

REASON, PASSION AND INTEREST: PIERRE TRUDEAU'S ETERNAL LIBERAL TRIANGLE*

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Considerable attention has been lavished over the years on Trudeau as the philosopher of federalism and bitter critic of Quebec nationalism. It is easy enough to assume, along with the Right and Left in English Canada and *le tout-Quebec*, that Trudeau's "rigidity" and "inflexibility" on these questions has simply left him as an anachronism, passed over by the rush of events and the seemingly inexorable advance of *indépendantisme* in Quebec and decentralist regionalism in English Canada. Yet nothing is more notoriously ephemeral than political fortune. That Trudeau's ideas are presently in eclipse is apparent; that they are thereby exhausted is by no means obvious. It is a mark of the power of this man that no strong federalist position can in the near future escape the colour and quality which his expression has given to this thesis in the dialectics of centralization-decentralization and duality-separation. In this sense alone Trudeau's arguments bear continued reading: to a greater extent than many of us would like to admit, he remains close to the heart of our central dilemmas.

It is not however this relatively familiar terrain which I propose to cover once again. Journalist Anthony Westell wrote a book on Trudeau called *Paradox in Power*, and that phrase perhaps best sums up a common reading of Trudeau, especially by English Canadian intellectuals. How could a man who first rose to notoriety in Duplessis' Quebec as a "radical" defender of strikers, a passionate proponent of civil liberties and a tireless advocate of democratization of public life turn into the prime minister who invoked the War Measures Act, defended

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RCMP illegal acts, and brought down wage controls against the labour movement? Many, particularly on the left, simply shrug their shoulders at yet one more sorry example of how "power" turns decent progressives into vicious reactionaries. Others return to Trudeau's early writings for evidence of the original sin always lurking beneath the opportunist's costume of the day.

I think the answer to this problem is rather more complex but also more interesting than either of these alternatives. Trudeau's reflections on politics over the last thirty years, while scarcely constituting an original contribution to political philosophy, nevertheless do offer striking and sometimes illuminating insights into the strengths and weaknesses of liberal-democratic thought, insights given further pungency by his personal participation in political power. It is not so much the specific concerns of Trudeau — French Canada and federalism — which appear most interesting in this light, although they have received most attention, but the more general problems of liberal-democratic theory and practice. Let us give Trudeau his due: he has always wanted to be known for what is universal in his makeup, rather than what is culturally particular. Of course, as a social being, man must start from the particular to approach the universal. George Grant, in deploring Trudeau's "evident distaste for what was by tradition his own," goes on to admit that his "quality of being a convert to modern liberalism is one cause of his formidability."¹ What English-speaking Canadians have generally accepted as tradition, Trudeau gained as rational accession. This may account for the vigour and the freshness of his thinking, so uncommon in this era of liberal pessimism and uncertainty. It also gives us the opportunity to grasp, at the level of theory, contradictions of liberal-democratic practice which are otherwise normally engaged at the level of empirical political science alone.

"Reason over passion." Trudeau once proclaimed this as his personal motto. It is no accident that his arch rival, René Lévesque, has recently had a book published under the title of *La Passion du Québec*. But Trudeau's slogan is, in this form, scarcely more fertile or illuminating than Lévesque's affectation. No theory of liberal democracy could be deduced from the proclaimed supremacy of "reason." It is my thesis that a third, sometimes silent, partner to this relationship is the ancient liberal actor, *interest*. It is this *ménage à trois* of reason, passion and interest which forms the more interesting dynamic of Trudeau's liberal politics. It is an *eternal* triangle, without resolution: a romantic liberal tragedy played out again and again. If we still applaud, it is because the plot continues to speak to our concrete political experience in the English-speaking world.

Trudeau comes to this originally as an outsider, as it were. Few have analyzed with such mordant wit and such Voltairian iconoclasm the bizarre, fantastic world of Quebec ideological life before the Quiet Revolution, as Trudeau himself in his journalism of the 1950s. Abraham Rotstein once remarked of

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Trudeau's thought that "it seems vaguely, in its intellectual underpinnings, *à la recherche d'un siècle perdu*."² Indeed, one can almost see Trudeau as once striving to be a one-man Enlightenment to a nation which had put the French eighteenth century under permanent interdiction. Yet, it is this only "vaguely," for Trudeau did not stop at 1789, and even formulated a relatively complex answer to the ambiguous legacy of the Enlightenment. He is also very much inspired by the nineteenth- and twentieth-century *English*-speaking liberal tradition and this gives his thought an eclectic leaven. When examined in its uniqueness, this elective world view proves to be often surprising, and almost always interesting.

The first surprise, and one which has passed unnoticed by the nationalist and conservative critics who see Trudeau as a "rootless cosmopolitan," is to find a religious foundation to his thought. His old reputation as an anticlerical "radical" and his reluctance to publicize his religious faith for political ends have misled these critics in the same way as his fashionable technocratic rhetoric about cybernetics and functionalism. It is true, however, as he himself has admitted, that his faith is more protestant than traditionally Catholic, inasmuch as his well known reluctance to accept external discipline interferes with the acceptance of hierarchial authority. On the other hand, Trudeau very early on decided, in his perversely individualistic way, that just because the Church told him to believe in God was no reason to become an atheist. A reading of Aquinas on the relationship between morality and free choice convinced him that he could accept certain moral codes and precepts *freely* as a rational form of self-discipline. His Catholicism thus placed the emphasis on inner conscience rather than on external conformity to rules. And it was the Christian existentialists, Kierkegaard, Berdyaev and Mounier who influenced his developing mind the most. The personalist philosophy of Mounier's review, *Esprit*, indeed exercised a pervasive influence over the entire *Cité Libre* group. In Trudeau's case, personalism meant that the fundamental datum of the social order is the *individual*, not a technological Prometheus unbound from chains of religious tradition, but rather the individual as the personal reflection of humanity's origin as God's creation in His own image. It also meant that faith must be manifested not in contemplative witness, but in the social embodiment of virtue in actual behaviour (in *works* if we may use a Protestant term.) We find here the abstract basis of a social liberalism which argues that the individual is the irreducible basis of the social order, requiring the maximum possible liberty so that autonomous wills may create the spontaneous nexus allowing for creativity and progress.³

Publicly a defender of a secular morality, Trudeau as Minister of Justice reformed the criminal code in matters of sexual and personal morality not in terms of "permissiveness," but on the high ground of liberal principle:

We are now living in a social climate in which people are

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beginning to realize, perhaps for the first time in the history of this country, that we are not entitled to impose the concepts which belong to a sacred society upon a civil or profane society. The concepts of the civil society in which we live are pluralistic, and I think this parliament realizes that it would be a mistake for us to legislate into this society concepts which belong to a theological or sacred order.⁴

To trust to personal conscience matters which do not call into question the liberty of others is not merely a liberal principle *à la* J.S. Mill; in Trudeau's case it reflects a respect for the value of the individual conscience which itself has a religious rather than a secular basis. Hence his reasoned rejection of capital punishment in parliament began with a theoretical discussion of the Christian concepts of justifiable self-protection and the just war as moral bases for taking a life, then argued that the question of capital punishment as a "justifiable act of collective self-defence" could only be answered by "factual data and logical induction, not moral philosophy," and called for a "practical rather than a moral judgement." Having then rejected the death penalty on these "practical" grounds, Trudeau concluded that, under these circumstances it was therefore immoral for the state to deliberately take a man's life. That he in effect places the burden of proof on the state rather than the individual cannot, I think, be dissociated from the *sacred* value embodied in the individual. This becomes especially clear in his angry dismissal of the argument that the state should "experiment" with the death penalty to determine if it actually deters murder. In a rejection which also applies to all calls for revolutionary violence against individuals to advance some collective project, Trudeau simply asserts that we have no business experimenting with human lives.⁵ Again, his well known antimilitarism stops short of pacificism: "In my political philosophy, I think that there sometimes is room for violence. In my religion I really cannot think of cases where violence is justified But, here again, when the religious principles, like the philosophical, are translated into reality, sometimes the reality forces violence on you, and there is no escape from it, and then I don't think it's something you should try to hide your face from."⁶

A personalist Catholic morality places on the individual a heavy burden of moral choice in concrete situations. Political philosophy is a kind of practical reason indicating a systematic basis for making such difficult choices, the difficulty of which deepens drastically when one moves from teacher and preacher to power wielding politician. We should now go on to follow Trudeau along this path of ascending difficulty, while never allowing the starting point to slip from our minds, as it has from the minds of all too many of his critics.

