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## Cul de Sac

Le Garçon Dupont

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I live now in regrowing rainforest, in hills in the Far North of Australia, in a land, until very recently, occupied by the people who called themselves Bulwai. When many of the original people who inhabited Australia realised that their culture was being wiped out they refused the entreaties of anthropologists and they took their knowledge with them when they died. This is hard line heroism. They knew that the world was being changed, that human things were being snuffed out in favour of a new, anti-human form of social organisation. To enable the survival of an empty culture, one with form but no content, would be a clownish absurdity. The culture would become an academic product, an ideological or political product, and a product for sale. The heroes who took their knowledge with them may not have articulated this possibility in the way I just have, but they knew it. Don't think they didn't. Their intelligence far outstripped the intelligence of those kind anthropological scientists, who blew in on a blood-soaked breeze. Their intelligence was greater but, in this battle between two forms of social organisation, their power was less. They were strong enough to be still and quiet in the last breaths of their community; when they could have been remembered and celebrated

in the new culture as the last of the true people — because, you see, they knew that their words and their knowledge, if spoken out loud, would be put on show, to be derided, and worse: to be misunderstood. In the face of circumstances that were consuming them they remained tight-lipped. In the face of the circumstances which I believe have already consumed me... I squirm and want to make a point, even though I know that my words will be derided, and worse: misunderstood. Their intelligence outstrips mine.

When I talk about the original inhabitants of Australia I also mean all people across the world who genuinely lived in pre-civilisation societies. But here we have a term that needs explaining: civilisation. In its most basic definition ‘civilisation’ means ‘living in cities’, and this simplicity can be retained in an extension of the definition: civilisation means a society organised by the power residing in cities.

There have been instances of civilisation throughout history, I kid you not. It has occurred whenever city power has arisen. Sometimes this civilisation has crumbled and been completely lost, and the people have returned to a pre-civilisation way of living. Usually, however, the civilisation does not disappear entirely, it just transforms itself, and the power continues to emanate from the cities. Such a ‘crisis’ in civilisation occurred in what has become known as ‘the Dark Ages’ in Europe.

Civilisation today is qualitatively and quantifiably different from all previous civilisations. We are all aware of this. You know this; don’t think that you don’t. The civilisation we live under today is global, and it was global long before people started to worry about ‘globalisation’. The ‘sameness’ that we are able to witness throughout the world is due to the fact that all means of living are now provided for by one economic system. This system is referred to as capitalism. It is a perfected form of civilisation.

The dictionary says that Capital (the root word of capitalism) is wealth available for use in the production of further wealth.

Being human is a risky business and we are now less animal than is desirable. We have divorced ourselves from the animal state by becoming aware of our lives and by having the ability to use our lives in any way we wish, under the parameters set by our imaginations, that is, the parameters set by our material circumstance. We have totally killed the animal inside us by leaving the land and letting it, and ourselves, be sold.

And, because our ideas are governed by the material circumstances of our existence, every opposition that we throw against the social and economic organization of our lives only feeds into that structure and makes it stronger.

Le Garçon Dupont

September 2009

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living things evolve progressively from simple to complex organisms. This led to problems when he attempted to address what it is to be human in political and social terms. Basically speaking, Natural Selection cannot explain society.

modern society is such a lie; it never amounts to anything more interesting than the winning of a large amount of money on the lottery. This society creates the scenario where there is indeed no difference between David Bowie and the winner of a lottery.

What pre-civilisation societies had, though, was a connection to the land that made their existence closer to that of animals. This connection to the land has been described as one of being owned by the land rather than owning it.<sup>11</sup> The parameters of thought and idea were constrained by an intimate knowledge of the land. Humans existed as part of something, whereas today humans exist in isolation from any reference points apart from those given by the economic system. We can no longer feel and know the earth, even as it falls through our fingers. We do no longer look around us and know the trees and the hills as our real home, our real parents.

