonable, one should look for a casual explanation of their success in the surrounding socio-cultural circumstances. Among the movements whose sad success we currently suffer are those which have resulted in acceptance of the closed shop in an increasing number of industries, most frighteningly in the once proud British newspaper industry where contributors and editorial policy will almost certainly soon be subject to the veto of employee unions. Others have included those resulting in so-called anti-discrimination legislation, insofar as such legislation has gone beyond the commendable purpose of removing statutory or common law impositions or privileges which applied selectively to non-violational groups.

Collectivist pressures have been particularly effective in education at all levels, and are not unrelated to its decline at every level. In nearly every state in Australia changes in the assessment procedures for school pupils in relation to the award of increasingly meaningless certificates have been as much responses to collectivist pressures, increasingly industrial in form, as to a clear headed critical reassessment of the purposes such certificates are supposed to serve. Education boards and even ministers speak of "reaching compromises" on syllabus content and assessment processes; the language of the political deal thus accompanies a resolution on educational substance and measurement.

The result of concessions to these collectivist pressures in education is an increase in educational inequality. To the extent that individual schools are given increased responsibility for their own syllabus selection and their own assessment of it, to that extent the meaning of a person's award and the person's capacity to obtain employment will depend upon the quality of the school attended. In determining whether to provide someone with employment the employer will need to ask what school was attended, and that will then very properly form the basis of the employer's decision to hire or not to hire. In other words what school you went to will become a major factor in determining whether or not you are employed; the very evil of social inequality which common assessment on the basis of a common performance in relation to a common syllabus was designed to remove.

I referred to a decline in education, but here I do not mean the decline in literacy and numeracy which I believe to be real, although difficult to measure; but to a decline in the quality of what is offered in education, which I suspect may be related. It is now possible in most states to obtain a Higher School Certificate or the equivalent, and even a Bachelor of Arts degree, without either mastering a foreign language or a branch of mathematics. The number of schools offering classical languages is negligible. This decline puts the product of such a system at a cultural disadvantage — another induced inequality — to which it is no satisfactory remedy to teach him to call those who value the skills he does not possess, elitists.

At this very moment there are in every campus in New South Wales, posters demanding an end to 'grading' and 'streaming' in schools. The posters show a flock of sheep and are captioned 'People are not sheep — end grading and streaming in schools'. In the small print one reads that the poster is prepared by the Trainee Teacher section of the Australian Union of Students.

The end to grading is demanded as a consequence of the undemonstrated 'right' of all children to be spared comparison with their peers. If previous fundamental changes in educational policy and

practice are a precedent, collectivist pressures rather than educational arguments are the forces which will work any change. The poor pupils in the lower streams or with the lower grades feel socially disadvantaged, we are told, (as incidentally, they are told also), and anyway, we are also told such judgements are just subjective: a demonstrative falsehood which is nonetheless politically convenient.

The sad story of the decline in schools can be repeated for universities. The quantity of labour and the level of effort required to pass an Arts degree programme at an Australian university are considerably less than were required fifteen years ago; I would think by a factor of at least 25%. As the requirements for performance have steadily lowered, cut-off points for admission have steadily risen. Why, then, has the graduation rate not improved? The answer is that generally it has, to some extent, but to nothing like the extent to which it should have improved, given the changes that have been made.

The community now pays far more for what is increasingly thought to be a generally poorer education system than it had even ten years ago. Then the difficulties were shortages of trained teachers, oversized classes, insufficient accommodation, shortages of equipment, and so on. Now, most of these difficulties have been overcome, yet public confidence in the quality of the product delivered has declined. In every area where there is public concern about the quality of education there has been an abandonment of rigour and structure in favour of freedom and formlessness, an abandonment of measurement in favour of guesstimate, and an abandonment of understanding in favour of application and relevance.

Those of us who are familiar with these changes and have watched their seepage into the education system, culminating in humbug from high places, particularly in New South Wales, to the effect that education is about "learning to be", and the demand of one of the Victorian secondary teachers associations that admission to universities should be determined by lot, cannot but notice the high correlation between those who have advocated and operated for the implementation of these changes, aided and abetted by politically naive educational administrators, and those who believe that society at large should be changed in a leftward if not revolutionary way. Of course the correlation is imperfect and does not by itself serve to refute or discredit any argument or evidence that might be offered in favour of moving in either direction. At the same time those of us who believe in the pursuit of a free individualistic society of equals would do well to contemplate the social effect of a generation of unemployed young bearers of meaningless certificates who believe that rigour, talent, and understanding are

discriminatory elitist ideals used to prop up our obsolete fascist, sexist, racist, multi-national police state.

