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Back to Socialist Basics

On 24 November 1993, a meeting of Left intellectuals occurred in London, under the auspices of the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), which is a Labour-leaning think-tank. A short document was circulated in advance of the said meeting, to clarify its purpose. Among other things, the document declared that the task of the IPPR was:

> to do what the Right did in the seventies, namely to break through the prevailing parameters of debate and offer a new perspective on contemporary British politics.

The explanatory document also said that 'our concern is not to engage in a philosophical debate about foundations of socialism'.

If this meant that those foundations were not the appropriate thing to talk about at the 24 November meeting, then that might have been right: not

everything has to be discussed at every meeting. But if what was meant was that discussion of philosophical foundations is not what the Left now needs, then I disagree, and, if that indeed is what was meant, then I think it curious that the breakthrough by the Right should have been invoked as an achievement for the Left to emulate. For, if there is a lesson for the Left in the Right's breakthrough, it is that the Left must repossess itself of its traditional foundations, on pain of continuing along its present politically feeble reactive course. If the Left turns its back on its foundations, it will be unable to make statements that are truly its own.

Theory, Conviction, Practice

An essential ingredient in the Right's breakthrough was an intellectual self-confidence that was grounded in fundamental theoretical work by academics such as Milton Friedman, Friedrich Hayek, and Robert Nozick. In one instructive sense, those authors did not propose new ideas. Instead, they explored, developed, and forthrightly reaffirmed the Right's traditional principles. Those principles are not so traditional to the British *political* Right as they are to the American, but they are traditional nevertheless, in the important sense that they possess a historical depth which is associated with the conceptual and moral depth at which they are located.

What the Right did is no *proof* of what the Left should do. It is nevertheless extremely suggestive. It tells against looking for 'a big new idea'. That is anyway a futile endeavour, since you do not land a new idea as a result of angling for one, in the wide sea of intellectual possibility. New ideas standardly come from attempts to solve problems by which old ideas are stumped. Sometimes the new idea turns out to be big, but looking for a big new idea, as such, because it would be impressive to have one, is a ridiculous agendum.

The character of the Right's success suggests that if, as the IPPR document also said, and as I agree, customary inherited socialist rhetoric now turns people off, then the remedy is not to cast about for a different rhetoric, or 'buzz'-phrase, irrespective of what its relationship to traditional principles may be, but to restore our own contact with those principles, from which exercise a new rhetoric may indeed emerge. The old rhetoric now sounds 'dated' not because everybody knows the content behind it but partly because its content has been forgotten. The Left will not recoup itself ideologically without addressing that foundational content.

The relationship between theory and political practice is more complex than some friends of the Labour Party appear now to suppose. The point of theory is not to generate a comprehensive social design which the politician then seeks to implement. Things don't work that way, because implementing a design requires whole cloth, and nothing in contemporary politics is made out of whole cloth. Politics is an endless struggle, and theory serves as a weapon in that struggle, because it provides a characterization of its direction, and of its controlling purpose.

Considered as practical proposals, the theories of Friedman, Hayek and Nozick were crazy, crazy in the strict sense that you would have to be

crazy to think that such proposals (e.g. abolition of *all* regulation of professional standards and of safety at work, abolition of state money, abolition of *all* welfare provision) might be implemented in the near, medium, or long term.[1] The theories are in that sense crazy precisely because they are uncompromisingly fundamental: they were not devised with one eye on electoral possibility. And, just for that reason, their serviceability in electoral and other political contest is very great. *Politicians and activists can press not-so-crazy right-wing proposals with conviction because they have the strength of conviction that depends upon depth of conviction, and depth comes from theory that is too fundamental to be practicable in a direct sense.*

I said that politicians make nothing out of whole cloth. All change in modern conditions of social differentiation and international integration is perforce incremental, 2 per cent here, 5 per cent there, accumulating after, say, fifteen years, into a revolution. The large fundamental values help to power (or block) the little changes by nourishing the justificatory rhetoric which is needed to push (or resist) change. Fundamental socialist values which point to a form of society a hundred miles from the horizon of present possibility are needed to defend every half-mile of territory gained and to mount an attempt to regain each bit that has been lost.

