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Anarchy and Ecstasy: Visions of Halcyon Days

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*witchcraft rite and much dispute over its authenticity. Some maintain that it contains sentiments which have been uninterruptedly passed down the ages from prehistoric times, whilst others aver that it derives wholly from the fertile imagination of Leland, who first published it in 1899. (For further information, see Margot Adler, *Drawing Down the Moon: Witches, Druids, Goddess-Worshippers, and Other Pagans in America Today, Revised and Expanded Edition* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1986), 56–9.) But to my mind the fact that it remains on the very cusp between fabrication and authenticity, or “fact” and “fiction,” adds to its attraction.*

Chapter 1: A Sprig of Mistletoe

The essays in this collection were envisioned and written beneath a sprig of mistletoe. The latter provides permission, a licence for pleasure unconstrained by law and limited only by the desires of the mutual participants. This Yuletide custom remains an attenuated token, a relic of the saturnalia, the solstice celebrations during which everything was temporarily everted: laws fell into abeyance, labour ceased, sexual liberty prevailed, gender roles became blurred and alterable, class differences receded, and control ceased. In turn, the saturnalia — a safety valve for repressed energies in antiquity — was itself a remnant from an era of primal freedom, the earthly paradise of global mythology, characterized by a total absence of control. The following essays hope to facilitate a regeneration of humanity through a renewal of this earthly paradise.

Formally, the present collection is intended to constitute a preliminary body of visionary insights. If, as Debord maintains, “revolutionary theory is now the enemy of all revolutionary ideology *and knows it*”, then visionary insight in turn transcends revolutionary ideology because the latter remains insufficiently radical. Total revolution must go beyond ideology to recover its roots through ecstatic visions. Hence, illuminated by an antinomian Inner Light, these essays examine vital issues on the interface between “fact” and “fiction,” history and myth, and draw materials from disparate orders of discourse.

Maybe life can once again become an exhilarating experience, a perpetuity of those intense feelings we recall from child-

hood anticipations of a seaside holiday, kiss chase, and falling in love. Perhaps, our hair entwined with holly and ivy, we can wassail every day.

Chapter 7: The Appeal of Anarchy

Amidst ecstatic visions Anarchy appears. She says:

Whenever you need anything, once a month at the full moon, assemble in the wilderness — in the forest, on the heath, by the seashore — for the state of nature is a community of freedoms. Recognize the imminence of total liberation, and as a sign of your freedom be naked in your rites.

Dance and sing, laugh and play, feast on the fruits of the earth, the delights of my body, make music and love — for all acts of pleasure are my rituals. And I am that which you find in the fulfilment of desire.

Abolish all authority, root out coercion. Share all things in common and decide through consensus. Shake off the character armor which binds and constrains. Let the wilderness energies possess you.

Cast the magic circle, enter the trance of ecstasy, revel in the sorcery which dispels all power. But commit no sacrifices. Repudiate harmfulness, exploitation and slaughter. Rather venerate all creatures and respect them as different but equal to you.

Total transformation thus becomes possible.

This rite shall continue to be celebrated until Anarchy becomes universal.

This text has been adapted from renderings of “The Charge of the Goddess” by Starhawk and Charles G.Leland. There are multiple versions of this

For Matthew Arnold, the philistines were the precipitants of anarchy, insurgents against whom authority wielded the weapon of culture. But he was wrong: by definition, the culture of authority remains philistine. Current mainstream culture, and the majority of its fringes, remain implicated, permeated by the stench of putrefying animal flesh, the source of totalitarian biocide. To become its antithesis, the shift toward total revolution must be founded upon, characterized by, and aspire toward a regeneration of total culture. Only thus will a culture of anarchy maintain its validity.

Chapter 2: Toward a Cultural Ecology of Anarchy

The aim of this essay is to subvert, and hence explode, one of the central ordering myths in Western civilization. The subversive action will occur through taking the elements within this myth to their logical conclusion. In the process, I hope to discover the conceptual basis for a new “politics,” or in fact an *antipolitics*.

The myth selected for this process concerns the act of universal creation and the subsequent fall of humanity. This myth remains of central significance for two reasons. First, it is a common component of the mythic legacy shared by paganism and Christianity, and thus plays a crucial ordering role within Western culture. And, secondly, in addition to offering an account of the structure of the universe and history, it provides an elementary paradigm in defining the nature and significance of obedience and disobedience. It is, then, a totalist explanatory grid, but one which contains within itself elements which can precipitate its collapse.

In order to gain access to this myth, I have decided to focus my analysis on one particular text — John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. This text has been chosen partly for its lucidity, but mainly because it constitutes a major synthesis of the relevant Western myths. In this poem Judaeo-Christian creation myths are explicitly combined with their pagan counterparts. Milton synthesises scriptural interpretations with insights derived from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, itself a compendium of ancient myths. Moreover, *Paradise Lost* remains concerned with two

interlinked phenomena that are fundamental to our concerns: power and religion.

1. Power

The events in the poem's narrative remain familiar, and in the present context not entirely relevant. Satan and his cohorts unsuccessfully attempt to depose God through rebellious military action. As a result, they are expelled from Heaven and consigned to Hell. God creates the Earth, and humanity in particular, in order to fill the void left by the expulsion of the fallen angels. Partly as an act of revenge, and partly as the opening shot in a fresh campaign to dethrone God, Satan enters Eden and tempts Adam and Eve to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. As a punishment for this transgression, they are banished from paradise and forced to inhabit a world of sin, temporality, and death.

These events are of secondary significance here. The really important point which emerges from this narrative is the conception of the structure or order of the universe. After the Earth's creation, the universe is essentially regarded in Manichean terms. Two vast and opposing forces — God and the Devil, or good and evil — fight a battle for universal control, a conflict the outcome of which depends upon enlisting a third element, humanity, into its ranks. The two opposing forces must each win over humanity to its side. Humanity can then be converted into combat troops in the war against the opposing force. Whatever the outcome, however, for humanity the result remains the same. Either victorious force will demand absolute submission and obedience from its former troops.

The significance of this cuneal perspective — of conceiving the structure of the universe in terms of an inverted triangle — can be seen when we realize that it has been generalized to such an extent that it now comprises the central method of for-

The best of the present culture — a culture in the pathological sense only — points beyond itself toward the recovery of primate lifeways. But for anarchists to seek inspiration in the strictly limited emancipatory attempts of the Paris Commune, the Spanish Revolution or May 1968 remains absurd. In these instances, the participants demanded so little and — not surprisingly, given their embattled situations — made only minimal moves toward recovery. It might be more congruent for anarchists to redirect attention toward the Adamites, the radical section of the dissenting Medieval commune of Tabor:

The majority of the Taborites were extreme puritans in their personal conduct, but a minority, influenced by the Free Spirit doctrines of the Pikarti, believed that the millennium had already arrived. They were the kingdom [sic] of the elect, and for them all laws had been abolished. Four hundred were expelled from Tabor in 1421 and wandered through the woods naked, singing and dancing, claiming to be in the state of innocence of Adam and Eve before the fall. Acting on Christ's remark about harlots and publicans, they considered chastity a sin and seem to have spent their time in a continuous sexual orgy.¹⁴

The nomadic, non-earth-centred nature of this venture indicates its limitations as a recovery endeavour, but it remains a far superior example of liberation than those listed above. In contrast to the latter, it contains an explicit recognition that Civilization constitutes a vast aberration and transgression of natural law — a perceptual basis upon which the Adamites founded alternative modes of conduct (a rudimentary form of culture).

¹⁴ Kenneth Rexroth, *Communalism: From Its Origins to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974), 89.

techniques, remains operational today.¹² The military state enforces its domination through economic exploitation and its attendant class distinctions, gender and ethnic differentiations, educational and religious indoctrination, the imposition of a monetary system, and so on. Its vassals in turn hunt and enslave animals, deliberately breeding a surplusage for exploitation and slaughter which eventually exhausts the land, causing dearth and famine. Still, amongst privileged classes or regions, animal flesh remains the staple dietary element, but this “unprimate food” corrupts “the inner organs, causing dull wits, foul diseases and great demands for medical help”.¹³ In short, it reinforces dependence upon and support for authoritarian control structures, creating a predisposition toward stupefaction. The cycle of degeneration remains complete. Ecologically, socially, and characterologically, the infestation of the flesh virus ultimately remains the catastrophic source of contemporary biocidal totalitarianism.

Given this horrific onslaught, it remains hardly surprising that the arboriculture disappeared and the lifeways it embodied became otherworldly. Atlantis sank beneath the waves, Avalon evaporated, paradise became enskied and could be hoped for only in an afterlife. But for those of us who wish to reverse this process and renew the earthly paradise, such consolation remains insufficient. Regeneration can become possible only through actions based upon an incisive awareness of the full nature of primeval transcultural conflict. In order to recover culture, to discover the basis for a culture of anarchy, it remains essential to revive the primal total culture, the holistic integration of art, ethics and horticulture. From this perspective, anything less remains severely tainted and compromised through its infection by the biopathic virus.

¹² Ibid., 157.

¹³ Ibid.

mulating Western reality. The strife is not only between good and evil for the human soul, but (to list just a few examples) between the law and lawlessness for the community; capitalism and communism for the world; ruling class and proletariat for society; the superego and the id for the ego... The list could be extended indefinitely.

In every instance, however, certain shared characteristics are perceptible. The God-Satan-Humanity trio, and all their contemporary analogues, in the cuneal paradigm can be represented as the forces of control, counter-control, and the controlled. The control forces create and command a hierarchical power structure. The forces of counter-control, often a disaffected fragment of the control elite strata, attempt to overthrow the ruling control forces. In order to do this, they ostensibly disabuse the controlled, the victims of the control forces, about their controllers. In order to enlist the support of the controlled, the forces of counter-control may promise liberation from control. But this merely constitutes an illusory enticement. The forces of counter-control are not interested in total revolution, but a *coup d'etat*; they are not interested in eliminating coercion and hierarchy, but merely with displacing the current controllers and seizing power themselves. The controlled, then, remain victims whether they conform or rebel. And this, because of the universal application of the cuneal paradigm, remains the debilitating impasse of the controlled today. Apparently too weak to break the chains of control on their own, they are doomed to remain pawns in an alternating game of eternal conformity or endlessly betrayed revolt. And this will remain the case until the cuneal paradigm is completely subverted and exploded.

In undertaking this task, an antipolitical reading of *Paradise Lost* provides many of the requisite materials. Why an antipolitical reading? And what exactly is denoted by that term? By antipolitical I do not mean an approach that pretends it has no ideological dimensions. I do, however, mean an approach that

is not political. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines politics as the “science and art of government,” and political as “of the State or its government.” Political praxis, in this definition, thus remains the ideology of governance, and as such it remains appropriate to the shared discursive territory of the forces of control and counter-control. In attempting to transcend that territory, therefore, it is necessary to construct an antipolitics, an anarchic praxis that is more germane for those whose aim is the dissolution, not the seizure, of power.

Once intellectually emancipated from the political obsession with domination and order, fresh vistas and unexpected perspectives are immediately disclosed. In this particular instance, the antipolitical methodology discovers, through a heretical reading of *Paradise Lost*, the superficiality, fragility and comparative recency of the cuneal paradigm. If the text is considered without political blinkers, it can be readily discovered that the universe does not possess a cuneal structure, but (as a minimum) has a quadruplex form.

