

# How to Transform a Society: Errors to Avoid

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In studying any complex process in which there are two or more contradictions, we must devote every effort to finding its principal contradiction. Once this principal contradiction is grasped, all problems can be readily solved.

— Mao Zedong<sup>1</sup>

A proposition must be plain, to be adopted by the understanding of the people. A false notion which is clear and precise will always have more power in the world than a true principle which is obscure or involved.

— Alexis de Tocqueville<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter we will state some rules that deserve the attention of anyone who wants to bring about radical changes in a society. Not all of the rules are precise enough to be easily applied and some may not be applicable in every situation, but if a radical movement fails to take the rules into account it risks throwing away its chances of success.

In the first part of this chapter we will give a brief and simplified explanation of the rules. Further on we will examine the meaning of the rules, illustrate them with examples, and discuss the limits of their applicability. In the last part of the chapter we will show how ignorance of the rules ensures the failure of present-day efforts to deal with the problems generated by modern technology, including the problem of environmental devastation.

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<sup>1</sup> Mao, p.112.

<sup>2</sup> Tocqueville, Vol. I, p. 172.

# I. Postulates and Rules

We begin by stating four postulates. We postpone a discussion of the extent to which the postulates are true.

Postulate 1. You can't change a society by pursuing goals that are vague or abstract. You have to have a clear and concrete goal. As an experienced activist put it: "Vague, over-generalized objectives are seldom met. The trick is to conceive of some specific development which will inevitably propel your community in the direction you want it to go."<sup>1</sup>

Postulate 2. Preaching alone—the mere advocacy of ideas—cannot bring about important, long-lasting changes in the behavior of human beings, unless in a very small minority.<sup>2</sup>

Postulate 3. Any radical movement tends to attract many people who may be sincere, but whose goals are only loosely related to the goals of the movement.<sup>3</sup> The result is that the movement's original goals may become blurred, if not completely perverted.<sup>4</sup>

Postulate 4. Every radical movement that acquires great power becomes corrupt, at the latest, when its original leaders (meaning those who joined the movement while it was still relatively weak) are all dead or politically inactive. In saying that a movement becomes corrupt, we mean that its members, and especially its leaders, primarily seek personal advantages (such as money, security, social status, powerful offices, or a career) rather than dedicating themselves sincerely to the ideals of the movement.

From these postulates we can infer certain rules to which every radical movement should pay close attention.

Rule (i) In order to change a society in a specified way, a movement should select a single, clear, simple, and concrete objective the achievement of which will produce the desired change.

It follows from Postulate 1 that the movement's objectives must be clear and concrete. According to Postulate 3 there will be a tendency for the movement's objectives to become blurred or perverted, and this tendency will be most easily resisted if the

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<sup>1</sup> Huenefeld, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> "The propagandist must realize that neither rational arguments nor catchy slogans can, by themselves, do much to influence human behavior." NEB (2003), Vol. 26, "Propaganda," p. 175.

<sup>3</sup> See Smelser, pp. 345n5, 356-57.

<sup>4</sup> See NEB (2003), Vol. 16, "Collective Behavior," p. 563. There is undoubtedly a good deal of truth in what the Britannica says here about the blurring of a movement's goals over time. Nevertheless, the Britannica's statements are not entirely borne out by the examples discussed in the present chapter. We may suspect the Britannica of generalizing too broadly.

movement has only a single objective that is simple in addition to being clear and concrete. As seen in the epigraph, above, Mao emphasized the importance of identifying the “principal contradiction” in any situation, and this one principal contradiction commonly will point to a single, decisive objective that a movement needs to achieve in order to transform a society.

In any conflict situation in which victory is uncertain, it is always essential to concentrate ones efforts on the achievement of the single most critical objective. Military practitioners and theorists like Napoleon and Clausewitz recognized the importance of concentrating ones forces at the decisive point,<sup>5</sup> and Lenin noted that this principle applies in politics as it does in war.<sup>6</sup> But we shouldn’t need Napoleon, Clausewitz, or Lenin to tell us this—its just common sense: When you’re facing a difficult struggle and have no strength to spare, you’d better concentrate what strength you have where it will do the most good: on the single most critical objective.

Rule (ii) If a movement aims to transform a society, then the objective selected by the movement must be of such a nature that, once the objective has been achieved, its consequences will be irreversible. This means that, once society has been transformed through the achievement of the objective, society will remain in its transformed condition without any further effort on the part of the movement or anyone else.

In order to transform society, the movement will have to acquire great power and therefore, according to Postulate 4, will soon become corrupt.. Once corrupted, the members of the movement or their successors will no longer exert themselves to maintain the transformed condition of society that corresponds to the ideals of the movement, but will be concerned only to gain and hold personal advantages. Consequently, society will not remain in its transformed condition unless the transformation is irreversible.

Rule (iii) Once an objective has been selected, it is necessary to persuade some small minority to commit itself to the achievement of the objective by means more potent than mere preaching or advocacy of ideas. In other words, the minority will have to organize itself for practical action.

As pointed out in Postulate 2, the advocacy of ideas alone cannot change society, so some group will have to be organized for the purpose of applying methods more potent than mere advocacy of ideas. At least at the outset, this group will ordinarily include only a very small minority because, again by Postulate 2, prior to the application of methods more potent than the mere advocacy of ideas, only a very small minority can be persuaded to act..

Rule (iv) In order to keep itself faithful to its objective, a radical movement should devise means of excluding from its ranks all unsuitable persons who may seek to join it.

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<sup>5</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 29, “War, Theory and Conduct of,” p. 649.

<sup>6</sup> Trotsky, Vol.Three, p. 179.

Tris can be important, because according to Postulate 3 the admission of unsuitable persons will promote the blurring or perversion of the movement's objective.

Rule (v) Once a revolutionary movement has become powerful enough to achieve its objective, it must achieve its objective as soon as possible, and in any case before the original revolutionaries (meaning those who joined the movement while it was still relatively weak) die or become politically inactive.

As noted earlier, the movement will have to become very powerful in order to achieve its objective, therefore, by Postulate 4, it will soon be corrupted. Once corrupted, the movement will no longer be faithful to its objective, so if the objective is to be achieved at all it must be achieved before the movement becomes corrupt.

## II. Examination of the Postulates

Let's take a careful look at the postulates and ask ourselves to what extent they are true.

Postulate 1. To see the truth of this postulate, we don't need to rely on the opinion of the experienced activist quoted above. It should be obvious that vague or abstract goals can't ordinarily serve as a basis for effective action.

For example, "freedom" by itself will not serve as a goal, because different people have different conceptions of what constitutes freedom and of the relative importance of different aspects of freedom. Consequently, effective and consistent cooperation in pursuit of an unspecified "freedom" is impossible. "the same is true of other vague goals like "equality," "justice" or "protecting the environment." For effective cooperation you need a clear and concrete goal, so that everyone involved will have approximately the same understanding of what the goal actually is.

Moreover, where an objective is vague or abstract, it is too easy to pretend that the objective has been achieved, or that progress toward it is being made, when real achievements are minimal. For example, American politicians automatically identify "freedom" with the American way of life regardless of the realities of day-to-day living in this country. Anything done to protect so-called American interests abroad is described as "defending freedom," and many Americans, probably the majority, actually accept this description.

For the foregoing reasons, it is usually true that a radical movement cannot pursue vague or abstract goals successfully. But is it always true? Maybe not. Look, for example, at the American Revolution. By May 1776 at the latest, the great majority of the American revolutionaries had accepted independence from Britain as their objective of highest priority.<sup>1</sup> This objective was clear and concrete, and it was achieved. But independence was not the revolutionaries' only goal: They also wanted to set up a "republican" government in America.<sup>2</sup> This was by no means a clear and concrete objective, since widely differing forms of government can be described as "republican." Consequently, once independence had been achieved, there were intense disagreements among the revolutionaries over the precise form of the "republic" that was to be established.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the revolutionaries did succeed in setting up a government that was unquestionably republican in form and that has lasted to the present day.

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<sup>1</sup> See Currey, p. 344; W.S. Randall, pp. 215,250,262.

<sup>2</sup> E.g., McCullough, pp. 102, 163.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., pp. 374-381, 397-98. W.S. Randall, pp. 480-83. Chernow, pp. 227-239,241,243-44,261-68.

Notice, however, that the revolutionaries did not set up a successful republican government until they had already won independence from Britain and no longer faced stiff opposition. Furthermore, they enjoyed certain special advantages: They had as a model a form of government—the English one—that was already halfway to being a republic. (Jefferson referred to the English constitution as a “kind of half-way house” between monarchy and “liberty.”<sup>4</sup>) The revolutionaries shared a common heritage of relatively “advanced” political ideas derived from English tradition and from the works of Enlightenment philosophers.<sup>5</sup> England, moreover, had long been moving in the direction of representative democracy, so the American revolutionaries were only accelerating what was already a well established historical trend. And they were not accelerating it so very much, since the government they set up was still far from fully democratic.<sup>6</sup>

In Part III of this chapter we will see other examples in which movements have succeeded in reaching vague or abstract goals. But we know of no well-defined examples of this kind in which the movement has faced stiff opposition and has not been favored by a pre-existing historical trend.

It would be rash to conclude that a movement can never achieve vague or abstract goals against stiff opposition and without the help of a pre-existing historical trend. But it remains true that a movement that lacks a clear and concrete goal operates under a very heavy disadvantage. The stronger the opposition that a movement has to face, the more important it is that the movement should be united and able to concentrate all its energy on achieving a single objective; and this requires an objective that is clearly defined.

Yet, even in those situations in which the need for a clear and concrete objective is greatest, Postulate 1 does not imply that abstract goals are useless. Abstract goals often play an essential role in motivating and justifying a movement’s concrete objective. To take a crude example, an aspiration for “freedom” may motivate and justify a movement that seeks to overthrow a dictator.

Postulate 2 is a matter of common, everyday experience. We all know how useless it is to try to change people’s behavior by preaching to them—generally speaking. Actually there are some important exceptions to Postulate 2, but before we discuss those we need to point out that some seeming exceptions are not really exceptions at all.

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<sup>4</sup> W.S. Randall, p. 512.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.201.

<sup>6</sup> In the early days of the Republic the members of the Electoral College that chose the President were not necessarily elected by the people; in many states they were appointed by the state legislatures. Ibid., p. 544. NEB (2003), Vol. 29, “United States of America,” p. 223. And, until 1913, Senators too were appointed by state legislatures, not elected by the people. Constitution of the United States, Article I, Section 3; Amendment XVII. The state legislatures that made these appointments were not elected in a fully democratic way, because in most states the right to vote was limited by property qualifications. See NEB (2003), Vol. 29, “United States of America,” pp. 217, 223, 269, 277, 283, 299, 302. Also Haraszti, pp. 32-33; Trees, p. 7A.



It would be a mistake, for example, to suppose that the teachings of Jesus Christ have been effective in guiding human behavior. It seems that the earliest Christians did try to live in accord with the teachings of Jesus (as they interpreted them), but at that stage the Christians comprised only a tiny minority. With the passage of years, the Christian way of life was progressively vitiated in proportion to the growing number of Christians,<sup>7</sup> and by the time Christianity had become dominant in the Roman Empire few Christians still lived as those of the first century AD had done. The world went on as before, full of war, lust, greed, and treachery.

What happened, of course, was that Christian doctrines were reinterpreted to suit the convenience of the society that existed at any given stage of history. Thus, the biblical commandment barring “usury” was originally held to prohibit all lending of money at interest.<sup>8</sup> The prohibition was often violated, beginning at least as early as 200-250 AD, but it remained theoretically in force at least through the late Middle Ages, until it became a serious obstacle to economic development. At that point it was abandoned altogether,<sup>9</sup> and nowadays it would be a rare Christian who would claim that lending at interest was prohibited by his religion.

Jesus himself—if we assume that the Gospels accurately reflect his views—was opposed to **all** accumulation of wealth,<sup>10</sup> and the earliest Christians probably tried to live accordingly, for “as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”<sup>11</sup> But that

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<sup>7</sup> See NEB (2003), Vol. 16, “Christianity,” pp. 258, 262 for the moral rigorism of the earliest Christians and its gradual relaxation. At least until circa 100 AD and probably through most of the following century, the Christians were numerically insignificant. Harnack, p. 5. Freeman, p. 163. Harnack finds in the reign of the emperor Commodus (180-192 AD) a turning-point in the growth of Christianity, Harnack, pp. 27ff, and by 300 AD perhaps seven to ten percent of the population of the Roman Empire was Christian, Freeman, p. 215. During the first half of the fourth century Christianity grew explosively and became dominant in the Roman Empire because it was favored by the emperor Constantine. Ibid., pp. 219,222, 225ff.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 22:25. The King James Version uses the term “usury”; the New English Bible, the Revised English Bible, and the New International Version do not. In all these versions, strictly speaking, the Bible prohibits the taking of interest only from “poor” or “needy” people. But apparently Jesus’s injunction to “lend, hoping for nothing again” (i.e., nothing in return; Luke 6:35, King James Version) was assumed to bar **all** lending at interest. See Weber, p. 59nl; Bouwsma, p. 198. (But see Matthew 25:14-28; Luke 19:12-25.)

