Individualism, Communitarianism, and Docility*

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IN THIS PAPER I wish to look at the recent communitarian critique of liberalism from a certain perspective. My interest is in the tendency of both communitarianism and liberalism to contribute to docility, in Foucault's sense, which is, roughly speaking, a condition in which people unreluctantly accept being used, and do so because they have been trained to do so. A delegate to the new Soviet congress recently spoke of the majority's "aggressive obedience," a fine near synonym for docility. The concept of docility is meant to point to a great question about modernity: Is the liberation of the individual only a new servitude, and perhaps a worse one than that endured in the old order? I believe that communitarianism is theoretically more favorable to docility than liberalism is. There is a further complication that I would like to deal with, which is that Foucault, the profound recent theorist and critic of docility, is also a critic of (what we call) liberalism, precisely on the grounds that liberal society is largely, and more than any other society, the scene of docility. I wish to subject his critique of liberalism to some scrutiny, with the hope of suggesting that he took a wrong turn in single-mindedly associating docility with it.

What People Need

It is not certain that the recent communitarian critique of

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liberal society will turn out to have made a permanently valuable theoretical contribution. A good deal of that critique seems to be dominated by an anxiety about cultural conditions that may not be long-lasting or that are only brief but vivid fashions. To be sure, the recent communitarian critique has antecedents that go back to the early nineteenth century and perhaps before. But insofar as that is the case, the recent critique may sometimes tend to be unoriginal and repetitious. Some part of what is good in the critique may be old; what is new, at best iridescent. Still, if one is concerned about docility, there is advantage in taking a brief and general look at what some recent critics have been saying. I have in mind such writers as Benjamin Barber, Sheldon Wolin, John Schaar, Alasdair MacIntyre, Christopher Lasch, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor, and Michael Walzer (some of the time), among numerous others.

When the communitarians attack liberal society they are really attacking individualism. For them individualism is the heart of liberalism. Though the communitarians differ among themselves on important issues, they share a common aversion to at least some of the tendencies of individualism.

The particular kind of individualism they criticize is rights-based individualism in a representative democracy with capitalist institutions. The United States is held up as the principal example of an individualist society because it is the purest case, the least alloyed with preindividualist elements—as it is the least alloyed with predemocratic and precapitalist ones.

What do the critics claim to see in liberal society? I would take a bird's-eye view and offer a few generalizations. However, a distinction may first be useful. We can distinguish between what the critics believe that people need in a liberal society but fail to get (on the one hand) and what the critics themselves need and fail to find (on the other hand). The latter consideration is as important as the former, but it is not frequently explicit.

Let us turn first to what the critics believe that people need. Naturally, the critics differ among themselves in their emphases, inclusions, and omissions, but I think that they would be likely to agree on the following critique. First, it is said that people need more *togetherness* than the individualist institutions and practices and general spirit of liberal society provide. Liberal society is "atomistic"; it cuts or weakens the habitual and unrationalized ties among people; it is indifferent or disrespectful to the past and to tradition; it fosters little or no attachment to anything outside oneself and one's circle; it makes personal identity a burden by making it paramount and by forcing it to be the willed creation of each individual; it makes people lonely and hence prone to alienation and to all the pathologies that alienation engenders.

Second, it is said that people need more *discipline* than liberal society provides. In such a society, people are too self-regarding, and self-regardingness too easily passes into selfishness, while selfishness expresses itself in the limitless pursuit of goods that do not gratify because they have no relation to any desire but the unappeasable desire for prestige and status: unappeasable, because prestige and status constantly fluctuate. Liberal society thus makes people anomic. The discipline of virtuous restraint is disregarded, with the result that the encouragement to individualism is paradoxically the encouragement to self-dispersal. If people were taught to care for themselves less and for others more, they would be happier. Greater discipline leads to greater contentment. Boundedness is necessary for happiness. Just from the point of view of the individual, greater discipline is better.

Third, people need greater encouragement to share their lives with others, to care about others for the sake of others, and to cooperate in the attempted solution of common problems and dangers. People should have greater *mutuality* than they are conditioned to have in liberal society. Liberal society allows people to think that they owe little if anything to others; that they are self-made; that all they are and do derives

strictly from their own merits or lack of them. The result is unacceptable cruelty to, or neglect of, the less fortunate who are seen as undeserving rather than unlucky; and insidious condescension toward all those who do not succeed brilliantly. Another result is an accumulation of social and cultural problems that threaten to engulf everyone, no matter how fortunate or unfortunate.

