The Ecology of Freedom
The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy

Murray Bookchin
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This book stands on its own ground and projects a coherent theory of social ecology that is independent of the conventional wisdom of our time. But we all stand on the shoulders of others, if only-in terms of the problems they raised and we are obliged to resolve.

Thus, I owe a great deal to the work of Max Weber, Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, and Karl Polanyi, who all so brilliantly anticipated the problems of domination and the crises of reason, science, and technics that beleaguer us today. I have tried to resolve these issues by following intellectual pathways opened by the anarchist thinkers of the previous century, particularly Peter Kropotkin’s natural and social mutualism. I do not share his commitment to confederalism based on contract and exchange, and I find his notion of "sociality" (which I personally interpret to mean "symbiotic mutualism") among nonhuman organisms a bit simplistic. However, Kropotkin is unique in his emphasis on the need for a reconciliation of humanity with nature, the role of mutual aid in natural and social evolution, his hatred of hierarchy, and his vision of a new technics based on decentralization and human scale. I believe that such a libertarian social ecology can avoid the dualistic, neo-Kantian ideologies such as structuralism and many communication theories-a dualism very much in vogue today. To know the development of domination, technics, science, and subjectivity-the latter in natural history as well as in human-is to find the unifying threads that overcome the disjunctions between nonhuman and human nature.

My intellectual debt to Dorothy Lee and Paul Radin in anthropology is enormous, and I cherish the time I encountered the work of E. A. Gutkind and Martin Buber's utopian reflections. I have found Hans Jonas's Phenomenon of Life an ever-refreshing source of inspiration in nature philosophy as well as a book of rare stylistic grace. For the rest, I have drawn upon so vast a cultural tradition that it would be meaningless to saddle the reader with names; this tradition appears throughout the book and hardly requires delineation.

I am indebted to Michael Riordan, who was more than a zealous editor and sympathetic publisher. His meticulous reading of this book, his keenly intelligent queries, his searching criticisms, and his demand for conciseness and clarity have made this book more accessible to the Anglo-American reader than I might have been inclined to do. For a European perspective, I must thank my dear friend, Karl-Ludwig Schibel, who, in reading the opening chapters, brought to them the sophisticated queries of his students at the University of Frankfurt and obliged me to examine issues that I would have ordinarily ignored. Richard Merrill, like Michael Riordan, was an endless source of articles and data from which the scientific material in the Epilogue is derived. To have so able and absorbing a biologist at hand is more than a privilege; it is an intellectual delicacy. I wish to thank Linda Goodman, an excellent artist, for bringing her talents as art director to the designing of this book and for rendering it aesthetically attractive. I have had the benefit of highly sympathetic copy editors, particularly Naomi Steinfeld, who exhibited a remarkable understanding of my ideas and intentions.

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This has been a wayward book that has taken on a life of its own. So I cannot refrain from closing these acknowledgements with the exquisite remarks (all failings of gender aside) of my favorite utopian, William Morris:

Men fight and lose the battle, and the thing they fought for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when it comes turns out not to be what they meant, and other men have to fight for what they meant under another name.

Murray Bookchin
Burlington, Vermont
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(We are enabled to conclude that the lesson which man derives from both the study of Nature and his own history is the permanent presence of a double tendency — towards a greater development on the one side of sociality, and, on the other side, of a consequent increase in the intensity of life . . . . This double tendency is a distinctive characteristic of life in general. It is always present, and belongs to life, as one of its attributes, whatever aspects life may take on our planet or elsewhere. And this is not a metaphysical assertion of the "universality of the moral law," or a mere supposition. Without the continual growth of sociality, and consequently of the intensity and variety of sensations, life is impossible.)

Peter Kropotkin, Ethics

We are forgetting how to give presents. Violation of the exchange principle has something nonsensical and implausible about it; here and there even children eye the giver suspiciously, as if the gift were merely a trick to sell them brushes or soap. Instead we have charity, administered beneficence, the planned plastering-over of society’s visible sores. In its organized operations there is no longer room for human impulses, indeed, the gift is necessarily accompanied by humiliation through its distribution, its just allocation, in short, through treatment of the recipient as an object.

Theodor Adorno, Minima Moralia

Ontology as the ground of ethics was the original tenet of philosophy. Their divorce, which is the divorce of the "objective" and "subjective" realms, is the modern destiny. Their reunion can be effected, if at all, only from the "objective" end, that is to say, through a revision of the idea of nature. And it is becoming rather than abiding nature which would hold out any such promise. From the immanent direction of its total evolution there may be elicited a destination of man by whose terms the person, in the act of fulfilling himself, would at the same time realize a concern of universal substance. Hence would result a principle of ethics which is ultimately grounded
neither in the autonomy of the self nor in the needs of the community, but in an
objective assignment by the nature of things.

Hans Jonas, The Phenomenon of Life
Introduction

This book was written to satisfy the need for a consistently radical social ecology: an ecology of freedom. It had been maturing in my mind since 1952 when I first became acutely conscious of the growing environmental crisis that was to assume such monumental proportions a generation later. In that year, I published a volume-sized article, "The Problems of Chemicals in Food" (later to be republished in book form in Germany as Lebensgefährliche Lebensmittel). Owing to my early Marxian intellectual training, the article examined not merely environmental pollution but also its deep-seated social origins. Environmental issues had developed in my mind as social issues, and problems of natural ecology had become problems of "social ecology" — an expression hardly in use at the time.

The subject was never to leave me. In fact, its dimensions were to widen and deepen immensely. By the early sixties, my views could be summarized in a fairly crisp formulation: the very notion of the domination of nature by man stems from the very real domination of human by human. For me, this was a far-reaching reversal of concepts. The many articles and books I published in the years after 1952, beginning with Our Synthetic Environment (1963) and continuing with Toward an Ecological Society (1980), were largely explorations of this fundamental theme. As one premise led to another, it became clear that a highly coherent project was forming in my work: the need to explain the emergence of social hierarchy and domination and to elucidate the means, sensibility, and practice that could yield a truly harmonious ecological society. My book Post-Scarcity Anarchism (1971) pioneered this vision. Composed of essays dating from 1964, it addressed itself more to hierarchy than class, to domination rather than exploitation, to liberatory institutions rather than the mere abolition of the State, to freedom rather than justice, and pleasure rather than happiness. For me, these changing emphases were not mere countercultural rhetoric; they marked a sweeping departure from my earlier commitment to socialist orthodoxies of all forms. I visualized instead a new form of libertarian social ecology — or what Victor Ferkiss, in discussing my social views, so appropriately called "eco-anarchism."

As recently as the sixties, words like hierarchy and domination were rarely used. Traditional radicals, particularly Marxists, still spoke almost exclusively in terms of classes, class analyses, and class consciousness; their concepts of oppression were primarily confined to material exploitation, grinding poverty, and the unjust abuse of labor. Likewise, orthodox anarchists placed most of their emphasis on the State as the ubiquitous source of social coercion.[1] Just as the emergence of private property became society’s "original sin" in Marxian orthodoxy, so the emergence of the State became society’s "original sin" in anarchist orthodoxy. Even the early counterculture of the sixties eschewed the use of the term hierarchy and preferred to "Question Authority" without exploring the genesis of authority, its relationship to nature, and its meaning for the creation of a new society.

During these years I also concentrated on how a truly free society, based on ecological principles, could mediate humanity’s relationship with nature. As a result, I began to explore the development of a new technology scaled to comprehensible human dimensions. Such a tech-
nology would include small solar and wind installations, organic gardens, and the use of local "natural resources" worked by decentralized communities. This view quickly gave rise to another — the need for direct democracy, for urban decentralization, for a high measure of self-sufficiency, for self-empowerment based on communal forms of social life — in short, the nonauthoritarian Commune composed of communes.

As I published these ideas over the years — especially in the decade between the early sixties and early seventies — what began to trouble me was the extent to which people tended to subvert their unity, coherence, and radical focus. Notions like decentralization and human scale, for example, were deftly adopted without reference to solar and wind techniques or bioagricultural practices that are their material underpinnings. Each segment was permitted to plummet off on its own, while the philosophy that unified them into an integrated whole was permitted to languish. Decentralization entered city planning as a mere strategem for community design, while alternative technology became a narrow discipline, increasingly confined to the academy and to a new breed of technocrats. In turn, each notion became divorced from a critical analysis of society — from a radical theory of social ecology.

It has become clear to me that it was the unity of my views — their ecological holism, not merely their individual components — that gave them a radical thrust. That a society is decentralized, that it uses solar or wind energy, that it is farmed organically, or that it reduces pollution — none of these measures by itself or even in limited combination with others makes an ecological society. Nor do piecemeal steps, however well-intended, even partially resolve problems that have reached a universal, global, and catastrophic character. If anything, partial "solutions" serve merely as cosmetics to conceal the deep-seated nature of the ecological crisis. They thereby deflect public attention and theoretical insight from an adequate understanding of the depth and scope of the necessary changes.

Combined in a coherent whole and supported by a consistently radical practice, however, these views challenge the status quo in a far-reaching manner — in the only manner commensurate with the nature of the crisis. It was precisely this synthesis of ideas that I sought to achieve in The Ecology of Freedom. And this synthesis had to be rooted in history — in the development of social relations, social institutions, changing technologies and sensibilities, and political structures; only in this way could I hope to establish a sense of genesis, contrast, and continuity that would give real meaning to my views. The reconstructive utopian thinking that followed from my synthesis could then be based on the realities of human experience. What should be could become what must be, if humanity and the biological complexity on which it rests were to survive. Change and reconstruction could emerge from existing problems rather than wishful thinking and misty vagaries.

My use of the word hierarchy in the subtitle of this work is meant to be provocative. There is a strong theoretical need to contrast hierarchy with the more widespread use of the words class and State; careless use of these terms can produce a dangerous simplification of social reality. To use the words hierarchy, class, and State interchangeably, as many social theorists do, is insidious and obscurantist. This practice, in the name of a "classless" or "libertarian" society, could easily conceal the existence of hierarchical relationships and a hierarchical sensibility, both of which — even in the absence of economic exploitation or political coercion — would serve to perpetuate unfreedom.

By hierarchy, I mean the cultural, traditional and psychological systems of obedience and command, not merely the economic and political systems to which the terms class and State most
appropriately refer. Accordingly, hierarchy and domination could easily continue to exist in a "classless" or "Stateless" society. I refer to the domination of the young by the old, of women by men, of one ethnic group by another, of "masses" by bureaucrats who profess to speak in their "higher social interests," of countryside by town, and in a more subtle psychological sense, of body by mind, of spirit by a shallow instrumental rationality, and of nature by society and technology. Indeed, classless but hierarchical societies exist today (and they existed more covertly in the past); yet the people who live in them neither enjoy freedom, nor do they exercise control over their lives.

Marx, whose works largely account for this conceptual obfuscation, offered us a fairly explicit definition of class. He had the advantage of developing his theory of class society within a sternly objective economic framework. His widespread acceptance may well reflect the extent to which our own era gives supremacy to economic issues over all other aspects of social life. There is, in fact, a certain elegance and grandeur to the notion that the "history of all hitherto existing society has been the history of class struggles." Put quite simply, a ruling class is a privileged social stratum that owns or controls the means of production and exploits a larger mass of people, the ruled class, which works these productive forces. Class relationships are essentially relationships of production based on ownership of land, tools, machines, and the produce thereof. Exploitation, in turn, is the use of the labor of others to provide for one's own material needs, for luxuries and leisure, and for the accumulation and productive renewal of technology. There the matter of class definition could be said to rest — and with it, Marx's famous method of "class analysis" as the authentic unravelling of the material bases of economic interests, ideologies and culture.

Hierarchy, although it includes Marx's definition of class and even gives rise to a class society historically, goes beyond this limited meaning imputed to a largely economic form of stratification. To say this, however, does not define the meaning of the term hierarchy, and I doubt that the word can be encompassed by a formal definition. I view it historically and existentially as a complex system of command and obedience in which elites enjoy varying degrees of control over their subordinates without necessarily exploiting them. Such elites may completely lack any form of material wealth; they may — even — be dispossessed of it, much as Plato's "guardian" elite was socially powerful but materially poor.

