Contemporary academic political theory, especially in the United States, is dominated by a largely sterile debate between liberals and communitarians. Academic liberals affirm the moral autonomy of the individual and the priority of rights over a commonly shared understanding of the good life. To a remarkable degree, they take for granted the moral preconditions of a free society—those habits, mores, and shared beliefs that allow for the responsible exercise of individual liberty. Raymond Aron's forceful retort to Hayek applies equally to other currents of academic liberal theory: they "presuppose, as already acquired, results which past philosophers considered the primary objects of political action." 1 Contemporary liberals fail to see that "a society must first be, before it can be free." 2

Communitarians, in contrast, insist that human freedom must be nurtured in the context of a community marked by shared values and aspirations. On closer inspection, however, most communitarians turn out to be political liberals with a bad conscience: they are more or less conventional liberals who regret the individualism of a market society and yearn for the communal warmth and participatory politics that supposedly characterized an earlier era of "republican" politics. With the discrediting of Marxism in the late twentieth century, communitarianism allowed intellectuals to distance themselves from liberal capitalism while avoiding any open identification with socialist ideology. Rarely, however, do communitarians endorse those tough-minded political measures (e.g. support for the traditional family, public encouragement of religion, unequivocal opposition to abortion on demand) that would be necessary to sustain traditional moral communities against the pressures deriving...
from rights-based jurisprudence and the ethos of personal liberation.' The much trumpeted liberal-communitarian debate turns out to be, for the most part, an in-house controversy among those who refuse to question either the core theoretical assumptions of modernity or the reigning prejudices of the academic class.

The political reflection of Bertrand de Jouvenel provides a way out of this impasse. He was, broadly speaking, a "conservative liberal" in the tradition of Tocqueville. In his view, liberty truly worthy of the name cannot be based upon chimerical assumptions about the individual or collective "sovereignty" of man. Human liberty unfolds within a natural order of things that human beings did not create and to which they owe humble deference. A true conception of human dignity depends upon a humanizing recognition of one's debts as well as a free acceptance of our obligations to others. Radical individualism is not only based on a false understanding of human nature but has deeply pernicious social consequences. It acts as an acid that erodes those intermediate social groups between the state and the individual that rein in the human will and check the insatiable growth of state power. In light of these considerations, Jouvenel rejects those libertarian moral premises common to almost all currents of contemporary political thought. But he also refuses to succumb to traditionalist complacency or irresponsible nostalgia for the "lost treasure" of classical republicanism. He accepts the inevitability and even the desirability of modern liberty while indicting the failure of modern theory to give a satisfying account of human experience.

Jouvenel is one of a series of important twentieth century thinkers to renew "the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns." Leo Strauss primarily understood this great quarrel as a struggle between two conflicting philosophical conceptions of politics, human nature, and the whole of things.' Jouvenel does not ignore the philosophical dimensions of the quarrel but finally is more concerned with the differences between ancient and modern conceptions of liberty. He is less concerned with the status of the theoretical life than with the moral and political effects of ancient and modern conceptions of human nature and social order.
Jouvenel writes not as a partisan of classical philosophy, but rather as a modern man searching for spiritual and intellectual resources to sustain human liberty and dignity in new circumstances. In his view, these resources are by and large not to be found in modern political philosophy. In particular, he believes that no human community can avoid confronting the question of the common good—the question of how human beings ought to order their lives together. Classical philosophy was right to make this question the centerpiece of its political reflection. But Jouvenel also appreciates that any conception of the common good articulated in modern circumstances must accommodate the dynamic and heterogeneous character of the open society. A liberal society allows human beings the freedom to regularly introduce new initiatives and actions. Any effort to block new initiatives leads to social petrifaction and to the stultifying repression of human nature.

In Jouvenel's view, social dynamism is ultimately rooted in the spontaneity of human nature itself—in what Jouvenel calls "the inevitable diversity of men" (S, 158). All of Jouvenel's work returns to this central question: Can the indispensable notion of the common good be freed from those corollaries (i.e., smallness, homogeneity, resistance: to innovation and foreign ideas, insistence on the community's immutability in order to maintain its harmony) in which classical political philosophy enframed it (see S, 147-148)? Can modern man draw on the wisdom of classical political philosophy without succumbing to a republican or communitarian nostalgia which at best romanticizes the harsh realities of the closed city and at worst gives rise to new, distinctively modern forms of tyranny? These are among the fundamental questions raised in Jouvenel's engagement of the problem of liberty and the common good.

