

On the Conditions of Society.

Six Popular Lectures

by

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I.

The Relation of Our Constitution to the Political Movements of the Moment.

An old fable tells that a general war had once broken out between the four-footed [1] animals and the birds. The animal world had divided into two fighting armies, which advanced: it was a matter of victory or defeat. Every living creature had taken its side; yet there was one creature that would not declare itself, but wished to hold itself hovering above both parties, and that was the bat. It thought as follows: in troubled times one must be cautious, not hasty, but look things over and keep on good terms with everyone. No one can know to which side victory will incline; the wise man is prepared for anything: if the four-footed win, then I belong to their number, for I too am four-footed; but should it happen that the birds carried off the victory, well then, I have wings after all and can very well pass for a bird. Besides, there is something lofty and superior in raising oneself thus above the parties; one is so unbiased, so many-sided, so honorably disinterested. And when the passions subside, what then? Then I become a peacemaker, recommend mutual accommodation, initiate agreements and am always on top. Thus the bat thought; for the bat was a politician, [2] a diplomatically refined politician. But the contending parties would not be fooled; they soon noticed the ambiguous creature, and however much at odds they were among themselves, they nevertheless at once agreed to strike the ambiguous one dead.

As it goes with the bat in the fable, so, the very timid think, it must surely go with anyone who in an agitated time wishes to step forward before the people with a word of guidance, if, mark you, he does not himself wish to take sides, but confines himself to attempts to interpret the movements and to cast stray beams of light upon the arena of the parties. — Yet the prospects are not so dark. To be sure, history knows party struggles in which the passions cry so loudly that reasonable arguments must be silent; but these are the terrors of the thunderstorm, earthquakes that overturn society. Such terrors of the thunderstorm have so far, fortunately, kept outside the borders of our fatherland. We are waking from an old drowse, but we shall not on that account fly up in passion and abandon ourselves to the blind impulses of unclear moods. We shall think before we act, and test before we judge. The testimony still

stands firm, the honorable testimony of history, that the Danish people is a calm, sober, circumspect on all sides people.

We listen to the words of those who wish to establish peace; but we do not care for the political bats: they shun the clear light and prefer to swarm in the twilight. We heed the voice of prudence, but we cannot admire the ambiguous go-betweens whose skill it is to break the point off every principle and to obscure what lies at the bottom. We value reconciliation and moderation, but are on our guard against [3] obliging conciliation commissioners who turn up with a stock of all sorts of opinions, adapted to the circumstances, and change color like the four-legged creature called the chameleon. We have an idea that, in spite of their apparent impartiality, they are deeply entangled in the web of party interests, that, to put it plainly, they have something behind the ear. A people never puts trust in those who give the impression of having something behind the ear. There is a popular virtue called honesty; to honesty corresponds openness, and to openness the frankness which, in seemly self-restraint, speaks out and gives us the matter as it is, whether it is otherwise pleasant or unpleasant to us.

By human conditions it is surely impossible that a living people can move freely under a free constitution without parties forming. Capable party leaders are indispensable figures in society; every party must then stand and fall with the cause for which it fights. But the popular lecture cannot take sides; that lies in the nature of the thing, it is impossible. With whom should it take sides? With the people! — But the people as a people is no party. The popular essence stirs, more or less obscured, in all parties — on the Right as well as on the Left. The popular essence encompasses the whole, ramifies into everything and pervades us all. The popular element enters into the most various mixtures; the task is to get it separated from these mixtures as purely as possible. When two or more parties are quarreling about a matter important to the whole people, and the popular yardstick is applied, it is a matter of course that [4] one party can be placed in a more favorable light than another; but in this there is no partiality. What matters is only this: that the yardstick is right, and the party rightly judged. To present a party either worse or better than it demonstrably is, is partisan; but to wish, without any side considerations, to characterize it as it is, is not partisan.

It will cost labor before the great general public reaches the point where, unbiased by party considerations, it can distinguish sharply between the popular and the unpopular. A gladdening sign has nevertheless already been given. The ordinary people have begun to open their eyes to a very important distinction, the distinction

between practical politics and an elucidation of political conditions comprehensible to all. A small example. No one shall be able with justice to say that the population of this region lacks a practical sense for the burning questions of the moment. And no one shall with justice be able to say that in the lectures which I last year had the honor of giving from this place before a numerous circle of benevolent listeners, sides were taken either for the Right or for the Left. When a wish has nevertheless now been expressed that the general points of view which were then put forward might, by a further continuation, find closer clarification and more distinct application to given cases, I may surely without presumption regard the honorably repeated invitation as a proof that the distinction mentioned is beginning to make its way through.

The popular lecture can go along very different paths, pluck fruits from different trees and draw from many sources. It can fetch its subjects from mythology, legendary history, general world history etc.; but with all this there is one thing that must never be lost from sight. The people lives in the present. The present, real life [5] has a multiplicity of conditions, troubles, entanglements and questions which daily announce themselves with great insistence; to the answering of these questions the popular lecture must first and last point, if only indirectly. The popular lecture is not to strike down upon the momentary with the assertion that this or that is the only thing that ought to be done; it is much rather to aim at elucidating the existing conditions in such a way that each individual among the people and thereby the whole people gradually can raise itself to that level of survey and insight at which the majority and, if possible, all are put in a position to pass a reasonable, independent and well-grounded judgment.

How this, as I conceive it, is to be understood will be seen as I now proceed to treat the announced subject of the present lecture: the *relation of our Constitution to the political movements of the moment*.

The little book with the title: *The Revised Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark of 5 June 1849*, is in extent perhaps nearly the smallest, but in content the greatest in our literature. It is a book of the people so comprehensible to all that it can be read and understood without juridical learning. In this there lies, then, a summons to everyone who wishes to form an independent judgment about our constitution, not to content himself with extracted sentences, but to know the law in its coherence and to make himself familiar with its spirit and letter.

That the Constitution divides the entire power of the state into three powers, the legislative, the executive and the judicial, in such a way that (§ 2) the legislative power [6]

rests with the King and the Rigsdag jointly, gives us in this connection no occasion for special consideration. But the division of the Rigsdag into two awakens our attention. “The Rigsdag,” it says (§ 29), “consists of the Folkething and the Landsting.” What does this division into two mean? Why could the Folkething alone not have been enough? The only information we can obtain on this must be sought in the mode of election (§§ 30–40). The Folkething’s members are elected directly by those in the population entitled to vote “in the proportion of one member to 16,000 inhabitants.” The election of the Landsting’s members, on the other hand, is more restricted and indirect (§ 34); the whole number is only 66, of whom the King appoints 12, etc.

That the Constitution by this double mode of election has wished to secure for itself as many-sided and complete a representation of the whole popular will as possible is beyond all doubt. It has for this purpose conceived the popular will from two different, yet inseparable principal sides, namely as majority will and as a rational will grounded in the welfare of the whole. It has indeed assumed that the rational element of the administration of the state would be just as fully present in the one Thing as in the other, but at the same time also assumed that the rational will running through the majority could best be tested, clarified and grounded when, by a different mode of election, the different views were secured a due influence on the course of the proceedings. By giving the direct elections a relatively wide extent the law has provided that the whole population can, so to speak, get to speak to the government [7] and through its elected spokesmen obtain a decisive voice in the business of legislation. The living people with its moods, thoughts and opinions, its changing needs and demands has then each year its spokesmen in the Rigsdag: that is, generally viewed, the significance of the Folkething.

But according to the intention of the Constitution the Folkething cannot be said to represent the people in everything and in every respect; this Thing is, by virtue of its mode of election, an expression of the popular will, understood most nearly as the immediate, mobile majority will. The Constitution proceeds from the view that a people is not always served by having everything instantly put through that a majority ruling at a given time demands; the Constitution proceeds from the view that the electorate standing behind it, though fundamentally it always wills what is right, yet does not always have the full, clear, sufficient insight into what in every matter is the right thing, and for that reason, when minds are set in commotion and party interests are in play, can let itself be carried away into zeal for something which, more closely considered, is to the harm of country and realm. The Constitution

proceeds from the view that an aroused majority, just because it is lively, enterprising and aroused, can be misled into taking steps which the people afterwards, when the consequences have shown themselves, must bitterly regret.

In consideration of this the Constitution, as a counterweight to the stirring, forward-driving element in the Folkething, has by a mode of election of its own, an indirect one, established another Thing, the Landsting, whose significance is: to supply the more restraining, controlling element and by its majority to step in as mediator between the will of the government and the majority will.

Between the two Things stands the royal government, embodied in a responsible [8] ministry.

Here, then, in this governmental whole there are three centers, three authorities, three wills; but where is the ruling unity? Which of the three authorities has here the original preponderance? Where lies the proper center of gravity? It is not easy to say beforehand; for each of the three has its own independent validity. That the Folkething may by no means be regarded as a subordinate member is plain from § 48, which says: "Proposals for the Finance Act and the supplementary appropriations acts are first dealt with in the Folkething." — But that the Landsting is in every respect placed on a level with the Folkething can be seen expressly from every paragraph in which the special activity of the Things, each for itself, and their mutual relation is mentioned (§§ 50—54). If the Folkething can alter the proposal for the Finance Act, then the Landsting, if it finds reason for it, can say No to the alterations made. Otherwise it would be the Folkething alone that had the right to grant taxes. The Landsting would then have to be regarded as a remnant of "the advisory Estates;" but that the Landsting, as regards finance, is just as fully legislative as the Folkething is plain. If the Landsting, as regards the Finance Act, had merely an advisory, not a legislative influence, then it would also with respect to the other acts of government stand a whole step lower than the Folkething; its authority would then thereby cease to be real legislative authority. But that this conception stands in obvious conflict with the spirit and letter of the Constitution is striking when we compare § 2 "The [9] legislative power rests with the King and the Rigsdag jointly," with § 29: "The Rigsdag consists of the Folkething and the Landsting."

The division into two has therefore, when we look at the whole system of government, become a division into three: the Folkething, the Landsting and between the two the King's responsible ministry. Whether this division into three is now in every respect suited to its purpose, or whether perhaps for the sake of unity and

concord a change ought to take place here, is a question by itself. The Constitution, once revised, can be revised again; it does not give itself out as infallible. It says (§ 95): “Proposals for alteration in or addition to the present Constitution may be put forward in an ordinary as well as in an extraordinary Rigsdag.” But — this stands firm — as long as the Constitution is, it must apply unconditionally; it is for the time being our highest yardstick for what is lawful and what is unlawful; we have no other. To put upon the Constitution another meaning than that which demonstrably corresponds to its spirit and letter is unpopular, for it is dishonest. To make use of the sound of words and give the appearance that the Folkething in everything represents the whole complete popular will is unpopular, for it is dishonest. To tear a single sentence out of its context and twist it to such a meaning that the Landsting, as regards the final adoption of the Finance Act, should not have equal authority with the Folkething is unpopular, for it is dishonest. And one thing more: to wish to place the responsible ministry in so one-sided a dependence on a voting majority that the [10] royal will dwindles away into an empty form, a meaningless symbol, is also, as we shall now see, unpopular and dishonest.

What does the Constitution teach us about the King’s personal position in the system of government and about the power and significance of the royal will? “The King is not responsible, his person is sacred and inviolable. The ministers are responsible for the conduct of the government” (§ 12). When one now infers from this that the King’s name ought not to be improperly mixed into the strife of the parties, and that the King exercises his acts of government only through responsible ministers, etc., then that is quite in order. But if one goes further and infers from this that the King’s personal will in reality has no influence on the course of the administration, then that is as contrary to the spirit and letter of the Constitution as it well can be.

By personal will we must here, mark you, by no means think of private wishes or individual inclinations. A truly personal will always aims at something essential, generally valid in a personal sense. The royal will aims personally at observing, maintaining and carrying through the Revised Constitution of the Kingdom of Denmark with all provisions flowing from it: this the King personally wills; this and only this can he as King personally will. “Before the King enters upon the government, he gives in writing in the Council of State the solemn assurance to keep the Constitution of the Realm inviolably” (§ 7). On this presupposition the King becomes personally the highest executor of all acts of government: without the royal will the law is dead. The responsibility of the ministers is therefore twofold: they are responsible to

the Rigsdag, and they are responsible to the King. What does the Constitution say? [11]
“The King appoints and dismisses his ministers. He determines their number and the division of business among them.” (§ 13). If a ministry does not think it can justify to the Rigsdag its remaining in its place, it is undeniably authorized to resign. But the King, according to the Constitution, has also on his side the right to dismiss ministers who do not hit upon what he, for the good of the realm, regards as the suitable thing, and to choose a ministry where one can be found that will by all lawful means work to carry through His Majesty’s personal conception of the right, lawful course in the administration.

— What does the Constitution teach about the King’s relation to the Rigsdag?
“Without the consent of the King the Rigsdag cannot remain together longer than two months.” (§ 13). “The King can convene the Rigsdag to extraordinary meetings.” (§ 20). “The King can dissolve either the whole Rigsdag or one of its divisions.” (§ 22). “If the King has not confirmed a bill passed by the Rigsdag before the assembling of the next Rigsdag, it is considered as lapsed.” (§ 24). It is plain from this that the functions of the royal will are more than symbolic, that they are acts of government of sweeping significance. By conceding to the royal will so essential a superior authority the Constitution has wished to secure a unity animating and directing the whole government. From this point of view it is important to give oneself an account of how the constitutional monarchy differs in principle on the one hand from absolute power (the absolute monarchy), on the other hand from majority power (democracy) [12]
— especially with regard to the popular will.

In the absolute monarchy the popular will is submerged in the royal will, for the King stands above the law: the absolute ruler wields the whole arbitrarily. In democracy the popular will perishes in the majority will: it is not the people’s sound reason, in so far as it works its way forward constitutionally, that is here the main thing; no, it is the mood of the population expressed in the most votes that is exalted to supreme, governing power and authority. In the constitutional monarchy the royal will stands firm on the foundation of the law. The popular will receives from this side its expression in the form of a unitary will, an indivisible single will. This single will is not arbitrary, on the contrary! it is in the highest sense popular. The royal will wills what the people wills, because it wills solely what the law wills; it cannot will anything else, for otherwise it would, according to the constitution, cease to be royal. In the constitutional monarchy the popular will receives at the same time its right, limited expression in the form of the majority will: it is the divisible popular will,

represented by division, which with us comes to real utterance in the Rigsdag. The intermediate link between the royal will, the indivisible single will, and the divisible majority will, represented in part in the two Things, is the ministry with its double responsibility.

So long, now, as the proposals laid before them by the ministry find such support in both Things that agreement can be brought about, so long the majority will continues to be in accord with itself, and the royal will thereby satisfied finds so far no occasion [13] for particular intervention. The ministry's responsibility to the Rigsdag is in full harmony with its responsibility to the King. But in the case that the Rigsdag becomes divided against itself, the matter takes on a different appearance. If a proposal wins approval in the Landsting but is rejected by the Folkething, it cannot be put through, for the Folkething has an indisputable right to offer resistance. If a proposal wins the Folkething's approval but is rejected by the Landsting, it cannot be put through either, for the Landsting too has an indisputable right to resistance. Disagreement between the Things themselves is a disagreement in the popular will, divisible through its representatives; it is the popular will which, in the form of majority will, has become divided against itself.

