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JOUVENEL, ROUSSEAU AND THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNITY IN MODERN SOCIETY

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With the decomposition of western civilization, we find those bonds which unite society breaking asunder. In any healthy society men must have a strong sense of commitment to a common purpose and a desire to work for the common welfare of their community. This has become increasingly difficult in contemporary western society which has witnessed a shocking breakdown in the spirit of community within the state. In this fine essay, Dr. Luckey examines the thought of Bertrand de Jouvenel, who sees the growing problem of the individual's alienation and the subsequent disintegration of the sense of community.



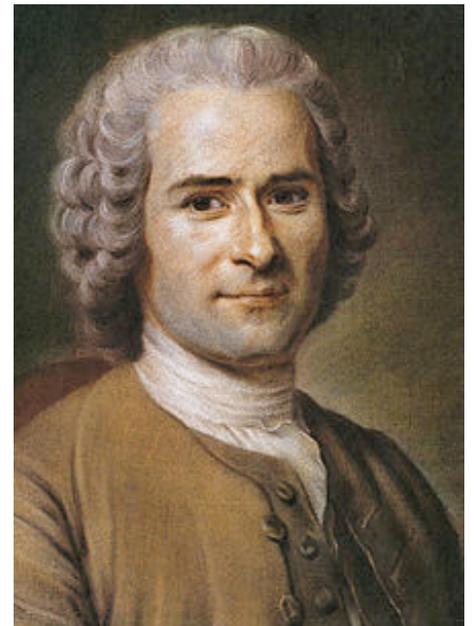
ESPIE THE FACT THAT FOR GENERATIONS THE VARIOUS EXISTING FORMS OF popular government have been extolled by politicians, scholars and patriotic citizens as being the most reliable safeguards of freedom, in recent years these same governmental systems have come under increasing criticism from all sources for being oppressive and tyrannical. Outside of the ever-present “lunatic fringe,” the American citizen, for example, generally has a great distrust of his government and its institutions and frequently expresses an outright hatred for its leaders. Usually this distrustful attitude is blamed on the specific policies of a certain regime,¹ but

the question as to whether the causes are more deeply rooted is virtually never asked.

That the problem of distrust of government and the ruthlessness used in politics is not linked to a specific regime and its policies is a subject with which Bertrand de Jouvenel deals in an insightful way. The problem, he says, lies in the nature of modernity and those social characteristics peculiar to modern society which have contributed to social breakdown, and the dissolution of the spirit of community in the state. But an understanding of Jouvenel's thesis can only be gotten by an examination of Jouvenel's interpretation of Jean-Jacques Rousseau from whom Jouvenel received his basic insight into the problem.

JOUVENEL, ROUSSEAU, AND MODERN SOCIETY

Peter Gay, in his introduction to Ernst Cassirer's book, *The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau*² reviews the multiplicity of interpretations given to the writings of Rousseau. Bertrand de Jouvenel has given us yet another interpretation. But Jouvenel has called Rousseau “my greatest teacher,”³ and although Michael



Rousseau

Dillon attempts to outline the major similarities between the thought of Jouvanel and that of Rousseau,⁴ I intend to examine this subject more deeply.

Jouvanel states that Rousseau was mainly concerned with discovering methods by which man may “feel at peace with himself and in trusting harmony with his fellows” in the midst of a development and evolution of society into more complex and industrial forms.⁵ The reason for Jouvanel’s emphasis on this particular aspect of Rousseau’s thought stems from a similarity in their conceptions of modern society. One gets a first glimpse at Rousseau’s perceptions in the opening lines of *The Social Contract* where he says: “Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains.”⁶ Jouvanel tells us that Rousseau found in man an innate goodness which is corrupted and stifled as society evolves. He quotes Rousseau’s own *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques: Dialogues* where we see Rousseau himself reflecting on his own work: “I saw throughout.. .that nature has made man happy but that society corrupts him and causes his misery. Take the Emile... it is nothing other than a treatise on the spontaneous goodness of man, meant to show how vice and error, foreign to his constitution, invade it from the outside and deteriorate it progressively.”⁷ In other words, Jouvanel sees Rousseau’s Social Contract not as a prescription for some perfect society or for a Republic toward which man evolves, but as a “clinical analysis of political deterioration.”⁸

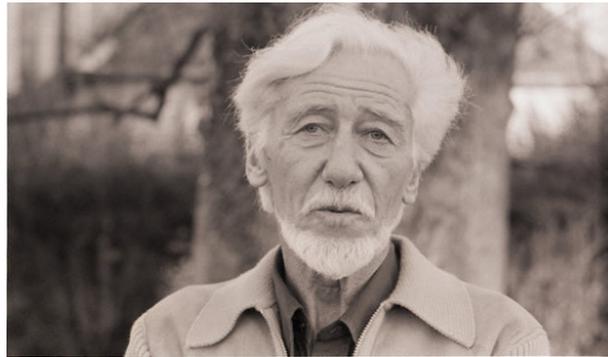
To what kinds of deterioration is Rousseau referring? The following explanation is offered by Jouvanel. According to Rousseau, Jouvanel says, as society evolves and social relationships become more complex, an increase of government activity becomes inevitable. Ultimately this will lead to the centralization of governmental power and authority in a few hands, which would be the opposite of democracy defined as a form of government where everyone would have at least some hand in the formation of ruling policy.⁹ As Jouvanel says: “Rousseau, while sketching social evolution with a keen pencil, also painted it in dark colours.. .warning against the dangers of progress.”¹⁰