Consider Gordon Brown's response to Kenneth Clarke's budget of November 1993. Its central themes were two: the Tories have broken their promise not to raise taxes, and it is they who are responsible for the mess which obliged them to break that promise. That combined charge, important though it is, and important as it was to level it, requires no socialist value, no non-Tory value, to back it up. Consider, too, Michael Portillo's artful manoeuvre around Brown's charge. He did not have to face it in its own terms because he could say with conviction to Brown that Brown proposed no solution to the £50 billion deficit (to which Brown's criticisms of betrayal and incompetence and Brown's policy of long-term greater investment indeed represented no solution). Brown centred his attack on the misdemeanours of economic mismanagement and political promise-breaking, instead of on the crime of depressing the conditions of life of poor people, and on the crime of not loading more burden on the better off, including the not stupendously well off. I do not say that Brown did not mention the sheer inegalitarianism of the budget's profile. But he did not and could not make that point with conviction as a central point, because he thinks about who votes for what and because he has lost touch with foundational values.

The Brown response was relatively ineffectual partly because it presupposed for its effect that people are dumber than they actually are. People already knew that the Tories made the mess, though it was no doubt useful to remind them of it, to keep it at the forefront of their consciousness. But they are not so dumb that they think it follows from the fact that the Tories made the mess that Labour would be better at getting the country out of it. Labour will win the politics of competence only if people have confidence in its competence. That requires that

[1] Profoundly transforming though the Thatcher revolution has been, the distance between British society now and the standards set by right-wing theory remains enormous.

Labour itself be confident in its own superior competence, and that in turn requires that it be confident in itself, *tout court*, which it can only be if it transcends its furtive relationship to its traditional values. Electoral success is to a large extent a by-product of commitment to something other than electoral success.

Success in a particular election can, moreover, be bought at the cost of an ideological backslide which has lasting deleterious effect. It is one thing to point out that the Tories have failed by their own standards. It is quite another, in the course of making that good point, to endorse those standards yourself. Labour is now so beguiled by the prospect of exposing the Tories as tax-raisers that it is beginning to treat tax restraint not merely as a Tory goal but as an intrinsic desideratum. Therewith traditional pledges to reinforce and extend welfare provision are being seriously compromised.[2]

Principle and Politics

In its ideologically self-confident phase, when its relationship to its values was forthright rather than furtive, the Labour Party affirmed a principle of community and a principle of equality. ('Community' and 'equality' can be defined in different ways, and I shall say what I mean by them, as names of traditional mainstream Labour values, in the following sections.) Each principle was regarded as authoritative in its own right, but also as justified through its connection with the other. Each value supported the other, and each was strengthened by the fact that it was supported by the other. And these values were not only central to the Labour Party and to the wider Labour movement surrounding it. They were also the values that distinguished Labour from other parties at Westminster. They were, indeed, the only values which *the Left affirmed as a matter of principle and which the Centre and Right reject as a matter of principle.*[3]

[2] Cf. the excellent article by David McKie on p. 18 of the *Guardian* for 31 January 1994, one paragraph of which runs as follows: 'Unless it is handled with extreme deftness, Labour's present campaign is in danger of shoring up the classic Thatcherite picture of taxation as something inherently undesirable, even wicked; something that shackles opportunity rather than, as Labour once taught, expanding it by building the public services on which the great majority of voters and their families will always need to depend: safeguarding *your* health, *your* welfare, *your* children's education.'

[3] 'X rejects V as a matter of principle' means, here, 'X rejects V when it is put as a matter of principle', and *not* 'It is a matter of principle, for X, to reject V.'

You could disagree with the italicized claim in either of two ways. You might think that one or both of the values I've identified don't fit the italicized description, or you might think that some value which I've not identified does. I'll be more surprised if you're able to disagree in the second way, not, that is, by challenging the distinguishing role of the values I've identified, but by claiming that a value not identified here also enjoyed such a role. (Perhaps a third such value, as suggested to me by Danny Goldstick, is equality of power, in a political sense, as opposed to equality in the economic-distributive sense which occupies me here. This value was indeed affirmed by the Left. But I doubt that it was rejected by *both* the Right and the Centre.)