But a will divided against itself cannot act. It is in vain that the one Thing wishes to appeal to the fact that it represents a larger majority than the other, that it has the whole electorate at its back and the like; such declarations of mood have no warrant in the Constitution. The Constitution takes account only of the relation in which the two Things, each with its lawfully elected members, stand to one another. In the case of strife it therefore becomes necessary that the popular will in its other form, the unitary will, the royal will, intervenes and takes measures so that the strife can be settled.

To bring about agreement, the royal will can, as is well known, choose one of two ways: either let the ministry resign or dissolve the Rigsdag. If the first means is chosen, then its proper significance must obviously lie in this, that a change of system [14] really takes place. Such a change of system must, of course, be in full accordance with the spirit and letter of the Constitution, and may for the rest lean more toward the mood in the one Thing than in the other; but it ought nevertheless, if it is to be popular, to be raised above one-sided party considerations. If the second means is chosen, H.M. the King having the firmly grounded conviction that a change of system would be to the harm of country and realm, then the royal will has power, on behalf of the people, to dissolve either the whole Rigsdag or one of its divisions.

But — one asks — if this last means does not help either, if by repeated new elections it shows itself; that the opposing party in the one Thing grows larger and larger, what then? Will it not follow of necessity that a change of system must take place to the advantage of the majority and its electors? We answer: Yes! it will certainly become necessary. If the whole constitution is not to be burst asunder, it must eventually come to this, that the electorate gets its will respected. Should the sole will try to take the majority will by force, then the Constitution would be broken: we should then no longer have a constitutional, but an absolute monarchy. But — let us not skip over the intermediate steps. The express difference the Constitution makes between dissolving “the whole Rigsdag” and dissolving “one of its divisions” must surely have something to signify. The meaning must be this: when one of its divisions is dissolved, it is only the members of that division who are subjected to new election; if, on the other hand, the whole Rigsdag is dissolved, then all the members (those of the Landsting as well as of the Folkething) must be elected anew. To repeat the dissolution of merely the one division (the Folkething, e.g.) and to put provisional measures in prospect, in order to bring about agreement, would surely be a partisan, [15] hence unpopular procedure. If the elections now change — mark you, after repeated dissolutions of the whole Rigsdag — so that the Landsting eventually becomes of one mind with the Folkething, then this is an irrefutable proof that the Folkething on the whole has the mood of the electorate on its side. The royal unitary will has then on its part helped the majority will to lawful agreement with itself and thereby given it back its lost power to act. But if the opposite proves to be the case, if after repeated new elections it appears that a majority in the Landsting — no matter whether it is larger or smaller — continues steadily to stand stiffly against a majority in the Folkething, then the leaders of the Folkething have absolutely no right to appeal to the concord of the electorate as a whole; for the electors to the Landsting — not forgetting H.M. the King — belong, according to the unambiguous provision of the Constitution, to the electorate, just as fully as the electors to the Folkething.

That resistance, resistance and resistance cannot, if things are to go lawfully, bring about agreement is obvious in itself. We can, without unwarranted interference in practical politics, cast a glance at the position of the parties. From the one side we hear declarations which run roughly as follows: “It must at last become manifest that what is being fought over here is more than this or that. We are fighting against a system of government which no longer suits the times. The persons change, but the worn-out system keeps coming back: a little change in expression and bearing, but always the

[16] old face! What we want, what we are striving for, is something new and distinctively fresh, that is working its way forward in the people. Here the strife is not about a few millions alone, not about the distribution of taxes alone, not about this or that means of defense alone: the strife is of direction against direction, of system against system, of spirit against spirit. What Luther said to his opponents at the negotiations in Marburg, that we men of the ordinary people say with a good conscience to our opponents in the Rigsdag: "You have another spirit than we." — From the other side the explanation runs thus: "Here there is not at all a strife of system against system, but the question is of system against party. The question is whether a majority party, out of misunderstood zeal for what it itself stamps as popular, shall have the right to let party spirit loose, carry the mood away with it, cast scorn on the judgment of experts and appeal to the multitude. Here resistance is made for the sake of resistance alone. By throwing the most dissimilar matters together in a heap and tangling the conditions into a hard knot one makes any government impossible. Is it for the good of the country, is it popular, is it reasonable, is it right?"

As the knot is tightened and the tension grows, one approaches the critical turning point at which provisional measures may become necessary, namely a provisional Finance Act. The possibility of such a Finance Act has been boldly rejected, and people have comforted themselves with the words of the Constitution (§ 49): "Before the Finance Act is adopted, taxes may not be levied. No expenditure may be made that has not a warrant in the Finance Act or in a supplementary appropriations act." Is the issuing of a provisional Finance Act then straightforwardly lawful? We answer: No!

[17] But to appeal to the lawful, when one has oneself helped to make the lawful impossible, is a self-contradiction that contains no comfort. Nor is it straightforwardly unlawful. "In particularly urgent cases the King may, when the Rigsdag is not assembled, issue provisional laws." (§ 25). The whole emphasis falls on the "particularly urgent." But whether a convening of the Rigsdag becomes impossible because the enemy is in the country, or the convened Rigsdag, on account of the resistance of the parties to one another, makes itself impossible, the case is equally urgent. Instead of comforting oneself with the worn-out phrase: there is no danger, it would surely be better to look somewhat more closely at § 95, so that the way along which the majority will, in full consciousness of its legally limited right, advances to full accord with the royal unitary will may come to lie open and clear before the whole population.

It is the foundations of our constitution that we are about to deepen. There are banks and reefs in these waters: we must sound, set out sea marks and secure the

sailing. A few gusts do not frighten us; even if a gale with breakers comes, our ship will not run aground: abaft the mainmast stands sound reason, and prudence sits at the helm. As yet the speed is good, and the danger only a cloud on the horizon; as yet nothing unlawful has happened; as yet the testimony stands firm, the honorable testimony of history, that the Danish people, even in the moment of tension, is a calm, sober, circumspect on all sides people.

II.

Popular Self-Government: People and King.

[18] A vigorous, sound and many-sided development of popular life is conditional on popular self-government. When a people has advanced so far that it has raised itself to the stage of freedom and has become of age, it can no longer tolerate any external master or guardian over it. The people of age wants to have its will; it wants to govern itself, rule itself, and take the consequences of what it itself has resolved.

This principle strikes men of the old school as something highly offensive, almost horrifying. "What is to become of it," they say, "when a people becomes so self-willed that it will not let itself be governed: insolence, unruliness, licentiousness must surely gain the upper hand day by day." — One readily grasps that a misunderstanding lies hidden here. It lies in the concept of governance that there must be some who govern, some who are governed, and a law according to which they are governed; but it lies by no means in the concept of governance that the governing element and that which is governed must be held apart by an insurmountable barrier. If the latter were unconditionally necessary, then all self-government would be impossible: no being, [19] whether in heaven or on earth, would then be in a position to govern itself. It is a superficial notion that those who govern are free and can do what they will, while those who must let themselves be governed never get their will, but are constantly under compulsion. The government — it is said — is free, the people unfree; the authorities are free, the subjects unfree; the guardian is free, the ward unfree. If this relation stood immutably fixed, then there could undeniably never be any talk of a free people; but then a ward could surely never become of age either. If the ward is to become of age, then the guardian must step down. When can the guardian step down? We answer: when the governing element, which hitherto was in him, thus outside the ward, is placed within the ward himself. The ward then no longer has the guardianship outside him, but within him: the guardianship does not cease, but it is transferred. Precisely by having taken the guardian into his inner being has the ward become of age. He is of age to the same degree as he has, spiritually understood, eaten, consumed and digested his guardian.

The same holds of an entire people. It begins in minority by having the governance, the government, outside itself as something alien, an external superior. The transition to self-government does not come about by a people casting off the government,

much as a horse throws its rider; no, but by its inwardly taking up the governing element into itself and moving the seat of the government to its own center. The guardianship, the external authority standing outside the people, ceases when the people has become of age, when it has, in other words, eaten, consumed and digested its guardian.

The essential likeness between self-government in the single individual and in [20] the people has, however, a real unlikeness that we must not overlook. When the individual sets about governing himself, he learns at once that in his nature there is a lower element which is to be brought into obedience under a higher. There are sensuous inclinations, impulses and passions that are to be mastered; only the rational will, guided by insight, and in a still higher sense the will of the spirit, ought to rule. But a human being's will is not moved solely by regard to what is rational; there is a natural will in flesh and blood, an impulsive will, which branches out into many inclinations: the head wants one way, the heart another, self-love one way, the sense of duty another. As the understanding takes sides now with one, now with another of these inclinations, party struggles arise, often stormy election struggles, in the inner being of man; it is then to be shown how far there is a ruling unity of will or not. Without a higher unity of will no character can form. The individual with the many wills becomes at odds with himself, is swept along now by one mood, now by another, grows giddy, wavers and reels, and ends by losing his way in himself. If a character is to form, there must be a superior, governing will which is master of the discordant, a royal will which is able to reconcile the mutually quarrelsome petty wills. There is in every thoroughly formed character a constitutional-monarchical constitution. The governing sole will cannot by an arbitrary word of command reduce to silence any single one of the expressions of the impulsive will, nor does it bring order and peace by letting the divided wills wear down each other in continued strife, and keep [21] itself behind the majority of the willing inclinations as an empty symbol, a shadow image of the law. The will of character is the living law; it enters into the conditions of the psychical-bodily constitution, it permeates, purifies, limits and reconciles the mutually conflicting impulses: the more constitutional the ruling will of unity is, the more royal it is. All this takes place in an inward manner, and only when this really takes place has the human being himself in his power, and is self-governing.

If we apply this to popular self-government, then the essence is certainly the same; but its outward appearance is different. Here in society there is not merely a multiplicity of directions of the will; but here there are as many wills as individuals.

The people is in the whole population; the will of the people, seen from this side, is split and divided: the will of the multitude is an assemblage, a sum of mutually different wills, a swarm of wills, which, in order to form a true popular will, must come together into unity. Now when the governing will, in order to bring about agreement and unity, steps up externally against the many self-willed wills, an ominous and threatening tension arises between the will of unity and the will of the multitude. So long as the will of the multitude, more precisely determined as majority will, by appeal to the power of the majority sets itself sharply against the sole power of any ruling will whatsoever, society is at odds with itself, constantly hovering between tyranny and anarchy. Under such circumstances there can naturally be no talk of rational government, still less of popular self-government. For the sake of government [22] there must be brought about a rational interaction, determined by law, between the will of unity and the will of the multitude; there must, in other words, be given a constitution.

What it has cost to get a tolerably rational constitution worked out, history teaches. Early the necessity of a governing will of unity was felt. Already Homer sings: "Majority rule is not good; let only One be ruler." But early too men had to learn the consequences of the inhuman, or rather, all too human, excesses of absolutism: the peoples have sighed under a heavy yoke, the will of the multitude has, after wild revolts, constantly sunk back into impotence.

In the Middle Ages the constitution of society was aristocratic. Only in the great noble families did a majority will stir in favor of freedom, mark well: the freedom of the nobles; of freedom for the common man there was naturally no talk. With what zeal the nobility strove to make royal power a semblance and to transform the royal will into a signing symbol of the authority of the Council of the Realm, of this the period of the royal charters in the history of our fatherland — from Christopher II to Frederik III — may furnish sufficient testimony.

By reaching out a hand to the burgher estate and giving itself the appearance of wanting to help up the whole people, the fettered royal power shook the chains off itself; but what happened then? Absolutism cowed the nobility and taught it to bend before the throne. But the bending only made pride supple, the nobility kept itself aloft as a court nobility, and the common people sank still deeper. The general will was absorbed into the state, and the state was absorbed into the royal will. It was not [23] vain boasting, but actual truth, when Louis XIV said of himself: I am the state (*l'état c'est moi*). The people had now got one guardian instead of many; but the guardian

stood outside the people, he was exalted over the people with divine authority, and let it feel that it was in One and All under age. So it went until the Revolution. With the Revolution (1789) an element broke through which in our days plays an important role, namely the democratic. In order to break down absolutism it became necessary that democracy should overthrow the throne, level the ground and pave the way for further progress. Then democracy got the current with it. Expressions such as: will of the multitude, majority will, have gained such currency in public opinion that they are — to the irreparable harm of the popular cause — without further ado accepted as synonymous with the popular will. It is a lopsidedness of outlook which must gradually be corrected. The strength of democracy is to assert the majority will, therein it has its right and significance. But in its strength it also has its weakness. Building on the foundation of the majority will, democracy must unceasingly fight for something unattainable, for it can never reach the unity of the ruling will; the majority shifts, party rises against party. The unity that is sought in the connection of the whole determined by law is weak and wavering: unity of connection without unity of will, without thoroughgoing self-unity, lacks sufficient ground. Resting on a democratic foundation the building of the state is loose in its joints, constantly exposed to hurricane gusts, when the forces of the majority stir in the storm of the party elements. Think of America's democratic party struggles and the election storms that rage at every change of president; think of France's entangled condition; [24] old and new dynasties intrigue against one another, while the communistic republic, "the red specter," threatens with the consistent carrying through of democracy. The democratic element has been, is still and will always be an indispensable factor in the free development of society; but democracy is no complete principle. If democracy is exalted to the sole valid principle, then it becomes in its essence just as one-sided, for the development of popular life just as ruinous, as absolute monarchy. In order to clear a way for ourselves to a rational insight into popular self-government, let us try to shed closer light on it.

There are surely many in our time who find it difficult to reconcile themselves to the thought that constitutional monarchy should signify a whole, in itself coherent system of government; on the contrary it must appear to them as if it were a kind of patchwork, a compromise practically extorted by the circumstances of the time, a piecing together of two mutually irreconcilable systems, trimmed to fit one another, namely absolute monarchy and pure democracy. One proceeds here from the wholly mistaken presupposition that absolutism and democracy, each by itself, are whole

principles. That is a prejudice drawn from a misunderstanding of history. Historically considered, each of the two systems undeniably gives the impression of being a complete whole; but the historical upheavals also give the impression that society has been able to settle into repose just as little in the one system as in the other. There is in the more recent history of Europe nothing that has to such a degree made difficult a rational use of constitutional monarchy and hindered the development of [25] popular life as the false conception that this monarchy is supposed to be a mixture of irreconcilable components. Even the fusing together of designations such as the “limited” and the “constitutional” monarchy contributes its share to nourishing the misunderstanding.

When the Revolution had ended with Napoleon’s fall, the notion of the old patriarchal absolutism, kingship by the grace of God, came forth again with renewed strength. The sole rulers of Russia, Austria and Prussia concluded — without the co-signature of their ministers — in Paris the *so-called Holy Alliance* (26 September 1815). In this document it is stated that the three contracting potentates, in accordance with the words of Scripture, will regard one another as brothers, help one another in encountered cases of need, and lead their subjects and armies, whose heads of families Providence had set them to be, in the same spirit of brotherhood; they acknowledge that “the Christian nation, to which they and their peoples belong, in reality has no other sovereign than him to whom alone power belongs, namely God and our divine Redeemer, Jesus Christ, the Word of the Most High, the Word of Life.” To the light-blue gaze of a trusting-hearted piety, so Christian-paternal a conduct on the part of the mighty of the earth must undeniably have looked like a sign from heaven, a promise of peace and felicity for the peoples of Europe after long and hard sufferings. It might indeed seem as if the self-ruling sole will had, by an elevated temperature of religiosity and love, at last become so thoroughly warmed through and expanded that it was now really able to set the majority will at rest and to nurture the freedom of the [26] people at its bosom. But the statesmen smiled; those who knew a little of the course of the world and remembered that the treaty on the partition of Poland begins precisely: “*in the name of the Holy Trinity*” felt themselves seized by uncanny forebodings and already glimpsed the claws by which one knows the lion.