**Ancient and Modern Liberty**

All of Jouvenel's work is a reflection on what the great post-revolutionary French liberal thinker Benjamin Constant called the "liberty of the ancients and the moderns." In his famous essay of that name, originally published in 1819, Constant argued that the ancients were concerned nearly exclusively with public liberty, with
collective deliberation within the public square, to the almost complete exclusion of individual liberty. Modern liberty, on the other hand, upholds the rights of the individual and treats political liberty as an instrumental means for the preservation of individual rights.\textsuperscript{1} Constant admired the grandeur of the ancients but was repelled by their almost complete lack of an interior life, the absence of self-consciousness, with all the internal divisions that accompany it. The agonistic life of the ancient citizen, centered narrowly on public deliberations and military struggles, belongs to the glorious pre-history of the human race. Constant tried to neutralize nostalgia for ancient liberty by dismissing it as an \textit{anachronism}, but he also thought contemporary Europeans and Americans should continue to admire its greatness and appeal to its public-spiritedness as a correction to the excessive individualism of modern times.\textsuperscript{1}

In his own manner, Jouvenel is a friend of modern liberty and of the "open" or "progressive" society. But he is less convinced than is his great predecessor that the classical emphasis on the common good is a mere anachronism. His work explores the possibility of freeing the common good from "the prison of the corollaries," from its historical identification with the above-mentioned categories of ancient thought. He believes this is necessary because once human beings have left behind the primitive community or the closed classical city, they are committed to a "prodigious adventure which cannot but bring grave disappointments in its train" (S, 166). This "world-wide" adventure is marked by a great proliferation of individual initiatives that leaves "progress" in its wake.

But Jouvenel learned from Rousseau that the development of civilization does not necessarily entail human happiness or moral progress. Any genuine political community depends upon "mutual trust" and social friendship. And both of these are undermined by "progress," by democratic individualism. Modern progress unfolds at the expense of strong "bilateral affinities" (see \textit{PT}, 70) and of the moral harmony that marks primitive ("face-to-face") human communities. Under the conditions of modernity, the self is no longer quite at home in the human world, and the "anxious ego" confronts the indifferent sea of "otherdom." In \textit{The Pure Theory of Politics},
Jouvenel suggestively remarks that the modern novel is a record of the ego's unnerving confrontation with a hostile external world (PT, 80-81). Collectivist politics and nostalgia for primitive community are thus understandable—if terribly wrongheaded—responses to modernity's profound spiritual dislocations. And a liberalism that identifies political and technological progress with moral improvement mistakes the nature of man. Such a liberalism cannot adequately account for the spiritual discontents that accompany the modern adventure.

The Problem of the Common Good

This is not all. In contrast to the dominant currents of modern thought, Jouvenel refuses to jettison the idea of the common good. In his view, however, the common good is not an a priori "Platonic ideal" to be imposed on a society by its rulers. That is the surest road to tyranny. Instead, the common good is best understood as a question that arises naturally in response to the exercise of authority in any political community, at any time or place. Jouvenel develops this essential insight in the opening pages of Sovereignty: "Every man who finds himself dressed in the smallest degree of authority over another (and that is the case with even the least important citizen of a republic) is bound to form some conception of the good which he hopes to achieve by the exercise of the power which is his. Will he use it, small though it may be, despotically by making the good sought only his own good, or will he use it properly in the interest of a good which is in some way common?" (S, 40xv). To reinforce his point, Jouvenel cites Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics (Book VIII, 1160B): "The despot is he who pursues his own good." The proponents of radical individualism, of individual autonomy, share despotism's basic premise that there can be no good held in common by human beings. This leads to an impoverished conception of political life as at best a series of negotiated settlements in an ongoing war rather than to a salutary understanding of politics as a common endeavor for pursuing shared goals and goods that transcend political partnership.

In chapters 7 and 8 of Sovereignty entitled "The Problem of the
Common Good" and "Social Friendship," respectively, Jouvenel further clarifies his understanding of the common good. Most Anglo-American political theorists would be surprised by Jouvenel's discussion. It focuses on widespread social attitudes and habits—what the French moralists referred to as *moeurs*—and avoids putting forward any abstract rights-based "theory of justice." In Jouvenel's presentation, the common good is tied to the strength of the social tie itself. The "social tie" is a good in itself since society is an absolute precondition for the individual's pursuit of his personal goods. "No man is an island unto himself," and few goods are simply individual or private in character. The common good also depends upon the warmth of the friendship felt by one citizen for another, on the cultivation of civic and personal affections. Finally, the common good relies on social stability, the assurance that each has of the predictability of another's conduct. It is impossible to conceive of a society without trust, and human life itself is unlivable without the predictability that trust makes possible. Jouvenel is one with Rousseau and the classical political philosophers in affirming that "the essential function of public authorities" is "to increase the mutual trust prevailing at the heart of the social whole" (S, 147).

But the emphasis on "moral harmony within the city"—the "ruling preoccupation of Plato and Rousseau" (S, 147)—has been traditionally identified with certain corollaries that are in tension with the defense of an open, heterogeneous society. Jouvenel seems to be committed to incompatible goals: the open society characterized by numerous, overlapping individual initiatives, and the moral harmony of a political community that actively cultivates mutual affections. This conundrum is never fully resolved or overcome, nor does he promise to do so." But he suggests a way to mitigate it in his remarkable discussion of the aforementioned "prison of the corollaries.

Jouvenel recognizes that the corollaries (again: small size and population, cultural and social homogeneity, resistance to innovation, and insistence on social immutability) "condemn the whole historical process, which is marked by just these four things" (S, 148). However, as we have earlier suggested, the movement of
Western history finds its promptings, according to Jouvenel, in the diversity inherent in human nature. The classical effort to establish and maintain the closed, immutable city thus appears to be profoundly unnatural.

