Human Needs and Politics: The Ideas of Christian Bay and Herbert Marcuse[1]

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This article demonstrates the way in which a notion of "human needs" is pivotal to the political theory of Christian Bay and Herbert Marcuse. Although Bay distinguishes "needs" from "wants, desires and demands" while Marcuse differentiates "true" from "false" needs, both theorists connect prescriptions about what ought to be done in politics with what they regard as empirical statements about the (true/real/authentic) needs of human beings as individuals and as members of groups and politics. The article also demonstrates how the notion of "need" itself coalesces "is" and "ought" and argues how a politics based on a theory of human needs has dangerous authoritarian implications and involves a denial of individual freedom.

INTRODUCTION

Although discussion about human needs in intellectual inquiry is as old as Plato and Aristotle, there has been, since the 1960s, a marked revival of need theory, especially in relation to politics. The late Herbert Marcuse and Christian Bay are two of the most important humanistic scholars who have constantly and consistently related talk about human needs, not only to the explanation of political behavior but also to the evaluation of political ends and purposes.

There are striking similarities between Marcuse, the German-born Hegelian philosopher, and Bay, the Norwegian-born political scientist now resident in Canada. Both are influenced by Marx and Freud; both are vocal critics of the so-called liberal democracies and the "liberal-make-believe"; both are crucially concerned with the promotion of "positive" freedom. Most importantly, both attempt to ground political morality on a notion of human needs, Marcuse by making a distinction between "true" and "false" needs, Bay by distinguishing "needs" from "wants," "desires," and "demands."

In three of his books — *Eros and Civilization, One Dimensional Man,* and *Negations* — Marcuse makes the notion of needs central to his analysis of the defects of advanced industrial society. A fundamental thesis of his work is that, guided and controlled by the imperatives of technical rationality, contemporary industrial society — both Soviet and Western — has succeeded in satisfying the needs perceived by most of its members; these perceived needs are primarily material needs. However, this satisfaction is at the expense of the vital needs for liberty, for nonalienation, and for individual fulfillment without repression, which Marcuse had identified on the basis of his reading of Hegel, Marx, and Freud. Having died before the onset of the recent severe recession in the West, for Marcuse the satisfaction of men's material needs via technological progress is part of a whole system of domination. This is because such satisfaction eliminates conflict and extinguishes the desire for social change among groups who in earlier forms of society would be revolutionaries and dissenters. Instead of being the precondition of all other freedoms — as Marx believed — the satisfaction of material needs has been transformed into a process that reinforces servitude.

Aware of the apparently paradoxical claim that in satisfying the needs of individuals the contemporary system may dominate them, Marcuse attempts to distinguish between "true" and "false," or alien, needs. The former he maintains, begin with the "vital ones — nourishment, clothing, lodging at the attainable level of culture" (Marcuse, 1955, pp. 4,5); only these needs have an unqualified claim for satisfaction because, as Marx held, the satisfaction of these needs is the precondition for the realization of all needs, true and false. "False needs" are those that are "superimposed upon the individual by particular social interests in his repression; the needs which perpetuate toil aggressiveness, misery, and injustice" (Marcuse, 1964, p. 5; 1968, pp. 159-196; Malinovich, 1982; Newman, 1976).

Most of the prevailing needs to relax, to have fun, to behave and consume in accordance with the advertisements, to love and hate what others love and hate, belong to this category of false needs; their gratification is at the expense of the person's, and others', true needs for liberty and self-determination. For Marcuse, in contemporary industrial society most *perceived* needs are false needs; moreover such needs are determined by external powers over which the individual has no control. Therefore, no matter

how much "false" needs may have become the individual's own, no matter how much she/he identifies her/himself with them and finds her/himself in their satisfaction, they continue to be what they were from the beginning — products of a society whose dominant interest demands repression and domination. Marcuse maintains that advanced industrial society (note that he always uses the singular) is to be judged not simply as undesirable but as "impossible" — so antithetical to the (true) needs of man in society that it must be transcended if humanity is not to be destroyed. But, as David Kettler asks, what can it *mean* to say that the "impossible" is existent and stable and seemingly invincible? (Kettler, 1976)

Although Marcuse claims that human needs are historical needs (in the sense that they are the product of historical social conditioning), he holds that their existence is a matter of truth and falsehood, and that their satisfaction

> ... involves standards of *priority* — which refer to the optimal development of the individual, of all individuals, under the optimal utilization of the material and intellectual resources available to man. (Marcuse, 1964, p. 6, his emphasis).

These resources he maintains, are calculable. The "truth" or "falsehood" of needs designates objective conditions "to the extent to which the universal satisfaction of vital needs and, beyond it, the progressive alleviation of toil and poverty are universally valid standards" (Marcuse, 1964, p. 6).

Marcuse holds that individuals are not necessarily the arbiters of what they truly need.

> In the last analysis, the question of what are true and false needs must be answered by the individuals themselves, but only in the last analysis; that is, if and when they are free to give their own answer. As long as they are kept incapable of being autonomous, as long as they are indoctrinated and manipulated ... their answer to this question cannot be taken as their own. (Marcuse, 1964, p. 6)

This position, and — as we shall see — that of Christian Bay, raises the charge of elitism and authoritarianism. It allows, and in fact encourages, the possibility of rulers or experts "forcing men to be free" and "indoctrinating a *real* consensus." This is because while human beings all know what they want or desire, they may not know what they (truly) need. But as Alasdair MacIntyre asks, how has Marcuse "acquired the right to say of others what their true needs are? How has he escaped the indoctrination which affects others?" (MacIntyre, 1970, p. 72). These questions underline what MacIntyre takes to be inescapable elitist consequences of Marcuse's viewpoint.