Jouvanel asserts that Rousseau was mainly concerned with the mores that are characteristic of the small

community.¹¹ In a small community there is a general agreement on the conduct that the community may expect from the individual toward his fellows. In addition, in a small community, each individual’s strength in relation to the formation of public policy (or the expression of the general will) is greater than it would be in a larger community. So, for example, in a state of one-thousand people the individual is one one-thousandth of the whole, while in New York City he is one eight-millionth of the whole and thus he has less personal influence in politics. As Jouvanel summarizes it:

The individual lost in a great crowd of citizens feels less intensely his pride and sense of responsibility in participating and when, as a subject, he receives his orders, they weigh heavily on him. He feels himself less free. Then, as this change of feeling makes him less well disposed towards the orders he is given, the repressive force must be increased.¹²

To put the argument in another way, the smaller a part of the sovereign people a person becomes, the more the laws are made for him by others. Man feels alienated: “When I am thus lost, I no longer recognize my own impulsion behind the pressure I feel, but only the pressure of other people.” Thus, according to Jouvanel’s interpretation of Rousseau, largeness in the state is accompanied by loss of liberty.¹³



Bertrand de Jouvenel

Rousseau expresses his love for rural communities and his contempt for nations striving to attain fame and fortune and therefore misery.¹⁴ His object, then, as Rousseau himself explains it, “could not be to bring back large populations and big states to the initial simplicity as some have charged him with attempting but only to arrest, if possible, the progress of those small and isolated enough for their preservation from the perfection of society and the deterioration of the species.”¹⁵ After all, since man is naturally good, and the progress and development of society have led men “to hate each other proportionately to the criss-crossing of their interests,”¹⁶ one reasonable solution would be to try to halt the same progress and development in states not yet affected.¹⁷

Jouvanel himself does not discuss whether man’s

nature is good, nor does he condemn modernity outright. He does see, however, certain serious difficulties which have come with modern society and which need to be understood.

Jouvenel isolated the concept of *efficacite* (translated as efficacy or efficiency) for scrutiny. Recalling the times of the European discovery of the Americas, he reminds us that those newly discovered societies, although technologically not as advanced as EUROPEAN SOCIETY, WERE NEVERTHELESS “PLUS RAFFINEES” (in the sense of being less oriented toward individual self-aggrandizement) thus imparting the idea that technological advancement per se may not be a quality of a good civilization.¹⁸

How is *efficacite* described by Jouvenel? Jouvenel writes: “The principle of *efficacite* is an instrumental principle: rational man, having been given a goal, organizes his action in view of that goal, subordinating the means to the end...” But what is that end to which the means are directed?

Jouvenel says that *efficacite* is a principle developed originally in Europe which has as its ostensible goal economic enrichment based on increasingly efficient methods of production. But *efficacite*, because it is oriented to economic progress alone, tends to deny all other values: “If one rejects all cultural values, one has no means to appreciate what is necessary to seek after, and what remains is the search for the development of power... (W)ithout values determining to what one aspires, it is completely naked power which becomes the object of the will.”¹⁹ In other words, if economic enrichment is one’s only goal, a reversal of values will take place such that this economic one will determine all other values in all other spheres. This ultimately boils down to the exalting of power as the highest value, in terms of which all other values are chosen. As Jouvenel writes: Power was no longer perceived as the possibility of realizing that which is suitable, but that which is suitable is finding itself determined by that which augments power.”²⁰

But what does “power” mean to Jouvenel in this context, and is it perceived by Jouvenel as an evil? Jouvenel describes the results of *efficacite* and its orientation to technical progress as follows: “Technical progress is essentially a manifestation of human power, an occasion for man to admire himself, to practice this self-worship (autolatry) which tends more and more to become the

religion of industrial society.”²¹ Hence, this *efficacite* is destructive of cultural values. Westerners, Jouvenel says, have a tendency to judge “underdeveloped” countries by the standards of *efficacite*. So, for example, a Westerner would blame the inefficient economic methods of these countries on the erroneous and outdated beliefs of the populace, which, in order to “better” themselves, they must eliminate. But what is not realized is that the citizens of the underdeveloped land not only do not value Western *efficacite*, but “they take pleasure in the manner of producing independent of its utility strictly relative to the goal.”²²

This helps to explain, Jouvenel tells us, why the West has been so conquest oriented:

The epoch of the caravel was also that of cannon powder. When technical progress began the European concurrently showed a new assurance and arrogance with regard to non-European peoples. The European was afraid of the Mongol, afraid of the Turk, now it is they who are afraid and this is not the effect of his technology but rather on one hand his successful technology and on the other hand his fashion to impose overseas, what amounted to a new attitude.²³