But Jouvenel insists that such a conclusion is precipitous. These corollaries may be necessary means to maintain the social tie and to cultivate the affections that are profoundly natural to man. If this is the case, then nature is divided against itself. It therefore is with some hesitancy that Jouvenel sets out to liberate the common good and social friendship from the prison of the corollaries. He never forgets that it would be "presumptuous" to dismiss these corollaries out of hand. A careful reflection on the preconditions of civic affection as well as an attentive regard for the profound meditations of Plato and Rousseau, remind us that it is natural for men to try to maintain "an inner harmony" (S, 149) which is already present in a community. It is natural for human beings to resist changes that undermine the integrity of the social bond itself. Once undermined or lost, it is extremely difficult to reconstruct the fragile ties that bind members of a community to each other.

In this connection, Jouvenel places great emphasis on what he calls "the dimensional law." The larger and more complex the society, the weaker those bilateral affinities will be that connect individuals and citizens. He fully appreciates that "the climate of trust prevailing in the various groups may never be felt again after the group's enlargement" (S, 150). Plato or Rousseau were right to question whether a recognizable political community can exist in a large extended territory ("Babylon")—whether such a community can be held together short of a repressive system of laws.

Thus, in full awareness of these important considerations, Jouvenel sides with the open society against the harmonious city. To be sure, he acknowledges the conservative claim that "trustfulness within the group is not only a moral good in itself but is a "condition of the various advantages which the members of society confer on each other" (S, 150). But he finally comes down on the side of societal enlargement because the alternative would be a constant repression of the spontaneous stirrings of human nature. He sug-
gests that trustfulness would be a "sterile thing" if it could "be maintained only at the cost of suppressing the individual initiatives making for new relationships" (S, 150). Human beings would then purchase stability at a terrible cost to their humanity and individuality. Jouvenel believes that there is something inhuman about a singular preference for civic harmony even at the expense of new relationships and initiatives. He points out that western philosophers were really only able to apply this "doctrine of unchangeableness" (S, 150) to mythical communities (such as the political community of the Republic) located in the distant past or the unforeseeable future. Real political communities always need to wrestle with the problem of reconciling "reliability with freedom and change" (PT, 69). No human society can ever escape the ravages of time or forever resist the inherent diversity of human nature. The ideal of the closed immutable city was utopian even within the context of "ancient liberty."

Yet Jouvenel questions whether it is wise simply to dispense with these corollaries. He is torn between "a reasonably clear idea of the common good" and the "unacceptable" character of the corollaries that seem to be logically deduced from them (S, 151). He appreciates the force of the objection raised by the "good citizen" who fears that by jettisoning the corollaries that make civic harmony possible, the advocates of the open society are trading uncertain hopes and promises for new and untried human relations at the expense of the strong affinities that actually exist in traditional society. As a result of these considerations, Jouvenel cautions against a too precipitous "escape" from "the prison of the corollaries." He warns that a violent overthrow of these "four walls" could "bring down the whole building" (S, 152). How then does one preserve moral cohesion and social friendship without trying to put a stop to the historical adventure that is rooted in the spontaneity of human nature itself?

Jouvenel provocatively suggests that the common good cannot be the only or principal "star and compass" for an open or dynamic society: Social friendship and mutual trust must be reconceived as "the essential framework, or the network of roads" (S, 154) that each
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member of society uses for his own ends. The magistrate has the responsibility of repairing these roads, of maintaining common civic affections. But it would be against human nature and the profound tendencies of modern society to forbid the individual's use of these roads altogether. Statesmen must continually attend to the common good in order to prevent the fraying of the social structure, while allowing reasonable space for the "free development of the various interests which form in society" (S, 155). A properly liberal conception of the common good must respect the autonomy of civil society, without reducing the common good to the sum total of individual wills and initiatives. This is easier said than done, however. It appears as if Jouvenel has merely restated the problem of the common good in a liberal society more than he has provided guidance on how to promote or preserve it. But in this case, clarity about the nature of the problem may be the beginning of wisdom.

Jouvenel is particularly critical of the "Rousseauan" identification of social friendship with Sparta, "the most unvarying Greek community" (S, 156). The Spartan cultivation of civic conformity and its accompanying militarization of human life-"directly conflicts with the development of human personality." More originally, he argues that both "reactionary" and "revolutionary" efforts to organize conformity in modern times have been consciously or unconsciously inspired by the Spartan model. He mocks modern revolutionaries who place a "revolutionary mask" over the most "routine-loving and ignorant conservatism" (S, 156). The error of the "Laecodomonian" party from Plato and Xenophon to Plutarch and Rousseau was to confuse social friendship with "mere similarity" (S, 156), and thus, to forget that individuality must play a role in the articulation of a genuinely humane common good.