Fourth, it is said that people need greater encouragement to think of the well-being of their nation or group in a hostile world and to think less of their individual successes and failures. Liberal society makes people narcissistic. It weakens the natural human tendency to acquire a *group identity* vis-à-vis other groups. Liberal society imprisons people in their individual identities and thus denies them the release into something larger than themselves, while also weakening their will to make the inevitable patriotic sacrifices that a hostile external world unexpectedly but regularly calls for.

There is no doubt that this line of critique captures some part of life in a liberal society. Whether or not it is intrinsic to human nature to need what the communitarians say that people need, and whether or not societies always need to encourage what the communitarians say they must, there are serious troubles that may be plausibly attributed to rights-based individualism in a context of representative democracy and capitalism. The question is whether communitarian thinkers offer a remedy that would have the result of inducing greater docility in society, apart from other possible bad consequences. Perhaps one can say that the wish for more mutuality is the only one of the four aspirations that is devoid of a strong initial affinity to the practices of docility.

Let us say that there is a need for greater mutuality. I believe, however, that rights-based individualism does not theoretically preclude a fair amount of it. One of the things needed for greater mutuality is a heightened feeling of the finitude of the individual. Does rights-based individualism theoretically exclude this feeling? I do not think so. The sense

of oneself and one's existence as an accident; of one's place and time as crucial in one's formation, though not all-determining; of the role that good luck and bad luck play in one's endowment and circumstances; of the unrequited contribution of countless people (most of them nameless), dead and living, near and remote, to one's well-being; and of the vulnerability of any life to being derailed or overwhelmed—this compound sense of finitude is not only consistent with rights-based individualism but part of the energy behind its emergence.

When, on the other hand, Emerson, a great theorist of the moral and existential potentialities of rights-based individualism, speaks of the "infinitude" of the individual, he is not disagreeing. Infinitude is experimental self-reliance, not literal self-creation. It is catching up with some of one's unused potency. In theorizing self-reliance he is opposing (in our terms) togetherness, discipline, and group-identity, not mutuality. By his question in "Self-Reliance," "are they *my* poor?" he wants to transmit the shock of Jesus' saying, "The poor you have always with you"; no more than Jesus is he counseling indifference to the disadvantaged. He does not want guilt to sicken charity; rather he wants respect to inform compassion. He does not want assistance to become a mutually degrading routine. I think that Emerson's attitude, because of its complexities, is a good guide to thinking about what individuals owe each other as strangers and fellow citizens in a rights-based democracy. Thoreau's reflections in *Walden* on philanthropy, and afterward on his encounters with involuntarily poor people, like John Field's family, promotes Emerson's attitude powerfully.

For all that I have said, however, I must grant that espousing mutuality as a constant guide to public policy does not come easily to proponents of rights-based individualism. When mutuality passes beyond relief of the needy to a greater effort to persuade or entice people to care actively for each other's well-being, individualists bridle. An individualist must find

distasteful and unreal the abstract impersonation of feelings that have their original reality in face-to-face relationships. Even worse, the tendency of such guided or administered or engineered mutuality is to work with the same effect of docility as those things individualism fears precisely because they are immediate sources of docility: greater togetherness, greater discipline, and greater group identity. Some of this tendency is already present in such social liberals as T. H. Green and John Dewey, both of whom urge so much mutuality that they betray the very idea of rights. They make rights merely instrumental to a society-wide and abstract mutuality. Rights-based individualism can have no difficulty with measures to alleviate suffering: it does not aspire to repeal basic morality, which mandates such alleviation. Beyond the relief of misery, however, social projects often appear to promise more docility, whatever else they may achieve.