A BASIC THESIS

A fundamental thesis of *One Dimensional Man* is that by producing material affluence, the technology of advanced industrial society has the ef-

fect of eliminating protest and dissent, and at the same time fostering identification with the established order. As Marcuse says, "If the worker and his boss enjoy the same television program and visit the same resort places, if the Negro owns a Cadillac, if they all read the same newspaper, then this assimilation indicates not the dissappearence of classes, but the extent to which the needs and satisfactions that serve the preservation of the Establishment are shared by the underlying population (Marcuse, 1969, p. 8). Needless to say this picture of shared affluence does not apply to the current − 1984 − high unemployment situation in the West.

Because of its all-persuasive technological rationality, Marcuse argues that contemporary industrial society is "totalitarian." He explains that the word "totalitarian" applies not only to a terroristic political coordination of society, but also to a nonterroristic economic-technical coordination that operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests, thus precluding the emergence of an effective opposition against the whole system. For Marcuse, It is this totalitarian productive apparatus that determines individual needs and aspirations. Moreover, totalitarian technology "obliterates the opposition between private and public existence, between individual and social needs" and serves to "institute new, more effective; and more pleasant forms of social control and social cohesion" (Marcuse, 1964, p. 3).

For Marcuse, the fact that individuals seem "happy" being satisfied with material goods and services handed down by the system is beside the point. Such people are suffering from false consciousness. They are fulfilling false needs. Moreover, their false and alien needs (and possibilities) are imposed upon them by the system itself. Marcuse makes it clear that this happiness is not true happiness; this false happiness, like "repressive affluence," is part of the "democratic unfreedom" that Marcuse (and also Christian Bay) castigates. The same applies to "sexual satisfaction" and "sexual freedom" in advanced industrial society. Just as the satisfaction of false needs is part of a whole system of servitude, so Marcuse argued in *One Dimensional Man* and in his later works that the permissiveness of modern society is also an instrument of domination. So-called "sexual liberation" is part of democratic unfreedom: It distracts attention from revolutionary possibilities.

In *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Marcuse had optimistically argued for a revision of the orthodox Freudian position that all civilization must be based on repression. The two most important concepts he developed in his attempt to synthesize Marx and Freud were "surplus repression" and "the performance principle." Marcuse's terminology reveals that the first concept was to be identified with Marx's "surplus value," that is, the *quantitative* measure of human exploitation under capitalism. "Surplus repression,"

a set of restrictions necessary to maintain a particular form of social domination, is distinguished from "basic repression," the set of restrictions upon the instincts necessary to found and maintain civilization *per se*. [For a useful exposition of the difference between surplus repression and basic repression see Robinson (1972) *The Sexual Radicals* (pp. 114-182, especially p. 153).] In *Eros and Civilization* Marcuse insisted that a large portion of sexual repression was repression in the service of domination. His argument went as follows: As technical and material progress removes the obstacles that scarcity placed in the path of civilized development, repression is more and more surplus to the task of maintaining civilization and more and more a matter of maintaining specific and removable forms of social dominations – that is, advanced capitalism (Marcuse, 1955, p. 185). Given Marcuse's revision of Freudianism, modern society might in theory be relieved of its repressive character without relapsing into chaos and barbarism (Robinson, 1972, pp. 114-182).

While Marcuse accepted Freud's distinction between the pleasure principle and the reality principle (this corresponded to the distinction between unrepressed behavior and repressed civilized behavior), he argued that under capitalist domination the reality principle takes a particular, and a particularly repressive, form which he termed "the performance principle." This concept which corresponded to Marx's *qualitative* characterization of existence under capitalism – that is, alienation and reification – involved the repression of libidinal energies and their expression only in controlled forms of work and of limited monogamic sexuality. Marcuse, in some respects similar to William Reich, argued that the repression of sexuality contributed significantly to maintaining the general order of repression, but it was a repression of *eros*, rather than of genital sexuality, with which Marcuse was concerned. In fact, he was strongly opposed to "genital tyranny" which he regarded as yet another expression of the performance principle and the turning of human beings into things. He argued that genuine liberation would involve a return to the state of "polymorphous perversity," in which the entire body would become a source of sexual pleasure. (As Marcuse explained in his pessimistic "Political Preface" to the 1966 edition of *Eros and Civilization*, "polymorphous sexuality" was the term which he used to indicate that the new direction of progress would depend completely on the opportunity to activate repressed or arrested *organic*, biological needs: to make the human body an instrument of pleasure rather than labor. The old formula, the development of prevailing needs and faculties, seemed to be inadequate; the emergence of new, qualitatively different needs and faculties seemed to be the prerequisite, the content of liberation.

When *Eros and Civilization* was first published in 1955, Marcuse optimistically believed that erotic liberation and "non repressive sublimation"

were possible, and that the life instinct (Eros) would triumph over the death instinct (Thanatos) — one of whose representations, via the performance principle and surplus repression, was the alienation of man from his sexuality. [There is not space to deal with criticisms of Marcuse's reinterpretation of Freud, but for a trenchant critique see MacIntyre (1970, pp. 43-58). Also see Horowitz (1977). *Repression,* and Nichols' (1982) response to Marcuse and Horowitz in *Human Studies,* pp. 69-76.] However, in his later works Marcuse stressed the constant increase in aggression and destructiveness in advanced industrial society — as a result of the combination of the performance principle and surplus repression (Marcuse, 1968, p. 256).