Efficacite is not limited to Western countries. The reason for this is that it may be exported. This, according to Jouvenel, explains both Russian and Chinese Communist imperialism and their success in controlling their own people. At first Stalin realized, and later persuaded Lenin, that since the communist revolution had not taken hold of industrial societies as planned, Russia herself would be forced to become strong enough to export the revolution. This was done by the adoption of *efficacite*; now the goals of the leaders became industrialization of the country and the build-up of military hardware and a spirit of conquest.²⁴

But the spirit of *efficacite* also has its detrimental effects within a society. Jouvenel admits that mechanization has helped man in many ways, and is the cause of an improved economic condition as well as an augmentation of man’s power. But it prevents man from or-

dering his own life and is destructive of his possessions: "Machines are without doubt created with man in mind, but men come to be ordered, organized by reason of the machines."²⁵

Of what is Jouvanel speaking here? First of all, the intensive destructiveness of war machines and material could have come about only as the product of an age whose religion was *efficacite*. Thus, the ordinary citizen lives under constant threat of massive destruction unprecedented in history.²⁶

Secondly, the coming of the industrial age brought with it the condition such that man in general seemed no longer to work for himself (farming his own land, for example) but was now engaged in working for the benefit of others, using the facilities owned by others, and having income under the control of another. The goals of the modern person's job are unrelated to his well-being and thus the worker feels alienated.²⁷

As Rousseau felt that "therefore one should not so distribute employments as to put the best man in the place where he can be most efficient, but so as to put men in positions where they can be as good and as happy as possible..."²⁸ so in a similar way, Jouvanel addresses himself to the plight of the worker in contemporary society. He says that the truly happy man is the one who prizes his job because he is permitted to exercise his faculties properly, as he sees fit and is best able. He whose faculties are at the mercy of the necessities of production is unhappy. The conditions of contemporary industrial society are unbearable; the stench, the noise, the crowded conditions, jostling, living in perilous surroundings, and alienation (in Marx's sense) all contribute to the dissolution of society. Jouvanel thus strongly decries the time, effort and cost of putting men on the moon, while doing virtually nothing to improve men's lot here.²⁹

Even the "science" of economics is mis-directed. The economists, basing their evaluation of a country's state of well-being (called "welfare" by Jouvanel) on the cost of goods and services rendered, do not take into account the reason for the level of GNP. Consider the following example given by Jouvanel:

In a neighborhood well known to me a river ran, clean and pleasant, affording to the riparians drinking water and a swimming pool. A tannery was set up on the river, making it unfit for drinking and sport. The contamination of the river required

the rebuilding of a costly aqueduct to bring pure water from a distant source. Now in national accounting, the services afforded by the tannery and those afforded by the aqueduct are added together as two distinct gains. But surely this is wrong. The building of the water pipe proved necessary only in order to restore the situation before the building of the tannery.³⁰

This attitude, that well-being is seen only in terms of the amount of goods and services, affects government. Governments finance expensive public school systems or massive navies—things that would never be financed at that level entirely by voluntary contribution because the populace itself does not want them to that degree. We tend, Jouvanel says, to value numbers of cars instead of climate, which is free and not measured in terms of dollars and cents.³¹ This has led to the ignoring of those things which are of real value, and the recalling of Rousseau's longing for the small agricultural community where, according to Jouvanel, most of these problems would not exist.

CORRECTING THE PROBLEMS OF MODERN SOCIETY; THE SOLUTIONS OF MABLY AND ROUSSEAU

Given the view that modern society, far from leading men to a fuller enjoyment of life, is a source of social dissolution and discontentment, one tends to seek solutions to remedy the problem. It is helpful at this point to describe two possible ways to proceed.

The Abbe Gabriel Bonnet de Mably (1719-1785), whose writings are very much ignored today, had a distinct influence on the French Revolution. His writings can be used as an example of one of these proposed remedies. Mably felt that man had a natural impulse for association and natural affection for his fellows. Mably wrote: "He (God) has placed in our soul general social qualities... which invite us, by the attraction of pleasure or the fear of pain, to approach one another, to unite with one another, to love, comfort and serve one another and to make reciprocal sacrifices."³² For Mably, natural law consisted in the law of equality among men.³³ Men have the same needs and faculties. But, like Rousseau, Mably saw in the growth of society the cause of all present-day evils, because that growth obscures men's natural tendencies. For example, the development of separate nations killed man's tendency to unite and co-operate. Whitfield

explains Mably's meaning as follows: "These national differences were the cause of early wars. It is to them that class distinctions are traceable, for the conquered became serfs. Avarice and ambition inevitably followed and laid the foundation of future ruin."³⁴