If the freedom of the people was not to perish, then it was time for the democrats to take the field with the majority will. It was a course of action that demanded endurance and courage. Every attempt either to obtain or even to preserve such rights (franchise, the right to grant taxes, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, etc.)

as are necessary if a people is to be able to move freely, every attempt in a liberal direction was regarded by the absolutist governments as a brazen assault on the Holy of Holies. To expose abuses was impious wickedness, to turn to the multitude was a political crime. The fanatical adherents of absolutism saw in every freer movement a new head shooting forth on the hydra of revolution, and hastened to hack it off. Here is a turning point where democratic civic spirit, courage and self-sacrifice show themselves in their most favorable light. The Revolution had — fortunately for the cause of humanity — given democratism such a mighty upswing that the free spirit no longer let itself be cowed. In the period from 1815 to 1830 it is the leaders of democracy who step into the foreground and must draw the load. Their intrepidity, zeal and endurance have — despite all demagogic excesses — a rightful claim on the gratitude and appreciation of posterity.

From this one will be able to see how it has come about that the two half-principles, the monarchical with the will of unity and the democratic with the majority will, have given themselves out, each for itself, as a whole, complete principle and have [27] appeared not merely as temporary opponents, but as born enemies. From this it will be understood that the concessions such two powers under continued conflicts can wring from one another are by no means suited to form a system of government with true organizing unity. The constitutional monarchy, the monarchy surrounded and limited by democratic (republican) institutions, must, when it is seen from this side, necessarily suffer from the ills which poisonous substances incompatible with the organism cause in an otherwise vigorous body. What convulsions may arise from this is historically illustrated in the disputes under Louis XVIII and Charles X over the application and interpretation of the French Charter.

Nothing is more ruinous than to build on a Constitution that is both to hold and yet not to hold. Conceived as a piecing together of two hostile principles, the constitutional monarchy is precisely suited to awaken, nourish and maintain an incessant discord between popular representation and government. When both parties are at bottom dissatisfied with the constitution, they can by resistance, intrigues and excesses, each from its own position, harass one another endlessly.

If it is the royal will which in absolutist selfishness feels the urge to extend its power, the encroachment from above will never lack means. Here it does not help to rely on ministerial responsibility. What cannot be done by force can be done by cunning; if one ministry does not dare to expose itself to a sentence of the Court of Impeachment, well, then another dares: a Charles X will always find a Polignac.

[28] There is among men of government who do not take it strictly with the moral side of the means a peculiar shrewdness in sounding out moods. One has in all secrecy a party in reserve, one makes masked movements which confuse the opponents, and with proud contempt for public opinion one keeps to the one decisive question: *how much can one demand of a people before it rises in revolt?* True, the calculation may go wrong, but one must venture: the attempt may after all succeed. What failed for a Charles X (1830) turned out happily in the coup d'état (1851) for a Napoleon III.

If it is, conversely, a democratically minded popular representation, indeed even if it is only a section of it, that is dissatisfied with the constitution, then the encroachment from below will likewise not lack means for cunning exploitation. First and foremost it will then be a matter of using the shortsightedness of the multitude, or at any rate of the majority, to get the Constitution, held at a distance, set in so skewed a light that it looks to the life as if it spoke unconditionally for the democratic view. Detached sentences, slogans and turns of phrase are well suited to agitating the population. The common people believe sincerely in such explanations — especially when they do not know, and are warned in the most emphatic manner against making acquaintance with, other explanations, since these are known in advance to be a web of semblance and deception — and are then easily ensnared in the delusion that their rights are being violated, that the democratic leaders, by no means from greed for power, but in true self-denial and with much self-sacrifice are fighting for a true, a whole and complete principle for the benefit and good of all. Next — when the agitation is in full

[29] swing — the thing is to intimidate the government and to overthrow one ministry after another. The latter means is as popular as the first. History teaches that the common people, so long as it has not yet become of age, gladly rejoices and claps its hands when a government falls. There is a series of examples that this has happened even in such cases where the fallen government was the actual defender of the people's cause, and it was the enemies of the people who, through the upheaval, came to the helm. If a government under such circumstances lets itself be intimidated by the impudence of majority leaders, it may quite certainly end in an overthrow of the constitution. If a government on the other hand, by holding unshakably to the foundation of the law, transforms the democratic assaults into rodomontades^{*)} and blind alarm, it may end with the general sense for great interests gradually being dulled, and the tumult giving way to a drowsy calm. The latter is, in the popular sense, just as sad as the former.

^{*)}Great boastings.

We have so far assumed that it was only one of the parties who by encroachment wished to violate the constitution; but such a case belongs to the rarer ones. It is far more usual that encroachment from the one side provokes encroachment from the other. We have an example of this in the history of Sweden in the period from the death of Charles XII to the Revolution under Gustavus III. "The death of Charles XII and the election of his sister Ulrika Eleonora as queen (1719)," — it says^{**} — "had made Sweden from an absolute state into an almost republican realm. Ulrika Eleonora gave [30] up the government already the year after her accession to the throne, having it handed over to her husband Frederick of Hesse, a prince who by no means lacked abilities, but was superficial, pleasure-seeking and always stood as a stranger in his realm. Hatred of absolutism and displeasure at the devious ways by which Frederick and his queen strove to get as much power as possible, brought forth at several Rigsdags (1720 and 1723) a series of such constitutional provisions that one would have difficulty pointing to any other kingship in which the King has had less to say or been placed in a manner more oppressive to his personal dignity... A strongly agitated political life developed in Sweden under this republican constitution. A stirring and a practice in critical discussion was created, which spread to other domains to the benefit of the development of the feeling of independence and of free movement. Knowledge was gained of the parliamentary forms, and through the numerous conflicts a series of experiences was made, which have turned to the benefit of political life later in Sweden. The thought that the people had a right to set up legally fixed barriers against royal power took root, never again to vanish. But the one-sidedness with which the weight was laid on the Estates, in connection with other unfortunate circumstances, caused such strong shadow sides gradually to come forth in the "era of freedom," that one can understand the displeasure with which most Swedes look back on it. — When Frederick of Hesse was dead, Adolf Frederick, according to the established order of succession, ascended the throne (1751). The indifference and sluggishness with which his predecessor had almost let royal power fall into oblivion was now replaced by [31] attempts to extend the King's influence, the result of which was his still deeper fall. Adolf Frederick's mild, good-natured character and strongly limited mental abilities seemed to make him well suited to content himself with the modest latitude that the constitution granted him; but his queen, the sister of the Prussian king Frederick II, Louisa Ulrika, who had complete mastery over him, was as ambitious as gifted." — To what degree the queen's plan for a revolution nevertheless failed, is seen from

^{**})Verdenshistorie efter Cæsare Cantù, frit bearbejdet af E. Holm og Ph. Weilbach. P. 498 ff.

what follows. "The imprudence of a couple of subordinate participants caused the plan to become known, and the punishment followed hard upon the discovery. The King, who had known nothing of the plan, himself in a letter to the Council broke the staff over the men who had risked their lives for him, but did not thereby save himself and the queen from new humiliations. While eight of the participants in the conspiracy were executed, the clergy gave the heavily compromised queen a sharp reprimand, in which it let her hear that she had set aside her duty to God, the King and the realm of Sweden. The King himself had to see it declared in a letter from the Estates that he had broken his oath, so that the Rigsdag, if it wished, had a right to declare that bond to be loosed which tied the subjects to him." — What did not succeed for Adolf Frederick and Louisa Ulrika, succeeded for their son, Gustavus III, who after his father's death (1771) ascended the throne. When all more lenient attempts to smooth out the passionate quarrels of the parties (the Hats and the Caps) failed, his resolution matured to venture a revolution. Without waiting for the arrival of Sprengtporten and the Finnish soldiers, he understood how "by his brisk, inspiring [32] conduct to win over to himself the troops that were in Stockholm. The burghers joined him, while the Council of the Realm and the secret committee were at a loss, so that the Revolution was scarcely begun before it ended victorious. After all resistance had fallen silent, the King delivered a thundering speech to the assembled Estates on the misfortunes which the era of freedom had brought upon the country. Thereupon he had a new constitution read aloud, and when he from the throne, with Gustavus Adolphus's silver hammer in his hand, asked the Estates whether they consented to it, a thrice repeated Yes rang out in answer. The same Rigsdag which a few days before had shown the most reckless arrogance, now did not dare the faintest resistance to protect that freedom of the people of which it, as bearer and defender, had been wont to boast of acting. Outside Stockholm the people joined with joy the new order of things, so that the constitutional edifice of the era of freedom collapsed like a house of cards, which topples at the first breath."

From a popular point of view the constitutional monarchy puts itself in an entirely different light. The monarchical is not a clipped remnant of the absolutism of absolute monarchy, any more than the constitutional is a product of a half-tamed democratism; but both are sides and products of the very essence of the popular will. The will of unity, represented and brought to life in the person of the King, is just as organically necessary a member of a popularly free constitution as the majority will represented by the delegates of the population. The Constitution must therefore be framed in

such a way that the popular will in the two principal forms can come forth powerfully and keep itself in constant organic interaction with itself, determined by law. There [33] is danger afoot when the repeated majority will, expressed in lawful, unambiguous form, is violated; but there is also danger for the cause of the people when the lawful form for the decisions of the will of unity is not respected.

So long as a people has not yet become of age, it will constantly live on in the delusion that King, government, officials, intelligence and whatever belongs under that, together make up an alien power, which constantly, if not always openly, yet secretly, aims at cowing and oppressing the people as much as possible; that is to say: the people in its state of minority has not got further than to conceive and feel itself as the common people. This minority the democrat knows excellently how to exploit, when he steps forth as demagogue. What is a man of the people? It is a man of the common people; everyone who, whether by birth or by fortune or by intelligence, raises himself a little above the level of the common people already stands outside the people and is a suspicious person. The demagogic road to popular self-government is clearly marked hereby: by striking down the guardian the one under age is to govern himself.

The more a people works its way forward to majority and the maturity of manhood, the more clearly it will see that the governing power, which must necessarily stand above the level of the common people, does not fall outside, but within the domain of its own will. A people of age will no more overlook the right of the common people to effective, lawful participation in the whole development of society than it will in One and All reduce itself to common people and make the government of the state a plain and simple affair of the common people. A people of age will see to it that the government and its officials do not act arbitrarily in a bureaucratic spirit opposed to [34] the popular will; it will make sure that the state does not appoint or pay its officials in a manner out of proportion to the measure of spiritual forces they apply in the service of society; but when the proper safeguards in this respect have been applied, then the people will also know how to hold the governmental authority and its servants in esteem; for the officials of the state are indeed the people's own officials, organs of the popular will. A people that knows what it is doing will just as surely find it insulting, indeed outrageous, if anyone advises it to weaken the organs of its own will, as a reasonable man will find it outrageous if anyone is so foolish as to advise him to weaken the muscles and sever the nerves by which he alone is able to move his limbs. For a people of age it stands clear that the executive power too ought to have a

free domain, that the authority of those who govern is the people's own authority, the intelligence of the teachers its own intelligence, etc.

The constitutional cooperation between the will of unity and the majority will must be so sufficiently determined in the Constitution that every encroachment from the one side as well as from the other can be combated and repelled in a constitutional way. This is, in brief, the meaning of *popular self-government*.

The King's will and the people's will are not two, but one will; the majesty of the people and the majesty of the King are not two, but one majesty. In the royal majesty the people honors its own sovereignty; it beholds in the King's person its own personal unity. The King's freedom and the people's freedom do not limit one [35] another; it is one and the same popular constitutional freedom. That the King stands over the people means that the law stands over the people. The King's will is the execution of the law: the King is the living law; in this sense we understand the words: "*a free King over a free people*."

III.

Political Experiences: Parliamentarism.

Experience, it is said, is a good schoolmaster, and that is true; but the schoolmaster is [36] sometimes rather dear, according to the old saying: through harm one becomes wise, but seldom rich. If one at least always became wise, the harm might be borne; but it is not said that one always becomes wise, one can unfortunately also become stupid from sheer experience.

It is not so straightforward a matter to gain experiences, as many imagine, that is to say: if the experiences are to be worth anything. To overcome difficulties, one must know them. As an introduction to a closer consideration of the difficulties that stand in the way of those who devote themselves to political experiences, we might begin with some experiences drawn from other circles.

Natural science is a science of experience; there are facts enough here, and enough to experience. But what has it not cost before research got so far that it could determine the right procedure and secure itself against false inferences. It is an old experience that sometimes shortly before sunrise a bright star shows itself in the eastern sky, [37] i.e. the Morning Star, and at other times immediately after sunset likewise a bright star in the western sky, namely the Evening Star. The opinion lay close at hand that these must be two different stars; but although it looks like a real experience, it is nevertheless only a false inference. Antiquity was surprised when one of its sages discovered that the Morning Star and the Evening Star were one and the same star. It is an old experience that stones fall and that smoke rises into the air. The Greek philosopher Aristotle built upon such experiences the doctrine that some bodies by nature moved downward, others upward, and that an essential distinction had to be made between bodies with and without weight. But physics teaches us that the notion of bodies without weight rests on a false experience. Experiences in the sensible world are not gained merely by hearing, seeing and feeling; it is necessary to be able to think, judge and infer.

If in the realm of nature, where after all everything proceeds by necessary laws, it is difficult to find one's way in the multiplicity of experiences, how difficult must it not be in the world of freedom, in human life, where a choice takes place, and where the will's choice does not always follow the commands of reason, but prefers to let itself be guided by impulses and incalculable inclinations. Here it depends not only

on what is experienced, but first and last on how it is experienced. It is a well-known matter that two people can live through the same event and yet get the most widely different things out of it. Inferences from experience are often in a high degree hasty and crooked, although the person concerned, who imagines that he has facts on his side, himself regards them as unfailing. It is an experience that men can be deceived by women, and women by men. The man who is so unhappy as to be deceived once, twice, indeed perhaps three times, receives, if it really goes to his heart, experience's certificate that three times is all times, and becomes a woman-hater. Women, whose finer nerves do not tolerate any repetition, can have enough in a single experience to become man-haters. Indeed, if one may rely on the poet — and the poet must surely understand such things — there are said even to be female individualities with so finely discerning a sense that, precisely because they have not had the luck themselves to have experiences, they know from experience that all men are deceivers. Of the experienced aunt who had undertaken to watch over "the Rose of the Alhambra," Washington Irving remarks: "The ever-watchful Fredegunde was the most prudent old creature one could imagine. With regard to 'the hostile sex,' as she called it, she cherished a respectable horror and distrust, which had gradually increased with the prolongation of her unmarried state. The good lady herself had indeed never suffered from the sex's intrigues, since Nature in her face had given her a protection against all pursuit; but women who have least cause to fear on their own account are precisely the most ready to watch over their more tempting fellow creatures."

As regards the upbringing of children, one is not seldom witness to how mutually discordant experiences can be. The one party will have it from experience that the child must be kept under strict discipline if it is not to become unruly and wilful, the other party can prove from experience that the dear child only becomes defiant when one takes it in the bad way, but is always well-behaved when one yields a little to it and takes it in the good way.