In *One Dimensional Man,* and in his works until his death, Marcuse argued that desublimation has already occurred in contemporary society, but that the forms in which it occurs are as repressive as ever sublimation was. The release of libido is so controlled that the "sexuality" that saturates the surface of social life — in advertising, for example — satisfies human beings without restoring to them the proper enjoyment of their true organic sexuality. The channelled release of libidinal energy also diverts them from revolutionary activity, and from the "negative" critical thinking that is necessary for challenging the system. In many ways Marcuse, like Freud, had a conception of sexuality and libido that involved a notion of energy that "builds up" and the "pressure of which has to be "released." What is important to stress here is that contemporary sexual freedom is, for Marcuse, a wrong road and yet another example of the domination of the system.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SERVITUDE

For Marcuse all human liberation depends on the consciousness of servitude; the emergence of this consciousness is greatly hampered by the predominance of false needs and satisfactions which, to a great extent, have become the individual's own. Because Marcuse emphasizes that all needs are historical needs — he insists that even human instincts must be seen as historical products — the historical process always replaces one system of preconditioning by another. The optimal goal of political activity is the replacement of false needs by true ones (or the inculcation of true needs rather than false ones) and the abandonment of repressive satisfactions. This must involve, Marcuse tells us, the redefinition of needs: The needs that human beings possess at the moment must undergo a "qualitative change" if they are to be liberated. But in Marcuse's good society, who is to do the redefining and inculcation of needs? Who is to do the liberating? And what is the price of such "liberation?"

When Marcuse wrote *One Dimensional Man* (1964) he was markedly pessimistic about radical change. In fact, he saw contemporary industrial society as one in which "all counter-action is impossible" because of the pervasiveness of technical reationality. But 4 years later, after hearing of the student uprising in Paris in the spring of 1968, he quickly wrote his *Essay on Liberation* (published 1969) in which, as Geoffrey Hawthorn explained in *Enlightenment and Despair,* "although his diagnosis remained the same he was markedly more optimistic about the possibilities of 'negation' from outside the society — from the Third World, from the stubborn refusals of students and other rebels not or not yet incorporated into the pervasive unidimensionality, from dropouts, from necessarily unconventional art, and from the 'unconscious,' ex *hypothes* immune to all social influence. But he never explained in what way any of these constituted or even pointed towards the positive promise of new order" (Hawthorn, 1976).

In his essay "Liberation from the Affluent Society" Marcuse explains that the "problem" is that because contemporary capitalism (in defiance of Marxist theory) delivers the goods to an ever larger part of the population, far too few people want the kind of "liberation" of which he dreams — or which, as some of his critics suggest, he so longs to impose. Marcuse consequently contrasts "objective need" — what he thinks people ought to want — with "subjective need" — people actually wanting what they ought to want. The latter, alas, does not prevail. It does not prevail precisely among those parts of the population that are traditionally considered the agents of historical change. The subjective need is repressed, Marcuse argues, "firstly, by virtue of the actual satisfaction of needs, and secondly, by a massive scientific manipulation and administration of needs" (Marcuse, 1968, p. 182).

Throughout his work Marcuse is never quite clear about who are to be the agents of radical transformation and liberation. Sometimes he talks about the proletariat (but rarely: the working class cannot be a revolutionary force as they have been "bought off with golden chains"); sometimes he considers the likely revolutionary force to be radical students and social outsiders; sometimes deeply repressed erotic instincts; and sometimes intellectuals. But in "Liberation from the Affluent Society" and in an essay with the "newspeak" title of "Repressive Tolerance," both published in *A Critique of Pure Tolerance,* Marcuse made it clear (as clear as he ever made anything) that it is the intelligentsia who are to be the catalyst of historical change and that the revolution requires "the dictatorship of an elite over the people" albeit an "educational dictatorship," which will "force men to be free." Indeed, one of Marcuse's main grievances against the "late" capitalist order is that, because of the satisfaction of material needs, the silent minority does not want, and has no interest in, such a revolution. "By the same

token, those minorities which strive for a change in the whole...will be left free to deliberate and discuss...and will be left harmless and helpless in the face of the overwhelming majority, which militates against qualitative social change. The majority is firmly grounded in the increasing satisfaction of needs" (Wolff, 1969). [This is quoted in Antony Flew's superb critique of Marcusian need theory, 'Wants or Needs, Choices or Commands?', in Fitzgerald, R. (ed.) (1977), *Human Needs and Politics,* pp. 213-228, especially pp. 222-224.]

In "Repressive Tolerance" Marcuse argues that the tolerance of the advanced industrial democracies is a deceit. The expression of minority views is allowed just because it cannot be effective; indeed, the only type of expression it can have renders it ineffective. The major premise of his argument is that the majority are effectively controlled by the system and so molded that they cannot hear or understand radical criticism. It follows, says MacIntyre, that the people have no voice, and the alternatives are not between genuine democracy and the rule of an elite but between rival elites, the repressive elite of the present and the liberating elite of the Marcusian future. Freedom of speech is not an overriding good, for to allow freedom of speech in contemporary society is to assist in the propagation of error, and "the telos of tolerance is truth." The truth is carried by the revolutionary minorities and their intellectual spokesmen, such as Marcuse then was, and the majority have to be liberated by being reeducated into the truth by this minority, who are entitled to suppress rival and harmful opinions. This is perhaps the most dangerous of all Marcuse's doctrines, for not only is what he asserts questionable but his is a doctrine which, if it were widely held, could be an effective barrier to any rational progress and liberation. As MacIntyre suggests, "To make men objects of liberation by others is to assist in making them passive instruments, it is to cast them for the role of inert matter to be molded into forms chosen by the elite" (MacIntyre, 1970, pp. 102-103).