The values of community and equality were articulated in books and pamphlets. But they were also carried by, and they expressed the sentiments of, a broad movement that no longer exists and that will never be recreated. It will never be recreated because technological change means that the class base of that movement is gone, forever. Socialist values have lost their mooring in capitalist social structure. Partly because of that, but also partly because of right-wing ideological successes, community and equality have lost the quite extensive ideological hegemony that they once enjoyed. If I had to hazard a causal story, I'd say that right-wing values filled a space vacated by left-wing values which went on vacation because their class base was eroded. Because I think that a likely causal story, I should not be accused of accusing Labour's leaders of gratuitous betrayal, in their abandonment of traditional values. 'Betrayal' is the wrong name for abandonment which has a hard underlying social cause. But the hardness of the cause does not mean that there is no alternative but to allow wholesale abandonment of values to be its effect.

The struggle for community and equality is perforce more difficult when the calculus of class interest reduces the constituency that would gain from them, in an immediate sense of 'gain'. But there remain two reasons for insisting on their authority. The first, which is decisive on its own, is a self-standing moral-cum-intellectual reason. The second, more contingent and debatable, is a reason related to the identity and survival of the Labour Party, and it is contingent partly because it is not a necessary truth that the Labour Party should continue to exist.

The decisive reason for not abandoning community and equality is that the moral force of those values never depended on the social force supporting them that is now disappearing. No one who believed in the values could have said that she believed in them *because* they expressed the sentiments of a social movement. Anyone who believed in them believed in them because she thought them inherently authoritative, and the withering of the social force that backed them cannot justify ceasing to think them authoritative. And the second reason for not abandoning the values is that, once they are dropped, then there is no reason of principle, as opposed to of history, for Labour not to merge with the Liberal Democrats. Labour cannot cherish its independence as a party, believe in a politics of principle, and affirm nothing but the 'four principles of social justice' affirmed in *The Justice Gap* and *Social Justice in a Changing World*.[4] No Liberal Democrat or progressive Tory need reject those principles.[5]

[4] Both documents, which I shall henceforth call JG and SJCW, emanated from the Commission on Social Justice and were published by the IPPR in 1993. The present essay was prompted by the consternation and, sometimes, shock that I experienced when reading the two documents.

[5] The four 'principles' (JG, pp. i, 16) or 'key ideas' (SJCW, p. i) or 'core ideas' (SJCW, p. 4): '1. The foundation of a free society is the equal worth of all citizens. 2. All citizens should be able as a right of citizenship to meet their basic needs for income, shelter, education, nutrition and health care. 3. Self-respect and personal autonomy depend on the widest possible spread of opportunities and life-chances. 4. Inequalities are not necessarily unjust but unjustified inequalities should be reduced and where possible eliminated' (SJCW, p. 4). In a somewhat different formulation of principle 4, given at JG, p. i, it reads: '4. Inequalities are not

A different response to the present predicament is to think the values afresh in a spirit of loyalty to them and in order to see how one can sustain commitment to them in an inhospitable time, and what new modes of advocacy of them are possible. But that partly practical task requires foundational reflection of just the sort that the IPPR (see p. 3 above) might have meant us to eschew.

You can ask what our principles are, what, that is, we believe with passion, and you can ask what is the best way to win the next election. But you cannot ask what principles we should have, what we should believe with passion, as a *means* of winning the next election.[6] For the answer won't be principles you can really believe in, and you might therefore not even help yourself electorally, since electors are not so unperceptive that they can be relied upon not to notice that you are dissembling.

The two IPPR documents bow before the success of pro-market and anti-egalitarian ideology that has helped to precipitate Labour's present ideological crisis. There is, as I have said, nothing in their four 'core ideas' (see note 5 above) that any Liberal Democrat or left-wing Tory need reject. To be sure, the Tories in particular do not in practice respect the core ideas as much as a Labour government might, but that does not justify flourishing forth pale principles to define the direction of Labour's renewal.