Of course there are many changes in our educational system which have been in the best interest of the pupil; to take one example the proposal to educate migrant pupils in various subjects in their home language is an excellent one, as are all those innovations which really do effectively increase the capacity of pupils to learn and retain skills and information, while at the same time lessening the burden involved in doing so.

It is a pity that it has become fashionable to subject education to criticism because whatever is fashionable is quite properly treated with the utmost suspicion. My criticism is directed against those well-known changes in course content, assessment, and educational values which have lightened the burden on school pupils only because they have denuded courses and subjects of substantial content and reduced the demands for rigour. The agents of such change have used the best resources Australian education has ever had to produce a new educationally disadvantaged generation. Their banner read 'equality' and their educational bomb was labelled 'freedom — from the syllabus'.

It is interesting to note that black pupils in New York's Harlem district have recently demanded a return to public assessment, a defined syllabus, and a structured contentful programme of studies, because they cannot get jobs in competition with pupils who have had such an education. I have heard a recording of their bitter observations about those who are commonly called the progressivists in education, and their contemptuous scorn at the reply that society needed to change to adapt to progressively educated pupils.

Collectivism in education has generally taken the form of smoothing the passage of the least able pupil, even if this has meant watering down content and assessment requirements to those which such pupils can meet, and then demanding that society adapt its ways to utilise the product delivered. If equality has meant anything at all it has meant a redistribution of resources away from those who are gifted and of superior talent to those who are less so, while at the same time downgrading the notion of superior talent. With the almost certain abolition of selective schooling in N.S.W. it appears that we have learnt nothing from the mountain of evidence about the failure of comprehensive education in England to do anything beyond generally lowering the level of performance in the public sector thus driving more and more parents of talented children to withdraw completely into the private sector. The result which Iris Murdoch¹ and others predicted has come about: the gap between privately and publicly educated children has widened and the old school tie network is alive and well.

A commonly aired response to this situation in England has been, as it will be here, a demand for the nationalization of the private sector in education. Having produced, in the name of equality, an education system which cannot cope for especially talented people, the next step, hopefully unattainable as so many Labour politicians went to private schools, is to violate the liberty of the parents of those pupils who wish to make use of them by incorporating the private sector forcibly into the same locally run public system. When educational policy is muddled with general social policy, political ideology, and industrial issues, it is the education of the individual — the paramount concern of any educator — which suffers.

I have mentioned education at relative length only to indicate some of the ways in which collectivism erodes equality and erodes liberty. In small part collectivist pressures in all the areas in which they are found come from clear headed political operators whose objects are ideologically specific. In the area of education it is difficult to exaggerate their success. In larger part collectivist pressures come from those whose objectives are not politically specific or even political at all in the broad sense, but who just want to advance the interests of the collection. They often characterize their stand as a moral one, and regularly misuse the word 'paranoic' to characterize anybody who draws their attention to the first group.

The largest group comprises what Hayek calls the carriers of ideas.² Neither political operators nor people with a moral involvement in the collection, these are the people who pick up these ideas, particularly as undergraduates at universities, and whose social status is partly a function of which of them they hold. Ideas have always been subject to adoption as matters of fashion; indeed two of the worst philosophies of the last hundred years, Marxism and existentialism, provide clear illustrations. Lately however ideas have constituted an industrial growth area, linked as they are commercially with their instruments of transmission (which seem to get progressively smaller) such as books, papers, films, pop music, T-shirts, and badges. Hayek has repeatedly pointed out that the carriers of ideas are generally not the originators of them nor do they always stand to gain more than short term social advantage from their expression of them, but they are the agents which give them social effect. The carriers of ideas are the media journalists, the TV comperes, and the radio producers, and also the readers of such papers as Rolling Stone and the New York Review of Books. Fashion, as well as moral conviction, had a great deal to do with the defeat of South Vietnam and its allies in the Vietnam War. (One thinks of the anti-involvement uniform and dialect, and of the Melbourne commercial radio station which

announced that it would broadcast the top 40 live from the Moratorium in Bourke Street.)

I have earlier indicated, without arguing for it, my general belief that collectivist ideas are logically, morally, and historically indefensible eroders of equality and liberty, and I have indicated that there are different motives and reasons which might govern their circulation. But why, if they are as indefensible as I have suggested, are they so widely adopted and so generally in fashion? There are, I believe, three reasons of a socio-cultural sort which explain the ease with which they slide into the otherwise unoccupied mind. They are, in order, what I shall describe as (1) the Nietzsche effect, (2) the use of 'persuasive definitions' and (3) changes in educational emphasis.