<sup>9</sup> For this whole paragraph, see World Book Encyclopedia, 2011, Vol. 20, “Usury,” p. 229; NEB (2003), Vol. 12, “usury,” p. 216; Pirenne, pp. 251-52; Bouwsma, pp. 198, 202-03; Weber, pp. 56-58nl. Circa 200-250 AD, certain Christian widows were lending money at extortionate rates of interest. Harnack, p. 131. For money-lending at interest by Christians in later centuries, see, e.g., Pirenne, loc. cit.; Runciman, pp. 304-05; D.Jones, p. 384.

<sup>10</sup> E.g., Matthew 6:19-24, 19:21-24; Luke 6:20-25, 12:15-21.

<sup>11</sup> Acts 4:34-35 (King James Version). See also Acts 2:44-45, 4:32. Many scholars reject altogether the historical value of Acts, Freeman, p. 40, though Harnack, e.g., p.116, apparently does not. Whatever the value of Acts, it is sufficiently clear that the early Christians were supposed to despise wealth and hold their property in common. E.g., Freeman, pp. 163-64, 165.

didn't last long. Not later than the early 2nd century AD there already were some wealthy Christians, and the Epistle of James rails against them for failing to help their impoverished brethren.<sup>12</sup> Over the succeeding centuries there were growing numbers of rich Christians, including many who were greedy or did nothing for the poor,<sup>13</sup> and today, at least in the United States, it is clear that the majority of Christians are less concerned to alleviate poverty than the (mostly non-Christian) left is.<sup>14</sup>

In North America and Western Europe a gentling effect—a decline in cruelty and violence—is often attributed to Christianity; Jesus is commonly seen as a pacifist. Actually Jesus's commandment, "Do not kill," was never intended to prohibit all killing, but only "murder," i.e., unjustifiable killing,<sup>15</sup> and Christian societies ever since have arrived at their own definitions, to suit their own needs, of what constitutes an "unjustifiable" killing, just as they would have done if Jesus had never lived. Christianity was strongest in Europe during the Middle Ages, a particularly cruel and violent era,<sup>16</sup> and the decline in cruelty and violence has coincided with a gradual weakening of

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<sup>12</sup> Freeman, p. 115. Harnack, p. 26&n3. James 2:1-16, 4:13-16, 5:1-3. The Epistle of James was written not later than the early 2nd century AD. Freeman, p. 105.

<sup>13</sup> Freeman, *passim*, e.g., pp. 169, 187-88 (greed), 211-12 (greed, failure to help starving brethren), 261, 266 (greed). Harnack, *passim*, e.g., pp. 21, 23, 25-32,39 (greed), 106-08 (greed, total decadence), 116. It's true on the other hand that early Christians did more for the poor than the pagans had done, according to Freeman, pp. 267-69 (referring to early fifth century), but this could have been motivated in part by the fact that taking care of the poor helped to ensure the stability of the existing structure of society, see *ibid.* Presumably for that reason, the church "was used by the state" to care for the poor. *Ibid.*, p. 225. The State gave some bishops "grain supplies to hand out to the poor." *Ibid.*, p. 228. Moreover, it's not clear that concern for poor people can be attributed specifically to **Christian** doctrines, since support for the poor is an important part of classical Judaism and of Islam (Neusner & Chilton, pp. 38-39, 7^—77), and no doubt of many other religions. This writer is aware of no reason to believe that Christianity has done better in this respect than other major religions have. For whatever it's worth: "Whereas the principle of official support for the poor and assignment of work to the unemployed had been systematically developed under the Stuart monarchs [of England], especially during the regime of [William] Laud [Archbishop of Canterbury] under Charles I, the battle-cry of the Puritans was, 'Giving alms is no charity'... ." Weber, p. 177n3.

<sup>14</sup> See, e.g., Freeman, p. 225 ("megachurch complexes").

<sup>15</sup> In the **King James Version**, Exodus 20:13 says "Thou shalt not kill," and Mark 10:19 and Luke 18:20 both make Jesus say, "Do not kill," but Matthew 19:18 quotes Jesus as saying, "Thou shalt do no murder." However, in each of these four verses the more modern translations cited in note 16, above, use the word "murder" instead of "kill." Jesus must at least have considered it justifiable to kill in self-defense, for when he advised his disciples to carry swords (Luke 22:36) he surely did not mean these to serve as mere decoration. Arguments that Jesus's reference to "swords" was not literal but allegorical make no sense in the context; one would have to believe that the references to money, coats, shoes, purse, scrip, garment, etc. (Matthew 10:9-10; Mark 6:8-9; Luke 10:4, 22:35-36) likewise were not literal but part of the allegory. And if one believes that much, then one cannot assume that **anything** in the Gospels is to be taken literally. The meaning of the Gospels would be up for grabs—no one could know what Jesus meant by anything he said; hence, a fortiori, Jesus's teachings could not have guided human behavior. Of course, if we were to assume that Jesus really was a pacifist, then that would strengthen our argument that his teachings have been ineffective—in view of the amount of violence that the Christian world has seen since his time.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Elias, pp. 162-65, 171.

Christianity from the 17th century to the present. So in this regard it does not appear that Jesus's teachings have had any substantial effect on human behavior.<sup>17</sup>

For another example, take Karl Marx. As a practical revolutionary Marx was active only for about 12 years (1848-1852, 1864-1872), and was not particularly successful;<sup>18</sup> his role was primarily that of a theorist, an advocate of ideas. Yet it has sometimes been said that Marx exercised a decisive influence on the history of the 20th century. In reality, the people who exercised the decisive influence were the men of action (Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao, Castro, etc.) who organized revolutions in the name of Marxism. And these men, while calling themselves Marxists, never hesitated to set Marx's theories aside when "objective" circumstances made it advisable for them to do so.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the societies that resulted from their revolutions resembled the kind of society envisioned by Marx only to the extent that they were in a general way socialistic.

Marx did not invent socialism, nor did he originate the impulse to revolution. Both socialism and revolution were "in the air" in Marx's day, and they weren't in the air just because some ingenious fellow happened to dream them up. They were in the air because they were called forth by the social conditions of the time (as Marx himself would have been the first to insist<sup>20</sup>). If Marx had never lived there would have been revolutionaries all the same, and they would have adopted some other socialistic thinker as their patron saint. In that case the terminology and the details of the theory would have been different but the subsequent political events probably would have been much the same, because those events were determined not by Marx's theories but by some combination of "objective" conditions with the decisions of the men of action who organized the socialist revolutions. And the men of action, as we've pointed out, were guided less by Marx's theories than by the practical exigencies of revolutionary work.

Even if we assume that the political events would have been different without Marx, the events that did occur did not represent a fulfillment of Marx's ideas, because, again, the societies that grew out of the socialist revolutions did not resemble anything that Marx had foreseen or desired. So it does not appear that Marx accomplished much through his advocacy of ideas.

For similar reasons, probably very few if any of the "great thinkers" whose ideas supposedly influenced history ever achieved their goals, except where the thinkers were also men of action who were able to implement their own ideas (as in the case

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<sup>17</sup> This discussion of Christianity has been conducted at a naive level inasmuch as it assumes that Jesus actually said what the Gospels report him to have said. This simplified treatment has been necessary for the sake of brevity. For clarification, see Appendix Six.

<sup>18</sup> See NEB (2003), Vol. 23, "Marx and Marxism," pp. 533-34.

<sup>19</sup> See, e.g., *ibid.*, pp. 539-542.

<sup>20</sup> "When people speak of ideas that revolutionize society, they do but express the fact that within the old society the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence." Marx & Engels, Chapt. II, p. 91.

of the Prophet Mohammed, for example). Such thinkers, therefore, do not provide counterexamples to the principle that the advocacy of ideas, by itself, cannot produce important, lasting changes in human behavior (unless in some very small minority). Nevertheless, some exceptions to Postulate 2 should be noted.

Small children are highly receptive to the teaching of their parents and of other adults whom they respect, and principles preached to a small child may guide his behavior for the rest of his life.

Ideas that people receive may have an important, long-lasting effect on their behavior if the ideas are ones that many individuals can apply for their own personal advantage. For example, the rational methods of empirical science were at first preached only by a tiny minority, but those ideas spread and were applied throughout the world because they were of great practical utility to those who applied them. (Even so, scientific rationality is consistently applied only where it is useful to those who apply it. Scientific rationality is commonly set aside when the irrational is more useful, for example, in certain aspects of the social sciences where the goal is not to describe reality accurately but to provide support for an ideology or a worldview.)

The power-structure of a modern society can change human behavior by preaching on a vast scale through the mass media with the help of skilled professional propagandists. Maybe a group outside the established power-structure could also change human behavior through propaganda alone, but only if the group were sufficiently rich and powerful to undertake a massive, sophisticated media campaign.<sup>21</sup> Even where human behavior is changed by professional propagandists, however, it is doubtful that the change is ever permanent. It seems that such changes are easily reversed when the propaganda ceases or is replaced by propaganda that promotes contrary ideas. Thus, the effects of Nazi propaganda in Germany, Marxist- Leninist propaganda in the Soviet Union, and Maoist propaganda in China faded rather quickly when those systems of propaganda were discontinued.

Postulate 3. Probably every radical movement tends to some extent to attract persons who join it from motives that are only loosely related to the goals of the movement. When Earth First! was founded in the 1980s its goal was simply the defense of wilderness, but it attracted numerous individuals of leftist type who were less interested in wilderness than in activism for its own sake. A good example was the late Judi Bari, who was a radical feminist, demonstrated against U.S. involvement in Central America, and participated in the pro-choice and anti-nuclear movements. "Eventually, she added environmentalism to her list of causes"<sup>22</sup> and became an Earth First!er. The influx of numerous individuals of this type did lead to the blurring of Earth First!'s original mission, which became heavily contaminated with "social justice" issues.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Propaganda that aims to induce major changes is certain to take great amounts of time, resources, patience, and indirection, except in times of revolutionary crisis when old beliefs have been shattered..." NEB (2003), Vol. 26, "Propaganda," p. 176.

<sup>22</sup> M.F. Lee, pp.119, 136.

<sup>23</sup> The story is told by M.F. Lee.

Probably, however, not every radical movement is equally attractive to persons whose goals differ from those of the movement. Because of the personal risk involved, it's not likely that an illegal and persecuted movement would draw many cranks and do-gooders, though on the other hand such a movement might be attractive to adventurers who valued danger, conspiracy, or violence for their own sake.<sup>24</sup> Again, when a movement is fully absorbed in a hard struggle (legal or not) for a single, specific, clearly defined goal, one imagines it would attract few individuals who were not willing to commit themselves whole-heartedly to that goal.

Whether this is true or not, it does seem true that even if many persons having varied and diffuse goals enter a movement, the movement's objective does not necessarily become blurred or perverted if that objective is simple, concrete, and clear, and if the movement is committed to it exclusively. For example, it appears that most of the early feminist leaders were professional reformers who were interested in a variety of causes, such as temperance (anti-alcohol), peace (anti-war), pacifism, abolition of slavery, and so-called "progressive" causes generally.<sup>25</sup> Yet, once the feminist movement had become clearly focused by about 1870 on the single, overriding goal of woman suffrage, it seems to have remained entirely faithful to that goal until the goal was achieved in the 1920s.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the words "tends to" and "may" that appear in the statement of Postulate 3 signify that the postulate does not state an inviolable law, but only a danger to which social movements are subject. The danger, however, is a serious one.

Postulate 4. The meaning of Postulate 4 needs to be clarified: A movement will not necessarily be thoroughly corrupted unless it becomes so powerful that (i) membership in the movement entails little or no risk (whether of physical harm or of other negative consequences, such as drastic loss of social status); and (ii) the movement is able to offer its adherents such conventional satisfactions as money, security, positions of power, a career, or social status—meaning social status not merely within the movement but in society at large. Even then the movement's ideals may retain some residual effectiveness

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<sup>24</sup> Among the early Bolsheviks, Krasin and Bogdanov were essentially adventurers. Ulam, pp. 90, 95, 101-02. (Bogdanov, alias Alexander Malinovsky, should not be confused with Roman Malinovsky.) During the 1930s, in the opinion of Otto Bauer, there were many adventurers in the German anti-Nazi movement. Rothfels, pp. 64-65. See Packer, p. 62 (suggesting that many Muslim jihadists are motivated by a "sense of adventure").

<sup>25</sup> See NEB (2003), Micropaedia articles on Anthony, Susan B.; Bajer, Fredrik; Blatch, Harriot Eaton Stanton; Braun, Lily; Catt, Carrie Chapman; Gage, Matilda Joslyn; Garrison, William Lloyd; Grimke, Sarah (Moore) and Angelina (Emily); Mott, Lucretia; Phillips, Wendell; Rankin, Jeanette; Stanton, Elizabeth Cady; Stone, Lucy; Truth, Sojourner; Woodhull, Victoria. Also Vol. 9, "prostitution," p. 737.