Hierarchy is not merely a social condition; it is also a state of consciousness, a sensibility toward phenomena at every level of personal and social experience. Early preliterate societies ("organic" societies, as I call them) existed in a fairly integrated and unified form based on kinship ties, age groups, and a sexual division of labor.[2] Their high sense of internal unity and their egalitarian outlook extended not only to each other but to their relationship with nature. People in preliterate cultures viewed themselves not as the "lords of creation" (to borrow a phrase used by Christian millenarians) but as part of the natural world. They were neither above nature nor below it but within it.

In organic societies the differences between individuals, age groups, sexes — and between humanity and the natural manifold of living and nonliving phenomena — were seen (to use Hegel's superb phrase) as a "unity of differences" or "unity of diversity," not as hierarchies. Their outlook was distinctly ecological, and from this outlook they almost unconsciously derived a body of values that influenced their behavior toward individuals in their own communities and the world of life. As I contend in the following pages, ecology knows no "king of beasts" and no "lowly creatures" (such terms come from our own hierarchical mentality). Rather it deals
with ecosystems in which living things are interdependent and play complementary roles in perpetuating the stability of the natural order.

Gradually, organic societies began to develop less traditional forms of differentiation and stratification. Their primal unity began to break down. The sociopolitical or "civil" sphere of life expanded, giving increasing eminence to the elders and males of the community, who now claimed this sphere as part of the division of tribal labor. Male supremacy over women and children emerged primarily as a result of the male's social functions in the community — functions that were not by any means exclusively economic as Marxian theorists would have us believe. Male cunning in the manipulation of women was to appear later.

Until this phase of history or prehistory, the elders and males rarely exercised socially dominant roles because their civil sphere was simply not very important to the community. Indeed, the civil sphere was markedly counterbalanced by the enormous significance of the woman's "domestic" sphere. Household and childbearing responsibilities were much more important in early organic societies than politics and military affairs. Early society was profoundly different from contemporary society in its structural arrangements and the roles played by different members of the community.

Yet even with the emergence of hierarchy there were still no economic classes or state structures, nor were people materially exploited in a systematic manner. Certain strata, such as the elders and shamans and ultimately the males in general, began to claim privileges for themselves — often merely as matters of prestige based on social recognition rather than material gain. The nature of these privileges, if such they can be called, requires a more sophisticated discussion than it has received to date, and I have tried to examine them carefully in considerable detail. Only later did economic classes and economic exploitation begin to appear, eventually to be followed by the State with its far-reaching bureaucratic and military paraphernalia.

But the dissolution of organic societies into hierarchical, class, and political societies occurred unevenly and erratically, shifting back and forth over long periods of time. We can see this most strikingly in the relationships between men and women — particularly in terms of the values that have been associated with changing social roles. For example, although anthropologists have long assigned an inordinate degree of social eminence to men in highly developed hunting cultures — an eminence they probably never enjoyed in the more primal foraging bands of their ancestors — the supercession of hunting by horticulture, in which gardening was performed mainly by women, probably redressed whatever earlier imbalances may have existed between the sexes. The "aggressive" male hunter and the "passive" female food-gatherer are the theatrically exaggerated images that male anthropologists of a past era inflicted on their "savage" aboriginal subjects, but certainly tensions and vicissitudes in values, quite aside from social relationships, must have simmered within primordial hunting and gathering communities. To deny the very existence of the latent attitudinal tensions that must have existed between the male hunter, who had to kill for his food and later make war on his fellow beings, and the female food-gatherer, who foraged for her food and later cultivated it, would make it very difficult to explain why patriarchy and its harshly aggressive outlook ever emerged at all.

Although the changes I have adduced were technological and partially economic — as terms like food-gatherers, hunters, and horticulturists seem to imply — we should not assume that these changes were directly responsible for shifts in sexual status. Given the level of hierarchical difference that emerged in this early period of social life — even in a patricentric community — women were still not abject inferiors of men, nor were the young placed in grim subjugation to
the old. Indeed, the appearance of a ranking system that conferred privilege on one stratum over another, notably the old over the young, was in its own way a form of compensation that more often reflected the egalitarian features of organic society rather than the authoritarian features of later societies.

When the number of horticultural communities began to multiply to a point where cultivable land became relatively scarce and warfare increasingly common, the younger warriors began to enjoy a sociopolitical eminence that made them the "big men" of the community, sharing civil power with the elders and shamans. Throughout, matricentric customs, religions, and sensibilities coexisted with patricentric ones, so that the sterner features of patriarchy were often absent during this transitional period. Whether matricentric or patricentric, the older egalitarianism of organic society permeated social life and faded away only slowly, leaving many vestigial remains long after class society had fastened its hold on popular values and sensibilities.

The State, economic classes, and the systematic exploitation of subjugated peoples followed from a more complex and protracted development than radical theorists recognized in their day. Their visions of the origins of class and political societies were instead the culmination of an earlier, richly articulated development of society into hierarchical forms. The divisions within organic society increasingly raised the old to supremacy over the young, men to supremacy over women, the shaman and later the priestly corporation to supremacy over lay society, one class to supremacy over another, and State formations to supremacy over society in general.

For the reader imbued with the conventional wisdom of our era, I cannot emphasize too strongly that society in the form of bands, families, clans, tribes, tribal federations, villages, and even municipalities long antedates State formations. The State, with its specialized functionaries, bureaucracies, and armies, emerges quite late in human social development — often well beyond the threshold of history. It remained in sharp conflict with coexisting social structures such as guilds, neighborhoods, popular societies, cooperatives, town meetings, and a wide variety of municipal assemblies.

But the hierarchical organization of all differentia did not end with the structuring of "civil" society into an institutionalized system of obedience and command. In time, hierarchy began to invade less tangible fields of life. Mental activity was given supremacy over physical work, intellectual experience over sensuousness, the "reality principle" over the "pleasure principle," and finally judgment, morality, and spirit were pervaded by an ineffable authoritarianism that was to take its vengeful command over language and the most rudimentary forms of symbolization. The vision of social and natural diversity was altered from an organic sensibility that sees different phenomena as unity in diversity into a hierarchical mentality that ranked the most minuscule phenomena into mutually antagonistic pyramids erected around notions of "inferior" and "superior." And what began as a sensibility has evolved into concrete social fact. Thus, the effort to restore the ecological principle of unity in diversity has become a social effort in its own right — a revolutionary effort that must rearrange sensibility in order to rearrange the real world.

A hierarchical mentality fosters the renunciation of the pleasures of life. It justifies toil, guilt, and sacrifice by the "inferiors," and pleasure and the indulgent gratification of virtually every caprice by their "superiors." The objective history of the social structure becomes internalized as a subjective history of the psychic structure. Heinous as my view may be to modern Freudians, it is not the discipline of work but the discipline of rule that demands the repression of internal nature. This repression then extends outward to external nature as a mere object of rule and later of exploitation. This mentality permeates our individual psyches in a cumulative form up to the
present day — not merely as capitalism but as the vast history of hierarchical society from its inception. Unless we explore this history, which lives actively within us like earlier phases of our individual lives, we will never be free of its hold. We may eliminate social injustice, but we will not achieve social freedom. We may eliminate classes and exploitation, but we will not be spared from the trammels of hierarchy and domination. We may exorcize the spirit of gain and accumulation from our psyches, but we will still be burdened by gnawing guilt, renunciation, and a subtle belief in the “vices” of sensuousness.

Another series of distinctions appears in this book — the distinction between morality and ethics and between justice and freedom. Morality — as I use this term — denotes conscious standards of behavior that have not yet been subjected to thorough rational analyses by a community. I have eschewed the use of the word “custom” as a substitute for the word morality because moral criteria for judging behavior do involve some kind of explanation and cannot be reduced to the conditioned social reflexes we usually call custom. The Mosaic commandments, like those of other world religions, for example, were justified on theological grounds; they were the sacrosanct words of Yahweh, which we might reasonably challenge today because they are not grounded in reason. Ethics, by contrast, invites rational analyses and, like Kant’s “moral imperative,” must be justified by intellectual operations, not mere faith. Hence, morality lies somewhere between unthinking custom and rational ethical criteria of right and wrong. Without making these distinctions, it would be difficult to explain the increasingly ethical claims the State has made on its citizens, particularly in eroding the archaic moral codes that supported the patriarch’s complete control over his family, and the impediments this authority has placed in the way of politically more expansive societies like the Athenian polis.

The distinction between justice and freedom, between formal equality and substantive equality, is even more basic and continually recurs throughout the book. This distinction has rarely been explored even by radical theorists, who often still echo the historical cry of the oppressed for “Justice!” rather than freedom. Worse yet, the two have been used as equivalents (which they decidedly are not). The young Proudhon and later Marx correctly perceived that true freedom presupposes an equality based on a recognition of inequality — the inequality of capacities and needs, of abilities and responsibilities. Mere formal equality, which “justly” rewards each according to his or her contribution to society and sees everyone as “equal in the eyes of the law” and “equal in opportunity,” grossly obscures the fact that the young and old, the weak and infirm, the individual with few responsibilities and the one with many (not to speak of the rich and the poor in contemporary society) by no means enjoy genuine equality in a society guided by the rule of equivalence. Indeed, terms like rewards, needs, opportunity, or, for that matter, property — however communally “owned” or collectively operated — require as much investigation as the word law. Unfortunately, the revolutionary tradition did not fully develop these themes and their embodiment in certain terms. Socialism, in most of its forms, gradually degenerated into a demand for “economic justice,” thereby merely restating the rule of equivalence as an economic emendation to the juridical and political rule of equivalence established by the bourgeoisie. It is my purpose to thoroughly unscramble these distinctions, to demonstrate how the confusion arose in the first place and how it can be clarified so it no longer burdens the future.

A third contrast that I try to develop in this book is the distinction between happiness and pleasure. Happiness, as defined here, is the mere satisfaction of need, of our survival needs for food, shelter, clothing, and material security — in short, our needs as animal organisms. Pleasure, by contrast, is the satisfaction of our desires, of our intellectual, esthetic, sensuous and playful
"daydreams." The social quest for happiness, which so often seems liberating, tends to occur in ways that shrewdly devalue or repress the quest for pleasure. We can see evidence of this regressive development in many radical ideologies that justify toil and need at the expense of artful work and sensuous joy. That these ideologies denounce the quest for fulfillment of the sensuous as "bourgeois individualism" and "libertinism" hardly requires mention. Yet it is precisely in this utopistic quest for pleasure, I believe, that humanity begins to gain its most sparkling glimpse of emancipation. With this quest carried to the social realm, rather than confined to a privatized hedonism, humanity begins to transcend the realm of justice, even of a classless society, and enters into the realm of freedom — a realm conceived as the full realization of humanity's potentialities in their most creative form.

If I were asked to single out the one underlying contrast that permeates this book, it is the seeming conflict between the "realm of necessity" and the "realm of freedom." Conceptually, this conflict dates back to Aristotle's Politics. It involves the "blind" world of "natural" or external nature and the rational world of "human" or internal nature that society must dominate to create the material conditions for freedom — the free time and leisure to allow man to develop his potentialities and powers. This drama is redolent with the conflict between nature and society, woman and man, and body and reason that permeates western images of "civilization." It has underpinned almost every rationalistic account of history; it has been used ideologically to justify domination in virtually every aspect of life. Its apotheosis, ironically, is reached in various socialisms, particularly those of Robert, Owen, Saint-Simon, and in its most sophisticated form, Karl Marx. Marx's image of the "savage who wrestles with nature" is not an expression so much of Enlightenment hubris as it is of Victorian arrogance. Woman, as Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer observed, has no stake in this conflict. It is strictly between man and nature. From Aristotle's time to Marx's, the split is regarded as inevitable: the gap between necessity and freedom may be narrowed by technological advances that give man an ever-greater ascendancy over nature, but it can never be bridged. What puzzled a few highly sophisticated Marxists in later years was how the repression and disciplining of external nature could be achieved without repressing and disciplining internal nature: how could "natural" nature be kept in tow without subjugating "human" nature?

My attempt to unravel this puzzle involves an effort to deal with the Victorians' mythic "savage," to investigate external nature and its relationship to internal nature, to give meaning to the world of necessity (nature) in terms of the ability of the world of freedom (society) to colonize and liberate it. My strategy is to reexamine the evolution and meaning of technology in a new ecological light. I will try to ascertain how work ceased to be attractive and playful, and turned into onerous toil. Hence, I am led to a drastic reconsideration of the nature and structure of technics, of work, and of humanity's metabolism with nature.