(1) The Nietzsche Effect

One of the most infamous of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche's doctrines is his theory of slave and master morality, and his pseudo-historical account of the reason for the survival of Christianity. To adapt very freely, Nietzsche's account goes like this. Consider the main features of Christianity and you will find that what it lists as virtues are all what Hume has to dismiss as 'monkish'. Compare its virtues in particular with the Roman virtues which it replaced, and one notices that the Christian virtues are each the negation of one of the Roman virtues. For the Romans it was a virtue to acquire and display wealth; Christianity made a virtue of poverty; participation in conquests, and fighting ability were regarded as high attainments by the Romans; the Christians emphasized love and peace; the Christian emphasis on sexual chastity contradicts the Roman ideas of male extravagance in sexual matters; for the Christians humility is a virtue; but a Roman should be a proud man, and so on, or so the story went.

Now for Nietzsche the Roman virtues were 'master' virtues and the Christian virtues were 'slave' virtues, in intuitively obvious senses. This raised the question for Nietzsche, why did the slave morality of the Christians catch on, and eventually displace the master morality of the Romans? The Nietzschean answer is that the Roman morality was an obviously competitive one, and it yielded a highly stratified society in terms of levels of attainment. People could be ordered in respect of their opulence, military ability, and so on.

Plainly, the Roman system of virtues meant that there would be a large number of losers; or people who were not very wealthy, not successful soldiers and so on. Such people, and this is the main point attributed to Nietzsche, **like any losers**, are going to be naturally attracted to any moral or ideological system, according to which they are not losers at all, but really winners, and really

achievers. Christianity, which was in the air, attracted the less successful people because it told them that those who were strutting around the top layer of society were not really the winners — not really the achievers, not really the virtuous at all: they were really the losers, the failures, the ones who were furthest from virtue.

It is frequently contended that the Nietzsche point is a general one. It is a general fact about human beings that the last thing they want to concede is failure. Given that, relative to a given system of assessment or evaluation, they have failed, their natural response is to be attracted to any theory at all which (a) has the consequence that the system in terms of which they had failed was a faulty system, and (b) provides an alternative system according to the scale of which they are winners rather than losers.

Thus Christians became attracted to a slave morality; a morality which demeans human capacity and belittles individual advancement, because they failed to get a place on the Roman system of master morality. Because the Roman system resulted in more losers than winners, the losers had the numbers, and thus we have mass Christianity.

This is, of course, a parody of the real history of Christianity's growth but the general idea applied within it does seem to be constantly confirmed. It has been used to explain the growth of the drop-out movement in the United States in the 1960's. In a highly competitive career situation, with people rushing to buy refrigerations to keep the refrigerator in, all-year round swimming pools, real estate in California, sons at medical school, and so on, the standards reached by the socially successful became more and more generally inaccessible, the road towards them more difficult, and the number of failures greater and more obvious.

Rather than admit to failure, a significant proportion of those who were 'losers' in the prevailing social game were ripe for attraction to any movement which said that, really, it is the game that is wrong, not the players. The rest is history. What was the resulting ethos? Those who get degrees, jobs, married, families, live in the suburbs, etc. are the failures: the winners are those who liberate themselves from all this. It is losing to have a job, winning to be a free drifter, an easy rider. Who wants money? Better not to have money, and live frugally. Who wants a degree? Better to learn the lessons of life, which are relevant, than to have the crazy idea that intensively trained experts fed on the best of 2,000 years of recorded attempts at reaching the truth could have anything useful to say. Anyway there's a war on; better to lose that too. At not owning things, not having jobs, not learning things, not fighting in a war, these people were experts. This was a new game

in which they would be the winners and the unliberated unreconstructed establishment role occupants would be the losers. But, the unliberated unreconstructed establishment role occupants replied, as of one voice, Aren't you running away from reality? Whose reality man? they replied, as they smoked, sniffed, soaked, jabbed, and junked their ways into their own psychedelic reality. Once again they believed they were winners, for they even rejected the reality of the reality which they had failed to comprehend or master, and on which their parents had grounded their lives.

The Nietzsche effect is a very prominent feature of the course content and assessment debate in schools and universities. Students who regularly fail at logic are eventually attracted to the idea that it is because of something wrong with logic. People who fear failure on assessment are naturally attracted to any idea which says assessment is a failure, or that those who fail their assessments do so because their knowledge is too vast, their minds too subtle, and their souls too sensitive to be done adequate justice by the assessment procedures.