In Book Two of the poem, Satan, after consulting with his demonic associates, determines to leave Hell and travel to Earth in order to precipitate the fall of humanity. He persuades the portress to open the gates of Hell, and we are told:

Before thir eyes in sudden view appear
The secrets of the hoarie deep, a dark
Illimitable Ocean without bound,
Without dimension, where length, breadth,
highth,
And time and place are lost; where eldest Night
And *Chaos*, Ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal *Anarchie*, amidst the noise
Of endless Warrs, and by confusion stand.
For hot, cold, moist, and dry, four Champions

been reversed, despite the mass animal slaughter, by their transition to livestock breeding. But the appearance was deceptive. The apparent short-term gains were overwhelmingly outweighed by long-term environmental depredations. The arboriculturists, fatally compromised by this time, were unable to counter the forces which were literally blighting their lifeways:

The overgrazing of the land by the herds of domestic animals sapped the fertility of the soil. The crops then became more susceptible to the host of blights which had always been a menace. When the season was favorable to those invisible fungi, dark spots would appear upon the leaves and spread from tree to tree. Then the foliage would wither and droop, and the spots would spread to the fruit. And the priests interpreted this to mean that the tree needed purer blood. So we took no more... unclean beasts... And when the blight still came on, spreading from tree to tree; and the earth seemed barren and the sands began to come; then the wizards came to us with hard faces, for they were certain of the efficacy of blood. The gods, they said, were angry with us, and there was only one way to propitiate them.¹¹

So murder became sanctified. Crop offerings, replaced by animal sacrifices, augmented by ritual killing of humans, tumefied into the systematic mass slaughter practised by the Aztecs, the precursors of contemporary totalitarianism. The synchronous subjugation of the arboriculture set the “essential pattern” of Civilization: the chain of oppression, the vicious circle of ongoing degeneration which, allowing for socio-economic changes and developments in control

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

effects. Private property, rather than community of goods, now slowly becomes predominant. The aryan term for war literally meant “a desire for more cows.” The war on animals became a war on humans and thence a war on nature, a war ultimately against all life waged in the name of total domination and disconnexion. Abattoirs, concentration camps, gas chambers and nuclear weapons all originate in the same complex.

The ground for the arboriculture’s violent subjugation was prepared through infection, both literal and symbolic. The orchardists, with their intuitive notion of cosmic equilibrium through reciprocity, had long recognized the significance of sacrificing the first fruits — i.e., allowing the initial crop in a season to fall and remain unharvested. This bloodless offering repaid the Earth by mulching and enriching the topsoil, which in turn yielded bigger fruit and larger crops. With the advent of animal domestication, however, it was discovered that spreading animal excrement under the branches of the trees resulted in an even more prolific yield. But the nitrogen in fecal matter which promotes plant growth, the slaughtering herders unwittingly discovered, is even more profuse in animal blood. Stevens surmises that the effect of this revelation on the arboriculturists was devastating, for the trees’ positive response to blood seemed to indicate divine approbation for slaughter in general and animal sacrifice in particular. Cosmological perceptions were transmuted and Mars, initially a vegetation god, became God of War.

The orchardists were ideologically undermined before they were militarily subdued. This demonstration of a seeming veracity in the theology developed by the barbarians’ specialized priesthood (in contrast to the generalized spirituality and random shamanism amongst the orchardists) initiated a fatal strain of degeneration amongst their frugivorous neighbours. In the hunting-fishing phase, the northerners had already begun their biocidal activities, rendering numerous species, such as the mammoth, extinct. This tendency seemed to have

fierce
Strive here for Maistrie, and to Battel bring
Thir embryon Atoms; they around the flag
Of each his faction, in thir several Clanns,
Light-arm’d or heavy, sharp, smooth, swift or
slow,
Swarm populous, unnumber’d as the Sands
Of *Barca* and *Cyrene’s* torrid soil,
Levied to side with warring Winds, and poise
Thir lighter wings. To whom these most adhere,
Hee rules a moment; *Chaos* Umpire sits,
And by decision more imbroiles the fray
By which he Reigns; next him high Arbiter
Chance governs all. Into this wild Abyss,
The Womb of nature and perhaps her Grave,
Of neither Sea, no Shore, nor Air, nor Fire,
But all these in thir pregnant causes mixt
Confus’dly, and which thus must ever fight,
Unless th’ Almighty Maker them ordain
His dark materials to create more Worlds,
Into this wild Abyss the warie fiend
Stood on the brink of Hell and look’d a while.

(*Book 2, 11.890–918*)

In this passage, Milton combines Christian and pagan elements, the latter explicitly derived from Ovid. But in synthesising these two mythic traditions, he in fact transcends them both. In the Biblical and Ovidian accounts, the divine creative fiat transforms the entire chaos of primordial matter into a structured universe. The divine power is omnific, its creative act does not leave any remainder of chaotic matter. Here, however, Milton supplies a vision of an extant chaos or anarchy. And although his Christian perspective, necessarily a control perspective, obviously limits the pertinence of his representation, some of the remarks he makes are very suggestive.

First, although his imagery remains confined by the political concern with domination, conflict and militarism, it should be noted that, in pointed contrast to Heaven and Hell, there are *several* personified “rulers” here: eldest Night, Chaos, Anarchy and Chance. Furthermore, as their names indicate, these qualities can hardly be said to *rule* in any political sense. Chaos and Chance are both characterised as umpires, and by necessity this implies that there are certain codes and rules to be followed. This is not an image of total lawlessness. However, the conjunction of such terms as chaos and chance with the notions of arbitration imply that such rules are not absolute nor imposed, but remain amenable to reform. The contest Chaos and Chance preside over is characterized in military terms, but again this appears a less serious, more ludic, conflict than that between the divine and the demonic forces depicted elsewhere in the poem. While the latter strife remains concerned with the possibilities of eternal subjugation, the warring elements here are involved in a conflict which denies the basis of domination: “To whom these [atoms] most adhere,/Hee rules a moment.” The momentary nature of governance undermines power, and anyway these “subjects” adhere voluntarily, in contrast to the coerced obedience of the control forces.

Secondly, attention should be paid to the structure of the universe as it is revealed in the above passage. Milton characterizes Chaos’s territory as “The Womb of nature and perhaps her Grave.” Chaos gave birth, and possibly can bring death, to nature. By nature, Milton designates all creation, including Heaven, Earth and Hell, plus all of their inhabitants. In interpreting this, emphasis should be placed on the word creation. It should be remembered that God (the control force) created both the demons (the forces of counter-control) and humanity (the controlled). They are His creatures, he has called them into being, and determined (indeed preordained) their identities and roles — hence His absolute power. But, as this passage renders apparent, He manufactured them from

The philosophic contrast between the cultures is sharp; but the conflict seems to have remained latent until the domestication of animals in the neolithic period. There is no evidence of warfare between the hunters and the horticulturists. Economically their interests were not at variance. Indeed, the hunters by reducing the number of wild animals performed the same service to food growers as did the beasts of prey; it was easier to grow crops successfully when the wild creatures were kept in abeyance. So the hunters and fishers, though they were at war with most of the animal kingdom [sic], were at peace with their fellow man.¹⁰

Stevens speculates that animal domestication originated amongst the orchardists, arguing that they tamed creatures not for farming and slaughtering, but as helpmates and crop protectors against wild birds and rodents. The barbarians, however, converted this benevolent symbiotic practice into the exploitative mode of livestock breeding — something more congenial to their carnivorous nomadic lifestyle. Cattle, goats and sheep were farmed for their milk, hides and flesh; horses were broken in to become implements of war and domination. And the arboriculturists failed sufficiently to oppose this development, or if they did so it was always too little and too late. Stevens suggests the Cain and Abel story records this conflict: the frugivorous grower kills the carnivorous herdsman in retaliation for the latter’s livestock overrunning his garden. But the retribution remains inadequate because the proliferation of herders continues apace. The dwindling hunting and fishing subsistence economy acquires a zombie-like resurrection, ironically through the agency of a technique adapted from the arboriculturists, whose subjugation it now

¹⁰ Ibid., 34.

— were assembled in prototypal form amongst the northern tribes during the Ice Age.

Stevens discerns two phases in the development of the northern “Blood Culture,” both centred on the treatment of animals and the natural world in general.⁸ The hunting phase considered above was superseded by a tellingly entitled period of animal husbandry. The latter commenced with the withdrawal of glaciation:

As the ice receded and plant food became again abundant, the capacity of the middle lands increased. Into a region accustomed to the hunting economy moved growers of crops. Thus the ultimate population of these lands was exposed in the Stone Age to two distinct types of culture — one the handax culture of the south, of primate character, symbolized by the tree; the other, the spear culture of the north, of carnivorous character, symbolized by blood.⁹

One might imagine that this reconvergence of two by now almost totally disparate cultures would produce bloodshed, with the warlike nomads effortlessly exterminating the growers whom they perceive as invaders of their territory, and hence proceeding to subjugate the southern heartlands. The fact that generations passed before the barbarians felt sufficiently confident to operate in this manner testifies to their relative weakness in the face of the arboriculture’s resilience. But the northerners’ seeming acquiescence in peaceful coexistence lulled the orchardists into a false sense of security which made their ultimate enslavement all the more effectual. The latter were drawn into a fatal compromise:

⁸ Ibid., 153.

⁹ Ibid., 33.

raw materials derived from the primordial territory of Chaos. Essentially, they are composed of chaotic atoms. Metaphorically, then, Chaos could become the grave of nature if the creatures of God began to divest their assigned identities and, through a process of biodegradation, started to remerge with the extant realm of Anarchy. In doing so, they would undergo a total revolutionary transformation; no longer manipulated creations, they would become independent yet collective creators. For we can now see that there are at least four elemental forces within the universe: God-Satan-Humanity-Anarchy; or, the forces of control, counter-control, the controlled, and the uncontrollables. I say at least four because the last component does not possess any unitary coherence. What so appalls Milton about Anarchy is its multiplicity and proliferating capacities. Unlike the other limited and limiting locales, it represents unlimited possibility and potential. It represents a positive anarchy or disorder, rather than the totalitarianism of order, which the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines as “rank, row, class” — an inherently hierarchical concept. The positive nature of this anarchy is implicitly recognized by Milton when it is contrasted with Pandaemonium, a term he coined to describe Satan’s capital in Hell. Pandaemonium is the negative aspect of anarchy, anarchy as the site of lawlessness and malificence. Chaos, in contrast, is the positive aspect of anarchy, a site of multiple potentiality.

