
John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, and Modern Citizenship

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Abstract:

The dialectical relationship of liberty and welfare has guided modern political development, and it sets the criteria for citizenship in a modern state. However, to absolutize either liberty or welfare can undermine both. The governance of any mature, legitimate state whether capitalist or socialist requires respect for the autonomy of individuals and civil society as well as effectiveness in the promotion of general welfare. In the process of governance each state makes its own path as it adjusts to its own successes and failures.

Key Words: Liberty, Welfare, Citizenship, Civil Society, John Stuart Mill, Karl Marx, Max Weber

1. HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

In 1792 the famous German intellectual and educator Wilhelm Von Humboldt began his essay on the state with the claim that hitherto there had been little attention paid to the purpose of the state and to the limits of state effectiveness.¹ This was a remarkable assertion since philosophers from the time of Plato and Guanzi had addressed questions of the organization and function of government. More cynical thinkers such as Machiavelli and Han Fei Zi have long given advice to rulers on how to stay in power. But Humboldt was writing under the influence of the American and French revolutions. Thomas Jefferson's claim that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" was revolutionary in theory as well as in practice, as was the French Revolution's slogan of "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." While previous philosophers had imagined the state as the moral guardian of the community, the new, specifically modern challenge was the proper governance of citizens.

Revolutions brought the question of modern governance to the fore, but they did not themselves provide the answer. In the United States the prudence of the *Federalist Papers* was necessary to form a workable government and nevertheless a civil war was fought eighty years later. The constitutional situation was more turbulent in France. Humboldt wrote his essay in his enthusiasm for the Enlightenment ideals of the French Revolution, but then did not publish it because of his subsequent horror at the Reign of Terror and his disgust with the rise of Napoleon. The full text of his essay was not published until long after his death, and it then became an inspiration for John Stuart Mill's classic work, *On Liberty*.

By 1859, when Mill published *On Liberty*, Parliament had been the dominant political institution in England for almost 200 years, and with the passage of the Reform Act of 1832 it was well launched in its transformation from an aristocratic to a more democratic body.² Thus when Mill took up the question of the purpose and limits of modern government, he had in mind an established and legitimate modern state, not a revolutionary ideal.

According to Mill, democracy is legitimate, but even government of and by citizens can exceed its proper limits. There can be a "tyranny of the majority,"³ if the majority attempts to control liberties of thought, assembly, and preferences that do not harm the liberties of others. As Mill puts it, "Self-government" is not the government of each by himself, but the government of each by all the rest."⁴ Society's control over its members can only be justified by self-

¹ Wilhelm von Humboldt was the founder of Berlin University. Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Gränzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen [Ideas for an attempt to determine the limits of the effectiveness of the state], written 1792, published posthumously in 1851 (Breslau: Verlag Eduard Trewendt), p. 1.

² It should be noted, however, that even skilled workers in cities were not enfranchised until 1867, and the secret ballot was not adopted in England until 1872. Universal suffrage was not achieved there until 1928.

³ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, Norton Critical edition, David Spitz, ed. (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 6.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

protection; thus, if an individual poses no threat to the liberties of others then his or her own liberty should not be restricted. Besides the statement of principle, Mill argues that even mistaken ideas benefit the community because discussion clarifies the rationale of truth. More importantly, the truth often appears first in minority opinions. Thus the general goal of society and government to promote human progress is best served by maximizing the sphere of individual liberty.

Karl Marx's general critique of capitalist society rendered unnecessary a direct confrontation with Mills' argument, but we can extrapolate the following response from his critique. The individual cannot be abstracted from the concrete relations of production that define society. Mills' liberty is bourgeois liberty, abstracted from class struggle and therefore irrelevant to real historical progress. As Marx put it, "all struggles within the state, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc., etc., are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out amongst one another."⁵ The true tyranny of Mills' bourgeois "majority" is exercised against the proletariat through the ownership of the means of production. It is the class tyranny of property rather than the majority tyranny of ideas. Marx's own "minority" opinions, whether permitted or oppressed, express the standpoint and interests of the vast and growing excluded majority, and they will prevail through revolution rather than through discussion.

For Marx, the purpose of the state was to serve the ruling class. The politics of the bourgeois state were insignificant compared to the inexorable working of its markets--impoverishing the poor, isolating the rich, and inevitably leading to revolution. After the revolution, a temporary dictatorship⁶ of the proletariat would be necessary to manage the transition to full communism, but soon the community and its members would lose the habits of property and then life would become spontaneous and public. In contrast to the emphasis of bourgeois democracy on political process, the emphasis of socialism was on public welfare through the end of exploitation. The "power of the people" was interpreted in ways quite different from bourgeois democracy. With Lenin's addition of the vanguard revolutionary party, the furthering of the interests of the masses could be entrusted to a leadership because the party could be effective rather than because it was representative.