But even if we grant the need for greater mutuality, we do not grant the heart of the communitarian case. For one thing, the communitarian critics may fail to see that liberal society contains individualist revisions, new versions, of all the desiderated elements; all of which revisions work to reduce their tendency to make people docile rather than to increase docility. Communitarianisms are usually reluctant to take in the fact that individualism redefines human bonds; it does not foolishly try to eliminate them. In a rights-based culture, the state is changed into government, and ruling into governing; society ceases imagining itself as a natural growth or cyclical process and becomes more consensual and voluntary; and the people becomes an entity held together by agreement rather than religion, ethnicity, a long and unforgiving memory, or the mimesis of traditional roles and customs. Love and friendship, marriage and the family, are also transformed. A rights-based culture is explicit, to an unusual degree, in its transactions, and therefore in its bonds. People are connected, yet in a new way. There is a second point: intensities of connection are made local or temporary in a rights-based culture. Episodes

characterize an individualist life. The assumption of permanence is disparaged as false to the feelings. Merely episodic involvement may be seen as superficiality, but it may also be seen either as playfulness or as attempted sincerity, and in both cases as a flight from false solidity.

As Robert Frost teaches, in "The Tuft of Flowers," people work together "Whether they work together or apart." The essence of all these individualist revisions of human ties is a movement toward allowing individuals to make up their world as they go along. That is a principal aspect of individualism, and the hidden spring of self-centered behavior. The alternative is prescriptive prearrangement—that is, submission (whether conscious or habitual) to the given. To a defender of rights-based individualism, such submission in itself diminishes the people who endure it, by weakening the self-dissatisfaction intrinsic to the effort to make up the world as one goes along. Beyond that, the communitarians may not have pondered other implications of this submission and hence of their claims concerning what people need or should be encouraged to acquire. The problem is docility (mobilized docility, aggressive obedience), which is distinct from submission and to which I shall return.

What the Critics Need

Let us now turn to what the communitarian critics themselves need and fail to find in liberal society. Here I would propose an interpretation of the mentalities that appear to underlie, in part, the criticisms that these writers offer. Only to some small degree—if at all—do they acknowledge directly that such mentalities inspire their writings. Nevertheless, their writings leave certain impressions on some who have tried to understand the communitarian critique, and to do so with fairness if not with sympathy. At the same time, it is doubtless true that these mentalities are not peculiar to the critics but will

be found throughout liberal society. Nevertheless, these mentalities help to account for the fact that the critics see liberal society so selectively and harshly, and offer the sort of remedies they do, remedies that would promote docility.

Two mentalities make their presence felt. The first is religious in nature, the second is aesthetic. Let me admit that I speak as one who is not religious and is also afraid of some of the effects a passionate religiousness has or can have on democratic society and on human affairs in general. Then, too, though I know and do not regret the major role that aesthetic considerations play in human life, even apart from erotic desire, and even though in an often unrecognized manner, it is certainly possible to distinguish between kinds of aestheticism. As Emerson suggests in "The Poet," bad poetry (so to speak) is part of the fabric of ordinary—that is, unreflective—life. In every society, ordinary life is full of bad displacements and condensations, of unintentional metaphorization and shadowy symbolism. Worse, some kinds of socially exaggerated aestheticism are hideous in their perverse beauty. I find that communitarianism is often an encouragement to bad poetry, to a heightened conventional aestheticism that in modern circumstances can be satisfied only with mischievous or even pernicious results.

Concerning the religious mentality, I would say that some of the critics desire to live in a society that is religiously grounded, organized, and sustained. Some may be genuine believers, others may think that without transcendent belief no society can last. The latter often speak of the need for a basic myth to hold society together, while the former insist that worship of the true God is indispensable to the life of an incorrupt society. Both sorts of thinkers find the secularism of liberal society—despite or because of its toleration of plural religions—unendurable. And both sorts are guarded in their expression of religious views, especially in the United States, where the Constitution separates church and state and disallows any religious test for holding public office. The implicit communi-

tarian sense is often that the only real community is a society pervaded by a common religion because a real community must have a well-defined and particular way of life, and only a ritualized or sacramentalized way of life can be well-defined and particular. Liberal individualism is death to a ritualized or sacramental order. It is death to God. It kills a properly rooted life.