Here, I would like to emphasize that my views on nature are linked by a fairly unorthodox notion of reason. As Adorno and Horkheimer have emphasized, reason was once perceived as an immanent feature of reality, indeed, as the organizing and motivating principle of the world. It was seen as an inherent force — as the logos — that imparted meaning and coherence to reality at all levels of existence. The modern world has abandoned this notion and reduced reason to rationalization, that is, to a mere technique for achieving practical ends. Logos, in effect, was simply turned into logic. This book tries to recover this notion of an immanent world reason, albeit without the archaic, quasi-theological trappings that render this notion untenable to a more knowledgeable and secular society. In my view, reason exists in nature as the self-organizing
attributes of substance; it is the latent subjectivity in the inorganic and organic levels of reality that reveal an inherent striving toward consciousness. In humanity, this subjectivity reveals itself as self-consciousness. I do not claim that my approach is unique; an extensive literature that supports the existence of a seemingly intrinsic logos in nature derives mainly from the scientific community itself. What I have tried to do here is to cast my speculations about reason in distinctly historical and ecological terms, free of the theological and mystical proclivities that have so often marred the formulations of a rational nature philosophy. In the closing chapters, I try to explore the interface between nature philosophy and libertarian social theory.

I am also obliged to recover the authentic utopian tradition, particularly as expressed by Rabelais, Charles Fourier, and William Morris, from amidst the debris of futurism that conceals it. Futurism, as exemplified by the works of Herman Kahn, merely extrapolates the hideous present into an even more hideous future and thereby effaces the creative, imaginative dimensions of futurity. By contrast, the utopian tradition seeks to permeate necessity with freedom, work with play, even toil with artfulness and festiveness. My contrast between utopianism and futurism forms the basis for a creative, liberatory reconstruction of an ecological society, for a sense of human mission and meaning as nature rendered self-conscious.

This book opens with a Norse myth that depicts how the gods must pay a penalty for seeking the conquest of nature. It ends with a social project for removing that penalty, whose Latin root poenalis has given us the word pain. Humanity will become the deities it created in its imagination, albeit as deities within nature, not above nature — as "supernatural" entities. The title of this book, The Ecology of Freedom, is meant to express the reconciliation of nature and human society in a new ecological sensibility and a new ecological society — a reharmonization of nature and humanity through a reharmonization of human with human.

A dialectical tension pervades this book. Throughout my discussion I often deal with potentialities that have yet to be actualized historically. Expository needs often compel me to treat a certain social condition in embryonic form as though it had already reached fulfillment. My procedure is guided by the need to bring the concept out in full relief, to clarify its complete meaning and implications.

In my descriptions of the historical role of the elders in the formation of hierarchy, for example, some readers might surmise that I believe hierarchy existed at the very outset of human society. The influential role that the elders were to play in forming hierarchies is intermingled with their more modest role at earlier periods of social development, when they actually exercised comparatively little social influence. In this situation I am faced with the need to clarify how the elders constituted the earliest "seeds" of hierarchy. A gerontocracy was probably the first form of hierarchy to exist in society. But, owing to my mode of presentation, some readers might assume that the rule of the old over the young existed during periods of human society when no such rule really existed. Nevertheless, the insecurities that come with age almost certainly existed among the elders, and they eventually used whatever means available to prevail over the young and gain their reverence.

The same expository problem arises when I deal with the shaman's role in the evolution of early hierarchies, with the male's role in relation to women, and so forth. The reader should be mindful that any "fact," firmly stated and apparently complete, is actually the result of a complex process — not a given datum that appears full-blown in a community or society. Much of the dialectical tension that pervades this book arises from the fact that I deal with processes, not with cut-and-
dried propositions that comfortably succeed each other in stately fashion, like categories in a traditional logic text.

Incipient, potentially hierarchical elites gradually evolve, each phase of their evolution shading into the succeeding one, until the first firm shoots of hierarchy emerge and eventually mature. Their growth is uneven and intermixed. The elders and shamans rely on each other and then compete with each other for social privileges, many of which are attempts to achieve the personal security conferred by a certain measure of influence. Both groups enter into alliances with an emerging warrior caste of young men, finally to form the beginnings of a quasi-political community and an incipient State. Their privileges and powers only then become generalized into institutions that try to exercise command over society as a whole. At other times, however, hierarchical growth may become arrested and even "regress" to a greater parity between age and sex groups. Unless rule was achieved from outside, by conquest, the emergence of hierarchy was not a sudden revolution in human affairs. It was often a long and complex process.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that this book is structured around contrasts between preliterate, nonhierarchical societies — their outlooks, technics, and forms of thinking — and "civilizations" based on hierarchy and domination. Each of the themes touched upon in the second chapter is picked up again in the following chapters and explored in greater detail to clarify the sweeping changes "civilization" introduced in the human condition. What we so often lack in our daily lives and our social sensibilities is a sense of the cleavages and slow gradations by which our society developed in contrast — often in brutal antagonism — to preindustrial and preliterate cultures. We live so completely immersed in our present that it absorbs all our sensibilities and hence our very capacity to think of alternate social forms. Thus, I will continually return to preliterate sensibilities, which I merely note in Chapter Two, to explore their contrasts with later institutions, technics, and forms of thinking in hierarchical societies.

This book does not march to the drumbeat of logical categories, nor are its arguments marshalled into a stately parade of sharply delineated historical eras. I have not written a history of events, each of which follows the other according to the dictates of a prescribed chronology. Anthropology, history, ideologies, even systems of philosophy and reason, inform this book — and with them, digressions and excurses that I feel throw valuable light on the great movement of natural and human development. The more impatient reader may want to leap over passages and pages that he or she finds too discursive or digressive. But this book focuses on a few general ideas that grow according to the erratic and occasionally wayward logic of the organic rather than the strictly analytic. I hope that the reader will also want to grow with this book, to experience it and understand it — critically and querulously, to be sure, but with empathy and sensibility for the living development of freedom it depicts and the dialectic it explores in humanity’s conflict with domination.

Having offered my mea culpas for certain expository problems, I would like to emphatically affirm my conviction that this process-oriented dialectical approach comes much closer to the truth of hierarchical development than a presumably clearer analytical approach so favored by academic logicians. As we look back over many millenia, our thinking and analyses of the past are overly informed by a long historical development that early humanity evidently lacked. We are inclined to project into the past a vast body of social relations, political institutions, economic concepts, moral precepts, and a tremendous corpus of personal and social ideas that people living thousands of years ago had yet to create and conceptualize. What are fully matured actualities to us were, to them, still unformed potentialities. They thought in terms that were basically dif-
different from ours. What we now take for granted as part of the "human condition" was simply inconceivable to them. We, in turn, are virtually incapable of dealing with a vast wealth of natural phenomena that were integrally part of their lives. The very structure of our language conspires against an understanding of their outlook.

Doubtless many "truths" that preliterate peoples held were patently false, a statement that is easily made nowadays. But I will make a case for the notion that their outlook, particularly as applied to their communities' relationship with the natural world, had a basic soundness — one that is particularly relevant for our times. I examine their ecological sensibility and try to show why and how it deteriorated. More importantly, I am eager to determine what can be recovered from that outlook and integrated into our own. No contradiction is created by merging their ecological sensibility with our prevailing analytical one, provided such a merging transcends both sensibilities in a new way of thinking and experiencing. We can no more return to their conceptual "primitivism" than they could have grasped our analytical "sophistication." But perhaps we can achieve a way of thinking and experiencing that involves a quasi-animistic respiritization of phenomena — inanimate as well as animate — without abandoning the insights provided by science and analytical reasoning.

The melding of an organic, process-oriented outlook with an analytical one has been the traditional goal of classical western philosophy from the pre-Socratics to Hegel. Such a philosophy has always been more than an outlook or a mere method for dealing with reality. It has also been what the philosophers call an ontology — a description of reality conceived not as mere matter, but as active, self-organizing substance with a striving toward consciousness. Tradition has made this ontological outlook the framework in which thought and matter, subject and object, mind and nature are reconciled on a new spiritized level. Accordingly, I regard this process-oriented view of phenomena as intrinsically ecological in character, and I am very puzzled by the failure of so many dialectically oriented thinkers to see the remarkable compatibility between a dialectical outlook and an ecological one.

My vision of reality as process may also seem flawed to those readers who deny the existence of meaning and the value of humanity in natural development. That I see "progress" in organic and social evolution will doubtlessly be viewed skeptically by a generation that erroneously identifies "progress" with unlimited material growth. I, for one, do not make this identification. Perhaps my problem, if such it can be called, is generational. I still cherish a time that sought to illuminate the course of events, to interpret them, to make them meaningful. "Coherence" is my favorite word; it resolutely guides everything I write and say. Also, this book does not radiate the pessimism so common in environmentalist literature. Just as I believe that the past has meaning, so too do I believe that the future can have meaning. If we cannot be certain that the human estate will advance, we do have the opportunity to choose between utopistic freedom and social immolation. Herein lies the unabashed messianic character of this book, a messianic character that is philosophical and ancestral. The "principle of hope," as Ernst Bloch called it, is part of everything I value — hence my detestation of a futurism so committed to the present that it cancels out futurity itself by denying anything new that is not an extrapolation of the existing society.

I have tried to avoid writing a book that masticates every possible thought that relates to the issues raised in the following pages. I would not want to deliver these thoughts as predigested pap to a passive reader. The dialectical tension I value the most is between the reader of a book and the writer: the hints, the suggestions, the unfinished thoughts and the stimuli that encourage the reader to think for himself or herself. In an era that is so much in flux, it would be arrogant to
present finished analyses and recipes; rather, I regard it as the responsibility of a serious work to stimulate dialectical and ecological thinking. For a work that is so "simple," so "clear," so unshared — in a word, so elitist — as to require no emendations and modifications, the reader will have to look elsewhere. This book is not an ideological program; it is a stimulus to thought — a coherent body of concepts the reader will have to finish in the privacy of his or her own mind.
1. The Concept of Social Ecology

The legends of the Norsemen tell of a time when all beings were apportioned their worldly domains: the gods occupied a celestial domain, Asgard, and men lived on the earth, Midgard, below which lay Niflheim, the dark, icy domain of the giants, dwarfs, and the dead. These domains were linked together by an enormous ash, the World Tree. Its lofty branches reached into the sky, and its roots into the furthest depths of the earth. Although the World Tree was constantly being gnawed by animals, it remained ever green, renewed by a magic fountain that infused it continually with life.

The gods, who had fashioned this world, presided over a precarious state of tranquility. They had banished their enemies, the giants, to the land of ice. Fenris the wolf was enchained, and the great serpent of the Midgard was held at bay. Despite the lurking dangers, a general peace prevailed, and plenty existed for the gods, men, and all living things. Odin, the god of wisdom, reigned over all the deities; the wisest and strongest, he watched over the battles of men and selected the most heroic of the fallen to feast with him in his great fortress, Valhalla. Thor, the son of Odin, was not only a powerful warrior, the defender of Asgard against the restive giants, but also a deity of order, who saw to the keeping of faith between men and obedience to the treaties. There were gods and goddesses of plenty, of fertility, of love, of law, of the sea and ships, and a multitude of animistic spirits who inhabited all things and beings of the earth.

But the world order began to break down when the gods, greedy for riches, tortured the witch Gullveig, the maker of gold, to compel her to reveal her secrets. Discord now became rampant among the gods and men. The gods began to break their oaths; corruption, treachery, rivalry, and greed began to dominate the world. With the breakdown of the primal unity, the days of the gods and men, of Asgard and Midgard, were numbered. Inexorably, the violation of the world order would lead to Ragnarok — the death of the gods in a great conflict before Valhalla. The gods would go down in a terrible battle with the giants, Fenris the wolf, and the serpent of the Midgard. With the mutual destruction of all the combatants, humanity too would perish, and nothing would remain but bare rock and overflowing oceans in a void of cold and darkness. Having thus disintegrated into its beginnings, however, the world would be renewed, purged of its earlier evils and the corruption that destroyed it. Nor would the new world emerging from the void suffer another catastrophic end, for the second generation of gods and goddesses would learn from the mistakes of their antecedents. The prophetess who recounts the story tells us that humanity thenceforth will "live in joy for as long as one can foresee."