When the talk is of popular enlightenment and learned instruction, it can sometimes, especially in lively discussions, make one uneasy to see how experience stands up against experience. We hold ourselves assured that the people's sound sense is open to the highest interests of life, that the common people have a quick, instinctively sure power of apprehension, a natural keen understanding, which errs only when it is entangled in unclear moods and led astray by groundless notions. It is, in our view, a pressing necessity that the common people, the great mass of the ordinary population, be affected by the word of light and truth and get their eyes opened; it is

our hope that the cause will prosper when there are teachers enough who know what they are about and speak plainly, without flattering the multitude and fishing for majorities. But can this be straightforwardly proved by experience? Not quite. There are thoroughly learned men who think they have experience that so-called popular enlightenment does harm instead of doing good. "The surveys of the unlearned are only overhauls, which lack thoroughness. And why? Because they lack criticism, archaeology, philology and grammar. Loose hints and scattered gleams of light set minds fermenting and make the man in the street conceited. Horses that work hard ought not to be fed with grass: they must have oats. The oat-kernel of instruction lies in archaeology and philology; the "people-awakening" enlightenment is a green fodder, which blows up but gives no strength. The kernel of all that the ordinary people are to learn is briefly and simply this: they are to learn to look up to learning and [40] show respect for the experts. Nothing is more pernicious than "the living word," with which one stirs about in everything. What is this "living word"? It is mushy chatter. But mushy chatter is like mushy food; the living word puffs one up like cabbage and can so easily cause bloat. The puffed-up, bloated spokesmen are half-educated rascals, who join in the talk about everything, but know their way about in nothing." — See, those were now learned experiences, and it is truly no joke to take up the cudgels against learned experiences.

Against the learned experiences stand the unlearned. We respect learning and science, in whatever fields the investigations may move, be it in the archaeological, the philological or the geological. But there are people of a popular awakening who have experienced to such a degree how hollow, unfruitful and empty learned research is, that they on the spot can read them the lesson. "What good does it do," they say, "to dig in strata of earth and rummage in old documents? Can one dig up life as one digs up corpses? Collections from the Stone Age, the Bronze Age, the Iron Age, etc., may well be entertaining enough for those who let themselves be buried in a museum, but we, who breathe under God's free heaven and do not feel the need to be buried alive, what gain have we from them for our present life? If from the life our forefathers lived in the Stone Age one is to work out how we men of the present are to go about living in the Age of Politics, then more than one bushel of peas is needed. People gnaw at the many languages and the many grammars: Chinese, Persian, Tamil, Malabar, Sanskrit, Prakrit, language upon language, grammar upon grammar! What good does it all do, [41] when in the end one cannot make living use of one's own living language? The great junk-heap of antiquity is a great "kitchen midden," and the endless language-research

an enormous grammar. Let one lay the archaeological midden upon the grammar, or, if one prefers, the grammar upon the midden; let one call physics to one's aid and let an electric current pass through — from the grammar to the midden, from the midden to the grammar — yet there comes no gleam of life, no spark of spirit: the dead is dead and remains dead, however long one may research and dig." — These are unlearned experiences, and unlearned experiences are by no means easy to combat.

If we take in the Holy as well and reflect upon the religious experiences, then the strife is still more pervasive. The many who gathered about Christ, and were eyewitnesses of his miracles, went away with highly different experiences. Some experienced that it was in truth the works of God; but others experienced that it was blind fanaticism, and the whole an uprising against God and the Emperor. How much did Pilate experience, when he asked: *what is truth?* It is told in the Acts of the Apostles (Chap. 25) that when King Agrippa and Berenice came to Caesarea to greet Festus, he was in perplexity and did not know what he should judge about the Jews' accusation against Paul. The only thing he had experienced was that they had some disputes about their worship of God and "about one Jesus, who is dead, whom Paul said to be alive." That is a characteristic trait. The whole event of Christ's death and resurrection stood before Festus as something so insignificant and transitory that it [42] was unworthy of a Roman to acquaint himself more closely with the matter. So it went for more than two centuries with the Roman experiences and Christianity. The party of Christ was from the start regarded as a mad party of the common people; of such a party of the common people it was then permitted to believe the most absurd, the most foolish thing that could be invented: one had, after all, experience on one's side.

We now turn to the subject of political experiences. These experiences are beset with all the difficulties we have met in what has gone before. They are to conform to universally valid laws; but the laws of freedom are so mobile that inclinations and moods tempt to hasty inferences and can give us a wholly crooked conception of the real conditions. To gain true experiences an unbiased mind is required, one that is able to free itself from all preconceived opinions; but where personal interests are in play, preconceived opinions readily settle into place as unfailing truths, inviolable principles. To gain true political experiences it is not only necessary that those concerned should in general have respect and feeling for truth and right: here something more is still required. Here self-conquest is required, in order to put oneself in the opponent's place and to understand his view from the ground up. Such a self-conquest is not

to everyone's taste. The initiated are just as tempted to remain in their once-closed circle of ideas as the uninitiated in theirs. It is so agreeable to live with nothing but like-minded people and to hear the surroundings' echo of one's own opinions. From this it can be understood that mighty parties can fight for a whole age and with great acuteness spy out each other's wrong sides without managing to see through each other's nature. We shall consider the difficulties first from above, next from below. [43]

If we look from above downward, it is surely a matter of course that a King on his Throne must gain political experiences. But the experiences, unfortunately, become colored when they are seen through colored glass. There is an atmosphere called the court atmosphere: it has a peculiar light-refracting effect. It is well known that the light from a star is bent by passing through different layers of air, so that it looks as if the star stood somewhat higher than it in reality stands. Such an appearance rests on what in astronomy is called refraction. The nearer the stars are to the horizon, the more the appearance has effect, so that they seem to stand higher. The astronomer knows that he must calculate the refraction. For the monarch's observation it will, on account of the court atmosphere's light-refracting power, only too easily look as if the lower classes of society stood higher, in other words: as if matters stood better with the subjects in his kingdom than they really do; it is by no means always convenient for him to calculate the refraction. When Catherine II had conquered the Crimea, and 30,000 Tartars had been cut down, Potemkin wished to show his imperial mistress a magnificent spectacle of splendor and glory. The Empress made a journey to visit her newly conquered lands. "Potemkin assembled a great army on the Dnieper and by the help of skilful scene-painters he fabricated, so to speak, a flourishing condition of the country, such as it had never known. The banks were strewn with villages, but they were painted on canvas: one saw churches under construction, ships and houses. With the knout Tartars were driven from far away down to the river banks, so that these might seem populated; the young grass was gnawed off by cattle that had been fetched from a circuit of 400 versts. There would scarcely have been greater expense in getting something useful established. But Catherine let herself be deceived in order to be able to deceive Europe with regard to the empire's strength and her own activity." — What dazzles a King's eyes is, in rarer cases, base flatteries; for in that respect experience will surely teach him to discount. But if there is a circle of confidential advisers, on whose infallibility he, without having himself sufficient insight into the course of affairs, will rely unconditionally, such a circle can become dangerous to him. When the sky is overcast with a veil of light clouds, rings and mock [44]

suns regularly form about the sun; so too in the court's vapor-sphere mock suns will easily form about the royal sun; a confessor, a first minister or whatever the oracle may be called, will see to it that His Majesty never sees naked reality, but images in a mirror, which throws back the glare of his own light. Even if reality becomes so pressing that by an upheaval it tears the princely person out of the magic circle and lets him pass through the severe school of great trials, it is nevertheless not thereby given that he gains true experiences. Let one think, to recall the history of the Stuarts, of Charles II. What had this Prince not lived through. His royal father had to lay his head on the scaffold; he himself had had to go through, in several years of exile, the humiliations that always meet fallen greatness. And when he then at last — after [45] Cromwell's death — was called back and entered his capital amid the jubilation of the people, what experiences did he then bring with him up onto the Throne? "That every woman's honor was for sale, and every man's fidelity to be had for money. The difference was only in the price: some sold themselves for a cheap bargain, others let themselves be paid dearly." Let one read Macaulay's grand-scale account of Charles II's last days, and one will see what sort of experiences of life this King had reaped. Of the Bourbons Napoleon has aptly said: "they have forgotten nothing and they have learned nothing." They have thus, despite revolution and empire, only turned about in the circle of their own imaginings, in old warped experiences.

If we look from below upward, would it then perhaps be easier for the peoples to gain true political experiences than it is for the Princes? By no means. If positions of power in society could be grouped like trees in the forest, if the course of government, up and down, were as plain to see as the swaying of the reeds at the edge of a lake or as the waving of the corn in the field: then sound understanding would easily make its way and distinguish between right and wrong. But the struggle for power is an intricate struggle; no story of seduction is so long-winded as that which deals with mutual political unfaithfulness between the peoples and their leaders.

Most often it is probably the leader who abuses the people's trust and betrays the good cause when unforeseen turns occur. Yet it does not as a rule happen in such a way that the person concerned steps forward with the fully conscious purpose of wanting to deceive, of wanting to ingratiate himself and win popular favor merely in order himself to come to power. We must, for the honor of the human race, on the [46] contrary assume that most of those who turn to the people begin in honest sympathy with the people. But for all that it may nonetheless end in deception. The moral self-esteem which is awakened in the leader by the fact that the multitude joins itself

to him is exposed to great temptations. The celebrated man already feels himself a holder of power, and this feeling is very tickling; it drives him forward: he cannot be content with moral influence, he needs fist-power; he must of necessity command a party and choose the means as they come. Then he is irritated by opponents, then he is egged on by worshippers, then he becomes a hero of the masses, Commander of the Order of the Majority, and the despot in him awakens. It can then happen in the most natural way that he who begins with the people's cause may pass over to serving his own cause and end by betraying the people.

But the relation can also turn in such a way that it is the people who betray the leader. There is in the common people — so long as they still find themselves on the stage of minority — a peculiar alternation between credulity and distrust. By nature an uncorrupted people is credulous; that holds as a rule. Anyone who steps forward and wants to take up its cause easily finds support. But the blinder the trust and enthusiasm are with which it follows its leader, the more precipitous again is the reversal by which it gives him up when its suspicion awakens. The history of Greece and Rome has eloquent examples of this. The need for a reorganization of land-ownership and the strife over the Agrarian Law was for the Romans, a little over a century before the birth of Christ, what the questions of pauperism and poor relief are in our day. The brothers Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, gifted men of noble [47] birth, with rare virtues and the most honest intentions, exerted every effort to help the poor impoverished people onto their feet; but their endeavors were fruitless, they had to see themselves branded as criminals and pay with their lives. The nobility with the Senate understood excellently how to lead the mob by the nose: the ignorant common people were stupid enough to let themselves be dazzled, cowardly enough to betray their protectors.

A necessary condition for a people to be able to make progress in political experiences is, among other things, this, that the discussions of public affairs be conducted with deliberation, so that the grounds for and against may come to the knowledge of the public; but that is precisely a condition that is difficult to fulfill. When parties get into a passion, one gets no time to think about the matter; one tumbles about with the personal: everyone is busy attacking, slandering and blackening his opponent. Readers who are used to the blackening may well know from experience that pressing accusations are not always to be taken literally; but those who speculate in excitements also know from experience that a bold distortion seldom misses its momentary effect. Democratic America has a knack for applying the method. Wash-

ington took it calmly. Though he was violently attacked by the Democratic party, he was nevertheless not angered; he wrote only to its leader, Jefferson: "I would never have thought, I will not say that it was probable, but merely that it was possible, that, while I was using my best powers to create a popular policy that was entirely our own, and to secure the country against the horrors of war, all my actions should [48] be distorted, represented in a gross and insulting manner, in such exaggerated and unseemly terms that they could scarcely be applied even to a Nero, to a notorious bandit, but rather to an everyday scoundrel. But enough, I have already gone too far in uttering my feelings."

If you would gain *true experiences*, then master your passions and use your *understanding*. This Washingtonian principle is but little attractive to the great mob, and therein lies the knot. It is not want of knowledge, for that can be remedied, but want of self-control that confuses the people's sense and prepares so many obstacles for the popular cause. Naturally nothing can be objected to the leaders of a party presenting the matter from their point of view and seeking to support their conception by grounds as strong, penetrating and convincing as possible; but to pass over the opposing party's grounds in silence and to present his utterances as simple, indecent wretchedness, is that honest, is that popular? That one wants to hold up a mirror before the people's eyes is in order; but it is, as is well known, not all mirrors whose images correspond to the objects. One has in gardens the so-called globe mirrors. However well-shaped the strollers may be, when they come near to such a mirror they undergo a dreadful change: big noses, fat bellies, tiny little legs! they look like nothing but nutcrackers. There are other mirrors that glorify the figures and show them in supernatural size. Now when the party leaders, the men who give themselves out as holding up the mirror of truth before the eyes of the multitude, constantly combine the two kinds of mirrors in such a way that they themselves come to appear [49] as heroes, while their opponents stand as nutcrackers, is that guiding the people to political, true political experiences?

On progress in political experiences rests the influence of so-called parliamentarism. We say: the influence; for the origin coincides with the laying of the foundation of any freer constitution. Already with the introduction of advisory Estates there follows a certain kind of parliamentarism. The first thing characteristic of parliamentarism is that the most important affairs of government are made the subject of a negotiation between the government and the popular representation. The popular representation's influence can pass through different degrees; but only when the

outcome of the negotiations is decided by a vote in such a way that the majority's vote at the same time becomes decisive for a ministry's continuing in existence or not, does parliamentarism come into full force. For the carrying through of parliamentarism it is necessary that the view expressed by the majority in the vote gain an actual and legal influence on the course of affairs; but it is by no means necessary that the majority should be gathered in one chamber; it can well also be divided between two. To stay with our own Constitution, it is not seen that it makes any breach in parliamentarism by letting the Folkething and the Landsting each have its own majority; for it may surely be presupposed that a ministry that gets the majority of both Things against it must resign. Something quite different is it that provisions are still lacking for what is lawfully to be undertaken in case of continuing disagreement between the divided majority. The indefinite notion of the possibility of provisional measures is dreadful not only for the reason that in what is to show itself when the law does not suffice there is always something bogeyman-like; but especially for the reason that the majority will can neither come into its full right nor be legally limited when the Constitution does not definitely and clearly indicate the way it has to go to reach the goal. As a model for a consistently carried-through parliamentarism one is wont to extol the English constitution. But that the English Lower House can just as little be assumed to be a pattern for our Folkething as the Upper House "can be a pattern for our Landsting, is obvious to anyone who has even a merely superficial acquaintance with the English Parliament. [50]

Parliamentarism in England has developed in a peculiar way out of the particular demands of English conditions with historical necessity: it has the political experiences of centuries as its foundation. Brought up to self-government, the English people has learned to keep strictly to the letter of the law and to respect the right of the Crown. And yet the swell can sometimes become dangerous enough when the sea of the people comes into commotion. The danger is, however, passing. With the exception of some philanthropic paroxysms, it is as a rule not great ideas but great projects that rule the mood. The law has a bulwark in capital; for to carry out great projects money is required. It is then also a piece of luck for England that in stirring times it has a guide as practical as the *Times*, a weathercock above the Exchange, so politically all-round-looking that it, without changing its standpoint, can constantly turn with the wind.

On the Continent parliamentarism has in recent years not exactly reaped laurels. In 1870 it was surely in good part the revived parliamentarism that, in connection [51]

with the moral importunity of opinion, by inflammatory means tore France into the war with Germany.