“... Charles Darwin, who met both Aborigines and Feugians in the 1830’s, classed the ‘shivering tribes’ of Fuegians as ‘the most abject and miserable creatures I anywhere beheld... The Australian, in the simplicity of the arts of life, comes nearest the Fuegian’. From these views came the concept that these societies in ‘the uttermost parts of the earth’ were living representatives of the oldest phase of human development.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the work of Bob Randall, a descendent of the Yankunytjatjara people of Uluru

<sup>12</sup> *The Original Australians*, Josephine Flood, 2006, Allen and Unwin, NSW, Australia, p 15. The development of Darwin’s ideas, and how they have been interpreted, is very interesting. Darwin is now often accused, by leftists and those who wish to discredit the issue of evolution, as a racist because of the ways he described those people across the world with whom he came into contact. However, this is unfair; he was trying to evaluate his experiences of other groups of people in terms of the dominant views of historical progression and in the terms he had devised regarding biology, where

Wealth, it says, is all goods and services which have monetary or productive value.

Productive, it says, means: producing goods and services that have exchange value.

Exchange, it transpires, is to hand over goods in return for the equivalent value in kind...

A key phrase here is exchange value... What things in this world have exchange value, that is, what things in this world are useful to the economy, what can be exchanged for money, what can be exchanged in order for us to continue living?

Take a look, take a deep look. Right through the mist, through the reflection on the cold, still water. Deeper. Right down to the point of your existence. It is disconcerting when you realise that the only useful part of you... is that which can somehow be ‘sold’, or made part of the economy. Truths can cut you in half like a sharp blade. Have I really exchanged my life for the dubious pleasure of continuing to live? When did it happen? When did I trade my life or did someone else trade it for me? Did it happen before I even went to work? And how on earth do I ever get it back again?

Hang on. Let us just review that last paragraph. On a second reading I realise that maybe it does not explain itself fully, or emphatically, enough. Dear reader, I don’t know your personal circumstances, and I hope that they are as pleasant as they can be. Maybe you are young and living at home with your parents. If so then I would suggest that the truths inherent in the paragraph above exist in you only as an inkling. Maybe you sense that at some point in the future you will have to fend for yourself, a time when parents or welfare will not be enough. It is common in these modern times that the days of idle youth come to a grinding halt when the demands of having to live in a certain manner become overbearing. Simply, there are two strategies to be taken at this point, one is to make oneself available for work, and the other is to suffer the ‘indignity’ of toughing it out as a ‘waster’. I speak from experience here, I have en-

duced both. Both lead to madness. Eventually, in my own life, I have made myself available for work, and I have done it for the romantic partner I have and the child I have. So, once one is properly in the world, living, not with ones parents, but with people who rely on you, then the sense of what might have to be done becomes more real... it is at this point that one realises that the people who are closest to you value you not only for your humour and kindness, but for your ability to provide income. And it is now that your humour and kindness seem to diminish..., and you are left thinking that the money you bring in is really all there is of importance in your being. Of course, there is more, how you treat those around you is supremely important..., but it is all connected, and your frenetic efforts to provide often crush your once held dream to be kind... This is the freedom I have had. I no longer really know who the guards are that stand at the doors of my prison. They have the faces of those I love...

Ah, but, you may say, this current way of doing things, life in the modern world, gives people more freedom. We are no longer tied to an endless search for food and shelter, we can rest and relax and dream. We have our time after work, our weekends, our retirement — it is in these moments that we can do exactly as we please and pursue our own idle pleasures; listen to music, play computer games, or watch television. Life is not so hard now as it once was...? But modern academic research is now finally beginning to tell us that, for instance, most mediaeval European serfs only worked for two-thirds of the year and that pre-civilisation humans generally lived in a state of abundance. Maybe we always think the past was hard and uncomfortable because we keep getting told that modern life is fabulous?

Maybe the reason we think this is because there was indeed one period of human existence that was pretty bad and it was quite recent. Of course, this period happened in 'the West', just as the modern good times are happening in 'the West' too. My

Thus, workers struggles tend to produce democracy, or a welfare state; revolt generally helps expand markets or create new ones; thus religious adventures will reflect the current mode of living; thus plans for the new world, as drawn up by the 'revolutionaries', will reflect current economic modes. The 'revolution' is more likely to be a self-managed counter-revolution than anything else.<sup>10</sup> If the central hero and victim in the romance of revolutionary thought is the working class and the first aim of the revolution should be to destroy the working class then there are a host of dilemmas to be faced right at the outset for revolutionaries. We have seen self-managed counter revolutions and the re-subjugation of the working class in the name of the working class in so many instances of interesting or calamitous times.