Jouvenel's emphasis in chapter 8 of Sovereignty on the reactionary and anachronistic character of modern revolutionary politics is indebted to Constant's critique of the French revolutionary cult of ancient liberty: it also closely resembles Karl Popper's assimilation (in The Open Society and Its Enemies) of Plato and Marx as philosophical enemies of liberty.' In my view, Jouvenel's argument suffers from many of the same defects as Constant's and Popper's.
It conflates the theoretical and practical judgment of Plato by ignoring his fundamental reservations about the adequacy of any and all political orders.  By inordinately emphasizing the anachronistic character of revolutionary aspirations, it understates the profoundly modern theoretical underpinnings of totalitarian tyranny. In fairness to Jouvenel, however, his "Spartan argument" is meant to supplement Sovereignty's overall emphasis on the connection between twentieth century tyranny and the modern emancipation of the will." Jouvenel's analysis of modern tyranny draws on three distinct lines of argument which to a large extent capture and reflect the ambiguity of the revolutionary phenomena: in On Power he stresses the imperial character of "Power" itself, defined by a ceaseless desire to expand and the various instrumentalities governments have devised to effect their will; in Sovereignty he analyzes the at once anachronistic and hyper-modern character of revolutionary movements and totalitarian regimes.

Jouvenel argued that while social friendship is a great and valuable good, systematic efforts to promote it are generally beyond the competence of the magistrate. He was well aware that the statesman must be attentive to any fundamental threat to the integrity of the social order. He therefore despised a facile progressivism that took the achievements of civilized order for granted. Civilization is, first and foremost, an inheritance to be protected. And political art is "necessary to its support and development" (S, 136). But Jouvenel provides few concrete suggestions on how the magistrate might promote social friendship in the open society. He suggests that in a highly developed society, law and general feelings of universal obligation rooted in religion and philosophy will tend to replace personal sympathy and affection as the major sources of civic trust (S, 158). Modern societies will tend to acquire universal bases in Jouvenel's view. Jouvenel's reservations about the closed city are undoubtedly tied to his Christian recognition of common humanity and his personal adherence to the universal human community that is the Roman Catholic Church.

Jouvenel is an incisive critic of what he calls "primitivist nostalgia" (PT, 69), but he recognizes that this nostalgia is not merely the
result of faulty doctrines or of irresponsible dreaming on the part of philosophers and revolutionaries. It has, in fact, deep and ineradicable roots in human nature. Human beings are made to live in face-to-face communities. The absence or weakening of communities of affection therefore necessarily gives rise to what Jouvenel calls "political infantilism"-"the mortal disease of advanced civilizations" (S, 160). Amid the perpetual change that characterizes modern society, human beings understandably long for the security and warmth of "the tribe." The desire for paternalistic government is a quasi-natural response to the inability of the anonymous Great Society to satisfy the natural human expectations for strong and intimate relations with our fellows. The appeal to collective solidarity and even uniformity is a misplaced application of the "natural ways" of the home to the national or worldwide community (PT, 69). The child, like the citizen of the closed community, comes to experience the benevolent attentions of "superior powers." Jouvenel suggestively remarks that the political "Boss" who promises to provide for his underlings is in some ways a more natural embodiment of authority than the liberal magistrate who promises to "pay no regard to persons and `merely follows the law'"(PT, 67).

In his discussion, Jouvenel dialectically oscillates between forceful denunciations of "political infantilism" and "primitivist nostalgia" on the one hand, and a subtle appreciation of the reasons for the continuing attraction of "the small closely-knit society" (S, p. 162), on the other. He understands that the small society still retains "an infinite attraction" for modern men. Even if it is strictly speaking unavailable as apolitical option, it retains some normative value as a reminder of the intrinsic good of the social tie itself.

For that reason, modern man must occasionally return to the closely-knit society in order "to renew his strength" (5,162). Modern man "displays extraordinary vigor" when he reconnects with such communities, whether in the form of the English public school or tight-knit revolutionary cells. But Jouvenel concludes that "any attempt to graft the same features on a large society is utopian and finally leads to tyranny" (S, 162). A careful and sympathetic student
of Rousseau," Jouvenel observes that the great French philosopher was wiser than many of his *soi-disant* disciples such as Robespierre. This "pessimistic evolutionist" appreciated that large, populous, and developed states could never return to primitive simplicity. Rousseau's more modest aim was to check the progress of those societies that had not already committed themselves wholeheartedly to the adventure of modernity (S, 162n). Jouvenel appropriates Rousseau's critique of modern progress at the service of a chastened liberalism that accepts the inevitability of modern liberty but has no illusions that it is coextensive with moral progress."

Jouvenel's unique brand of liberalism combines a profound appreciation of the benefits of modern civilization and the desirability of widespread individual initiatives with classical and Rousseauan reservations about the moral effects of social progress. But he is careful to distinguish the necessary *moral* critique of modernity from the utopian urge to return to the world of the corollaries. Such a return, he repeatedly maintains, is both impossible and undesirable. In *Pure Theory*, Jouvenel introduces a concept that he calls "Galileo's law." This law states that "a structure, solid and serviceable at a given size, cannot stand if one seeks to reproduce it in a different order of size; that the much greater edifice has to be built on different lines" (*PT*, 69). The attempted return to primitive simplicity or classical harmony is thus destined to fail in its stated aim. Other means must be found to preserve civic affections in a modern society.