In this Norse cosmography, there seems to be more than the old theme of "eternal recurrence," of a time-sense that spins around perpetual cycles of birth, maturation, death, and rebirth. Rather, one is aware of prophecy infused with historical trauma; the legend belongs to a little-explored area of mythology that might be called "myths of disintegration." Although the Ragnarok legend is known to be quite old, we know very little about when it appeared in the evolution of the Norse sagas. We do know that Christianity, with its bargain of eternal reward, came later to the Norsemen than to any other large ethnic group in western Europe, and its roots were shallow for
generations afterward. The heathenism of the north had long made contact with the commerce of the south. During the Viking raids on Europe, the sacred places of the north had become polluted by gold, and the pursuit of riches was dividing kinsman from kinsman. Hierarchies erected by valor were being eroded by systems of privilege based on wealth. The clans and tribes were breaking down; the oaths between men, from which stemmed the unity of their primordial world, were being dishonored, and the magic fountain that kept the World Tree alive was being clogged by the debris of commerce. "Brothers fight and slay one another," laments the prophetess, "children deny their own ancestry . . . this is the age of wind, of wolf, until the very day when the world shall be no more."

What haunts us in such myths of disintegration are not their histories, but their prophecies. Like the Norsemen, and perhaps even more, like the people at the close of the Middle Ages, we sense that our world, too, is breaking down — institutionally, culturally, and physically. Whether we are faced with a new, paradisical era or a catastrophe like the Norse Ragnarok is still unclear, but there can be no lengthy period of compromise between past and future in an ambiguous present. The reconstructive and destructive tendencies in our time are too much at odds with each other to admit of reconciliation. The social horizon presents the starkly conflicting prospects of a harmonized world with an ecological sensibility based on a rich commitment to community, mutual aid, and new technologies, on the one hand, and the terrifying prospect of some sort of thermonuclear disaster on the other. Our world, it would appear, will either undergo revolutionary changes, so far-reaching in character that humanity will totally transform its social relations and its very conception of life, or it will suffer an apocalypse that may well end humanity's tenure on the planet.

The tension between these two prospects has already subverted the morale of the traditional social order. We have entered an era that consists no longer of institutional stabilization but of institutional decay. A widespread alienation is developing toward the forms, the aspirations, the demands, and above all, the institutions of the established order. The most exuberant, theatrical evidence of this alienation occurred in the 1960s, when the "youth revolt" in the early half of the decade exploded into what seemed to be a counterculture. Considerably more than protest and adolescent nihilism marked the period. Almost intuitively, new values of sensuousness, new forms of communal lifestyle, changes in dress, language, music, all borne on the wave of a deep sense of impending social change, infused a sizable section of an entire generation. We still do not know in what sense this wave began to ebb: whether as a historic retreat or as a transformation into a serious project for inner and social development. That the symbols of this movement eventually became the artifacts for a new culture industry does not alter its far-reaching effects. Western society will never be the same again — all the sneers of its academics and its critics of "narcissism" notwithstanding.

What makes this ceaseless movement of deinstitutionalization and delegitimation so significant is that it has found its bedrock in a vast stratum of western society. Alienation permeates not only the poor but also the relatively affluent, not only the young but also their elders, not only the visibly denied but also the seemingly privileged. The prevailing order is beginning to lose the loyalty of social strata that traditionally rallied to its support and in which its roots were firmly planted in past periods.

Crucial as this decay of institutions and values may be, it by no means exhausts the problems that confront the existing society. Intertwined with the social crisis is a crisis that has emerged directly from man's exploitation of the planet.[3] Established society is faced with a breakdown
not only of its values and institutions, but also of its natural environment. This problem is not unique to our times. The desiccated wastelands of the Near East, where the arts of agriculture and urbanism had their beginnings, are evidence of ancient human despoilation, but this example pales before the massive destruction of the environment that has occurred since the days of the Industrial Revolution, and especially since the end of the Second World War. The damage inflicted on the environment by contemporary society encompasses the entire earth. Volumes have been written on the immense losses of productive soil that occur annually in almost every continent of the earth; on the extensive destruction of tree cover in areas vulnerable to erosion; on lethal air-pollution episodes in major urban areas; on the worldwide diffusion of toxic agents from agriculture, industry, and power-producing installations; on the chemicalization of humanity’s immediate environment with industrial wastes, pesticide residues, and food additives. The exploitation and pollution of the earth has damaged not only the integrity of the atmosphere, climate, water resources, soil, flora and fauna of specific regions, but also the basic natural cycles on which all living things depend.

Yet modern man’s capacity for destruction is quixotic evidence of humanity’s capacity for reconstruction. The powerful technological agents we have unleashed against the environment include many of the very agents we require for its reconstruction. The knowledge and physical instruments for promoting a harmonization of humanity with nature and of human with human are largely at hand or could easily be devised. Many of the physical principles used to construct such patently harmful facilities as conventional power plants, energy-consuming vehicles, surface-mining equipment and the like could be directed to the construction of small-scale solar and wind energy devices, efficient means of transportation, and energy-saving shelters. What we crucially lack is the consciousness and sensibility that will help us achieve such eminently desirable goals — a consciousness and sensibility far broader than customarily meant by these terms. Our definitions must include not only the ability to reason logically and respond emotionally in a humanistic fashion; they must also include a fresh awareness of the relatedness between things and an imaginative insight into the possible. On this score, Marx was entirely correct to emphasize that the revolution required by our time must draw its poetry not from the past but from the future, from the humanist potentialities that lie on the horizons of social life.

The new consciousness and sensibility cannot be poetic alone; they must also be scientific. Indeed, there is a level at which our consciousness must be neither poetry nor science, but a transcendence of both into a new realm of theory and practice, an artfulness that combines fancy with reason, imagination with logic, vision with technique. We cannot shed our scientific heritage without returning to a rudimentary technology, with its shackles of material insecurity, toil, and renunciation. And we cannot allow ourselves to be imprisoned within a mechanistic outlook and a dehumanizing technology — with its shackles of alienation, competition, and a brute denial of humanity’s potentialities. Poetry and imagination must be integrated with science and technology, for we have evolved beyond an innocence that can be nourished exclusively by myths and dreams.

Is there a scientific discipline that allows for the indiscipline of fancy, imagination, and artfulness? Can it encompass problems created by the social and environmental crises of our time? Can it integrate critique with reconstruction, theory with practice, vision with technique?

In almost every period since the Renaissance, a very close link has existed between radical advances in the natural sciences and upheavals in social thought. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the emerging sciences of astronomy and mechanics, with their liberating visions of a
heliocentric world and the unity of local and cosmic motion, found their social counterparts in equally critical and rational social ideologies that challenged religious bigotry and political absolutism. The Enlightenment brought a new appreciation of sensory perception and the claims of human reason to divine a world that had been the ideological monopoly of the clergy. Later, anthropology and evolutionary biology demolished traditional static notions of the human enterprise along with its myths of original creation and history as a theological calling. By enlarging the map and revealing the earthly dynamics of social history, these sciences reinforced the new doctrines of socialism, with its ideal of human progress, that followed the French Revolution.

In view of the enormous dislocations that now confront us, our own era needs a more sweeping and insightful body of knowledge — scientific as well as social — to deal with our problems. Without renouncing the gains of earlier scientific and social theories, we must develop a more rounded critical analysis of our relationship with the natural world. We must seek the foundations for a more reconstructive approach to the grave problems posed by the apparent "contradictions" between nature and society. We can no longer afford to remain captives to the tendency of the more traditional sciences to dissect phenomena and examine their fragments. We must combine them, relate them, and see them in their totality as well as their specificity.

In response to these needs, we have formulated a discipline unique to our age: social ecology. The more well-known term "ecology" was coined by Ernst Haeckel a century ago to denote the investigation of the interrelationships between animals, plants, and their inorganic environment. Since Haeckel's day, the term has been expanded to include ecologies of cities, of health, and of the mind. This proliferation of a word into widely disparate areas may seem particularly desirable to an age that fervently seeks some kind of intellectual coherence and unity of perception. But it can also prove to be extremely treacherous. Like such newly arrived words as holism, decentralization, and dialectics, the term ecology runs the peril of merely hanging in the air without any roots, context, or texture. Often it is used as a metaphor, an alluring catchword, that loses the potentially compelling internal logic of its premises.

Accordingly, the radical thrust of these words is easily neutralized. "Holism" evaporates into a mystical sigh, a rhetorical expression for ecological fellowship and community that ends with such in-group greetings and salutations as "holistically yours." What was once a serious philosophical stance has been reduced to environmentalist kitsch. Decentralization commonly means logistical alternatives to gigantism, not the human scale that would make an intimate and direct democracy possible. Ecology fares even worse. All too often it becomes a metaphor, like the word dialectics, for any kind of integration and development.

Perhaps even more troubling, the word in recent years has been identified with a very crude form of natural engineering that might well be called environmentalism.

I am mindful that many ecologically oriented individuals use "ecology" and "environmentalism" interchangeably. Here, I would like to draw a semantically convenient distinction. By "environmentalism" I propose to designate a mechanistic, instrumental outlook that sees nature as a passive habitat composed of "objects" such as animals, plants, minerals, and the like that must merely be rendered more serviceable for human use. Given my use of the term, environmentalism tends to reduce nature to a storage bin of "natural resources" or "raw materials." Within this context, very little of a social nature is spared from the environmentalist's vocabulary: cities become "urban resources" and their inhabitants "human resources." If the word resources leaps out so frequently from environmentalistic discussions of nature, cities, and people, an issue more important than mere word play is at stake. Environmentalism, as I use this term, tends to view
the ecological project for attaining a harmonious relationship between humanity and nature as a truce rather than a lasting equilibrium. The "harmony" of the environmentalist centers around the development of new techniques for plundering the natural world with minimal disruption of the human "habitat." Environmentalism does not question the most basic premise of the present society, notably, that humanity must dominate nature; rather, it seeks to facilitate that notion by developing techniques for diminishing the hazards caused by the reckless despoilation of the environment.

To distinguish ecology from environmentalism and from abstract, often obfuscatory definitions of the term, I must return to its original usage and explore its direct relevance to society. Put quite simply, ecology deals with the dynamic balance of nature, with the interdependence of living and nonliving things. Since nature also includes human beings, the science must include humanity's role in the natural world — specifically, the character, form, and structure of humanity's relationship with other species and with the inorganic substrate of the biotic environment. From a critical viewpoint, ecology opens to wide purview the vast disequilibrium that has emerged from humanity's split with the natural world. One of nature's very unique species, homo sapiens, has slowly and painstakingly developed from the natural world into a unique social world of its own. As both worlds interact with each other through highly complex phases of evolution, it has become as important to speak of a social ecology as to speak of a natural ecology.

Let me emphasize that the failure to explore these phases of human evolution — which have yielded a succession of hierarchies, classes, cities, and finally states — is to make a mockery of the term social ecology. Unfortunately, the discipline has been beleaguered by self-professed adherents who continually try to collapse all the phases of natural and human development into a universal "oneness" (not wholeness), a yawning "night in which all cows are black," to borrow one of Hegel's caustic phrases. If nothing else, our common use of the word species to denote the wealth of life around us should alert us to the fact of specificity, of particularity — the rich abundance of differentiated beings and things that enter into the very subject-matter of natural ecology. To explore these differentia, to examine the phases and interfaces that enter into their making and into humanity's long development from animality to society — a development latent with problems and possibilities — is to make social ecology one of the most powerful disciplines from which to draw our critique of the present social order.

But social ecology provides more than a critique of the split between humanity and nature; it also poses the need to heal them. Indeed, it poses the need to radically transcend them. As E.A. Gutfkind pointed out, "the goal of Social Ecology is wholeness, and not mere adding together of innumerable details collected at random and interpreted subjectively and insufficiently." The science deals with social and natural relationships in communities or "ecosystems." In conceiving them holistically, that is to say, in terms of their mutual interdependence, social ecology seeks to unravel the forms and patterns of interrelationships that give intelligibility to a community, be it natural or social. Holism, here, is the result of a conscious effort to discern how the particulars of a community are arranged, how its "geometry" (as the Greeks might have put it) makes the "whole more than the sum of its parts." Hence, the "wholeness" to which Gutfkind refers is not to be mistaken for a spectral "oneness" that yields cosmic dissolution in a structureless nirvana; it is a richly articulated structure with a history and internal logic of its own.

History, in fact, is as important as form or structure. To a large extent, the history of a phenomenon is the phenomenon itself. We are, in a real sense, everything that existed before us
and, in turn, we can eventually become vastly more than we are. Surprisingly, very little in the evolution of life-forms has been lost in natural and social evolution, indeed in our very bodies as our embryonic development attests. Evolution lies within us (as well as around us) as parts of the very nature of our beings.