As Barbara C. Sproul’s anthology *Primal Myths: Creating the World* indicates, all cosmogonies — not merely those of the West — remain curiously silent regarding the reasons for the appearance of the control figure, who transforms the anarchic, paradisaical and ecologically-integrated “state of nature” into the stratified, oppressive and coercive order of creation — the original State. Marx tried to discern these reasons in the development of material and productive conditions. But Fredy Perlman, in his monumental *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!*, provides a more convincing explanation. Control figures arise

when anarchic communities, immersed in beatific dreams, visions and vocations, inadvertently delegate too much authority to an individual who is temporarily assigned the task of maintaining the (to them) subsidiary and trivial apparatus which sustains material life. The distracted community does not realize until too late that the strong individual gradually accumulates power through continuously performing the disparaged maintenance duties. The individual constructs a hierarchy to facilitate his responsibilities, and this hierarchical institution is eventually employed to enslave the free community. As the institution expands and becomes more impersonal, it gains a momentum of its own and becomes unmanageable, even by its ostensible rulers. Hence, its deistic, absolute powers, which are then projected or displaced onto the cosmos itself.

A version of this process appears in *Paradise Lost*. Chaos has not been a conscious or militant force, and hence has remained vulnerable to incursions by the divine. This becomes apparent when Chaos describes the structure of the universe to Satan:

I upon my Frontieres here
Keep residence; if all I can will serve,
That little which is left so to defend,
Enroacht on still through our intestine broiles
Weakening the Scepter of old *Night*; first Hell
Your dungeon stretching far and wide beneath;
Now lately Heaven and Earth, another World
Hung ore my Realm, link'd in a golden Chain
To that side Heav'n from where your Legions fell.

(*Book 4, 11.998–1006*)

Chaos, absorbed in internal excitements, has failed to prevent the annexation of its territories by the control forces. Such is the disarray that Milton refers to Chaos as a “brok’n foe” (*Book 2, 1.1039*). And, in fact, even the permission given to Satan to pass through the realm to Earth effectuates a further

germinant processes.⁶ Patriarchal ideology, which exalted a deracinated, linear masculine sexuality above earth-centred female menstrual cycles, overthrew the delicately balanced polarities of matrifocal spirituality and replaced it with a hierarchical, priestly religion which stressed the celestial at the expense of the chthonic. The sky gods replaced earth spirits, the sun god displaced the moon goddess, animism became animalism, menstrual-centred mysteries were distorted into blood sacrifices. The “Age of Blood,” which continues to the present day, had begun.⁷ And the slaughter of animals soon extended to the murder of humans. Competition for scarce resources amongst nomadic groups inexorably resulted in conflict, and in its train the institutions of war and militarism. Hunting and warfare both demand tools for killing, hence the origins of the arms trade. The need to coordinate these diverse activities in a firm command structure under the control of a ruling elite eventually led to the formation of a prototypical State. Hence, it can be seen that the essential elements which comprise the contemporary control complex — or Civilization

⁶ Three points should be made at this juncture. First, the generative capacities attributed to women here should not be understood merely in the narrow sense of parturition, but in the wider sense of creativity and inventiveness in general. Secondly, I am aware that the picture I am painting of the northern “blood culture” remains stark, even exaggerated. It is certainly true that in certain instances — e.g., in some Amerindian tribes — patriarchal/hierarchical elements have been accommodated within wider egalitarian structures. War then becomes the sport of counting coups, whilst opportunities for the development of a rich culture still remain available. However, whilst these societies are far preferable to their Western counterparts, they remain tainted by the same sanguinary virus which flared up amongst their central American cousins, the Aztecs. And, anyway, this stark depiction clearly remains applicable to the Western path of development. Thirdly, it should be borne in mind that the developments deliberately telescoped here for purposes of coherence, actually took hundreds or thousands of years to take shape.

⁷ Stevens, 106,

Amongst these northern tribes, the integrated culture developed by the arboriculturists was fragmented, and devastated in each of its three aspects. Plant cultivation was abandoned, ethical sensibility was debased through animal (and consequently human) exploitation, and opportunities for the development of a communal-spiritual-artistic culture vanished. This traumatic cultural deprivation, with its attendant disfiguration of sensibility, constitutes the foundation of the biocidal mentality.

The human physiological structure does not possess the capacity to digest flesh properly. The toxic properties in decomposing flesh, which cannot be assimilated or dissipated, enter the human organism and act as an irritant. This physiological factor, combined with the shame resulting from violation of the cardinal ethical principle, was sufficient to produce a generalized disposition toward ill-feeling — both an inner sense of disease and of being ill at ease, and an outer ill-tempered belligerence — in the northern tribes. This constitutional degeneration was gradually compounded by other environmental factors. In a context of scarce resources, competition — rather than the mutual aid characteristic of the orchardists — became inevitable. Work, rather than ritual play, became the primary occupation, and with it slowly came a division of labour, a demarcation of responsibilities and power, hierarchical control. Given that hunting was the basic task, and that men were physically more suited to this role, the matricentric focus of these communities was increasingly displaced by patriarchal structures. This gradual shift in orientation produced enormous changes in the area of spirituality. As they became less reliant on agricultural produce, and hence less connected to any particular locale, the northern tribes became nomadic, following the migrations of their prey. This continual motion disrupted the spiritual and cultural potency of women, which remained rooted in the earth and

loss of territory. In the wake of Satan's track, Sin and Death build an overarching bridge that will allow demons easier access to Earth. And this, of course, occurs with God's assent. The forces of control in this text are so powerful that even revolt by the counter-control force (Satan) is countenanced and permitted. Rebellion of the counter-control type is not inimical to the control forces: it is allowed because it actually reinforces the power structure.

From an antipolitical perspective, the implications are clear. On the one hand, anarchy must be rejuvenated and become conscious and vigilant. Liberation from all forms of coercion and hierarchy, including its formulation in the cuneal paradigm, can be achieved only through an attentive and sagacious anarchy. On the other hand, techniques must be developed whereby the controlled can experience the psychosocial biodegradation process, with its liberating cathartic effects, and hence regain their forfeited heritage as uncontrollables — the real paradise lost. Through these two complementary processes, it should be possible to achieve the social ecology that is so desperately needed. But how are these processes to be initiated? Obviously, that is an enormous subject, and one that clearly remains beyond the scope of this essay. However, I will attempt to offer some suggestions which could perhaps be developed.

2. Religion

At the beginning, I indicated that *Paradise Lost* was important because of its concern with power and religion. So far, I have used the text as a way of exploring notions of power and control, particularly in respect to politics and order. Now, however, I wish to shift my attention to the topic of religion. In the foregoing, I have considered God as a political construct. He emerged as the ultimate totalitarian control force, and on those

grounds can and should be utterly repudiated. But this leaves us with a problem, and one which has largely been ignored in anarchist theory: namely, the problem of confronting the ultimate questions of human existence. These are, of course, often characterized as religious or metaphysical issues, and hence not of interest to an atheistic revolutionary movement. Inadvertently, perhaps, anarchist theorists have encouraged this attitude. Bakunin's *God and the State*, for example, comprises a thorough analysis of the socio-political function of God. It correctly repudiates the idea of God, but leaves nothing in its place. "Religious" issues constitute a vacuum at the centre of anarchism which limits its appeal and cogency.

In this essay, I have argued for a total shift of allegiance. As opponents of control, we should not assume an adversarial position (like the forces of counter-control), nor identify ourselves with the oppressed (the controlled); rather, we should situate ourselves within the matrix of anarchy, and become uncontrollables. Only then can we develop a liberatory praxis, which simultaneously promotes the disintegration of the entire control complex, and facilitates others to reintegrate within the creative potentialities of anarchy. We should be neither demonic, nor humanist, but anarchic. Our divine principle should not be deistic power, or demonic, Dionysian energies, or human community, but positive and creative chaos (a natural "order" which the advocates of order designate as disorder). Chaos is homologous with ecological order, and social ecology constitutes the specifically human component within that order. It is from this position that we must approach those existential problems that remain so troubling.

One of the major difficulties here remains the lack of an adequate vocabulary. Intrinsically, religion — which the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* defines as "human recognition of superhuman controlling power and especially of a personal God entitled to obedience" — remains anathema to anarchists. The two elements of this formulation, the emphasis on a superior con-

totally egalitarian by weeding out any lingering relics of the bestial pecking-order.

As intimated above, these paradisaical life ways were literally subjugated by marauding bands of hierarchical, patriarchal militarists. But ultimately the responsibility for their suppression must be attributed to the cosmological energies which precipitated the Ice Age. This in itself should provide a topic of contemplation for those who glibly assume that the Earth Spirit automatically supports such endeavours. But the main issue lies in examining the effect of the tectonic shift on contemporaneous communities, and in particular its role in forming the basis of the biocidal mentality.

According to Stevens, when the glaciers descended from the north, humanity underwent a fatal bifurcation which remains at the basis of the current global crisis. Whilst most communities retreated south in search of more propitious climatic conditions, scattered tribes who were unwilling or unable to abandon their settlements became caught in continental traps or peninsulas or between mountain ranges and the ocean. Rather than abundance, they now encountered conditions of extreme scarcity. Horticulture was no longer a viable practice and so drastic alterations in lifestyle, including diet, were necessary to ensure survival. In these harsh and exceptional conditions, there originated a hunting-fishing economy, where humans hunted and killed their animal cousins for food and clothing. In evolutionary terms, such practices constituted a vast atavism, justified perhaps in extreme circumstances and for a limited period. But in this instance the period became prolonged, and gradually the profound mutations effected in every aspect of these tribes' lifeways became inveterate. Even after the extraordinary situation had disappeared and such practices were no longer justified, they persisted through internalization, the influence of vested interests, and cultural deprivation. They are still with us today, perverting and vitiating any attempt toward total liberation.

want were unknown and there were ample opportunities for celebration, conviviality, ritual and creativity.

But, Stevens avers, there was a third crucial aspect to this integrated “art-ethics-soil culture.”² The ethical component was derived from a profound ecological sensibility and reverence for the natural. The arboriculturists may have undertaken complex experiments in seed selection, improvement and hybridization, but they did not regard this as abusing so much as cooperating with nature. They did not conceive of themselves as separate from the latter; essentially, theirs was still a “primate culture.”³ And their ethical conceptions derived from this acceptance. At the basis of their ethics lay a respect and affection for other species which emanated from their own physiological structures. Diet — a strictly frugivorous diet — lay at the foundation of their fundamental ethical principle: namely, that cousins, whether they assume animal or human form, for no firm ontological distinctions can be made here, should not be harmed, exploited, killed or eaten. “There are many indications that diet played an important part in such ethics and that the garden settlements took an absolute stand for the frugivorous culture of the primate family.”⁴ For in assuming this stance, the orchardists resolutely asserted their simian heritage. Non-human primates are not noted exploiters, rarely kill except in self-defence, and share with humans a physiological structure which suits them for not a carnivorous or omnivorous or herbivorous but a frugivorous diet.⁵ The human contribution to this “natural” ethic was to render it

² Ibid., 198.

³ Ibid., 165.

⁴ Ibid., 85.

⁵ For additional evidence, see Jon Wynne-Tyson, *Food for a Future: The Complete Case for Vegetarianism* (London: Centaur Press, 1979). The distinction between human and animal creatures is not ontological, but epistemological. Humans know and communicate things in different and more diversified, although not necessarily more complex, ways than animals.

trol force and on unthinking obedience, are clearly unacceptable. All the more so in religions such as Christianity, which not only advocate dangerous delusions such as faith (i.e., belief in and prostration before an authority, without any proof of its existence), but also induce obscenities like worship, pietism, sanctimoniousness, sin, mortification, and the ultimate act of obedience, martyrdom. Given this legacy, the repudiation of religion hardly appears surprising. Nevertheless, the necessity remains for proponents of anarchy to reclaim what, for want of a better word, and despite its antipathetic connotations, can only be termed spirituality. This is necessary if anarchy is to become the integral praxis so manifestly required.