Thus liberty and welfare have been linked to the contending political movements of capitalism and socialism. Moreover, liberty is usually associated with the procedural democracy of a legislative state, despite Mill's criticism of the "tyranny of the majority," while welfare is associated with the substantive democracy of an executive-oriented party-state, despite Marx's hopes for the withering away of the state. Nevertheless, the relationship between liberty and welfare is not posed by either side as a trade-off. Mill sees liberty as the key to human

⁵Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), p. 45.

⁶Until the twentieth century the term "dictatorship" did not have a negative connotation, but rather referred to the Roman Republic's temporary granting of executive powers during an emergency. The most famous Roman dictator was Cincinnatus, who defeated the enemy and returned to his farm after sixteen days of absolute power.

development; Marx sees the end of exploitation as the key to true liberty. And liberty and welfare have become intertwined in the course of political development of capitalist and socialist citizenship, though in different patterns.

The purpose of this essay is to explore the relationship of liberty and welfare in modern citizenship. Like Mill, I assume that the modern state is mature and legitimate. A mature state is one that has consolidated its power and that has established characteristic institutions. A legitimate state is one whose chief concern is good governance and therefore adjusts the path of its political development according to its perceived successes and failures. Unlike Mill and most Western theorists, I assume that a socialist party-state can be mature and legitimate, and I consider China and Vietnam to be the best examples. The similarities and differences between capitalist and socialist states raise questions concerning the general features of modern politics and concerning the roles of liberty and welfare in defining proper governance.

The essay begins with a theoretical discussion of the dialectic of liberty and welfare. It argues that the two are not contradictory, but if either is absolutized the other is excluded. Ultimately governance decisions are made according to each state's path as defined by its experiences, capacities, and present situation. The following section sketches the political development of capitalist and socialist states and discusses the tensions and compromises between liberty and welfare evident in their histories. The final section attempts to develop a general theory of modern citizenship. In contrast to Ferdinand Tönnies' disjunction of traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*) and modern society (*Gesellschaft*), I use an insight from Max Weber to argue that the distinctive features of modern politics are the vast increase in its interrelated features of power and societal complexity. Managing power and preserving the texture of society are the defining tasks of modern governance, and the principal key to its success is awareness of and respect for the basic interests of its citizens.

2. LIBERTY AND WELFARE

As basic values of governance, liberty and welfare are in a dialectical relationship. On the one hand, they are both necessary. On the other, they make different demands and so there is tension between their priorities. Lastly, the actual course of governance in a modern state will embed current choices in a path set by history and existing institutions.

We must start with the fact that liberty and welfare are both necessary principles of governance. If we define "liberty" as the scope of self-directed individual thought and action and "welfare" as the general wellbeing of the community, they are both intrinsically positive values. When the American revolutionary Patrick Henry shouted, "Give me liberty, or give me death!" he was not stating an indifference to death. Rather, he was affirming how highly he valued liberty. Any politician or theorist who would deny that both liberty and welfare are proper concerns of government could justly be considered mad. One or the other might be emphasized, as we have seen with Mill and Marx, and various governments at various times have pushed one or the other to the extreme. However, if a political system is sensitive to its effects on the community

it is likely to correct its course. If not, its continued neglect of the missing value, either liberty or welfare, may prove to be a fatal flaw.

Indeed, liberty and welfare appear so linked that arguments in favor of one usually presume the inclusion of the other. Mill begins *On Liberty* with a quotation from Humboldt to the effect that the purpose of government is “human development in its richest diversity,” implying that the liberty of each individual is necessary for the welfare of all. Conversely, Humboldt’s hesitation in publishing his individual-centered theory of governance was due to his shock at the general outcome of the French Revolution. Subsequently he directed his considerable energies to public education. And there are few more idyllic descriptions of a utopia of liberty than Marx’s image of a communist society:

...in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, herdsman or critic.⁷

Just as Mill assumes that liberty makes welfare possible, so Marx assumes that welfare creates the conditions for liberty.

As Humboldt’s later interest in education suggests, there are values of governance that combine contributions to liberty and to welfare. Education is the best example since it contributes to general welfare by expanding individual capacities. It is thus not surprising that Jefferson paid special attention to education, and that the revolutionary movements in China and Vietnam emphasized literacy campaigns.

Despite their interrelationship, if either liberty or welfare is taken as an absolute it is indifferent to the other. Absolute liberty does not allow the constraints of communal welfare. One must be free to shout “Fire!” in a theater. Absolute welfare does not permit the immunity of private space. The state must be able to regulate every aspect of individual behavior for the common good. While neither value denies the other, if absolutized neither can tolerate limitation. If public welfare is countered with individual immunity, or if individual freedom is restricted by the necessities of public welfare, a wedge is introduced that by questioning the fringe of the absolutized value denies that it is absolute.