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Once in the course of attacking a statement of André Laurendeau that liberty must be wrested from authority, Trudeau replied unequivocally that "Liberty is a free gift — a birthright, which distinguishes man from beast." He went on to draw the consequence that the "game of politics should consist less in wresting liberties from a grudging State than in grudgingly delegating powers to the State." He even makes a case for "inalienable rights" of the individual in democratic theory, to be guaranteed by bills of rights which are anterior in "some sense" to the very existence of the state, although he does so in rather functionalist terms which would no doubt fail to please true natural law theorists: "to assure the effective participation of all citizens in the development of public policy, these rights must remain vested in each citizen independently of the laws."⁷ In 1964, expressing his contempt for the revolutionary pretensions of that era's "nationalist brood," he spoke in somewhat forlorn tones of Quebec's revolution which never took place: such a revolution could "have consisted in freeing man from collective coercions ... in the triumph of the freedoms of the human being as inalienable rights, over and above capital, the nation, tradition, the Church, and even the State." This kind of statement, along with his quotations of Acton and other writers stressing the sacred quality of man's individual dignity, have led at least one Quebec critic to decry Trudeau's exclusively and naively ethical interpretation of rationality.⁸ While avoiding the error of those who view Trudeau as simply an amoral Machiavellian, this interpretation fails to do justice to the complexity of his liberalism. For while Trudeau begins with the individual and his "free gift" of liberty, he quickly situates this *datum* in the real world of conflict, violence, insecurity and death. If Cain used his "free gift" of liberty to slay his brother, then Christianity obviously will not save us in *this* world. We need political philosophy and law — the latter understood as both social science and social control.⁹

In allowing himself to muse on the Quebec revolution that might have been, he was allowing his irritation and anguish at the actual course of events to get the better of his own good sense. Elsewhere his writings are studded with exhortations to follow the "first law of politics ... to start from the facts rather than from historical 'might-have-beens,' warnings that history is useful only as a guide to a future toward which we are being impelled by material reality, brilliant denunciations of the irrelevance of social and political theory divorced from social and economic facts, and appeals to *realpolitik*.¹⁰

Trudeau's sense of reality and of the transience of human contrivance has led conservative and nationalist critics to accuse him of mindless celebration of the triumph of modernity. Some of his rhetoric certainly suggests this; one hesitates to deny this as an element in his thought which has on occasion gained supremacy. But to assume, with George Grant, that liberalism always identifies necessity with goodness, is to oversimplify. Trudeau has often exhibited a

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historical sense of the impermanence of things, and of the ironies which history plays on those who seem to shape it. Speaking of Louis Riel in 1968, he wondered "how many of us understand the loneliness, the sense of futility of such a man? How many of us are willing to concede that future historians, in chronicling the events of our lives, may choose to emphasize and applaud the activities, not of the privileged majority, but of some little known leader of an unpopular minority?" More to the point is his facing up to the fact that "the nation of French Canadians will some day fade from view and ... Canada itself will undoubtedly not exist forever. Benda points out that it is to the lasting greatness of Thucydides that he was able to visualize a world in which Athens would be no more."¹¹ Nor can we simply take this as cheerful surrender to progress. Since the PQ victory in 1976 Trudeau has on more than one occasion publicly confronted the possibility that Quebec may indeed separate: which is to say, that everything to which Trudeau has dedicated his public life since 1965 will come to naught. Trudeau's very activism on this issue indicates that he sees history as made by men, not impersonal forces. But if the results must ultimately be accepted, this acceptance may be closer to classical stoicism than to Panglossian celebration. Once in a television interview, before he became prime minister (and before his ill-fated marriage), he quoted Marcus Aurelius: "This vase you hold in your hands may shatter, this woman you love may be unfaithful."

But if all is flux and if brute reality rules the world, Trudeau would have little resort but to retreat to a private garden of contemplation. On the contrary, the superiority of modern liberalism to classical stoicism is in its development of mechanisms for managing the tension between change and continuity. The key is to create a procedural basis for resolving conflicting demands on criteria minimally acceptable to all actors in the process. Individuals compete, economically, socially and politically, in a continual process of remaking the world; the only constant is the process itself — the rules of the game, so to speak. This much is obvious and central to any genuinely liberal reading of the political process. What is perhaps less obvious is the extent to which such a reading precludes, on theoretical grounds alone, any prior acceptance of the Good, or of *a priori* moral ends of the community. Instead of the Good there can be only "goods," demonstrated to be goods only by the fact that they are demanded. If justice is the resolution of competing demands on a procedural basis acceptable to all reasoning and calculating participants, then any dedication of the community to a particular concept of the Good is, *ipso facto*, an upsetting of the procedural fairness of a liberal political order. We in the English-speaking world have thought and acted so much in this familiar intellectual landscape that we are often incapable of seeing it whole.¹² Trudeau, a passionate (if he would forgive the word) convert to this world-view from a cultural milieu in which such ideas were by no means familiar, raises some

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fundamental questions with particular clarity and force.

When Trudeau tells us that "ideological systems are the true enemies of freedom," he is telling us something which appears on the surface as little more than an appeal to North American "pragmatism." In fact he is getting at something more interesting from the point of view of his political philosophy: how to reconcile the claims of liberty and authority without allowing the answer given at a particular moment to harden into an orthodoxy which itself becomes an obstacle to future flexibility. His much-quoted remarks on creating "counterweights" and his insistence on checks-and-balances, whether in parliamentary or federal forms, are the institutional expression of his personal guide to political participation: "When a political ideology is universally accepted by the elite, when the people who define situations embrace and venerate it, this means that it is high time free men were fighting it."¹³ The core of the opposition to ideological systems does not rest on some faith in pragmatism as political know-how, but on the liberal principle that only *procedures*, never ends, can be sacrosanct in a progressive society. Ideological systems congeal volatile elements into monopolies by transforming goods into the Good. This seems to me to be a crucial point in Trudeau's thought. As a shorthand, I will call it "procedural justice." If we see that Trudeau's focus always rests on justice as procedure, never as end, I think his thought becomes much clearer, overall.

Procedural justice remains at an unacceptably rarefied level of abstraction when argued in narrow political terms alone. To see why this is so, let us begin with Trudeau's most ambitious attempt to expound a pure political theory of democracy, his 1950s articles in *Vrai*, later gathered together in book form.¹⁴ Faced with the "*grand noirceur*" of Duplessis' Quebec, Trudeau wishes to provide an answer to a question which he poses in a provocatively personal way: "how it is that Maurice can give orders to Pierre?" The heaviest penalty for refusing to engage in politics is to be ruled by someone inferior to yourself.* Even if madmen rule over us, it is least up to us to "see to it that we are governed no worse than is absolutely necessary." We are going to be governed, like it or not, but we must demand from political power that any exercise of authority be explained in a way which satisfies our reason, since the "nature of things" cannot explain the conventional forms which politics actually take in the world. From this late eighteenth-century *philosophe* position of radical scepticism Trudeau stakes a claim on explaining the universal principles which underlie the diversity of the real world of politics.

All the obscurantist theories of authority fall in the face of one overwhelming fact of human history: men *do* overthrow rulers, whether "divine" or otherwise. "In the last analysis any given political authority exists only because

*Presumably the 1979 election indicates that political engagement is no proof against this eventuality.