Jouvenel's objection to revolutionary or reactionary nostalgia for a lost communal treasure, though, is at bottom a moral one. The mutual affections that enrich human life cannot ultimately be imposed on society at large. Even a liberal political order, to be sure, needs civic affections and cannot ignore the question of common good: Jouvenel is quite insistent on these points. But the effort to impose "intensive emotions" on the public life of a free society "is bound to wear thin." It is perfectly understandable that individuals who have difficulty finding meaningful human relations in their private lives will "dream of instituting" community at large. But Jouvenel warns that "love or friendship cannot be contrived by
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The spiritual dilemmas of modern societies cannot be overcome through political coercion or resort to a quasi-mythical "Legislator" who aims to impose communal ties artificially. The forcible imposition of the dream of the harmonious city is bound "to generate hate more often than harmony" (PT, 86). As the experience of communism amply attests, the real consequence of such efforts is to undermine the imperfect but real manifestations of community that continue to exist in liberal society. In such cases, the perfect truly is the enemy of the good.

Beyond Theoretical Modernity

Jouvenel is an incisive critic of communitarian illusions. But he equally highlights the fundamental theoretical inadequacy of modern liberal political philosophy. This radical critique of modern theory is evident in each of his masterworks. He concluded On Power with an assault on "individualist rationalism," the "destructive metaphysic" which, in his view, made the development of totalitarianism a "certainty." Renewing Tocqueville's earlier account of the dialectical relationship between individualism and collectivism, Jouvenel attacks a metaphysic which sees in society nothing "but the state and the individual" (OP, 417). The proponents of individualist rationalism "disregard the role of the spiritual authorities and of all those intermediate social forces which enframe, protect, and control the life of man, thereby obviating and preventing the intervention of Power." The partisans of individual liberation see in traditional spiritual authorities only a source of despotism and as a result work to free human beings from dependence on any and all transpolitical authority. They do not appreciate that atheistic rationalism can give rise to new forms of cruelty and subservience and that human liberty depends upon an acceptance of regulative principles above the human will. The "individualists and freethinkers" of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were committed to an abstract rationalism and a geometric account of social organization. They ignored the profound social utility and spiritual contribution of those "barriers and bulwarks" (OP, 417) under the ancien régime that acted as real restraints on the development of Power.
The weakening of spiritual authorities and intermediate social forces did not contribute, however, to a more humane society as the partisans of enlightenment rationalism had predicted. Instead, it undermined salutary restraints on "egotistical interests." Too many of the powerful and wealthy no longer acknowledged fundamental obligations to the poor or weak beyond those rooted in legal or contractual obligations. The weakening of religion and the gutting of traditional social restraints unleashed "blind passions leading to the fatal and inauspicious coming of tyranny" (OP, 417). The partisans of individualist liberalism did not appreciate that every society depends upon a sense of noblesse oblige on the part of elites in positions of responsibility. In every community there are "rulers" and "guides" who set the tone for society at large (OP, 414). Even democracy cannot escape the sempiternal division of society into the few and the many. The financier, the industrialist, the journalist and the public relations agent must all be guided by a sense of obligation which "canalizes their activities toward social ends" (OP, 414).

But liberal society cherishes a "false dogma of equality" which is blind to the indispensable role of spiritual and social authorities within civil society. The "legalitarian" fiction that all social relations are merely contractual and that no individual or group has exceptional responsibilities both flatters the weak and "results in practice in a chartered libertarianism for the strong" (OP, 414). In a liberal order, elites lack a defined sense of spiritual purpose. The liberal Jouvenel shares many of the reservations of both traditional conservatives and socialists about a merely "formal" conception of liberty. Liberalism only recognizes the political relevance of the individual and the state, and it has no place in its theory for the very authorities necessary to preserve a humane society. Spiritual and social authorities have no formal political or legal status in a representative order and no officially acknowledged responsibilities. Liberals are torn between two equally problematic solutions to the spiritual vacuum brought about by egalitarian dogma: on the one hand, they succumb to spurious confidence in the ability of spontaneous order or an "Invisible Hand" to promote a common good rejected by
liberalism's foundational premises; on the other hand, they come to support the dangerous statist imposition of social obligation through political command.

Jouvenel's analysis of the political consequences of "individualist rationalism" is by no means original to him. He acknowledges his debts on this score to a range of thinkers from Alexis de Tocqueville and August Comte to Hippolyte Taine. His particular contribution is to show that the rationalist metaphysic is not only destructive but false, rooted in the "willful" assumptions of early modern political philosophy. In *Sovereignty*, Jouvenel goes to great lengths to establish that a proto-liberal thinker such as Hobbes fails to provide a principled basis for political liberty. Hobbes fails to do so because he cannot account for the social nature of man or the non-arbitrary character of the moral life. But if self-restraint has no ultimate foundation in divine or natural law, then only the awesome restrictive powers of the state can keep egoism and blind passions at bay.