<sup>26</sup> See *ibid.*, articles on Anthony, Catt, and Gage, plus: Vol. 9, "Pankhurst, Emmeline," pp. 115-16; Vol. 19, "Feminism," p. 160 ("the feminist movement... became focused on a single issue, woman suffrage..."). It's true that beginning in the late 1890s "radical feminists challenged the single-minded focus on suffrage," *ibid.*, p. 161, but still it seems clear that at least from about 1870 until the 1920s, woman suffrage was overwhelmingly the dominant goal of the feminist movement in England and America.

unless and until the movement achieves a secure position as the dominant force in society, after which corruption becomes complete.

Subject to the foregoing clarification, Postulate 4 seems to be invariably true. People who join a radical movement while it is still relatively weak may have goals that diverge from those of the movement, but at least such people are not likely to be selfish in the conventional sense, because they cannot draw the conventional advantages from their membership in the movement. In fact, their membership may entail serious risks or sacrifices. They may be motivated in part by a drive for power, but they seek to satisfy that drive through participation in a movement that they hope will become powerful and attain its goals.<sup>27</sup> There may also be struggles for power within the movement. But the members do not expect the safe and stable positions of power that are available in a movement that is already powerful and firmly established.

However, once a movement can offer money, security, status, a career, stable positions of personal power, and similar advantages, it becomes irresistibly attractive to opportunists.<sup>28</sup> At this stage the movement will already have grown to be a big one with an unwieldy administrative apparatus, so that the exclusion of opportunists will not be a practical possibility. After the Bolsheviks became masters of Russia even Lenin, powerful as he was, was unable to exclude the droves of opportunists who joined the party, and according to Trotsky these people subsequently became “one of the bulwarks of the Stalinist party regime.”<sup>29</sup> Moreover, when a movement has grown excessively strong, even some of the formerly sincere revolutionaries may give in to the temptations of power. “The history of liberation heroes shows that when they come

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<sup>27</sup> See ISAIF, 183.

<sup>28</sup> “In connection with the Italian fascist movement, Rossi remarked that by the beginning of 1922, the movement was sufficiently successful to provide various advantages to members— ‘uniform, arms, expeditions, subsidies, loot, fat- tery, and all the other advantages reserved to fascists.’ Such attractions presumably would attract members on bases other than ideological commitment.” Smelser, p. 357nl, quoting Rossi, p. 180.

<sup>29</sup> Trotsky, Vol. Two, pp. 309-310. As ordinarily used, the term “opportunist” refers to an individual who makes use of an opportunity to advance his own personal interests without regard to moral or political principles. However, in Marxist-Leninist theory the “opportunists” were not unscrupulous individualists but socialists who focused on immediate goals of socialism, such as improving the economic status of the workers, rather than on the revolutionary goal of transforming society as a whole. See, e.g.: Stalin, *History of the Communist Party*, passim; in particular, first chapter, Section 3, p. 30 (the “ ‘Economists’... were the first group of compromisers and opportunists ... “). Lenin, “What Is to Be Done?,” Chapt. I, Part D (“fashionable preaching of opportunism”); in Christman, p. 69. Selznick, passim, e.g., p. 308 (“Opportunism is a readiness to adapt to situations that offer immediate rewards without weighing the consequences of such adaptation for the ultimate character of the group.”). Stalin eventually came to use “opportunist” as a general term of abuse for anyone whom he wanted to denounce. See his *History of the Communist Party*, seventh chapter, Section 2, p. 261 (accusing Kamenev, Zinoviev, etc.: of opportunism); Conclusion, pp. 483-84. Trotsky, loc. cit., describes the ‘fundamental quality of opportunism’ as “submission to the existing powers.” Whatever Trotsky’s exact meaning may have been, it can hardly be open to doubt that a great many of those who came flooding into the Bolshevik Party upon its attainment of power must have been opportunists in the ordinary, individualistic sense of the word.

into office they interact with powerful groups: they can easily forget that they've been put in power by the poorest of the poor'. They often lose their common touch, and turn against their own people." (Nelson Mandela)<sup>30</sup>

Look at history: We know very well what happened to Christianity after the Church became powerful. It seems that the corruption of the clergy has usually been in direct proportion to the power of the Church at any given time. Some of the popes have actually been depraved.<sup>31</sup> Islam didn't turn out any better. Twenty-four years after the Prophet's death his son-in-law, the Caliph Uthman ibn Affan, was killed by rebels, and this event was followed by power-struggles and violence among the Muslims and a prolonged period of conflict within Islam.<sup>32</sup> Nor does the later history of Islam indicate that it adhered to its ideals any better than Christianity did.<sup>33</sup> The French Revolution was followed by the dictatorship of Napoleon, the Russian Revolution by that of Stalin. After the Mexican Revolution of 1910-1920, the revolutionary ideals were progressively drained of their content until Mexico found itself under the dictatorship of a party that continued to call itself "revolutionary" without being so in reality.<sup>34</sup>

The sociologist Eric Hoffer wrote:

Hitler, who had a clear vision of the whole course of a movement even while he was nursing his infant National Socialism, warned that a movement retains its vigor only so long as it can offer nothing in the present...<sup>35</sup>

According to Hitler, the more 'posts and offices a movement has to hand out, the more inferior stuff it will attract, and in the end these political hangers-on overwhelm a successful party in such number that the honest fighter of former days no longer recognizes the old movement... When this happens, the "mission" of such a movement is done for.'<sup>36</sup>

In March 1949, when the Communists were on the verge of final victory in China, Mao warned:

With victory, certain moods may grow within the Party—arrogance, the airs of a self-styled hero, inertia and unwillingness to make progress, love of pleasure and distaste for continued hard living ... The comrades must be helped to remain modest, prudent, and free from arrogance and rashness in their style of work. The comrades must be helped to preserve the style of plain living and hard struggle.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Sampson, p. xxv.

<sup>31</sup> See, e.g., P.P. Read, pp. 58-60. The progressive corruption (in our sense of the word) of early Christianity with the growth of its own power can be seen from Freeman, e.g., pp. 187-88, 201, 225 (especially), 237, 253, 261, 266, 269, 270, and Harnack, e.g., pp. 39, 106-08, 136, 241, 256, 259-260, 287.

<sup>32</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 12, "Uthman ibn Affan," p. 219; Vol. 22, "The Islamic World," pp. 110-11.

<sup>33</sup> See R. Zakaria, e.g., pp. 59, 282-83, 296.

<sup>34</sup> La Botz, pp. 43-63, 127. See also NEB (2003), Vol. 6, "Institutional Revolutionary Party," p. 333, and Vol. 24, "Mexico," pp. 48-49; Agustin, both volumes, entire. The revolutionary stage of Mexico's "revolutionary" party ended in 1940. See note 166, below.

<sup>35</sup> Hoffer, § 116.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., § 7, quoting Hitler, p. 105.

<sup>37</sup> Mao, pp. 362-63.

Needless to say, Mao's warning was futile. Already in 1957 he complained:

A dangerous tendency has shown itself of late among many of our personnel—an unwillingness to share the joys and hardships of the masses, a concern for personal fame and gain.<sup>38</sup>

Today the Communist regime in China is notorious for its corruption: Not only are Party members and government officials concerned more with their own careers than they are with Communist ideals;<sup>39</sup> what is worse, the regime is pervaded by out-and-out criminal dishonesty.<sup>40</sup>

Shortly before the end of the American War of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

It can never be too often repeated that the time for fixing every essential right on a legal basis is while our rulers are honest and ourselves united. From the conclusion of this war, we shall be going downhill.<sup>41</sup>

In fact, soon after the end of the war, quarreling and disunity broke out among the thirteen states to such an extent that the new nation seemed on the point of breaking up.<sup>42</sup> By creating the Constitution of 1787 the revolutionaries succeeded in saving the Union, but the passage in 1798 of the anti-libertarian Alien and Sedition Acts<sup>43</sup> suggests a weakening of commitment to the ideals of the Revolution even among some of the old revolutionaries, and by the time most of the original revolutionaries were dead not much idealism, or even integrity, seems to have been left in American politics.<sup>44</sup> One has to ask why the United States did not go the way of most Latin American countries and fall under the control of a dictator or an oligarchy. One part of any answer to this question should be that before the Revolution the American colonists, like their English cousins, had already been long habituated to a semi-democratic form of government, hence would not have been likely to create or tolerate a highly authoritarian regime.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p.475.

<sup>39</sup> The Economist, June 25, 2011, p. 14 ('Although the decision by these young careerists to sign up [for Communist Party membership] shows the party's clout, they have very different ambitions from those of the old ideologues.'). Ibid., "Special Report" on China: The general impression one gets from this Special Report is that Chinas politicians are doing what politicians everywhere do— jockeying for personal power and advantage—and that they use the old Maoist ideology only as a tool for that purpose.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., The Economist, April 2, 2011, p. 34, and April 23, 2011, p. 74; Folger, p. 145; USA Today, Sept. 3, 2014, p. 7A.

<sup>41</sup> W.S. Randall, p.357.

<sup>42</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 29, "United States of America,"pp. 216-18.

<sup>43</sup> McCullough, pp. 504-06, 536,577.

<sup>44</sup> Buckley, p. 7A ("But just how long did republican virtue persist in America? By 1829... there wasn't too much left."). See NEB (2003), Vol. 29, "United States of America," pp. 221, 223-24; McCullough, p. 398.



### III. Examination of the Rules

Because the rules are directly derived from the postulates, our discussion of the rules is in some ways merely an extension or elaboration of the foregoing discussion of the postulates.

Rule (i) asserts that a movement needs a single, clear', simple, and concrete objective.

The story of the so-called civil society movement in Mexico shows what typically happens to a movement that flagrantly violates Rule (i). The civil society movement originated in 1985,<sup>1</sup> and its goals were to oppose "concentrated, centralized power"<sup>2</sup> and to fight "for human rights, civil rights, political reform and social justice against the domination of the one-party state."<sup>3</sup> Thus the movement favored decentralization and "a redistribution of power",<sup>4</sup> and "tended to take the side of the underdog, to side with peasants and workers, poor people and Indians."<sup>5</sup>

Obviously the civil society movement did not have a single, clear', concrete goal.<sup>6</sup> Some sectors of the movement did adopt single, clear', concrete goals. For example, the Mexican anti-nuclear movement was part of the civil society movement,<sup>7</sup> and its single goal was to prevent the development of nuclear energy in Mexico. It was not completely successful in achieving this, since one nuclear power-plant was put into operation in Mexico. However, "the anti-nuclear movement had really won on the question of Mexico's nuclear future," because Mexico's ruling party "abandoned its ambitious plans for a dozen or more nuclear reactors."<sup>8</sup>

But who hears of the Mexican civil-society movement today (2018), thirty-three years after it arose? The movement seems to have petered out without having made any significant progress toward the general goals stated above. The election in 2000 as president of Mexico of Vicente Fox of the "conservative" (read "authoritarian") PAN party may have seemed to end the "domination of the one-party state" by breaking the PRI party's monopoly of power', but many of the PRI technocrats had actually wanted "some sort of power-sharing arrangement with the PAN," so that Mexico would

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<sup>1</sup> This according to La Botz, p. 66. But Agustin, Vol. 2, p. 121, claims that the civil society movement already existed in "nascent" form in 1976.

<sup>2</sup> La Botz, pp. 66, 81.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>6</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 234.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

no longer appear to be a one-party state yet would remain effectively under technocratic control.<sup>9</sup> The technocrats' power-sharing arrangement worked up to a point: The PAN held the presidency for two six-year terms (2000-2012), after which the PRI returned to power. But on July 1, 2018 Manuel Lopez Obrador, described as a "leftist," was elected president of Mexico, and his MODENA party won other elective offices as well.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the PRI-PAN system had clearly lost its grip on power. Meanwhile, however, the traditionally very powerful Mexican presidency, and with it the national government, had been to some extent weakened as increased authority was acquired by the governors of the Mexican states.<sup>11</sup> In this way there was a "redistribution of power" in Mexico, but it was hardly the kind of redistribution of power that the initiators of the civil society movement had had in mind: "The governors rule like 'feudal lords' with few oversights such as independent auditors and legislatures,"<sup>12</sup> and they are thoroughly corrupt.<sup>13</sup>

In another way too there has been a redistribution of power in Mexico:

In much of the country [drug gangs are] more powerful than the government itself. Mexico's three main drug cartels are effectively in control of the country's Pacific Coast, industrial heartland, and tourist havens of the Gulf Coast. ... [T]he gangs ... don't hesitate to kill the politicians, cops, and journalists they can't bribe or intimidate ... Yet they are folk heroes to many poor Mexicans ... [The gangs'] ranks now include many members of Mexico's elite special forces. At the same time, the gangs have infiltrated much of Mexico's power structure . ... They have corrupted every level of government, from local policemen to army generals to presidential aides.<sup>14</sup>

But this, again, is hardly the kind of "redistribution of power" that the initiators of the civil society movement had in mind.