In the *reductio ad absurdum* of absolutized liberty or absolutized welfare they each lose their justifying value. Liberty becomes the “freedom of the void,” in which any actual choice is a restricting commitment. To do *something* is no longer to be free to do anything else. At the level of politics, absolute liberty is all discussion and no closure. But without the potential for common action, public discussion is pointless. Conversely, absolutized welfare is the unlimited

⁷ Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, p. 45.

enforcement of public purposes. Without discussion, public welfare becomes the welfare of the enforcer, not of the public. One cannot be forced to be free, nor forced to be happy.

There is a satisfying logical coherence in concentrating solely on either liberty or welfare. Since one cannot deny the value of either liberty or welfare, the logical elaboration of the consequences of one or the other cast a sharp light on political theory. Without the other, each can present broad solutions to apparently muddled thinking behind the compromises of actual political life. But if indifference to the other becomes exclusivity there is a destruction of the very value that is absolutized. Liberty without life is not liberty; life without liberty is not worth living.

Precisely because of the self-destructiveness of the extremes of liberty and welfare, in both theory and practice a productive dialectic between the two is necessary. Despite the logical attractiveness of simply maximizing one or the other, their inherent interrelatedness requires a consideration of both. The problem shared by both Marx and Mill is that the neglected value is presumed to be included but it is not worked into a more balanced fabric of governance values. The productive dialectic of liberty and welfare is part of a larger dialectic that includes those between majority rule and minority rights and between democratic process and democratic substance.

What might be neglected in theory is more difficult to avoid in political practice. The political equivalents of the theoretical extremes of liberty and welfare, libertarianism and what Tang Tsou (Zou Dang) called “totalism” (全能主义), cannot achieve their absolute goals, and they do grave damage to their political communities in vain attempts. However, as countervailing logics and political trends the values of liberty and welfare can play a constructive role of highlighting the advantages, costs and consequences of alternative policies. The actual historical path taken by any modern state is formed by choices reflecting a composite of values. The path is often zigzag as the consequences of previous choices affect both political consciousness and the relative urgencies of future options. The practical dilemmas posed by liberty and welfare do not have a final solution. On the contrary, each state generates a unique path reflecting its past choices and embedding its present options in an institutional and ideological framework.

Ultimately we are left with a conundrum regarding liberty and welfare analogous to Hegel’s famous definition of freedom as the insight into necessity. The theoretical challenge is not that of isolating and abstracting absolute values, but rather of appreciating the valuational components of complex, real situations. Theory can be critical, and radically critical of seriously distorted realities, but it is useful only if it maintains its own balance. To the extent that theory is about the possible, it cannot afford the luxury of a one-sided logic. To the extent that theory is about the impossible, its value can justly be questioned.

3. MATURE MODERN STATES AND THEIR CHOICES

The twentieth century has been one of implementation of earlier grand political theories, but the results have been mixed. Both liberal democracy and revolutionary socialism have proven to be viable, though not as originally imagined. Governmental reality has turned out to be far more complex and compromised. Since Mill was analyzing a more mature political system his approach has faced fewer surprises, but if we position his defense of liberty in a broader theory of classical democracy, then the twentieth century has posed important questions for democracy as well. There have been more surprises for socialism, and a greater mortality among socialist states. Moreover, as one might expect from the dialectical relationship of liberty and welfare, the grand trends of the twentieth century involved the “welfare-ization” of liberal states on the one hand and the self-limitation of socialist states on the other. While each of these trends led to a stabilization of different governmental forms, the trends themselves are evidence of common challenges of modern governance.

From 1870 to 1950 first European states and finally the United States adapted to the societal pressures created by economic inequality and exploitation by expanding state services and creating “welfare states.” The expansion of the electorate went hand in hand with the increasing welfare functions of the state. In Europe socialist parties played a major role in adaptation, initially as an external threat to the system and gradually as participants in legislative democracy. The permitted range of politics was narrower in the United States and basic welfare guarantees such as health care still remain largely outside the governmental system. The difference can be explained largely by the frontier of opportunities in America. While social crises could generate enough pressure to drive European politics, in the United States the economic crisis of the Great Depression played a decisive role.

Eduard Bernstein, the father of revisionism, was one of the most alert socialist observers of the adaptive transformation of the bourgeois state. A person of impeccable Marxist credentials (he was appointed by Friedrich Engels to be executor of his estate), Bernstein noted the growing cooperative movement in society and increasing political power of workers within the system and concluded that the state would evolve into socialism rather than having to endure a proletarian revolution.⁸ The actual outcome was somewhat more complex than Bernstein imagined. Rather than the growing power and organization of the workers producing an eventual transformation into socialism, the policies and parties of the social democrats were absorbed into the existing political systems. As Robert Michels detailed in his classic *Political Parties*,⁹ as the radical party leaders became integrated into the political establishment they began to resemble their fellow politicians. Michels coined the term “the iron law of oligarchy” to describe the tendency of even proletarian leaders to behave according to their personal status

⁸Eduard Bernstein, *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie* (1899), translated as *Evolutionary Socialism* (1911).