As we have seen, the development of civilization inevitably undermines the strong face-to-face ties that characterize traditional communal life. But it took a philosophic doctrine such as Hobbes' "fearful and atheistic individualism" to unleash hedonism and moral relativism as explicit principles of a political order. Jouvenel forthrightly rejects the Hobbesian notion that individual liberty can be understood "as the right of a man to obey his appetites," both because it ignores the higher capacities of the human soul and because it necessarily gives rise to the "strongest of powers," to "Leviathan," in order to "maintain society in being" (S, 298). Jouvenel insists that "the idea of political liberty is linked with other suppositions about man and with the encouragement of quite other tendencies" (S, 298). Hobbes' purported liberalism is based upon an "arbitrary simplification" of the human world-one that cannot do justice to the manifold plurality of social life and the complexity of the human soul. Jouvenel indicates that contemporary liberals reject the political implications of Hobbes' individualism while accepting almost all of his reductionistic and relativistic premises. They fail to see that government based on free discussion and free opinion
presupposes the human capacity to distinguish truth and falsehood and to define general principles of justice that transcend the human desire for power.

*The Pure Theory of Politics* contains one of Jouvenel's most powerful responses to the intellectual assumptions underlying modern liberalism. Part II of that work, "Setting: Ego in Otherdom," (*PT*, 57-87) is a rich articulation of the social nature of man. The larger purpose of *Pure Theory* is to analyze politics at the "micro level," to explore the foundation of politics in the capacity of "man to move man." This elementary exploration, however, does not presuppose any individualistic "methodological" assumptions. In order to avoid any misunderstandings of this score, Jouvenel devotes three chapters of that work to exploring the ways that individuals exist in, and are profoundly shaped by, their social setting. He shows that the idea of Individual Man is, strictly speaking, an intellectual conceit that ignores the fundamental dependence of man upon his wider social setting and a whole array of civilized inheritances. In this context, Jouvenel explicitly criticizes the "intellectual monstrosity" (*PT*, 60) which is social contract theory. He mocks the "fantasy of Individual Man striding about in Nature and deciding deliberately to come to term with his fellows" (*PT*, 60). Jouvenel goes right for the jugular: social contract theories are the "views of childless men who must have forgotten their own childhood" (*PT*, 60). The "hardy, roving adults" of the state of nature could only imagine the advantages of the social state if they had already enjoyed the benefits of social existence in the family or some related protective setting.

Social contract theorists such as Hobbes ignore the "simple truth" that human beings "begin [their] lives as infants" (*PT*, 60). Therefore, when they enter civil social society human beings are never free of obligations to others. The first and indispensable society is the family to which we owe our very existence and sense of humanity. The family provides a protective setting, a "humanized cosmos" (*PT*, 61), where the helpless child is loved and provided for. Human beings experience an exceptionally long period of dependence upon their begetters. But this extended period of dependence is a precondition for an education and moral training that
allows the young to begin to master complex individual and social passions. The family and the extended social community provide both group protection and group tuition (PT, 60)-they allow for the education of the passions and the inculcation of the ways of one's people. The dependence of man upon others therefore is a great—indeed, the greatest—of blessings. Jouvenel argues that Hobbes's claim that human beings construct an artificial political community out of the raw material of contentious and radically independent individuals is itself based upon an unwarranted pride which forgets "that only dependence has made us what we are" (PT, 59).

The Wise Man as Debtor

Jouvenel's most eloquent discussion of human dependence can be found in chapter 14 ("Liberty") of Sovereignty. There, Jouvenel argues that man's liberty and dignity depend upon a gracious acceptance of his status as a dependent being. Here the scope of human dependence is broader than the focus on the family in Pure Theory: our debts and dependence within the family branch out to a wider series of debts including tradition and civilized inheritances, the political community that shapes our humanity, and the natural order of things itself. Jouvenel defends natural piety against the false and acidic claims of rational autonomy and individual independence. The battle cry of eighteenth century proponents of enlightenment-"Man is born free"-turns out to be the worst delusion. Jouvenel insists that it is "the greatest nonsense if it is taken literally as a declaration of [the] original and natural independence" (S, 316) of human beings. Human beings are in truth the product of "the prolonged efforts of others" within the family and the larger social order. Jouvenel echoes Burke's famous discussion of social contract theory in the Reflections on the Revolution of France. In that work Burke appropriated the language of contract theory to remind his contemporaries of its failure to do justice to the bonds connecting the living with those who came before them and those who will inherit their patrimony. Burke eloquently presents the true nature of the social contract:
Society is indeed a contract. Subordinate contracts for objects of mere occasional interest may be dissolved at pleasure—but the state ought not to be considered as nothing better than a partnership agreement in a trade of pepper and coffee, calico or tobacco, or some other such low concern, to be taken up for a little temporary interest, and to be dissolved by the fancy of the parties. It is to be looked on with other reverence; because it is not a partnership in things subservient only to the gross animal existence of a temporary and perishable nature. It is a partnership in all science; a partnership in all art; a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be obtained in many generations, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born.

Jouvenel renews this Burkean insight. He speaks of man as an "heir entering on the accumulated heritage of past generations, taking his place as a partner in a vastly wealthy association." Jouvenel attacks the blindness of those who forget how "small and insignificant" (S, 317) Individual Man is, devoid of this civilized inheritance.