The new President, Lopez Obrador, is no revolutionary. He says he wants to help poor people and no doubt he will try, but apparently he also feels it necessary to retain the support of big business,<sup>15</sup> and one must seriously doubt whether his efforts to help the poor will be any more effective than those of earlier Mexican presidents.<sup>16</sup> In any case, his pledge to "end Mexico's rampant government corruption" and put a stop to the murders of the drug gangs<sup>17</sup> is nothing but the kind of empty promise

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>10</sup> USA Today July 3, 2018, p. 3A.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., July 3-4, 2012, p. 2A.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., May 10, 2017, p. 5A.

<sup>14</sup> The Week, March 21, 2008, p. 11. See also *ibid.*, March 13, 2009, p. 16; Caputo, pp. 62-69; Padgett & Grillo, pp. 30-33.

<sup>15</sup> Foer, p. 45 (Lopez Obrador "has embraced a more business-friendly persona"). USA Today, July 3, 2018, p. 3A ("he has tried to reassure financial markets").

<sup>16</sup> See note 166, below. Of course, even if Lopez Obrador's efforts to help the poor should prove highly successful, that would not represent an achievement of the civil society movement, which—it appears—has long since ceased to be a political force in Mexico.

<sup>17</sup> USA Today, May 10, 2018, p. 5A; July 3, 2018, p. 3A.

that politicians typically offer in order to win elections. The Mexican government has been trying for many years to bring the drug gangs under control and has made no headway;<sup>18</sup> “rampant corruption” is deeply ingrained in Mexico’s political culture and isn’t going to be eliminated any time soon.<sup>19</sup>

So what did the Mexican civil-society movement accomplish? Some sectors of the movement may have attained their specific goals, but toward the movement’s general goals little or nothing has been achieved.<sup>20</sup>

In England and the United States during the first two thirds of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the goal of feminists was to make women equal to men in terms of power, dignity, and opportunities within society. Since this goal was a vague and general one, it’s not surprising that these early feminists didn’t accomplish much.<sup>21</sup> But, as we saw earlier, by roughly 1870 feminists had settled on a single, clear, simple, and concrete objective: to secure for women the right to vote.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps because they realized that it was the key that would open the door to power for women and enable them to reach other goals, woman suffrage was the objective on which feminists concentrated their efforts until that objective was achieved in the 1920s.

Since the 1920s the feminist movement has had no single, clear, concrete objective. The movement has splintered into various factions that pursue diverse objectives and are often in conflict with one another.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, Rule (i) notwithstanding, feminists have continued to make steady progress toward their general goal—to make women equal to men in power, dignity, and opportunities.<sup>24</sup> However, the feminists have had certain critically important advantages that have offset their neglect of Rule (i).

First, the achievement of the earlier feminists’ well-chosen central objective—the right to vote—has given women collective power: No politician who hopes to win an

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<sup>18</sup> See: note 66, above, and USA Today, Feb. 6, 2013, pp. 1A, SA; Oct. 9, 2014, p. 7A; Oct. 20, 2014, p. 7A; Nov. 22, 2014, p. 8A; May 10, 2018, p. SA. Also note 21 to Chapter Two, and Hayes, p. 3A (last paragraph).

<sup>19</sup> See ISAIF, **1100**; note 66, above; Agustin (the entire work); La Botz (the entire work); USA Today, May 10, 2017, p. SA, May 10, 2018, p. SA, and July 3, 2018, p. 3A. Guillermprieto, pp. 87-88, describes briefly the unofficial—and, from the point of view of legal governmental structures, corrupt—system of caciques, or local bosses, that plays a large part in governing Mexico. Guillermprieto’s description dates from 1994, but this writer knows of no reason to think that the system has changed since then. See also La Botz, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> The nascent civil-society movement apparently made some contribution to the sequence of events in 1976 that led to the lifting of government restrictions on freedom of the press in Mexico, Agustin, Vol. 2, pp. 119-121, and if one wanted to stretch a point one might possibly list this as a success on the part of the movement. But by 2008 government restrictions had been replaced with those imposed by the drug gangs, which exercise censorship through the simple expedient of murdering any journalists who offend them. See note 70, above.

<sup>21</sup> See NEB (2003), Vol. 19, “Feminism,” p. 160.

<sup>22</sup> See note 34, above.

<sup>23</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 12, “women’s movement,” pp. 734-35; Vol. 19, “Feminism,” pp. 161-62.

<sup>24</sup> See both the articles cited in note 75.

election can afford to ignore women's wants. More importantly, the tide of history has been working in the feminists' favor. Ever since the onset of the Industrial Revolution there has been a powerful trend toward "equality"—meaning the elimination of all distinctions between individuals other than those distinctions that are demanded by the needs of the technological system.<sup>25</sup> Thus, a mathematician is to be evaluated in terms of his/her mathematical talent, a mechanic in terms of his/her knowledge of engines, a factory manager in terms of his/her ability to run a factory, and with the passage of time it has increasingly been expected that the religion, social class, race, gender, etc., etc. of the mathematician, the mechanic, and the manager are to be treated as irrelevant. Because the feminists' goal of equality has been in harmony with this historical trend, opposition to feminism has steadily declined over time, and from 1975 at the latest the media and the cultural and political climate have been overwhelmingly favorable to gender equality.

A comparison of post-1945 British and American feminism with the Mexican civil society movement provides an illustration of the principle that the stronger the opposition a movement has to face, the more important it is that the movement should concentrate all its energy on a single, clearly defined objective. The feminists have made steady progress toward their vague goal of gender equality, in part because they have faced no very serious opposition since the middle of the 20th century. But the Mexican civil society movement has faced very tough resistance from the nation's power-structure, and the movement has therefore been doomed by its failure to concentrate on a single, clear, concrete objective.

In connection with Rule (i) it is also instructive to look at the history of Ireland. From at least 1711 until the 1880s, there was chronic rural unrest in Ireland due to the wretched conditions in which Irish peasants had to live.<sup>26</sup> In 1798 there was an attempt at violent revolution, but it failed miserably, in large part because it was unorganized, undisciplined, and lacked a clear objective.<sup>27</sup>

The Irish began to make progress only with the advent of Daniel O'Connell. O'Connell was a political genius and a spellbinding orator,<sup>28</sup> but unlike many other political geniuses he was a sincere patriot who had genuinely dedicated himself to the welfare of his country. O'Connell's ultimate objective was "the improvement of the lot of the Irish common people."<sup>29</sup> As a step toward this vague and general goal, O'Connell set himself a clear and concrete objective, namely, "Catholic Emancipation,"<sup>30</sup> which meant repeal of the laws that subjected Irish Catholics to certain political disabilities

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<sup>25</sup> The reason for the trend is that this type of equality is to the advantage of the technological system. See Kaczynski, "The Systems Neatest Trick."

<sup>26</sup> Kee, pp. 24-25.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., pp. 101-09, 114-121, 126, 128-29, 151.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 181-82.

(for example, they were not allowed to become judges or members of Parliament).<sup>31</sup> Catholic Emancipation would directly benefit only a small minority who could hope to occupy important offices or be elected to Parliament, but it would indirectly benefit the overwhelmingly Catholic peasants of Ireland inasmuch as it would give them representation in Parliament and (more importantly) prove that they could prevail over the British government through collective action.<sup>32</sup>

O'Connell created an amazingly well-organized and well-disciplined movement dedicated to the specific goal of Catholic Emancipation, and that goal was achieved within about six years.<sup>33</sup> Catholic Emancipation undoubtedly would have occurred eventually anyway, since it was a development that was guaranteed by the same historical trend toward "equality" that favored the feminist movement. But, without O'Connell and his organization, Catholic Emancipation probably would have been delayed for many years, for when Emancipation was granted in 1829 it was granted grudgingly,<sup>34</sup> and it very likely would not have been granted at that time at all if O'Connell had not played smartly upon the government's fear of another violent uprising like that of 1798.<sup>35</sup> (It is worth noting, therefore, that the 1798 rebellion, even though it was ruthlessly crushed, was not in vain.)

Needless to say, excellent organization in pursuit of a single, clear, simple, and concrete objective does not guarantee success. In 1840, O'Connell founded a Repeal Association for the purpose of securing the repeal of the Act of Union that placed England and Ireland under a single Parliament. The objective was not to separate Ireland from England but to create a specifically Irish Parliament, while Ireland would remain united with England under a single sovereign.<sup>36</sup> Again O'Connell built a highly disciplined movement that had broad support among the Irish people, but this time he failed to achieve his objective, for the British government and Parliament remained obdurate, and the Act of Union was not repealed.<sup>37</sup>

A contributing factor in the failure of O'Connell's Repeal Association was the Great Potato Famine of 1846-49. When peasants were starving to death in droves, O'Connell's political goal seemed irrelevant to them.<sup>38</sup> In 1847, during the famine, a faction within the Repeal Association formed a new organization called the Irish Confederation.<sup>39</sup> The new group soon recognized that it needed some specific goal,<sup>40</sup> but apparently was unable to agree on one until the revolutions of 1848 broke out on the European

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp.181,186.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.,pp.181-86.

<sup>34</sup> Catholic Emancipation received only a "pained and angry" royal assent. Ibid., pp. 185-86. The king; "had to be bullied"into approving the measure. NEB (2003), Vol. 29, "United Kingdom,"p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> Kee, pp. 184-85. Churchill, pp. 27-30.

<sup>36</sup> Kee, pp.152,193,201,227.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., pp.193-242.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 261.

continent. Inspired by these events, the Irish Confederation adopted violent revolution as its goal, presumably for the purpose of making Ireland independent of Britain.<sup>41</sup> That same year an uprising attempted by the radicals failed, in part because of the radicals' incompetence, but even more because they had no popular support. The common people were concerned only with their own immediate material welfare, or indeed with their very survival, and had little interest in the Confederation's nationalism.<sup>42</sup>

By 1856, a leader named James Stephens (a survivor of the 1848 uprising) had definitely settled on the clear, concrete objective of total political independence for Ireland.<sup>43</sup> Independence was to be followed by the establishment of a "republic,"<sup>44</sup> but the imprecision of this second goal was perhaps not very important, because a republic would not be established until independence had been achieved. Thus, the imprecise goal of founding a republic would not necessarily interfere with efforts toward the clear and specific goal of independence. (Compare the case of the American revolutionaries, discussed above.)

Stephens, a brilliant organizer, created a powerful revolutionary movement<sup>45</sup> that in 1867 attempted an uprising for the purpose of separating Ireland from Britain. For reasons not relevant to the present discussion, the uprising failed ignominiously.<sup>46</sup> But from that time until 1916 the aspiration for total independence from Britain was kept alive by a minuscule minority of extreme nationalists who had virtually no support among the general population of Ireland.<sup>47</sup> Irish peasants at first were concerned only to secure relief from the oppression of the landlords, and had no interest in nationalist ideals. Eventual relief of the peasants' suffering was guaranteed by the general liberalizing trend of Western civilization, but the process was accelerated by the efforts of Parnell and Gladstone,<sup>48</sup> so that the condition of the peasants was alleviated step by step until by 1910 at the latest they no longer had any grievance serious enough to provide a motive for radical action.<sup>49</sup>

Thus, by the second decade of the 20th century, the Irish no longer had any plausible reason to separate themselves from Britain, nor did such a separation have the appearance of a historical inevitability. Nevertheless, the extremists' stubborn persistence in adhering to their goal of total independence did pay off in the end. It is a remarkable fact that between 1916 and 1921 the tiny minority of extreme nationalists, who at first lacked significant support, were able to swing the majority of the Irish population over to their side. Through terroristic tactics and guerrilla warfare, the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 264-67.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., pp. 270, 304-05.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 305-06.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., pp. 308-310, 315-320.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., pp. 335-340.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. 351-564, especially p. 391.

<sup>48</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 352-53.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., pp. 351-470, especially p. 352.

nationalists provoked the British government to harsh countermeasures that alienated the Irish masses and drove them into the arms of the revolutionaries.<sup>50</sup> The result was not immediate and complete independence for Ireland. The military situation forced the revolutionaries to stop (temporarily) just short of their goal by accepting “dominion status”; that is, a relationship to Britain similar to that of Canada.<sup>51</sup> This made Ireland practically an independent country with ties to Britain that were little more than symbolic; and even so the revolutionaries never regarded the settlement as final, but only as a stepping stone to the total independence that was to be reached later.<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, a powerful faction of the nationalist movement, under the political leadership of Eamon de Valera, refused to accept dominion status and was suppressed only through a brief but bloody civil war.<sup>53</sup> A remnant of the dissident faction continued to exist, but most of it was subsequently integrated as a normal component of Ireland’s parliamentary system.<sup>54</sup> De Valera was for many years the Prime Minister of Ireland, and by 1949 at the latest had made his country totally independent of Britain—with the ready acquiescence of the British themselves.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, in the end, the extreme Irish nationalists did achieve the one clear, simple, concrete goal that for many decades had been the center of their aspirations.<sup>56</sup> It was moreover a goal that probably would never have been reached without the nationalists’ efforts, for, as noted earlier, there was no apparent historical reason why Ireland had to become independent<sup>57</sup> (unless the reason was the existence of the nationalists themselves).