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men consent to obey it. In this sense, what exists is not so much the authority as the obedience." In other words, in the long run the only sovereignty is popular sovereignty. This is not to deny that there is a "psychological disposition" to obey; history and observation will indicate (not least in the Quebec of this era) that the people will put up with a very great deal before being moved to disobedience, but it is the ultimate sanction of disobedience or revolution which is the crucial fact. After all, to shift gears to ethical terms, if the "purpose of living in society is that every man may fulfil himself as far as possible" and if that society serves him badly, then "he is entitled to overthrow it." This should not imply anarchy, however. It is up to each citizen to judge the value of his particular state, but the standards upon which such judgements may be made cannot be mere individual interests, since, lacking the crucial bond of social solidarity, a society of egoists quickly becomes a society of slaves. "To remain free then, citizens must seek their welfare in a social order that is just to the largest number; in practice only the majority has the power to make and unmake governments."

There is a middle way between despotism and anarchy which rests on the device of the majority. Democracy is a mechanism of civilized peoples "whereby citizens can fight against laws they disapprove of without going outside the law or becoming conscientious objectors or political martyrs." A constitutional democracy is one in which the rule of law is interpreted as follows: "our obedience then is not to individuals but to the general will of the nation, a will embodied in laws, to whose service and execution the rulers are appointed." The particular will of the statesman must bow to this general will: "that is why the statesman must be attentive to the needs of all sectors of society, with no bias towards thwarting any one of them, and must wish only to reconcile them all and direct them towards the general interest." Understood in this context, Trudeau's Lockean espousal of the right to revolution as a logical corollary of the doctrine of popular sovereignty is, like Locke's own teaching, a conservative device to prevent the necessity of violence or tyrannicide. "If that is to have a revolutionary spirit, then I admit to it, but I must add that such a spirit is the best safeguard against revolution."

This purely political theory of democracy has the virtue at least of vigorous clarity and forceful expression. Compelled to explain first principles in a society hostile to liberalism, Trudeau does provide us with the skeleton rather than the clothes. But the very starkness of the skeleton discloses all too readily some missing linkages. A major example lies in the adequate discussion of the social content underlying the political forms and, allied to this, the emptiness of Trudeau's concept of the state.

Trudeau's use of Rousseauian language (general will, particular interests) was, no doubt deliberately, a provocation to the clerical reactionaries and conservative nationalists of the day to whom Rousseau was a veritable red flag.¹⁵

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Yet aside from his evident desire to *épater la (petite) bourgeoisie*, it is not clear what Trudeau gains from Rousseau. The latter had a very clear idea of the social preconditions for the emergence and maintenance of a "general will," and very rigorous conditions they were — to the extent that Rousseau himself was left wondering if such a conjuncture would ever be possible in the real world. Above all, Rousseau had a strong sense of the distortions which the uneven distribution of property and economic interests would have on the possibility of the general will finding expression. Even if Rousseau's own solution was anachronistic and contradictory, it is somewhat startling to note that Trudeau does not even diagnose the problem, let alone suggest a solution. The closest he comes is in the above-quoted sentence in which he discusses the impotence of mere egoistic motives to effect revolution and concludes that citizens should seek a "social order that is just to the largest number." When he follows this immediately with the statement that "in practice only the majority has the power to make and unmake governments" it seems that he is suggesting only a mechanistic argument from power politics; the so-called "general will" is nothing more than a given majority. But if this general will is merely the addition of particular wills, each presumably reflecting individual "egoistic" interests, into an evanescent coalition controlling a majority of votes, then it is at least incumbent upon the political theorist to consider the particular wills in their social reality, which is to say, in their class reality. What are the classes and the class interests which go to make up the "general will" of a democracy through the mechanism of majority rule? Or, to rephrase the question in historical terms, what are the different kinds of democracy which are possible under this principle? This pure theory of popular sovereignty would seem to yield a good deal less than meets the eye. At least Locke made it fairly clear what kind of majority he was advocating.

The lack of social content to the concept of sovereignty tends to vitiate almost entirely Trudeau's concept of the state. "The state," he announces, "is an article made to measure by its citizens, according to the precise amount of obedience they are prepared to offer it." He pleads with Quebecers to see the state not as a foreign power but as something which "has been for all practical purposes in the hands of those whom we choose from election to election." It is all quite simple, really: "the state is by definition the instrument whereby human society collectively organizes itself and expresses itself. A sovereign society that fears the state is ... unconvinced of the usefulness of its own existence as a group." The state grew because individual efforts could not provide the society with necessary services, whereupon "the community simply decided to solve these problems communally, through the state." Quoting Karl Marx and Saint Thomas More, he does admit that at "all times and under all systems there is a tendency for the few to use the State to enslave the many." But for this democracy is itself the sole remedy, "since it is the system in which

the citizen consents to be governed by a body of laws that the majority of citizens wanted."¹⁶ The state, as such, collapses into the democratic majority. Or, as Trudeau's *Cité Libre* collaborator, Jean Pellerin later summed it up neatly: "*L'état, c'est nous.*"¹⁷ Trudeau does suggest that while the state should do more, it should arouse less reverence and face more means of control and limitation. But this is merely the opposite side of the coin to the sovereignty of the people. What most strikes the reader some twenty years after Trudeau's political statement is its naive reductionism. There is almost nothing about the influence which particular interests (Rousseau's partial associations) may exercise on the formation of majorities as well as upon the exercise of power by the state, nothing about the representation of particular interests within the state. If Trudeau had set out to demystify the state in the eyes of Quebecers, he surely was setting up an equally mythical construct in its place.

He does admit two major qualifications to his theory. First is his Millian insistence that majorities have no monopoly of truth and that the liberties of minorities must thus be protected. This of course can be explained, as by J.S. Mill himself, on progressive grounds: today's minority may be tomorrow's majority. Majorities should be liberal toward minorities out of prudence alone. At the same time the tyranny of the majority is itself in violation of the fundamental liberal concept of procedural justice. A tyrannical majority would in effect have substituted its idea of the Good for the free individual pursuit of goods. In this sense majorities are merely practical mechanisms for registering a critical weight of opinion against excesses of government, but have no value in and of themselves.

A much more serious qualification is also admitted, but only through the back door, as it were. Having described a Platonic form of the state which was in no way related to the specificity of twentieth-century liberal-democratic capitalism, he then grants that a democratic majority cannot understand the complexities of modern legislation and administration. This admission is in contradiction to the theory of the state as an "article made to measure by its citizens." The recognition of the Weberian principle of the state as a bureaucratic phenomenon leads Trudeau to a further attempt at precision which calls into question the entire concept of majority rule as a mechanism of popular sovereignty. In a well known passage, he indicates that the "electoral system asks of the citizen only that he should decide on a set of ideas and tendencies, and on men who can hold them and give effect to them. These sets of ideas and men constitute political parties, which are indispensable for the functioning of parliamentary democracy." Voters will not be asked to decide "each of the technical problems presented by the complicated art of government in the modern world." The point is made clearer yet when Trudeau posits a hypothetical benevolent despot and asserts the need for some mechanism whereby the despot would be forced to abdicate if opinion went

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against him — but this, Trudeau concludes is, itself the “actual mechanism of democracy.” In a functioning democracy, “at each election ... the people assert their liberty by deciding what government they will consent to obey.” Popular sovereignty thus means no more than the ultimate authority residing in the people at elections to recall the mandate of politicians in office. The people can judge government only by results — “real or apparent on the happiness of the group.”¹⁸

We thus see a double reinterpretation of popular sovereignty: first, it becomes identified with numerical majorities (albeit with liberal guarantees for minorities), and second, majorities themselves are called into being only as periodic ratifications or rejections of the politicians who head the state — a state which, by indirect inference must be assumed to be a much more formidable and autonomous organism than the pure theory would lead us to believe.

Trudeau's purely political formulation was admittedly designed for a limited and specific polemical purpose. When he turns his attention to the question of the origin of the state — the hypothetical social contract underlying it — he has managed to suggest more fruitful perspectives. In an article written in the early 1960s, he drew attention to the dilemma of the individual in modern society “hamstrung by a web of social, economic and administrative institutions,” unable to determine if he is being economically exploited by monopoly capital: “And even if the citizen knew he was the victim of an injustice, he wouldn't have the power to come to grips with such offenders. Therefore, if the citizen wants to avoid being commanded against his will at every turn, he must give himself as a protector a state strong enough to subordinate to the common good all the individuals and organizations who make up society.”¹⁹ Here we can readily detect the tones of an earlier theorist who was most concerned with the state as a means of protecting citizens from one another: Thomas Hobbes. The “common good” is not, in this Hobbesian formulation, the Good as a community goal, but the rules which allow a minimum of security in the pursuit of individual goods. The strong state is necessary precisely because competition in civil society renders life insecure.