ELITISM

Marcuse's implicit elitism is made explicit in *An Essay on Liberation* (1969). His position is, as MacIntyre says, that the human nature of inhabitants of advanced industrial society has been "molded" so that their very wants, needs, and aspirations have become conformist—except for a minority, which includes Marcuse. The majority cannot voice their true needs, for they cannot perceive or feel them. The minority must therefore voice their needs for these, and this active minority must rescue the necessarily passive majority (MacIntyre, 1970, pp. 100-101). This passive majori-

ty includes even the "new (technically skilled) working class" who by virtue of their position, could disrupt, reorganize and redirect the mode and relationships of production. However, they have neither the interest nor the vital need to so do (Marcuse, 1969, p. 11). They are well integrated and well rewarded by the system. But as MacIntyre asks, which are the minority who are to rescue the majority by transforming them: the same old ratbag of students, blacks, "flower-power," or an educational elite? (MacIntyre, 1970, p. 104).

The answer is that Marcuse's utopia *must* involve an educational dictatorship. On page 8 of *One Dimensional Man* Marcuse asked a key question: How can the people who have been the object of effective domination create by themselves the conditions of freedom? His answer is honest and direct: To the degree to which the slaves have been preconditioned to exist as slaves and be content in that role, their liberation necessarily appears to come from without and from above. They must, in Rousseau's famous words, be "forced to be free," to "see objects as they are, and sometimes as they ought to appear," they must be shown the "good road" they are in search of. On page 40 Marcuse continued:

> But with all its truth, the argument cannot answer the time-honoured question: who educates the educators, and where is the proof that they are in possession of "the good?"

See Rousseau, The Social Contract, Book 1, Chap. 7, and Book 11, Chap. 6. "(T)he only possible excuse (it is weak enough!) for 'educational dictatorship' is that the terrible risk which it involves may not be more terrible than the risk which the great liberal as well as the authoritarian societies are taking now, nor may the costs be much higher" (Marcuse, 1964, pp. 11-13).

This position, as with Bay's, contains terrible dangers: of authoritarianism and the erosion of personal freedom.

Of the writings of contemporary theorists, those of Christian Bay best exemplify the recent revival of need theory and especially the idea of politics being put in the service of human needs. His important work, *The Structure of Freedom* (1970), first published in 1958 — three years after *Eros and Civilization* — was an attempt to combine the behavioral and the normative approaches to the study of politics and to unify research in all social sciences. Incidentally, in *The Structure of Freedom* there is not a single reference to Marcuse (and only three to Marx). Since then, Bay has constantly argued that the social sciences should be used to help mankind, and specifically that our increasing knowledge should be placed in the service of the satisfaction of human needs. This is made especially clear in Bay's *Strategies of Political Emancipation,* published in 1981, in which the influence of Marx and Marcuse is much more obvious.

Like other western need theorists, e.g., C. B. Macpherson, Charles Reich, James C. Davies, and a number of contributors to my *Human Needs and Politics* (Fitzgerald, 1977), Bay's work since the mid-1960s involves an attempt if not to ground political prescriptions on a theory of human needs, then at least to connect and relate value-statements in an intelligible way to allegedly empirical evidence about a hierarchy of human needs.

According to Bay's normative position, a government's only acceptable justification, which also determines the limits to its legitimate authority, is its task of serving human needs — serving them better than would be done without any government. The only acceptable justification of a particular form of government is that it serves to meet human needs better than other forms of government. Once we develop a conception of humans and their needs, the natural consequence is to insist that a political system should have our allegiance only if and to the extent that it serves human needs in the order of their importance to individual survival and growth, and does so better than alternative systems. Thus Bay submits that to meet human needs is the ultimate purpose of politics. This is made clear in Bay's 1968 article "Needs, Wants and Political Legitimacy" and a year later in *The Cheerful Science of Dismal Politics.*

While, in substance, Bay thinks that Marcuse's distinction between true and false needs dramatizes a most important insight — that, as Plato taught, there is a radical difference between reality and appearance in human affairs — Bay also maintains that the concepts of true and false needs are misleadingly facile, for they suggest a clear empirical distinction, even an easy classification. Bay's preferred alternative is to make a distinction between needs (which, by definition, are genuine) and wants, desires, and demands (which may, or may not, correspond to needs). Bay also differs from Marcuse in that he talks about universal human needs and opposes the historicizing of all needs.

In a 1980 article, "Human Needs, Wants and Politics," Bay (1980a) reaffirmed that his need/want distinction is quite different from the distinction between true and false needs proposed by Marcuse. (Bay also thinks that some of Marcuse's "false needs" — needs induced by advertising or propaganda — can become as compelling, in a psychological sense, as many needs that are authentic in the individual). Marcuse, he says, is too quick to construe the true/false needs dichtomy as if there were a clear empirical distinction between true and false needs. In *Strategies of Political Emancipation* (1981) Bay argues that this involves a premature reification with dangerously authoritarian policy implications, but as we shall see so does Bay's use of the notion of needs, especially in relation to politics (see also Leiss, 1976, pp. 49-71).

Bay is concerned that, under the influence of behaviouralism and empirical political science, the term "politics" has become debased. No longer

does politics refer, as it did for Plato and Aristotle, to the political community. To Aristotle in *Nichomachean Ethics,* Book 1 and *Politics,* Book 1, i-iii, political science was the master science which drew upon the rest of the sciences. This was because "the end of politics is the good of man...which itself is the highest good attainable by action." In the main, the term, however, now refers to "who gets what, when, how," or to some similar concept that focuses not on justice but on power. This focus makes political science more quantifiable and political scientists more pliable and useful for the powers that be. At the same time, it severs the study of politics from any direct bearing on the task of developing institutions and organizations in the service of human needs.