Independence was unmistakably the extreme nationalists’ dominant goal until it was very nearly achieved with dominion status in 1922. But what about the nationalists’ other goals? It can probably be said of each of their other goals that either the goal would have been reached anyway through the operation of general historical trends and without any effort on the part of the nationalists; or the achievement of the goal

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 548-709. Those who are familiar with Irish history may feel that the first half of this paragraph represents a serious oversimplification, but, assuming that Kees history is not misleading, and notwithstanding the expected objections of Irish nationalists (who are not in a position to make an unbiased judgment), I think this passage comes close enough to the truth for present purposes. I’m not writing a textbook of history. I’m using Irish history to illustrate certain points, and to do this briefly I have to paint with a very broad brush. Similar remarks apply to many of the other historical examples cited throughout this book.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 719, 726.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 728.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., pp. 728n\*, 730, 732-745.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 748-49. However, some diehards continued to maintain an illegal organization calling itself the Irish Republican Army. Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., pp. 748-751.

<sup>56</sup> The nationalists’ victory was incomplete inasmuch as the six counties comprising Northern Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom. This fact is not important at the present point in our discussion, but we will have occasion to return to it further on.

<sup>57</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 389-390.

was merely symbolic; or else the goal was achieved only in an incomplete form that would have been unsatisfactory to the original revolutionaries.

One goal of the 19th-century Irish revolutionaries was the relief of the peasants' misery, and the revolutionaries may have hastened the achievement of this goal insofar as the British fear of revolutionary violence made the task of reformers like Parnell easier.<sup>58</sup> But, as we've already pointed out, the eventual relief of the peasants' misery was guaranteed anyway by a pre-existing historical trend that prevailed throughout Western Europe.

Another goal of the extreme nationalists was the establishment of a "republic." This goal was a vague one since, as we mentioned in connection with the American Revolution, a wide variety of states can be called "republics." Constitutional monarchies such as Britain, Spain, or the Netherlands are not technically republics, but in practical terms their systems differ little from those of undoubted republics like France or the United States. When Ireland was officially declared a republic in 1949, little was changed;<sup>59</sup> "republic" was hardly more than a word or a symbol.<sup>60</sup> If the term "republic" were taken to mean "representative democracy," we would say that Ireland was already a republic in substance long before it became one officially. And, once the goal of independence was reached, Ireland would have become a representative democracy anyway through the operation of pre-existing historical trends, just as every other country in Western Europe has become a representative democracy. And it is not certain that Ireland has become a republic in a sense that would have satisfied the original revolutionaries, for at least some of these seem to have had something more socialistic in mind.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, the revolutionaries wanted to avoid "Anglicization" of Ireland and preserve Irish language and culture.<sup>62</sup> In this it can't be said that the revolutionaries failed completely, but their success has been unimpressive at best. Irish Gaelic today is the first language of only a small fraction of the Irish population. Though it is taught in the schools and is "more widely read, spoken, and understood [as of 2003] than during most of the 20th century,"<sup>63</sup> it seems unlikely that the majority of modern Irish people are fluent in Gaelic; for, among people who learn a language only in school, no more than a small minority ever become fluent in it. Ireland is basically an English-speaking country, from which it follows that Ireland must be subject to considerable cultural influence from other English-speaking countries. Whether or not it is accurate to speak of an "Anglicization" of Ireland, there can be no doubt that Ireland (with the possible

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., pp. 353-54, 368-376.

<sup>59</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 750-51.

<sup>60</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 732-33, 752.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 303 (Stephens's "political thought contained obvious traces of revolutionary socialist thinking"); p. 334 ("a republic... which shall secure to all the intrinsic value of their labour"); p. 751.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 446. NEB (2003), Vol. 21, "Ireland," p. 1004 ("cultural revivalism became an inspiration to the Irish nationalist struggle of the early decades of the 20th century").

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 1001.



exception of a few isolated areas that may not yet be fully modernized) has undergone the same cultural homogenization that has occurred in the rest of Western Europe, and in all probability modern Ireland differs culturally from other Western European countries no more than these countries differ among themselves. It may well be that traditional arts, crafts, music, etc. are now practiced in Ireland more than they would have been without the efforts of the nationalists, but it is certain that the basic culture of Ireland today is the universal culture of modern industrial society.<sup>64</sup> It follows that traditional arts and crafts can be no more than gimmicks that serve to entertain tourists or to give the Irish themselves a temporary illusion of escape from the modern world.<sup>65</sup>

Would this degree of linguistic and cultural preservation have satisfied the revolutionaries of the 19th and early 20th centuries? Probably not. “Few Irishmen today would accept that what Irish nationalists have achieved represents a true fulfillment of that near-mystical ideal for which, in one form or another, Irishmen had striven for so long.”<sup>66</sup>

Thus, while it can’t be said that the Irish revolutionaries achieved no success at all in other areas, their one unmistakable and complete success was in reaching the single, clear, simple, and concrete goal that had been their main objective for several decades: to make Ireland politically independent of Britain.

The examples of feminism and Irish nationalism (among others) show that Rule (i) cannot correctly be understood to mean that no social movement can ever achieve any success at all without concentrating exclusively on a single, clear, simple, concrete objective. But these and other examples that we’ve looked at do support the proposition that every movement that hopes to achieve something had better give careful consideration to Rule (i) and should deviate from the rule only if there is a definite, strong, and convincing reason for doing so.

Rule (ii) states that if a movement aspires to transform a society, then the objective selected by the movement must be of such a nature that the social changes wrought by the achievement of the objective will be irreversible—meaning that the changes will survive even without any further effort on the part of the movement or anyone else. The reason is that the movement, once in power, will become “corrupt”; i.e., will no longer be faithful to its earlier goals and ideals.

For example, the feminists’ achievement of woman suffrage is irreversible because (among other reasons) now that women have the right to vote, it cannot be taken away from them through democratic processes without the consent of most women—consent

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<sup>64</sup> See McCaffrey & Eaton (referring to 2002 and the years immediately preceding), pp. 5, 120, 203, 219 (Burger King in Dublin). On the other hand, it must be admitted that Ireland has been rather slow in adopting modern culture. *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 23, 120.

<sup>65</sup> In an obvious attempt to escape temporarily from the modern world, some Irish play at reenacting Bronze Age customs—as they imagine them to have been. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-47. Compare similar games played elsewhere in Europe.

<sup>66</sup> Kee, p. 751.

that they would hardly be likely to give even in the absence of an effective and uncorrupted feminist movement. Of course, the feminists' achievement is not irreversible in any absolute sense. Women could lose the right to vote in the event of some sweeping transformation of society, such as an end of the democratic form of government.

The theocratic republic set up in Geneva by Calvin<sup>67</sup> provides a probable example in which a movement achieved its objective and the associated social changes were later reversed due to corruption of the movement. What seems to happen more often, though, is that a movement becomes corrupt before it reaches its objective, so that the objective is never fully achieved in the first place. Thus, in Russia, the Bolshevik Communist movement was corrupted while the construction of a socialist society was still in its early stages, so that the kind of socialist society envisioned by the original Bolsheviks was never attained.<sup>68</sup> The French Revolution was corrupted before it even came close to creating the type of society envisioned by any of the revolutionary factions.

This writer is not aware of even one unarguable example in which a revolutionary movement has concentrated its efforts on a single, clear, simple, concrete objective (as required by Rule (i)) and has achieved the objective, and the achievement has subsequently been reversed due to corruption of the movement. Once a clear, simple, concrete objective has been achieved, its achievement no doubt is less easily reversed than that of a vague or complex objective, because its reversal would be too obvious, too hard to disguise. This is another reason why a movement should obey Rule (i).

The establishment of a democratic government is not a very clear and precise objective, because there are considerable differences among the various kinds of government that today are called "democratic." But democratic government is at least a much clearer objective than such vague goals as "freedom," "equality," "justice," "socialism," or "protecting the environment." From the history of many countries scattered around the world we know how reversible the achievement of democracy can be. The overthrow of a democratic government through a military coup was once such a common event in Latin America and Africa that news of such a coup hardly raised an eyebrow in Western Europe or the United States. A military coup usually represents not the corruption of democracy but a victory of those who never wanted democracy in the first place. But the death of a democracy through corruption (in our sense of the word) has probably been even more common than the military coup, and when this happens the external forms of democracy often are retained even while an individual or an oligarchy

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<sup>67</sup> See NEB (2003), Vol. 15, "Calvin and Calvinism," p. 436; Vol. 19, "Geneva," p. 743; Vol. 26, "Protestantism," p. 212, and "Rousseau," p. 939.

<sup>68</sup> During the 1970s the Secretary General of the Communist Party of Spain wrote that the State that had developed in the Soviet Union was neither one "that could be considered a workers' democracy" nor "the State that Lenin imagined." Carrillo, pp. 201,202. Carrillo also pointed out that, in the Soviet Union, "the bureaucratic stratum... decides and resolves at a higher level than the working class and even at a higher level than the party, which, as a whole, is subordinate to the bureaucratic stratum." Ibid., pp. 207-08. Thus, the Soviet Union was a dictatorship neither of the proletariat nor of the party of the proletariat, but of the bureaucracy.

takes effective control of the country. We've seen this in Russia since the breakup of the Soviet Union: Vladimir Putin was originally a protege of Boris Yeltsin, the great champion of Russian democracy, and Russia still retains all the usual apparatus of parliamentary democracy. Yet it is said that Putin is now almost a dictator.<sup>69</sup>

In Latin America, democracy has routinely been corrupted. A group of Argentine scholars presents the following example as typical:

The center of gravity of control passed softly and silently from the State to a restricted economic and social apparatus (inside groups) that constituted a privileged system of enrichment. The acquisition of a license for importation or for exchange made more men rich in less time than any other activity, including speculation in land. This is how the families dominant in the financial sector entered political channels... There occurred a metamorphosis of the 'group of families,' which, incidentally allied for the purpose of negotiating with the State... turned into a stable, indissolubly united oligarchy for control of the organisms of political activity... in the parties, in the government... and in order to establish a system of privilege.<sup>70</sup>

A democratic government can easily be subverted because it is a complicated mechanism and the concept of "democracy" itself is far from precise, so that subtle or covert changes can accumulate over time until one day people wake up to find that their country is no longer a functioning democracy. Compare democracy with the clear and simple achievements of the feminists and the Irish nationalists—the right to vote and political independence for Ireland, respectively. Because of the clarity and simplicity of these achievements, they could not easily be undermined covertly. Note, however, that while impairment of Ireland's formal political independence would be obvious, Ireland could become dependent on Britain economically or in some other way.

Though the establishment of democratic government has so often been a reversible social change, it cannot be said that democratization per se is reversible. Whether it is reversible or irreversible in a given case depends on the culture and history of the country in which the democratic government is set up, and on the international situation in which the country finds itself. The more or less democratic system set up by the American revolutionaries survived despite the fading of revolutionary idealism, in part because the American colonists had already been long habituated to a semi-democratic form of government. Today in Latin America functioning democratic governments seem to have a better chance of success than they did a few decades ago, probably because the cultural and economic changes associated with modernization have raised the level of social discipline in those countries.<sup>71</sup> Another factor to be considered is that the international climate has become more unfavorable to obvious dictatorships (by an individual or by a party), and nations are now under pressure to maintain at least the appearance of democracy. In Africa, for example, international

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<sup>69</sup> It's not entirely clear to what extent Putin actually monopolizes power in Russia, but, whatever the exact distribution of power may be, no one claims that Russia as of 2018 is a functioning democracy.

<sup>70</sup> Tella, Germani, Graciarena et al., p. 266n15, quoting Fluharty, quoting in turn Garcia.

<sup>71</sup> See Kaczynski, Letter to David Skrbina: Nov. 23, 2004, Part IV.C.

aid organizations left The Gambia after a military coup in 1994 but resumed assistance to that country following its return to democratic forms;<sup>72</sup> assistance to Tanzania from the International Monetary Fund apparently was conditioned on political reforms in 1986;<sup>73</sup> in Kenya, “Western financial aid came to be tied to demands for political and economic reforms,” so that in 1991 there was a “constitutional amendment that reinstated multiparty elections.”<sup>74</sup> On the other hand, it must seriously be doubted whether democracy is a functioning reality in those countries. Kenya,<sup>75</sup> at least, is not a democracy in the sense in which that term is understood in Western Europe and the United States. The Gambia—withstanding democratic forms—was ruled by a dictator from 1994 to 2017.<sup>76</sup> It appears that the country is now (2018) making another attempt at democracy—with what success remains to be seen.

As the foregoing discussion indicates, the problem of predicting whether a social change will be reversible or irreversible in a given case can be subtle and difficult. Consequently, Rule (ii) may often be hard to apply in practice. Rule (ii) is important nevertheless. The essential point of the rule is that a movement builds its foundation on quicksand if it bases its strategy on the assumption that faithfulness to the movement’s ideals will be sustained indefinitely and independently of the immediate self-interest of the people who are in positions of power. What a nascent movement needs to ask itself in choosing its objective is whether the resulting social changes, once achieved, will survive in an atmosphere in which people are motivated more by short-term self-interest than by dedication to ideals—which indeed is the normal atmosphere in any society. Even though this question may often be difficult to answer with any degree of confidence, it needs to be asked and considered carefully.