Collectivist movements in education, in demands for anti-discrimination legislation, and in industrially based social demands are often instances of the Nietzsche effect; and the natural attractiveness of the slave-master inversion partially explains why otherwise indefensible ideas may still influence people. To demand, as some current American **reverse** discrimination legislation does, that a certain proportion of minority groups be given a certain proportion of positions at certain levels, including university places and university teaching positions, even if the non-minority applicants have demonstrably superior qualifications, is a legislatively introduced inequality which reinforces the belief (an instance of the Nietzsche effect) that minority members fail to get jobs not because they fail to possess the relevant skills to the suitable level, but only because white male dominated appointment boards are incapable of making an appointment recommendation which is uncluttered by racist sexist prejudice. It is of course undeniable that there are white males who cannot make unprejudiced decisions; it is equally undeniable that there are many who can.

Yet, as Nietzsche would have predicted, we constantly find those militant collectivists who wish in Australia to have women or blacks or homosexuals appointed to quotas of positions constantly howling — tune to Broadband on Radio Two for confirmation — that any failure of such a person to get a job or a degree or whatever, where an element of discretion is involved, can only be because of the operation of prejudice. One of my kind (real or, in many cases, adopted) could not be a failure; the system is failing my kind.

(2) The Use of Persuasive Definitions

I have indicated that the terms 'liberty', 'equality' and 'happiness' are often used in the same breath, and charged that collectivists pose a real threat to both liberty and equality. This charge will seem to some surprising or even hysterical, for the obvious reason that collectivists invariably declare, and I believe in a few cases sincerely, that they are attempting to further liberty or equality on behalf of the band on behalf of which they speak. I came clean at the outset about what I mean by liberty and equality, and I indicated that I do not believe that 'happiness' stands for any single quality or condition, but something which may be different from individual to individual, may have different forms for any one individual from time to time, and may even have a multiplicity of forms for any one individual at any one time.

Although collectivists say that they believe in equality and liberty, we should look carefully for what they say they mean by equality and liberty. And this time I need to introduce another philosopher's notion, not from Nietzsche, but from the contemporary American moral philosopher Charles Stevenson.³ This notion is the notion of a persuasive definition, a persuasive definition being, as its name perhaps implies, a definition the purpose of which is to **change** the meaning a person attaches to a word, or associates with a particular idea, **in a direction** which advances the proponent's position, while preserving the illusion that the meaning being given is not a changed meaning at all, but the real meaning, recorded at a newly profound depth. As Stevenson points out, the characteristic flag of a persuasive definition is the use of the frames "true. . . ." or "real. . . ." or "genuine. . . .", with emphasis, followed by what is very often the opposite of the word's customary meaning. It is an interesting psychological phenomenon to observe the stunning effect such definitions can have. The effect of "true. . . ." or "real. . . ." is to create such sympathy in the audience that the audience does not show its lack of profundity by contesting the definition, but meekly adopts it and of course the consequences which flow from it.

Consider the following: "You might think that all it is for blacks to have equality with whites is for them to get the same wages, to get the same rights, to go to the same schools, but that's nothing — true equality will not be achieved until blacks have the same power as whites because that's what true equality means — the same power for blacks as whites have got." The point is of course that equality does not and never has meant that, but the use of this **persuasive definition** of equality is a simple forensic device for tricking one's opponent into thinking that he is in the

morally difficult position of being against equality. Stevenson illustrates the notion of a persuasive definition with this passage from Aldous Huxley's *Eyeless in Gaza*:

But if you want to be free, you've got to be a prisoner. It's the condition of freedom — true freedom.

"True freedom!" Anthony repeated in the parody of a clerical voice. "I always love that kind of argument. The contrary of a thing isn't the contrary; oh, dear me, no! It's the thing itself but as it truly is. Ask any die-hard what conservatism is; he'll tell you it's true socialism. And the brewer's trade papers: they're full of articles about the beauty of true temperance. Ordinary temperance is just gross refusal to drink but true temperance, true temperance is a bottle of claret with each meal and three double whiskies after dinner. . . .

"What's in a name?" Anthony went on. "The answer is, practically everything, if the name's a good one. Freedom's a marvellous name. That's why you're so anxious to make use of it. You think that, if you call imprisonment true freedom, people will be attracted to the prison. And the worst of it is you're quite right."