At every point in human history and existence the possibilities we think we are faced with are conditioned by our material circumstances. What many of us have now, in this era of capitalist civilisation, are possibilities based on our recent history, our experiences, our ideologies, our emotions — all shaped by our existence, our material circumstance. This existence is dominated by the way in which each of us needs to live in order to survive. We have to do things in order to be paid money so that we can buy our survival.

What people had in pre-civilisation societies was, on this level, no different. The possibilities they thought they were faced with were conditioned by their material circumstance. The possibilities open to them were based on their recent history, their experiences, their ideologies, their emotions.

Both types of society, therefore, lack that individualist freedom that is so highly valued in modern civilized society. This individualism that is put on such a pedestal by all sections of

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the remarkable text: *Lip and the self-managed counter-revolution*, Negation, translated and reprinted by Black and Red, Detroit, 1975

akin to academic discourse. I now wish to return to rough-hewn assertions and provocations; unravelings of logics that lead to who knows where?

Previously in this piece I said:

“To understand the real difference between pre-civilisation humanity and present-day humanity we have to comprehend the underlying difference in their modes of existence, the way they ‘make a living’.

This difference can be simply put and easily understood – I beg you to understand this. The original people of the world lived in societies that exulted the human being. Present-day people live in a society where the economy and wealth is exulted.”

But more recently I have agreed with descriptions that define humanness thus:

“The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity. Only because of that is he a species-being. Or, rather, he is a conscious being – i.e., his own life is an object for him.”

Humans are constrained in so many ways by their material circumstances.

The chances they have to change their way of living are not to be found in their ideas because their ideas are always bound by the parameters determined by material circumstance.

mother and father lived through the end of the period of hardship; they saw the world change from one of genuine struggle to survive, to one where survival was ensured. This period of general human misery lasted from the end of mediaeval times to the years immediately after the Second World War. This is the period that encompasses The Industrial Revolution and World Colonisation, and was the time during which the modern economy, capitalism, established itself and refined its operations. People of my age grew up being told that we were getting everything on a plate, and we heard the stories of hardship from our parents. We grew up thinking that the past was hard and uncomfortable; maybe we just let this notion speak for the whole of the past? Maybe this is why we think that ‘progress’ is a good thing. Yes, progression from the Industrial Revolution was/is a good thing... but is life better now than in Medieval European times? Think hard. Don’t jump to an answer. Research my question. Properly. Once you have done that, research what we know of human societies that existed before the mediaeval mode of production, before the rise or imposition of civilisation. Where would you rather live? Think hard. Don’t jump to an answer.

There is a film called *Dead Man*, by Jim Jarmusch.<sup>1</sup> It is set in the ‘wild west’ days of the USA. The hero of the film comes across an indigenous man who was seized by Europeans when he was young, paraded in front of them as a curio and then ‘educated’ and sent to England. This man is now unable to live either in the culture of his youth or the invading culture of the Europeans. He relates the story of his capture and subsequent events. He says that when he was put on show in different towns and cities across America, it was always the same people who came to see him. They moved all the people who saw him in one place to the next place to see him again. Why did he think they were the same people? It would have been be-

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<sup>1</sup> *Dead Man*, Jarmusch, Jim, Twelve Gauge Inc, 1994, USA.

cause they dressed the same, had the same language, behaved in the same way. These people who turned out to see the primitive savage, no matter which part of the country they lived in, all had the same reference points, all thought the same things; they were all the same. Today we get the same phenomenon across the entire globe: the important fact is not that we see the same shops everywhere, it is the fact that the same people are everywhere.

Capital has no human qualities, it has no personality; it is beyond good and evil. But it is clever; it grows with each new venture and enterprise, it takes over other ventures; it invents; it spreads. Different capitalist organisations, businesses or corporations, compete with each other. This competition is what keeps the economy 'healthy', and early proponents of capitalism (such as the Levellers in the English Revolution of 1648) were aware that this factor in the economy needed protecting, or regulating, which is why democracy is the political system used by the wealthiest countries.