Certain aspects of this spirituality have been explored and designated as an ecological sensibility by Murray Bookchin in *The Ecology of Freedom*. My concerns in this essay, however, are rather more limited and specific. I am interested in delineating some spiritual techniques which may aid and promote an anarchic revolution. We require, not theology, nor even liberation theology, but a spiritual therapeutics that prefigures and participates in the social shift toward anarchy. Such emancipatory techniques can, I believe, be adapted from the praxis of Zen.

As Fredy Perlman indicates, most religions were, to varying degrees, originally liberation movements. But during the struggle for liberation, their initial ideals were distorted and recuperated to such an extent that they eventually became indistinguishable from the totalitarian ideologies of their oppressors. At the centre of every religion, however, there remains a residue of the original libertarian ideals, which occasionally returns to haunt the doctrine’s predominant authoritarian exponents. For example, Jesus’s non-violent resistance and derogation of private property periodically resurfaces to the consternation of Christian hierarchies. The crucial point here, however, is that in Zen these contradictions are intensified, quite deliberately I believe, to the point of absurdity. In contrast to their religious counterparts, the founders of Zen, presumably

cognizant of the bureaucratic tendencies of such doctrines, implanted three techniques at the centre of their praxis which flatly confute the authoritarian debasement and the ensuing scholarly or commercialized industry. Their prognosis proved to be correct, and like its analogues, Zen was deluged by the hierarchical complex. However, submersed as they may be, the basic techniques fulfilled their founders' desires, and managed to withstand the flood. They remain to be rediscovered and adapted to contemporary needs and circumstances. And, moreover, in terms of the challenges to authority they pose, each of these techniques remains broadly compatible, and can be modified to attune, with anarchic praxis. Just because they have been used to reinforce quietism and passivity in the past does not mean that they cannot now become part of the movement toward total social revolution.

The three techniques referred to above are *zazen*, the *koan*, and the *mentor-neophyte relationship*. They all share a common aim, the enlightenment or illumination of an individual, and are linked by the common means of eliminating, at various levels, dependence upon authority. *Zazen* is a form of meditation wherein an individual, in time with respiratory rhythms, mentally recites a meaningless word. By repeatedly concentrating in this way, the flow of everyday thought ceases, and the individual is flooded with spiritual illumination and a sense of unity with the universe. At a later phase, thought may be reintroduced in *zazen*, but only in order to play across the surface of the inner grace (the metaphors used here are of course woefully inadequate). *Zazen* seeks to stem the *logos* (significantly the initiator of hierarchical creation in many cosmogonies) and break the authority of meaning through an amphigoric word. Here then, surely, we can discover several points of convergence with anarchic praxis — particularly in terms of the biodegradation process mentioned earlier. *Zazen* disrupts the psychology of dependence and points toward autonomy. Moreover, this autonomy remains intimately interlinked with

Stevens's basic theses are as follows. Before the Ice Age there existed a "Total Culture," a holistic "integration of ethics (cult), art (culture) and soil fertility (agriculture)."¹ This total culture centred on the garden or more precisely the orchard, an informal enclosure best denoted by the Avestan word *pairidaeza*, paradise. Such spaces should not be confused with the walled gardens of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, those sites of total control. Rather, as centres of barrow culture, they were only separated from the wilderness by functional trenches which prevented wild animals from ravaging the produce. This cultivated product was the *Aval*, a word whose modern derivative is apple, but which was originally a generic term for fruit. Through etymological investigation, Stevens establishes that the *Aval*-culture ranged from its source in Java as far as *Avalon* and beyond. And throughout this region horticulture remained the basis of culture. Cultivation was not undertaken for profit, but for ecological, communal and characterological nourishment. It was not an extractive industry: the plant-human relationship was symbiotic, and the activity involved — hardly onerous by the most stringent reckoning — was more like a vocation or play than labour. The orchard was not a factory but a temple, a word which originally denoted a sacred grove. It was literally the seedbed of primate spirituality and culture. Hence, it remains unsurprising that the global symbols of human spiritual experience — the *arbor vitae*, the *axis mundi*, the golden apples, the coiled guardian serpent or dragon, the kundalini energy (originally snakes, Stevens suggests, domesticated to deter other creatures from ravaging the fruit) — derive from this empirical reality. These nonviolent, communalistic, matrifocal yet variegated anarchies of abundance were veritable earthly paradises, where toil and

¹ Henry Bailey Stevens, *The Recovery of Culture* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), 166,198.

come so deeply embedded that it has assumed a biopathic and biocidal character. But the analytic instruments wielded by the vast majority of anarchists are insufficiently searching, incapable of penetrating to the root cause. Various elements — the State, capitalist relations of production, hierarchy, technological domination, patriarchy, or a combination of these factors — have been proposed as the source of oppression, but each fails to account satisfactorily for the inceptive motivation. Certainly these factors are facets of the global control complex, but what induced a section of humanity to desolate the earthly paradise and set the authoritarian process in motion? Frequently, anarchist writers displace the problem by focussing on free communities who were invaded and enslaved by extraneous forces. But this merely begs the question of what actuated the expropriators. In my view, only a vast tectonic cataclysm, whose reverberations are still experienced today, can account for this malificent transformation. This upheaval — the Ice Age — necessitated the implementation of extreme emergency measures to ensure survival. But as the crisis became prolonged, sensibilities became lethally deformed and vested interests in deprivation developed amongst emerging control groups. We have all lived in a permanent state of emergency ever since.

In order to discern the basis of a future culture of anarchy, it remains essential to journey beyond the cataclysm which initiated history to the genuinely halcyon days of the primeval era. During this passage, I shall draw on Henry Bailey Stevens's remarkable but neglected text, *The Recovery of Culture*. Stevens was not an anarchist *per se*, but he was a visionary — something immediately apparent in his magnum opus, where the joins between vision and ideology are all too evident. His reconstruction of primordial human modalities remains unparalleled, but the accompanying remedial plans are marred by an incompatible Carlylean emphasis on Great Men as the motivators of social change. In what ensues, these extrinsic elements will be disregarded.

a sense of ecological community. In turn, this cracks open the character armour, and allows glimpses into an anarchic future, a universe of free interaction within a reintegrated ecological complex. Zazen stanches the cacophony of internalized coercions and constraints, even those which appear to be self-generated, and thereby transcends the conventional parameters of the self. The sunburst of satori loosens what Perlman terms the Leviathanic integuments. Bliss results, but also the consciousness that this cannot remain a permanent, or for some hardly become a possible, state under the current socio-economic system. There could be no clearer cachet of anarchy. In order to encourage this consciousness, however, it remains necessary to reclaim and recontextualize zazen in ways which will allow people to reorientate themselves in this way. Obviously, as long as such techniques remain enmeshed within the domain of authoritarian religion and mysticism, they cannot become resources in the struggle for total liberation.

Many of the above remarks are also applicable to the two remaining techniques. A koan is a conundrum, a paradoxical phrase which an individual is assigned to “work on.” Once again, although this time from a different angle, the aim is to explode dependence on logic, rationality, intellect and ultimately meaning, by allowing a person to discover their limitations. A koan cannot be “solved” through ratiocination, and the realization of this, coupled with continued concentration on the text, leads to a moment of insight comparable to that achieved through zazen.

The mentor-neophyte relationship is also designed to eliminate dependence on authority structures, unlike the parallel religious relationship between guru and proselyte, which merely transfers existing dependency. Its characteristic feature remains the so-called direct method, which rejects verbalization — even the most enigmatic — and attempts to break through the orderliness of reason to basic convivial

impulses. Zen manifests itself in spontaneous acts, but evaporates once interpretation tries to discern meaning or significance within any action. Regaining the experiences of life's instantaneousness constitutes its essence. The direct method attempts to propel the neophyte into the flow of life and unmediated experience. Language and ideation are too slow to grasp such instantaneity. Hence, the neophyte must be somehow shocked into abandoning interpretation and other inculcated forms of standardized response. Occasionally, these shock tactics assume the form of tempered violence, but more commonly they consist of unexpected responses and behaviour. When a neophyte asks for elucidation on a profound doctrinal point, for example, a master may "reply" by undertaking a simple everyday task or leaving the room. Such actions are intended to have a *demonstrative*, rather than *symbolic*, effect. Indeed, if the neophyte attempts to interpret the meaning of the action, the moment — of direct existential contact and the spiritual illumination which accompanies it — has already been lost, and dependency will continue. However, should the neophyte respond by spontaneously participating in the playful stratagem instigated by the master, the cycle of dependency will be broken. The former no longer needs to rely upon the latter for guidance, for after continued practice the two effectively become equals. The moment of "coming alive," or becoming existentially sensitive, achieved through the direct method, gradually develops into a perpetual sensibility, and sparkles through passages recording meetings between Zen masters.

In the Zen tradition, these three techniques are used in order to break dependency at all levels — on authority figures, on the authority of doctrines, on the authority of thought itself — and thereby to induce illumination. Taken together, these techniques constitute a potent array of methods for undermining control structures. And given that in the Zen tradition they are often coupled with the repudiation of private property, this is

only interested in recreating humanity in their own atrophied image, with a greatly distended political consciousness, but merely a rudimentary capacity for existential experience and appreciation. Given that anarchism has partly relied upon the vibrancy of its ideas and the exemplary actions of its adherents to transform popular praxis, its marginal appeal remains hardly surprising. Frankly, whatever vigour inheres in certain features, its notions of a politicized future are bland and unappetizing, and its conception of an adequate basis for a culture of anarchy remains almost nonexistent.

And yet the anarchic tradition retains a crucial element, a key attitude, which could help to recover this essential foundation. Proponents of anarchy habitually regard with nostalgia a halcyon period from the past. Depending upon individual perspectives, this mythopoeic era can be discerned in neolithic villages, primitive Christian communities, Medieval communes, pre-Columbian Amerindian life, and so on. In each instance, however, these idylls are flawed in two respects. On the one hand, their inhabitants failed to foresee and prevent their forcible suppression. And, on the other hand, all are compromised through defects — e.g., militaristic elements or disparate gender evaluations — of various magnitudes. Whilst not perfect nor ideal societies, however, they do provide basic paradigms for a regenerated future. A primary task of contemporary anarchic visionaries thus consists of amending the deficiencies in a primal pattern by synthesising it with insights derived from an imaginative, informed and empathic holistic sensibility.