⁹Robert Michels, *Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* (1911), translated as *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1915).

in the establishment hierarchy rather than continuing to represent the popular basis of their support. The most striking example of the cooptation of European socialist parties was the patriotic support that they gave to their respective governments in World War I. However, while European states did not become socialist, their broader political base and welfare policies were essential steps in their paths as stable modern states. Without incorporating socialism, they may well have entered the downward spiral of crises prophesied by Marx.

To some extent, the incorporation of welfare values and working class citizens can be seen as a victory of the liberal state as a freely deliberating political community. But the pressure for change emerged from the ineffectiveness of the liberal state as a promoter of communal welfare. And to the surprise and relief of conservatives, the new majorities of working class citizens compromised rather than tyrannized. In the interwar period the muddled legislative and bureaucratic results were unsatisfying to some (who became radical socialists and communists) and uninspiring to others (who became fascists).¹⁰ Confidence in the ideal of democracy—"the government of the whole people by the whole people, equally represented"—as Mill put it,¹¹ was shaken.

The defeat of fascism, the unattractiveness of Stalinist communism, and relative prosperity in the West restored confidence and pride in the reality of legislative democracy, but it did not restore the nineteenth century notion that democracy was simply the common good arrived at through public discussion. Rejecting what he called the "classical theory of democracy," Joseph Schumpeter substituted the following: "The democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."¹² Liberty remains politically important because competition must be fair, but the citizen is more the passive object of political competition than the deliberator on public issues. Schumpeter's more modest empirical definition reflected the sobering experiences with legislative democracy in the twentieth century as well as the effects of theories criticizing the roles of elitism and the media. Nevertheless, Schumpeter's empiricism also marked a confidence in the reality and persistence of competitive politics. Rather than portraying an ideal democracy, he described the modern legislative state. Under the influence first of the Cold War and then of the collapse of European communism, confidence grew that the only durable form of the modern state was legislative. Anything else was either primitive or transitional.

Leaning toward liberty in the liberty-welfare dialectic enhanced both the strengths and the weaknesses of the liberal state. On the positive side, the state did not threaten anyone beyond the immediate targets of its police powers. Competitive political power is an open-ended game.

¹⁰ Michels became a fascist in the hope that the direct appeal of the leader to the people could transcend the dead weight of oligarchy.

¹¹ Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), Chapter 7.

¹² Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976, orig 1942), Chapter 21, p. 269.

No one is barred from playing, and everyone can imagine winning. Even more importantly, there is a huge societal zone of activities, including most of the economy, ideology, and individual preferences, that is relatively immune from state interference but can itself influence politics at will. While the liberal state has an inertia that frustrates reformers, it does not exclude or isolate its critics. They can imagine winning within the system, though by the time that they succeed they have become part of it.

On the negative side, competitive politics creates an oppositional, short-term, and tactical focus on each politician's next election. Even though the actual risk for an incumbent of losing an election may be low—in the US House of Representatives the incumbent retention rate has ranged between 98% and 85% for the past fifty years¹³--the necessity of election dominates politics. Since each candidate and party must distinguish itself from the others, opposition is necessary regardless of policy merits. Cooperation is compromise. Moreover, since elections occur in relatively short cycles or can be called by a vote of no confidence, long-term advantage cannot justify short-term loss. With constant opinion-polling actual policy horizons become even shorter than the electoral cycle. Lastly the tactics of reelection are not so simple as representation might suggest. Campaign financing, media connections, irrelevant public profiles (movie star, etc.), smear campaigns against opponents—all of these can be more important than attending to the interests of the entire constituency or gathering their considered opinions. Beyond the distractions of competitive politics, the vulnerability of the executive to the legislature weakens the capacity of the state to take decisive action in domestic politics. As Mill himself observed, "No body of men, unless organized and under command, is fit for action."¹⁴

In contrast to the stability of liberal states in the twentieth century, revolutionary socialist states have had a turbulent history. Marx's expectation that the proletarian revolution would occur first in the most advanced states was clearly not met. Domestic revolutions led by communist parties were not successful against developed legislative states, but rather against distressed, non-democratic states (Russia, China, Yugoslavia, Cuba) and colonial regimes (Vietnam, Laos, Korea). In other cases communist regimes were imposed by external forces. All were animated by the belief that class struggle was the only meaningful form of politics. As Marx put it, "Revolution is necessary, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class *overthrowing* it can only by revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."¹⁵ In the revolutionary process the party became the vanguard of the masses and its state became its fist.