Democracy isn't here to cater for the interests of 'the people'. Although one of its functions is to disguise where the real power in society lies, it mainly exists to regulate the market and keep a limited amount of competition alive. The most advanced capitalist countries, that is, the wealthiest and most powerful, also have the most well-established democratic political systems. This is not a coincidence; and it shows us that this is the way the capitalist economy works most efficiently. Those countries which are 'on the rise', such as China, currently have a growing democracy, or competition, or struggle, between differing business interests in the top echelons of their societies. We will know when these countries have reached a stable capitalist structure when the political system becomes fully democratic; when 'the workers' accept the 'fact' that they have an influence on government by being able to vote.

All societies are determined by the way the people 'make a living'. In pre-civilisation societies that living was directly

In pre-civilisation societies humans were also restricted in their ability to pursue free activity. They made their own history, their own lives, but within a certain framework.

Karl Marx said:

"People make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past."<sup>8</sup>

Ernest Mandel elaborated on this idea. He devised the term 'parametric determinism' to describe how history was made by humans, not some inevitable force, and how their actions are contained within particular parameters.<sup>9</sup> So, humans do have free will, but their will is constrained by their material circumstances and the ideology that grows from that. They are constrained by their perceptions, their experiences and their emotions. We can understand the truth of this if we look at any society of humans; we can see that certain things are likely to happen and certain things are not.

The human mind is a victim of the material circumstances it finds itself in.

Since humans are conscious of their activity and life (even if they are often misguided about what is really happening) they are able to stand apart from it. Unlike animals, which are defined largely by their activities, human activity is not what defines them. It is the consciousness of their activity which defines them. This is a useful and useable definition of what it is to be human.

In the last few paragraphs we have left my intuitive search for the ends of my logic and almost lapsed into a something

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<sup>8</sup> *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. Karl Marx 1852, found at [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org)

<sup>9</sup> *How To Make No Sense of Marx*, Ernest Mandel, 1989, found at [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org)

worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally. Man not only effects a change of form in the materials of nature; he also realises his own purpose in those materials. And this is a purpose he is conscious of, it determines the mode of his activity with the rigidity of a law, and he must subordinate his will to it. This subordination is no mere momentary act. Apart from the exertion of the working organs, a purposeful will is required for the entire duration of the work.”<sup>7</sup>

Humans are conscious beings, they are able to treat their own lives as an object, something they can consciously change and affect; they are therefore able to imagine possible futures and strive to achieve them. Their consciousness of the possibilities of their own existence gives them a practical freedom. Humans are able to decide to live differently. They are able to decide to live alone. They have a capacity for individualism. A human being could decide to live alone in a cave on a mountain top, thereby going against the tendency for humans to live in a social organization. A human could decide to live with another animal group and endeavour to be accepted by them.

This freedom, however, is determined and restricted by material circumstances. In the present day the activity of humans is bound within the parameters set by the way the economy is organized and the way that humans must secure a means of living. The activity of humans in the present day is, therefore, not free activity. Karl Marx suggested that it would only be in a society organized communistically, where technology was Industrial or post-Industrial, that humans would be able to create freely. In order to get to this possibility, however, history had to go through capitalism and the Industrial Revolution.

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<sup>7</sup> *Capital* Volume 1, Karl Marx, London 1867, Penguin Books, London 1976, page 284.

connected to the land. In modern society we all make a living by serving some function in the economy, for which we are paid money; once we have this money we are able to buy what we need to live. This process occurs even for those who make their living from the land. Even if we think we don't directly sell our brains, bodies and time for money, we still contribute to industries such as the welfare industry and the education industry. The economic imperatives that underpin capitalism give it a life beyond that of the mere individuals (the big bosses, entrepreneurs, etc) who appear to represent it.

And worse: capitalism is an economic system that has reached so deeply into the heart of humankind that it is able to recreate itself automatically within the mind, brain and creative impulse of human beings. We must not forget that our economic system is based on the large-scale brutalism which resulted in the success of the Industrial Revolution, combined with the large-scale brutalism which has resulted in the successful spread of the one economic system to all parts of the world. In this massive process of revolutionising the way the world works we have also changed as human beings. It would be absurd to think otherwise.