However, these mythopoeic excavations are in turn inadequate through lack of profundity. They are insufficiently radical because they fail to unearth the root issue. No past society can be ideal, but all of these proposed paragons are to varying degrees contaminated by an immemorial sociopathic virus, a contagion so insidious and entrenched that it poisons even the most benign or revolutionary disposition. Nowadays it has be-

Chapter 6: Culture and Anarchy

Within mainstream discourse, and particularly in texts like the one by Matthew Arnold whose tide I have deliberately appropriated here, the terms “culture” and “anarchy” are regarded as antithetical. Any putative tendencies toward anarchy become a pretext to entreat authority to intervene and reestablish order and culture. But for proponents of anarchy this polarization clearly remains unacceptable. For the latter, the primary aim becomes the development of a culture *of* anarchy. Unfortunately, however, this project has been poorly served by anarchist thinkers who for the most part have remained mired in politics. Little seems less anarchic than jejune fantasies, presented with evident yet rather pathetic glee, of a future peopled with wholesome types whose entire *raison d'être* and greatest pleasure resides in orderly discussion and voting at neighbourhood or communal assemblies. I am not referring here to the visions of Utopian dreamers à la Morris, but to the prevailing impressions which exude through major anarchist texts, including those by contemporaries such as Murray Bookchin. In such works, many shibboleths are discarded, but not the one designated as politics; the future emerges as a place freed from all governance, except the rule of politics itself. Of course, communal decision-making processes should not be denigrated, and must play an important role in any future anarchy. But to envision a fresh culture around such a dessicated structure remains absurd, and fuels the popular suspicion that militants are

clearly something that proponents of anarchy cannot afford to dismiss lightly. This remains particularly true when the parallels between Zen and anarchic praxis are rendered apparent. Zen posits a series of techniques which suggest that all doctrine/ideology is irrelevant. And just as anarchy attempts to relieve us of politics and ideology, leaving the core of independent yet collective creativity, so Zen tries to relieve us of etiolated thought and internalized propaganda, leaving the core of limited experience. And it is at this point, that Zen makes its most significant contribution to the resolution of the existential problems mentioned earlier. Unlike authoritarian religions, which emphasise faith, Zen suggests its irrelevancy. The experience of nirvana may be evidence of an afterlife, or it may be pleasurable sensations caused by electrical impulses on the cortex, or it may be something altogether different. But these are all retrospective judgments, they are not available within the lived experience of nirvana. The information conveyed in that experience is of a totally different order. Faith, like political ideology, remains irrelevant at this level; it does not matter what you believe, the associated experiences of nirvana and anarchy provide the touchstone.

Zen techniques, adapted and recontextualized within anarchic praxis, possess an immense liberatory potential. Of course, they are not sufficient in themselves to precipitate the total revolution toward anarchy. All I have proposed here needs to be complimented by the ideas of theorists like Bookchin and Perlman, and the practice of communities in the process of liberating themselves. Nevertheless, Zen techniques can play an important part. We should not undervalue inner liberation as an accompaniment to social revolution — even as a spur to social revolution through its exeplary function. One of Emily Dickinson's deliberately unpunctuated poems reads:

The mob within the heart
Police cannot suppress
The riot given at the first
Is authorized as peace

Uncertified of scene
Or signified of sound
But growing like a hurricane
In a congenial ground.

(Poem 1745)

This poem constitutes a microcosm compared to Milton's macrocosm. Both consider liberated activity, Milton within universal Anarchy, Dickinson within an individual's inner anarchy. But whereas the former poet rather negatively depicted a contracting territory, the latter positively represents an expansion of chaos. This expansion begins from within the individual, but an individual whose cramped and unitary self has developed into a plural, unrestrained and riotous mob, which the police — whether psychic or social — cannot suppress. As in *Paradise Lost*, the keynote remains free and independently-determined activity: there is no authorization, no certification, and no signification. It is as if anarchy has cancelled all social authority, and Zen has cancelled all internalized authority. Hence, we proceed to the anarchic, global and natural energy of the hurricane, already decimating the hierarchical order, and preparing more congenial ground in the individual, social and ecological environments. Dickinson's untitled poem, not Milton's pale sequel to his account of the Fall, should be entitled *Paradise Regained*.

But if Dickinson situates the action of her text "within the heart," her concerns centre almost entirely on the exterior, in the environments convulsed by a proliferating anarchic energy. The poem does not indicate how it feels to be inside anarchy, to be possessed by a holistic sensibility and a capacity for rev-

spiritual complexity. Through the Mysteries, individuals — and through them entire communities — were sensitized to the point of ecstasy, and reborn with shamanic gifts that enriched the human collectivity. All existence became structured around the limitless vision quests which began on the sacred nights. But these gifts were received only after convulsive perceptual transformations and metamorphoses in sensibility. If initiation evoked terror and wonder, it also aroused pity and euphoria. The resulting *katharsis* was thus tragic in tone because it admixed ecstasy with empathy and compassion.

Eversion Mysteries could help to precipitate a shift toward total revolution, the unlimited liberation of anarchy. Complete emancipation should be ecstatic, blissful, convivial, but to remain human it may have to include a tragic hue. Tellus-vision may always remain a dual perspective, a double vision. The flavour of anarchy may be exquisitely bittersweet.

labyrinth to be reborn. Death constitutes the central fascination; simultaneously alluring and terrifying, once confronted it becomes neither:

Death is seductive, for once the frightening threshold is crossed there is no more fear. Fear and hope are both dissolved; all that is left is rest, repose, relief, blessed nothingness, the void. But just as the void, to physicists, is the 'mother state,' so the crown of death becomes the circlet of rebirth, and the cords of binding become the umbilical cord to life, and we learn the Great Mystery — not as a doctrine, not as a philosophy, but as an experience: There is no annihilation.¹⁰

Apuleis resists the seduction, as the Mystery rites intend, and experiences illumination and rebirth. He returns through the four elements which are invoked in the casting of the magic circle that protects his rudimentary self from merging completely with the oceanic consciousness. He stresses rebalancing polarities in terms of chthonic and celestial images, a re-equilibration of sexual and spiritual, or animal and divine energies. When the ego boundaries are lowered, unlimited motion in all dimensions becomes possible. He can commune with the living and the dead, travel back and forth in time, and explore the vast expanses of inner and outer space.

But even Apuleis cannot convey the inferiority of this experience. Livy says of Mystery ritualists: "To regard nothing as forbidden was among these people the summit of religious achievement."¹¹ It may be impossible to impart the experience of total freedom in words. But perhaps Aristotle's formulations on tragedy in the *Poetics* intimate a pale reflection of its full

¹⁰ Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979), 161.

¹¹ Meyer, 86.

relations within the matrix of total liberation. In short, the inferiority of a spiritual condition — a condition characterized by its sense of beatific community — remains unexplained. But for proponents of anarchy, such an exploration becomes a vital necessity. Intimations of the myriad delights available within a renewed earthly paradise could inspire the controlled to discard their assigned identities. And amongst these delights the most fundamental remains the paradisaal consciousness itself. The significance of a recontextualized Zen becomes apparent at precisely this juncture. Appropriately reorientated, its techniques could provide individuals with a gloriously expanded consciousness, a prefigurative vision of a social future of permanent revelry and jubilee.

Many have recently talked about the politics of desire. And Raoul Vaneigem has proposed a "politics" of pleasure. Can we now consider an antipolitics of ecstasy and bliss?

Chapter 3: On Ecdysis

The previous essay identified in Western creation myths an elementary paradigm which defined the structure of universal history. I now wish to focus upon one specific component of Judaeo-Christian cosmogony: the temptation.

A plethora of political interpretations of this incident have been offered, but all necessarily overlook the crucial issues, which only become available through an antipolitical perspective. The narrative relates how the serpent successfully tempts humanity to obtain the capacity to discriminate between good and evil. Significantly, the humans respond to this acquisition by immediately concealing their nakedness: “and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis, 3:7). When God subsequently discovers their transgression, He expels them into a world of work, sin and mortality. Before doing so, however, the text notes that “Unto Adam also and to his wife did [He] make coats of skins, and clothed them” (Genesis, 3:21).

The potency of Western cosmogony derives from its reduction of the multiplicity and diversity of life, the universal territory of anarchy, into the basic elements of a cuneal paradigm. The latter enforces the notion that the universe is comprised of three forces: God, the control force; Satan, the counter-control force; and humanity, the controlled. For Satan, who wishes to overthrow God and seize power for himself, the temptation constitutes an opportunity to subvert the controlling order. He attempts to disabuse humanity of its innocence (i.e., its unreflecting, naive allegiance to the control force), not in order to dissolve power, but to transfer their subordination from God

you in the sacred agape.” The latter evokes “sentiments of awe and reverence, and gentleness and love, to the highest pitch of which mankind is capable.” Participants “feel welling up within them a tie that unites them with their companions of that night of nights that will last as long as they live.”⁸ The Mysteries produce an amative disposition, an expansive but informed empathy, a holistic sensibility, which promises a revivification of those harmonious and integrated lifeways that remain cardinal in contemporary visions of anarchy.

The techniques which comprise the Mysteries, a *gestalt* capable of effecting total transformation, have been outlined. But this description has remained exteriorized: the interior experience has so far eluded examination. Apuleis’s formulation of his vision quest may be useful here:

I approached the confines of death. I trod the threshold of Proserpine [goddess of the underworld]; and borne through the elements I returned. At midnight I saw the Sun shining in all his glory. I approached the gods below and the gods above, and I stood beside them, and I worshiped them. Behold, I have told my experience, and yet what you hear can mean nothing to you.⁹

Perhaps, however, it can mean something. Many ritual elements of the Mysteries — fasting, breath control, hallucinogens — deliver individuals to the verge of physical demise. Whilst others — satire, dancing, kundalini techniques, Tantric sexual practices — propel them toward dissolution as distinct psychological or ethical entities. Apuleis stood on the threshold of death and recognized there was nothing to fear, but maintained the rudiment of subjectivity, the thread (perhaps an umbilical cord) which allowed him to find his way back through the

⁸ Wasson et al, 19, 23, 56.

⁹ Meyer, 189.

tion. And mandalas or visual images are employed to inspire revelation through the representation of patterned energies.

Through the *gestalt* of these techniques and experiences, individuals are possessed by the wilderness in almost every aspect of their persons. Immersed in ecstasy, imbued by chthonic energies, they lose their wills and are healed by becoming vehicles through which the sacred wilderness achieves human expression. Possessed by animistic energies, they become qualified to participate in the *enactments*, the dramatization of the sacred myths of death and renewal. This dramatization incorporates the hierogamy, the orgiastic coupling with the divine which complements and reinforces the spiritual conjunction through possession. Tantric sexual rites intensify these acts to a frenzy, and unconstrained libidinous desire — the final aspect of wilderness force — overcomes any inhibitions placed on the search for erotic pleasure. The re-equilibration of inner polarities includes a fusion of “male” and “female” energies, and the initiate becomes androgynous, unconcerned with the artificial distinctions of gender in this search. Encountering total saturation, individuals transcend their ego boundaries and their mortality in successive waves of ecstasy.

This ecstatic culmination imperceptibly shades off into the *agape*, a love feast of wild food. The Mysteries conclude tenderly with re-birthday celebrations. Commensality constitutes a further sharing of energy, and conviviality reiterates consensual relations. But, both ancient and modern commentators agree, the affection and solidarity felt by the revellers comprises the *agape*'s most important aspect. Diodorus Siculus reports that those “who have taken part in the mysteries become more pious and more just and better in every respect than they were before.”⁷ And R. Gordon Wasson relates that “an indissoluble bond unites you with the others who have shared with

⁷ Marvin W. Meyer, *The Ancient Mysteries: A Reader* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1987), 41.

to himself. Fully cognizant of the punishment likely to ensue, he cynically manipulates humanity, calculating that their penalization might elicit a resentment ultimately conducive to a transfer of dependency.