A closer consideration of the nature of parliamentarism must lead to the recognition that its working is conditioned by the cooperation of two related, yet dissimilar factors; the one is the moral, the other the juridical. The moral factor lies in the negotiations; for what should the discussion and negotiations be aiming at, if the intention were not to have the grounds that speak for and against a pending matter tested conscientiously and carefully? The view that is supported by the most convincing grounds must then be said to have the moral preponderance. The juridical factor lies in the outcome of the vote. When a vote has taken place, that view must prevail which has the most votes on its side; that is juridical right: no reasoning helps here. If the two factors now always cooperated in full agreement, then a consistently carried-through parliamentarism would undeniably be a political blessing for country and people. But unfortunately, experience teaches that the opposite is often the case. The moral factor is sometimes encumbered with immoral elements.

There are indeed party views that stand so firm that they do not let themselves be shaken by counter-grounds. Even if eternal reason were to condescend to take on human shape and take part in the negotiations, it would still not be able to make the party uncertain. The negotiations are conducted only for appearance's sake, the matter is already decided beforehand: that is as unparliamentary as possible. Even if [52] the abuse does not go to such an extreme, even if there is in the assembly sense and receptiveness for grounds, there is yet — if true political experiences are lacking — neither in the moral nor the juridical factor any security that it will become more than sham grounds. It is so tempting for a gifted parliamentary speaker to apply means that dazzle, to shine by wit and humor, to wound his opponent with the poison-drop of satire and carry the assembly away with him. Whether what he defends is in the best agreement with his own past and will hold in a time to come does not trouble him: he is bewitched by the honor of the day, and relies on the public being forgetful. Yes, the public is forgetful; it has, as Karker says of Haakon Jarl, “so many things in its head.” But a people with political experiences is not forgetful; it does not let itself be infatuated by a moment's fireworks, but remembers precisely that on which it depends, remembers who it was that spoke, and what was said, and remembers it long.

To rely on the moral factor without securing the juridical (constitutional-law) one is impractical; but to rely on the juridical alone and to scorn the moral is in truth also

impractical. Those who have the floor in a parliamentary assembly must know that they have not merely listeners, but also judges, serious judges, who in the course of time will call them to account for every improper word they have spoken. Only when it comes so far that a parliamentary speaker who has won a momentary victory, which he knows, be it ever so brilliant, rests on hollow grounds, must say to himself what a Greek Prince said to those who congratulated him: “if we win one more such [53] victory, then it is all over with us,” only then is parliamentarism carried through. But then it will also be seen that it rests on more than a juridical mechanics of voting, that its foundation is a dearly acquired treasure of true political experiences.

IV.

Free Constitution and Freedom.

[54] It is now 28 years, thus nearly a generation, since a new age began for the peoples of Europe. It was in '48 that the spirits of life stirred: the morning shone, the day broke forth, and the sun of freedom rose over jubilant millions. From Paris, from Vienna, from Berlin, from Copenhagen, everywhere the same message sounded. Where the old bonds could not, as with us, be loosened with gentleness, there they had to yield to force, there they had to burst. What had long been fermenting in possibility, in the womb of disappointed expectations, of dim, unfulfilled wishes, came at one stroke to reality; and the reality was surprising. In one place people knew nothing of what was going on in another, and yet everything happened as if by secret agreement. The morning came, and behold! the edifice of the new freedom stood complete before the gaze of all, like Aladdin's castle, a work of the spirits of the lamp, conjured forth in a single night.

But the enchanted castles of free constitutions have unfortunately not been able to satisfy everyone in the long run, in particular not those who, without troubling
[55] themselves about the style of the whole, think only of putting their private household affairs in order. There is in the new edifices of society a good deal that is not pleasant. They are magnificent enough to look at, but there is much false gilding; they are airy enough, but there is so much draught; they are roomy, indeed far too roomy. There is a noise and unrest, a bustle and traffic, a shoving, pressing and running up the stairs and down the stairs, not only on the main stairs but on the back stairs, indeed, what must especially annoy those who like peace in their own kitchen, even on the kitchen stairs. The ground is not firm, the pillars not strong. The floor rocks; the ceiling cracks; one feels as if in a perpetual earthquake. Every moment something comes tumbling down; one goes in mortal fear of getting a beam, a Rigsdag member or a minister on one's head. One consoles oneself that the building is so new that it will surely hold; a wretched consolation! One has examples, after all, of new buildings falling, even before they have been inhabited.

No, then there was a different order in the edifice of the state under the old absolute kings. Every estate stood at its own height; one knew how to make a distinction between the gentry on the beletage and the servants in the mezzanine. Now the lowest runs together with the highest: the lady on the first floor and the woman

in the cellar, the Born and the Unborn, hat and cap, uniform and smock are all one and the same. And then people mock the Table of Ranks and make a fuss about the Constitution. How perverse! The Table of Ranks is the true Constitution, the only law that can separate the classes and keep order in society: when the Table of Ranks is abolished, the state must go to ruin. It is important for a civilized society that it know [56] its great men; but how is it possible to know them when there is no Table of Ranks? When in earlier days one met a man with a white ribbon and a star, one was seized with involuntary reverence, one felt that this was a great man, a man deserving of the state; in what his merit consisted one did not need to know, one had after all the Table of Ranks. Even a little cross was a gift of grace, thus something different from a plain and simple gift of nature. Distinctions are just as indispensable for the sense of society as comma, semicolon, full stop and exclamation mark are necessary for the sense of a book. But the liberal constitutions overlook the distinction. Nowadays deserving men go about and look like other men; that gives occasion to confusions. If one wants to know the deserving man, one must oneself take the trouble to investigate in what his merit consists, and then the yield of the inquiry may still be thin enough. On oral traditions one dare not rely: one must go to written sources, that is to say, to the newspapers; but the newspapers? One paper presents him with a halo round his brow, the other with big blots of ink on his face. What is one to think, what is one to believe? Might one not wish that the political fairy tale of the people's stir would end with a bang like a fairy tale, that Fate or Chance or Heaven or the Lamp would send us a statesmanlike Nureddin, who could move Aladdin's castle, this castle in the air of freedom with its false princess, over to Africa.

Such expressions of involuntary ill humor would certainly have something to be [57] said for them, if the standpoint from which they proceed were not entirely mistaken. But the fact is that the free constitutions on which the present is working are not products of the arbitrariness of the multitude, but a work of historical necessity. The great stages of development in the history of mankind may be compared to the classes in a large school. When the pupils have sat a certain time in one of the lower classes, they must either be moved up into a higher or leave the school. The nations that, after having passed through the intermediate stages of European civilization in the 17th and 18th centuries, are still not ripe to take hold of the work of freedom, must put up with going out of history. Over the stage in our Royal Theatre there stands an inscription: *Not for Pleasure Alone*; this inscription ought to stand in large golden letters over our new edifice of society.

A playhouse, however excellent its style and appearance may be otherwise, is not erected for its own sake, but for the sake of the drama. Were there no dramatic poets and no actors, the magnificent building would stand as an empty monument, a memorial of want and spiritual impotence. This holds in a still higher sense of the constitution founded on freedom. If there are no ideas of freedom and no men who understand how to bring them forth, then the building stands there like a temple without gods and looks scornfully down upon a degenerate generation whose spiritual marrow is consumed. The free constitution exists for the sake of freedom; it is a foundation of freedom with external conditions, but not freedom itself. A free
[58] constitution need not always be bought dearly, it can after all be had as a gift: we thank King Frederik VII for his gift. But freedom itself cannot be had as a gift; it must be bought at the dear price, it must be acquired in struggle, though in peaceful, bloodless struggle.

That freedom must be acquired lies in the nature of the case; for what is freedom? The first thing of freedom is self-determination, and self-determination is activity, in the innermost and deepest sense self-activity. The human being who does not feel ability and strength for self-determination is unfree, however fortunate his external circumstances may be, and the same holds of a whole people. A people may have a free constitution and yet find itself in a condition of unfreedom, either because it has not yet learned to use freedom or, what comes to about the same thing, because it misuses it. To make rational use of the external conditions of freedom, in particular of popular freedom, two things are required: forces and insight. Forces without insight give only commotion, and the blind, thoughtless commotion makes the people giddy. Insight without forces gives only doctrines, and empty doctrines are powerless in the face of reality.

When the crises of freedom begin, the popular spirit awakens and asks for forces. There are those who preach and say that "a people's spirit" need not look for forces, since it has the forces within itself, and can, though we be ever so enfeebled, come and give us all the forces we need, whatever day it pleases; this is a bungling with spirit and words which misleads instead of guiding. Should the spirit bring the forces with it from heaven, they would have to be supernatural forces, and the upswing of
[59] popular life would rest upon a miracle. That is superstition. In a commercial crisis the merchant says: I must have money, wherever I am to get it from, otherwise I go bankrupt. In a crisis of freedom the spirit says: I must have forces, wherever I am to get them from, otherwise it is all in vain. In this respect it proceeds just as naturally in

a crisis of freedom as in a money crisis. Yet here there is undeniably also a difference. Capital can hide so cunningly that the merchant is unable to hunt it up; but forces cannot hide thus from the spirit; it will certainly know how to find them, wherever they may be. It is not always certain that they are found in the uppermost stratum of society; there is a civilization that consumes the forces, there is a sunburn of culture that dries out the mind, so that the germs of life wither. If the spirit finds the upper strata burnt out, it works its way deeper down and finds the forces in the lower. The popular spirit performs no miracles, it does not create out of nothing; but it uses what is given: its power consists in awakening the slumbering forces and raising them through the growth of spiritualization.

Here is a standpoint from which the spokesmen for formal intelligence think they can strike a blow in honor of what they understand by enlightenment and education. If the spirit, they say, is to seek its forces in the lowest strata of society, then it must content itself with crude forces; how then do matters stand with forces and crudeness? If one assumes that only the crude forces are unweakened, then one must above all seek to preserve crudeness in order to preserve the forces. If popular freedom is conditioned by forces, and the forces conditioned by crudeness, then the age of freedom must necessarily become an age of crudeness. If one assumes that force can [60] be separated from crudeness, so that the forces can be preserved after crudeness has vanished, how then will one be able to scorn the highest products of civilization, art, poetry and science? If the age of popular freedom is to be an age of enlightenment and education, then the mythological twilight of half-enlightenment is not sufficient to displace the raw air: the sun of intelligence must stand shining in the clear sky. But if one admits that the forces are not weakened but ennobled by enlightenment, then the noblest forces must surely be sought in the uppermost, sunlit stratum of society, and by no means lowest down in the darkness of crudeness.

It is the well-known dispute over cultural intelligence and popular enlightenment that we touch upon here. That art, poetry and science contribute mightily to awakening and clarifying the life of the spirit, and that the forces of freedom, so far, must rather be sought in the upper strata than in the lower, is a fact which no one who knows a little of history will be able to deny. But that culture, besides this, hatches a swarm of infusoria of intelligence, who reason on the surface and consume the forces, no one else will be able to deny either. Superficial reasoning goes from doubt to doubt, and the endless doubt weakens the power to act. What good does it do a civilized present to know all the virtues and vices of the past, if it does not know

and understand itself; and what use is it if it also contemplates itself in the mirror of intelligence, so long as it remains with the barren contemplation. Light without forces is a dead glow; but where the forces are, the spirit can find them and kindle [61] light, even in the deep darkness. The word of truth does not say that the light is the life of man, but it says that the life is the light of man.

Where strong forces give birth to clear thoughts, there comes about an education by which what is common to humanity and what is peculiar to each capable person is developed. In the popular society the development of freedom will then show a multiplicity of stages of education and circles of education, and the education in every circle will correspond exactly to the labors that are assigned to the particular classes. It is quite true that the hardy men who move about on land and sea understand better how to handle reality than those who sit in a study and busy themselves with thoughts; but for that reason it ought not to be forgotten that there is also a labor of thoughts, that many a light which has shone over society and set a world of new forces in motion has been kindled in the quiet chamber. The main thing is that the different kinds of education enter into the right reciprocal action, in that they all, each with its measure of forces and light, enter the service of the development of life and of freedom. The core of all education is self-education, formation of mind, the education that teaches the individual that he in truth only works for himself by working for the whole. On these conditions the popular spirit can stir, and the work of freedom be advanced.

The forces can work without spirit; but the spirit cannot work without forces. Where the forces work without spirit, society will find itself now in drowsy order, now in uncanny ferment. Either the activity will be so distributed that each estate attends to its own, the government to its own and the people to its own; here reciprocal [62] action is lacking. Or the opposite endeavors will fall into strife with one another, one party will combat the other and lose sight of the common aim: here there is lacking harmonious cooperation. The mark that it is the popular spirit which sets the forces in motion is this twofold: that all endeavors work together toward one aim, and that all, high and low, are conscious that they must take part in the activity. The latter point becomes especially important when the free constitution has succeeded absolutism.

In a condition of society where the spirit is still half slumbering, it is natural that only some individuals of particular classes concern themselves with public affairs, while the great multitude keeps to the private and lets the government look after the state. It is a view which pleases the government; it does not care for restless heads.

The authorities seek, as guardian of the people, to establish firmly the principle that the subjects have to submit to their measures and for the rest keep quiet.

It lies in the nature of the state to maintain itself as something existing; those who govern therefore keep a sharp eye on the restless, but look graciously and mildly upon the quiet in the land. The statesmen of antiquity were in this respect already attentive to the difference between the workers in the cities and the rural population. “The worker,” says Aristotle, “is a man of small virtue; and only in imperfect states can it be permitted to workers to take part in legislation and government. A population that is chiefly occupied with agriculture and cattle-breeding is as a rule content, if it can merely get peace to continue at its work, and is willing to content itself with a limited share in the administration of the state. Far more restless is the mass of [63] craftsmen, tradesmen and such as live by profit: their way of earning a living acts more harmfully on character, and in the city, where they are found crowded together, they are inclined to make noise in the assemblies.”

When it is to become serious with the use of the free constitution, that is, with freedom, we cannot — with all respect for peace and order — praise the quiet in the land unconditionally. What kind of people are these? Decent people; in private, personal relations honorable, respectable, useful members of society. But their inclination to peace and zeal for minding their own is so predominant that active participation in public life is almost repugnant to them. It is in vain to remind them of the inscription: Not for Pleasure Alone, for they do not even have pleasure. Nor is it of much use to set before them the common duty which the constitution imposes on us in the name of freedom, for as to freedom, they have their own explanation: “In a free constitution everyone, who does not wish to join in the public bustle, must surely have freedom to hold back. There are, they say, people enough who have a mind to act on the political stage. But there is no real pleasure in being an actor when there are no spectators. We, who cannot act, serve the public by being spectators.” The quiet in the land are spectators. What joy do these spectators now have of the popular-political scenes? The joy is not great. Those who sit in the first rows of the pit and can plainly see everything through the spyglass of criticism, do nothing but fret. If the play goes briskly, they fret, for freedom becomes saucy and throws sand in their eyes. If the play drags, they fret also: there ought surely to be hissing; but hush! — for the sake of [64] quiet one scarcely dares even to sneeze, still less to hiss. Those who stand so far back that they can scarcely make out what is going on on the stage regard the whole as something that basically does not concern them; the only thing that can occasionally

give their tranquility a jolt is rumors of some frightful things that are said to be going on behind the scenes.