When rural workers were drawn from the land to work in factories in Europe they were physically shocked at the new work routines they had to cope with. They fought these new regimes by not coming to work. They would claim Holy Days as justifications for a sleep in and a party. They would have Monday off because it was St Monday's Day, and sometimes they even had St Tuesday and St Wednesday too!<sup>2</sup> Of course, such obstruction could not be allowed to continue, so life in the factories became more authoritarian and was backed up by increasing amounts of brute force. People actually died because of the increase in the amount of work and the decrease in free-

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<sup>2</sup> *The Making of the English Working Class*, E.P. Thompson, 1963, London.

dom. This new regime for living spread beyond the workplace. Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century the British authorities had to shorten the school day for the new mass school population because children were dying from overwork and stress. When pre-civilisation people were used in factory situations in new empires across the world, they simply died from the trauma of it. In Medieval Europe ordinary people worked far less than we do now. They would be aghast at how little we know of the land, and how much of our time we spend working for faceless others. They would understand, however, why we are consumed by stress and mental illness. We are not the same people that our distant ancestors were.

“The World Health Organisation says depression is the fourth biggest disease in the world. One in five people will suffer from clinical depression at some stage in their life.” *The Cairns Post*, August 29<sup>th</sup> 2009.

“Neuroses are unknown there and no one has ever seen a person who was mentally disturbed.”<sup>3</sup>

To understand the real difference between pre-civilisation humanity and present-day humanity we have to comprehend the underlying difference in their modes of existence, the way they ‘make a living’.

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<sup>3</sup> *Dix-Sept Ans Chez Les Sauvages. Les Aventures de Narcisse Pelletier Constant Merland*, 1876. Translated by Stephanie Anderson in her book, “Pelletier, The Forgotten Castaway of Cape York,” 2009, Melbourne Books, Melbourne, Australia.

After being shipwrecked in 1857 fourteen year old cabin boy, Narcisse Pelletier was taken in by the Utaalnganu people of Cape York, Australia and spent the next seventeen years living with them. The area these people lived in had not yet been colonised by Europeans. He was eventually ‘taken back’, against his will, by the captain of an English pearling vessel and returned to France; where Constant Merland interviewed him and wrote up his story. Pelletier never seemed to re-adjust successfully to life in France, and died of ‘nervous exhaustion’ at the age of fifty.

hence, man also produces in accordance with the laws of beauty.”<sup>5</sup>

He continues:

“The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It is not distinct from that activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life activity. Only because of that is he a species-being. Or, rather, he is a conscious being — i.e., his own life is an object for him, only because he is a species-being. Only because of that is his activity free activity. Estranged labour reverses the relationship so that man, just because he is a conscious being, makes his life activity, his essential being, a mere means for his existence.”<sup>6</sup>

Later, in *Capital*, he writes:

“A spider conducts operations that resemble those of the weaver, and a bee would put many a human architect to shame by the construction of its honeycomb cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour-process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the

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<sup>5</sup> *Economic & Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* (also referred to as *The Paris Manuscripts*), a series of notes written between April and August 1844 by Karl Marx. Found on [www.marxists.org](http://www.marxists.org). Also to be found at: “Marx’s theory of human nature.” Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. 1 Mar 2009.

<sup>6</sup> As above



who are suspicious of the rise of the all-conquering civilised man tend to view the world through the same lens: it is only through the material and psychological process that we have undergone, say the 'revolutionaries', that we can establish a free, human, communistic society. Capitalism is necessary prior to Communism. For the 'revolutionaries' this is the trajectory of progress. Progress, in their book, is still, even after all the war, misery and killing, a good or necessary thing, without it how can we achieve a world communist society? These 'revolutionaries' may nit-pick with those they see as the supporters of Capitalism, but they do not see where they agree with each other, they do not see how their ideas about the march of progress are fully in line with the support for existing conditions: for civilisation and capitalism.

The differences between humans and other living animals are always interesting to explore. Benjamin Franklin famously defined humans as 'the tool-making animal,' however, this has been proved to need some elaboration. Karl Marx wrote:

"It is true that animals also produce. They build nests and dwellings, like the bee, the beaver, the ant, etc. But they produce only their own immediate needs or those of their young; they produce only when immediate physical need compels them to do so, while man produces even when he is free from physical need and truly produces only in freedom from such need; they produce only themselves, while man reproduces the whole of nature; their products belong immediately to their physical bodies, while man freely confronts his own product. Animals produce only according to the standards and needs of the species to which they belong, while man is capable of producing according to the standards of every species and of applying to each object its inherent standard;

This difference can be simply put and easily understood — I beg you to understand this. The original people of the world lived in societies that exulted the human being. Present-day people live in a society where the economy and wealth is exulted.