As a beginning toward a more appropriate political theory, Bay spells out a distinction between authentic "politics" (in the classical sense) and what he regards as "pseudopolitics." By "political" Bay means all activity aimed at improving or protecting conditions for the satisfaction of human needs and demands in a given society or community, according to some universalistic scheme of priorities, implicit or explicit. "Priorities" refers to norms for guiding the choice between conflicting needs or demands. "Pseudopolitical," on the other hand, refers to activity that resembles political activity, but is exclusively concerned with either alleviating personal neuroses or promoting private advantage or private-interest group advantage, deterred by no articulate or disinterested conception of what would be just or fair to other groups; thus, to Bay, pseudopolitics is the counterfeit of authentic politics. In terms of Bay's distinction between political behavior and pseudopolitical behavior, it is the concept "needs" that provides the key criterion. This is because the former is activity based on human needs, whereas the latter, while resembling political activity, merely satisfies group wants and private interest. An adequate *political* theory, he maintains, is one that deals with basic human needs as well as overt desires and other observable aspects of behavior.

To Bay, much empirical research has little bearing on the fundamental problem of the needs of human beings. His specialized definition of "politics" has been criticized on the grounds of being too restrictive. Heinze Eulau, for example, argued that "much political activity throughout history has been directed toward the achievement of goals that were eminently evil. To neglect this kind of politics would deprive the study of politics of some of its most perplexing problems" (Eulau, 1969, p. 13). In a similar vein, Howard Ball and Thomas P. Lauth, Jr., argued that Bay's definition "substantially narrows the range of what is generally considered political activity. Particularistic and essentially self-serving interests pursued by groups of individuals would seem, according to Bay, to be not only dysfunctional for 'the satisfaction of human needs,' but also an improper focus for political science investigation" (Ball and Lauth, 1971, p. 66). Bay makes it clear that

he is supportive of the study of what he regards as "pseudopolitical behavior." He is, however, highly critical of what he takes to be the almost exclusive focus on pseudopolitical activities (that is, on private wants and desires and on group demands) in much behavioral literature, and the virtual exclusion of the study of human needs.

If Bay is going to place such primacy on the notion of needs, he has to face — as he does — the questions of how one determines what people need and how one differentiates needing from associated notions like wanting, desiring, or demanding. Clearly one can determine what people want by asking them or by observing their behavior. But this is not so with needs. We know that, in common language people can "want" something they do not "need" and "need" something they do not "want." Bay has therefore to attempt to develop an empirically useful concept of needs, as compared with wants, desires, or demands.

In four important papers published between 1965 and 1970, Bay addressed himself to this problem. In these papers, (Bay, 1965, 1968, 1969, 1970a) and in his work up to 1984, the concept "want" refers to a perceived or felt need that may or may not correspond to or overlap with a real need, while "demand" refers to a politically activated want.

He began by defining "needs" negatively via pathology; using empiricist terminology, he regarded as a "human need" any behavior tendency whose continued denial or frustration leads to pathological responses. Granting that there were problems in defining the terms "pathological responses" and "behavior tendency," he maintained that it made sense to say that the most obviously pathological kinds of behavior indicated that relatively crucial needs have been denied or frustrated.

The following categories of behavior, he suggested, were clearly pathological: (1) suicide and homicide, or serious attempts at either; (2) psychosis; (3) severe neurosis; and (4) severe addiction to alcohol or other drugs (Bay, 1968, 1969). Obviously there were many problems with the above. Is suicide necessarily pathological? What about rational suicide — for example, the unattached elderly person who decides to terminate a life of pain caused by incurable cancer? Moreover, "pathology," like "health," is clearly a value-laden and problematic term. Bay recognized that the problems of pathology and mental illness were extremely complex, and that the political theorist cannot enter deeply into this territory without help. Moreover, he acknowledged distinct disadvantages with this negative approach to defining "need," especially its implication that need frustration cannot readily be recognized before it has led to pathologies of one kind or another. Also, his catalogue of pathologies was by his own admission restrictive; what, he asked, of the person doomed by early deprivation to become the perfect accountant but incapable of doing anything warm and impulsive and playful

in his whole life? This approach must be supplemented by other lines of approach, based on theoretically more meaningful concepts of "need." The shortcoming of the approach to defining "need" via pathology was that it suggested neither a hierarchy of needs nor a developmental scheme. It hardly began to suggest a model of actual or potential man. Nor did it answer a fundamental question: According to what order of priorities is the satisfaction of human needs important for individual survival and growth?

Bay therefore rejected the idea of defining needs negatively via pathology and switched to another approach; to defining "needs" in terms of a positive model of man.

MASLOW'S SCHEME

Bay, along with many other contemporary need theorists, believes that the late Abraham Maslow's scheme as outlined in his 1943 article, "A Theory of Human Motivation" and reprinted in Maslow (1970, Chap. 4) still provides the best available point of departure for establishing a theory of hierarchy of human needs. In his work, Maslow listed five categories of universal human needs in the order of their assumed priority: (1) physical (biological) needs; (2) safety needs — assurance of survival and of continuing satisfaction of basic needs; (3) affection or belongingness needs; (4) esteem needs — by self and others; and (5) self-actualization or self-development needs. While, for simplification, I refer to five basic needs, it is important to realize that Maslow's hierarchy is based on five need *areas* (so that the physiological level, for example, refers to a variety of specific needs, such as air, water, food, sleep, sex, etc.), and, as Jeanne Knutson pointed out, does not rest on a simplistic assumption that man's motivational patterns could be defined in terms of five single needs (Knutson, 1972, p. 23).