But, in the short term, the temptation provides humanity with a sense of shame. Adam and Eve become ashamed of their naked subservience, their unwitting erotic investment of power, and hence cover their generative organs and erogenous zones. They symbolically refuse to reproduce their own domination, or to expose their pleasures to the all-seeing deity. But as indicated above, the covering process possesses two distinct stages — the first autonomously directed, the second coerced. This differentiation remains crucial. In the first phase, the two humans fashion aprons out of fig leaves. In the second phase, God clothes them with coats made from animal skins. There are two important distinctions here. On the one hand, two different types of clothing are designated. An apron is a garment designed specifically for protection: it is worn on particular occasions for specific tasks, and its wearing here does not therefore imply any permanency. The coats enforced by God, however, are not worn for protection, nor specific tasks, but for general and hence permanent use. The voluntarily assumed apron can be easily divested, whereas the coat — imposed as part of a punishment — becomes an instrument for indefinite encasement in an unwanted and constraining integument. The primal humans — i.e., the first hominids to be dislocated from the “state of nature” and have their identities determined by the control force — are literally coated. On the other hand, an important difference in the clothing material becomes apparent. Humanity's use of a vegetable product, a renewable and regenerative resource, does not constitute a denudation of nature. But God's use of animal skins clearly implies an ecological — and ethical — infringement. This incident establishes that God, not Cain, committed the primal murder. (Genesis I: 29–30 indicates that prior to the Fall all

creatures, including humans, were frugivores or herbivores, and hence presumably pacific.)

The mythic origins of clothing can thus be discerned in the temptation narrative. But in considering this chronicle, the inevitable question arises of why the serpent was selected as the image of the tempter. Many explanations of this symbol have been advanced. But in the present context, only one connotation of the image remains significant. The key to the interchange between humanity and the serpent can be characterized as the issue of attire. Its central terms are exposure and covering. The serpent exposes the nakedness of humanity to itself, thus precipitating the act of covering. God subsequently regularizes this covering by making it a coating, and thus transforms humanity into the only species which attires itself with exogenous, manufactured apparel (in contrast to the endogenous integument — the organic pelt — developed by animals). But the creature which instigates this process also possesses a relevant and distinctive characteristic in this context. The serpent undergoes the process of ecdysis: it periodically sheds its skin for the purpose of growth. Of course, many creatures — often in conjunction with the seasons — cast or moult their skin, fur, feathers, and so on. But while other animals undergo these processes piecemeal and hence imperceptibly, the serpent sloughs its skin at one time and in one piece, leaving behind a visible husk. Furthermore, although this process facilitates growth, it does not involve a fundamental biological metamorphosis, such as the development of a chrysalis into a butterfly. The serpent maintains its original shape, but merely casts off the dead tissue from the living flesh, leaving a fresh and brightly-hued new skin.

The central interchange of the Fall scenario can now be formulated. The serpent, a creature which periodically sloughs its skin, instigates a process wherein a glabrous humanity permanently covers its skin with clothing or, more accurately, keeps its skin continually covered with a succession of clothes. (The

Hallucinogens are administered by facilitators or hierophants, those who reveal sacred things. Psychotropic drugs expedite a further dissolution of socially conditioned rational constraints and liberate the imagination. But because they derive from poisonous substances, they also transport individuals to the brink of physical decease. This remains necessary to facilitate a maximal capacity for kinesis in unlimited dimensions. And it becomes possible because those aspects of the wilderness embodied in the psychotropic properties of certain plants possess the initiates.

Hallucinogenic effects increase the intensity of magical or *kundalini techniques*. Through magic rituals, energies are evoked from chthonic regions in the identical realms of the Earth and the unconscious. Physical descent into the underworld finds a complement in a spiral downward into the spirit.⁶ Once connexions with the Earth and cosmological energies are reestablished, it becomes possible to tap into and redirect currents of elemental energies. These currents can rebalance inner polarities of energy, a process which facilitates ecstatic reintegration.

In turn, kundalini techniques are enhanced by a series of associated practices. Exercises in *breath control* are utilized. The life currents dependent on breathing are voluntarily regulated to achieve energy transformations. Moreover, regulation and retention of breath evokes yet another uncontrollable wilderness urge: the overwhelming desire to respire, to live, to affirm the life force. Similarly, the *voces magicae*, the magical words of power, the use of poetry and metre, mantric chanting, arouse energies through vocalization and rhythmic vibra-

⁶ I have employed hierarchical terminology as little as possible and only for its emotive value. As Buckminster Fuller indicated long ago, the universe contains no ups and downs, only ins and outs. One task of contemporary visionaries of anarchy must be to replace terms like “the underworld” by a richly textured non-hierarchical vocabulary.

Dance promotes the initiation process by encouraging enraptured abandonment to a syncopated musical beat. The dancer releases inhibitions, flings aside rigidities, be they postural, behavioural or characterological. Choreography allows a reattunement and a realignment with natural rhythms. And these compelling rhythms constitute another aspect of possession by the sacred wilderness.

Singly or collectively, individuals enter *labyrinthine structures*, often caves or underground passages, signifying their vision quest through the tunnels and caverns of the spirit. Mystery rites are conducted at night during periods when alignments of cosmological energy — expressed, for example, in the seasons, the phases of the moon, and astrological sitings — are favourable. So contrasts between light and darkness are maximal anyway. But descent into the labyrinth entails quitting this familiar if nocturnal terrain for the total darkness of the Earth and the unknown. The remainder of the initiation process unfolds here, even though the gloom becomes iridescent with illumination. Here the meaning of the Mysteries becomes apparent. The word “mystery” derives from the Greek term *myein*, to close. Enclosed in complete darkness and silence, the senses and faculties are sealed and fall into abeyance. Subsequently, each will be sensitized and deranged into an ecstatic synaesthesia, and the *mystai* (or initiates) will become *epoptai*, beholders. But at this juncture they become physically lost and mentally disorientated. Loss of self provokes bewilderment, amazement, panic — words which all originally denoted a positive surrender of rational faculties to the sacred wilderness. Possessed by chthonic energies who conduct them through the intricacies of the maze, they reach the matrix of the labyrinth. Both physically and spiritually, they enter the underworld, the womb of Mother Earth, the cauldron of transformation, in order to experience a symbolic death and rebirth on an expanded psychic level.

origins of fashion can be traced to this initial interchange. Continual sartorial modification compensates for the arrested development of integral creative potentials.) But note the crucial displacement at the centre of this transaction. Although God’s enemy, Satan necessarily operates only with the tacit permission of the omniscient and omnipresent deity. And the guile of the latter becomes apparent in precisely this interchange. By allowing Satan to assume the serpent form, He effectively binds humanity more closely to His control, even while imposing a punishment that seems more likely to precipitate revolt. In the serpent, with its sloughing capacity, humanity might have perceived a symbolic or analogical method of casting off their identities as God’s creatures. But the temptation prevented — or at least postponed — this eventuality. The revelation of humanity’s naked subservience was so shameful that its first response was not repudiation, but protection. And this defensive impulse became the lever God used to shift humanity even further away from authentic revolt (not the ersatz, condoned type practiced by Satan). For the control force ensured that the Fall would so distance the relationship between humanity and serpents, that the former could learn nothing from the latter. The deity informs the serpent: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel” (Genesis, 3:15). Satan only temporarily possessed the serpent for the purpose of temptation. Hence, this curse does not apply to him. Unwittingly, in his manoeuvre for the seizure of power, he has furthered and reinforced the interests of the entire control complex, both the forces of control and counter-control. Although God’s absolute rule has been disrupted, the threat to the principle of governance has been contained and defused. In fact, humanity’s distancing from the serpent — the natural creature, not the mythic worm — further alienates humans from authentic forms of insurgency.

The legacy of the Fall scenario become increasingly apparent as the global megamachine of Western civilization plunges into further crisis. Much contemporary revolt remains determined and circumscribed by the paradigmatic temptation incident. Rather than shed the character armour, slough the itching and constricting Leviathanic integuments, many restlessly change the styles and fashions of clothing, while underneath the exacerbating dead tissue accumulates. Seasonal moults have degenerated into new “seasons” of fashion commodities that maintain no connexion with ecological cycles. And the central Western symbol of revolt – the black leather jacket – remains an ironic descendant of the original coat of animal skins inflicted by the control force.

Other, seemingly more direct attempts at divestment are equally inauthentic; particularly given their delusory aura of defiance. Leaving aside psychic divestment, the contemporary proliferation of physical unveiling alone has been astonishing. And, moreover, from streaking to strippergrams, public disrobement is generally regarded as daringly defiant – an attitude frequently promoted by regulatory or repressive legal measures. The stripper remains a central icon of the age. But economic considerations are not always primary here. Certainly, one can pay to witness a striptease or acquire photographs of naked individuals. But equally, one can appear nude in public with no economic motivation. The common element – whether in the participant or the spectator – remains the act of unfocussed revolt.

The point here is neither to deprecate nudism, which has constituted a notable element of liberatory movements from the Adamites through the Spanish Anarchists and beyond, nor to repudiate clothing in climates and seasons where they are evidently necessary. The point remains to examine such phenomena from an antipolitical perspective, and thus discover the nature of their relationship to the shift toward total anarchy.

of paradise. There are fewer perils in the initiation process because coercion remains absent there. The routes to the ecstatic release of the involuntary are always voluntary. The individual volition retains its will until it becomes subsumed within the wilderness, at which juncture coercion becomes impossible.

The process begins with *purgations*, both inner and outer. Fasting signifies cleansing: it purges inner poisons, those imbibed through consumption, and lays the basis for more intense experience. The effects of drinking alcohol on an empty stomach are well known. Fasting prepares the ground, adds an edge, an appetite. The pangs of hunger prefigure other intractable urges, beyond rational control, which Mystery rites evoke. Immersion – physical submersion, particularly in the sea or other saline water – complements fasting by cleansing the corporeal exterior, and also presages the later total immersion in the oceanic consciousness.

A degree of *sleeplessness* remains important in ritualistic preparation. The lack of sleep breaks down inner resistances and in particular undermines and disorients codifying intellectual processes. Trains of rational thought are disrupted as the wish to merge into dreamtime increases.

In such conditions *satire* becomes an effective instrument. Satyrs ridicule and humiliate, but also provoke laughter through ribaldry and the ritual uncovering of the genitals. The use of satire ensures that the whole process will not be regarded with excessive pomposity or piety. Sacred rites are performed in a spirit of play, which includes festivity, ludic fantasy and celebration, not the grave sanctimoniousness familiar from hierarchical ceremonies. Ridicule and mocking humour break down the sense of self, the egotism of self-importance and self-esteem. And when these defences are down, ribaldry arouses laughter, another refractory wilderness force, but one which assumes a uniquely human form.

in what follows no attempt will be made to reconstruct a Mystery rite from a specific historical era or geographical location. Moreover, since this essay intends to be catalytic rather than antiquarian in function, scant attention will be paid to external properties. If Eversion Mysteries develop, contemporary visions will discover appropriate ritual resources. Instead, this essay will enumerate the elements of an “ideal” Mystery rite. All of these elements may never have become operational in any actual rite. But varying combinations have been utilized throughout the ages. Indeed these combinations or *gestalts* are the crux of the Mysteries. Within such crucibles, transformations occur. When segregated these elements possess limited potency. When concentrated, however, they acquire almost unlimited transformative potential. Arts such as dance, music, poetry, drama and visual representation, in the various genres of satire, comedy and tragedy, plus skills in herbalism and gastronomy were developed, combined and energized here through magical integration.