Concerning man's natural equality, Mably felt that this was obscured by the convention of private property.³⁵ Since this convention was the source of all the evils affecting modern society, causing avarice, it must be combatted.³⁶ How? One must assure absolute economic equality.³⁷ This was to be done, according to Mably, by state-enforced redistribution of wealth. J.L. Talmon says that thinkers like Mably would normally have difficulty in reconciling the desire for freedom with the strict governmentally enforced remedies demanded in solution to the problems caused by modern society. The key to explaining why the question of reconciling aggressive state action with freedom never arose in the minds of Mably and others is that these thinkers saw "not in terms of men as they are, but as they were meant to be, given the proper conditions. In so far as they are at variance with the absolute ideal they can be ignored, coerced or intimidated into conforming, without any real violation of the democratic principle being involved."³⁸ In this "totalitarian democracy," the "state is precisely defined, and is treated as a matter of immediate urgency, a challenge for direct action, an immediate event."³⁹ Therefore, "no one was so radical in his demand for state control and interference with trade as was Mably..."⁴⁰

There is a difficulty with Jouvenel's interpretation of Rousseau. According to Jouvenel, Rousseau never intended to attempt a radical reform of advanced societies,⁴¹ but "Rousseau had more sense of history (than reformers like Plato), and his point that nothing could be done elsewhere than in Corsica proves that he had worked his illusion down to a minimum."⁴² On the other hand, we see Rousseau first expressing his hatred for the rich and for luxury as did Mably, and also, as did Mably, recommending heavy taxes on the rich and on "unnecessary professions" such as dancers.⁴³

The resolution of this conflict is beyond the

scope of this study. But it can be accurately stated that Bertrand de Jouvenel himself strongly objects to aggressive state action like that recommended by Mably (and seemingly, Rousseau).⁴⁴ The point that is relevant here is that Jouvenel perceives that Rousseau's solution to the confusion of modern society is either withdrawal (as Rousseau recommends in the *Emile* for those living in advanced states), or to try to prevent less advanced states from reaching a deeper stage of corruption.

The above recommendations made by Rousseau, withdrawal, or the prevention of the coming of modernity, are not immediately helpful to Jouvenel. One could recommend them for today's citizen, but that would not solve the problem, nor would it give insight into the causes of the current difficulties facing our society. Hence, Jouvenel continues where Rousseau leaves off. He tries to identify exactly what is the main source of corruption in modern society and then attempts to develop some solutions suited to our conditions.

JOUVENEL'S VIEW

Jouvenel considers the conception of a "noble savage" acting completely independent of others outside civil society unrealistic, and that some type of society has always been necessary.⁴⁵ But this does not mean that Jou-

venel feels that all ideas of a state of nature are useless and inaccurate. Those who posited the idea that society was artificial, that it was mere convention, did, according to Jouvenel, hit upon a truth that, when understood properly, gives one great insight into the nature of social relations. Jouvenel tells us that although society was not "made" one fine day, "it is true that it is made and un-

made every day. And the myth of instantaneous creation enabled them to bring out in sharpest relief the conditions on which social life is possible..."⁴⁶

Jouvenel explains these conditions of social existence as follows. In the Hobbesian state of war, we see men clashing as a result of their appetites. As they emerged from that state of war they voluntarily bridled those appetites in order to achieve social harmony. Despite the fact that the state of nature is a myth, in civil



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society a certain daily assent, even if muddled, is necessary on the part of each person to bridle the appetites of each. As Jouvanel summarizes it: "It is enough if this hypothesis demonstrates that the curbing of the ego and the awareness of the social whole are essential to a viable society."⁴⁷

His meaning here is clarified by the following quotation: "It is better to picture society as artificial than to call it natural (in the sense of spontaneous), for only so can the point be made effectively that art is necessary to its support and development."⁴⁸ The real purpose of those who postulated the formation of society as an act of the will was to put us on guard against social dissolution."⁴⁹

In other words, individuals in society must make a positive effort at co-operation or else, if not, Hobbes' state of war or something similar will result. A society must constantly choose to avoid disaggregation.⁵⁰

This constant will to society depends on one of the most important themes in Jouvanel's writing—the affection for the social whole, or social friendship.⁵¹ Just as Rousseau's purpose was to be "in trusting harmony with his fellows," so Jouvanel holds very dear the notion that society should be a true community. One must feel an awareness of a "We" in society so that not only do we feel affection for those persons we know, but for those persons who are unknown to us, yet are members of that "we".⁵²

Jouvanel explains:

We can consider the whole society as 'friend' despite the fact that we know only a few people, if we look on the fictitious person of the 'group' like the intermediary of a friend. Through this friend we gain affection for his family which we never met, thus through affection for the group—we have affection for each individual we meet or have occasion to contact.⁵³

The affection for the group, meaning in this case the whole society, has a distinct purpose, however. Since Jouvanel is concerned with the harmony in modern society (which Rousseau felt could not exist in modern society) he turns to the notion of obligations that each one of us has to his fellows. Jouvanel says that "the 'we' breeds obligations which are feelings of linkage."⁵⁴ Reminding us of the moral harmony of the small community as

desired by Rousseau, Jouvanel says that while many of these obligations arise from contractual relations, most are based on the folkways, manners, religious beliefs and other points of consensus in the society.⁵⁵ Since there is some kind of consensus among the members of this society regarding their behavior, each individual has a certain sense of assurance that his fellows will perform the commonly recognized obligations. In other words, almost all members of the society can reasonably be expected to discharge their obligations in a certain way, so that there is little social disruption. Hence, confidence in others is built up and "human activity can develop."⁵⁶

Jouvanel appears to have left the content of these obligations to the particular society in which one lives. Like Rousseau, Jouvanel is trying to preserve society from dissolution: he is not trying necessarily to recommend that the social bond be based on any particular tenets.⁵⁷ This is why he selected *efficacite* for criticism. The attitude of *efficacite in itself* is destructive of social friendship.