For the present, it suffices to say that wholeness is not a bleak undifferentiated "universality" that involves the reduction of a phenomenon to what it has in common with everything else. Nor is it a celestial, omnipresent "energy" that replaces the vast material differentia of which the natural and social realms are composed. To the contrary, wholeness comprises the variegated structures, the articulations, and the mediations that impart to the whole a rich variety of forms and thereby add unique qualitative properties to what a strictly analytic mind often reduces to "innumerable" and "random" details.

Terms like wholeness, totality, and even community have perilous nuances for a generation that has known fascism and other totalitarian ideologies. The words evoke images of a "wholeness" achieved through homogenization, standardization, and a repressive coordination of human beings. These fears are reinforced by a "wholeness" that seems to provide an inexorable finality to the course of human history — one that implies a suprahuman, narrowly teleological concept of social law and denies the ability of human will and individual choice to shape the course of social events. Such notions of social law and teleology have been used to achieve a ruthless subjugation of the individual to suprahuman forces beyond human control. Our century has been afflicted by a plethora of totalitarian ideologies that, placing human beings in the service of history, have denied them a place in the service of their own humanity.

Actually, such a totalitarian concept of "wholeness" stands sharply at odds with what ecologists denote by the term. In addition to comprehending its heightened awareness of form and structure, we now come to a very important tenet of ecology: ecological wholeness is not an immutable homogeneity but rather the very opposite — a dynamic unity of diversity. In nature, balance and harmony are achieved by ever-changing differentiation, by ever-expanding diversity. Ecological stability, in effect, is a function not of simplicity and homogeneity but of complexity and variety. The capacity of an ecosystem to retain its integrity depends not on the uniformity of the environment but on its diversity.

A striking example of this tenet can be drawn from experiences with ecological strategies for cultivating food. Farmers have repeatedly met with disastrous results because of the conventional emphasis on single-crop approaches to agriculture or monoculture, to use a widely accepted term for those endless wheat and corn fields that extend to the horizon in many parts of the world. Without the mixed crops that normally provide both the countervailing forces and mutualistic support that come with mixed populations of plants and animals, the entire agricultural situation in an area has been known to collapse. Benign insects become pests because their natural controls, including birds and small mammals, have been removed. The soil, lacking earthworms, nitrogen-fixing bacteria, and green manure in sufficient quantities, is reduced to mere sand — a mineral medium for absorbing enormous quantities of inorganic nitrogen salts, which were originally supplied more cyclically and timed more appropriately for crop growth in the ecosystem. In reckless disregard for the complexity of nature and for the subtle requirements of plant and animal life, the agricultural situation is cruelly simplified; its needs must now be satisfied by highly soluble synthetic fertilizers that percolate into drinking water and by dangerous pesticides that remain as residues in food. A high standard of food cultivation that was once achieved by diversity of crops and animals, one that was free of lasting toxic agents and probably more
healthful nutritionally, is now barely approximated by single crops whose main supports are toxic chemicals and highly simple nutrients.

If we assume that the thrust of natural evolution has been toward increasing complexity, that the colonization of the planet by life has been possible only as a result of biotic variety, a prudent rescaling of man’s hubris should call for caution in disturbing natural processes. That living things, emerging ages ago from their primal aquatic habitat to colonize the most inhospitable areas of the earth, have created the rich biosphere that now covers it has been possible only because of life’s incredible mutability and the enormous legacy of life-forms inherited from its long development. Many of these life-forms, even the most primal and simplest, have never disappeared — however much they have been modified by evolution. The simple algal forms that marked the beginnings of plant life and the simple invertebrates that marked the beginnings of animal life still exist in large numbers. They comprise the preconditions for the existence of more complex organic beings to which they provide sustenance, the sources of decomposition, and even atmospheric oxygen and carbon dioxide. Although they may antedate the “higher” plants and mammals by over a billion years, they interrelate with their more complex descendants in often unravelable ecosystems.

To assume that science commands this vast nexus of organic and inorganic interrelationships in all its details is worse than arrogance: it is sheer stupidity. If unity in diversity forms one of the cardinal tenets of ecology, the wealth of biota that exists in a single acre of soil leads us to still another basic ecological tenet: the need to allow for a high degree of natural spontaneity. The compelling dictum, “respect for nature,” has concrete implications. To assume that our knowledge of this complex, richly textured, and perpetually changing natural kaleidoscope of life forms lends itself to a degree of “mastery” that allows us free rein in manipulating the biosphere is sheer foolishness.

Thus, a considerable amount of leeway must be permitted for natural spontaneity — for the diverse biological forces that yield a variegated ecological situation. “Working with nature” requires that we foster the biotic variety that emerges from a spontaneous development of natural phenomena. I hardly mean that we must surrender ourselves to a mythical “Nature” that is beyond all human comprehension and intervention, a Nature that demands human awe and subservience. Perhaps the most obvious conclusion we can draw from these ecological tenets is Charles Elton’s sensitive observation: “The world’s future has to be managed, but this management would not be just like a game of chess — [but] more like steering a boat.” What ecology, both natural and social, can hope to teach us is the way to find the current and understand the direction of the stream.

What ultimately distinguishes an ecological outlook as uniquely liberatory is the challenge it raises to conventional notions of hierarchy. Let me emphasize, however, that this challenge is implicit: it must be painstakingly elicited from the discipline of ecology, which is permeated by conventional scientistic biases. Ecologists are rarely aware that their science provides strong philosophical underpinnings for a nonhierarchical view of reality. Like many natural scientists, they resist philosophical generalizations as alien to their research and conclusions — a prejudice that is itself a philosophy rooted in the Anglo-American empirical tradition. Moreover, they follow their colleagues in other disciplines and model their notions of science on physics. This prejudice, which goes back to Galileo’s day, has led to a widespread acceptance of systems theory in ecological circles. While systems theory has its place in the repertoire of science, it can easily become an all-encompassing, quantitative, reductionist theory of energetics if it acquires
preeminence over qualitative descriptions of ecosystems, that is, descriptions rooted in organic evolution, variety, and holism. Whatever the merits of systems theory as an account of energy flow through an ecosystem, the primacy it gives to this quantitative aspect of ecosystem analysis fails to recognize life-forms as more than consumers and producers of calories.

Having presented these caveats, I must emphasize that ecosystems cannot be meaningfully described in hierarchical terms. Whether plant-animal communities actually contain "dominant" and "submissive" individuals within a species can be argued at great length. But to rank species within an ecosystem, that is to say, between species, is anthropomorphism at its crudest. As Allison Jolly has observed:

> The notion of animal hierarchies has a checkered history. Schjelderup-Ebbe, who discovered the pecking-order of hens, enlarged his findings to a Teutonic theory of despotism in the universe. For instance, water eroding a stone was "dominant" . . . Schjelderup-Ebbe called animals' ranking "dominance," and many [research] workers, with an "aha," recognized dominance hierarchies in many vertebrate groups.

If we recognize that every ecosystem can also be viewed as a food web, we can think of it as a circular, interlacing nexus of plant-animal relationships (rather than a stratified pyramid with man at the apex) that includes such widely varying creatures as microorganisms and large mammals. What ordinarily puzzles anyone who sees food-web diagrams for the first time is the impossibility of discerning a point of entry into the nexus. The web can be entered at any point and leads back to its point of departure without any apparent exit. Aside from the energy provided by sunlight (and dissipated by radiation), the system to all appearances is closed. Each species, be it a form of bacteria or deer, is knitted together in a network of interdependence, however indirect the links may be. A predator in the web is also prey, even if the "lowliest" of organisms merely makes it ill or helps to consume it after death.

Nor is predation the sole link that unites one species with another. A resplendent literature now exists that reveals the enormous extent to which symbiotic mutualism is a major factor in fostering ecological stability and organic evolution. That plants and animals continually adapt to unwittingly aid each other (be it by an exchange of biochemical functions that are mutually beneficial or even dramatic instances of physical assistance and succor) has opened an entirely new perspective on the nature of ecosystem stability and development.

The more complex the food-web, the less unstable it will be if one or several species are removed. Hence, enormous significance must be given to interspecific diversity and complexity within the system as a whole. Striking breakdowns will occur in simple ecosystems, such as arctic and desert ones, say, if wolves that control foraging animal populations are exterminated or if a sizable number of reptiles that control rodent populations in arid ecosystems are removed. By contrast, the great variety of biota that populate temperate and tropical ecosystems can afford losses of carnivores or herbivores without suffering major dislocations.

Why do terms borrowed from human social hierarchies acquire such remarkable weight when plant-animal relations are described? Do ecosystems really have a "king of the beasts" and "lowly serfs"? Do certain insects "enslave" others? Does one species "exploit" another?

The promiscuous use of these terms in ecology raises many far-reaching issues. That the terms are laden with socially charged values is almost too obvious to warrant extensive discussion. Many individuals exhibit a pathetic gullibility in the way they deal with nature as a dimension
of society. A snarling animal is neither "vicious" nor "savage," nor does it "misbehave" or "earn" punishment because it reacts appropriately to certain stimuli. By making such anthropomorphic judgements about natural phenomena, we deny the integrity of nature. Even more sinister is the widespread use of hierarchical terms to provide natural phenomena with "intelligibility" or "order." What this procedure does accomplish is reinforce human social hierarchies by justifying the command of men and women as innate features of the "natural order." Human domination is thereby transcribed into the genetic code as biologically immutable — together with the subordination of the young by the old, women by men, and man by man.

The very promiscuity with which hierarchical terms are used to organize all differentia in nature is inconsistent. A "queen" bee does not know she is a queen. The primary activity of a beehive is reproductive, and its "division of labor," to use a grossly abused phrase, lacks any meaning in a large sexual organ that performs no authentic economic functions. The purpose of the hive is to create more bees. The honey that animals and people acquire from it is a natural largesse; within the ecosystem, bees are adapted more to meeting plant reproductive needs by spreading pollen than to meeting important animal needs. The analogy between a beehive and a society, an analogy social theorists have often found too irresistible to avoid, is a striking commentary on the extent to which our visions of nature are shaped by self-serving social interests.

To deal with so-called insect hierarchies the way we deal with so-called animal hierarchies, or worse, to grossly ignore the very different functions animal communities perform, is analogic reasoning carried to the point of the preposterous. Primates relate to each other in ways that seem to involve "dominance" and "submission" for widely disparate reasons. Yet, terminologically and conceptually, they are placed under the same "hierarchical" rubric as insect "societies" — despite the different forms they assume and their precarious stability. Baboons on the African savannas have been singled out as the most rigid hierarchical troops in the primate world, but this rigidity evaporates once we examine their "ranking order" in a forest habitat. Even on the savannas, it is questionable whether "alpha" males "rule," "control," or "coordinate" relationships within the troop. Arguments can be presented for choosing any one of these words, each of which has a clearly different meaning when it is used in a human social context. Seemingly "patriarchal" primate "harems" can be as loose sexually as brothels, depending on whether a female is in estrus, changes have occurred in the habitat, or the "patriarch" is simply diffident about the whole situation.

Baboons, it is worth noting, are monkeys, despite the presumed similarity of their savanna habitat to that of early hominids. They branched off from the hominoid evolutionary tree more than 20 million years ago. Our closest evolutionary cousins, the great apes, tend to demolish these prejudices about hierarchy completely. Of the four great apes, gibbons have no apparent "ranking" system at all. Chimpanzees, regarded by many primatologists as the most human-like of all apes, form such fluid kinds of "stratification" and (depending upon the ecology of an area, which may be significantly affected by research workers) establish such unstable types of association that the word hierarchy becomes an obstacle to understanding their behavioral characteristics. Orangutans seem to have little of what could be called dominance and submission relations. The mountain gorilla, despite its formidable reputation, exhibits very little "stratification" except for predator challenges and internal aggression.

All these examples help to justify Elise Boulding’s complaint that the "primate behavior model" favored by overly hierarchical and patriarchal writers on animal-human parallels "is based more on the baboon, not the gibbon." In contrast to the baboon, observes Boulding, the gibbon is closer
to us physically and, one might add, on the primate evolutionary scale. "Our choice of a primate role model is clearly culturally determined," she concludes:

Who wants to be like the unaggressive, vegetarian, food-sharing gibbons, where father is as much involved in child-rearing as mother is, and where everyone lives in small family groups, with little aggregation beyond that? Much better to match the baboons, who live in large, tightly-knit groups carefully closed against outsider baboons, where everyone knows who is in charge, and where mother looks after the babies while father is out hunting and fishing.