Trudeau's constant appeals to “facts” and “reality” begin to make sense in this context. In the way in which Robert Dahl defines political power (“a relation among actors in which one actor induces other actors to act in some way they would not otherwise act” based on the Hobbesian combination of promise of rewards and threat of sanction).²⁰ Trudeau sees power as the basic datum of politics, the building blocks material, as it were, of the political superstructure of values and institutions. At first glance this seems incompatible with the rather idealist and abstracted reading of politics described just a moment ago. It depends, however, on the level of analysis. Hobbesian *realpolitik* at the structural level readily turns into idealism at the superstructural level. This is,

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indeed, an ideological characteristic of liberal thought. Trudeau is no exception.

One of the closing paragraphs of his *Approaches to Politics* makes the connection between the two levels quite overtly. It is worth quoting at length:

As for majority rule, the fact must be faced that it is a convention, possessing simply a practical value. It is convenient to choose governments and pass laws by majority vote, so that those who exercise authority can feel assured of having more supporters than opponents — which is itself some guarantee that the social order will be upheld. It is true that from one point of view the majority convention is only a roundabout way of applying the law of the stronger, in the form of the law of the more numerous. Let us admit it, but note at the same time that human groupings took a great step towards civilization when they agreed to justify their actions by counting heads instead of breaking them.²¹

Under the clothes of the Enlightenment which Trudeau strove to legitimate in Duplessis' Quebec we find, if not the old Adam, at least the old Hobbes, as revealed in Locke's majoritarian rendering.

My stress on the Hobbesian basis of Trudeau's reading of the foundations of the state rests on more than the pedantic desire of the historian of political thought to classify theorists into historical pigeonholes. The failure to recognize the Hobbesian assumptions which Locke slipped into modern liberal discourse has arguably misled generations of students of liberal democracy into most peculiar and irrelevant notions of the "rule of laws, not men" and of the strictly limited state — notions which have worn increasingly thin in the last few decades of state capitalist development. There has always been a sense that the political culture of Canada has been rather more Hobbesian than that of America, but now the case is being made that the constitutional foundations of the United States are deeply Hobbesian as well.²² Certainly since C.B. Macpherson's *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism* we are better able to appreciate the curious combination of possessive individualism in civil society and a policing sovereign grown more and more absolutist in the public sphere, a combination which appears to be characteristic of liberal democracies in the late twentieth-century. And since it is on grounds of his alleged "betrayal" of civil liberties in office that Trudeau has drawn most criticism from academic critics, this Hobbesian basis of the state should be examined.

Hobbes broke from classical political philosophy by denying that political rights and obligations could be derived from natural law as an ideal pattern of

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behaviour. Individuals alone could be seen as the source of right, and this right could be understood only in terms of the private wills of individuals. The unlimited appetite for power which Hobbes read in human nature was itself both cause and consequence of the chaotic conflict of particular private wills in competition with one another: striving for power was a striving for an illusory security resulting only in the universal insecurity of the state of nature. However, individuals in the state of nature are also rational calculators of their self-interest. Enlightened self-interest, the highest form of reason, suggests that the transfer of each individual's power to a sovereign is the appropriate means of creating secure foundations for the continued pursuit of private goods. It also suggests that the sovereign will prudently take into account the interests of his subjects for his own security, although he is not bound by the social contract to do so. Locke, and Trudeau, extend this somewhat by developing the majoritarian doctrine as a more flexible device for effecting the same end.

Trudeau accepts a great deal of this Hobbesian teaching, more than most have been willing to see. But he does not accept all of it, and it is here that he remains interesting as more than a mere interpreter. The most crucial difference between Trudeau and the seventeenth-century liberal thinkers derives directly from Trudeau's own specific cultural and intellectual background in twentieth-century Quebec, and more generally from his experience as an observer of twentieth-century world history. Trudeau has seen the re-emergence on a vast and frightening scale of an element in human nature which the seventeenth-century liberals believed they had contained: *the passions*. To Trudeau, men are not quite the rational calculators of self-interest which Hobbes posited; they *may* be that, but they may also be passionate champions of irrational causes which, by objective standards, would not be in their self-interest as calculating individuals. What happens to the liberal theory of procedural justice when men passionately devote themselves to the application of a particular concept of the community Good even at the expense of their individual pursuit of goods? And what happens when this passion turns out to be a passion for one's Own rather than the Good, but interpreted on a collective rather than on an individual basis? In short, to speak the name with which Trudeau has identified this passion, what happens to liberalism when *nationalism* is let loose on the world?

Classical political philosophy had taught that the desire for material gratification was the necessary but not sufficient condition of the political order. Plato saw the money-makers as the first level of the just city, to be governed by the quality of spiritedness or courage which in turn must be governed by reason or wisdom. Christianity in a sense separated the last level from politics by placing wisdom in the City of God. The virtue of spiritedness as the governing principle of pre-capitalist society had long disclosed its limitations in the passions and warfare which constantly rent the fabric of

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European society. Hobbes well understood that the passionate desire for honour was disruptive of all social peace. At the same time, bourgeois property relations and the dedication to money-making were evils which could be counterbalanced to the evils of the passionate politics of princes. The calculability and predictability of a commercial society could even begin to seem as agreeable alternatives (*le doux commerce*) to the old order with its aristocratic passion for heroic virtue. Ultimately in Locke it could provide the social basis for a reliable bourgeois majority guaranteeing order. The notion of man as a calculating being pursuing his self-interest (reasoned, deliberate self-love) appeared to many Europeans emerging out of feudalism not as the bleak picture many in the twentieth century see, but as a liberating view, when interest is seen as a force counteracting the irrational and destructive passions.²³

It should be clear that a market economy is a necessary structural precondition of the rational calculating human nature required for liberal procedural justice. Indeed the equation of rationality with market rationality or reason with calculation is so pervasive in the contemporary literature as to make their disentanglement difficult indeed. Suffice to say for now that to Trudeau practical reason is thus linked with individual calculation of self-interest. Of course philosophical or theological knowledge unconnected to the market is not denied; it is simply assumed to be the realm of that private, autonomous self, the inner person, which his personalist Catholic liberalism tells him forms the end of social and political organization. The individual is free to pursue his reason in this sense wherever it takes him, and he must be protected in this autonomous activity by safeguards against, for example, the tyranny of public opinion. But it is quite another matter for the individual to impose his private views on his community where such an imposition interferes with procedural justice. The latter can only rest on a firm basis of calculating self-interested wills; practical or political reason is the intelligent management of all these conflicting interests within a dynamic equilibrium. The art of the statesman is thus a kind of meta-rationality in the economic sense, "fine-tuning" (to use a current cliché) the market mechanism. As Mandeville wrote long ago in the *Fable of the Bees*, the "skillful management of the Dextrous Politician" is the necessary condition for turning private vices into public benefits. Mandeville meant not day-to-day crisis management but the conscious elaboration over time of an appropriate legal and institutional framework. This would seem close to Trudeau's views of the role of the rational statesman.

In this light, it is no surprise to find in Trudeau's writing that the market, the industrialization which the market entailed, and finally the entire panoply of modern technology which came in the wake of industrialization, were all taken as *givens*. Bélanger adds, "*le politique, à l'opposé, paraîtra beaucoup plus malleable, sujet à une construction; bref, à un certain voulu. De ce fait, il ouvrira la porte toute grande à une vision éthique de la res publica.*"²⁴ Hence

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the crucial disjuncture which I noted earlier between a realist reading of social and economic structure and an idealist reading of the political superstructure. But the contradiction involved in this, while characteristic of liberal thought, is all too easily apparent. Politics is hardly the realm of freedom; its relative autonomy is merely a short length of leading-strings. And these leading-strings are its own understanding of reason as calculating self-interest.