Since the quiet in the land do not express themselves publicly, we cannot of course have any reliable knowledge of their opinions in detail; but that may also be all the same. What matters here is solely the fact that they do not regard an active participation in the great affairs of society as a general civic duty. Could we directly address questions to them, they would doubtless answer: "Nothing comes out of all this political rummaging. It cannot be every man's duty to understand affairs of government. We do not understand affairs of government and consider ourselves too good to do drudgery for those who, in order to be able to use us, must begin by making us imagine that we are great politicians. A sensible man never concerns himself with what he does not understand." — Such an answer would be adequate under absolutism, but under a free constitution it is by no means adequate. If a human being could without more ado get out of concerning himself with what he does not understand, then it would surely be clever to apply oneself to understanding as little as possible. There may be much that we do not understand, and which we yet must learn to understand, when it concerns us and our work. Certainly not every other person [65] in a population can sacrifice time and diligence to know the affairs of government in detail; but if we put the question to the reserved, whether they then would give up their franchise? we shall doubtless get the answer: "by no means! why should we not have the same right as all the others." — But how can you set a price on a right which you, by your own admission, do not know how to use? — "We understand it just as well as all the others." — Then tell us, how you go about it on an election day? — "Sometimes we turn up, sometimes we do not turn up. But every time we turn up, we get right into the matter. We hear the candidates' instructive statements and take note of the enlightening answers, when they are interpellated. To be sure, we cannot always find our way so readily in the details, but the spirit is after all the most important thing." — How do you go about grasping the spirit? — "That is the easiest thing in the world. One need not, for that matter, even understand what it is that is said, but merely take note of how what is said affects the assembly. If it elicits Hear, Hear! and Yes, Yes! then the spirit is there; if it elicits Hush, Hush! No, No! then the spirit is not there. If we now find, after careful consideration, that the spirit is for a man of the Right, then we naturally elect a man of the Right; but if the spirit absolutely wants a man of the Left, very well! then we can also elect a man of the Left."

— So: in this manner you serve freedom by conscientiously! — using your franchise.

The franchise is a dangerous weapon; to entrust a dangerous weapon to people who cannot even be bothered to inform themselves of its right use is thoughtless. There is complaint that we have too many examinations; one could after all be [66] tempted to propose one more examination, namely a general voters' examination. How many commissions would have to be appointed on this occasion, how they should be composed, of which and how many members such an examination commission ought preferably to consist, how large per diems, in proportion to the price of grain or the tobacco tax or the rising export of eggs, might accrue to each member of the commission, these are practical considerations that we cannot here go into; it is enough for us to point to the need of the time, its deeply felt need of a voters' examination. In such an examination it ought not chiefly to depend on the candidate's external position, whether he is common or distinguished, poor or rich — respect of persons does not count in a public examination. — The outcome depends on the candidate's answers, and on order being kept with the marks. If a candidate can give sufficient account of his point of view and of the reasons which guide him when he elects, then it ought not to be to his detriment that he is for the rest a man without means; even a small running account with the poor relief shall not prevent him from getting a Very Good with a cross. If a candidate, on the other hand, presents himself without proper preparation, weaves in and out about Conservatives and Liberals, about the party of standstill and the party of progress until he literally cannot tell Right from Left: then the commission ought not to let itself be dazzled by his external advantageous position; even if he owned ten factories and twelve manors, he ought nevertheless to have a mediocre mark: for my part I would vote for Zero.

But — one will perhaps object — such a proposal will never pass; it runs into practical difficulties. Possibly so. But for that reason we shall not lose heart. We [67] have in reality, when we look more closely, a voters' examination. Existence itself with its experiences is the great examiner. Freedom has its rod of discipline in strict necessity; it disciplines us by the consequences of our actions. A free man, of course, is permitted to sleep. But in the busy season, when the seed is to go into the ground or when the harvest is on, the free man knows very well what consequences it may have to oversleep. As regards agriculture and industry, a free man is certainly permitted to stand still and say: I do not keep up with the times; with me everything shall stay as it was. I act as my grandfather acted, when there were as yet neither steamships nor

railways. I keep my farm in the same operation as my forefathers; the newfangled inventions do not concern me; I will not depart from my old habits. See, that a free man can certainly do; for the free constitution will hardly issue any compulsory law for the redemption of lazy habits; but the consequences do not fail to appear: freedom will discipline the free man with the rod of necessity. Thus, and not otherwise, will it go in the course of time with the use of the franchise; one can misuse it and one can neglect to use it, but the consequences will not fail to appear.

Those who complain that things are going awry with freedom, and by their complaints imply that they know better how it ought to go, dare not sit by as spectators. They must come forward on the stage, that the public may see the coat of arms they bear. Freedom is activity, self-activity, and self-activity is closely akin to enterprise.

[68] The enterprising party in a country will always be a horse's head ahead of the merely reasoning one. The encroachments of an opposing party cannot be repelled by merely pointing out its shadows and crookednesses, but by organizing, closing ranks and acting. To be sure, freedom may also demand of its resolute ones that they for a time stand still, see how things go and let the hot-tempered opponents run out the line. But such a standing still is then itself an action, and such an action widely different from being either a sulky critic or a thoughtless spectator.

To invoke the popular spirit while yet doing everything to stifle it is certainly a contradiction; it is a sad sight when an enterprising party of progress in blinded defiance chooses the wrong means. So long, however, as there is faith in the spirit and courage to fight for the cause of freedom, there is yet hope; the mistakes can surely be corrected, and the development again come into the original track. But those who are in the process of giving up the spirit, the circumspect men of order, who are calm only because they are weary, and weary, indeed dead tired, because their capital of life is used up, because they have not a single viable and fruitful thought left, what hope is there for them? Their watchword is: to keep *things going*. Of course, to keep things going can also be a task for those who are in full activity with what is future. But when keeping things going is the last refuge of weariness, of the burnt-out and yet of tenacity of life, then there falls over it a glow of old age which is uncanny. There is told in Snorri Sturluson of a King An or Ön, how he sought to keep things

[69] going. It says in Grundtvig's translation: "After Jørrun his son An or Ön became king in Sweden; he was a clever man and a great idolater, but war he left to others, and held home dearest. To his misfortune it was otherwise with the Danish King Halvdan... He went to Sweden with an army, and fought victoriously with King Ön,

until he had to take flight into Vester-Gylland, and let Halvdan rule till his dying day in Upsal. At that time Øn had already reigned twenty years, and Halvdan reigned another twenty, but when he was laid in the mound, Øn came back to Upsal in his sixtieth year, and made at once a bloody sacrifice, in order to live long yet. It was his own son whom he sacrificed to Odin, and received for it the promise that he should become just as old again as he was, but the kingdom he did not keep this time either longer than twenty years, for then came King Fridleif's son in Denmark, Ole Bravkarl, with his army, struck Øn both asunder and together and forced him again to flee to Vester-Gylland. Now twenty years passed again, but then Stærk-Odder killed that Old Ole Bravkarl, and at once Øn came back to Upsal, and ruled his twenty years for the third time. He wanted, however, to live longer yet, and sacrificed to Odin his second son, for which he received the promise to live ten years, and so on ten for each son he gave Odin, but on the condition that each time he should give a district of the same number as the son he sacrificed. Now he went on, and when he sacrificed the seventh son, he could no longer stand on his legs, so that he had to be carried in a chair, but nonetheless he sacrificed the eighth too and could in the following ten years not get up from his bed. Still he sacrificed his ninth son, and had, to keep his [70] life, to suck like an infant at a horn. One only son he had still, and him he would also have sacrificed to Odin, together with Upsal and the district around it, which should have been called Tenth-Land, but this the Swedes denied him, so that nothing came of it, and An had to resign himself to die, and be laid in a mound at Upsal".

As there can be a wondrous tenacity of life in old worn-out people, so there can also be an almost incredible tenacity of life in old, worn-out states of affairs.

But not merely laxity, will-lessness and the debility of old age is a burden upon freedom; the unruly enterprise as well, the selfish pushiness, can put it in danger. — A foreign potentate is said once to have said: every time Denmark is about to go under, the Lord always has a little miracle in reserve. We have no right on this point to rely on miracles, but we are bound to rely on the aid of the spirit, heed the signs of the times and acknowledge the claim of freedom. Fresh forces, fruitful enlightenment, high-minded courage and popular education are ideal powers, with which we must first and last seek alliance. They are allies who will not fail in the hour of danger, if we only do not fail ourselves. But we fail ourselves when we pettily squabble about power; we give ourselves up when in passionate blindness we transform our constitutional edifice into a gambling house, where the party spirit says *va banque* and stakes freedom.

Still stands Denmark's old house, despite robbery and plunder, on its own ground.
[71] Of the timbers of freedom shall the small remnant that is left be built up anew. It will presumably not become an Aladdin's castle, but if the workmen are ready, and the master builders agreed about style and plan, the house can rise with the wreath of honor, a memorial of concord, a work of the spirit, a stronghold of the people against the storms of the age.

V.

Aristocratism and Democratism.

The busy present must never forget how much it owes to its time of preparation, to its [72] honorably buried past. Should it forget this elsewhere, in this town it will not forget it: the hand of the past is stretched out here and reaches into the present. Youthfully fresh with hope and outlook for the future, life can stir everywhere, in the houses of the citizens, in the workshops of the workmen, in the squares and streets, but over the bustling life of the present there spreads quietly a gleam of antiquity, an illuminating light from the vanished past: Viborg stands on historic ground with old thoughts and with old memories. The cathedral yonder with its round arches and its high towers keeps the memories; the school opposite, in its sight, gathers up the thoughts, and both, church and school, agree that everyone who wants thoroughly to understand the intricate present ought not to neglect to live himself into the great past, so rich in experience.

Past and present, the old and the new, are in unceasing conflict; a ceaseless striving after change is forever at work transforming what exists. The old, it is said, must fall and the new rise on its ruins, only progress is life, standstill is death. In such political [73] catchwords there is something true, but also something untrue, awry and misleading. The question is how things really stand in society with the transition from the old to the new.

When a house grows old and falls into decay, one repairs it. One can then build up much, take away something and add something; but when this happens again and again, the building too can gradually become so altered that the original style can no longer be recognized: the partial transformation ends in a baroque patchwork. The English structure of the state, with the reforms it has undergone in the course of time, has much that reminds one of this. An English parliamentary speaker once remarked, on the occasion of the multitude of alterations that were being made in a Reform Bill: this Bill reminds me of the cotton stocking that was darned so long with silk until it became a silk stocking.

The opposite procedure is applied, for example, in France, where one briskly pulls the old down to make room for the new. When what exists no longer satisfies, one makes a revolution. In the course of a couple of days one can, when one has

got properly into practice, pull down a whole structure of the state and introduce a brand-new constitution.

In the first case — after the English pattern — it is the old that partly distorts the new; in the latter case — after the French pattern — it is the new that destroys [74] the old. But precisely through the old being destroyed, the foundation of the new is undermined. The latter is worse than the former.

The relation between the old and the new takes a wholly different shape according as it is a merely mechanical or an organic, a lifeless or a living building that one has to do with.

The human structure of society is not a dead mechanical composition, but a living, animate organism.

In living organisms, plants and animals, there goes on an uninterrupted transformation of all, even the smallest parts. Work is done in cells and tissues and countless workshops on the transformation, so that the change becomes thoroughgoing. The basic form, what we might call the style, is maintained. In periods the basic form too may indeed be altered, — there are, as is well known, plants and animals that in different periods of life have an entirely different appearance — but even where the change seems to happen suddenly, it has long been prepared, on all sides and in an inward manner, so that in all members and parts there appears the most intimate connection between the old and the new.

What nature has set before us in examples from the living organisms should now repeat itself, in a higher degree and in a higher manner, in human society. But precisely because the conditions of development are of a higher kind, the development itself undergoes various oscillations.

Social life with its many institutions does not shoot forth like the shoots of a germinating seed, does not grow in a quiet growth according to necessary unalterable [75] laws; for development has a twofold basis, a natural and a spiritual one. The laws of society, however much they may be necessary by nature, are laws of freedom, with a stamp of arbitrariness; development is a struggle between many interests. If the struggle becomes so violent that the strata of society topple over one another, that class stands up against class, party against party, then the even development is interrupted, and the question becomes how the new will place itself in relation to the old. No people leaps with impunity in its historical development. Traditions, habits, all the after-effects of the past continue with a terminal velocity that is decisive not only for the speed of the movement but, whithersoever the new may otherwise

strive, also for its direction. The transition from one constitution to another is always precarious, and that in the same degree as the corresponding conditions are unlike. A people that for centuries has lived under a monarchical government is ill served by being flung headlong into a democratic republic. After the experiences that peoples and statesmen must have had in the latter half of the last and the beginning of this century, one would suppose that the time must now be past when people imagined that ready-made theories of the state could be obtained in a political shop, like ready-sewn clothes in a tailor's warehouse. None the less the party spirit, when it finds its account in it, without regard to the organic conditions of life of the people concerned, will naturally not fail to beat the drum in urgent recommendation of democracy. Democracy is a catchword that always suits the taste of the multitude, and why should the demagogues not have it in their mouths? When it is said of a man that he is an aristocrat, then the mob knows at once that he is an unpopular man, a man [76] who overlooks and despises the people. Since the aristocratic in this way becomes synonymous with the unpopular, the democratic naturally becomes synonymous with the popular. The democrat of the pure water, the genuine democrat, is the friend of the people; so the multitude believes, and takes the catchwords in use on this occasion for good wares. Natural enough, when it does not know the mixture of true and false that lies in such catchwords, when it is, in other words, not able to take counsel with history and to feel its great lesson. It is undeniably true that there is a form of aristocracy — be it aristocracy of birth or aristocracy of office — that is incompatible with the demands of popular life. But the same, the very same, holds of democracy. In democracy too, in radical democracy especially, there is something unpopular, something worn out and threadbare, that must be transformed. We can best convince ourselves of this by looking at the principles.

What sort of principle is it, then, on which aristocracy stands firm, when we look away from the historical abuses? it is literally and according to the wording this, that *the best shall rule*. If the democratic were now what it gives itself out to be, the direct opposite of the aristocratic, then the principle of democracy would evidently have to be this, that *the worst shall rule*. But such a principle surely no one will acknowledge. If the democrat will declare that it is neither the best nor yet the worst who shall rule, but the multitude, and that in the multitude all are equally good: then we must ask him what it is then the multitude looks to when it chooses a leader. If it is really true [77] that all are equally good, then it is surely not necessary to make particular fuss over the election, one can choose blindly or by drawing lots or however one likes. But

although the multitude knows, or at any rate imagines it knows, what ought to be done, yet when it comes to the point, it is not everyone in the multitude who knows how it ought to be done, indeed, if one looks more closely, it is only very few who have any tolerably clear idea of what it really is that ought to be done. The multitude has by instinct a feeling that although all are in general equally good, yet all, when it truly concerns carrying out something, are not equally good. It is of importance to the multitude to get capable leaders, for without leaders it can accomplish nothing. When it has found a leader who is entirely after its mind, what does it do then? then it follows him blindly; it obeys him unconditionally, believes in him — that is to say so long as it lasts — and why? naturally because it regards him as the most capable, the best. The best is therefore to lead, the best is to have the power, the best is to rule. But that the best shall rule is surely an aristocratic principle. The multitude is therefore, without knowing it, aristocratically disposed.

It is incalculable what popular life would gain, if this simple principle, evident to all, that the best shall rule, were allowed to make its way through.