These need-areas are arranged in a hierarchy of prepotency. Thus, for Maslow, "higher" needs (belongingness, esteem, self-actualization) cannot become activated unless the "lower" needs are met, or at least have been reasonably well met at some time in a person's life — particularly in childhood. However, once higher needs are activated, they are not necessarily extinguished by subsequent deprivation of lower or more basic needs. For example, some individuals, provided they have known satisfaction of physiological and safety needs, will sacrifice the former for love, for self-esteem, or for truth; thus a person such as Gandhi may deny himself food because higher needs have become more important. But, according to Maslow, a person who has never had enough to eat or has never felt safe could not activate or articulate his higher needs [Maslow (1970, Chap. 4); See also Fitzgerald (1977)].

It is important to realize that Maslow does not clearly differentiate between "needs" and the related concepts of "wants," "drives," "motives," or "desires," and that he regards "needs" as a trouble-free and empirical notion. But, as I have argued in detail elsewhere (Fitzgerald, 1977a), the notion of "need" can be rendered empirical only by relating it to some specified end, most obviously that of human goodness or a model of human health or excellence. Bay maintains that a simple model of man, if it is realistic and open-ended, is better than no model at all. Thus while he accepts that there are difficulties with Maslow's need-hierarchy, he suggests that it be tentatively adopted for the purpose of indicating what the priorities of politics should be — assuming that the most basic needs have first claim on political guarantees.

Given an allegedly empirical theory of human needs, Bay argues that certain political prescriptions follow: namely, that governments ought to answer the needs of human beings in the order of their assumed priority. This sounds unproblematically praiseworthy; but there are many difficulties with Maslow's need-hierarchy as it stands, let alone in its application to politics.

It is important to realize that Maslow claimed that he was working up to a scientific ethics based on universal human needs. In a similar way, Erich Fromm (whose ideas Bay also draws on) claimed that it was for psychology to discover the principles of a universal ethics tuned to the universal needs of man (Fromm, 1975). Both Maslow and Fromm argued that a knowledge of human needs could enable us to establish values that have objective validity (Maslow, 1959, pp. 123, 151). Significantly, in a recent paper (1983, p. 8) Bay refers to the attempt "to develop objective criteria of justice." As an extension of this position it therefore follows for theorists such as Bay that one can ground a political morality on allegedly empirical statements asserting the needs of human beings. But the unambiguously empirical status of need statements is precisely what is in dispute.

One way of making it clear that the concept of human needs employed by Bay cannot be purely empirical is to understand that concepts of what people "need" are tied to concepts of human health or excellence and the nature of humans. Different concepts of human nature and different models of excellence will generate different needs. Thus, one model of human nature might stress the "needs" for ambition, power, and competition; while another might emphasize the "needs" for trust, cooperation, and-mutuality. Because different concepts of what is good and desirable generate different needs, any concept of what is a "human need" cannot of itself be purely empirical. The only way in which the concept of need can be made empirical is to spell out in detail a particular model of human excellence and then talk about needs in order to achieve this goal or end. But then there

is the fundamental problem of how one determines the end or goal or model of health or excellence to which human needs are relative. [For a critique of Bay's attempt to resolve normative questions by allegedly empirical means, see Mary Hawkesworth (1980, pp. 357-365; 1982, pp. 369-373).]

Despite cultural variations in human behavior, there do appear to be certain basic propensities, other than bodily ones, which all or most human beings share. The problem is therefore not that of making universal statements about human *propensities* as such. Rather the problem is the selection of some of these propensities, on the basis of some criteria of goodness or health or human excellence, and the labeling of them as "needs." If "need" is merely a concept referring to certain physiological and psychological processes and nothing else, there is no way of regarding these processes as desirable or undesirable without introducing some normative premise or some notion of human excellence. Disagreement on these normative premises or notions will lead to the development of a different set of "needs." To attribute *needs* to people presupposes certain standards or norms as to which among human propensities or characteristics it is desirable to foster; this selection will be culture-bound and dependent on different ethical preferences. This applies to even allegedly physiological needs. As R. F. Dearden puts it, "If you say that in my emancipated condition I need food, I may refuse to attach any importance to the norms of health that you are presupposing, pointing out that I am engaged in a religious exercise" (Dearden, 1972, p. 55). Obviously if I am fasting I do not need food. And if I intend to commit suicide I do not need to breathe.

SELF-ACTUALIZATION

It is the notion of "a need for self-actualization" that most clearly highlights the problems confronting Bay (and Maslow). It is impossible to make such metaphysical notion empirical at all. Human selves have many potentialities; we have many things in us. This raises the problem of which selves and which potentialities are to be realized. The answer to the question "What sort of self does Bay want actualized or realized" is simple: It is good self. Similarly, it is good potentialities that he wants to be developed or expressed. Likewise, the answer to the often unasked question "What are the needs that ought to be satisfied, fulfilled, or promoted" is good needs. This is precisely why it sounds strange to talk about a need for destruction or punishment or a need to be sadistic, while talk in terms of a need for love, affection, or knowledge sounds fine. And this is why Bay and Marcuse are compelled to distinguish between "real" needs and mere "wants" (Bay) or "false" or "artificial" needs (Marcuse). It hardly has to be pointed out that "real needs" or "genuine needs" come to equal "good needs."