Trudeau's earlier espousal of "socialism" or the social-democratic state was indeed, in Pierre Vallières' contemptuous phrase, a mere "*étiquette*."²⁵ It is a sad comment on the sheer political illiteracy of right wing journalists in this country that this "socialism" was ever taken seriously in the first place. At best, he never meant more than certain state actions to promote greater equality of opportunity among individuals, or perhaps a certain Galbraithian faith that technology entailed more state intervention and regulation.²⁶ "Powerful financial interests, monopolies and cartels are in a position to plan large sectors of the national economy for the profit of the few, rather than for the welfare of all. Whereas any serious planning by the state, democratically controlled, is dismissed as a step toward Bolshevism."²⁷ Only those haunted souls who would define the "skillful management of the Dextrous Politician" as socialistic need be alarmed by this.

Far more dangerous to Trudeau's mind than concentrations of economic power in the market was the growth of nationalist passions in the hearts of his fellow Quebecois. Passion overthrows reason again and again in the twentieth century. The relationship between passion and interest is, however, relatively complex in a concrete historical situation. It is a peculiarity of nationalism that one person's interest is another person's passion: nationalism too involves its own individual interests, but they can only be achieved at the expense of a greater irrationality, an illiberal political regime.

In his analysis of Quebec society in the 1950s, Trudeau looked for a class basis for opposition to Duplessis' *ancien régime*. Whose class interests would propel them in the direction of confronting the political autocracy and the ludicrous and irrelevant social ideologies which diverted attention from its true nature? Trudeau found his answer in the Quebec working class whose class interest in democratization had been dramatically indicated in the famous 1949 Asbestos Strike at which Trudeau himself assisted. The workers were learning that "*devant un conflit d'intérêts, un gouvernement gouverne toujours pour le profit de ces secteurs qui le reporteront au pouvoir*." This meant, despite nationalist pleas for ethnic unanimity, that class struggle was a positive good in which the working class would change the world through struggling for its *own* interests. This did not mean revolutionary class struggle, of course: "*il faut laisser les forces sociales s'exprimer rationnellement et calmement au sein d'une cité libre*."²⁸ Trudeau read the struggle of labour and capital in a thoroughly Hobbesian way, especially when he praised the workers' escalating demands as

part of the motor of economic progress, while at the same time noting that the conflict was never solved on more than a temporary basis. The very material inferiority of the workers in the struggle was itself one of the reasons for trade unions lending themselves to the democratization of Quebec. More to the point, the labour movement represented a welcome kind of reality principle counterposed to the bizarre world of nationalist ideology: union thinking was "essentially the child of necessity, and had little opportunity to lose touch with the social realities of our industrial world." Finally, the labour movement was part and parcel of the "only powerful medium of renewal" in Quebec: industrialization.²⁹

The interest of the working class in democratization was not the only element in the struggle against Duplessis. Competing for the allegiance of Quebecers was nationalism, which Trudeau consistently associated with *bourgeois* interests — sometimes with the "new middle class" later to become so celebrated in analyses of the Quiet Revolution, sometimes with the "petty bourgeoisie" more generally.³⁰ The point at issue here is not the sociological validity of this fairly schematic explanation of nationalism, but the fact that Trudeau did not view nationalism simply as disinterested passion. It was one avenue of attack on nationalism to unmask the particular class interests which hid under its rhetoric. Indeed, it is interesting to note that at the very core of his own later bilingualism programme in the federal government was a specific appeal to the same "new middle class" which was promoting nationalism and independence in the Quebec of the 1970s: a bilingual civil service with emphasis on Francophone talent was supposed to operate as an alternative pole of attraction to the new technical-professional elite. Class interests were to be incorporated into the struggle for federalism as a counter to the same interests behind *indépendantisme*. That the strategy appears not to have worked very well may tell us something about political realities but does not diminish the theoretical significance for Trudeau's political philosophy.

Trudeau's polemical assaults on the irrationality and even insanity of nationalism, its causal linkage to civil violence and war, its socially reactionary, intellectually oppressive and culturally stifling qualities — all are too well known to be rehearsed here once again.³¹ Criticized bitterly from within Quebec, these views have been widely mistrusted by nationalist intellectuals in English Canada as well.³² Certainly, Trudeau's cry — "*Ouvrons les frontières, ce peuple meurt d'asphyxie!*"³³ — elicited remarkably little support from the alleged victims. Nor is there much doubt that he greatly overstated his case, turning empirical associations into causal links and treating nationalism as a reified absolute, abstracted from the concrete social circumstances which alone can give it meaning. Analysing the nationalism of a tiny Quebec struggling to maintain its language and culture in the vast anglophone sea of North America as exactly the same phenomenon as the nationalism of Nazi Germany is, on the

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face of it, simply bad political science. But Trudeau is not a bad political scientist. In part Trudeau on nationalism may simply offer another illustration of Lord Keynes' comment on Friedrich Hayek: how, starting from a mistake, a remorseless logician can end up in Bedlam. Yet, amid the vehement jeremiads there are no shortage of arguments suggesting a subtler interpretation.

First of all, nationalism is a brute fact, and facts, in Trudeau's Hobbesian world, must be faced. Second, his own not unsubtle reading of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century history leads him to discern a direct connection between the achievement of *popular self-government* in the American and French revolutions and the appearance of the idea of national *self-determination*. "While the erstwhile territorial state, held together by divine right, tradition and force, gave way to the nation-state, based on the will of the people, *a new glue had to be invented* which would bind the nation together on a durable basis." Any modern state needs to develop and preserve "as its very life" a consensus whereby "no group within the nation feels that its vital interests and particular characteristics could be better preserved by withdrawing from the nation than by remaining within And since it is physically and intellectually difficult to persuade continually through reason alone, the state is tempted to reach out for whatever emotional support it can find Hence, from the emotional appeal called nationalism is derived a psychological inclination to obey the institution of the state."³⁴ Moreover, the nation is the guardian of cultural, moral and historical qualities which "at this juncture in history go to make a man what he is." Even if these national qualities are particularistic and hence divisive, "they are a reality of our time, probably useful, and in any event considered indispensable by all national communities."³⁵ Light at the end of the tunnel begins to appear — just as conflicting self-interests can be linked together by procedural justice in a liberal democracy, so it may be that conflicting passions of nationalism may be linked together by another form of practical rationality.³⁶ The problem is not nationalism after all, but the demand for a *national state* where political sovereignty is coterminous with a single linguistic cultural and ethnic identity.

"Only a few political thinkers" — Garth Stevenson has recently written, "Pierre Elliott Trudeau would probably be one of them — have endowed the concept of federalism with the heavy load of symbolic attributes more normally attached to such words as democracy, liberalism, and socialism."³⁶ Trudeau in fact endows the concept of federalism with what he considers the most noble task on the agenda of liberalism in the twentieth century — the management of nationalist passions to the benefit of mankind. When Prime Minister Trudeau told the American congress that the breakup of Canada would be a crime against human history, or when he has made the even greater claim that Quebec's separation would be a sin against the Holy Spirit, many Canadians, both English and French, have no doubt winced at this kind of emotive

rhetorical excess. Certainly Trudeau the Hobbesian realist and stoic historicist poses his own self-criticism to this (dare we say?) passionate ideologizing of the federalist "dogma." It is crucial in understanding the man's thought to understand why he should have such a passionate commitment, one which many of his fellow citizens have come to see as an increasingly irrelevant obsession. If Trudeau has any original contribution to make to liberal theory, it is certainly here. Just as liberal procedural justice claims to manage conflicting self-interests for the greater good of the community, so too federalism according to Trudeau can claim to manage nationalist passions. The passions themselves must be accepted; the trick is to turn them to benefit. Trudeau's reading of Canadian history suggests that federalism as it has actually evolved can, with skillful management, accomplish exactly this end. It thus has an importance which transcends Canada's national status as a mere middle power.