Jouvenel aims to recover the sentiment of natural piety that is a precondition for man's recognition of his dependence upon the Creator. "Every individual with a spark of imagination must feel deeply indebted to these many others, the living and the dead, the known and the unknown" (S, 317). Jouvenel emphasizes the naturalness of such piety and criticizes the "folly" of the modern emphasis on what society owes the individual. For Jouvenel, the fact of human dependence is much more than a natural datum. It is, more fully, a profoundly relevant moral truth. "The wise man knows himself for debtor, and his actions will be inspired by a deep sense of obligation" (S, 317). With this one stroke, he rejects the Promethean spirit common to all branches of modernity. In particular, Jouvenel sharply dissents from the classical liberal view of freedom and obligation put forward by John Stuart Mill at the beginning of On Liberty. There, Mill asserted that the individual ought to be free in those "parts of his life and conduct which affects only himself." For
Jouvenel, there is something willful, narrow, even infantile about a view which ignores the obvious reality that "the whole of a man's life, whatever society he lives in, is passed in never-ending contact with his fellows; there is not a single action or even word of his which may not prove obnoxious, there is not one which is completely devoid of consequence for someone" (S, 315). Jouvenel believes that the individualist premises of Hobbes and Mill are not only destructive of a stable liberal order, but are based on a brutal contraction of the range of human obligations. The libertarian premise of individual independence cannot provide a foundation for a sense of human dignity that does justice to the social nature of man.

Jouvenel believes that, if left unchecked, the individualist premises of modern liberalism will contribute to the subversion of liberty—that individualism contains a collectivist logic that can eventuate in tyranny, or at least in the serious erosion of the social fabric. The soullessness of "Babylon," the modern atheistic state which officially acknowledges no principle above the individual and collective will, is psychologically untenable: human beings are made for community. The undermining of social friendship and vigorous intermediate social groupings are too much for many fine souls to bear. In particular, the contemporary intellectual's disdain for the impersonality of the modern state and society gives rise to an understandable but finally tyrannical desire to recreate community as an imagined "Icaria" freed from the emptiness of life in "Babylon."

"Babylon and Icaria"

"Babylon" is Jouvenel's name for a "large and complex social whole, far advanced in civilization" (all quotations in this section are drawn from S, 328-333). His account of the intellectual and political development of Babylon is, in truth, a reasonably accurate sketch of the profound transformations within the liberal West over the past three or four centuries. Babylon is a commercial society marked by "every sort of activity and a wide variety of ways of life." Religious orthodoxy, if not religion itself, "has been in decline there for some time" and philosophers have successfully challenged "old metaphysical and moral certitudes." Efforts at crafting a rational system
of morals as an alternative to those grounded in revealed religion have failed. As a result, Babylonians face "a long-drawn-out intellectual crisis." Babylonians confront a great diversity of ways of life, but, even more importantly, a dizzying array of beliefs and opinions. Babylonians cannot agree on "what is seemly, what is moral, what is just, what is owing." In contrast to Rousseau, however, Jouvenel acknowledges that Babylonian society continues to function more or less satisfactorily. Babylonian laws do not reflect a shared moral understanding or any kind of agreement about what is good in itself. Babylon is held together by a "system of laws of pragmatic inspiration, which forbids action of a kind harmful to the social organism and commands behavior necessary to social prosperity." The liberal or Babylonian state is strictly speaking "neutral and agnostic" when it comes to claims about the human good, to cite Pierre Manent's striking formulation. It respects the diversity of activities and opinions which proliferate in a free society. It does not appeal to a common system of beliefs in order to elicit obedience from free men. But behind the liberal state lurks the Hobbesian specter of "fear of punishments induced by a strong government." The principles of governance in modern societies are essentially Hobbesian.

The prosperous, law-bound, commercial society therefore may be the "freest" in the history of the world, but to some sensitive souls it appears to impose insufferable burdens which stifle individual conscience and human spontaneity. Its freedom depends upon an "apparatus of repression," its laws ignore the naturally obligatory character of conscience. The spiritually disenchanted long for a society without law or repression, one where obligations are voluntarily fulfilled, where conscience replaces an arbitrary system of command. They are attracted to revolutionary movements that promise to "reconstitute a small, primitive society in the heart of the large, highly civilized society." These revolutionary sectarians experience "the unity of principles and the spontaneous harmony of behaviors." They yearn to "bend the rest of the Babylonians to a system of rules which is coherent, rational and complete." But Babylonians do not welcome revolution as liberation. They experience the "march to total liberty" as the fanatical imposition of
Beyond the "Prison of the Corollaries"

restraints by a revolutionary sect which does not share the views of Babylonians at large. There is nothing spontaneous or conscientious about the attempted revolutionary transformation of society. Babylonians thus understandably yearn for the freedoms of the old Hobbesian order and are repelled by the moral fanaticism that animates the revolutionary impulse. Jouvenel's account is undoubtedly incomplete as a description of the development of totalitarianism or even of the psychology of conspiratorial, tyrannical sects. But it incisively highlights the specific vulnerability of the liberal order: the "neutral and agnostic" state is experienced as profoundly unnatural by those who are sensitive to the connection between conscience and law, by those who "think of laws as the expression of a moral rule." And despite the "official" claims of liberalism, it is impossible for human beings to wholly sever the natural connection between law and morality.