The aesthetic mentality is, in some respects, closely related to the religious one, but may stand on its own separately. Some communitarian critics long for a society whose customs, manners, visible surfaces, and daily transactions (public and private) all seem designed or composed; and therefore seem to have strong and unmistakable meanings and to fit together to create one great composition, one great meaning. That is, a good society should seem to be the emanation of one superior, controlling intellect that may surpass the actual intellects of the human individuals involved in the life they enact and carry forward. In effect, the communitarians ask us to give up the will to have moments of transcendence in which one tries to see one's society as from a distance or a height, or in which one tries to see it as an alien or an enemy does or could. Instead, one should treat society as prior; that is, as always prepared to receive everyone: all-enclosing and wiser than oneself. Every society provides the script, and in good societies all play their parts and say their lines unself-consciously. The model is the ancient polis—at least as imagined by contemporary communitarians—or Rousseau's city. This aestheticism can take an even worse turn: into tribalism, the most odious of all aspirations. To such aesthetic critics, liberal society appears formless, unintegrated, unskillfully improvisatory, incoherent, slovenly, and often downright ugly. That aesthetic judgment is, however, narrow, almost incurious. It does not allow for the possibility that beauty has more than one way of appearing in the world: a way peculiar to modern democracy, and radically different from the classical or the aristocratic.

Longing for a Lost World

From the perspective of rights-based individualism, both what the communitarian critics say that people need and what the theorists themselves appear to need are retrogressive. Communitarian views give the impression of being inspired by a longing for a lost world (that is, a world that never existed except in misinterpretation). Communitarianism is nostalgic, antimodern. Common to what the critics say that people need and what they themselves appear to need is the message that, above all, people cannot be trusted—especially with freedom. The critics say or imply that if people are allowed to live more or less as they please within the limits of respect for the rights of others, they will lead lives that are not only unhappy but also wasted. Not that the majority are throwing their lives away in drugs, drink, gambling, circuses, and casual sex. Rather, they seem to live to no purpose. The majority don't do or enjoy, in T. H. Green's formulation, "something worth doing or enjoying, and that, too, something that we do or enjoy in common with others."

For people to lead worthwhile lives they must be enlisted in projects that are not merely their own, that do not come merely from their unmobilized choices, and that unite them with each other. The tendency is Aristotelian or Rousseauist: the more that people must act together in order to act at all, the better. The communitarian critics want people to be led by, and thus to be more deferential toward, either personal or impersonal authorities. All this can only mean that they want people to be made happy and useful by being made more docile. I do not see what word captures their drift better. I do not intend to exaggerate when I say that from the perspective of rights-based individualism, communitarianism shows too many affinities to fascism, either in fascism's corporatist or in its ritualist and spectacular aspect. Recent communitarianism is yet another reactionary response to modernity, though, of

course, still innocent of any direct baleful influence. Hatred of modernity promotes docility, either directly or indeliberately.

The great nineteenth-century theorists of rights-based individualism were profoundly worried about the urge to make people docile. One has only to read the powerful pages of John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (especially chapters 4 and 5) and *Auguste Comte and Positivism,* and of Herbert Spencer's *The Man Versus the State,* to see that significant expressions of liberalism are devoted to blocking the urge to treat people as objects in need of repair, or as well-tended animals prepared for burden or slaughter, or as forces in need of enlistment in projects that are not spontaneously their own. This great liberal contribution is maintained and sometimes enhanced by American constitutional jurisprudence, especially during the time of the Warren Court (1953–69). One can even say that the primary element in rights-based individualism is negative: to try to avoid not only the more blatant kinds of oppression that ensue when government fails to respect (or even acknowledge) the rights of individuals but also to avoid the more subtle kinds of oppression that ensue when government engages in soft or even unfelt oppression that does not seem to abridge rights (spying, monitoring, inspecting, testing, advising, and acting paternalistically) or in continuous activism that seems to enhance or enrich life but that weakens the desire and ability of people to respond to life as they please and to initiate projects on their own. Theorists of individualism detect in the communitarian critique a grave threat to human dignity, precisely because its hostility to rights opens the door to every sort of oppression, and its positive aspirations radiate a sense of mistrust of people and hence the desirability of gathering them up in patterns of supposedly useful or beautiful or pious activity.

Passivity and Docility

Fairness requires, however, that a defender of rights-based

individualism acknowledge that some among the communitarians are appalled by passivity and claim to see its prevalence in liberal society. To be sure, passivity is not the same as docility: docility, as I have suggested, shows itself in strenuous exertion. But the two conditions may be inwardly related, and may have some of the same practical effects. For example, Sheldon Wolin and Benjamin Barber believe that the emphasis on individual rights is a way of privatizing people and leaving them in an unprotesting or complacent condition of mind. Wolin and Barber, among others, are trying to remain faithful to the idealism of the New Left. I find much to sympathize with in their attachment to the hopes and insights of the 1960s.

