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## THE FORMS OF FREEDOM AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT GO WITH THEM

*When freedom destroys order, the yearning for order will destroy freedom.*

Eric Hoffer<sup>76</sup>

What of freedom—that devoutly sought, passionately touted value of the Western world? What is freedom? What does it mean to be free? Sorokin provided some valuable insights utilizing his distinctions between sensate, ideational, and idealistic cultures and, we will recall, concluded that there were two ways in which a person can be free: either

by decreasing his wishes to make them equal to or smaller than the means of their satisfaction, or by expanding his wishes and increasing proportionally the means of their satisfaction. The first is the way of ideational liberty, consisting in a reduction of one's wishes, especially sensory ones. The second is the way of sensate liberty, consisting in an ever-increasing expansion of one's wishes for sensory values, accompanied by an equal or greater expansion of the means of satisfying them.<sup>77</sup>

But of course, there will not be always “an equal or greater expansion of the means of satisfying them”; as noted earlier, modern, materialistic Western man, like a hamster, is perpetually on a treadmill. But even were this form of material fulfillment possible for everyone, the spiritual and relational void would remain.

As Solzhenitsyn observed about the West, freedom carries moral responsibility; otherwise it becomes mere license. “Destructive and irresponsible freedom has been granted boundless space. Society appears to have little defense against the abyss of human decadence, such as, for example, misuse of liberty for moral violence against young people, motion pictures full of pornography, crime and horror.”<sup>78</sup> Then Solzhenitsyn pointed to the flimsy and disingenuous rationalization why this is not stopped: “It is considered to be part of freedom and theoretically counter-balanced by the young people's right not to look or not to accept.”<sup>79</sup> Perhaps it is especially ironic that, having been trained as a lawyer, I would agree emphatically with Solzhenitsyn's next conclusion: “Life organized legalistically has thus shown its inability to defend itself against the corrosion of evil... Such a tilt of freedom in the direction of evil has come about gradually but it was evidently born primarily out of a humanistic and benevolent concept according to which there is no evil inherent to human nature; the world belongs to mankind and all the defects of life are caused by wrong social systems which must be corrected.”<sup>80</sup>

Years of experience with the legal system, the political and judicial processes, and the mindsets attendant to each, have taught me that the true answers to the most important questions will never be found in any of these arenas. Solzhenitsyn was correct—evil is inherent in human nature and no amount of legal or social engineering will control it, much less remove it. Law and government reflect the corruption of a culture; they do not nullify or expunge it.

The quest for greater “freedom” to do what man wants to do, in the manner alluded to by Solzhenitsyn, is not only morally wrong, it is leading man to ever more depraved forms of slavery. The philosopher Eric Hoffer observed that “The basic test of freedom is perhaps less in what we



"Last of the Mohicans" from Corbis. Used by permission.

*The Last of the Mohicans*, by Michael Mann, 1992. Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook. The screenwriter captured the original, true American attitude with an exchange between a pompous, young British officer seeking volunteers for the King's militia and Hawkeye. British Officer: "You call yourself a patriot, and loyal subject to the Crown?" Hawkeye: "I do not call myself subject to much at all." This independent, self-reliant spirit is all but extinct in twenty-first-century America. De Tocqueville predicted that if Americans moved away from self-reliance and individual freedom—particularly in the context of a society guided by religious principles—they would come to depend on the government more and more; and government, in turn, would expect to control more and more of their lives.

are free to do than in what we are free not to do."<sup>81</sup> This is true in the moral sphere, as well as the sphere of government and law. Man is readily enslaved by his passions, prejudices, and fears. St. Paul admitted, "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing." (Romans 7:19) This was in truth a confession for all of humanity—at least those portions even making an effort.

The value of freedom—which Western man venerates reputedly above all others—has become the garrote with which his civilization is being strangled since he has no freestanding authority to check the power of his new ultimate god—himself.

Sorokin asserted, "Freedom of speech, of the press and of thought are the greatest boons when they are not dissociated from moral and social responsibilities." But without that sense of moral restraint they "degenerate into irresponsible and unbridled propaganda, the sensationalism of the yellow press, the uncensored production of obscene plays and novels, or the means of discrediting and undermining precious values," and "become a societal and cultural poison infinitely worse than the denial of freedom of thought and expression."<sup>82</sup>

Eric Hoffer reminded us of an inevitable result: “When freedom destroys order, the yearning for order will destroy freedom.”<sup>83</sup> I would carry this further. **Among the most dangerous human propensities are two that are opposite sides of the same coin: Man craves freedom, which in turn often leads to license—or sin, to use the religious term—which leads to the loss of order. The loss of order, in turn, leads eventually to chaos and to fear, producing a desperate need for order, which results in the loss of freedom.** Sorokin declared that sensate culture, therefore, is its own worst enemy because it “releases forces that ultimately destroy the magnificent contractual edifice it proudly builds at the earlier, more sober, and more balanced stages of its development.” This destructiveness is not due to any “external forces” though it is the wont of sensate man to assert that someone has “sown tares in his wheat” even though the true “perpetrators” have been the citizens and society of the culture.

There is no hope for the culture “*in extremis*” in this way other than a “reconstruction of absolute moral values and norms, with their ‘the law is hard, but it is the law,’ obligatory for all, universally binding, not to be brushed aside in the interest of relative, expedient pseudo-values...”<sup>84</sup>

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## THE FUTURE OF FREEDOM

*We promise according to our hopes and perform according to our fears.*

La Rochefoucauld<sup>85</sup>

Western man will surely continue his worship of democracy and capitalism as part of his pantheon of most revered idols. Yet, as our observers have noted, democracy can be nothing more than another form of tyranny: the tyranny of the majority—a majority bereft of a transcendent belief and conviction of ultimate accountability. Nothing good can be expected of such—unless you naïvely believe in the “innate goodness of man”—and democracy then is transmogrified into just another form of deception, manipulation, and control of humanity.

We have shown the danger in reposing one’s confidence in government, even democracies. Schaeffer’s “authoritarian” governments will probably be titular democracies. This concept is neither oxymoronic nor far-fetched. The obsequious deference in the West to the institution of democracy blindly ignores the realities that slavery was at one time a legally protected institution within Western democracies, as have been various manifestations of tyranny of the wealthy and vested financial interests over labor and the poor—a condition closer to plutocracy than democracy, yet concealed behind the Potemkin façade of an ideologically acceptable word. None of these propensities of man will change. Democracy will continue to always be susceptible to serving power and thus be at the beck and call of those who would control—just another form of tyranny by those who have power over those who have less or none. An old Spanish proverb declares, “Laws, like the spider’s web, catch the fly and let the hawk go free.”