In fact, Boulding concedes too much about the savanna-dwelling primates. Even if the term dominance were stretched to include "queen" bees and "alpha" baboons, specific acts of coercion by individual animals can hardly be called domination. Acts do not constitute institutions; episodes do not make a history. And highly structured insect behavioral patterns, rooted in instinctual drives, are too inflexible to be regarded as social. Unless hierarchy is to be used in Schjelderup-Ebbe’s cosmic sense, dominance and submission must be viewed as institutionalized relationships, relationships that living things literally institute or create but which are neither ruthlessly fixed by instinct on the one hand nor idiosyncratic on the other. By this, I mean that they must comprise a clearly social structure of coercive and privileged ranks that exist apart from the idiosyncratic individuals who seem to be dominant within a given community, a hierarchy that is guided by a social logic that goes beyond individual interactions or inborn patterns of behavior.[5]

Such traits are evident enough in human society when we speak of "self-perpetuating" bureaucracies and explore them without considering the individual bureaucrats who compose them. Yet, when we turn to nonhuman primates, what people commonly recognize as hierarchy, status, and domination are precisely the idiosyncratic behaviorisms of individual animals. Mike, Jane van Lawick-Goodall’s "alpha" chimpanzee, acquired his "status" by rambunctiously charging upon a group of males while noisily hitting two empty kerosene cans. At which point in her narrative, van Lawick-Goodall wonders, would Mike have become an "alpha" male without the kerosene cans? She replies that the animal’s use of "manmade objects is probably an indication of superior intelligence." Whether such shadowy distinctions in intelligence rather than aggressiveness, willfulness, or arrogance produce an "alpha" male or not is evidence more of the subtle projection of historically conditioned human values on a primate group than the scientific objectivity that ethology likes to claim for itself.

The seemingly hierarchical traits of many animals are more like variations in the links of a chain than organized stratifications of the kind we find in human societies and institutions. Even the so-called class societies of the Northwest Indians, as we shall see, are chain-like links between individuals rather than the class-like links between strata that early Euro-American invaders so naively projected on Indians from their own social world. If acts do not constitute institutions and episodes do not constitute history, individual behavioral traits do not form strata or classes. Social strata are made of sterner stuff. They have a life of their own apart from the personalities who give them substance.

How is ecology to avoid the analogic reasoning that has made so much of ethology and sociobiology seem like specious projections of human society into nature? Are there any terms that provide a common meaning to unity in diversity, natural spontaneity, and nonhierarchical relations in nature and society? In view of the many tenets that appear in natural ecology, why stop
with these alone? Why not introduce other, perhaps less savory, ecological notions like predation
and aggression into society?

In fact, nearly all of these questions became major issues in social theory in the early part of
the century when the so-called Chicago School of urban sociology zealously tried to apply almost
every known concept of natural ecology to the development and "physiology" of the city. Robert
Park, Ernest Burgess, and Roderick McKenzie, enamored of the new science, actually imposed
a stringently biological model on their studies of Chicago with a forcefulness and inspiration
that dominated American urban sociology for two generations. Their tenets included ecological
succession, spatial distribution, zonal distribution, anabolic-catabolic balances, and even competi-
tion and natural selection that could easily have pushed the school toward an insidious form of
social Darwinism had it not been for the liberal biases of its founders.

Despite its admirable empirical results, the school was to founder on its metaphoric reduction-
ism. Applied indiscriminately, the categories ceased to be meaningful. When Park compared the
emergence of certain specialized municipal utilities to "successional dominance" by "other plant
species" that climaxes in a "beech or pine forest," the analogy was patently forced and absurdly
contorted. His comparison of ethnic, cultural, occupational, and economic groups to "plant inva-
sions" revealed a lack of theoretical discrimination that reduced human social features to plant
ecological features. What Park and his associates lacked was the philosophical equipment for
singling out the phases that both unite and separate natural and social phenomena in a devel-
opmental continuum. Thus, merely superficial similarity became outright identity — with the
unfortunate result that social ecology was repeatedly reduced to natural ecology. The richly me-
diated evolution of the natural into the social that could have been used to yield a meaningful
selection of ecological categories was not part of the school's theoretical equipment.

Whenever we ignore the way human social relationships transcend plant-animal relationships,
our views tend to bifurcate in two erroneous directions. Either we succumb to a heavy-handed
dualism that harshly separates the natural from the social, or we fall into a crude reductionism
that dissolves the one into the other. In either case, we really cease to think out the issues involved.
We merely grasp for the least uncomfortable "solution" to a highly complex problem, namely,
the need to analyze the phases through which "mute" biological nature increasingly becomes
conscious human nature.

What makes unity in diversity in nature more than a suggestive ecological metaphor for unity
in diversity in society is the underlying philosophical concept of wholeness. By wholeness, I mean
varying levels of actualization, an unfolding of the wealth of particularities, that are latent in an
as-yet-undeveloped potentiality. This potentiality may be a newly planted seed, a newly born
infant, a newly born community, or a newly born society. When Hegel describes in a famous
passage the "unfolding" of human knowledge in biological terms, the fit is almost exact:

The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that
the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is
shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges
as the truth of it instead. These forms are not just distinguished from one another,
they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet at the same time their
fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not
conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity
alone constitutes the life of the whole.
I have turned to this remarkable passage because Hegel does not mean it to be merely metaphorical. His biological example and his social subject matter converge in ways that transcend both, notably, as similar aspects of a larger process. Life itself, as distinguished from the nonliving, emerges from the inorganic latent with all the particularities it has immanently produced from the logic of its most nascent forms of self-organization. So do society as distinguished from biology, humanity as distinguished from animality, and individuality as distinguished from humanity. It is no spiteful manipulation of Hegel’s famous maxim, "The True is the whole," to declare that the "whole is the True." One can take this reversal of terms to mean that the true lies in the self-consummation of a process through its development, in the flowering of its latent particularities into their fullness or wholeness, just as the potentialities of a child achieve expression in the wealth of experiences and the physical growth that enter into adulthood.

We must not get caught up in direct comparisons between plants, animals, and human beings or between plant-animal ecosystems and human communities. None of these is completely congruent with another. We would be regressing in our views to those of Park, Burgess, and MacKenzie, not to mention our current bouquet of sociobiologists, were we lax enough to make this equation. It is not in the particulars of differentiation that plant-animal communities are ecologically united with human communities but rather in their logic of differentiation. Wholeness, in fact, is completeness. The dynamic stability of the whole derives from a visible level of completeness in human communities as in climax ecosystems. What unites these modes of wholeness and completeness, however different they are in their specificity and their qualitative distinctness, is the logic of development itself. A climax forest is whole and complete as a result of the same unifying process — the same dialectic — that a particular social form is whole and complete.

When wholeness and completeness are viewed as the result of an immanent dialectic within phenomena, we do no more violence to the uniqueness of these phenomena than the principle of gravity does violence to the uniqueness of objects that fall within its "lawfulness." In this sense, the ideal of human roundedness, a product of the rounded community, is the legitimate heir to the ideal of a stabilized nature, a product of the rounded natural environment. Marx tried to root humanity’s identity and self-discovery in its productive interaction with nature. But I must add that not only does humanity place its imprint on the natural world and transform it, but also nature places its imprint on the human world and transforms it. To use the language of hierarchy against itself: it is not only we who "tame" nature but also nature that "tames" us.

These turns of phrase should be taken as more than metaphors. Lest it seem that I have rarefied the concept of wholeness into an abstract dialectical principle, let me note that natural ecosystems and human communities interact with each other in very existential ways. Our animal nature is never so distant from our social nature that we can remove ourselves from the organic world outside us and the one within us. From our embryonic development to our layered brain, we partly recapitulate our own natural evolution. We are not so remote from our primate ancestry that we can ignore its physical legacy in our stereoscopic vision, acuity of intelligence, and grasping fingers. We phase into society as individuals in the same way that society, phasing out of nature, comes into itself.

These continuities, to be sure, are obvious enough. What is often less obvious is the extent to which nature itself is a realm of potentiality for the emergence of social differentia. Nature is as much a precondition for the development of society — not merely its emergence — as technics,
labor, language, and mind. And it is a precondition not merely in William Petty's sense — that if labor is the "Father" of wealth, nature is its "Mother." This formula, so dear to Marx, actually slights nature by imparting to it the patriarchal notion of feminine "passivity." The affinities between nature and society are more active than we care to admit. Very specific forms of nature — very specific ecosystems — constitute the ground for very specific forms of society. At the risk of using a highly embattled phrase, I might say that a "historical materialism" of natural development could be written that would transform "passive nature" — the "object" of human labor — into "active nature," the creator of human labor. Labor's "metabolism" with nature cuts both ways, so that nature interacts with humanity to yield the actualization of their common potentialities in the natural and social worlds.

An interaction of this kind, in which terms like "Father" and "Mother" strike a false note, can be stated very concretely. The recent emphasis on bioregions as frameworks for various human communities provides a strong case for the need to readapt technics and work styles to accord with the requirements and possibilities of particular ecological areas. Bioregional requirements and possibilities place a heavy burden on humanity's claims of sovereignty over nature and autonomy from its needs. If it is true that "men make history" but not under conditions of their own choosing (Marx), it is no less true that history makes society but not under conditions of its own choosing. The hidden dimension that lurks in this word play with Marx's famous formula is the natural history that enters into the making of social history — but as active, concrete, existential nature that emerges from stage to stage of its own evermore complex development in the form of equally complex and dynamic ecosystems. Our ecosystems, in turn, are interlinked in highly dynamic and complex bioregions. How concrete the hidden dimension of social development is — and how much humanity's claims to sovereignty must defer to it — has only recently become evident from our need to design an alternative technology that is as adaptive to a bioregion as it is productive to society. Hence, our concept of wholeness is not a finished tapestry of natural and social relations that we can exhibit to the hungry eyes of sociologists. It is a fecund natural history, ever active and ever changing — the way childhood presses toward and is absorbed into youth, and youth into adulthood.

The need to bring a sense of history into nature is as compelling as the need to bring a sense of history into society. An ecosystem is never a random community of plants and animals that occurs merely by chance. It has potentiality, direction, meaning, and self-realization in its own right. To view an ecosystem as given (a bad habit, which scientism inculcates in its theoretically neutral observer) is as ahistorical and superficial as to view a human community as given. Both have a history that gives intelligibility and order to their internal relationships and directions to their development.

At its inception, human history is largely natural history as well as social — as traditional kinship structures and the sexual division of labor clearly indicate. Whether or not natural history is the "slime," to use Sartre's maladroit term, that clings to humanity and prevents its rational fulfillment will be considered later. For the present, one fact should be made clear: human history can never disengage itself or disembled itself from nature. It will always be embedded in nature, as we shall see — whether we are inclined to call that nature a "slime" or a fecund "mother." What may prove to be the most demanding test of our human genius is the kind of nature we will foster — one that is richly organic and complex or one that is inorganic and disastrously simplified.

Humanity's involvement with nature not only runs deep but takes on forms more increasingly subtle than even the most sophisticated theorists could have anticipated. Our knowledge of this
involvement is still, as it were, in its "prehistory." To Ernst Bloch, we not only share a common history with nature, all the differences between nature and society aside, but also a common destiny. As he observes:

Nature in its final manifestation, like history in its final manifestation, lies at the horizon of the future. The more a common technique [Allianztechnik] is attainable instead of one that is external — one that is mediated with the coproductivity [Mitprodukтивitat] of nature — the more we can be sure that the frozen powers of a frozen nature will again be emancipated. Nature is not something that can be consigned to the past. Rather it is the construction-site that has not yet been cleared, the building tools that have not yet been attained in an adequate form for the human house that itself does not yet exist in an adequate form. The ability of problem-laden natural subjectivity to participate in the construction of this house is the objective-utopian correlate of the human-utopian fantasy conceived in concrete terms. Therefore it is certain that the human house stands not only in history and on the ground of human activity; it stands primarily on the ground of a mediated natural subjectivity on the construction site of nature. Nature's conceptual frontier [Grenzbegriff] is not the beginning of human history, where nature (which is always present in history and always surrounds it) turns into the site of the human sovereign realm [regnum hominis], but rather where it turns into the adequate site [for the adequate human house] as an unalienated mediated good [und sie unentfremdet aufgeht, als vermitteltes Gut].