¹³ For the years 1964 to 2010. See data at Center for Responsive Politics, <http://www.opensecrets.org/bigpicture/reelect.php>

¹⁴ John Stuart Mill, *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861), Chapter 5.

¹⁵ Marx, *German Ideology*, p. 87.

With victory, the party led the people's democratic dictatorship in furthering national welfare and continuing the struggle against enemies of the people. In the Soviet Union, Stalin transformed the national economy into a command economy run on developmental five-year plans and in the 1930s created a new industrial base behind the Urals. Liberty suffered. The domestic division between the people and their enemies did not permit a general notion of citizenship. By eliminating liberty, welfare was also undermined. The countryside was treated like an "internal colony,"¹⁶ exploited to support urban industrialization, and productivity declined. Anyone accused of being a class enemy had no rights, and so waves of denunciations and counter-denunciations swept through society, the army, and even the party and its security apparatus. Beginning with Khrushchev efforts were made to strengthen the legal system, and the declaration of the "state of the whole people" at the XXII Party Congress in 1961 removed the ideological basis for the politics of class struggle. However, there was little real change in citizenship or liberty, and advocates of a serious rethinking of socialist democracy such as Roy Medvedev were persecuted. Meanwhile the bureaucracy remained unresponsive to a more complex society and the economy stagnated. By the time of Gorbachev, the bureaucratic party-state seemed beyond repair. It had lost credibility as a guarantor of welfare, especially in contrast to capitalist prosperity, and demands for liberty were kept outside the system. The collapse of the imposed communist governments in Eastern Europe, which Stalin had set up as a stabilizing buffer, added to the destabilizing environment of 1989-1991.

The political development of Russia since 1991 has been a painful but clear lesson in the continued importance of both welfare and liberty. The "shock therapy" of the 1990s was catastrophic for every dimension of welfare, as indicated by a sharp decline in life expectancy. According to the World Bank, Russian life expectancy first dipped below the world average in 1993 and has not yet fully recovered.¹⁷ Vladimir Putin's reinstitution of a neo-commandist state is popular in Russia because it is restoring the order and public credibility needed first for welfare but also for liberty to be meaningful. It remains to be seen whether Putin's restoration has absorbed enough of the societal forces expressed in the 1980s and 1990s to stabilize as a modern state.

The political development of China and Vietnam has been different from that of European communism. Despite shared ideology and institutional forms, their party-states were shaped by a fundamentally different revolutionary experience, one of protracted rural revolution.¹⁸ Both parties faced much stronger, urban-centered opponents, and they could succeed in the countryside only by mobilizing the peasantry. They had to pay close attention to what the peasants wanted, what they would fight for. Land distribution was the first major step, but

¹⁶ Alvin Gouldner, "Stalinism: A Study of Internal Colonialism," *Telos* 1978, pp. 5-48.

¹⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators* (July 28, 2011).

¹⁸ Brantly Womack, "The Party and the People: Revolutionary and Post-Revolutionary Politics in China and Vietnam." *World Politics* 39:4 (July 1987), pp. 479-507.

continued mobilization required a “fish-water” relationship between the party, its army, and the people.

Mao Zedong put it best in Ruijin in 1934:

I earnestly suggest to this congress that we pay close attention to the well-being of the masses, from the problems of land and labor to those of fuel, rice, cooking oil, and salt. The women want to learn plowing and harrowing. Whom can we get to teach them? The children want to go to school. Have we set up primary schools? The wooden bridge over there is too narrow and people may fall off. Should we not repair it? ...All such problems concerning the well-being of the masses should be placed on our agenda...We should convince the masses that we represent their interests, that our lives are intimately bound up with theirs. We should help them to proceed from these things to an understanding of the higher tasks which we have put forward, the talks of the revolutionary war, that they will support the revolution and spread it throughout the country, respond to our political appeals and fight to the end for victory in the revolution...Comrades! What is a true bastion of iron? It is the masses, the millions upon millions of people who genuinely and sincerely support the revolution.¹⁹

Mao later formulated this as the mass line, and Tang Tsou described the subtle transformation of the mass line from an interactive process of leadership during the rural revolution to a top-down mobilization of the masses after the revolution.²⁰ In Vietnam national liberation played a more prominent part in mobilization, especially in the north after 1954, but the village-based effort centered on land reform remained central in the areas of struggle.²¹

Rural mobilization is the polar opposite of the limited, liberal state. The object is maximum communal involvement, and elections are a subordinate part of the effort. The focus is welfare, not liberty. But as Mao's statement suggests, the party had to stay close to the masses' ideas of their own welfare or else the masses would not identify with the party. Each local cadre was an entrepreneur encouraging enthusiasm. In a life-or-death competition with a more powerful enemy, separation from the masses (脱离群众) would be a fatal mistake. The leadership was therefore constrained to be flexible and mass-regarding in its formulation of welfare.