Nevertheless, I am struck by the way in which Wolin (in the powerful writing he did for his journal, *democracy*), imparts the sense that the effort to attain a more decentralized and participatory society requires the sort of militancy that penalizes diversity and disagreement in its ranks. Both single-mindedness and like-mindedness are needed. Historical experience indicates, however, that such militancy prefigures a reformed condition that will be oppressive. It turns out that the society in view is also inhospitable to diversity and disagreement. Wolin is generally disposed to criticize rights when they lead to bad results. In "What Revolutionary Action Means Today" (1982), he specifically says: "How could a democratic conception of citizenship be said to be fulfilled—as a liberal conception would be—by having rights exercised for antidemocratic ends, as the KKK choice would be?" He then offers an ideal of good citizenship that, in modern conditions, can only be a recipe for the enlistment of the energies of people who think themselves free when they are more likely to be subtly intimidated into a common enthusiasm. "The citizen, unlike the groupie, has to acquire a perspective of commonality, to think integrally and comprehensively rather than exclusively." Despite his endorsement of situational activism Wolin goes on to chide those who practice interest-group politics. Yet what other modern way is there of normally

breaking up massification and homogenization? Acting on self-interest or on particular moral interests is, except in times of constitutional or other crisis, the only form that participatory politics can take. To discredit such action is not to hasten the end of passivity. And to idealize a situation in which all the citizens of a large society are constantly mindful of society as a whole is to favor increased docility, despite one's theoretical intentions. The "perspective of commonality" entails a politics in which leadership is essential, and along with it, the trained disposition to be led.

In the case of Barber, in his *Strong Democracy* (1984), it is well to notice that he makes a strenuous effort to avoid nostalgia for the polis and to think of methods for introducing a greater degree of popular participation in modern large-scale democracy. He relies heavily on the use of "interactive" television to register immediate popular opinion on the issues presented to it for decision. One wonders, however, whether this sort of democracy actually avoids passivity, because of the conversion of significant questions of public policy into a video experience. He also says that all his proposals must be accepted together, and this turns out to mean that greater popular participation is acceptable only if there is at the same time the universal requirement of periods of compulsory military or civilian service. One tendency in recent theories of citizenship like Barber's is to yoke citizenship to legally mandatory self-denial. Participation is paid for by conscription, by involuntarily living for others or for an abstraction. So that the fear of passivity, once again, can lead to proposals that work, on balance, in the direction of increased popular docility.

The Foucault Critique

At this point, it may occur to someone to say that I have coopted Foucault's word "docility" and some of his thoughts

for the purposes of defending the very viewpoint that he attacked so mercilessly—individualism. He was not a communitarian, but he surely was a critic of individualism. How then can I find in individualism the defense and the remedy against docility and the disciplinary society, while a great modern theorist of these undesirable social conditions blames individualism for them? The matter deserves long and close attention. I can only say something sketchy.

It may be well to notice first that whether or not Foucault studied Tocqueville, thinking about him is enhanced by attending to *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* and the second volume of *Democracy in America.* In particular, Tocqueville's discussions of individualism in an age of equality, and the causally connected condition of democratic despotism, are especially relevant. Now, Tocqueville does not believe that the individualist individual, so to speak, is a fabrication, and this fact establishes a tremendous difference between him and Foucault. The initiating agency in Tocqueville's analysis is not power/knowledge but the intimidating pressure of modesty, which each individual feels in the face of all the others, his equals, and which, by issuing in private retreat and self-absorption, causes an expansion of the tutelary activism of state power. Despite all differences, however, Tocqueville does illuminate Foucault's theme of the emergence of what Tocqueville conceptualizes as the minute regulation of daily life. Particularly relevant are Tocqueville's analysis of the democratic substitution of lenient for brutal regimentation, with a consequent increase of effectiveness and extent of control; and relatedly, the insensible transformation of much regulation into a "pastoral" (to use Foucault's word) or therapeutic solicitude by those in power toward the many, who seem to crave it as solace for the rigors of an economically competitive life. Reading Foucault is all the more advantageous when one keeps Tocqueville by one's side, especially in regard to the subject of individualism. Yet neither sees enough of the picture, ungrateful as it may be to say so.