Rule (iii) states that once an objective has been selected, some small minority must undertake organization for practical action (as opposed to mere preaching or advocacy of ideas) in the service of the objective.<sup>77</sup> Three points must be noted, however:

First, while ideas by themselves will not transform a society, the development and propagation of ideas must be a part of any rational effort to transform a society. Without some organized set of ideas to guide its action, a movement will flounder aimlessly. It may generate more or less uproar, but if it accomplishes anything more than that it will do so merely through luck.

The Whiteboy Movement of 18th-century Ireland consisted of guerrilla-like peasant bands that roamed the countryside at night taking revenge on the landlords and on

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<sup>72</sup> NEB (2003), Vol.29, “Western Africa,”p. 841.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Vol. 17, “Eastern Africa,”p. 810.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 803.

<sup>75</sup> See note 22 to Chapter Two, and: NEB (2003), Vol. 17, “Eastern Africa,” p. 798. National Geographic, Sept. 2005, p. 15. Denver Post, Feb. 26, 2009, p. 11A. Time, Aug. 23, 2010, p. 19. USA Today, Aug. 6, 2009, p. 7A; Aug. 7, 2017, p. 3A; Aug. 10, 2017, p. 3A.

<sup>76</sup> S.A. Reid (the entire article). USA Today, Jan. 18, 2017, p. 3A. Ibid., Jan. 20-22, 2017, p. 10A, “TROOPS ENTER GAMBIA TO FORCE OUT JAMMEH.”Yahya Jammeh was the dictator.

<sup>77</sup> “For Lenin, organization was an indispensable adjunct to ideology.” Selznick, p. 8. See Lenin, “What Is to Be Done?,” Chapt. IV, Parts C, D, E; in Christman, pp. 147-08, 151-52, 157.

those peasants who were too ready to cooperate with the landlords.<sup>78</sup> But the members of these bands were uneducated men whose limited ideas did not enable them to envision anything beyond resistance to specific local abuses.<sup>79</sup> Only in the 1790s, with the arrival of ideas from revolutionary France, did the Irish peasant rebels begin to acquire some notion of changing society.<sup>80</sup> At the time of the attempted revolution of 1798 their ideas in this direction were still too confused to provide them with a clear objective,<sup>81</sup> and their lack of a clear objective was probably a contributing factor in their defeat.<sup>82</sup>

Contrast the Irish peasants of 1798 with the workers of Saint Petersburg who revolted in February 1917: These workers had already been indoctrinated with Marxist ideas by the Bolsheviks, consequently their insurrection was purposeful and successful.<sup>83</sup>

Second, while both ideas and organization for practical action are necessary components of any rational and successful effort to change a society, the people who organize for practical action need not be the same individuals as the theorists who develop and propagate the ideas. In Ireland, again, nationalist ideas and the aspiration for independence from Britain were already well developed among the extremist minority prior to the advent of Michael Collins in 1917.<sup>84</sup> Collins does not seem to have been a theorist, but it was he who organized the successful guerrilla war that led to Ireland's independence in 1922.<sup>85</sup>

However, for theorists who do not themselves organize for practical action, there is a grave danger: The men of action who do organize, purportedly in the service of the theorists' ideas, may reinterpret or distort the ideas so that the results are very different from what the theorists envisioned. Martin Luther was appalled at the social rebellion that his ideas called forth,<sup>86</sup> and we've already pointed out that Marxist revolutionaries like Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Mao, and Castro deviated from Marx's ideas whenever they found it convenient to do so. Here again we see the importance of Rule (i), that is, of the need to select a clear, simple, concrete objective: Neither Marx nor Luther formulated such an objective, and because their ideas were complex their ideas could easily be misunderstood or distorted. In contrast, by the time Michael Collins assumed leadership of the Irish nationalist movement, the nationalists had already settled on

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<sup>78</sup> Kee, pp. 21-27. The "Whiteboys" apparently took their name from the white shirts they wore. *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.24, 26, 27.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 44, 57, 68-69, 73.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 57, 59, 61, 68-69, 73, 126, 151.

<sup>82</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 101-09, 114-121, 128-29.

<sup>83</sup> Trotsky, Vol. One, pp. 136-152, especially p. 152. For the role of ideas in the French Revolution, see Haraszti, p. 22, citing opinion of M. Roustan.

<sup>84</sup> Kee, pp.450-611.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.595-742.

<sup>86</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 20, "Germany," pp. 89-90; Vol. 23, "Luther," p. 310. Dorpalen, pp. 113-14, 117, 119&n49.

total political independence from Britain as their central objective—an objective of such clarity and simplicity that it could hardly be misunderstood or distorted.

Third, preaching, or the advocacy of ideas, is by far the easier part of an effort to change a society; organizing for practical action is vastly more difficult. This at least is true today; it may not always have been true in the past..

Martin Luther was an intellectual leader, but he was not a man of action; he even declined to try to carry out the “institutional church reforms” that he himself had called for.<sup>87</sup> Yet his preaching and his daring theological ideas aroused tremendous ferment, as a result of which armies were organized and wars fought.<sup>88</sup> It appears that organization for practical action occurred quickly and easily once Luther’s ideas became widely known. In those days the educated sector of society was relatively tiny, and the expression of dissident ideas could entail considerable personal risk.

(Luther’s forerunner Jan Hus was burned at the stake for his ideas.<sup>89</sup>) Consequently, new ideas were a scarce commodity, and intense dissatisfactions could long foster unarticulated for lack of anyone to articulate them. A thinker who was bold enough to express dissent publicly and able to do so eloquently might trigger a release of pent-up resentments. When this occurred it was probably much easier to organize a rebellion in those days than it is now, because people were much less effectively conditioned to obedience, docility, and passivity than they are today. In fact, by modern standards the people of Luther’s time were lawless.<sup>90</sup>

Nowadays, however, there is a surfeit of ideas, including dissident and even outrageous ones. Artists and writers strive to outdo one another in thumbing their noses at conventional values. Consequently new ideas, however outrageous, evoke a yawn from many people, from others only an expression of irritation, and serve the remainder of the population as mere entertainment. To their contemporaries, the ideas of men like Hus and Luther suggested the possible opening of a new era, but no ideas do that today because new ideas are so commonplace that no one takes them seriously any more. Except, of course, technological ideas.

At present, organization for practical action is more difficult not only because new ideas no longer evoke a strong response, but also because of people’s docility, passivity, and “learned helplessness.”<sup>91</sup> Professional political operatives do exploit people’s discontents to organize support for their parties, candidates, or movements, but this only makes the task of organization more difficult for amateurs, who are poorly equipped to compete with skilled professionals for people’s attention and commitment.

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<sup>87</sup> Dorpalen, p. 113.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., pp. 114–121&nn44, 49. NEB (2003), Vol. 10, “Schmalkaldic League,” p. 527; Vol. 20, “Germany,” pp. 88-90; Vol. 23, “Luther,” pp.310-11; Vol. 26, “Protestantism,” pp. 208-211, 213.

<sup>89</sup> NEB (2003), Vol.20, “Germany,”p. 83.

<sup>90</sup> See Elias, e.g., pp. 166-171. Cf Graham &Gurr, Chapt. 12, by Roger Lane.

<sup>91</sup> On learned helplessness see Seligman.

Thus, whatever may have been the case in the past, in the modern world the critical challenge for anyone wishing to transform society is not the propagation of ideas, but organization for practical action.

Rule (iv) states that in order to keep itself faithful to its objective, a movement should devise means of excluding all unsuitable persons who may seek to join it.

One can identify two possible approaches to the problem of excluding unsuitable persons: (a) A movement may be careful in selecting the individuals who are allowed to be members; or (b) a movement may design its program or its public message in such a way that unsuitable persons will not **want** to be members. As far as this writer's knowledge extends, relevant historical evidence is scanty. Only in the case of communist movements does there appear to be any indication of explicit policies intended to exclude unsuitable persons; though no doubt many movements have to some extent deterred any influx of unsuitable persons in one or both of the foregoing ways without adopting explicit policies for that purpose. Unsuitable persons may simply have been given the cold shoulder at meetings, or the movement's program and message, even without any conscious intention, may have tended to repel unsuitable persons.

The Bolsheviks seem to have used both of the approaches (a) and (b) to the problem of excluding unsuitable persons. Lenin "was always extremely sensitive to the question of the ingredients of the party;"<sup>92</sup> he insisted on "strict selection of members" and that "an organization of real revolutionaries will stop at nothing to rid itself of an undesirable member."<sup>93</sup> This writer has no information as to the means by which "strict selection of members" was to be carried out or how "undesirable members" were to be identified and ejected from the party. In any case, Lenin also insisted that every member of the party should be required to belong to a party organization and submit to party discipline,<sup>94</sup> in part because, under this requirement, "unstable elements" would not want to be members of the party.<sup>95</sup>

In the years preceding the Communist victory in China, Mao repeatedly referred to the problem of weeding out the "careerists," "saboteurs," "degenerates," "undesirables," and "traitors" who "sneaked" into the Party.<sup>96</sup> But nowhere in the Selected Readings from his works does Mao explain what he means by "saboteurs," "degenerates," etc., nor does he tell us how these individuals are to be identified and excluded.

Beyond the foregoing, this writer knows only that the Bolsheviks and the Chinese Communists did avoid letting any unsuitable elements in their organizations become numerous enough to prevent these two movements from seizing power in their respective countries. How they avoided letting unsuitable elements become numerous remains obscure, though they were no doubt helped by the fact that—as we pointed

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<sup>92</sup> Trotsky, Vol. Two, p. 309.

<sup>93</sup> Lenin, "What Is to Be Done?," Chapter IV, Part E; in Christman, p. 162.

<sup>94</sup> Stalin, History of the Communist Party, second chapter, Section 3, pp. 60-61.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., Section 4, p. 68.

<sup>96</sup> Mao, pp. 143-44, 172, 175, 258.

out earlier—an illegal and persecuted movement is unlikely to attract many cranks and do-gooders.

In 1841 there was an attempt to set up a utopian community at Brook Farm in Massachusetts. Though the community was linked with the distinguished intellectuals of the Transcendental Club it failed within a few years,<sup>97</sup> perhaps in part because it was joined by too many of “the conceited, the crotchety, the selfish, the headstrong, the pugnacious, the unappreciated, the played-out, the idle, the good-for-nothing generally; who, finding themselves utterly out of place and at a discount in the world as it is, rashly concluded that they are exactly fitted for the world as it ought to be.”<sup>98</sup> It has been suggested that the Brook Farm experiment would have had a better chance of success if “standards of recruitment” had been applied.<sup>99</sup> No doubt standards of recruitment—if there had been any—could readily have been applied in this case because Brook Farm was a relatively small enterprise at a single location, so that a handful of leaders would have been able to evaluate any prospective member directly by interacting with him personally. But once an organization has grown larger and has, say, several thousand members at scattered locations, the task of vetting prospective recruits will have to be delegated to various lower-level leaders who necessarily will exercise a good deal of independent judgment. Under these circumstances, it may be very difficult to ensure consistent application of rigorous standards of recruitment.

During the Stalinist era, communist parties in non-communist countries were selective in accepting members,<sup>100</sup> and they seem to have succeeded in maintaining adequate standards in doing so. But these parties were tools or agencies of the Soviet Union, centrally governed from Moscow,<sup>101</sup> and they had a well-established, tightly disciplined, hierarchical structure.<sup>102</sup> A new and growing movement, independent of any strong central authority, will not easily build a tightly disciplined structure and consequently will find it difficult to maintain consistent standards in selecting individual recruits. We therefore suggest that such a movement should emphasize the approach (b) mentioned above—it should make a special effort to design its program and its public message in such a way as to repel unsuitable persons who might otherwise seek to become members.

A movement that follows Rule (i) will perhaps have taken a step toward so designing its program; as we noted in the discussion of Postulate 3, it seems unlikely that a movement struggling toward a single, specific, clearly-defined goal will attract many individuals who are not willing to commit themselves whole-heartedly to that goal.

The fact that the 19th-century feminist movement lent its support to Victoria Woodhull, who was a spiritualist charlatan and an advocate of a crackpot variety of social-

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<sup>97</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 2, “Brook Farm,” p. 549.

<sup>98</sup> Smelser, pp. 356-57, quoting Noyes, p. 653.

<sup>99</sup> Smelser, p. 357nl.

<sup>100</sup> Selznick, pp. 24, 60.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., passim, e.g., pp. 120-21, 132-33, 178, 216, 221.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., pp. 21-36, 177.



ism,<sup>103</sup> suggests that that movement may not have been selective in accepting individual participants. If that is true, then the movement may have been saved by its focus on the single, specific, clearly-defined goal of woman suffrage.