[78] Let us consider the opposition from another side and look not merely at the persons but at the cause, not only at the best, but at the best thing, the true, the good, the right, in short: that which serves the whole of society. How do matters now stand between the aristocratic and the democratic? The aristocrat presupposes that civil society, whatever the constitution may be, is subject to definite laws of development, that there is something harmful in and of itself and something beneficial in and of itself, and that the difference between harmful and beneficial cannot be decided by loose judgment or by a momentary majority vote, but only by investigation of the matter and insight. His motto is that the truest is always the best. If he imagined that one need only be born with a manor or an entail in order to have a privilege of knowing what is best for society, then his aristocratism would certainly be a delusion; but the true aristocrat has a respect for truth and right that he cannot give up without giving up himself. — — Let us then see how the democrat goes about it. To find out what is for the best of society, he need not trouble himself with laborious investigation; he has only to heed the opinion of the most; “the opinion of all,” and to turn to the multitude. The multitude is his oracle, the multitude alone knows what is the best. No pointer has a finer nose for tracking down game than the democrat for tracking down the opinion of the multitude. The acuteness he thereby displays has a fair claim on our admiration. In the first place he has an opinion himself; but to acknowledge it and step forth in public with a wretched individual and private opinion, what could that

lead to? It would surely be subjected to sharp criticism; for one pays no compliments [79] to an individual opinion; indeed the public might even be capable of demanding of him the impossible, that he should in earnest engage in giving grounds for his opinion. No thank you! He is not so stupid as that. He chooses a more practical procedure. As he steps forth before the multitude, he knows how to speak in such a way that, by an acoustic deception, — for the democrat is a practiced ventriloquist — it comes to sound as if it were the multitude's own opinion that he was uttering. The multitude, which now for the first time properly learns that it has an opinion, at once proclaims the opinion far and wide, and, as gladly surprised at hearing its own opinion as the woman in "Gjenboerne" at seeing her own "winders," it shouts to the skies in rapture. Now there remains only, what is the easiest thing in the world, to lump the multitude and the people together, and what a transformation! The democrat's opinion has become the multitude's opinion, the multitude's opinion the people's opinion, and the people's opinion needs no justification.

On these presuppositions the democrat can defend himself before any tribunal whatever. It is in vain that the experts come forward with objections; he answers merely: Thus the people want it, and one must bow to the will of the people. It is in vain that the better informed propose something that in itself is far more reasonable; if the democrat cannot defend himself against the telling reasons that speak for his opponent's proposal, then he says: As a doctrine the matter may well look all right, especially when it is seen through learned spectacles; but the people, who prefer to see things with their own natural eyes, have once for all come to distrust this matter, [80] and to offer the people anything it distrusts is impractical. One sees here the fineness of the procedure: first he awakens in the little expert people a distrust of the matter he does not want brought forward, and then he applies the distrust thus awakened to get the matter rejected, before the people have yet come to see their error. Thus must the genuine democrat go about it when he is properly to act in accordance with the democratic principle.

But, it will be asked, are all democrats then really such deceivers? We answer no, far from it, the most among them are without doubt honest, well-meaning persons, who stand on the ground of freedom and really imagine they are serving the popular cause. The secret is that they read something else and something more into the principle than it actually contains. The principle is that the multitude knows what is the best, and that the will of the majority should for that reason be the only one ruling. The deception hidden in this comes to light only when one gives a serious

account of *truth* and majority.

To arrive at knowledge of truth — this holds of political truth too — is, and has from time immemorial been, a very difficult matter. Not the multitude, but only quite few were granted to see such clear glimpses of the light of truth that they found a way through the wilderness of error; still fewer were granted to press through and win an entrance for truth. In antiquity truth was regarded as a secret that might be entrusted only to the initiated; to communicate truth to the great mob. was to cast [81] pearls before swine, an enterprise dangerous to life, a violation of the holy. That was a false aristocratism. It is true that the discovery of truth is reserved especially for the gifted, but the truth once discovered will not therefore be shut up within Egyptian temple walls: truth is light and wants to shine for all. It goes with the truth of life as with beauty; there is a natural sense for the beautiful, and there is also a natural and original sense for the true. The human eye must gradually accustom itself to the glimmer of light. A sudden transition from the gloom of night to the strong light of the midday sun is painful, the rays dazzle and it cuts into the eyes; but little by little the transition may take place, and then the light is beneficial. Human beings have by nature an eye for truth just as they have an eye for light, a need of truth just as they have a need of light, yet with the difference that always obtains between the merely natural and the spiritual. The spiritual eye and the spiritual need must be awakened, purified and sharpened, that is to say, there must be education, if the human being is truly to become a human being.

From this standpoint the opposition between the aristocratic and the democratic is striking. Both, the aristocrat as well as the democrat, influence the multitude, but in a different spirit.

The democrat proceeds from the presupposition that truth is something innate. Just as every living human being knows what life is, and what it is to live, so too everyone in society knows what is beneficial and harmful to society. Truth consists in distinguishing between the beneficial and the harmful. But what then is the beneficial? [82] It is surely obvious. Beneficial is that which heightens our well-being, which procures for us the greatest liberties and the most comforts. To understand this there is need of no laborious instruction. The beneficial is what we all desire; that the desire is present is seen from the fact that the impulse, the inclination, indeed the passion is present. In impulse, inclination and passion the will of the multitude resides. The multitude knows well enough what it wants, when it is told. On this presupposition the democrat too knows what he wants: he wants naturally to let the multitude

know what it is that it itself wants, the true, the serviceable, the beneficial, the best. His speech does not aim at convincing, but at persuading. To convince is laborious and, when one speaks to the multitude, exceedingly tedious. But to persuade is both alluring and enlivening. To convince there is need of reasons; but reasons often have, like the doctor's pills, a bitter taste, and so they lie heavy in consciousness and are hard to digest. To persuade there is no need of real reasons, but of catchwords; catchwords act in the assembly like kettledrums in an orchestra, enlivening to the mind, musical to the eardrum.

The aristocrat too must address himself to the multitude, for in the multitude the people is outwardly present. If he holds himself back in silence and imagines that the people is nothing but multitude, that one may despise the people because in a certain sense one can overlook the multitude, then he is only a spurious aristocrat, a ghost from the past, with whom we have nothing to do. Thus — for the people's sake — the aristocrat too must speak to the multitude. But his speech is different from the [83] democrat's. The aristocrat wants more than to persuade, he wants to convince. He pays no heed to what pleases or displeases the multitude, but only to that which, by his well-grounded assumption, is the true, the serviceable and the best. He wishes naturally that many, if possible all, would unite around that which he regards as the best, but it never occurs to him to regard anything as the best because it has won the approval of many. He is not so conceited as to regard his own view as infallible, he is on the contrary willing to yield to counter-reasons; but it is no use meeting him with the objection that the majority is of another opinion than he, for he asks not about numbers, but about reasons. The aristocratic is to be able to stand in the midst of the multitude alone with the truth he has recognized, bowing only to reasons, but not to a number with many noughts.

What the majority accepts is true and valid; that is a democratic principle. What is true and valid the majority ought to accept; that is an aristocratic principle. The democrat sets the majority above truth; the aristocrat sets truth above the majority. If it holds that a person stands the lower, the lower he himself sets truth and right, and the higher, the higher he sets truth and right: then it follows from this that the democrat must stand lower in proportion as he is true to his principle, and the aristocrat the higher, the more faithfully he carries through his principle. But from this one also understands what might otherwise seem strange, that the democrat as a rule is better than his principle, whereas the aristocrat seldom or never quite succeeds in doing justice to his principle.

[84] The progress of popular life will therefore depend on this, that aristocratism steadily grows, and that democratism steadily diminishes. The confusions in civil society have, when we look more closely, always their origin from above; from the distortion and abuse of aristocratism, and, what is more, from want of ability and will to get the abuses that had crept in abolished before it is too late, the corruption springs. The French Revolution affords instructive examples.

It was not for the sake of the people, but for the sake of the state, that absolutism was raised to its height. Although the common folk suffered unspeakably under it, yet they put up with it, so long as the power and greatness of the state gave their self-esteem nourishment. But when the whole power of the state had been merged in the royal power, and the absolute royal power had done its part to destroy the state, it followed of itself that the foundation of the royal power had to be undermined, and that the King personally had to bear the blame for the public misfortunes. Leaning on the sovereignty of the King there stood the sovereignty of the nobility with its privileges, its dishonorable arrogance and ever-increasing presumptions; these became the more intolerable, the deeper the state sank. The King was the aristocrats' aristocrat, so that one cannot find it strange that public opinion regarded "King and hereditary nobility as one of God's worst scourges." Under the absolute kingship the Church and its hierarchy were at bottom transformed into an institution of the state, for the King was in reality the supreme hierarch: the royal conscience was the subjects' standard conscience. If now the state was "without respected laws, its arms without luster, the court without dignity and morals without decency," if besides the immorality of the [85] higher clergy — one thinks of a Cardinal Dubois, a Cardinal Rohan and others — was on average just as unbridled as that of the nobility, its unbelief just as conspicuous as that of the materialists and its official profession of faith a mask, under which it held fast only to the great ecclesiastical revenues: what wonder if sound understanding regarded religion as a dark superstition and its priests as deceivers who ought to be hanged. Thus the corruption had proceeded from above.

The danger drew near, and the blindness grew with the danger. Already Madame Pompadour, Louis XV's all-powerful mistress, is said to have said: *after us the Deluge*; and the Deluge came, and the waters rose above the high mountains. There was a lack of will, because there was a lack of understanding, a confused conflict between old and new made the evil worse. "To take the shock off all this France had only Louis XVI, a truly good but little capable man, who, from distrust of himself, usually sought help from still less able persons, who were above all still less honest. He was forced to

change ministers and with them the system, and when the bad harmed him, the good did not benefit him. The short-sighted court, which had followed upon the boundless corruption of the courtiers of Louis XV, did not know how to put the King at the helm and therefore demanded that he should stop it, but without being able to instill in him the necessary strength. Therefore the government displayed that mixture of arbitrariness and weakness, which excites without cowing the desire for resistance, but on the contrary makes this popular and gives it the prospect of success. Tossed [86] about among ministers, courtiers, women, historical traditions and philosophy, Louis XVI let the ship of state run on a half wind, and he captivates interest only when he ceases to act and begins to suffer" (Cantù).

As to nobility and clergy, the mood was divided between obstinate clinging to the old and frivolous flirting with the new. It is so tempting to let oneself be carried away by new ideas, so long as they do not interfere disturbingly with one's own inborn rights and ingrained habits. People amused themselves with Voltaire, let themselves be inspired by Rousseau, laughed at "Figaro's Marriage" and studied the Encyclopedists without considering how dangerous it is to play with fire and light beside an open powder tower. "Lafayette preached a crusade to America in the name of freedom and went there himself to shed his noble blood for freedom. Young men, the future pillars of the French aristocracy, hastened to fight for the overthrow of the special privileges that remained unchanged in their fatherland, and to learn principles of equality, of hatred of all sovereignty of kings, ministers and priests."

The Parliament fought with the court, and the authorities betrayed one another mutually. The middle class had in part joined in; but no one, with the exception of some philanthropists, troubled himself about the common man. The literary champions of freedom thought little or nothing of the moral regeneration of the people; their doctrines were calculated for the educated class and did not concern what one then called the dregs (*la canaille*).

None the less it was precisely the lower population, the rabble despised by the [87] men of freedom, which through the new doctrines was to come to power. The new doctrines had their strength chiefly in the merely demolishing; criticism, doubt, denial were the most effective weapons; the positive and new confined itself essentially to bitter theories. Rash paradoxes, boldly flung-out catchwords, flashes of thought that in a moment lit up the darkness, flew across the masses and set the great mob in passionate commotion. Under these presuppositions the movement had necessarily to become democratic.

Radical democratism is recognizable by the elemental natural force with which it attacks and tears down existing barriers, and by the total lack of ability to organize anything new by developing the germs that are contained in the old. It is not able to separate the kernel from the shell. Whatever is afflicted with abuse, were it in itself the noblest and best, shall be abolished. Royal power was abused, and so one abolished royal power; the power of the nobility was abused, and so one abolished the nobility; the power of the Church was abused, and so one abolished religion; Intelligence was abused, and so one slandered science and executed a Lavoisier. — Terrorism is radical democratism; Robespierre is the most radical and most consistent of all democrats, his virtue guillotines all abuses.

[88] The aristocracy of birth has in its time abused its position, the aristocracy of office has abused its position and the aristocracy of instruction has neglected to do its duty. By unrolling the old register of the sins of aristocratism, history gives us sufficient instruction about the rise of democratism. It is not political catchwords, but a sober conception of the historical development of society that can teach us how the old is related to the new, what under transformation must be that which persists, what must be reborn and what must die away and vanish.

VI.

Politics and Conscience: Machiavellianism.

Politics and Conscience! They are two great powers in our existence. Could these [89] two powers agree to enter into “a holy alliance” and keep it inviolate, what would not thereby be gained for the good cause of humanity? And what would not be spared? Means and capital, painful sacrifices, costly energies and blood and tears! But alas, the two powers still stand so far apart that it almost seems as if they belonged to two realms unconcerned with one another. Politics dares not ask Conscience for counsel, and Conscience can seldom or never approve the plans of Politics. This must not be understood, however, as if the wise men who sit in the councils of princes, the busy and clever men who work in the cabinets, were unconscionable people more than the rest of us mortals. Far from it! The unconscionable does not proceed immediately from the evil disposition of individuals. It originates in a distortion of the essence of politics. Unconscionable politics is a satanic web in which humanity— by the guilt of thousands, to be sure—has in the course of the ages more and more entangled itself.

It is of little use to moralize to statesmen about disarming, about being open and [90] honest, about always willing what is right, and so on. They smile and shrug their shoulders, and their eloquent silence is easy to interpret. “Disarm, when neighbors and adversaries are arming to the utmost?” “Be open and honest, when friends and enemies employ all the circumlocutions of cleverness and cunning?” “Will what is right, what is in and for itself true and good, when all powers, friendly and unfriendly, understand by what is right only what self-interest tells them about their own interest and honor?” The politician knows that “the world is not governed with the Lord’s Prayer.” The bitterness with which he rebuffs the moralist is mixed with melancholy. Naturally all would be only too glad to be out of the painful entanglements; but there are meshes in the net of fate that cannot be torn apart; and the net encloses all, even the mightiest struggle in the toils.

Is there, then, no way out? Yes, certainly. But to find it and choose it and follow it there is required a self-reflection that can be attained only through painful experiences.

The first question that presents itself for answer is this: how did it actually come about that politics and conscience have moved so far away from each other? It is a well-known saying that he who wills the end must also will the means. From this it has been inferred that the end sanctifies the means, and from this in turn it has

been inferred that bad means may be used for the attainment of a good end. This last is obviously Jesuitical. Yet it must be remarked that the Jesuits were not the first inventors; the discrepancy is of older date and of deeper origin.

[91] The discrepancy between means and end can first be recognized in its depth when the end is eternal and the means temporal, the end holy but the means worldly. The politics of the ancient world, especially of the Romans, was in many respects immoral, arbitrary, revolting, and cruel; and yet the unconscionableness in all this coarseness and selfish unruliness is only child's play in comparison with the ecclesiastical politics of the Middle Ages. Before conscience can properly be violated, it must have awakened, its ideal demand have been acknowledged, and a universally valid standard have been established for the judgment of actual deeds. But the conscience of the ancient world was wrapped in natural self-conceit and stirred only in mythical dreams. It is not merely a Nero who is unconscionable; but even if ethics turns to a Cato the Elder, rips him open, and looks him over inside along the seams, it will hardly find a trace of what we must call conscience. The only people of antiquity of whom it could be said in the stricter sense that they had conscience were the Jews; and yet the Jewish people is known to have applied a good part of its natural understanding to evading the Law and cheating Jehovah. Only with Christianity does conscience awaken in history.