At various places in his work, Foucault alleges that modern individualism is, appearances notwithstanding, the result of techniques of discipline. The more each person regards himself or herself as distinct from others, as special, as acting spontaneously, as living in response to the deep promptings of one's unique inner life, the more one is being victimized by the disciplinary and docility-inducing techniques of modern power (especially decentered institutional power). In his preface to Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* he therefore says:

> Do not demand of politics that it restore the "rights" of the individual, as philosophy has defined them. The individual is the product of power. What is needed is to "de-individualize" by means of multiplication and displacement, diverse combinations. The group must not be the organic bond uniting hierarchized individuals, but a constant generator of de-individualization.

I suppose the sort of group he wants is a passionate but temporary affinity group. Each person will belong to many groups, serially or concurrently. Actually, Foucault is affirming the version of group life that grows most hospitably in an individualist culture, but he is not disposed to make this point.

Let us notice two of his main lines of critique. In *Discipline and Punish,* he tries to show how techniques of modern power in institutional settings like prisons, mental asylums, schools, armies, and hospitals all tend to individuate the person by treating him or her as a special case in need of reformist or therapeutic attention. The techniques are not physically brutal but all the more rigorous for being lenient, or at least sparing in their violence. But the result is the creation or "fabrication" of an individual identity: an identity acquired by docile absorption of the habits and, above all, of the words and meanings implanted by technicians, not (as it is claimed) by one's natural unfolding. On the other hand, in *The History of Sexuality,* volume 1, Foucault tries to show that modern society systematically induces or exaggerates sexual desires and then guides their satisfaction. Modern culture creates an obsession

with sex just as it creates the whole artifice of sexuality, of sexual roles and assignments. Such incitement is also a technique apt to make people docile: the key to this strategy of docility is also the fabrication of an individual identity; here, a distinctive sexual identity that is supposedly the locus of one's deepest secret and hence one's truest self. Modern culture then encourages the struggle to learn and express the secret, the self. But, again, one has been given a secret or a self to express; one has had a project thrust on one, which is only a trap.

The two lines of critique come together in a passage in the last part of *The History of Sexuality,* volume 1, when Foucault refers to the two modes of individualization as "not antithetical" but rather "two poles of development" of the "power over life." In both lines, Foucault is trying to suggest that individuality is an artificial production that is undertaken (let us say by dominant interests) to make it easier to control and use people. Trained to become self-conscious and differentiated selves, people are forever tied to external encouragements and disciplines that keep them manageable even when (especially when) their lives are self-consciously experimental or exploratory or rebellious.

There is a passage in Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* (bk. 5, sec. 354) that throws light on Foucault's enterprise. Nietzsche highlights the perils of finding one's individuality in one's expanded or deepened consciousness. He says:

> My idea is, as you see, that consciousness does not really belong to man's individual existence but rather to his social or herd nature; that, as follows from this, it has developed subtlety only insofar as this is required by social or herd utility. Consequently, given the best will in the world to understand ourselves as individually as possible, "to know ourselves," each of us will always succeed in becoming conscious only of what is not individual but "average." Our thoughts themselves are continually governed by the character of consciousness—by the "genius" of the species that commands it—and translated back into the perspective of the herd. Fundamentally, all our actions are altogether incomparably personal, unique, and infinitely individ-

> ual; there is not doubt of that. But as soon as we translate them into consciousness *they no longer seem to be.*

This is a great passage, but maybe not altogether right or in line with other equally great passages in Nietzsche about man's depth. (Think only of the discussion in *The Genealogy of Morals* [First Essay, sec. 6; Second Essay, secs. 16–18] on the way that induced "bad conscience" creates the soul; but in doing that, deepens individuals and fits them eventually for some otherwise unattainable unherdlike greatness.) Of course, Foucault does much more than repeat Nietzsche; and Nietzsche's suggestiveness spreads out in many directions, not all of them followed by or of interest to Foucault. But evidence of a basic similarity between them is striking when this passage is read after one has read Foucault. In one sector of his motivation, each aims to deliver people from all the vanity that grows from thinking about the distinctively human and that leads to the prison of docility, of self-expanding and therefore self-mutilating moral or social responsibility. With the concept of docility, Foucault ruthlessly develops Nietzsche's insight, even as he revises it.