After each of Labour's four electoral failures, the Labour Right said: we did not win because we looked too socialist; and the Labour Left said: we did not win because we did not look socialist enough. I do not think either side knows that what it claims to be true is true, and, if one side is right, then I do not know which is.[7] Certainly there exists an aversion to increases in taxation, and although that is no doubt partly because no truly principled defence of greater redistribution is confidently projected, I admit that I do not know how large a part of the explanation of the unpopularity of greater taxation is associated with failure to project its justification. I am therefore not contending that a principled defence of community and equality is a sure route to electoral success in 1996 or '97. But failure to secure acceptance of the principles of community and equality[8] is not a reason to modify one's *belief* in the principles themselves, even if it is indeed a reason, politics being what it is, not to thrust them

necessarily unjust—but those which are should be reduced and where possible eliminated.'

[6] My own claim that reaffirmation of traditional values would have electoral force is not put as an answer to that counterfeit question. My view that the old principles can be electorally supportive does not imply the (incoherent) recommendation that we should believe in them *because* they can be supportive, even though it does imply rejection of an electorally inspired case for abandoning them.

[7] Has there been a post-electoral survey of potential Labour voters who did not vote Labour to determine how many voted otherwise, or abstained, for each of the stated opposite reasons? (Not that what people say in such a survey is conclusive with respect to what their response to a different campaign would have been.)

[8] And, some might add, especially a failure which followed hardly any attempt to defend them.

forward publicly in their unvarnished form.[9] To massage one's beliefs for the sake of electoral gain can, moreover, be electorally counter-productive. It can be inexpedient to abandon principle for expediency, because it is hard to hide the fact that you are doing so, and everyone, Neil Kinnock included, knew that the Tories were right when, to powerful electoral effect, they accused Kinnock of that unprincipled abandonment. The Commission on Social Justice should not pretend to run an exercise in the examination of principle whose real focus is not principle but electoral success, because it will then certainly betray principle and possibly contribute to electoral failure.

Community versus Market

I mean, here, by 'community', the anti-market principle according to which I serve you not because of what I can get out of doing so but because you need my service.[10] That is anti-market because the market motivates productive contribution not on the basis of commitment to one's fellow human beings and a desire to serve them while being served *by* them, but on the basis of impersonal cash reward. The immediate motive to productive activity in a market society is typically[11] some mixture of greed and fear, in proportions that vary with the details of a person's market position and personal character. In greed, other people are seen as possible sources of enrichment, and in fear they are seen as threats. These are horrible ways of seeing other people, however much we have become habituated and inured to them, as a result of centuries of capitalist development.[12]

I said that, in community motivation, I produce because of my commitment to my fellow human beings and with a desire to serve them while being served by them.[13] In such motivation, there is indeed an

[9] Politics (again) being what it is, *a* gap between belief and public statement is often unavoidable. But there is a limit to how big that gap can be, without compromising both principle and political effectiveness, and when the gap approaches that limit, principle forbids adjusting belief, as opposed to public statement.

[10] That is by no means the only thing that 'community' can mean. Nor do I regard it as a particularly good name for what I use it to name here: I simply haven't been able to think of a better one.

[11] People can operate under a sense of service even in a market society, but, insofar as they do so, what makes the market work is not what makes them work. Their discipline is not market discipline. (Some think that the very success of the market depends on the tempering leaven within it of non-capitalist motivation: for present purposes, there is no need to form a judgement about that complex claim.)

[12] Capitalism did not, of course, invent greed and fear: they are deep in human nature, related as they are to elementary infantile structures. But capitalism has undoubtedly magnified the role of greed in particular in ordinary life, and, unlike its predecessor feudal civilization, which had the (Christian) grace to condemn greed, capitalism celebrates it.

[13] Under its most abstract description, the motivation in question might be consistent with hierarchy: Prince Charles's motto is '*Ich dien*', and serfs and lords alike who buy feudal ideology wholesale can describe themselves as being motivated thus. If community motivation is indeed consistent with hierarchy, then the principle of equality informs the principle of community, in its socialist form.

expectation of reciprocation, but it nevertheless differs critically from market motivation. The marketeer is willing to serve, but only in order to be served. He does not desire the conjunction (serve-and-be-served) as such, for he would not serve if doing so were not a means to get service. The difference is expressed in the lack of fine tuning that attends non-market motivation. Contrast taking turns in a loose way with respect to who buys the drinks with keeping a record of who has paid what for them. The former procedure is in line with community, the latter with the market.

