

moral dimension. To embrace a collectivist system of property rights and thereby jeopardize sustained economic growth, inevitably misallocate scarce resources, and almost necessarily perpetuate destitution, hardly merits moral acclaim. Indeed, intellectuals in general and church leaders in particular who bewail the continued existence of poverty absolutely defined, and who state that they yearn for a world in which the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, and the destitute housed, yet who ceaselessly undermine the very system which, to date, has best done what they claim to value most, are, surely, moral imbeciles.

Conservation of Resources

One could develop the case further. We are told, for example, that private ownership jeopardizes the conservation of scarce resources. Yet consider. Here is a farmer who owns his land. He is anxious that his land should provide a living for himself and his chosen successors tomorrow as well as today. Is *he* likely to adopt methods of farming which produce large profits today, but reduce his land to a desert-like waste? Or is the political controller, anxious to please the short-term wants of a fickle electorate or a demanding Party, the person more likely to exchange tomorrow's productivity for today's killing?

Notice, incidentally, that our pri-

vate owner's motivation to use his resources with an eye to the future is tied to his ability to *dispose* of what is his as he chooses. Knowing his children and his children's children will inherit his farm, he is even loathe to cut down the beautiful oak tree his own great-grandfather planted, and motivated to seek out some way to retain that tree without substantially reducing his productive output. Those who cry out for the conservation of scarce resources and the preservation of what is of sentimental value, should, I suggest, be in the front ranks of those attacking the iniquitous tax we call "death duties."

But enough. Our forefathers perceived the crucial importance of private property. The well they dug cries out for redigging.

Individualism

I refer finally to an old well usually named Individualism. Other names have been given it, and what already has been said about our forefathers' understanding of human rights and property rights indicates much of what I, at any rate, mean by the word. Frankly, I choose to *use* the term "Individualism" simply because the term, at least in church circles, is so frequently used derogatively. I read, for example, in a parish church bulletin that "capitalism is utterly incompatible with Christian values. In fact it is incompatible

with any civilized system of values. At its heart lies individualism, and individualism is the opposite of community."

Let me indicate what individualism is *not*. First, it is not a denial of the claim that human beings are social animals. Clearly, the life of the human mind and the joy of the human heart are largely the gifts of fellowship, friendship, and intimacy. In the absence of language, thought, so necessary for a fully human existence would be but rudimentary, and language is an essentially social phenomenon. Indeed, it is necessarily a social phenomenon, as the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein so powerfully argued.⁵ Evidence exists for asserting that an infant deprived of "tender, loving care" is deprived of something utterly vital. The hunger of the human spirit for communion with selves beyond it is a real and almost insatiable hunger. The Individualist in no way denies that the achievement of an authentically human existence, in both the cognitive and affective domains, is a cooperative enterprise, not a solitary endeavor.

Second, the Individualist does not deny his material dependence upon other people. He does not, unless he is an extremely foolish Individualist, pretend that he is a "self-made man" or "self-sufficient." He both can, and is wise to, make his own the assertion of Michael Oakeshott that

"the greater part of what we have is not a burden to be carried or an incubus to be thrown off, but an inheritance to be enjoyed."

Exercise in Interdependence

Indeed, the free market so lauded by the Individualist is an exercise in interdependence. Before typing this lecture, I purchased a new ribbon for my typewriter. I ambled into my friendly local stationery store, and exchanged what I would earn for approximately half-an-hour's tutoring in Greek Philosophy for a new ribbon. The generosity of the exchange is stunning. Just consider that ribbon. Consider the skills involved in locating, mining, and refining the metals making up the spool, the skills involved in weaving the ribbon wound around the spool and synthesizing the "ink" impregnating the ribbon, the skills in manufacturing the completed object, the skills in making the plastic box and printing the paper label informing intending buyers of the box's contents, the skills in ensuring that my local stationer had on his shelves the appropriate ribbon for a very aged "Royal Typewriter." Literally hundreds of thousands of skills are coordinated through the sheer miracle that is the free market. Interdependence is the very name of the game.

Amusingly, if Individualism signifies a desire for complete self-suf-