One can take issue with the emphasis Bloch gives to human sovereignty in the interaction with nature and the structural phraseology that infiltrates his brilliant grasp of the organic nature of that interaction. Das Prinzip Hoffnung (The Principle of Hope) was written in the early 1940s, a grim and embattled period, when such a conceptual framework was totally alien to the anti-naturalistic, indeed, militaristic spirit of the times. His insight beggars our hindsight, redolent with its "pop" ecological terminology and its queasy mysticism. In any case, enough has been written about the differences between nature and society. Today, together with Bloch, it would be valuable to shift our emphasis to the commonalities of nature and society, provided we are wary enough to avoid those mindless leaps from the one to the other as though they were not related by the rich phases of development that authentically unite them.

Spontaneity enters into social ecology in much the same way as it enters into natural ecology — as a function of diversity and complexity. Ecosystems are much too variegated to be delivered over completely to what Ernst Bloch called the regnum hominis or, at least, to humanity’s claim of sovereignty over nature. But we may justly ask if this is any less true of social complexity and history's claims of sovereignty over humanity. Do the self-appointed scientists or "guardians" of society know enough (their normally self-serving views aside) about the complex factors that make for social development to presume to control them? And even after the "adequate form for the human house" has been discovered and given substantiality, how sure can we be of their disinterested sense of service? History is replete with accounts of miscalculation by leaders, parties, factions, "guardians," and "vanguards." If nature is "blind," society is equally "blind" when it presumes to know itself completely, whether as social science, social theory, systems analysis, or even social ecology. Indeed, "World Spirits" from Alexander to Lenin have not always served
They have exhibited a willful arrogance that has damaged the social environment as disastrously as the arrogance of ordinary men has damaged the natural environment.

Great historical eras of transition reveal that the rising flood of social change must be permitted to find its own level spontaneously. Vanguard organizations have produced repeated catastrophes when they sought to force changes that people and the conditions of their time could not sustain materially, ideologically, or morally. Where forced social changes were not nourished by an educated and informed popular consciousness, they were eventually enforced by terror — and the movements themselves have turned savagely upon and devoured their most cherished humanistic and liberatory ideals. Our own century is closing under the shadow of an event that has totally beclouded the future of humanity, notably the Russian Revolution and its terrifying sequelae. Where the revolution, unforced and easily achieved by the popular movement, ended and Lenin's coup d'etat of October, 1917, replaced it can be easily fixed and dated. But how the will of a small cadre, abetted by the demoralization and stupidity of its opponents, turned success into failure in the very name of "success" is more difficult to explain. That the movement would have come to rest had it been left to its own spontaneous popular momentum and self-determination — possibly with gains that might have reinforced more advanced social developments abroad — is perhaps the safest judgment we can make with the hindsight time has given us. Social change, particularly social revolution, tends to find its worst enemies in leaders whose wills supplant the spontaneous movements of the people. Hubris in social evolution is as dangerous as it is in natural evolution and for the same reasons. In both cases, the complexity of a situation, the limitations of time and place, and the prejudices that filter into what often merely appear as foresight conceal the multitude of particulars that are truer to reality than any ideological preconceptions and needs.

I do not mean to deny the superadded significance of will, insight, and knowledge that must inform human spontaneity in the social world. In nature, by contrast, spontaneity operates within a more restrictive set of conditions. A natural ecosystem finds its climax in the greatest degree of stability it can attain within its given level of possibilities. We know, of course, that this is not a passive process. But beyond the level and stability an ecosystem can achieve and the apparent striving it exhibits, it reveals no motivation and choice. Its stability, given its potentialities and what Aristotle called its "entelechy," is an end in itself, just as the function of a beehive is to produce bees. A climax ecosystem brings to rest for a time the interrelationships that comprise it. By contrast, the social realm raises the objective possibility of freedom and self-consciousness as the superadded function of stability. The human community, at whatever level it comes to rest, remains incomplete until it achieves uninhibited volition and self-consciousness, or what we call freedom — a complete state, I should add, that is actually the point of departure for a new beginning. How much human freedom rests on the stability of the natural ecosystem in which it is always embedded, what it means in a larger philosophical sense beyond mere survival, and what standards it evolves from its shared history with the entire world of life and its own social history are subjects for the rest of this book.

Within this highly complex context of ideas we must now try to transpose the nonhierarchical character of natural ecosystems to society. What renders social ecology so important is that it offers no case whatsoever for hierarchy in nature and society; it decisively challenges the very function of hierarchy as a stabilizing or ordering principle in both realms. The association of order as such with hierarchy is ruptured. And this association is ruptured without rupturing the association of nature with society — as sociology, in its well-meaning opposition to sociobiology,
has been wont to do. In contrast to sociologists, we do not have to render the social world so
supremely autonomous from nature that we are obliged to dissolve the continuum that phases
nature into society. In short, we do not have to accept the brute tenets of sociobiology that link
us crudely to nature at one extreme or the naive tenets of sociology that cleave us sharply from
nature at the other extreme. Although hierarchy does exist in present-day society, it need not
continue — irrespective of its lack of meaning or reality for nature. But the case against hierarchy
is not contingent on its uniqueness as a social phenomenon. Because hierarchy threatens the
existence of social life today, it cannot remain a social fact. Because it threatens the integrity of
organic nature, it will not continue to do so, given the harsh verdict of "mute" and "blind" nature.

Our continuity with nonhierarchical nature suggests that a nonhierarchical society is no less
random than an ecosystem. That freedom is more than the absence of constraint, that the Anglo-
American tradition of mere pluralism and institutional heterogeneity yields substantially less
than a social ecosystem — such concepts have been argued with telling effect. In fact, democracy
as the apotheosis of social freedom has been sufficiently denatured, as Benjamin R. Barber has
emphasized, to yield the gradual displacement of participation by representation. Where democ-


Perhaps more significantly, the concept of a public sphere, of a body politic, has been literally
dematerialized by a seeming heterogeneity — more precisely, an atomization that reaches from
the institutional to the personal — that has replaced political coherence with chaos. The displace-
ment of public virtue by personal rights has yielded the subversion not only of a unifying ethical
principle that once gave substance to the very notion of a public, but of the very personhood that
gave substance to the notion of right.

A broad, frequently raised question remains to be answered: To what extent does nature have
a reality of its own that we can legitimately invoke? Assuming that nature really exists, how
much do we know about the natural world that is not exclusively social or, to be even more
restrictive, the product of our own subjectivity? That nature is all that is nonhuman or, more
broadly, nonsocial is a presumption rooted in more than rational discourse. It lies at the heart
of an entire theory of knowledge — an epistemology that sharply bifurcates into objectivity and
subjectivity. Since the Renaissance, the idea that knowledge lies locked within a mind closeted
by its own supranatural limitations and insights has been the foundation for all our doubts about
the very existence of a coherent constellation that can even be called nature. This idea is the
foundation for an antinaturalistic body of epistemological theories.

The claim of epistemology to adjudicate the validity of knowledge as a formal and abstract
inquiry has always been opposed by the claim of history to treat knowledge as a problem of
genesis, not merely of knowing in a formal and abstract sense. From this historical standpoint,
mental processes do not live a life of their own. Their seemingly autonomous construction of the
world is actually inseparable from the way they are constructed by the world — a world that is
richly historical not only in a social sense but in a natural one as well. I do not mean that nature
"knows" things that we do not know, but rather that we are the very "knowingness" of nature,
the embodiment of nature's evolution into intellect, mind and self-reflexivity.[6]

In the abstract world of Cartesian, Lockean, and Kantian epistemology, this proposition is diffi-
cult to demonstrate. Renaissance and post-Renaissance epistemology lacks all sense of historicity.
If it looks back at all to the history of mind, it does so within a context so overwhelmingly social and from historical levels so far-removed from the biological genesis of mind that it can never make contact with nature. Its very claim to "modernity" has been a systematic unravelling of the interface between nature and mind that Hellenic thought tried to establish. This interface has been replaced by an unbridgeable dualism between mentality and the external world. In Descartes, dualism occurs between soul and body; in Locke, between the perceiving senses and a perceived world; in Kant, between mind and external reality. Thus, the problem of nature's knowingness has traditionally been seen from the knowing end of a long social history rather than from its beginnings. When this history is instead viewed from its origins, mentality and its continuity with nature acquires a decisively different aspect. An authentic epistemology is the physical anthropology of the mind, of the human brain, not the cultural clutter of history that obstructs our view of the brain's genesis in nature and its evolution in society conceived as a unique elaboration of natural phenomena.

In the same vein, I do not wish to accord mind a "sovereignty" over nature that it patently lacks. Nature is a perpetual kaleidoscope of changes and fecundity that resists hard-and-fast categorization. Mind can grasp the essence of this change but never all of its details. Yet it is precisely in matters of detail that human hubris proves to be most vulnerable. To return to Charles Elton's sensitive metaphors: we have learned to navigate our way through the deeper waters of this natural world, but not through the countless and changing reefs that always render our debarkment precarious. It is here, where the details of the shoreline count so tellingly, that we do well not to ignore the currents that experience assures us are safe and that will spare us from the dangers of foundering.

Ultimately, organic knowledge is mobilized insight that seeks to know nature within nature, not to abandon analysis for mysticism or dialectic for intuition. Our own thinking is itself a natural process, albeit deeply conditioned by society and richly textured by social evolution. Our capacity to bring thought into resonance with its organic history (its evolution from the highly reactive organic molecules that form the fundament for the sensitivity of more complex ones, the extravagant cloudburst of life-forms that follows, and the evolution of the nervous system) is part of the knowledge of "knowing" that provides thought with an organic integument as real as the intellectual tools we acquire from society. More than intuition and faith, thought is literally as real as birth and death, when we first begin to know and when we finally cease to know. Hence nature abides in epistemology as surely as a parent abides in its child. What often is mistakenly dismissed as the intuitive phase of knowledge is the truth that our animality gives to our humanity and our embryo stage of development to our adulthood. When we finally divorce these depth phases of our being and thinking from our bodies and our minds, we have done worse than narrow our epistemological claims to Kantian judgements based on a harsh dualism between thought and nature; we have divided our intellects from ourselves, our state of mind from the development of our bodies, our insight from our hindsight, and our understanding from its ancient memories.

In more concrete terms, what tantalizing issues does social ecology raise for our time and our future? In establishing a more advanced interface with nature, will it be possible to achieve a new balance between humanity and nature by sensitively tailoring our agricultural practices, urban areas, and technologies to the natural requirements of a region and its ecosystems? Can we hope to "manage" the natural environment by a drastic decentralization of agriculture, which will make it possible to cultivate land as though it were a garden balanced by diversified fauna and flora? Will these changes require the decentralization of our cities into moderate-sized com-
munities, creating a new balance between town and country? What technology will be required to achieve these goals and avoid the further pollution of the earth? What institutions will be required to create a new public sphere, what social relations to foster a new ecological sensibility, what forms of work to render human practice playful and creative, what sizes and populations of communities to scale life to human dimensions controllable by all? What kind of poetry? Concrete questions — ecological, social, political, and behavioral — rush in like a flood heretofore dammed up by the constraints of traditional ideologies and habits of thought.

The answers we provide to these questions have a direct bearing on whether humanity can survive on the planet. The trends in our time are visibly directed against ecological diversity; in fact, they point toward brute simplification of the entire biosphere. Complex food chains in the soil and on the earth's surface are being ruthlessly undermined by the fatuous application of industrial techniques to agriculture; consequently, soil has been reduced in many areas to a mere sponge for absorbing simple chemical "nutrients." The cultivation of single crops over vast stretches of land is effacing natural, agricultural, and even physiographic variety. Immense urban belts are encroaching unrelentingly on the countryside, replacing flora and fauna with concrete, metal and glass, and enveloping large regions in a haze of atmospheric pollutants. In this mass urban world, human experience itself becomes crude and elemental, subject to brute noisy stimuli and crass bureaucratic manipulation. A national division of labor, standardized along industrial lines, is replacing regional and local variety, reducing entire continents to immense, smoking factories and cities to garish, plastic supermarkets.

In this confluence of social and ecological crises, we can no longer afford to be unimaginative; we can no longer afford to do without utopian thinking. The crises are too serious and the possibilities too sweeping to be resolved by customary modes of thought — the very sensibilities that produced these crises in the first place. Years ago, the French students in the May-June uprising of 1968 expressed this sharp contrast of alternatives magnificently in their slogan: "Be practical! Do the impossible!" To this demand, the generation that faces the next century can add the more solemn injunction: "If we don't do the impossible, we shall be faced with the unthinkable!"