If it is true that Jouvanel greatly values social friendship, correspondingly he greatly fears social insecurity or instability. Thus, Jouvanel will be interested in social and political institutions which encourage social stability.⁵⁸

This desire for social stability leads Jouvanel into a discussion of what he calls the "social state." "The common good," he says, "consists in the social state itself and its successive advances."⁵⁹ He then attempts to define the social state, but the definition itself needs elaboration. The only reason, Jouvanel says, that the institution we call "the state" is successful in getting men to obey its commands, is that there are a number of individuals who co-operate with the directives of the state and thus serve as its instruments. The social state therefore is defined by Jouvanel as a condition in which these co-operating individuals use their powers not to hurt other citizens, but "to bring mutual advantage."⁶⁰ The social state is characterized by a more or less high degree of "reciprocal trustfulness" among the citizens.⁶¹

This trustfulness is a valuable component of society because we base all our actions on confidence in others. As Jouvanel says:

The condition of a man would be miserable... if at every moment he had to be on guard against the unforeseeable action of every other man. Our

progress in and toward the human condition (in the sense of accomplishing our goals) presupposes that we live within a circle of peace and friendship, in which not only do we not anticipate attacks but we expect to be succoured in need.⁶²

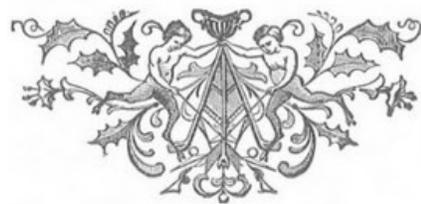
We make all our calculations for the accomplishment of our goals because, and to the extent that, we are able to anticipate the behavior and reactions of others. If the behavior of others becomes less and less regular and predictable, our own lives and plans become chaotic; yet the “miracle” of the social state is that “my calculations, though calling for the intervention of a very large number of free agents, can yet be made as if there were no question of free agents at all.” Life would then afford me a wide range of certainties upon which to base my actions.⁶³

In modern industrial societies, as has been said, there is a problem of the dissolution of this social bond. Jouvanel describes the process of that breakdown as follows. In societies where there is little agreement on the obligations of citizens, “new situations and new ideas create the feeling of new obligations due from others. If the idea which I form of another’s obligations does not coincide with his own, I feel uncertainty as to his conduct, which leads to irritation on my part and determination to impose on him as obligation what I conceive it to be.”⁶⁴ But this uncertainty leads men to seek authoritative definitions from the state of the legitimate expectations which they should have of one another’s behavior, and the government willingly grants that request.⁶⁵

On the other hand, Jouvanel says that man’s freedom is “a freedom to discharge his obligations by his own choice and in his own way...” It is characterized by “voluntary action following a necessary judgement of one’s conscience.” There, Jouvanel contends, “unfreedom” exists when my judgment is overruled by external judgments regarding my obligations.⁶⁶ If this is true, each individual who disagrees with the “officially” declared set of obligations will feel oppressed. As Jouvanel says, paraphrasing Rousseau: “The only morally valid basis of command is the ethical harmony which the command expresses...”⁶⁷ Lacking this harmony, command becomes an imposition of the will of others upon my own. The more complex the society becomes, the worse this condition becomes, and the stronger the governmental authority must become to get dissenters to comply, and to protect those who agree with the governmental position

from the unsettling behavior of those who do not.⁶⁸ When a citizen no longer finds freedom in the ethical harmony of the community, freedom becomes a matter of “jurisdiction.” By this Jouvanel means that the affected citizen now realizes that his freedom is intact only in places where the government does not rule one’s activities, such as one’s home.

But this is only the beginning for the oppressed individual. Jouvanel states: “The quest for the climate of trustfulness raises in the mind the picture of a closed, narrow circle of neighbors who are very much alike, who value highly a type which each strives to realize and who are very proud of a common denominator which all wish to maintain.”⁶⁹ This is the source of utopian thought: “The thinker who finds himself most in contradiction with his time is most prone to compensate for his isolation by making ideal pictures of harmony.”⁷⁰ But this is not limited to the intellectual elite. Jouvanel says: “It is quite conceivable that the sense of freedom may be satisfied in a very closely knit organization.”⁷¹ That small society retains for man “an infinite attraction,”⁷² fulfilling “the psychological requirements of Everyman, who feels a nostalgia for the tribe.”⁷³ Hence, man seeks freedom and security in the small aggregate. The aggregate, composed of likeminded persons, “renews his strength”⁷⁴ in the sense that he now has others to defend him and aid him in carrying out his projects and obligations. Jouvanel states: “Man on finding himself again in a small, closely knit community, displays extraordinary vigor. Therein is a principle common to successes of most varying kinds: those of communist cells, those also of the English aristocracy educated at schools in which the Spartan tradition lingers.”⁷⁵