After victory, mass mobilization remained the main strength of the party-state, but now it served more abstract national goals of development, and local cadres become the lowest link of a long chain of command. The masses lost their active role in welfare goal-setting, and they gained neither an autonomous role in the new state nor legal protections from cadre abuses. In China the absolutization of centrally-formulated goals lead to two very different but equally

¹⁹ Mao Zedong, “Be Concerned with the Well-Being of the Masses, Pay Attention to Methods of Work (January 27, 1934),” *Selected Works*, vol I, pp. 149-150.

²⁰ Tang Tsou, “Reflections on the Formation and Foundations of the Communist Party-State in China,” in Tsou, *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms*, pp. 259-334.

²¹ Jeffrey Race, *War Comes to Long An* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).

damaging consequences. The first was a general trend toward Soviet-style bureaucratization and a new oligarchy of officials. The second was Mao's attempt to reverse the bureaucratic trend, first in economic development with the Great Leap Forward, and second in politics with the Cultural Revolution. Mao's failures proved the bankruptcy of leftism, but reversion to bureaucratic commandism was also unappealing. Vietnam's experience was more complex because of the splitting of the country in 1954 and its reunification in 1975-6, but by 1986 its leadership was convinced by its failures that a different approach was necessary.

Too much credit for the success of the reform eras in China and Vietnam is given to the formula, "economic reform first, political reform later." In fact, the major difference between the failure of the Soviet Union and the successes of China and Vietnam was that, because of their rural revolutionary experience and their broad reach into the population, the leaderships of the latter felt confident enough of their relationship with the people to self-limit their control of society and to encourage markets and openness.²² The notion of welfare again became interactive with popular enthusiasm, and cadres succeeded by becoming entrepreneurs of local prosperity. Material welfare was uppermost for all, and the leaderships of both China and Vietnam have shown flexibility in meeting new challenges in development.

Freedom of choice and action of individuals has expanded enormously in the reform era, and the material life of China and Vietnam has been transformed from homogeneous poverty to economic diversity. The daily life of a young person in Changsha or Ho Chi Minh City is more similar to life in Bangkok or Istanbul than it is to that of their parents thirty years ago. The availability of internet and social media has broken the informational monopoly of the official media and has challenged it to be more responsive to consumer interests. The role of law has been strengthened, and there has been progress in intra-party democracy, especially in Vietnam.

However, the socialist party-state remains fundamentally different from parliamentary states, even from those with established one-party rule like Singapore. A party-state is a mass-regarding executive state rather than a constituency-based deliberative state. Singapore is similar in that the rule of the People's Action Party has been justified by its results, but ultimately the PAP has to face elections. If we assume that only competitive legislative states are legitimate, then progress in political development in China and Vietnam can be measured by the distance between their current constitution and an ideal parliamentary one. If, however, we assume that China and Vietnam are already legitimate modern states, then the question of their continued political development becomes similar to that faced by Humboldt and Mill. What are the limits of effectiveness of a modern socialist government? What are its aims? Does it have a problem analogous to Mills' problem of the tyranny of the majority, a tyranny of the masses? What is the proper sphere of liberty in socialist citizenship, and how should it be protected?

²² Tang Tsou, "Political Change and Reform: The Middle Course," in *The Cultural Revolution and Post-Mao Reforms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 219-258.

There are many people, especially outside China and Vietnam, who would not accept the possibility of a legitimate socialist party-state and see the only course of political development to be the eventual transition to a legislative state. But the ability and adaptability in governance of China and Vietnam in the reform era are impressive. European states in the late nineteenth century transformed themselves by doing well on the liberty side of the spectrum, and perhaps the welfare performance of China and Vietnam has created a different form of stable, modern constitution. To be sure, China and Vietnam face tremendous challenges in further political development. However, the same could be said for legislative regimes. Currently the domestic political dimension of American economic crisis is particularly evident, showing an apparent incapacity of the system to be an effective provider of welfare. If citizenship in both socialist states and liberal states is facing new and fundamental challenges, it is necessary to consider the deeper roots of each state form in modern citizenship.

4. MODERNITY AND MEMBERSHIP

What is modern society? Max Weber provided a fundamental insight when he described society as a system of social chances.²³ The emphasis of his term “chances” is not on the risk taken in social interactions, the possibility that something else might happen, but rather on the individual’s expectation that the interactions will follow a certain pattern. This, according to Weber is all that society is—shared patterns of expectation. If chances change, society has changed. Of course, society does not change uniformly, and vested interests in preserving existing patterns will be in tension with new interests and new patterns. But the tensions in a modernizing society are not between the old society and its critics, or even between the proponents of the old society and the proponents of the new, but rather within a complex system of chances that has already changed the old society. While Marx once said that society only raises such problems as it can solve, Weber would claim that society itself has become the problems that it raises, whether or not it can solve them.

