Clipping of Note NUMBER 65

Two kinds of influence

Most persons have some notion of their dependence on others. Most of us realize that we cannot by ourselves build the houses in which we live, raise the foods we eat, make the cars we drive, create the opportunities constantly presented to us, originate the knowledge and ideas by which we live, garner the fuel we burn, fabricate the clothes we wear, construct the telephones over which we talk—indeed, few among us could in a thousand years produce what we consume in a single day!

Anyone who is aware of the extent to which he is dependent on others is, or should be, familiar with his stake in the proficiency of others. Let all others fail, and I shall perish. Let all others become increasingly creative, and I shall in all likelihood receive more in exchange for the little I can create.

No doubt about it, most of us do concern ourselves with others. Every law is an attempt to do something to others. Wars are aimed at others, as are strikes and all coercive hassels. Sermons, lectures, schooling, pamphlets, books, statements like this—all are communications to others.

The important question at issue is not: "Should we have an interest in others?" Obviously we should. Instead, the vital question is: In what way can we best aid the millions of others upon whom we are unquestionably dependent?"

There are two ways, constantly in action. One commends the influencing of others by *force.* The other commends the influencing of others by *attraction.* Both are useful if understood and properly practiced.

There isn't any doubt but that force is an effective method of influencing others. Force, however, is of two kinds. There is initiated or coercive force—aggression. It is inconceivable that this kind of force can have any moral justification among men under any circumstances. There is, though, another kind of force—defensive or repellent force. But even defensive force has only the capacity to destroy or restrain and, therefore, is the type of influence that should be limited to negating aggression or coercive force, regardless of source: all violence, all fraud, all misrepresentation, all predatory practices. To avoid the authoritarianism of each citizen being a complete law unto himself—each person his own gun-toter—we should, in good theory, delegate the defensive function to a formal, codified, societal-wide agency called government. (When delegating only defensive functions to government, we grant no collective rights that are not the prior rights of individuals; for the collective cannot logically or morally exercise rights which are not inherent in the persons who organize the collective.)

Defensive force, to be used profitably, must be confined to minimizing coercive or aggressive force—that is, to securing those rights to life and honestly acquired livelihood common to all men. Force cannot, by its nature, otherwise serve us creatively. Yet, force of the coercive brand is attempted currently as a means of influencing others in tens of thousands of instances. All socialistic acts by government are cases in point—public housing, for example. How? The force of government—not defensive but coercive force—is employed to take the property of some for the "benefit" of others. In what manner is this aggression? The use of one's livelihood in one's own way is forcibly denied by the aggressive taking of it—effective, indeed!

Force as a device for having others behave in ways seemingly advantageous to oneself is not intelligent attention to self-interest—except when used to restrain them from coercive acts. To aggressively force others is to thwart others. Self-interest requires that all others become more creative, not more thwarted.

The question, then, to which self-interest demands an answer is: "How does one influence others to become more creative?"

Attraction is the best answer to influencing others creatively. Daily experiences supply evidence to support this conclusion. If one would influence another to become a better cook or golfer, he should increase his own proficiency at cooking or golfing. He should attain a perfection, a leadership, a head-of-the-class status that would attract others to draw on him. No person is influenced to greater creative activity on any subject by one who is inferior on that subject. Influence of one on another in upgrading —materialistically, intellectually, spiritually—is by attraction only.

One can do things *to* others destructively, but not creatively. Creatively, one must confine himself to what he can do *for* others. One can do things *for* others materialistically by having money or tools to lend or give, or goods and services to exchange; intellectually by having knowledge and understanding for those who are in search of knowledge and understanding; spiritually by possessing insights that can be imparted to those who want them.

Self-interest can best be served by minding one's own business—that is, by the process of self-perfection. It isn't that this idea has been tried and found wanting; it is that it has been tried and too often found difficult, and thus rejected. Actually, coercive meddling in other people's affairs has its origin in the rejection of self-perfection. Many persons conclude that they can easily improve others in ways they refuse to attempt on themselves. This is an absurd conclusion. Thus it is that in our dealings with our fellow men, we so often try to coerce them into likenesses of our own little images instead of trying to make of ourselves images that are attractive and worth emulating.

LEONARD E. READ
of the Foundation staff

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