Typically, Canada's advantage accrues not from *a priori* ideals but from a frank recognition of the facts of the case. Quebec was from the beginning a national entity too strong to be crushed or assimilated by English Canada and yet too weak to assume the status of its own national sovereignty. Confederation was a bargain in which the English Canadian majority traded off a little of its own ideal for the new nation in the face of the French "fact." Like the Hobbesian social contract, the origins of federalism are rather ignoble, but its base origins are transcended by the rationality inherent in the working out of the bargain. English and French Canada represent a "balance of linguistic forces." "In terms of *realpolitik*, French and English are equal in Canada because each of these linguistic groups has the power to break the country. And this power cannot yet be claimed by the Iroquois, the Eskimos, or the Ukrainians." These words were written in 1965. In 1971, justifying his government's policy of multi-culturalism, he told the Canadian-Ukrainian Congress that Canada's population was so balanced ethnically that "every single person in Canada is now a member of a minority group." He went on to caution them, however, that "an overwhelming number of Canadians use either English or French It is for this practical reason — not some rationalization about founding races — that these two languages have attained an official character in Canada."³⁷

Federalism's great advantage is that the national state cannot be ultimately based on the passionate loyalties of its citizens but only on their rational calculations of self-interest. If the federal government tries to focus such loyalties in a binational country, it can only do so at the expense of one side or the other. Hence the various attempts in Canadian history to whip up national feeling — Canada First, the Imperial Federation Movement, the recycled British monarchy in the post-war world — these only cause further alienation in French Canada. It is almost as if Trudeau is trying to allocate passion to the provinces in a federal-provincial distribution of powers. "The great moment of

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truth arrives when it is realized that *in the last resort* the mainspring of federalism cannot be emotion but must be reason."³⁸ Despite Conservative and PQ criticism of Trudeau's alleged centralist tendencies, his own historical reading of Canadian federalism is redolent with praise for decentralism as a positive good. It is the very possibility of decentralized decision-making and local initiatives against the centralized administration of things that commends federalism so strongly to him. These things are much more difficult to achieve in highly unitary states, such as France, where culture, language, ethnicity and centralized bureaucracy all combine to form a monolithic unity which is moreover all too subject to the winds of nationalist passion, such as in the Algerian war. Canada is, by virtue of its federalism, proof against such passions, at least at the national level.

There are a number of observations which emerge from this reading of Trudeau. First, despite what so many nationalists have argued, there is little direct justification for labelling Trudeau as an "anti-nationalist" who is ideologically incapable of standing up for Canada in relation to the outside world, especially the Americans. There is an irony in this, for as a foreign policy maker Trudeau has been taxed by those with an internationalist bent for reorienting Canadian foreign policy towards the national interest. But there is no inconsistency in Trudeau. As Bruce Thordarson concluded from a reading of the corpus of his work, the continued existence of the sovereign Canadian state is "central to his political thought."³⁹ If federalism is a kind of rational synthesis of national passions (accepted as facts) and liberal procedures of government, then the federation itself is an entity to be cherished and protected. The criticism that Trudeau's rejection of Quebec *indépendance* for continued federalism could equally be applied to Canada's ultimate absorption into the American nation is, quite simply, invalid. The United States, although formally a federation, is in reality a highly unified nationalist state with a long record of brutal repression of those minorities who do not match up to the standards of Americanism. As Trudeau wrote in 1964, we may "yet be spared the ignominy of seeing [our] destinies guided by some new and broader emotion based, for example, on continentalism." In a lyrical passage in 1962, he even envisaged a messianic role for Canadian federalism, an example to new nations rent by ethnic divisions, more compelling than the American melting pot. "Canadian federalism is an experiment of major proportions; it could become a brilliant prototype for the moulding of tomorrow's civilization."⁴⁰

There are some very considerable difficulties involved in this rationalist messianism. Not the least is the fragility of reason as a focus of popular support for national government, a problem of which Trudeau is himself uneasily aware. One attempt to infuse reason with some emotional colouring is his espousal of functionalism as an ideal — certainly one of Trudeau's more bizarre ventures into the psychology of consent. Functionalism, which seems to mean

little more than the application of scientific technique systematically to the organization of human society has, as George Grant constantly reminds us, its own inexorable dynamic in the modern world and certainly does not need Pierre Trudeau to ensure its progress. Nobody other than Trudeau, to my knowledge, has actually tried to give this phenomenon the emotive status of a symbol of national loyalty. He has always been personally committed to this as an ideal which flows quite readily from his rationalist liberalism, from his first article in *Cité Libre* in 1950 ("Politique fonctionnelle") to his obsessive concern while prime minister with mechanisms of administration and the need for rational policy-making machinery.⁴¹

The manifesto "pour une politique fonctionnelle" signed by Trudeau, Marc Lalonde and other like-minded Quebec academics and intellectuals in 1964 gives the full flavour of this technocratic aspiration to reduce politics to administration and predictability. The conservatism of this view (although certainly not in Grant's sense) in its acceptance of the "system" as a fact to which one must adjust, its reduction of politics to problem-solving and its faith that philosophy and the human sciences are a mere reflex of science in the hard sense, have all been noted and criticized from both right and left.⁴² Most distressing to nationalists is the decree that "*L'ordre social et politique doit être fondé au premier chef sur les attributs universels de l'homme, non sur ce qui le particularise*" and the further statement that "*les tendances modernes les plus valables s'orientent vers un humanisme ouvert sur le monde, vers divers formes d'universalisme politique, social et économique.*" No doubt there is an unmistakable flavour here of Hegel's universal, homogeneous state as the end of history, and of the identification of freedom with technological power (elsewhere Trudeau has written of how everything was becoming possible in Quebec in 1960 "so wide open was the road to power for all who had mastered the sciences and the techniques of the day: automation, cybernetics, nuclear science, economic planning, and what-not else"⁴³). And yet I suspect that altogether too much has been made of this naive expression of faith in technocracy by a small group of Quebec intellectuals recently emerged out of an atmosphere of clerical reaction and facing a renewed nationalist wave in the form of youthful separatism. It is assumed that the techniques exist for the efficacious management of all "problems" and the only difficulty is the failure of will to use them. Beyond this the manifesto is replete with traditional expressions of liberalism and assertions that "*la règle démocratique doit être maintenue à tout prix.*" A faith that "science" can systematically do what liberal democracy wants done to the end that individuals can be free to pursue their own individual goods without unnecessary inefficiencies and blockages in the system is certainly liberal, but to suggest that it bespeaks totalitarianism is to stretch a criticism to the point where it wears rather thin. Moreover, as Bruce Doern has pointed out, Trudeau's technocratic tendencies derive in good part

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from a conjuncture of older ideas of juridical mind and Montesquieu's checks and balances.⁴⁴

What is most remarkable about Trudeau's "functionalism" is his grotesque notion that this arid technocratic dream can be a basis for counter-passion to nationalism: "If politicians must bring emotionalism into the act, let them get emotional about functionalism!" Since this issues from the same man whose clarion call to Quebec intellectuals in 1950 was "*froidement, soyons intelligents*,"⁴⁵ one must assume either that reason has become Trudeau's own passion or that he has become increasingly uneasy about a legitimacy of federalism based on reason alone. If the latter interpretation is correct, then waving the flag of functionalism has been ironically mistimed to coincide with the apparent failure of technocratic liberalism to solve the very technical problems which the technocrats had set themselves — and with the resulting general legitimation crisis of capitalism which in Canada has pressed hardest of all upon the national government and the federal system itself.