The characteristic feature of Catholic church politics is now easy to illuminate. The Church naturally had to impress upon men the demands of conscience; the aim it set itself was supramundane, its end holy. Nevertheless this holy end was, according to the Catholic point of view, to be furthered and attained by worldly means. Means
[92] and end are thus as dissimilar as is at all possible. The more the Church became involved in worldly affairs, the more its politics developed. Christ was no politician; the only worldly means he employed were suffering and self-sacrifice; and the means corresponded to the end, for his kingdom was not of this world. But when the Church had set itself the lofty goal of making the supramundane worldly, it could not content itself with such meager means. For making the supramundane worldly it had in earnest to think of using worldly means; it had to engage in politics. When conscience then shrank from the means but yet approved the end, "the holy end," it lay near at hand to address it in a practical way and to remind it that everyone who wills the end necessarily must will the means. If conscience found itself revolted by the means that were employed, how comfortingly soothing was then not the assurance that the Church had means of atonement, that the end sanctifies the means, that one

can with a good conscience employ bad means for good ends. Papal politics was supposed, according to its ideal, to be a politics of conscience, its boldest means means of conscience; but in reality it was so self-seeking, so arbitrary and intriguing that ordinary princely politics had difficulty enough in matching it in unconscionableness: it was a glaring contradiction.

The next step was that conscience went out and politics was left alone. This turning point was stated with clear consciousness by the Florentine Nicòlo Machiavelli (1469–1527). By taking part in public life he acquired an early taste for politics and practiced, as it seems, even in private relations the principle that one must not be too particular about the means in attaining an end. He led an unprejudiced, unrestrained existence, [93] was in love not only in his youth but even in an advanced age, sang serenades, wrote indecent comedies, and was to such a degree the good head of his comrades that they, during his absence as an exile, wrote to him: “Now that you are not here any more, no one understands cards, drink, or any other merriment.” From the Church he learned that he who by cunning and power wishes to make his fortune on the great theater must be a good actor. To try his powers in devout roles he joined one of the pious brotherhoods and, when his turn came, delivered a penitential sermon that ended with a heart-crushing exhortation, full of unction: “We ought to imitate St. Francis and St. Jerome, who, in order to mortify the flesh and rob it of power to tempt them, rolled in thorns or struck their breasts with a stone; we, on the contrary, are deceived by pleasure, lulled in errors, entangled in the snares of sin, and are in the hands of the Devil. Therefore we must, in order to escape from it, do penance and cry with David: *miserere mei Deus*, or weep with St. Peter.”

If religion was a church fraud, a stage play, what then was morality? In his book, as famous as it is notorious, *The Prince* (il principe), Machiavelli gives an account of political justice. “The ruler shall always have on his lips words like justice, lawfulness, mildness, and religion, but not trouble himself about these things when he has an advantage in the opposite. Cruelty is necessary for a new government, and one shall rather make oneself feared than loved, when one cannot become both at once. The aim of a government is its duration, and that cannot be attained without hardness, because men are usually ungrateful, false, and quarrelsome, so that they must be [94] held in check by fear of punishment. The Prince must therefore know how to use both poison and dagger, both cunning and force; he must be able to play both the fox and the lion.” How seriously Machiavelli means it, and how far his conception of justice deviates from the Socratic one in Plato’s *Republic*, is seen among other

things from “The Discourses on the Decades of Livy,” in which he often refers to *The Prince*. He declares openly that justice arose through men’s having seen how useful the good and how harmful the evil was, that men let themselves be moved to the good only by necessity and self-interest,” and so on. Remarkable indeed, that the principles which the “heathen” Plato puts in the mouth of an insolent sophist are, precisely in a Catholic-Christian age, proclaimed openly and to all the world by the “penitential preacher” Machiavelli! It is a great transformation of consciousness, a yield of world-historical significance, that we have before us here.

Machiavellianism has this in common with the political view of the ancient world, that it sets the state as the highest, the only thing that has validity in itself. Greek and Roman history has Machiavellian traits in word as well as in deed. That Machiavellianism nevertheless differs from the heathen view of the state follows from the fact that it has Christianity, especially Catholicism, as its presupposition. When a heathen sophist asserts that nothing is in and for itself good or evil, he can yet in a way be excused on the ground that the conscience he knows is a blurred essence; but when a Machiavelli openly sets forth the same assertion, then it happens with scorn and [95] denial of the clearly recognized conscience. When a statesman in antiquity regarded the individuals of society as without rights over against the state and therefore did not hesitate to sacrifice them by the thousands for some political purpose, the revolting character of this is softened by the notion that the personal in human worth and human right was still veiled in mythical fog; but when Machiavellianism, with unveiled praise of falsehood, dissimulation, perjury, and fratricide, coolly and with strict consistency develops the same fundamental thought, then that means that the ideal of man’s personal worth has appeared in the light of day only to be trampled underfoot with shameless insolence.

One may object that neither ecclesiastical nor secular politics has ever avowed Machiavellianism, still less carried through its consequences. But what does such an objection mean? To avow Machiavellianism honestly and openly would surely be the stupidest thing a Machiavellian could do. As for carrying it through, a Louis XI in France and a Ferdinand the Catholic in Spain may well be regarded as talented precursors in practice, and as for the theory itself, it is a fact that Catherine de’ Medici, when she was married to Henry II, brought the book on “The Prince” with her from Italy. That she studied it thoroughly, and that the fruits of her studies have shown themselves in a brilliant fashion, especially in the wedding of blood at Paris (the night of St. Bartholomew 1572), is well known. As long as secular politics had a religious

cast, and the hydrogen flame of fanaticism intensified the heat, the temperature was in a high degree favorable to the flowering of Machiavellianism.

The ecclesiastical made good the secular, when the prince committed a tyrannical outrage, and the Pope's holy hand washed off the blood stain (the Stockholm Bloodbath). [96]

To what degree the Catholics had a sense for Machiavelli's doctrine becomes clear to us when we see how shrewdly, piously, and cunningly it was conceived and further developed by the Jesuits: Jesuitism is, politically understood, an ecclesiastically applied Machiavellianism. That religious Machiavellianism, even without regard to the ecclesiastical, has been appropriated by the Protestants proves how deep roots it has in human nature. When Charles X (Gustavus) had broken the Peace of Roskilde, and with the intention of seizing Denmark-Norway had landed with his fleet at Korsør, he struck up the hymn: "In Thee I hope, O Lord most dear!" If it can succeed for a prince to warp his Protestant conscience to such a degree that God in heaven himself becomes a Machiavellian, then he can also, with Charles Gustavus, without blushing speak of his conquests as "gifts he owes to God's grace." In the spirit of this politics Charles Gustavus's confidential friend Schlippenbach has in confidence communicated to Elector Frederick William of Brandenburg an edifying interpretation of the revelation of grace in politics: "God no longer reveals his will to princes through prophets or dreams; but when there shows itself a good opportunity to harm one's neighbor, it ought to be held a divine calling." — The Great Elector without doubt felt so edified by the interpretation that he saw no obstacle to a sincere union between Lutherans and Reformed.

True, in literature there gradually appeared a number of moral refutations of Machiavelli's doctrine; but practice was stronger than theory. That holds not least of the Brandenburg practice. Frederick II of Prussia wrote in his youth an Anti-Machiavelli, a work full of virtuous indignation over the immoral principles; but the King of Prussia, whose political conscience on the whole seems to have been in a somewhat mythical state, came precisely by this youthful work to break the staff over principles by whose clever application he was afterwards to shine in history as the conqueror of Silesia and the hero of the Seven Years' War. This inconsistency is, from a Machiavellian point of view, for the rest quite consistent. [97]

In our century Machiavellianism may on the whole be said to be on the decline. Only now and then has the immoral in politics come to a breakthrough in a revolting manner. In order not to come too near the present and tear open the wounds that

still bleed, we shall limit ourselves to recalling the English attack on Copenhagen in 1807. This step was for natural feeling so revolting that a Danish poet has even wished to make clear to us what disapproval it must have aroused in the English people itself. Well known is the song of the English captain: “with zest I cried: God and King George! Every time I fired at Napoleon’s brigs, But here I almost must weep with sorrow: On robbery now our fleet lies. — Sail on, you! I obey not the King’s command, But go on other adventures and voyages, It stands in Scripture: You shall obey God More even than you shall obey Rome’s Emperor!”

- [98] Let it be with the legend as it will; certain it is that English politics did not show itself unworthy of Machiavellianism. For so great an errand men of the right school were required. The English ministry had in Sir Brook Taylor and Sir Francis Jackson precisely two such men of honor. Sir Brook Taylor already had a name in the great world. “He had namely formerly, when he represented England at Kassel, taken part in the attempts to murder First Consul Bonaparte”; the end sanctifies the means. As to Sir Francis Jackson’s prominent personality, one of our younger historians^{*)} has furnished a characterization that deserves to be read. As a *Deus machina* (a god out of a machine) this diplomatic agent appears suddenly at Kiel and reveals to Crown Prince Frederick England’s hidden plans. He “began his message with the declaration that the English government had procured reliable evidence that Napoleon would force Denmark to close her ports to the English and to take part in the Continental Blockade. Both Great Britain’s interest and security and Denmark’s independence demanded that the court at Copenhagen enter into an intimate relation with England and consent that its fleet be brought to England before the frost had shut it in in the harbor, so that it might be protected against Napoleon’s pursuit.” He solemnly assured, “that the fleet should be given back when peace was concluded.” He offered
- [99] the Crown Prince a close alliance with Great Britain, guarantees, and so on, and added finally, “that if the Danish government by such a step feared to bring itself into a dangerous position toward France, it must yet not forget that the English force which now lay before Copenhagen was so considerable that it might well look as if it had yielded to compulsion, to which England for the rest would resort, if Denmark did not enter into its plans.” — Proposals of so pithy a content had naturally to be put forward in a correspondingly pithy form, and Sir Francis Jackson was a master of the pithy form. It is reported, “that Jackson in the beginning said nothing but “De” to the Crown Prince, whereupon the latter asked whether he did not know whom he

^{*)}Alex. Thorsøe *Den danske Stats politiske Historie. Første Tidsrum*. Copenhagen 1873. P. 154 ff.

was speaking with, that it was a prince, the son of the King of Denmark, whereupon Jackson became somewhat more polite” and so on.

The extreme brutality with which the apostles of Machiavellianism presented themselves on this occasion had, unfortunately, the result that the worthy representative of honesty and morality, the noble Crown Prince, was not able to come to political reflection before it was too late. “Crown Prince Frederick ought certainly to have sought to gain time by entering into negotiations with Jackson, until the intentions of the French government had become known to him. He would then, when this had happened, have come to the recognition that the Emperor’s plans with regard to Denmark were just as contrary to international law and just as little reconcilable with the free right of self-determination of the Danish government as those of the British cabinet. The Crown Prince would then have come to know by experience that Napoleon, with the concentration of troops at the frontier of Holstein, quite connected the same thought as the English ministry with the gathering of the fleet in the Sound, [100] and it would thus have stood perfectly clear to him that the two powers were in equal degree guided by self-interest, and that both with equal ruthlessness and disregard of Denmark’s freedom of action sought only through force and compulsion to carry through their own will. But Crown Prince Frederick did not enter into negotiations with Jackson at all, and if one cannot admire his “diplomatic acumen,” yet one receives a so much the more satisfying impression of his moral character. “He declared—which in that time, when political acts of violence belonged to the order of the day, sounded strange—that there was hardly in history any example of an attack like that with which they dared to threaten Denmark, he stated that among the barbarian states one might expect to find greater honesty than with the English government, on whose help one could not even rely, even if it were an ally. When Sir Francis Jackson lodged an objection to this statement, Crown Prince Frederick remarked that the man who had the moral courage to undertake a mission like his must also be able to bear to hear everything; when the English envoy assured that England would compensate Denmark with money for the damage suffered, he was interrupted with the famous words: “And with what will one compensate Denmark’s honor?”

Machiavellianism is not limited to certain forms of government; it thrives about equally well in them all. — The democrats would gladly have us believe that when the majority comes to the helm, the last hour of the great injustices will strike, and Politics and Conscience fraternally embrace each other; for under majority rule means [101] and ends are to be dealt with honestly. How beautiful that is, if one could only believe

it! But alas, history teaches that Machiavellianism has precisely in the power of the majority an old ally, and that is party spirit. "He who wills the end must will the means; the means is good when it leads to the goal." The party makes individuals into means, uses them as long as they serve its end, and throws them away when it no longer needs them. Conversely the participants in turn make the party a means, and leave it when they have used it as a footstool. It is just the liberal, the genuinely free-minded thing about party spirit that its claims upon the mutual agreement of the participants are by no means importunate. It is far from demanding that the members of the party be agreed on anything so essentially inward that it could trouble conscience; it is enough that they are agreed on some external matter, such as overthrowing a ministry, helping their leaders to power, taking revenge on opponents, and the like. Every such external end is as a rule only a means to other and higher ends. Everyone in the party can then freely go about and fawn on his conscience and persuade it that the petty tricks which the party now and then permits itself are only innocent knacks by which one paves a way for the spirit. True, there are many in the party who as yet do not have the spirit, but the party is, after all, only a transition, a means. True, some of the means the party employs are perhaps not quite lawful, and would hardly deserve the approval of conscience if it were the opponents who used them; but one may—in view of the political situation—allow oneself a good deal, when it happens for a good end. "The opponents have—fortunately—no good end. There is in what they say and do, to be sure, something that we would find right if it were we who said it, we ourselves who did it, but from the side of the opponents it is —on account of the political situation—nonetheless unreasonable and dishonorable; for the fact is that the party's opponents without exception are idiots." By such reflections a decent man can easily get his conscience chloroformed, even to such a degree that even the boldest operations with the political knife do not cause it pain. This is the most questionable kind. of Machiavellianism.

When Hercules, the myth relates, on his western expedition came to Libya, he encountered the giant Antaeus, whose cruelty to strangers made him a veritable monster. Antaeus forced the newcomers to wrestle with him, and when he had overcome them, he strangled them and set up their skulls around his dwelling. What made him invincible in the struggle was his mother, *Earth*, whereby his strength was doubled. But Hercules seized him with his arms around the waist and held him suspended in the *air*, until he, strangled by the hero's strength, gave up his spirit. —Machiavellianism is like the giant Antaeus; it cannot be defeated by merely worldly

forces; for worldliness is its mother, its innermost essence is the selfishly worldly. If the monster is to be smothered, then it must be lifted up into the sphere of religion and morality, into the atmosphere in which conscience breathes, and held up there by mighty arms. No diplomatic artist and no political genius is able to hold out against the monster; it blinds the clever with their own cleverness and smothers the strong [103] in foul vapors. If there is to be any power on earth that is able to seize the monster about the waist and hold it suspended in the air, then it must be the popular spirit, when it truly awakens. The popular spirit is a Hercules of moral forces, a real spirit in a spiritually active people. It is a hero who goes honestly to work; on his banner stands humanity's demand in flaming script, and the cunning of worldliness and the deviousness of politics must, ashamed, bow beneath it. If he comes on his expedition to the wrestling match, then he will surely use honest, if not exactly lenient means: he will subdue the petty defiance, air out the camps of the parties and cleanse the encumbered state, as his mythical predecessor of old cleansed the stable of Augeas.