In pre-civilisation times the occupants of the land travelled and exchanged tools and artefacts across the continents and beyond. This was a kind of economy, but it in no way resembles the economy under which the world lives today. The whole point of anything done in a pre-civilisation society was to reproduce the human community in which the people lived. The 'capital' of this society (and any 'pre-civilisation' society) is the human being. It is the human being that is recreated and reproduced. In modern society we live under an economy which only reproduces humans as a bi-product. What is recreated and reproduced now is wealth, or capital (which is why our economy is described as capitalist). Modern society is geared to recreate the wealth of individuals, business and corporations; and most other humans play only a part in this process. Their part is equal to the materials or land used. Just like oil or land, most humans are now a commodity to be used in the re-creation of profit and wealth. Even those individuals who seem to benefit from great wealth are only part of a process in which they have also sold themselves. Like the rest of us, they are commodities too.

Humanity has lost its animal status, and this is not a good thing. All animals need to adapt to their environment in order to keep that environment healthy. Non-adaptation results in strange phenomena. It can result in massive population explosions, for example amongst rabbits introduced into Australia many years ago, or amongst humans who have been divorced from the land and turned into the slaves of wages. These population explosions are signs of non-suitability; they will be accompanied by massive, periodic epidemics, or constant battle. They show that the animal that is undergoing a population

explosion has lost its connectedness to the land, as it rides roughshod over it. The introduced rabbit has changed the nature of the flora in the areas it has conquered in Australia, just as the new human converts the landscape into a product that serves the economy and the generation of money and wealth.

The human species is 'out of control' because the economic system has taken human beings away from the land; because capitalism has put a barrier between human beings and the natural world. This barrier is created daily in even the most dirt poor rural places, and here the misery is even more extreme; the outskirts of the city is the only option for survival. We skid and slide inside this bubble that has been created inside the bubble of the world's tiny atmosphere. We do not know what we are doing anymore. This life no longer retains any animal content.

Since the onset of the Industrial Revolution a lot of thought has been given over to the question of what the essence of being human really is.

"It was without exception the most curious and interesting spectacle I ever beheld: I could not have believed how wide was the difference between savage and civilised man: it is greater than between a wild and domesticated animal, inasmuch as in man there is a greater power of improvement."

Charles Darwin

"But these [Tierra del] Fuegians in the canoe were quite naked, and even one full-grown woman was absolutely so. It was raining heavily, and the fresh water, together with the spray, trickled down her body. In another harbour not far distant, a woman, who was suckling a recently-born child, came one day alongside the vessel, and remained there out of mere curiosity, whilst the sleet fell and thawed

on her naked bosom, and on the skin of her naked baby! These poor wretches were stunted in their growth, their hideous faces bedaubed with white paint, their skins filthy and greasy, their hair entangled, their voices discordant, and their gestures violent. Viewing such men, one can hardly make one's self believe that they are fellow-creatures, and inhabitants of the same world. It is a common subject of conjecture what pleasure in life some of the lower animals can enjoy: how much more reasonably the same question may be asked with respect to these barbarians! At night, five or six human beings, naked and scarcely protected from the wind and rain of this tempestuous climate, sleep on the wet ground coiled up like animals. Whenever it is low water, winter or summer, night or day, they must rise to pick shellfish from the rocks; and the women either dive to collect sea-eggs, or sit patiently in their canoes, and with a baited hair-line without any hook, jerk out little fish. If a seal is killed, or the floating carcass of a putrid whale is discovered, it is a feast; and such miserable food is assisted by a few tasteless berries and fungi."

Charles Darwin<sup>4</sup>

It is the establishment of civilisation and the advance of the capitalist economy that has created the parameters of thought on the question of what human beings are. It is not that the events of the last few hundred years have given us something to think about, it is that those events have made us think in certain ways. Many of us do, in all innocence and honesty, regard these events as 'progress'. Even those of us

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<sup>4</sup> *Journal of Researches into the Natural History and Geology of the Countries Visited during the Voyage of HMS Beagle Round the World* (first published 1839), Charles Darwin, T Nelson and Sons, London 1890, p 259–280