Now, the history of the twentieth century encourages the thought that the easiest way to generate productivity in a modern society is by nourishing the motives of greed and fear, in a hierarchy of unequal income. That does not make them attractive motives. Who would propose running a society on such motives, and thereby promoting the psychology to which they belong, if they were not known to be effective, did they not have the instrumental value which is the only value that they have? In the famous statement in which Adam Smith justified market relations, he pointed out that we place our faith not in the butcher's generosity but on his self-interest when we rely on him to provision us. Smith thereby propounded a wholly extrinsic justification of market motivation, in face of what he acknowledged to be its unattractive intrinsic character. Traditional socialists have often ignored Smith's point, in a moralistic condemnation of market motivation which fails to address its extrinsic justification. Certain contemporary over-enthusiastic market socialists tend, contrariwise, to forget that the market is intrinsically repugnant, because they are blinded by their belated discovery of the market's extrinsic value. The genius of the market is that it recruits shabby motives to desirable ends, and, in a balanced view, both sides of that proposition must be kept in focus.

Generosity *and* self-interest exist in everyone. We know how to make an economic system work on the basis of self-interest. We do not know how to make it work on the basis of generosity. But that does not mean that we should forget generosity: we should still confine the sway of self-interest as much as we can. We do that, for example, when we tax, redistributively, the unequalizing results of market activity. The extent to which we can do that without defeating our aim (of making the badly off better off) varies inversely with the extent to which self-interest has been allowed to triumph in private and public consciousness.[14] (To the extent that self-interest has indeed triumphed, heavily progressive taxation drives high earners abroad, or causes them to decide to reduce their labour input, or

[14] My views on this matter run alongside those of John Stuart Mill, who averred that '[e]verybody has selfish and unselfish interests, and a selfish man has cultivated the habit of caring for the former, and not caring for the latter.' And one thing that contributes to the direction in which a person's habits develop is the ambient social ethos, which is influenced by the stance of political leaders. (The Mill quotation is from his *Considerations on Representative Government*, in J. M. Robson, ed., *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, Toronto 1965–86, Volume 19, p. 444. For sapient commentary on this and other relevant passages in Mill, see Richard Ashcraft, 'Class Conflict and Constitutionalism in J. S. Mill's thought', in Nancy Rosenblum, ed., *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, Cambridge, Mass. 1989, pp. 117–18.)

induces in them a morose attitude which makes their previous input hard or impossible to sustain.)

The market, any market, contradicts the principle which not only Marx but his socialist predecessors proclaimed for the good society, the principle embodied in the slogan 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.' One might ask what it means for each to give according to his ability, and what it means for each to get according to his needs. But for present purposes, the unambiguous message of the slogan is that what you get is *not* a function of what you give, that contribution and benefit are separate matters. Here the relationship between people is not the instrumental one in which I give because I get, but the wholly non-instrumental one in which I give because you need. You do not get more because you produce more, and you do not get less because you are not good at producing. Accordingly, the ideal in the primeval socialist slogan constitutes a complete rejection of the logic of the market.

The socialist aspiration was to extend community to the whole of our economic life. We now know that we do not now know how to do that, and many think that we now know that it is impossible to do that. But community conquests in certain domains, such as health care and education, have sustained viable forms of production and distribution in the past, and it is consequently a matter for regret that the IPPR documents do not invoke community as a core value, when it is a value that is currently under aggressive threat from the market principle, and when there is even immediate political mileage to be got from reasserting community in the mentioned particular domains.