Threatened man, however, although he finds some freedom and security in the small aggregate, still realizes that his freedom and security end when he is forced to deal with the rest of society. The behavior of the members of his group may be certain and agreeable to him, but not the behavior of the rest of society. Man’s dream, then, becomes this: within my aggregate, there is a general agreement as to the principles by which we carry out our obligations, and because of this harmony, freedom reigns. Therefore, if I somehow could get the whole

society to agree on these principles, the pristine harmony of the small community could be restored. Jouvanel calls this process the imposition of Icaria on Babylon.⁷⁶

But Jouvanel feels that this process is fraught with danger. If the rest of the society refuses to co-operate or agree, the visionaries of the small aggregate will attempt to take “total charge of society so that they may mold it closely to their desire; therein is tyranny.”⁷⁷ The group reasons: “All we have to do is to capture the government, and bring our principles into authority. Then we shall have a good and free society, for all will follow voluntarily dictates which are excellent. Only in fact they won’t ...we shall have to use force upon those who were not sharers of our Icarian ideal.”⁷⁸

COMMENT ON PLURALISM

To summarize, according to Jouvanel, modern society is threatened by the decomposition of the social bond. This decomposition is a major stimulus to the formation of small, closely knit aggregates. The aim of many, if not most, of these aggregates is the restoration of the social bond either by persuading the government to adopt their views, or by assuming outright control of that government for the purpose of imposing those views upon the larger society.

At least one criticism of Jouvanel’s theory can be made here. The distinction between groups which are formed out of that desire for freedom, harmony and security, and those which are formed to accomplish short term or particularized plans is not clearly formulated by Jouvanel. On the other hand, it is fairly obvious that a) Jouvanel feels the existence of groups of both kinds in society is natural and necessary, but b) that the groups which have security as their purpose are found to be more abundant in modern industrial society, or in societies in the process of moral dissolution. Hence, both types of groups may exist side by side, although they differ in function and intent and are symptomatic of different things.

The role of government in a society in which groups persistently pressure the government to adopt their views is seen as a corruption of “democratic government” by both Jouvanel and political scientists like Theodore Lowi. Lowi says that since people no longer tend to accept governmental decisions as obligatory in themselves, governments have attempted to have their

decisions accepted by “parcelling out to private parties the power to make public policy.”⁷⁹ In other words, in order to get public support for itself and/or its decisions, government allows the most active and powerful groups to make policy, or at least to participate extensively in the policy-making process.⁸⁰ This leads to demoralization because there is no notion of a “right” or “just” in governmental decisions.⁸¹

Jouvanel approaches the problem of group conflict in politics in much the same way. Ambitious groups desiring changes in public policy “can no more tolerate a Power which is not theirs, than they can admit limitations to one which is. Hence the idea that it is not enough for individual sovereignties to be guaranteed against Power... they must admit no power which has not issued from themselves...” If the group gains control of the government, how could the government not rule in their favor? Thus, Jouvanel says: “Let the sum of private liberties set in its place a new authority, which of its nature cannot turn traitor to those who gave it life.”⁸²

Thus the process in totalitarian states where one group has in fact assumed command is similar in nature to the process in the modern liberal state where the government is not a “strong, neutral” one, but one in which “systems of legal dictates are bent to and fro by the pressure of group wills”.⁸³

As a result, the government no longer has a will of its own, and public policy is no longer the will of a ruler. In this sense government is “powerless.” This is because the complexity of the relationships in modern society requires a proliferation of governmental officials and agencies to regulate the social conflicts. But this has the effect of producing a conflict of wills in the government itself, so that agreement on policy is less the result of the “government’s will” and more the result of the clash of forces inside and outside of the governmental structure. This is true despite the fact that the policy arrived at in such a manner is enforced with vigor due to the rise of government power in general.

Jouvanel says that Rousseau predicted this state of affairs. Paraphrasing Rousseau, Jouvanel writes: “If the magistrates are increased in number... this introduces a diversity of wills into the body of the government, and, the more friction there is within the government itself, the less energetically it can act on the subject.”⁸⁴ As Lowi puts it: “Liberal (in the sense of interest group liberalism)

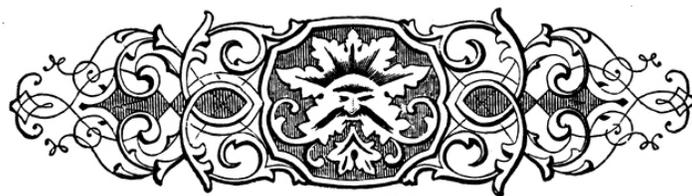
leaders do not wield the authority of democratic government with the resoluteness of men certain of the legitimacy of their positions, the integrity of their institutions, or the justness of the programs they serve.”⁸⁵

Jouvenel feels that this problem is not easily resolved because the whole locus of related events encourages the activities which produced it in the first place. This is because the edicts of government become less compelling the more they appear to be the outcome of some sort of compromise among the contending elements and “when the subject feels that such edicts might have been different if the balance of forces within the government had been a little bit altered...”⁸⁶

The role of government in this situation is quite ambiguous. It appears that the government will be placed

in one of the following positions; it will be unable to command, its commands will be a hodgepodge designed to pacify contending groups, or, lastly, and in Jouvenel’s eyes, most dangerously, one group will be able to take over to produce a tyrannical rule.