By stressing the individual’s view of society rather than an autonomous social structure it might appear that Weber is placing too much weight on the subjective dimension, but this is not the case. The consciousness of choice implied in Weber’s chances reflects both the freedom and the uncertainty of modern life. It is not the abstract, absolute freedom that Hobbes and Rousseau argue exists prior to a social contract. Rather it is the expanded alternatives of judgment and action that are inherent in society and cannot be avoided by the individual. A modern person has no choice but to make choices in interpreting his/her surroundings and acting on them. The consequences of individual judgments and actions will remain inherently interactive with the chances of others. Not only therefore are consequences unpredictable, but the further development of each individual’s chances will be co-determined by the interactive

²³ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* [Economy and Society], 5th ed., Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972, I:1:10.(p.9).

social environment. Modern society carries Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty one step further: the subject as well as the object is shaped by interaction.

This existential situation may not seem to be exclusively modern, and in a sense it is not. In the orations of Cicero, the stoicism of Marcus Aurelius, and the naturalism of Zhuangzi there is a sense of individuality interpreting an interactive social world. The common, proto-modern characteristic of their situations is the confrontation with vast change, but it is seen as a crisis, a time out of joint, rather than as the natural rhythm of a complex world. Cicero's famous exclamation, "O tempora! O mores!" (Such times! Such behavior!) can now be heard daily in every modern society. Each older generation and every established power in a modern society can share Cicero's lament. In the modern world, societal complexity has created ever-new levels of capacity that in turn drive and reshape complexity. The division of labor makes possible greater and more sophisticated products that in turn make some occupations obsolete while demanding others. Heraclitus may have seen that "all is flux," but his stream was small compared to the vast and swirling waters of global modernity. Human desire for a better life, though not necessarily a faster one, has driven modernization, and even if the current multi-century age of industrial expansion is succeeded by a more frugal one of resource conservation it is hard to see how society as a whole would become more simple.

The state is the most prominent beneficiary of the power created by the modern era. Both the complexity of society and its rate of change justify the presence of a decisive regulating force, and the capacity that complexity creates can be appropriated and concentrated for public purposes. The state can be seen as the cluster of enforced chances. But the modern state is itself a chance-facing Leviathan; it does not create the society that it governs. It interprets a complex, interactive social environment and despite its power it cannot know in advance the ultimate outcome of its actions. Hence the basic task of the modern state is to be neither the steadfast upholder of a golden age or the confident vanguard of a transformed future. Any notion of the fundamental state task that holds society to an unchanging standard implicitly denies its change, and any state that acts in confidence of some future outcome denies society's interactivity. Of course, states have the power to act inappropriately, but such actions damage the texture of their societies and ultimately reduce their power as well as their legitimacy. If the Leviathan persists in enforcing political chances that are inappropriate for its society, it will eventually beach itself on the sands of history.

In his preface to *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* Weber expresses his deep appreciation for Ferdinand Tönnies' dichotomy²⁴ between traditional community (*Gemeinschaft*) and modern society (*Gesellschaft*), but in effect Weber adds a middle term, that of civil society. Tönnies' dichotomy had a deep influence on the self-consciousness of modern Europe because it

²⁴ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie* [Community and society: Foundational concepts of pure sociology] (Leipzig: Fues Verlag, 1887). 6th and 7th ed., Berlin: Verlag Carl Curtius, 1926.

highlighted the difference between its past and the novelty of its progressing, complex, big-city present. But as Weber's analysis of chances suggests, Tönnies, by consigning community to Europe's past, misses the ambiguity of the identities of both public and private in modern society. Tönnies' picture of modern society is too harsh and atomistic. Civil society is essentially voluntary public bonding, and it has the contradictory but inseparable aspects of appearing to be a larger individual and at the same time a smaller community. Moreover, in a large, modern society, it is the large arena of each citizen's chances beyond the small world of family and friends and beneath the canopy of politics. Civil society thus creates a texture of community shaping both public and private expectations. Modern governance is not only the management of individual citizens. It is also the management of a voluntary society.

What is the role of liberty in membership in a modern society? I interpret liberty as primordial and persisting space for choice. It is primordial because the chances perceived by each individual or collective actor have uncertainty and leeway that can be shaped but not eliminated. But liberty is far more than a residuum of modern society. Each individual and group has located interests and perspectives that are interactive with others, and as Humboldt emphasized, it is a fundamental duty of a modern state to respect, encourage, and enhance the realm of choice. Although the state shapes interests and perceptions, it does not create them. No one can be told what their interests are, or what they should see with their own eyes. The citizen's inherent membership in a polity is not simply as a beneficiary of public order, but as a maker of political choices. And the choices of participation in civil society are an essential part of membership in modernity. These choices interact with political chances, but they are essentially voluntary.