Justice and Equality

The principle of equality says that the amount of amenity and burden in one person's life should be roughly comparable to that in any other's. That principle is not mentioned in the documents; or, to be more precise, it is mentioned only in parody, in the statement that 'few people believe in arithmetical equality'.[15] Perhaps no one believes in the unlimited sway of the principle of equality, as I defined it above,[16] where, that is, equality is rough similarity of amenity and burden. But I, and many others, certainly believe in it as a value to be traded off against others, and this value is rejected, as such, in the Commission's documents. Instead, we have an arrestingly weak proposition—strangely said to be a 'radical one' (JG, p. i)—in the fourth 'core idea' of social justice, which reads as follows: 'Inequalities are not necessarily unjust—but those which are should be reduced and where possible eliminated' (JG, p. i). Those who are eager to declare their support for unjust inequalities will oppose the fourth core idea.

Proposition 3 on social justice[17] reads, in part, as follows:

[15] JG, p. ii.

[16] For a more precise definition of the principle, see my 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice', *Ethics*, vol. 99, 1989.

[17] SJCW, p. 24 (cf. JG, p. 13). This is not one of the 'four principles of social justice' listed in note 5 above, but one of 'ten propositions on social justice' which are more specific and more circumstantial than the four principles are.

> Redistribution of income is a means to social justice and not an end in itself; social justice demands sufficient revenue to meet basic needs and extend opportunities, but there are limits of principle as well as practice to levels of taxation (SJCW, p. 24).

To say that (an equalizing) redistribution of income is not an end in itself but only a means to fulfil basic needs and extend opportunities is, once again, to abandon equality as a principle.[18]

The fourth core idea and the third proposition on social justice raise two questions: first, what is the difference between a just and an unjust inequality? And, second, what are the 'limits of principle' to taxation, beyond which taxation counts as 'punitive' (SJCW, p. 25)?

An answer to the first question is given at p. 43 of JG. The inequalities that 'are indeed justified'[19] are, it says there, justified by 'need, merit, or reward' (cf., too, ibid., p. 15). I find that list curious, and I want to examine it in a little detail.

'Inequalities' justified in terms of need are not ones that even the most radical egalitarian has ever opposed. JG does not say what needs it contemplates here, but there are only two kinds that appear relevant. First, some people need more resources to achieve the same level of well-being as others. But to unequalize resources on that basis is consistent with egalitarianism of a most radical kind. Second, some people need more means of production than others do to carry out their social function. But producer need is out of place in a roll-call of justified inequalities which is intended to challenge an uncompromising egalitarianism. No egalitarian thinks that brain surgeons should be denied expensive equipment.

The other supposed ways of justifying inequalities are, first, in terms of merit and, second, in terms of reward. But the phrase 'inequality justified in terms of reward' conveys no clear thought, especially when it is, as here, contrasted with 'inequality justified in terms of merit'. I suppose that the phrase was a piece of innocent carelessness, yet it is symptomatic of the altogether casual treatment of equality in these proceedings that such carelessness should have got by the eyes of what must have been quite a few readers. I presume we can take it that what was intended by 'inequality justified in terms of reward' is inequality justified in terms of reward for merit and/or effort. So let me address merit and effort, as grounds of inequality.

If one person produces more than others that is because he is more talented or because he expends more effort or because he is lucky in his circumstances of production, which is to say that he is lucky with respect

[18] Notice that to say that equalizing redistribution of income *is* an end in itself is not to say that the equality to be achieved thereby is of income, as opposed to, for example, of what Amartya Sen calls 'capability'.

[19] And, therefore, in conformity with justice, since—see the end of note 5 above—'just' and 'justified', which *can* convey different ideas, are used interchangeably in the IPPR documents.

to whom and what he produces *with*. The last reason for greater productivity, lucky circumstance, is morally (as opposed to economically) unintelligible as a reason for greater reward. And whereas rewarding productivity which is due to greater inherent talent is indeed morally intelligible, from certain ethical standpoints, it is nevertheless a profoundly anti-socialist idea, correctly stigmatized by J. S. Mill as an instance of 'giving to those who have',[20] since greater talent is itself a piece of fortune that calls for no further reward.