The exercise of political power for any length of time is bound to wear away at the confidence of the philosopher, and darker strains of pessimism and even bewilderment have begun to appear in his prime ministerial musings and rationalizations. Speaking to the no doubt perplexed Liberal organizers and constituency officials of Vancouver on May Day, 1971, the philosopher-king described the disjuncture in the modern world between technological development and our cultural awareness: "We stand at this juncture in history in as great a need of a philosophy of technology as did the world in the seventeenth century need a philosophy of a science and mathematics just prior to Descartes' *Discourse on Method*." He went on to admit that "in the absence of a philosophy of this age we must give the appearance of a generation gone mad." Then, astonishingly, he posited the need for a "sense of wonder and awe [which] has been permitted to exist beside the regimentation of reason, to prevent what Kenneth Clark describes as a 'new form of barbarism' resulting from the 'triumph of rational philosophy.'" ⁴⁶ Was his audience aware that this was nothing less than self-criticism of his own past faith? Later the same year in an interview with James Reston he responded to a question about the decline of "moral leadership" in liberal democracies by suggesting that, in effect, liberalism had served to destabilize societies in the late twentieth century, with the individualist ideal expressed in terms of selfishness without political consensus. It was inevitable, he warned, that the pendulum would swing away from this insupportable society of egoists to one of authoritarianism in which, perhaps, the peer group will become the deity to which individuals become enslaved — a future in which divisive and passionate group loyalties make liberal democracies at the same time both ungovernable and unfree. The theme of heightened expectations and disenchantment toward the political process — the now familiar thesis of "ungovernability" which has spread throughout

western political science in the last decade — began to crowd out Trudeau's "participatory democracy" slogan of 1968 almost as soon as he was elected.⁴⁷ A purely cynical response to this has a surface plausibility yet fails to recognize that there may not have been disillusionment solely on the part of Trudeau's 1968 enthusiasts, but on the part of Trudeau himself. The tools did not seem to work, politics became day-to-day crisis management, demands were being made by powerful sectors which could not be accommodated together with other demands, the fiscal crisis of the state forced a pervasive negativity on the actions of government The optimism of the manifesto for a functional politics must have appeared merely naive.

The imposition of wage and price controls was the symbol for much that had gone wrong in the earlier vision. This was, in effect, more than an exercise in Hobbesian state sovereignty. It suggested that the economic system could not be taken as a given but was itself the problem — a very disquieting prospect for a liberal. Yet when Trudeau drew the appropriate conclusion that the free enterprise system had not been working and that changes would have to be made in it, the outcry was of tidal wave proportions.⁴⁸ Three years later Trudeau went down to defeat at the hands of a Tory party dedicated to the ideological proposition that everything wrong with the economy was the fault of the state and that the answer is to "privatize" public activity. A greater irony: wage controls finally precipitated the labour movement into close and open electoral support of the NDP, while identifying Trudeau, once of Asbestos Strike fame, as the primary enemy of the Canadian labour movement. Trudeau's liberalism has been bested not by conservatism nor by socialism, but by an unreconstructed faith that the free market and minimal state can save us, while he has himself offered no basis for a critique of the functioning of the capitalist system which might transcend its present crisis.

The problem is, in a sense, within Trudeau's own assumptions. To begin with a Hobbesian reading of human nature in action, to call in the state as a mechanism to resolve the conflicting demands of groups and classes, to reject any notion of the collective Good as different from the configuration of individual demands for good is, in the end, to leave the politician in a position of blindness and impotence. All that counts is effective demand; Trudeau can in fact be read as always having told groups without real power to either make their demands effective or stop complaining. But however realistic this advice, it is simply to ratify the intensification of conflict and instability. When demands reach a volume and level that overloads the system (to use the "ungovernability" argument), we begin to see a further complication of Trudeau's eternal triangle: self-interests are pursued so passionately as to bring into question the rationality of the system. When the crisis deepens, the political leader has the choice of coercive intervention or of preaching moral reformation to the passionately competing individuals. Trudeau has tried both.

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While the former works better in the short run, it creates long term oppositions. The latter, as with Trudeau's pleas to Canadians to "lessen their expectations" has a forlorn quality about it from the beginning, especially in a political culture which has drawn deeply on optimistic individualism, and where such appeals can readily be dismissed as the class-biased preaching of the privileged.

Obviously the notion of positing the functional activities of the national government as its legitimation in a federation where cultural and nationalist loyalties rest at the provincial or regional level has proven to be weak indeed. Nor has the idea of the federal government as a guarantor of individual civil rights through constitutional provisions raised much groundswell of support: Trudeau's juridical mind here seems very detached from the concerns of ordinary citizens. All this suggests that Trudeau's most cherished ideal, a rational federalism, is in considerable difficulty, especially when faced with what after all was his original *raison d'être* for entering politics: the threat of Quebec secession, now in a most imminent form. As William Mathie has argued, if the reason which underlies Trudeau's federalism is without ends of its own (this is my interpretation as well), then the *will* expressed by the nations which make up the federation is "altogether legitimate"; there can thus be "no appeal against a non-rational will to secede."⁴⁹ Since alternative props have been pulled out, Trudeau finds himself in a tenuous position. Yet however precarious his argument has become, his response to the challenge of the PQ shows a certain liberal tenacity, not to say dignity.

We can best understand this by contrasting his behaviour since November 15, 1976, with his actions during the October crisis of 1970. The excesses of that latter episode need not detain us, as they have been very fully expounded by others. I do wish to suggest that, contrary to conventional wisdom, there was nothing *in principle* (police execution of orders is another matter) in the use of the War Measures Act which violated Trudeau's own liberalism. Against a terrorist group which threatened the lives of citizens (and diplomats) who fell under the protection of the laws, and which sought thereby to create a "parallel power" challenging that of the state, there was no question that a Hobbesian liberal like Trudeau should have called upon the state to intervene with its full coercive power. Importantly, Trudeau did in the immediate aftermath of the crisis make it clear that this would *not* be his response to a constitutional challenge to federalism backed by a democratic majority: "the country is held together only by consent, not by force of arms ... if a whole province decides that it is happier outside the country, then it will leave."⁵⁰ The PQ project, however distasteful to Trudeau in content, is premised on the expression of democratic will and on orderly procedures and due process. The transformation by the PQ of sovereignty into reality must be accepted, so long as it follows the rules of procedural justice. Inasmuch as he views politics as an

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essentially Hobbesian power struggle, a majority for independence would be a kind of fundamental fact which would have to be faced. More importantly, because his own concept of federalism cannot permit an overriding notion of the Good, a democratic majority within the Quebec nation for sovereignty would constitute an expression of will which would be unanswerable by reason and would have to be accepted as legitimate. That certain Toronto nationalists convinced themselves that Trudeau was always planning another October action, this time against the PQ, tells us a good deal less about Trudeau than about the Toronto nationalists.⁵¹ For his own part, the former prime minister on more than one occasion made it clear that he was "not the man to lead Canada into a civil war." In fact, any other position would be a violation of his liberal principles.

Yet even if the dignity and sincerity of his ideas has been maintained, at least in this case, the failure remains. The eternal liberal triangle of reason, passion and interest once again fails to resolve itself. Before we leave this now somewhat isolated figure in search of a better idea, we had best pause to ponder the fate of his ideas. Are there any among us who could remain entirely unmoved by his appeal after the PQ victory, that Levesque had surrounded himself with blood brothers, but that he, Trudeau, wished to speak to us of a loyalty which is higher than to blood alone? Which critic of his mechanistic liberalism could tell us, in good conscience, of a community Good which could replace the individual pursuit of goods, without entailing the kind of civil conflict which Trudeau has always sought to avoid? The very liberalism of the PQ itself — not to speak of the much cruder liberal ideology of the Conservatives who replaced him — cautions us against criticism which is not also, at some level, self-criticism. Even George Grant has admitted that "despite the disintegrations and contradictions of our regimes, liberal principles are the only political principles we've got."⁵² Coming to terms with both the strengths and the failures of Pierre Trudeau in his extraordinary passage across our intellectual and political life means coming to terms with some of the central values and central conundrums in the present crisis.