The role of welfare is similarly fundamental to modern society. A citizen expects security and benefit from membership in modern society. Given the inherent uncertainties of modern complexity, security is especially important. The expanded presence of the modern state is in part a response to the nearly limitless horizons of possible risks faced by the modern citizen. Food supply and quality must be regulated; transportation provided; public order enforced. In a traditional subsistence village each of these needs for state presence would be less pressing. Moreover, the horizons of possible citizen benefit are expanded by the enormous capacities of the modern state. The state is no longer the remote caretaker of a collection of mostly self-sufficient cells. It has more to offer in terms of overall organization and specific welfare functions. But citizens and groups pursue their own welfare in civil society, and because these choices are voluntary, they become part of a citizen's social identity. Thus the role of the state as a guarantor of welfare should be that of an enabler of civil welfare as well as a provider of public welfare.

So what is modern citizenship? Its essence is participatory membership in both the complexity and power of a polity, including its civil and political systems of chances. Participatory membership is both the irreducible minimum of modern citizenship and its goal. A modern state that attempts to guarantee order by eliminating liberty is merely compressing and

distorting the individual's view of his/her chances. And as Zhuangzi observed, "the human heart is like a spring. The more it is pressed down, the higher it will jump." While Zhuangzi was criticizing Confucian moralism, his point is even more appropriate for a complex modern society.

Continuing the theme of minimum modern citizenship, we could say that democracy, understood in its broadest meaning of the power of the people, is not a specific system of government but rather a base-level reality of modern society. If public authority severely abuses the liberty and welfare of its citizens it destroys the societal complexity upon which its power is ultimately founded. We can give here a sober reading to the title Humboldt's work, "An attempt to determine the limits of the effectiveness of the state." A state that neglects either the liberty or the welfare of its citizens is limiting its own effectiveness, and perhaps its life span. What appears to be a display of unusual power or license by the state may be a sign of its weakness.

The maximum challenge of modern citizenship to the modern state is to enhance the positive space for choice among the chances presented by society and to maximize the security and benefit involved in those choices. The fundamental prerequisite for optimizing the function of the modern state is therefore respect for the citizenry, both as individuals and as public and civil collectivities. Implicit in respect is acknowledgement of foundations of public authority on the power of the people. If the state's function and capacity rests on the liberty and welfare of the citizenry, then the state strengthens itself by respecting its base. This notion resonates with the classical Chinese notion of 民本 (the people as root of the state), but in a modern society it requires a respect for choice and civil society as well as attention to popular welfare. The modern state does not "shepherd the people," as Guanzi put it, rather, it governs the citizenry.

5. CONCLUSION: FEELING THE STONES

There is no golden key or perfect formula for proper governance of a modern citizenry. Capitalist and socialist societies will each face major challenges of adapting their current patterns to changing conditions. The provision of welfare by limited states in situations of diminishing resources appears to be the looming problem of developed legislative states, and the United States seems most at risk to this challenge. The provision of liberty to an increasingly diversified and sophisticated citizenry and civil society appears to be the major challenge facing China and Vietnam. These are profound challenges precisely because they do not correspond to the existing strengths of each system. They do not demand "more of the same," but rather an adjustment in the content of governance at a minimum, and possibly adjustments in its processes and structure.

Despite the significance of these challenges, neither capitalism nor socialism is faced with imminent mortality. Both have done their respective half of the liberty/welfare job well, and because the two halves are linked each system has shown the capacity for adjustment. The very complexity and power that underlie the challenges of modernity create a path-dependency that

makes continuity the strong default choice not only of the state, but of its membership. The Soviet Union proves that mortality is possible, but the Soviet Union was deeply problematic in terms of both liberty and welfare. Moreover, as the most spectacular recent failure of a modern state the Soviet Union is also a teacher by negative example. Likewise the earlier emergence of fascism can be seen as the failure of capitalist states, but Germany and Italy were problematic as liberal states and also teachers by negative example to their successors. Thus the exceptions increase the likelihood of continuity.

But continuity in a changing societal environment cannot be inertia. If it is, the state's governance capacity will be eroded. In liberal states inertia is likely to produce an erosion of welfare and consequently feelings of frustration among the citizenry as they pursue security and benefits. In party-states inertia is likely to produce a skeptical and alienated citizenry increasingly aware of the limitations of their liberty and of the abuses of power by the state.

Failure and inertia are the least likely outcomes because of their very undesirability. Far more likely is that modern states will continue pragmatic adjustments of their governance and adjust to the crises that they will inevitably face. They will feel the stones of their political paths and proceed accordingly.