NOTES from FEE

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# LIBERATED!

HOW LONG have you been interested in this philosophy?" I asked the graduate student in education, who obviously wanted to learn more about the subject of freedom.

Her response struck me as sensational in the clarity of what it revealed: "I have now been *liberated* for six months." This conjures up a picture of a person imprisoned by a host of myths, superstitions, fallacies. Then, in a flash, by some unforeseen encounter, she was freed of them all and launched on a new road to enlightenment. Liberation, as she used the term, suggested a sudden illumination, a breakthrough to a higher level of consciousness: "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

It is interesting to reflect on the preliberation notions. In many cases we find lying at their root the primitive doctrine that man derives his rights to life and liberty from some man-concocted collective—the tribe or the state. This doctrine was frankly expressed in the old divine-right-of-kings thesis, an egotism few present-day statists have the nerve to admit.

The logical sequence to such a premise is the conviction that the state is responsible for a people's welfare, security, prosperity. And if the state can grant a man's rights, it can also retract them; that is, it is in control of rights. Freedom of choice as to how one employs himself or what he does with the fruits of his own labor is expanded or contracted according to the caprice of those who have gained command of the political apparatus. Wage and price controls, government education, public housing, federal urban renewal, government power and light, socialized medicine, government mail delivery, social security, federal subsidies to any and all groups who think themselves in distress, protection against competition, progressive taxation, and a host of other socializations or nationalizations are simply extensions of the premise that man's rights derive from the state.

OUT OF THIS CONFUSION emerges an intensely personal experience—the moment of liberation, the break-through! An idea or fact or observation, germinating in the mind for an indeterminate period, suddenly comes to life, opens a crack, and the light floods in. It's something like a seed embedded in a crevice of solid granite, the forces of its growth slumbering but, when released, stronger than its rock-bound prison. Its destiny undeniable, the seed splits the stone and is freed to friendly and life-giving elements.[1]

Once this opening has taken place, old ideas take on a different perspective and new ideas come into one's comprehension. Relegated to the junk heap of myths is the absurd premise that man derives his rights from a political apparatus. To the question, "How could man, who knows next to nothing about himself, create himself or preside over creation?" comes a resounding "Impossible!" Rid of this bedeviling notion, a new premise insinuates itself into consciousness: Men are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among them the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Or, as Bastiat later put it:

> We hold from God the gift which includes all others. This gift is life—physical, intellectual, and moral life.
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> But life cannot maintain itself alone. The Creator of life has entrusted us with the responsibility of preserving, developing, and perfecting it. In order that we may accomplish this, He has provided us with a collec-

[1] For instance, *Betula Nigra*, sometimes known as "The Rock Splitting Birch."