If by self-actualization is meant *whatever* a person can be motivated to act out or express, it provides us with no way of distinguishing between desirable and undesirable forms of self-expression. This, of course, theorists like Bay who use Maslow's scheme do not intend. Manifestly, the murderer, sadist, fascist, rapist, or incendiarist does not fit in with their notion of a person developing his or her potentialities. Bay and Maslow must, and by implication do, set up standards of what the individual ought to become or express, and what he or she ought not to become or express. To speak of a "need for self-actualization" is either tautological or unequivocally normative. The criteria used to specify what sort of self is to be realized must be thoroughly value-laden, and notions of the self to be actualized will vary according to different estimates of things that are worth doing and propensities that are worth developing. Self-actualization is merely another way of referring to what one ought to do and what one ought to be or become.

Fundamentally, the notion of "need" itself simply substitutes for "good" or for "what ought to be." Any talk about human needs must involve value-judgments about which of our many propensities it is desirable to foster and which forms of human development are good. As we are aware, these judgments differ markedly even in Western industrial society; such differences are dramatically compounded when we compare this society with other past and present societies. For example, are competition and rivalry, anger and aggression, good? Are incestuous and polyandrous relationships evil? Do human beings who become soldiers, shamans, accountants, bookmakers, stockbrokers, or priests exhibit examples of desirable personal development? Many would disagree. And what of surfers, poets, commune dwellers, transsexuals, Trotskyites, fortune tellers? What forms of human development people consider desirable, and what human beings value in general, vary enormously. And even if human beings did agree on what they considered good or valuable, agreement or consensus *cannot* validate judgments of value, any more than agreement on the statement that the world is flat would validate that allegedly factual proposition. This point is of the utmost importance for a theory of human needs, because any such theory is ultimately dependent upon a series of judgments about what is good and valuable for human beings and for human society. When one is talking about human needs such value judgments cannot be escaped.

In his recent work, Bay has restructured Maslow's need-hierarchy, affirming three general categories or classes of needs, in this order of urgency: (1) basic physical needs for sustenance and safety; (2) community needs, most notably the needs for love, belongingness, and esteem; and (3) individuality or subjectivity needs, which include needs for individual identity and dignity, freedom of choice, and self-development [Bay (1980a, 1981)

speaks of three "ranges of needs"; and of three "tiers" of needs in 1981a.] While this involves a restatement, Bay is clearly still following Maslow's model.

As in his earlier work, in *Strategies of Political Emancipation,* Bay argues (1981, p. 84) that human need priorities must come to be seen as the only legitimate basis for priorities of human liberties. Moreover, he argues that the universality of human rights is based on *objective* human need priorities. While there are innumerable human wants in a society saturated with commercial advertising and consumerism, he now argues that there are only three categories of basic needs, the satisfaction of which should be the first principle of politics. Physical survival is the most basic need, followed by the need for security against violence — violence grievous enough to lead to possible injuries. The worst evils are omnicide, genocide, and homicide. In terms of human rights, physical survival, or the right to life, obviously must take precedence over competing claims; for example, the execution of a criminal is totally impermissible, at least unless it can be proved that failure to apply the death penalty will lead inevitably to an increase in homicides. Bay thus contends that needs must take precedence over wants or demands and that the most basic needs of all must be satisfied before the less basic needs of the few.

A UNIVERSAL NEED HIERARCHY

Bay argues that there are *universal* human needs, despite differing ways of satisfying them, and there is a *universal hierarchy* in the sense that basic physical needs precede community or social belongingness needs, which have priority over subjectivity needs. In this, Bay differs radically from Marcuse, and even more from Marcuse's pupil William Leiss, who historicizes all needs (Leiss, 1976). Their approach loses sight of what Bay assumes to be the basic biological-psychological unity of the human species: "While universal basic needs and propensities to be sure are hard to establish empirically, let alone with any degree of exactitude, I think we must reject the notion that, of all species, mankind is the one that is entirely without instinctual equipment or species-wide psychological characteristics of any kind" (1981, p. 94). Bay's position is that human right priorities must be based on our knowledge of priorities among universal human needs, and that a legitimate government must honor and promote human rights as effectively as possible, in the order of these priorities. On the basis of priorities among human needs, it follows that the most oppressed persons in any social order must have first claim on protection, support, and redress of grievances from any government that claims political legitimacy.

Bay draws a sharp distinction between a human rights approach to politics, based on need-priorities, and a liberal-democratic approach, based on wants, desires, and demands which may be artificially created.

In Bay's latest book, *Strategies of Political Emancipation,* "human need" refers to

> any and all minimum requirements for every individual's health and well being, as distinct from the needs of specific categories of individuals or needs that are shared by all or most people within a given social order, and/or culture. By definition, when a person becomes psychosomatically sick, or commits suicide, or becomes dependent on health-destructive drugs, some of his or her individual needs are not being met; if such things happen to many in a given class or culture, then class-shared or culturally imprinted needs are not being met; if in the study of sickness in this broad sense we begin to find regularities across cultures and across generations, then we may develop tentative empirical generalizations about human need priorities in general. We can also study conditions under which, in various societies, high levels of public health are achieved. (1981, p. 92)

But who determines what constitutes "health?" That is a key question.

In a paper first presented in Washington to the International Society for Political Psychology's annual meeting in May 1979, Bay suggested that "want" should be an empirical term, referring to every kind of verbally stated or otherwise manifest wish, preference, demand, desire, interest, etc., that indicates a felt or alleged need; any given want may or may not reflect a human need. "Needs" should be reserved, then, for what Marcuse would consider true or genuine needs — that is, requirements for life, health, and/or basic freedom of the living person (Bay, 1980a, p. 19). Bay accepts that needs are not readily visible, except at the lower extreme of "dire needs." Yet, he argues, (1980, pp. 293-318) all needs are real, they exist; by definition they must be met if human health and well-being are to be assured.