What Foucault says is immensely instructive. He forces us to reconsider the fact that one outgrowth of rights-based individualism is a heightened concern to express one's being. It is also undeniable that a good deal of what one struggles to express has not only been culturally implanted: that process is, in every society, necessary and inevitable; but, in addition, some of it has been thoughtlessly absorbed from the ministrations of modern technicians of soul-making, who are active in the media and in practically every institutional setting. Spontaneity often is unconscious mimesis. The rhetoric of the flowering personality contains some nonsense. Even Emerson, who began the theoretical effort to move rights-based individualism in the direction of a distinctive democratic individuality, has moments when he indulges in this rhetoric. In "Self-Reliance" he holds up the rose as a model for human

being: "they are for what they are . . . there is no time to them. There is simply the rose." We are here too close to the dangers of wanting to be *en soi,* whole and stable like a thing; too close, also, to the dangers of bad faith, of clutching to an aspect of one's life as if one had an essence and the aspect were that essence.

Emerson, however, corrects himself; he corrects the latency in rights-based individualism to make too much of oneself. The nobility of the Emersonian aspiration lies in transcending the ideal of individualism understood as the cultivation and expression of personality, precisely because Emerson, like his great colleagues Thoreau and Whitman, knows how social, and not individualist, such an ideal is. They all go in the direction of self-abandonment, away from egotism, even away from self-expression, and do so as proponents of individualism. They encourage a more intense awareness of everything outside oneself, an awareness each individual owes to all persons as equal individuals, and to all creatures and things just for being what they are. This awareness is the democratic ecstasy. The Emersonians are sure that such awareness was dimmed by the essentially social desire to express oneself. Awareness is a more heroic aspiration than expressiveness; also, more heroic and more sane, perhaps, than the aristocratic project urged in Pindar (Pythian II), "O find, and be, yourself," and perhaps intended in Nietzsche's admonition to become who you are. Thus the theory of democratic individuality distinguishes between the expressive self and the cultivated inward self, and judges the former to be much less significant than the latter, while making the latter an opening on to the reality of the world.

It does not seem to me that Foucault allows for the possibility that this distinction can be made. His analysis has great power when it challenges the expressive self. It gives much less trouble to those who prize the cultivation of greater inwardness, the effort to explore the self's cave. Human depth is not always *trompe l'oeil.* Unconscious motives; obscure motives, movements, and associations; the capacity to feign or

to be double; the capacity to talk to oneself; the capacity to draw things out by thinking them over; and above all the capacity to surprise oneself and others in one's speech and writing as well as in one's action—all these things testify to depth, to depth of soul. Memory, forgetfulness, and repression are all manifestations of depth. Language is one great source of depth, and its sole guarantor. It would be impossible to imagine any society, except the most rudimentary, in which the phenomena of depth did not exist, and exist in large measure independently of techniques of power/knowledge; though not, of course, independently of acculturation. "What is life," says Emerson in "Natural History of Intellect," "but what a man is thinking of all day?" How could life be human without mental depth, whatever Nietzsche and Foucault may want to entertain and have us believe? The critique of the "subject" is too often at the service of the wish, in Burke's great phrase about Rousseau, to "subtilize us into savages."

Another troubling tendency in liberal society is for people to fret endlessly about their symptoms—to have a lust for therapy. Unphilosophical self-absorption is not a pretty picture, and gives a foothold to power/knowledge, whether or not power/knowledge causes it. But it is too much to expect of people in an individualist culture not to be nervous about themselves. They have been taught to take themselves seriously, to take themselves as ends rather than as parts or means or tools or weapons or resources. To say it again, they have been encouraged to make up their world as they go along. The lust for therapy is a vice, but the vice of an essentially serious disposition.