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Notes

1. George Grant, "Nationalism and Rationality," *Canadian Forum*, 50 (January, 1971), p. 336.

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2. Abraham Rotstein, *The Precarious Homestead*, Toronto, 1973, p. 110.
3. George Radwanski, *Trudeau*, Toronto, 1978, pp. 36, 39; Trudeau, *Conversations With Canadians*, Toronto, 1972, pp. 7-10; André Carrier, "L'idéologie politique de la revue *Cité Libre*," *Revue canadienne de science politique*, 1:4 (Décembre, 1968), p. 416.
4. Quoted in Radwanski, p. 96.
5. Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, June 15, 1976, 14500-1. Trudeau's horror of capital punishment goes back a long way. See his "L'affaire Coffin," *Cité Libre*, 21 (Juillet, 1958), p. 46.
6. *Conversations*, p. 67. A good example of his earlier antimilitarism is "La guerre! La guerre!" *Cité Libre* 42, (Décembre, 1961).
7. *Approaches to Politics*, Toronto, 1970, pp. 50, 84. Although these words were written in the 1950s, Trudeau as prime minister in the 1970s has pursued the notion of a charter of human rights, this time buttressed by the further functionalist argument that such a charter would provide a focus for individual loyalties to the federal government which would transcend provincial group loyalties. For a discussion of this point see William Mathie, "Political Community and the Canadian Experience: Reflections on Rationalism, Federalism and Unity," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 12:1 (March, 1979), pp. 3-20.
8. *Federalism and the French Canadians*, Toronto, 1968, pp. 205, 159, 181; André-J. Belanger, *Ruptures et constantes: Quatre idéologies du Québec en éclatement*; *La Relève, la JEC, Cité Libre, Parti Pris*, Montréal, 1977, especially pp. 99-100 and 127.
9. Radwanski, p. 59.
10. *Federalism*, p. 192. See also pp. 172-6 on the nation as an unfortunate but undeniable fact of life, and *The Asbestos Strike*, Toronto, 1974, especially pp. 12-16, 25, 330 and 349.
11. *Conversations*, p. 46; *Federalism*, p. 177.
12. George Grant, *English-Speaking Justice*, Sackville, New Brunswick, 1974.
13. *Federalism*, pp. xix-xxiii.
14. *Approaches to Politics*, Toronto, 1970. This and the following two paragraphs are drawn from this source.
15. When two right-wing nationalists attacked him for quoting Rousseau, Trudeau wittily replied: "But to tell the truth, I know when I quoted even the most inoffensive phrase of Rousseau's that I was setting a snare for all the watchdogs of reaction. I might have known that I would find Mr. Dagenais in it, on all fours along with Leopold Richer." *Ibid.*, p. 57.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 50, 42, 44 and 86.
17. *Cité Libre*, p. 81.
18. *Approaches*, pp. 89, 76-7, 45-7. See also Radwanski, p. 126 for more recent restatements by Trudeau of the difference between "participation" and "decision-making." Two writers who have drawn attention to Trudeau's plebiscitary majoritarianism and its contradictions are Denis Smith, *Bleeding Hearts ... Bleeding Country: Canada and the Quebec Crisis*, Edmonton, 1971, chapter five, pp. 82-105; and Henry David Rempel, "The Practice and Theory of the Fragile State: Trudeau's Conception of Authority," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, X:4 (November, 1975) pp. 24-38. The paradoxical results of the 1979 federal election should have brought home

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to Trudeau in the most personal way the limitations of his treatment of popular sovereignty as electoral majoritarianism in a functioning parliamentary democracy. After all Trudeau was forced to yield office to a man whose party actually garnered about 4% *less* of the popular vote than Trudeau's party: a curious "mandate" for change. More curious yet is Trudeau's own silence on this fact.

19. "Economic Rights," *McGill Law Review*, 8:2 (June, 1962).
20. Robert Dahl, *Modern Political Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970, p. 17.
21. *Approaches*, p. 88.
22. See my own argument for Canada in "Images of the State in Canada" in Leo Panitch, ed., *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, Toronto, 1977. For an American reading I am most indebted to Frank M. Coleman, *Hobbes and America: Exploring the Constitutional Foundations*, Toronto, 1977.
23. The argument of this paragraph owes a great deal to Albert O. Hirschman's *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before its Triumph*, Princeton, 1977.
24. Bélanger, *Ruptures et constantes*, p. 87.
25. Vallières, *Nègres blancs d'Amérique*, Montréal, 1968, p. 293.
26. See his "Un manifeste démocratique," *Cité Libre*, 22 (Octobre, 1958) and "Leçon de science politique dans un parc qu'il s'agirait de préserver," *Ibid.*, 25 (Mars, 1960).
27. "Economic rights," *op.cit.*
28. "Réflexions sur la politique au Canada français," *Cité Libre*, 3 (Décembre, 1952).
29. *The Asbestos Strike*, especially "The Province of Quebec at the Time of the Strike," pp. 1-82 and "Epilogue," pp. 333-52.
30. *Federalism*, pp. 109, 173, 208-11; *Asbestos Strike*, p. 31.
31. See especially his articles "New Treason of the Intellectuals" and "Separatist counter-revolutionaries" in *Federalism*.
32. Two Quebec nationalists who have dealt seriously with Trudeau are Pierre Vadeboncoeur, *La dernière heure et la première*, Montréal, 1970, and *Chaque jour, l'indépendance ...*, Montréal, 1978, pp. 43-53; and the late Hubert Aquin in "La fatigue culturelle du Canada français" (1962), reprinted in Aquin, *Blocs Erratiques*, Montréal, 1977, pp. 69-103. Camille Laurin's speech on the second reading of Bill 101 in the National Assembly also constitutes a virtual point-by-point disputation with a number of Trudeau's theses. English Canadian distrust is best expressed in James and Robert Laxer, *The Liberal Idea of Canada: Pierre Trudeau and the Question of Canada's Survival*, Toronto, 1977.
33. "L'aliénation nationaliste," *Cité Libre*, 35 (Mars, 1961).
34. *Federalism*, pp. 184-9.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 177. Mathie ("Political Community") has read Trudeau more carefully on this than have most critics.

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36. Garth Stevenson, *Unfulfilled Union*, Toronto, 1979, p. 4. Another is the nineteenth-century French anarchist, P.-J. Proudhon, whose *The Principle of Federation* has recently been translated by Richard Vernon, Toronto, 1979. Curiously, in his otherwise interesting introduction which takes extensive notice of Canada, Vernon makes only one passing reference to Trudeau. Another passionate federalist is Canadian anarchist George Woodcock, "Up the Anti-nation," *The Rejection of Politics*, Toronto, 1972, pp. 72-82.
37. *Federalism*, p. 31; *Conversations*, pp. 32-3.
38. *Federalism*, p. 194.
39. Bruce Thordarson, *Trudeau and Foreign Policy: a Study in Decision-Making*, Toronto, 1972, pp. 57-65. Mathie makes the same point very well ("Political Community").
40. *Federalism*, pp. 196, 178.
41. *Cité Libre*, 1 (juin, 1950) and 2 (février, 1951). G. Bruce Doern, "The Policy-making Philosophy of Prime Minister Trudeau and his Advisers," in T.A. Hockin, ed., *Apex of Power*, Scarborough, 1971, pp. 127-34.
42. *Cité Libre*, 67 (mai, 1964) pp. 11-17. An intelligent left critique is Fred Caloren, "The War Measures Act and the Politics of Functionalism," *Our Generation*, 7:3 (October - November, 1970).
43. *Federalism*, p. 206.
44. Doern, "Policy-making Philosophy," p. 34.
45. *Federalism*, p. 197; "Politique fonctionnelle," *Cité Libre*, 1.
46. *Conversations*, pp. 27-8.
47. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-40, 77-9.
48. Laxer and Laxer in *The Liberal Idea of Canada* have made this the centrepiece of their argument that Trudeau has in effect betrayed traditional liberal ideology. There is a point here worth making, although their own insistence on American economic domination as the precipitating factor seems a bit parochial. "Killing expectations" have, after all, become an international ideological phenomenon in the West in recent years.
49. Mathie, "Political community," pp. 10-11.
50. Quoted in Smith, *Bleeding Hearts*, p. 174. *Conversations*, p. 69. Smith's argument that Trudeau's actions in 1970 had undermined Levesque's options and forced a polarization between Trudeau's armed federalism and Pierre Vallière's armed separatism (p. 133) seems a poor prognosis indeed in terms of what has actually happened since. Armed separatism was defeated by the superior power of armed federalism, thus clearing the way for the Parti Québécois. This is tacitly admitted in Vallière's *L'urgence de choisir*, Montreal, 1972.
51. See, for example, Abraham Rotstein, "Is There an English-Canadian Nationalism?" *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 13:2 (Summer, 1978), pp. 117-8.
52. Review of J.S. Mill's *Essays on Politics and Society* in *The Globe and Mail*, August 6, 1977.