PRIORITIES

In another 1979 paper, Bay defined human rights as "all categories of individual claims (including claims on behalf of individuals or groups) which *ought to have* legal protection, as well as social and moral support, *because* the protection of these claims *is essential to meet basic human needs"* (Bay, 1979, pp. 9-14, his emphases). For Bay, human right priorities ought to be ordered according to objective human need priorities. He constantly stresses that priorities of rights ought to be determined by the best available knowledge of human need priorities. But the vital question is who knows, and how? Who is to determine what are needs, and what are mere wants? Wants, desires, and demands are ascertainable facts; we ascertain what people want

by asking them, or (more indirectly) by observing their behavior. But this is not so with needs, which are hypothetical constructs. This, Bay admits, makes it difficult to disentangle authentic human needs from, for example, alienated wants that result from high-powered promotion and programming. In *Strategies of Political Emancipation,* Bay does maintain that it will not do to take the course so easily suggested by Marcuse's terminology, and simply hold that politicians must choose to serve the people's "true" needs while ignoring or suppressing or explaining away their "false" needs. This, he agrees, could indeed come to vindicate Plato's republic, or Stalin's Politbureau: "To do people good against their own will is to serve people badly" (1981, p. 93). But he never explains how *he* can avoid the authoritarianism implicit in a politics based on needs.

In fact, while Bay pays continual lipservice to respecting the (often manipulated) wants and desires of individuals — for example, "wants and demands are not to be ignored" (1980, p. 294) and "we must begin with a healthy dose of respect for people's actual wants, whatever their origin or genuineness" (1981, p. 93) — he places primacy on needs. Bay (1981a, p. 27) has written "Also, there is the didactic consideration that our credibility as advocates of rational priorities of liberty could suffer, were we not to take careful precaution against appearing to lay down dogmatically what are other people's 'true' needs independently of their own judgments." Is this, one wonders, a matter of *tactics?*

The "dilemma" of resolving conflict between wants and needs is always decided in favor of the latter. Despite Bay's protestations, in his schema it is not individuals who "validly" determine what they need, for under capitalism individuals are often misled. Similarly William Leiss (1976, pp. 49-71) argued that some of Marcuse's "false needs," as a result of advertising and propaganda, can become as psychologically compelling as authentic needs. Ultimately the people who know, and come to determine, what (real) human needs really are, are intellectual experts — in Bay's case, university social scientists. [For the role of "responsible social scientists," of Universities and of "radical political education," see Bay (1981, pp. 77-81, 89).] For Bay it is "responsible social scientists" whose expertise identifies universal human needs. As Mary Hawkesworth argues, (1980, p. 357), Bay has no qualms about vesting political authority in such social scientists.

A fundamental implication of Bay's conception of human needs and politics is to elevate the role of "experts": It is social scientists who establish the hierarchy of human needs and determine the feasibility of universally fulfilling such needs; it is the social scientists who "set the priorities for the political agenda" (Hawkesworth, 1980, p. 362). Thus, "just priorities are to be determined. . . by the best available knowledge of biological and psychological priorities among basic human needs" (Bay, 1981, p. 89). Like Mar-

cuse's intellectual elite who will force people to be free, the individuals and groups who know are in essence Platonic experts. Bay hints at this connection by saying "As every political theory requires a model of the human being, so it requires a conception of human need priorities, which in a given society to be sure will be influenced by history and culture, but still retain some universal aspect. Much before Marx and Marcuse, Plato was preoccupied with the difference between what benefits men and what men on spurious grounds may come to desire!" (Bay, 1981, p. 19).

Such a distinction can have extremely dangerous consequences. It leaves the way open for an elite of experts, or other "representatives" of the State, to "objectively" pronounce upon what people, or "The People," need, despite the fact that the individuals said to have such needs want something quite different. This situation resembles Rousseau's theory of the General Will—which is not what all or the majority of people actually want or demand, but what they would will if they were true to their essential (good) natures. Actual support of real people becomes unnecessary.

The allegedly "objective" and scientific nature of "needs" is what makes needs talk of the Bay-Marcuse variety so fashionable, especially in educational circles. Of all human beings in our society, children are in the least authoritative position to pronounce upon what they want or desire, or to resist the findings of "experts." The current welter of literature about the "educational needs" and "curricula needs" of those who cannot "legitimately" speak for themselves is a dramatic example of the grave danger of applying a theory of human needs to politics. As a consequence, the British philosopher Antony Flew (1977, pp. 213-228) argues that, in political discussion, references to people's supposed needs, as opposed to their actual or expressed wants, are often the mark of the authoritarian. The famous slogan, "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs," ought, he suggests, for that reason, to make liberals and those who are committed to individual freedom shudder.

For all their differences, Herbert Marcuse and Christian Bay are united in the seductive pursuit of a politics based on true or genuine or real needs as opposed to false or alien ones, or as opposed to mere wants, desires and demands. While Bay is much more aware of the problems of "experts" and the possibilities of imposing needs, (for example, Bay, 1981, pp. 66, 93), from the perspective of those who value individual freedom, their respective need theories are also linked in their implicit authoritarianism. For who determines what are human needs? Certainly not "alienated," "repressed," inauthentic humans (i.e., us *all,* save the odd expert) in the here and now.

To highlight the dangers that the contemporary emphasis on needs in politics poses for personal autonomy, it is appropriate to close this paper

with a quotation from Yevgeny Zamyatin's great antitotalitarian tract *We, A Novel of the Future* (1972, p. 5): "I want to want myself — I do not want others to want for me." Despite its current appeal, need theory in relation to politics, as exemplified by Marcuse and Bay, has profoundly authoritarian, even totalitarian implications.

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