It is highly probable that the average citizen recognizes the existence of the prevailing situation and acts accordingly.⁸⁷ Such a recognition may ultimately lead to a political apathy on the part of the ordinary citizens, and to a certain ruthlessness or “maximalism” on the part or those who are politically active, especially if the first two of the above three situations prevail.⁸⁸ It is at this point that the citizen, the politician and the political scientist must seriously re-examine the nation’s politics to discover how that spirit of community, so necessary to a political system, may be recaptured.⁸⁹



NOTES

1See for example, Robert G. Lehnen, *American Institutions, Political Opinion and Public Policy* (Hinsdale, Illinois: The Dryden Press, 1976), chapter 4-7.

2(Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963), pp. 3-32.

3Jouvenel quoted in Michael Dillon, “The Sensitive Citizen: Modernity and Authority in the Political Thought of Bertrand de Jouvenel,” *The Political Science Reviewer*, V (Fall, 1975), 3.

4Ibid., 3-12.

5Jouvenel, “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist,” *Yale French Studies*, XXVIII (1961-1962), 94. This is substantially the same article as his “Rousseau, Evolutioniste pessimiste,” in *Jouvenel, Du principat et autres reflections politiques* (Paris: Hachette, 1972), pp. 251-266.

6Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. by Maurice Cranston (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1969), p. 49.

7Jouvenel quoting Rousseau’s *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques* (Troisieme Dialogue) XXI, 129-130 in “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist,” 35.

8Jouvenel, “Rousseau’s Theory of the Forms of Government,” in *Hobbes and Rousseau: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. By Maurice Cranston and Richard S. Peters (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1972), p. 487, and hereafter referred to as “Forms of Government.”

9Ibid.

10Jouvenel, “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist,” 84.

11Ibid.

12Jouvenel, “Forms of Government,” p. 493.

13Ibid., p. 492.

14Rousseau, *Emile*, Bk. VII, 45-9, quoted by Jouvenel in “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist,” 87.

15Rousseau *juge de Jean-Jacques* (Troisieme Dialogue), XXI, 129-30, quoted by Jouvenel, “Forms of Government,” p. 487.

16Rousseau in *Discourse on the Origin and the Foundation of Inequality Among Mankind*, note 7 of original quoted by Jouvenel, “Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist,” 94-95.

17Jouvenel reminds us that Rousseau felt that the prescriptions of the Social Contract could only be carried out in a place like Corsica. See Jouvenel, "Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist," pp. 93-94, and "A discussion of Freedom," *Cambridge Journal*, VI (September, 1953), 722.

18Jouvenel, "Organisation du travail et aménagement de l'existence," in his *Arcadie: essais sur le mieux vivre* (Paris: SEDEIS, 1968), p. 24.

19Ibid., p. 48.

20Ibid.

21Ibid., p. 36, my emphasis.

22Ibid., p. 49.

23Ibid., p. 40.

24Ibid., pp. 49-50. Cf., Lenin, "On the Slogan for a United States of Europe" in *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton, 1975), pp. 203.

25Ibid., p. 53.

26Ibid., p. 54.

27Jouvenel, "L'homme et son travail," in *Arcadie*, pp. 87, 88 et seq.

28Jouvenel paraphrasing and summarizing Rousseau in "Rousseau the Pessimistic Evolutionist," 88-89.

29Jouvenel, "Efficacite et savoir-vivre," in *Arcadie*, pp. 111-112.

30Jouvenel, "The Political Economy of Gratuity," *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, XXV (Autumn, 1959), 521.

31Jouvenel, "The Idea of Welfare," *Cambridge Journal*, V (August, 1952), 647-661.

32Mably, *De la legislation ou principes des loix*, Book I, Chapter 1, p. 29, hereafter referred to as *De la legislation*, quoted in Ernest A. Whitfield, *Gabriel Bonnet de Mably* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1930), p. 255.

33See Mably, *De la legislation*, Book I, Chapter 2, pp. 43 and 53.

34Whitfield, *Gabriel Bonnet de Mably*, pp. 64-65.

35Ibid., p. 71. See Mably, *De la legislation*, Book I, Chapter 2, p. 64.

36Mably, *De la legislation*, Book I, Chapter 4, p. 110.

37Whitfield, *Gabriel Bonnet de Mably*, p. 198.

38J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), p. 3.

39Ibid., p. 2.

40Ibid., p. 61.