In relation to Rule (iv) there is also the question of where to draw the boundary of the “movement” from which unsuitable persons are to be excluded. If a movement has an inner circle and an outer circle, and if the inner circle maintains firm control over the outer circle, then exclusion of unsuitable persons from the inner circle may be sufficient even if all comers are admitted to the outer circle.

It’s very probable that the Irish patriot Daniel O’Connell had his movement for Catholic Emancipation firmly under his own personal control for the six years of its existence<sup>104</sup> 1823-29. But whatever may have been the degree of O’Connells personal control over it, his superbly organized and highly disciplined<sup>105</sup> movement must have been governed by some limited inner circle that presumably was kept “pure” through formal or informal selectiveness in recruitment. Recruitment to the outer circle of the movement was indiscriminate—anyone could join by paying minimal dues<sup>106</sup>—but the controlling inner circle evidently kept the movement faithful to its objective.

Referring to the period about 1908-1912, the historian writes of the extreme Irish nationalist movement:

Sinn Fein... [was] a rallying point for all radical, dissatisfied and potentially disappointed individual nationalists in Ireland. The hybrid nature of its support with an overlap of poets, eccentrics, members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, politically-minded Gaelic Leaguers and frustrated parliamentarians had been the movement’s chief characteristic. Many lone wolves with a romantic or otherwise obsessional love of Ireland that had been born of Irish history, but frustrated in the present, gravitated towards Sinn Fein. As with every movement that attracts rebels there were those who [were impelled by] obscure psychological motives of their own.<sup>107</sup>

Evidently, then, any Irishman “opposed to British rule in Ireland”<sup>108</sup> could participate in Sinn Fein, and like many other radical movements it attracted a motley assortment of oddballs. But it is possible to identify with a reasonable degree of confidence the factors that rescued the movement from impotence. First, the movement was

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<sup>103</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 12, “Woodhull, Victoria,” p. 743. Buhle & Sullivan, pp. 36-37 (“Woodhull fed to England, married wealthily and renounced her former radical ideas.”).

<sup>104</sup> Our historian states explicitly that O’Connell had his later Repeal Association firmly under his own control. Kee, p. 193. O’Connell founded the Catholic Association (for Catholic Emancipation), and the Catholic Association was superbly disciplined, *ibid.*, pp. 179-186, so it is probable in view of O’Connell’s immense prestige that he had the Catholic Association under his own control to the extent that it is possible for one man to control an organization of that size.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 182.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 456.

<sup>108</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 450.

focused on the single, clear, simple, concrete objective of total political independence for Ireland,<sup>109</sup> and, as noted earlier, such an objective is not as easily perverted as a more diffuse one. Moreover, beginning in 1917, Michael Collins with a limited inner circle of collaborators progressively took over effective control of the movement,<sup>110</sup> and the inner circle, because it was relatively small, was probably easy to keep “pure” (i.e., faithful to the movement’s objective) even without formal standards of recruitment. It’s true that Collins and his inner circle were by no means able to control in detail the actions of their guerrilla fighters,<sup>111</sup> but involvement in a guerrilla war was itself a powerful factor in keeping the movement faithful to its objective. If a movement is locked in a desperate struggle, that fact will tend strongly to unite the movement behind its leaders and behind its principal objective.<sup>112</sup>

In summary, this writer has found very little evidence concerning any formal or informal, conscious or unconscious means that may have been used to exclude unsuitable persons from radical movements of the past. It is clear, however, that the kinds of people who join a movement necessarily have a profound effect on its character and can blur or change its goals. If some of the movements we’ve looked at have remained faithful to their goals without any premeditated effort to exclude unsuitable persons, then they’ve been lucky. A nascent movement that is not content to depend on luck needs to give close attention to the question of the kinds of people who are to comprise the movement.

Rule (v) states that once a revolutionary movement has become powerful enough to achieve its objective it must achieve its objective soon thereafter, before the movement is corrupted (as Postulate 4 affirms it will be).

As noted in the discussion of Postulate 4, this writer has found no exception to the law that when a radical movement grows too powerful it is soon corrupted; that is, it ceases to be faithful to its original goals and ideals. From this law the importance of Rule (v) is obvious. It will nevertheless be instructive to see how Rule (v) relates to some of the examples we’ve looked at.

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<sup>109</sup> This statement slightly simplifies the actual situation. A relatively “moderate” Sinn Fein leader like Arthur Griffith was willing at least to contemplate conceding something to those Irishmen who wanted less than total independence. *Ibid.*, pp. 451, 720. But Griffith personally believed that nothing less than total independence would be sufficient. *Ibid.*, p. 451. Throughout Kee’s account of the Irish War of Independence, his application of the term “moderates” to Griffith’s faction evidently refers only to a difference of opinion within the movement about the means by which and the time at which total independence was to be achieved. There seems to have been general agreement within the movement that total independence was the ultimate goal. E.g., *ibid.*, pp. 609 (“it was known that Sinn Fein stood for ‘total independence’”), 626.

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 606, 608, 610, 611, 621–22, 630, 641, 647–48, 651, 652, 654, 661, 680, 711, 732, 733.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 606, 613–14, 641, 654, 661, 662, 732.

<sup>112</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 730. Once hostilities against the British were suspended, there was a split in the Irish movement owing largely to “the removal of the need for what had often been unnatural unanimity”—unanimity enforced by the requirement of a common front against the enemy in a shooting war.

In Russia, the kind of socialism envisioned by the revolutionaries could not have been built within any brief period. Consequently, as pointed out in the discussion of Rule (ii), the construction of a socialist society was still in its early stages when the Bolshevik-Communist movement was corrupted, with the result that socialism as conceived by the original Bolsheviks was never achieved at all.

It seems that democratization movements in any country, once they've achieved power, usually set up representative democracies soon thereafter. (Whether these democracies survive is another question, as we've seen.) But the French revolutionaries of the 1790s were unable to set up a properly functioning democratic government promptly. The exact point at which the French Revolution was corrupted may be open to argument, but certainly it had been corrupted by the time Napoleon became First Consul. When that happened, it was too late to establish a representative democracy.

In Mexico following the revolution of 1910-1920, the revolutionaries did not bring social justice to the peasants all at once but sought "a more conservative evolution... and more stability in government."<sup>113</sup> Progress toward social justice for the peasants essentially ended in 1940 when Lazaro Cardenas, one of the original revolutionaries, concluded his term as president. Thus, delay in fulfillment of the revolutionary ideal prevented its complete fulfillment. Even the partial fulfillment of the ideal that had been achieved was eroded under attacks that began almost immediately after Cardenas left office, and continued until the coup de grace was administered by President Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994).<sup>114</sup>

In England and the United States the feminist movement achieved its central goal—woman suffrage—as soon as it was powerful enough to do so. Since then the feminist movement, though splintered into various factions, has remained sufficiently powerful to make continued progress toward total equality for women, as described earlier in this chapter, but, as far as this writer knows, the movement has not been seriously corrupted in the sense of allowing the personal ambitions of its members or its leaders to supersede the movement's ideal of equality of the sexes.

However, Rule (v) refers to revolutionary movements, and feminism today is not a revolutionary movement. When it emerged during the first half of the 19th century feminism might perhaps have been called revolutionary, since immediate implementation of the feminists' demands would have entailed a fairly radical alteration of society. But, as noted earlier, feminism was favored by the historical trend toward "equality"

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<sup>113</sup> NEB (2003), Vol. 6, "Institutional Revolutionary Party," p. 333. But the Britannica's statement may represent an unduly generous view of the motives of Mexico's revolutionary leaders other than Lazaro Cardenas. Compare the detailed account of Tannenbaum, pp. 198-224.

<sup>114</sup> La Botz, pp. 43-63. Agustin, Vol. 1, pp. 7-19, 49-52, 56-57, 68, 155-57. President Lopez Mateos (1958-1964) made some gestures toward reviving the program of agrarian reform, but these were mostly ineffectual. Ibid., pp. 173, 196, 269. Presidents Echeverria Alvarez (1970-1976) and Lopez Portillo (1976-1982) likewise attempted to renew agrarian reform. Their efforts were probably sincere (though La Botz, p. 128, may not think so) but, again, mostly ineffectual. Agustin, Vol. 2, pp. 20-23, 98-101, 146, 166, 171, 174, 229-232, 279, 289. For the coup de grace by Salinas de Gortari, see La Botz, p. 118.

in general, and by the time feminists acquired the right to vote in the 1920s their movement could no longer be considered revolutionary; one would hardly say that the achievement of woman suffrage caused a social earthquake. Still less is the feminists' goal of total gender equality a revolutionary one nowadays.

Because its goals have not been of revolutionary magnitude, the feminist movement has not had to grow powerful enough to become attractive to opportunists. Membership in feminist organizations today does not in any substantial degree earn a woman such personal advantages as money, power, or social status.<sup>115</sup> A woman seeking such advantages will enter a career in business, government, politics, or the professions, not in a feminist organization. 'Thus Postulate 4 and Rule (v) do not apply.

In the case of the Irish nationalist movement the issue is somewhat complicated. By achieving dominion status in 1922 the nationalists reached the main part of their goal, and they reached it as soon as they were powerful enough to do so.

It's not clear that it would be reasonable to say that the movement thereafter became corrupt in the sense of being no longer faithful to the goal, because the goal was already mostly achieved. Yet, once the movement was in power, it split into two factions over the oath of allegiance to the British crown that members of the new Irish Parliament had to take.<sup>116</sup> The more extreme faction, led by Eamon de Valera, regarded the members of the other faction (which accepted the oath) as sell-outs (as "corrupted" in our sense of the word) for giving in to the British on this largely symbolic issue.<sup>117</sup>

De Valera's faction eventually came into power, but nevertheless remained faithful to its goal of total independence from Britain until, by 1949, the objectionable oath had been eliminated, Ireland had been formally declared a republic, and the last vestiges of political dependence on Britain had disappeared. But all this took place under the leadership of de Valera,<sup>118</sup> who was one of the original revolutionaries.<sup>119</sup> Postulate 4 does not assert that a successful revolutionary movement is corrupted until all of its original leaders have become politically inactive.

Moreover, in another sense it could be argued that even de Valera's faction of the Irish nationalist movement was corrupted, for a certain fraction of Ireland ("Northern Ireland") remains tied to Britain even today as part of the United Kingdom.<sup>120</sup> The original Irish revolutionaries regarded such a partition of their country as unacceptable; their goal was independence for **all** of Ireland.<sup>121</sup> At least until 1998, the Republic

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<sup>115</sup> A few individual women have gotten rich by writing feminist books, but they have been able to write these books independently of their membership in feminist organizations, if indeed they have been members of any such organizations.

<sup>116</sup> Kee, pp. 726-27, 733-34.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., pp 728&n\*, 730-33, 748-49.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., pp. 748-751.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., e.g., pp. 610-12.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., pp. 750-51.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., e.g., pp. 592-93, 721, 745, 748.

of Ireland maintained a nominal claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland, but there were no efforts on the part of mainstream Irish politicians to make that claim effective.<sup>122</sup> These politicians, like politicians everywhere, have no doubt been concerned primarily with their own careers. (They are “corrupt” in our sense.)

Thus, having been unable to take Northern Ireland from the British soon after they acquired power, the Irish nationalists lost that territory forever, or at least for the foreseeable future.<sup>123</sup> There still exist offshoots of the original Irish nationalist movement<sup>124</sup> (Sinn Fein and the IRA, the Provisional IRA, the Real IRA, the Effective IRA, or whatever the latest faction of a faction of a faction is called) that may be uncorrupted in the sense of remaining faithful to the goal of independence for all of Ireland, but these offshoots do not have great power, hence Postulate 4 does not apply to them.

The Reformation was not the work of a single movement but a complex event in which several theological movements, such as those of Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, competed with one another,<sup>125</sup> and in which various princes participated for reasons that likely had more to do with their own practical advantage than with religious conviction.<sup>126</sup> Thus an examination of the Reformation in relation to Postulate 4 and Rule (v) would be complicated and would require a detailed knowledge of the period.

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As we’ve seen from the examples reviewed here, our five rules are not to be taken as rigid laws that every radical movement must consciously obey on pain of total failure. In many situations the interpretation of the rules may be difficult and complicated, or the application of some of the rules may be impossible or unnecessary. The rules nevertheless are important because, at the least, they set forth problems that every radical movement needs to study carefully. A movement that does not consciously address the problems represented by the rules may possibly succeed through mere luck, but its chances of success will be very much less than those of a movement that takes the rules into consideration.

In the next section we will see how present-day efforts to deal with the problems generated by modern technology, including the problem of environmental devastation, are doomed to failure through neglect of the five rules.

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<sup>122</sup> See *ibid.*, p. 749, and NEB (2003), Vol. 10, “Sinn Fein,” p 837.

<sup>123</sup> Kee, pp. 713, 747, 749, 751, 752.

<sup>124</sup> See note 174.

<sup>125</sup> See NEB (2003), Vol. 26, “Protestantism,” pp. 206-214.

<sup>126</sup> See Dorpalen, pp. 108, 113, 121, 124, 125&n65.