In sum, Foucault's analysis, for all its power, is strategically incomplete. His partiality is all the more damaging, given his apparent endorsement of the Deleuzian project to "ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behavior." The reality of liberal society is much more complex than he allows. Democratic culture contains more than the effects of fabricated individuality, even in reactionary times. In fact, the

techniques of fabrication—of encouraged avowal and disclosure, and of technical training and care—may help supply some of the resources that enable resistance to fabrication itself and that can also lead to advantages apart from resistance like greater refinement, even greater depth. Fabrication can help to create a condition far better than its practitioners intend.

If the Emersonian theory of democratic individuality is an aspiration, it nevertheless aspires to an intensification of what is already present, if often confusedly or usually intermittently, in a rights-based democracy. Even if we confine ourselves to phenomena of self-expression or self-assertion, we find not only or mainly helplessly fabricated selves or souls, but a more complex situation. Foucault does not deal adequately with the vitality and creativity of various popular movements of resistance which originate in the will to express something that is being blocked, shunned, or repressed, whether or not one wants to call it "real." It is really painful not to express it. Foucault does after all insist on saying (in *Discipline and Punish*) that the soul is no illusion; it has a reality. "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society [he is here referring to Althusser's thesis in "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses"]; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'." Power "produces reality." Foucault, however, is not historical enough. The liberationist movements of the 1960s and after were and are fighting against categorial oppressions that rest on a conventional aestheticism related to the bad aestheticism to which I referred earlier: I mean here the aestheticism of duality—whether Manichaean, or an attitude a little less stark but still averse to nuance, hybrid, and indeterminacy.

The oppression is real, even if its foundation and pretext are not. There is a commendable individualism in the will to stop being ashamed of one's arbitrary or unchosen characteristics, either the most superficial (like skin color) or the most tenacious (like desire) or the most culturally variable (like one's

place in the sexual division of roles). Obsession with these characteristics is as old as humanity; modern power/knowledge did not originate either the characteristics or the obsession with them. The liberationist movement in the 1960s was not merely a lightweight response to minor and short-lived complaints. And just as it grew in the soil of rights-based individualism, so it continues to disseminate its influence, despite its crudities and its defeats. Feminism, gay rights, certain racial assertions, and other social movements are faithful to the spirit of rights-based individualism, precisely because the will to end shame is more important than any further ideal aspiration. The group affirmation is an act of resistance to stigmatized identities and functions, more than it is a claim to positive virtue or value. When, however, there is such a claim, it is best understood as compensatory and hence temporary. If the claim insists on being more, then is the time to think that victim-souls are cooperating to their hurt with their fabrication.

To discredit rights-based individualism is necessarily to strengthen all those forces in modern life that work to render people docile. If, therefore, rights-based individualism may, in some respects, cooperate with these forces, it holds within itself great resources to resist docility. Where else can those resources be found? To what can appeal be made if not to individuals? And surely the really great sources of modern docility are not found in individualist feelings and practices, but in anti-individualist ones: fascism, religious fanaticism, exclusive group identity, state socialism, and power-statism. Foucault does not make this point, and discourages others from making it. He seduces some into thinking that fabricated individuality (if that is what it is) is yet worse than the collectivist horrors, while he himself seems to hate modernity so much as to prefer (if only implicitly) the old order.

The last word on rights-based individualism cannot be that it is implanted only by suggestion and manifested in confessional anxiety; or that it is induced only by indoctrination and then encouraged to manifest itself in safe and programmed ways; or

that it is fabricated only in order to facilitate a deceived but eager subjection; or that it is fabricated only in order to be mobilized for systematic productive purposes, and enlisted in the attempt to abort the formation of an insurrectionary group identity. Foucault's various theses catch aspects of the painful truth and comprise an invaluable cautionary doctrine. If insisted on exclusively, however, they turn into an ideological caricature. The fabricated individual is not merely fabricated; the "enslaved sovereign" is neither enslaved nor sovereign.

Defenders of rights-based individualism must hold to the premise that there is something worse than the wrongs and the deficiencies that the communitarian critics point to; and that is docility. A docile people is a people fit for mobilization; and the purposes of mobilization in advanced countries tend to be destructive and irrational. Only rights-based individualism provides a steady perspective from which to protest this mobilization. On the other hand—contra Foucault—another premise is that rights-based individualism is preponderantly in opposition to docility and not its best friend in disguise. Admirers of Foucault should worry more about communitarianism than individualism. Indeed, they should work to rehabilitate individualism.

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