Effort might be a different matter. I say that it *might* be different, because it can be contended that unusual effort (largely) reflects unusual capacity for effort, which is but a further form of talent and therefore subject to the same scepticism as talent itself is with respect to its relevance to reward. But let us allow, against such scepticism, that effort is indeed *pertinently*[21] subject to the will. That being granted, ask, now, why the effortful person who is supposed to be handsomely rewarded expended the effort she did. Did she do so in order to enrich herself? If so, then why should her special effort command a high reward? Or did she work hard in order to benefit others? If so, then it contradicts her own aim to reward her with extra resources that others would otherwise have, as opposed to with a salute and a handshake and a sense of gratitude.[22] Of course those remarks are only the beginning of a long argument, but it is indicative of the utter conventionality of the disparagement of equality in the IPPR pamphlets that such considerations lie beyond their horizon.[23]

I turn to the question raised by the third proposition on social justice (see p. 12 above), concerning the 'limits of principle on taxation'. Now, although those 'limits of principle' are not defined or explained in the two published documents, I conjecture that part[24] of the unstated explanation

[20] *Principles of Political Economy*, in J. M. Robson, ed., op. cit., Volume 2, p. 210.

[21] I emphasize 'pertinently', because, among those who agree that effort is subject to the will, some ('hard determinists') would deny that that raises a challenge to egalitarian views of distributive justice, and others (e.g. Rawls) issue the same denial, on the non-determinist basis that it is inscrutable to what extent a person's emission of effort is not due to differential good fortune. (For a critical discussion of Rawls's remarks on effort, see section II of my 'On the Currency of Egalitarian Justice', op. cit.)

[22] Or, indeed, with a sum of money, conceived as a gift expressing gratitude, rather than as an *ex ante* motivating reward.

[23] The two most influential Anglophone political philosophy books of recent years are John Rawls's *Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass. 1971), which is left liberal, and Robert Nozick's *Anarchy, State and Utopia* (New York 1974), which is extreme free-market Right. It conforms to the outlook of these documents that Rawls should be cited critically and Nozick positively, with respect to their teachings about equality. Nozick's discovery that one does not have to deserve one's talent to deserve the fruits of its exercise is heartily commended (JG, p. 13), while the egalitarian Rawlsian reminder that talent is but good fortune is disparaged, and, moreover, misrepresented as a premiss for the plainly false conclusion, which Rawls does not assert, that 'in the last analysis all that anyone's work represents is a site at which society has achieved something' (JG, p. 13). The single moderately extended exposition of academic political philosophy in these documents serves to make an anti-egalitarian point in a slapdash way.

[24] Another part, presumably, is the idea that too much taxation trenches against the claims of 'need, merit, and reward': see p. 12 above.

of them is the one that appears in the unpublished paper on 'Ideas of Social Justice' that Bernard Williams prepared for the Commission. Echoing a chief claim of Robert Nozick's, Williams said that 'sustaining an equal distribution of money would involve continuous incursions into liberty'.

This summary remark overlooks the conceptual truth that to have money *is* (*pro tanto*) to have liberty. The richer you are, the more courses of action are open to you, which is to say that you are freer than you would otherwise be. Accordingly, whoever receives money as a result of redistribution thereby enjoys an enhancement of her liberty,[25] albeit at the expense of the liberty of the person from whom it is taken, but with the net result for liberty as such entirely moot. Taxation restricts not, as is here misleadingly suggested, liberty as such, but private property rights, both in external things and in one's own labour power. Whether or not such rights are deeply founded, it is ideological hocus-pocus to identify them with liberty as such, and it is entirely alien to traditional socialist belief so to construe them.

The stout opposition to equality and redistribution as matters of principle is revealed in this rejection of Tory dogma:

> Contrary to the 'trickle-down' theory of the 1980s, making the rich richer does not make the poor richer too. Indeed, because the great majority pay the costs of unemployment, crime and ill-health, making the poor poorer makes us all poorer too. Common interests demand social cohesion rather than polarization.[26]

This appeal side-steps the politically difficult redistributive issue. By plausible absolute standards, most people in the past were poor, and the target for redistribution could then be a rich minority. Now, by the same absolute standards, the standards in the light of which it is pertinently pointed out that 62 per cent of UK households have videos (JG, p. 19), only a minority are poor. To appeal to the self-interest of the majority (dressed up as an interest they have in common with the poor) as a central reason for relieving the poverty of that minority may work electorally: that depends on how the electoral majority do the arithmetic the appeal invites them to engage in. It depends, that is, on whether they will reckon that higher taxation is a smaller price to pay for their own health and security than what they'd have to shell out on BUPA, improved anti-burglary systems, a house in the suburbs, and so on. But however they figure those sums, inviting them to consider the issue primarily in that framework,[27] under a pretence of common interest, is a cop-out at the level of principle.