## IV. The Application

Let's start with Chellis Glendinning's "Notes Toward a Neo-Luddite Manifesto," which can be found in an anthology compiled by David Skrbina.<sup>1</sup> Glendinning's statement of the goals of neo-luddism is long and complicated, and most of the stated goals are hopelessly vague. Here is a sample:

We favor the creation of technologies in which politics, morality, ecology, and technics are merged for the benefit of life on Earth:

- Community-based energy sources utilizing solar, wind, and water technologies—which are renewable and enhance both community relations and respect for nature;
- Organic, biological technologies... which derive directly from natural models and systems;
- Conflict resolution technologies—which emphasize cooperation, understanding, and continuity of relationship; and
- Decentralized social technologies—which encourage participation, responsibility, and empowerment.

... We favor the development of a life-enhancing worldview in Western technological societies. We hope to instill a perception of life, death, and human potential into technological societies that will integrate the human need for creative expression, spiritual experience and community with the capacity for rational thought and functionality. We perceive the human role not as the dominator of other species and planetary biology, but as integrated into the natural world with appreciation for the sacredness of all life.

One can hardly imagine a more fagrant violation of Rule (i), which states that a movement needs a single, clear, simple, concrete goal. Nor is this a case in which vague, generalized goals may be attainable because a movement faces no serious opposition and is favored by a pre-existing historical trend. On the contrary, modern society is driven hard along its present technological path by the vigorous, determined, unremitting efforts of innumerable, deeply-committed scientists, engineers, and administrators,

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<sup>1</sup> Skrbina, pp.275-78. According to Dr. Skrbina (personal communication to the author), Glendinning's article originally appeared in *Utne Reader*, March/April 1990. I have not seen the original article, and am relying solely on Dr. Skrbina's anthology.

and by desperate competition for power among large organizations. Under these circumstances, the vagueness and complexity of Glendinning's goals are by themselves sufficient to guarantee the failure of her proposals.

What about Rule (v), which requires that a successful revolutionary movement achieve its goals promptly, before corruption sets in? As the basis for a thorough reorganization of society (radical enough to be called a revolution even if nonviolent), Glendinning's proposal demands the creation of a broad range of technologies, most of which differ widely from any well-developed technologies that exist today. The creation of these technologies, if possible at all, would require extensive, systematic research, vast resources, and a great deal of time. A neo-luddite movement would be able to gain control over the resources it needed only if it became big, powerful, and well-organized, hence ripe for corruption. In order to carry out the necessary social reorganization, the movement would even have to be the dominant force in society, and the process of reorganization would surely take at least a few decades—say forty years at a minimum. By that time the movement's original leaders would all be out of action and the movement would be corrupt, as guaranteed by Postulate 4. Consequently, the reorganization of society in accord with neo-luddite principles would never be completed.

Let's nevertheless make the improbable assumption that society had been transformed in the way advocated by Glendinning. Would the transformation be irreversible, as Rule (ii) requires? That is, would society remain in its transformed condition without continuing effort by the neo-luddites? Not a chance! As discussed in Chapter Two, natural selection guarantees that conflict and competition for power would re-emerge after the neo-luddite utopia had been established. Even if one rejects the argument of Chapter Two, it is an observable fact that human affairs have usually if not always been characterized by conflict and competition, whether within societies or between different societies. Glendinning does not explain what would prevent conflict and competition from reappearing and wrecking the neo-luddite utopia. In practice, the neo-luddite movement would be corrupted, just as every other radical movement that has become the dominant force in a society has been corrupted. Neo-luddite ideals would be forgotten or would receive only lip-service, and the continued existence of modern technology (which Glendinning does not contemplate eliminating) would ensure society's inevitable return to its present destructive trajectory.

As for Rule (iii), Glendinning shows no awareness of the need to form an organized movement committed to practical action. Apparently, either she thinks she and other neo-luddites can transform society just by preaching, or else she hopes someone else will do the hard work of organizing an effective movement. As we noticed earlier, the advocacy of ideas is easy; what is difficult is the task of organizing for practical action. Confronted with this task, people like Glendinning feel intimidated, they are appalled at the catastrophic growth of the technological system and they want to do something about it, but they are too helpless and ineffectual to face up to the formidable challenge of budding a movement. So to give themselves the illusion that they are "doing something" they preach about the way they think we should deal with

technology or with the devastation of our environment. “The result is that we have an abundance of dreamy utopian schemes for saving the world, but in practical terms nothing gets done.

There are of course groups that do organize themselves in pursuit of fairly definite goals of limited scope; for example, groups like the Sierra Club that try to preserve wilderness. And they do accomplish something—a little bit—but what they accomplish is insignificant in relation to the problem of technology in general. The insignificance of their accomplishments is guaranteed by the limited scope of their goals.

Since Glendinning doesn’t even mention the need to form an organized movement, the question of Rule (iv) (that a movement should find means of excluding unsuitable persons) does not arise.

But the worst is that Glendinning is utterly naive; she doesn’t even show any awareness that the problems indicated by Rules (i) through (v) exist. Her neo-luddite scheme therefore is no better than any of the other unreal utopian fantasies that have misled the unwary ever since Plato dreamed up his ideal republic.

Skrbina’s anthology also contains an essay by Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher who coined the term “deep ecology.”<sup>2</sup> Taken simply as criticisms of the technological system, many of Naess’s remarks are quite valid. But it appears that Naess wants to bring about far-reaching, fundamental changes in the way the system functions in the real world, and to the extent his ideas are intended to lead us toward that practical objective, they are totally useless.

Naess’s goals are—if such a thing is possible—even more diffuse than those proposed by Glendinning. In fact, Naess in this essay does not explicitly enumerate his goals at all. But he does write:

A crucial objective of the coming years is... decentralisation and differentiation as a means to increased local autonomy and, ultimately, as a means to unfolding the rich potentialities of the human person.<sup>3</sup>

The ultimate goal, “unfolding the rich potentialities of the human person,” is just beautiful; one can hardly conceive of a more elegant platitude. But as a practical proposal it is meaningless. The intermediate goals of “decentralisation” and “local autonomy” are not meaningless, but they are still too vague to form the basis for an effective movement.

Naess also writes that it is “a major concern to find a kind of equilibrium” between “the requirements of reduced interference with nature and satisfaction of human vital needs.”<sup>4</sup> This does not even remotely approach the degree of specificity that a goal must have in order to be practical. Naess does slightly better when he quotes eight pairs of related goals stated by Johan Galtung.<sup>5</sup> Two of the pairs are:

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<sup>2</sup> Skrbina, pp. 221-230. The “essay” is actually a section of Naess, pp. 92-103.

<sup>3</sup> Naess, p. 97. Skrbina, p. 225.

<sup>4</sup> Naess, p. 98. Skrbina, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> Naess, p. 99, Table 4.1. Skrbina, p. 226.



Clothes [:] build down international textile business [—] try to restore patterns of local handicraft: symbiosis with food production

Transportation/communication [:] less centralised, two-way patterns, collective means of transport [—] try to restore patterns of walking, talking, bicycling, more car-free areas, cable TV, local media

Most of Galtung's goals are still too vague to serve as the basis for an effective movement, but some at least are definite enough so that individually they might serve as starting points from which one could try to develop more precise goals. However, eight pairs of goals are too many; and the achievement even of every one of Galtung's goals would not be anywhere near enough to solve the overall problem of technology. Thus, Naess's scheme violates Rule (i) as flagrantly as Glendinning does.

Naess is ignorant of Rule (v): He thinks "big, centralised, hierarchical" social structures can be "phased out gradually."<sup>6</sup> Evidently he envisions a transformation of society that is to take at least a couple of generations; but in that case "deep ecology" will be corrupted long before the transformation is complete. Once "deep ecology" has been corrupted, people in positions of power will pursue primarily their own advantage and will use "deep ecology" concepts only as propaganda if they use them at all. So the transformation envisioned by Naess will never be completed.

Naess's scheme also violates Rule (ii): Even if society had somehow been transformed in the way Naess desires, the transformation would not be irreversible. It seems clear that Naess expects the retention of a good deal of advanced technology,<sup>7</sup> and constant vigilance would be necessary to prevent that technology from being used in ways that were inconsistent with the kind of society that Naess proposes. In practice, such vigilance would not be long maintained, because corruption (in our sense of the word) inevitably would set in.

As for Rule (iii), Naess, like Glendinning, seems to think he can save the world just by preaching, for he gives no indication of any awareness of the need to organize the "deep ecology" movement for practical action.

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We could review the work of other writers in this genre—Ivan Illich, Jerry Mander, Kirkpatrick Sale, Daniel Quinn, John Zerzan, the whole useless crew—but there would be little point in doing so, because we would only be repeating the same criticisms that we've directed at Glendinning and Naess.<sup>8</sup> This entire body of literature suffers, by and

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<sup>6</sup> Naess, p. 98. Skrbina, p. 226.

<sup>7</sup> "The objectives of the deep ecological movement do not imply any depreciation of technology or industry..." Naess, p. 102. Skrbina, p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> This writer has read but little of the work of Glendinning or of Naess, and it's possible that elsewhere in their writings they may have remedied to some extent the deficiencies we've noted here, by (for example) formulating more precise goals or acknowledging the need for an organization oriented toward practical action. For present purposes, however, this is not very important, because our interest is not in Glendinning or Naess personally but in the whole genre of literature that they represent. And the deficiencies we've noted in the works of Glendinning and Naess here discussed are characteristic of the genre.

large, from the same faults as the work of these last two writers: Authors express their well-grounded horror at what the technological system is doing, but the remedies they suggest are totally unrealistic. There are many reasons why their remedies are unrealistic; in the present chapter we've discussed only those reasons related to the dynamics of social movements as reflected in our five rules, but in Chapters One and Two, and elsewhere,<sup>9</sup> we've described other very powerful reasons why solutions like those of Glendinning, Naess, Illich, Mander et al can never be put into practice.

The reader may well ask whether it is possible to conceive of any remedy at all for the problem of technology that would be consistent with the five rules. We think it is possible. To begin, let's follow Mao's advice and ask what is the principal contradiction in the situation with which we are faced. "The principal contradiction, clearly, is that between wild nature and the technological system. This suggests that the objective chosen should be that of "killing" the technological system as we've described previously.<sup>10</sup> In other words, revolutionaries should aim to bring about the collapse of the system by any means necessary.

Rule (i): This objective is sufficiently clear, concrete, and simple to form the basis for an effective movement.

Rule (v): If a revolutionary movement once grew powerful enough to destroy the technological system in this way, it ought to be able to accomplish the destruction in a short time. Destruction is easier by far than construction.

Rule (ii): If the system were thoroughly broken down the effect would be—at least for a long time—irreversible, because it would take several hundred years or more for a new technological system to develop.<sup>11</sup> Some people even believe that a technological system could never again be created on Earth.<sup>12</sup>

Rule (iv): A revolutionary movement aspiring to "kill" the technological system would need to find a way of preventing unsuitable persons from joining the movement. Most likely the chief danger would come from people of leftist type (as defined in ISAIF<sup>13</sup>) who attach themselves to "causes" indiscriminately.<sup>14</sup> A movement could

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<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., ISAIF, **11** 99-104, 111-12, and Kaczynski, Letter to David Skrbina: March 17, 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Kaczynski, Letter to David Skrbina: April 5, 2005, Part II, and Extract from Letter to A.O., June 30, 2004.

<sup>11</sup> See ISAIF, **11** 207-212.

<sup>12</sup> This was the opinion of, for example, the late distinguished astronomer Fred Hoyle (Hoyle, p. 62). The argument is that, due to the exhaustion of such natural resources as readily accessible deposits of coal, oil, and high-grade metallic ores, there could not be a new Industrial Revolution; consequently, there could never again be a technologically advanced society. Unfortunately, I can't agree with this. I think it's all too possible that a technologically advanced society might be developed without "coal, oil, and high-grade metallic ores," especially since there would be a vast amount of scrap metal left over from the previous technological society. But it's certainly true that the development of a technologically advanced society would be much slower and more difficult the second time around due to the lack of coal, oil, etc.

<sup>13</sup> ISAIF, **11** 6-32, 213-230.

<sup>14</sup> See Kaczynski, Preface to the First and Second Editions, point 3, and the case of Judi Bari in the discussion of Postulate 3, above.

probably drive such people away by maintaining a continuous verbal and ideological attack on leftist beliefs, goals, and ideas.<sup>15</sup> If that proved insufficient to repel leftists, or if other types of undesirables (e.g., rightists) were attracted to the movement, other means of keeping the movement “pure” would have to be found.

Rule (iii): The hard part would be the task of organizing people for practical action. We can’t offer any formula or recipe for carrying out this task, but those who undertake such an effort will find their road less difficult if they apply the ideas and information provided in Chapter Four, which follows.

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<sup>15</sup> As in ISAIF, 11 6-32, 213-230; Kaczynski, “The System’s Neatest Trick;” and (in the 2010 Feral House edition of Kaczynski) “The Truth About Primitive Life.”

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