41Rousseau offered no recipe for turning the government of "a large and complex society into a democracy..." Jouvenel, "Forms of Government," p. 487.

42Jouvenel, "A Discussion of Freedom," 722.

43Rousseau, "Political Economy," Denis Diderot's *The Encyclopedia: Selections*, ed. and trans. by Stephen Gendzier (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), pp. 197-198; cf., pp. 195 bottom and 197 middle.

44See, for example, Jouvenel, *On Power: Its Nature and the History of Its Growth*, trans. by J.F. Huntington (Boston: Beacon Press, 1962), Bks. V and VI.

45Jouvenel, *Sovereignty: An Inquiry Into the Political Good*, trans. by J.F. Huntington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 261-2.

46Ibid., p. 113.

47Ibid., pp. 113-114.

48Ibid., p. 114. Jouvenel appears to be making a questionable distinction. For Hobbes it is true that society is intentionally created by men to rectify the state of incessant war. But he seems to imply that those who say that the society is natural (as do thinkers in the Aristotelian tradition) also say that it is spontaneous, which they do not. Burke, for instance, writes: "The state of civil society.. is the state of Nature, and much more truly so than a savage and incoherent mode of life. For man is by nature reasonable; and he is never perfectly in his natural state, but when he is placed where reason may be best cultivated and most predominates. Art is Man's Nature." "Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs." *Edmund Burke on Revolution*, ed. by Robert A. Smith (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 169, my emphasis.

49Jouvenel, *Sovereignty*, p. 114.

50Ibid.

51Ibid., Chapter 8.

52Ibid., p. 115.

53Ibid.

54Ibid.

55Ibid., p. 120-121.

56Ibid., p. 115.

57In explaining the concept of Rousseau's "general will," and why the particular wills are not the same as that general will, Jouvenel says that the general will can only be understood as an 'ideal will' which is outside the wills of all or of each and which gives an overall purpose to the whole society. He calls this "the motive force" of society and says that it operates regardless of whether the individual members of that society are conscious of that force or its end. Hence, if there is a general will at all it will always be for the overall public advantage (whatever that public advantage may be). Here it is evident why Jouvenel prefers to abstain from stating any substantive principles upon which any society must be founded in order to preserve the social bond. Jouvenel, *On Power*, p. 50.

58Jouvenel writes: "For that reason a religion which stimulates the sentiment of obligation in general, while not associating it with a host of particular precepts, is, from the purely social angle, necessarily more favorable to progress." *Sovereignty*, p. 121. See also the idea of *rex* in *Sovereignty*, p. 300.

59Jouvenel, *Sovereignty*, p. 114.

60Ibid.

61Jouvenel, "Nostalgia for the Small Community." *Documents of Modern Political Thought*, ed. by T.E. Atley and J.S. Maclure (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), p. 81.

62Jouvenel, *Sovereignty*, p. 115.

63Ibid., pp. 115-116.

64Ibid., p. 122, my emphasis.

65Jouvenel, *The Art of Conjecture*, trans. by Nikita Lary (New York: Basic Books, 1967), p. 241. The reason for this lies with Jouvenel's idea of the nature of political power which Jouvenel sees as having a constant tendency to expand. See, *On Power*, chapters VI and VII.

66Jouvenel, "A Discussion of Freedom," 716, my emphasis.

67Ibid., p. 721.

68Jouvenel, *The Art of Conjecture*, p. 241.

69Jouvenel, "Nostalgia for the Small Community," 80.

70Jouvenel, "A Discussion of Freedom," 721.

71Ibid.

72Jouvenel, "Nostalgia for the Small Community," p. 81.

73Ibid., p. 80.

74Ibid., p. 81.

75Ibid., pp. 80-81.

76Jouvenel, "A Discussion of Freedom," 723.

77Jouvenel, "Nostalgia for the Small Community," p. 79. Jouvenel states that "any attempt to graft the same features (of the small community) on a large society is Utopian and leads to tyranny." See p. 81.

78Jouvenel, "A Discussion of Freedom," 723.

79Theodore Lowi, *The End of Liberalism: Ideology, Policy and Crisis of Public Authority* (New York: Norton, 1966), p. 528.

80Certainly the American experience with Cabinet departments and regulatory commissions tends to bear this out. See Lowi, pp. 288-289.

81See indictment no. 3 in Lowi, pp. 289-290.

82Jouvenel, *On Power*, pp. 255-256.

83Jouvenel, "A Discussion of Freedom," 724.

84Jouvenel, "Forms of Government," p. 493.

85Lowi, *The End of Liberalism*, p. 288.

86Jouvenel, "Forms of Government," p. 494.

87See Stuart Oskamp, *Attitudes and Opinions* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977), Chapter II.

88See Jouvenel, *The Pure Theory of Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), Part VI, Chapter 3.

89Such a re-examination in the higher echelons of government has been slow in coming. For example, the disgust of the electorate for the “plastic” nature of election campaigns and the inability of government to deal with the problems bothering most Americans have been documented for years, yet it was only in mid-1979 that President Carter publicly admitted noticing a decline in the American spirit.