[25] For further demonstration of the connection between money and liberty, see the Appendix to this article.

[26] SJCW, p. 22. The statement is part of the elaboration of the first 'proposition on social justice', which reads as follows: 'Social justice is about more than poverty—it concerns everyone. The best way to help the minority who are poor is to advance social justice for all.'

[27] As the amalgam consisting of the first proposition on social justice (see footnote 26 above) and its complete elaboration does.

Appendix: On Money and Liberty

A standard political debate runs as follows. The Right extols the freedom enjoyed by all in a liberal capitalist society. The Left complains that the freedom in question is meagre for poor people. The Right rejoins that the Left confuses freedom with resources. You are free to do what no one will interfere with your doing, says the Right. If you cannot afford to do it, that does not mean that someone will interfere with your doing it, but just that you lack the means or ability to do it. The problem the poor face is lack of ability, not lack of freedom. The Left may then say that ability should count for as much as freedom does. The Right can then reply, to significant political effect: so *you* may think, but our priority is freedom.

In my view, the depicted right-wing stance depends upon a reified view of money. Money is unlike intelligence or physical strength, poor endowments of which do not, indeed, prejudice freedom, where freedom is understood as absence of interference. The difference between money and those endowments implies, I shall argue, that lack of money *is* (a form of) lack of freedom, in the favoured sense of freedom, where it is taken to be absence of interference.[28]

To see this, begin by imagining a society without money, in which courses of action available to people, courses they are free to follow without interference, are laid down by the law. The law says what each sort of person, or even each particular person, may and may not do without interference, and each person is endowed with a set of tickets detailing what she is allowed to do. So I may have a ticket saying that I am free to plough this land, another one saying that I am free to go to that opera, or to walk across that field, while you have different tickets, with different freedoms inscribed on them.

Imagine, now, that the structure of the options written on the tickets is more complex. Each ticket lays out a disjunction of conjunctions of courses of action that I may perform. I may do A and B and C and D or B and C and D and E or E and F and G and A, and so on. If I try to do something not licensed by my ticket or tickets, armed force intervenes.

By hypothesis, these tickets say what my freedoms (and, consequently, my unfreedoms) are. But a sum of money is nothing but a highly generalized form of such a ticket. A sum of money is a license to perform a disjunction of conjunctions of actions—actions, like, for example, visiting one's sister in Bristol, or taking home, and wearing, the sweater on the counter at Selfridges.

[28] Accordingly, poverty should not be bracketed with illness and lack of education and thereby be treated as a restriction on 'what [people] can do with their freedom' (JG, p. 8). Poverty restricts freedom itself, and the Left needlessly accedes to the Right's misrepresentation of the relationship between poverty and freedom when it issues statements like that just quoted. Cf. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 204: 'The inability to take advantage of one's rights and opportunities as a result of poverty and ignorance, and a lack of means generally, is sometimes counted among the constraints definitive of liberty. I shall not, however, say this, but rather I shall think of these things as affecting the worth of liberty . . .'

Suppose that someone is too poor to visit her sister in Bristol. She cannot save, from week to week, enough to buy her way there. Then, as far as her freedom is concerned, that is equivalent to 'trip to Bristol' not being written on someone's ticket in the imagined non-monetary economy. The woman I've described has the capacity to go to Bristol. She can board the underground and approach the barrier she must cross to reach the train. But she will be physically prevented from passing through it, or physically ejected from the train, or, in the other example, she will be physically stopped outside Selfridges and the sweater will be removed. The only way you won't be prevented from getting and using things is by offering money for them.

To have money *is* to have freedom, and the assimilation of money to mental and bodily resources is a piece of unthinking fetishism, in the good old Marxist sense that it misrepresents *social relations of constraint* as *things* that people lack. In a word: money is no object.[29]

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