The central objective of the Mysteries assumes three interrelated aspects: the arousal, shaping and projection of energy; possession by the wilderness or chthonic energies; and liberation of the involuntary through the gateway of the voluntary. In the process of achieving this triple objective, there results an erosion of ego boundaries, a concentrated assault on individuation intended to transfigure any incipient tendencies toward characterological — and hence social — authoritarianism. Each of the senses and faculties are sensitized to fever pitch prior to derangement into a liberatingly integrative synaesthesia. Belief remains irrelevant: emphasis falls on participation and experience, traditionally experience of the three observances, the things visualized/envisioned, vocalized and enacted. Ultimately, this process becomes ecstatic and convivial, but the initiation process remains daunting because of its extreme nature, its alluring aspects notwithstanding. Greater danger, however, threatens those who linger this side

Current manifestations of nudity signify an urge to ecdysis, but one which remains inauthentic because entrapped within the parameters of the Fall scenario. Obviously, many of these manifestations are deliberately deformed to reinforce the sordid but profitable aims of domination and exploitation. But in every case, public disrobing is predicated upon a general and continued cowering. Stripping can continue to be regarded as defiant only so long as the stripper perpetually reclothes him or herself, and only whilst public nudity remains a relative scarcity. As long as these conditions pertain, the public disclosure of nakedness can rarely be motivated by endogenous desire, but mainly by the exogenous and covertly coerced promptings of defiance. In actuality, such defiance constitutes a total conformism. Its actions never go beyond the boundaries delimited by the Fall. The control complex retains its authority.

Dismantling this endlessly frustrating cycle has now become a primary requisite for the total transformation toward anarchy. The hideous contemporary alternatives make one’s flesh creep: either peacefully submit to a mortification of the flesh, the hairshirt, the daily scarification, or be flayed alive by napalm and nuclear radiation. Either way it is difficult not to become one of the many complaisant scabs on the body of Leviathan. But there are ways out of this seeming impasse. And one of them remains the recovery of ecdysis. Nudism can only become an authentic praxis if it is informed by the latter. For the ecdysiast, the decision to dress or stay naked depends purely upon individual desire, but anyway a peripheral concern. The key issue remains the sloughing of dead tissue, the character armour, internalized authority, the Leviathanic integument — and hence to the elimination of the entire control complex. Ecdysis thus becomes part of the wider psychosocial biodegradation process. Individually and collectively, people who reject the identities and postures assigned to them by the control force, begin to remerge in the positive anarchy or chaos which predates the creation.

As advocates of anarchy, our task should be to discover techniques which facilitate, promote and generalize this process. In “Toward a Cultural Ecology of Anarchy,” I made some provisional proposals in this area. These can now be related to the project of stimulating the kundalini, the latent spiritual energy which Vedantic writers symbolize as a coiled serpent. But this is not the place to reiterate or develop such ideas. We must remain eternally vigilant, and not allow tentative possibilities to solidify into prescriptive dogmas. Anarchy can be defined as maintaining a field of infinite potentialities. Additional explicitness here could initiate the forms of closure that are to be avoided. As Fredy Perlman has noted, “Theories of liberation are the clothes of dictators.” And ecdysis demands a sloughing of these garments too.

mately effected a catastrophic inversion in perceived relations between human beings and the divine.⁵ The notion of cosmic equilibrium entailed that any profitable act had to be offset by an equivalent service — or “giveaway” — to restore balance. As cultivation became customary, rather than occasional, and these acts became habitual, so guilt became generalized, and divinity came to be regarded as external, rather than integral, to human life. And as an exteriorized and potentially hostile force, the divine no longer invited ecstatic participation and celebration, but seemingly demanded propitiation and sacrifice, obeisance and penance. Consequently, through the sacerdotal insertion of a mediating conscience, the universe was construed to possess a moral order, with redemption for the obedient and penalization for the disobedient. Similarly, and related to this cosmological upheaval, as patriarchal forces gradually became dominant, so the matricentric Earth Goddess was splintered into various manifestations and assigned minor male consorts who grew to such importance that the Earth Mother herself gradually diminished into one of the lesser deities in the classical pantheon. Concurrently, the informal Mystery structures generated by shaman women were replaced by formal hierarchies dominated by male officiants. Furthermore, in preliterate societies the Mysteries were necessarily maintained through oral tradition — a custom which simultaneously prevented abuse of its techniques but made monopolization by emergent control structures much easier.

As a corollary of this set of historical factors, it remains difficult to determine the exact content of any particular Mystery praxis, particularly given that the only extant records are incomplete, derive from periods of decline and co-optation, and were frequently composed by hostile witnesses. Hence,

⁵ See the following essay for a detailed examination of the process responsible for this inversion.

The essential features, particularly the experienced inferiority, of the Mysteries have thus been scattered and obscured. Regeneration remains essential because a recovery of the earthly vision could help to facilitate a renewal of the earthly paradise. But reconstruction and replication of primal Mysteries in their archetypal form, even supposing the feasibility of such a project, is neither necessary nor sufficient. Primordial Mystery forms proved inadequate to prevent the rise of control structures, and are thus unlikely to be capable of promoting their eradication. Moreover, the character of the conflict has now been invented: whilst primal Mysteries were essentially defensive, conserving congenial lore against authoritarian aberration, posthistoric Mysteries must take the offensive, evoking insurgency against the totalitarian status quo. The shift toward total revolution centres on a synthesis of primal existential harmony with contemporary visions of anarchy, a blending designed to elicit holistically integrated lifeways. Situated “between the times,” when total transformation becomes possible, this perspective necessarily exhibits a Janus-face. Primal praxes can be retrieved to nourish the future, but only if they are metamorphosed in the present. Contemporary conditions decree that preservation mysteries must become Eversion Mysteries. Given the existence of biocidal totalitarianism, life itself can be preserved only through global renewal, in the dual sense of resurgence and reintegration.

2. Germination

Olden Mysteries were modified to correspond to socio-economic changes. Most crucially, as forager-gatherer modes were replaced by agricultural settlement, the fertility aspect of the Mysteries shifted in focus from wild vegetation to crop cultivation. But this seemingly negligible modulation ulti-

Chapter 4: Bewilderness

In an important article, Jay Vest convincingly demonstrates that the words “will” and “wild” derive from a common etymological root. For primal Europeans, nature was pervaded by a will force that remained beyond their power to influence. What nature autonomously willed became identified as wild.

Wilderness then means ‘self-willed-land’ or ‘self-willed-place’ with an emphasis upon its own intrinsic volition... This ‘willed’ conception is itself in opposition to the controlled and ordered environment, which is characteristic of the notion of civilization. While control, order, domination and management are true of civilization and domestication, they are not essentials of primal culture... Nature worship among primal Indo-Europeans evidences a traditional theme of sacred natural places, free from desecration by humans and their technology. Such sacred places were wilderness in the deepest sense; they were imbued with *will-force*, – willed, willful, uncontrollable – and with spirit. Thus, they held about them a sacred mystery – a numinous presence. It is from this tradition that the ‘will-of-the-land’ – wilderness – concept emerges.¹

Vest’s remarks recover important information, but remain curiously exteriorized. The contours of a spirituality structured

¹ Jay Hansford C. Vest. “Will-of-the-Land: Wilderness Among Primal Indo-Europeans,” *Environmental Review*, Vol.9, no.4 (Winter 1985), 324–5.

around the recognition of a sacred wilderness — the significance of its symbolism and ritual — are skilfully outlined. But the interiority of this experience — what it felt like and what it meant to be immersed in such a wilderness — remains beyond Vest’s purview.

One reason for this deficiency may be the lack of an appropriate vocabulary. Vest’s article establishes that primal notions of wilderness are diametrically opposite to those operative in contemporary mainstream discourse. Archaic humans regarded the wilderness as a site of positive energies, whereas today power complexes demand that it be considered as a place of evil and negativity which deserves domination and exploitation. In *Against His-story. Against Leviathan!*, Fredy Perlman retraces the process whereby power — through authority structures, imperial and Judaeo-Christian civilizing forces — converts nature into a wasteland, thus forcing the term “wilderness” to acquire pejorative connotations. But the semantic history of a cognate term which denotes the interior experience of sacred wilderness — “bewilder” — has not received similar examination. Necessarily, this semantic reconstruction must be speculative. Contextual factors, however, indicate appropriate orientations for an accurate recovery of the term’s original meaning.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) provides two definitions of the verb “bewilder”: literally, “to lose in pathless places, to confound for want of a plain road,” and figuratively, “to confuse in mental perception, to perplex, confound, to cause mental aberration.” It is my contention that as the notion of the wilderness was forced to abandon its positive meanings and acquire negative connotations, the originally unified meaning of “bewilder” was divided into two partial definitions, whose connotations were then inverted. Wilderness, as Vest avers, simultaneously denoted a location and a condition: a state inhab-

day when battery-run voices began broadcasting old speeches to battery-run listeners, the beast has been talking to itself.”³ Repeats, reruns and rewinds are not failures of imagination, but intrinsic elements in the ritual reprogramming of the system’s viewers. Increasingly, however, familiarity breeds dissent, and growing rejection of the entire ensemble.

The time approaches when tell-a-vision can be displaced by Tellus-vision. Tellus denotes the Earth, the Earth Mother, the underworld or inner space, the wilderness, chthonic and anarchic elemental energies. In contrast to the coy explicitness of the Told Vision, which dictates non-participation, Tellus-vision offers an experience of the ineffable, of untold delight. The mosaic spectacle’s defoliation, its amputations of the sensorium, can be healed through sharing in rituals of numinous synaesthesia, mutual involvement in multi-sensual actions, an ecstatic *katharsis*.

In prehistory and the ancient world, the processes for ritually acquiring Tellus-vision were known as the Mysteries. The latter, initially designed to forestall the development of characterological or communal authoritarianism, degenerated as patriarchal thugs fabricated institutions of domination, and prehistory became ancient history. The Mysteries were absorbed, allowed an uneasy coexistence, became subject to elite control and hence entered the marketplace, undergoing further evisceration until they were incorporated by the Christian hierarchy in the fourth century C.E.⁴ Recalcitrant indigenous Mysteries were extirpated by imperialist invaders, or forced to be practised in severely reduced form by isolated shamans or covens of witches.

³ Idem, *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!: An Essay* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), 301.

⁴ This can be pieced together from the evidence scattered throughout R. Gordon Wasson, Alfred Hofmann, Carl A.P. Ruck, *The Road to Eleusis: Unveiling the Secret of the Mysteries* (New York: Harcourt Bruce Jovanovich, 1978). The present essay focusses primarily on the European experience.