The experience of totalitarianism in the twentieth century has gone a long way toward discrediting revolutionary politics in the western world, at least for the foreseeable future. Jouvenel suggests, however, that the dialectic of Babylon and Icaria is inherent in the modern adventure. "The dream of Icaria is for ever being born again spontaneously in the heart of Babylon. For men never resign themselves to Babylon being Babylon." As much as we rightly loathe totalitarianism, we ought to welcome this stubborn refusal of human beings to resign themselves to spiritual desiccation. It is natural for human beings to pose the question of the common good. Even in liberal societies, in the "procedural republic" which is Babylon, human beings long for those "islands of friendship" that reveal to them that they are social beings dependent on others for almost everything they are. Therefore the inevitably totalitarian character of Icarian revolution should not discredit the necessary effort to free the common good from "the prison of the corollaries."

Conclusion

We have seen that Jouvenel's thought is characterized by an unresolved tension between a "progressive" confidence in the open or dynamic society and profoundly "classical" reservations about the
moral consequences of modernity. Jouvenel sides with modern liberty against the closed city or primitive community while also drawing on the broad tradition of classical and Christian thought to expose the profound limitations of modern political philosophy. Jouvenel's measured ambivalence about things ancient and modern, his dialectic appropriation and critique of aspects of modern theory and practice, reflect his desire to do justice to the complexity of the human world. By posing the question of the common good within the context of a modern liberal order, Jouvenel reveals the fatal limitations of the liberal reduction of social reality to the sole realities of the state and the individual, as well as the deluded character of all forms of "primitivist nostalgia." Jouvenel thereby encourages each of us to do justice to the various goods of life, including the inherent diversity of human nature, the humanizing requirements of conscience, and the social bonds that make true individuality possible.

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NOTES
2. Ibid., 86.
3. There are important exceptions. Religious, conservative-minded communitarians such as Jean Bethke Elshtain and Mary Ann Glendon are penetrating critics of rights-based jurisprudence and forceful defenders of traditional moral communities.
4. More than any other recent thinker, the German emigre political philosopher Hannah Arendt is responsible for contemporary nostalgia for the classical polis as the home of authentic republicanism. Arendt valued political participation in "the public space" as the hallmark of genuine republican liberty. See her discussion of the "lost treasure" of the revolutionary tradition in

5. See Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) and the writings of a host of his students, including Allan Bloom, Thomas Pangle, and Stanley Rosen.

6. All citations to Jouvenel's major works of political philosophy will be cited internally: Page references refer to the Liberty Fund editions (Indianapolis, IN) of *On Power* (henceforth *OP*), *Sovereignty* (*S*), and *The Pure Theory of Politics* (*PT*), all of which are in print and readily accessible.


8. See *Ibid.*, 323. Constant writes: "Individual liberty, I repeat, is the true modern liberty. Political liberty is its guarantee, consequently political liberty is indispensable. But to ask the peoples of our day to sacrifice, like those of the past, the whole of their individual liberty to political liberty, is the surest means of detaching them from the former, and, once this result has been achieved, it would be only too easy to deprive them of the latter."'

9. For Constant's view of political liberty as a necessary corrective to the individualism of modern societies, see *ibid.*, 326-328.

10. The *locus classicus* of contemporary "theories of justice" is of course the famous book of that name by John Rawls. Jouvenel's work shows the possibility of a very different type of liberalism, one more attuned to the affections that bind a living political order.


Jouvenel's writings on political economy provide fruitful suggestions on how the good life might be cultivated within the context of "the affluent society." They illustrate in an extremely concrete way how the common good might be freed from "the prison of the


14. Jouvenel fails to appreciate sufficiently that Plato is first and foremost a partisan of the theoretical life and only subordinately and instrumentally an advocate of any particular political community. The always nuanced reader of Rousseau is a bit more heavy-handed in his reading of Plato.

15. See Jouvenel's critique of the "modern idea" of absolute sovereignty in Part III of Sovereignty, 201-257.

16. See note #10.

17. See in particular Jouvenel's groundbreaking "Essai sur la politique de Rousseau" (1947) which originally appeared as an introduction to an edition of Rousseau's Du contrat social (Geneva: Editions du Cheval Aile,1947). In 1978 this text was republished as an introduction to an edition of Du contrat social released by the Parisian publisher Hachette. The Hachette edition also contains two other texts by Jouvenel on Rousseau.

Jouvenel stands apart from most other conservative-minded readers of Rousseau in his appreciation of Rousseau as a classical moralist as well as in his refusal to identify the idea of the "general will" with modern totalitarianism. Jouvenel carefully distinguished Rousseau's thought from its incendiary cooptation or vulgarization by the French revolutionaries among others.

18. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn articulates a very similar position in his Liechtenstein Address of September 14, 1993. The speech appears as an appendix to Solzhenitsyn's The Russian Question at
the End of the Twentieth Century (New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1995), 112-128.


20. Jouvenel fully agrees with Leo Strauss and Michael Oakeshott that Hobbes was an architect of individualist liberalism and not the father of totalitarianism in any form. See S, 289-290.


22. For a penetrating analysis of the modern effort to create a "neutral and agnostic" state where power and opinion are vigorously separated, see Pierre Manent, "Preface: Situation du liberalisme" in Les libéraux (Paris: Gallimard /Tel, 2001), 11-16.