The failure to recognize the tricks associated with rhetorical devices such as persuasive definition is one of the cultural facts of life which permits the easy acceptance of otherwise inadequately defended collectivist positions, for whatever we think of liberty, equality, and happiness, we must all be in favour of true liberty, even if it can be achieved only in a prison; real equality, even if it means a far more repressed society than we have ever envisaged, and genuine happiness, even if its other name is misery.

(3) Changes in Educational Emphasis

I referred earlier to a decline in education although I tried to make it clear that I do not wish to identify that decline with just the decline in skills of literacy and numeracy. The decline is what everyone would agree is a change, though others may refer to it as a change for the better. I have no doubt that the fact that not only a relatively smaller proportion of educated people, but an absolutely smaller number, have any knowledge of classical languages and literature, that a relatively smaller proportion of the community studies logic or even informal linguistic analysis, that students who once studied ancient and modern history and the evolution of society now study subjects which have a problem orientation often a social problem orientation; and that bogus sciences such as numerology and the occult are increasingly treated as legitimate alternatives to natural sciences, has contributed to a general disorientation. One of the primary purposes of a basic

education should be to teach the pupil his or her way about. That is to say, the pupil should be clear as to exactly where he or she is in space-time; a knowledge which is possible only if the child is thoroughly immersed in, dare I utter the word, facts. History, geography, and the natural sciences are vital studies for any sort of understanding of oneself and one's place in the world, and history in particular is an essential basis for understanding the meaning of the institutions which shape our cultural environment. Ignorance of this meaning makes criticism redundant and speculation about alternatives idle. I believe that when Harry Eddy went on record, as he frequently did, stressing the importance of a liberal education, these considerations were among those he had in mind.

If people are uncertain about the nature and purposes of the institutions with which they interact and even to which they belong, they are not in a particularly authoritative position to resist attempts to modify those institutions to further the purposes of those who assault them. Bright young civil servants trained in the so-called social sciences are simply ill-equipped to counsel politicians on the right responses to institutional challenges. It seems to me a reasonable conjecture that the past twenty year run down of classical analytic, and, generally speaking rigorous studies, and the change in student appetite to those subjects which require neither a large amount of factual information nor sophisticated conceptual manipulative abilities of the sorts provided by the study of foreign languages, logic, and mathematics, is reflected in the fact that the new opinion makers, the emerging young leaders and their advisers, are not in a strong position to defend the institutional structures which they enter. Worse than that, they not only do not understand them but have neither the appetite nor the capacity for the marshalling of resources necessary for understanding them. When young educated business executives pay out wallet fulls of expense account dollars to hear entertainers such as Edward de Bono knowingly and wilfully misrepresent logical thinking (thus getting the consumers on side, as it were, since they are no good at it anyway) one is surely confirmed in one's hypothesis that the changes in educational emphasis have not been all to the good.

People who are neither confident of their own orientation nor possessors of the resources necessary for rigorous and analytical investigation can be snowed. And they are snowed — in industry, in commerce, in government, and in universities, — by their own inability to unmask the nonsense which masquerades under so much talk of rights (most of which reduces to the constant assertion of the right to win), or to see through the obscenity of those game theoretic approaches to negotiations which teach you how to quantify the number and order of the concessions you should make and so on. They huff and they puff as they pull their house

down. The cave in, the capitulation, the failure of nerve in the light of collectivist pressures, is the all too frequent response of thousands in government, industry, and education, who ought to know better. The most frightening realization of all is that day by day the numbers who do not know better must increase, especially as the products of the last two decades of secondary and tertiary education move into positions of influence and power.

To conclude, the fight is now well and truly on, for those who believe in individual liberty and individual equality as proper social ideals, to protect those ideals against the collectivists who now have a socio-culturally milieu conducive to the absorption of those of their doctrines which they describe using those cherished names. A society which is based on individived liberty and individual equality will not guarantee the generation and perpetuation of eternal human bliss, but only because no formal constraints on social structure can provide such guarantees. Those who offer a society guaranteed to augment human happiness are false prophets who, historically, have adopted totalitarian methods rather than admit their error. At least we can promise that a liberal and equal society will contain at least one **common ingredient** of human happiness, and that is liberty itself. If in doubt, ask someone who has been deprived of it.

NOTES

1. Iris Murdoch, "Socialism and Selection", in C.B. Cox and Rhodes Boyson (eds.) *Black Paper* 1975, London, Dent, 1975, pp. 7-9.
2. See e.g. F.A. Hayek, "Intellectuals & Socialism", *Institute for Humane Studies*, 1971.
3. C.L. Stevenson, *Ethics and Language* New Haven, Yale University Press, 1944. The passage from Huxley is quoted pp. 214-215.