Chapter 5: Eversion Mysteries

1. Decay

Attempting to discern the formative elements in the re-nascent totalitarian mentality, Fredy Perlman suggests: “I could start by noticing that the new anti-semitic is not really so different from any other TV-watcher, and that TV-watching is somewhere near the core of the choice (I include newspapers and movies under the abbreviation for ‘tell-a-vision’).”¹ The mass media, as part of the global megamachine of domination, provide a contemporary *fuehrerprinzip*, “a total abdication of self-powers, a self-annihilation,” a comprehensive investment in unlimited obedience:

This something is the Told Vision which can be watched on off hours and preferably all the time. By choosing himself a Voyeur, the individual can *watch* everything he no longer *is*.²

Or can become, or ever experience. The Told Vision is a sold vision: it demands suppliants and supplies the demand. Due to the circularity of this process, humans are either cyberneticized, assimilated as functional components within the global automaton, or abandoned as superannuated. “From the

¹ Fredy Perlman, *Anti-Semitism and the Beirut Pogrom* (Seattle: Left Bank Books, 1983) 14.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

ited by willful, uncontrollable natural energies. In such states,² humans surrendered their individuality, renounced personal volition to the will-of-the-land, and merged individuated desire within the expansive needs of the wild. In doing so, they became channels or mediums through which the wilderness could become articulate and operative in the human sphere. The process was ecstatic: the surrender of the ego; the merging of individuation within holism, produced sensations of bliss and promoted ecstatic/erotic actions. Any incipient characterological sclerosis, absorbed through prolonged participation in communal relations, was discarded or dissipated. Any tendencies toward the formation of Leviathanic structures were thus dispersed.

Individuals undergoing this process were bewildered, in the original, integrated sense of the term. They entered “pathless places” in two senses. First, wilderness areas (i.e., the vast totality of the world) contained no paths or tracks — neither the roads of imperial domination and plunder constructed by the Romans, nor the routes of commerce carved by Islamic merchants. By definition, the wilderness remained free from incursions by technology. And secondly, there were no established journeys to be undertaken, no predetermined paths to traverse. All social codes were annulled: vision, emotion and behaviour were no longer subject to regulation and control. Total transformation was possible. But the directions — for unlimited eversion were no longer, or only minimally, under individual control. The individual will, subsumed within the will-of-the-land, no longer retained the power of volition. Possessed by the wilderness, individuals eagerly became vehicles for its sacred and ecstatic expression.

Evidence to substantiate these contentions regarding the bewilderment process can be derived from a consideration of

² By “states,” I mean both a state of existence and the state of nature, not the State.

an associated term, “amazement.” The OED variously defines “amaze” as “to put out of one’s wits... bewilder, perplex,” “to overcome with sudden fear or panic,” and “to overwhelm with wonder, to astound or greatly astonish.” It also defines “amazedness” as “loss of self-possession through fear.” This cluster of ideas clearly parallels the meanings attached to “bewilder.” Indeed, they may ultimately derive from a common origin. The OED notes that “amaze and a maze were often identified.” And this etymological link provides the crucial connexion. In certain primal traditions, the maze or labyrinth played a homologous role to that of the sacred wilderness area – in fact, the two may have been indistinguishable:

Extremely complex ideas were expressed through the symbol of the labyrinth. First, the initiate had to find the way through the underworld -the womb of the Mother -going through symbolic death to be reborn through her on a larger psychic level. Simultaneously, by dancing the winding and unwinding spiral, the initiate reached back to the still heart of cosmos, and so immortality, in her. The dance would have been combined with sexual rites and the taking of some hallucinogen like the legendary soma. In the resulting illumination soma and self were experienced as one with the cosmic self in orgasmic ego-death. The ecstatic centre of the labyrinth was the no-mind centre of orgasm experienced as death, creative madness, and loss of the conditioned ‘self.’³

“Bewilderment” and “amazement” once denoted the experienced interiority of radical purification through displacement. Losing one’s self in a maze meant precisely that, not merely a

³ Monica Sjöö and Barbara Mor, *The Great Cosmic Mother: Rediscovering the Religion of the Earth* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), 74–5.

human being is dispossessed of this repressed sensual life which becomes an object of knowledge, of science; it becomes capitalizable. The unconscious, becoming an object of commerce, is thinly sliced and retailed in the market of knowledge. The unconscious did not always exist, and it exists now only as a component in the discourse of capital.⁶

To demolish barriers and walls, to recover the unconscious and reactivate it in everyday life – these are metaphors for a process which bewilderment can help to facilitate. Bewilderment is an extreme condition, an encounter with transcendence, possession by elemental energies. But it allows the possibility of more measured and integrated lifeways. After such experiences, individuals and communities can accept convivial coexistence because they wittingly live within and amidst the oceanic consciousness. And such a state characterizes the condition of total anarchy.

⁶ Jacques Camatte, *The Wandering of Humanity* trans. F. Perlman (Detroit Black & Red, 1975), 35n. As the context renders apparent, by “capital” Camatte means much more than the mere Marxist economic category.

Despite its illuminating qualities, Starhawk's metaphor remains descriptively inadequate because it lacks any notion of the historical relativity of the configuration of elements she discerns within subjectivity. Deep Self can undoubtedly be found beneath the garden (and the house), but also — and most prodigiously — in the wilderness. Here lies Starhawk's major error. Rather than contrariety, one finds identity: the wilderness is Deep Self, and vice versa. Primal peoples realized this fact. They also knew that Talking Self was a useful and beneficial agency, but only so long as it remained contextualized, in situ, within its proper, circumscribed dimensions. Its constant tendency to hypertrophy was recognized, and thwarted by the bewilderment process. But in hierarchical control structures, this tendency is encouraged, and Talking Self becomes deracinated, denatured, (pre)dominant. Hence, in terms of Starhawk's metaphor, the central issue should not be tending the garden, making it more hospitable, indeed civilized, but rather flattening the wall. Younger Self's garden should by degrees imperceptibly shade into the wilderness, allowing for an untroubled access to and from the two complementary areas of hearth and hinterland. Any strict demarcation automatically creates and maintains the divisions of private property.

Jacques Camatte provides another metaphorical representation of this issue when he proposes a recovery of the unconscious:

What is the subconscious if not the affective-sensual life of the human being repressed by capital? The human being has to be domesticated, shaped to a rationality which he must internalize — the rationality of the process of production of capital. Once this domestication is achieved, the

Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979).

sense of disorientation. Bewilderment entailed an encounter with death and transcendence, and so was necessarily characterized by complex interacting responses, including terror, wonder and ecstasy. The wilderness overwhelmed the individual will from three directions. Spiritual techniques for arousing the coiled kundalini energy eroded ego boundaries and merged the individuated self within the cosmic All. Hallucinogens derived from poisonous substances transported the individual to the brink of physical decease. And uncontrollable sexual desires overcame any social inhibitions placed on the search for erotic pleasures. The combination of these three elements took the individual to the edge of dissolution — as a psychological, physical, and social/ethical entity. But only to the edge: vestiges of consciousness remained so that the wilderness could become aware of itself, achieve a knowledge of its own awesome nature. However, the process remained reciprocal: the individual emerged transformed and whole, often bearing shamanic gifts — such as prophetic powers, healing capacities and visions — to enrich the community. Such symbiosis constituted the core of the ancient Mysteries.⁴

Once “wilderness” acquired pejorative connotations, however, the bewilderment phenomenon underwent a similarly negative redefinition. The originally integrated meanings of the process were separated and demonized, gradually assuming the forms in which they are currently known. On the one hand, bewilderment now signifies the feeling experienced when one is lost, disorientated in an unfamiliar — and hence potentially threatening — context or environment, unable to find an exit. On the other hand, the term denotes a derangement of perceptions, not in a positive sense of possession by the wilderness, but in the negative sense of

⁴ The Mysteries were part of a long and integrated tradition, much of which has now been lost. The access routes toward bewilderment were highly structured and thoroughly understood, even if the condition itself allowed total liberation. For additional information, see “Eversion Mysteries” below.

perplexity and bafflement. To lose one's self now becomes an adversity because the failure of the cognitive faculties reveals, not a wealth of inner spiritual resources, but an emptiness — a subjectivity evacuated by power and glutted with totalitarian trivia.

These contemporary meanings of “bewilderment” are so ingrained that it seems an impossible task to retrieve this term. Hence, as an alternative I propose the notion of *bewilderness*. The primal meanings of “bewilder” are now apparent. The amalgamation of “bewilder” and “wilderness” in this new term possesses the advantage of restoring the emphasis on the wild component of the former term. But the addition of “ness” to “bewilder” also remains appropriate. Vest demonstrates that the suffix “ness,” in addition to expressing a particular state (e.g., sweetness, tiredness), originally denoted a “land” or “place.” Hence, as a term “bewilderness” reunites the two separated aspects of “bewilder” as geographical dislocation and as a spiritual condition.

The reasons for coining this neologism are far from antiquarian. The experience denoted by *bewilderness* remains crucial for all proponents of anarchy, who recognize that syncopating the spiral dance could facilitate total revolution. *Bewilderness* constitutes both the means and an end (i.e., the beginning of another cycle). Like anarchic Zen, it postulates a supersession of everyday, socially conditioned consciousness on an individual and later generalized scale. It promotes psychosocial biodegradation or ecdysis: the refusal of assigned identities, the divestment of polysemic integuments, the disgorgement of totalitarian toxins. Dispossession becomes Possession, not so much through an expropriation of the expropriators, as an evacuation of and from the evacuating control complex. This process is purgative and therapeutic: the vacuum becomes inundated with waves of ecstasy that prefigure, and hence promote the shift toward, total global anarchy. Techniques for recovering *bewilderness* are available.

Many of Starhawk's magic exercises, for example, attempt to elicit precisely this condition. She proposes wordless chants, inarticulate noises which resolve into the sounds of the wilderness communing through individuals and groups. Such techniques aim to liberate the involuntary, be it a yelp of pain, an orgasmic groan, a growl of anger, or any other expression. The individual invokes, and waits to discover what energy emerges. Magic consists of merging and participating in these energies, and shaping their manifestations. The nature of the resulting patterns depends on the metaphors and symbols utilized. For example, Starhawk, characterizing subjectivity within hierarchical control structures, discerns three aspects of the self: Younger Self, the playful, sensory element that appears when the infant distinguishes itself from its environment; Talking Self, the later rational faculty of abstraction and codification; and Deep Self, the all-pervasive oceanic consciousness: Imagine Talking Self's domain as a house we live in, and Younger Self's domain as a garden that surrounds it completely. Beneath the garden are the caves and wells of Deep Self; outside it are the other realms of reality, the wilderness. There is no clear dividing line between Younger Self's garden and the wild until Talking Self builds a wall. Younger Self constantly brings in plants and animals... In order to walk out into the wild, we must first pass through the garden.

Or, conversely, in order to examine any piece of the wild Younger Self brings in, in order to name it and set it on the shelves of our house, it must first be brought through the garden. The clearer the paths are, the more familiar we are with their windings and turnings, the friendlier we are with the creatures that inhabit them, the clearer are our contacts with external reality — both physical and metaphysical.⁵

⁵ Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), 55–6. The magic techniques can be found in *The Spiral Dance: A*