In the Norse legends, Odin, to obtain wisdom, drinks of the magic fountain that nourishes the World Tree. In return, the god must forfeit one of his eyes. The symbolism, here, is clear: Odin must pay a penalty for acquiring the insight that gives him a measure of control over the natural world and breaches its pristine harmony. But his "wisdom" is that of a one-eyed man. Although he sees the world more acutely, his vision is one-sided. The "wisdom" of Odin involves a renunciation not only of what Josef Weber has called the "primordial bond with nature," but also of the honesty of perception that accords with nature's early unity. Truth achieves exactness, predictability, and above all, manipulability; it becomes science in the customary sense of the term. But science as we know it today is the fragmented one-sided vision of a one-eyed god, whose vantage-point entails domination and antagonism, not coequality and harmony. In the Norse legends, this "wisdom" leads to Ragnarok, the downfall of the gods and the destruction of the tribal world. In our day, this one-sided "wisdom" is laden with the prospects of nuclear immolation and ecological catastrophe.

Humanity has passed through a long history of one-sidedness and of a social condition that has always contained the potential of destruction, despite its creative achievements in technology. The great project of our time must be to open the other eye: to see all-sidedly and wholly, to heal and transcend the cleavage between humanity and nature that came with early wisdom. Nor can we deceive ourselves that the reopened eye will be focused on the visions and myths of
primordial peoples, for history has labored over thousands of years to produce entirely new do-
mains of reality that enter into our very humanness. Our capacity for freedom — which includes
our capacity for individuality, experience, and desire — runs deeper than that of our distant pro-
genitors. We have established a broader material basis for free time, play, security, perception,
and sensuousness — a material potentiality for broader domains of freedom and humanness —
than humanity in a primordial bond with nature could possibly achieve.

But we cannot remove our bonds unless we know them. However unconscious its influence
may be, a legacy of domination permeates our thinking, values, emotions, indeed our very mus-
culature. History dominates us all the more when we are ignorant of it. The historic unconscious
must be made conscious. Cutting across the very legacy of domination is another: the legacy of
freedom that lives in the daydreams of humanity, in the great ideals and movements — rebellious,
anarchic, and Dionysian — that have welled up in all great eras of social transition. In our own
time, these legacies are intertwined like strands and subvert the clear patterns that existed in
the past, until the language of freedom becomes interchangeable with that of domination. This
confusion has been the tragic fate of modern socialism, a doctrine that has been bled of all its
generous ideals. Thus, the past must be dissected in order to exorcise it and to acquire a new
integrity of vision. We must reexamine the cleavages that separated humanity from nature, and
the splits within the human community that originally produced this cleavage, if the concept of
wholeness is to become intelligible and the reopened eye to glimpse a fresh image of freedom.
2. The Outlook of Organic Society

The notion that man is destined to dominate nature is by no means a universal feature of human culture. If anything, this notion is almost completely alien to the outlook of so-called primitive or preliterate communities. I cannot emphasize too strongly that the concept emerged very gradually from a broader social development: the increasing domination of human by human. The breakdown of primordial equality into hierarchical systems of inequality, the disintegration of early kinship groups into social classes, the dissolution of tribal communities into the city, and finally the usurpation of social administration by the State — all profoundly altered not only social life but also the attitude of people toward each other, humanity's vision of itself, and ultimately its attitude toward the natural world. In many ways, we are still agonized by the problems that emerged with these sweeping changes. Perhaps only by examining the attitudes of certain preliterate peoples can we gauge the extent to which domination shapes the most intimate thoughts and the most minute actions of the individual today.

Until recently, discussions about the outlook of preliterate peoples were complicated by opinions that the logical operations of these peoples were distinctly different from our own. To speak of what was called "primitive mentality" as a "prelogical" phenomenon, to use Levy-Bruhl's unhappy term, or more recently, in the language of mythopoeically oriented mystics, "nonlinear thinking," results from a prejudicial misreading of early social sensibilities. From a formal viewpoint, there is a very real sense in which preliterate people were or are obliged to think in much the same "linear" sense as we are in dealing with the more mundane aspects of life. Whatever their shortcomings as a substitute for wisdom and a world outlook, conventional logical operations are needed for survival. Women gathered plants, men shaped hunting implements, and children contrived games according to logical procedures that were closely akin to our own.

But this formal similarity is not at issue in discussing the preliterate outlook toward society. What is significant about the differences in outlook between ourselves and preliterate peoples is that while the latter think like us in a structural sense, their thinking occurs in a cultural context that is fundamentally different from ours. Although their logical operations may be identical to ours formally, their values differ from ours qualitatively. The further back we go to communities that lack economic classes and a political State — communities that might well be called organic societies because of their intense solidarity internally and with the natural world — the greater evidence we find of an outlook toward life that visualized people, things, and relations in terms of their uniqueness rather than their "superiority" or "inferiority." To such communities, individuals and things were not necessarily better or worse than each other; they were simply dissimilar. Each was prized for itself, indeed, for its unique traits. The conception of individual autonomy had not yet acquired the fictive "sovereignty" it has achieved today. The world was perceived as a composite of many different parts, each indispensable to its unity and harmony. Individuality, to the extent that it did not conflict with the community interest on which the survival of all depended, was seen more in terms of interdependence than independence. Variety was prized within the larger tapestry of the community — as a priceless ingredient of communal unity.
In the various organic societies where this outlook still prevails, notions such as "equality" and "freedom" do not exist. They are implicit in the very outlook itself. Moreover, because they are not placed in juxtaposition to the concepts of "inequality" and "unfreedom," these notions lack definability. As Dorothy Lee observed in her deeply incisive and sensitive essays on this outlook:

Equality exists in the very nature of things, as a byproduct of the democratic structure of the culture itself, not as a principle to be applied. In such societies, there is no attempt to achieve the goal of equality, and in fact there is no concept of equality. Often, there is no linguistic mechanism whatever for comparison. What we find is absolute respect for man, for all individuals irrespective of age and sex.[7]

The absence of coercive and domineering values in organic cultures is perhaps best illustrated by the syntax of the Wintu Indians, a people that Lee studied very closely. She notes that terms commonly expressive of coercion in modern languages are arranged, in Wintu syntax, to denote cooperative behavior instead. A Wintu mother, for example, does not "take" a baby into the shade; she goes with it. A chief does not "rule" his people; he stands with them. "They never say, and in fact they cannot say, as we do, 'I have a sister;' or a 'son,' or 'husband,'" Lee observes. "To live with is the usual way in which they express what we call possession, and they use this term for everything that they respect, so that a man will be said to live with his bow and arrows."

The phrase "to live with" implies not only a deep sense of mutual respect for person and a high regard for individual voluntarism; it also implies a profound sense of unity between the individual and the group. We need not go any further than an examination of American Indian life to find abundant evidence of this fact. The traditional society of the Hopi was geared entirely toward group solidarity. Nearly all the basic tasks of the community, from planting to food preparation, were done cooperatively. Together with the adults, children participated in most of these tasks. At every age level, the individual was charged with a sense of responsibility for the community. So all-pervasive were these group attitudes that Hopi children, placed in schools administered by whites, could be persuaded only with the greatest difficulty to keep score in competitive games.

These strong attitudes of intragroup solidarity were fostered in the earliest days of Hopi childhood and continued through life. They began in infancy with the process of weaning, which emphasized interdependence between Hopi individuals and the group — in marked contrast to the surrounding white culture's emphasis on "independence." Weaning is not merely "a transition from milk to solid foods," observes Dorothy Eggan in a study of Hopi socialization. "It is also a gradual process of achieving independence from the comfort of the mother's body and care, of transferring affections to other persons, and of finding satisfactions within oneself and in the outside world." In this sense, many whites "are never weaned, which has unfortunate consequences in a society where individual effort and independence are stressed. The Hopi child, on the other hand, from the day of his birth was being weaned from his biological mother." But this weaning process resulted not from social indifference or maternal neglect. To the contrary, and very characteristically:

Many arms gave him comfort, many faces smiled at him, and from a very early age he was given bits of food which were chewed by various members of the family and placed in his mouth. So for a Hopi, the outside world in which he needed to find satisfaction was never far away.
From this feeling of unity between the individual and the community emerges a feeling of unity between the community and its environment. Psychologically, people in organic communities must believe that they exercise a greater influence on natural forces than is actually afforded them by their relatively simple technology. Such a belief is fostered by group rituals and magical procedures. Elaborate as these rituals and procedures may be, however, humanity’s sense of dependence on the natural world, indeed, on its immediate environment, never disappears. Although this sense of dependence may generate abject fear or an equally abject reverence, there is a point in the development of organic society where it visibly generates a sense of symbiosis, of communal interdependence and cooperation, that tends to transcend raw feelings of terror and awe. Here, people not only propitiate powerful forces or try to manipulate them; their ceremonials help (as they see it) in a creative sense: they aid in multiplying food animals, or in bringing changes in weather and season, or in promoting the fertility of crops. The organic community is conceived to be part of the balance of nature — a forest community or a soil community — in short, a truly ecological community or ecocommunity peculiar to its ecosystem, with an active sense of participation in the overall environment and the cycles of nature.

The fine distinction between fear and reverence becomes more evident when we turn to accounts of certain ceremonials among preliterate peoples. Aside from ceremonials and rituals characterized by social functions, such as initiation rites, we encounter others marked by ecological functions. Among the Hopi, major horticultural ceremonies have the role of summoning forth the cycles of the cosmic order, of actualizing the solstices and the different stages in the growth of maize from germination to maturation. Although this order and these stages are known to be predetermined, human ceremonial involvement is an integral part of that predetermination. In contrast to strictly magical procedures, Hopi ceremonies assign a participatory rather than a manipulatory function to humans. People play a complementary role in natural cycles: they facilitate the workings of the cosmic order. Their ceremonies are part of a complex web of life that extends from the germination of corn to the arrival of the solstices. As Dorothy Lee observed,

Every aspect of nature, plants and rocks and animals, colors and cardinal directions and numbers and sex distinctions, the dead and the living, all have a cooperative share in the maintenance of the universal order. Eventually, the effort of each individual, human or not, goes into this huge whole. And here, too, it is every aspect of a person which counts. The entire being of the Hopi individual affects the balance of nature; and as each individual develops his inner potential, so he enhances his participation, so does the entire universe become invigorated.

Contemporary ecological rhetoric tends to blur the wealth of implications that follow from the integration of the individual, community, and environment into a "universal order." Since Lee penned these lines, almost every one of her words have become the cheap coin of the "human potential" movement. Preliterate cultures, in fact, often begin with a cosmology consisting of the conclusions that our current bouquet of mystics profess to attain. To organic societies, the puzzling cosmological issue is not life, which exists everywhere and in all things; the puzzle is death, the inexplicably unique condition of nonliving and hence nonbeing. "Soul," in some sense, permeates the entirety of existence; the "dead" matter that science has given us since the Renaissance, as Hans Jonas has so sensitively pointed out, "was yet to be discovered — as indeed its concept, so familiar to us, is anything but obvious." What is most natural to organic societies is an abounding fecund, all-encompassing "livingness" that is integral to its knowingness, a world of life that "occupies the whole foreground exposed to man’s immediate view. . . . Earth,
wind, and water — begetting, teeming, nurturing, destroying — are anything but models of "mere matter."

The direct involvement of humanity with nature is thus not an abstraction, and Dorothy Lee’s account of the Hopi ceremonials is not a description of "primitive man’s science," as Victorian anthropologists believed. Nature begins as life. From the very outset of human consciousness, it enters directly into consociation with humanity — not merely harmonization or even balance. Nature as life eats at every repast, succors every new birth, grows with every child, aids every hand that throws a spear or plucks a plant, warms itself at the hearth in the dancing shadows, and sits amidst the councils of the community just as the rustle of the leaves and grasses is part of the air itself — not merely a sound borne on the wind. Ecological ceremonials validate the "citizenship" nature acquires as part of the human environment. "The People" (to use the name that many preliterate communities give to themselves) do not disappear into nature or nature into "the People." But nature is not merely a habitat; it is a participant that advises the community with its omens, secures it with its camouflage, leaves it telltale messages in broken twigs and footprints, whispers warnings to it in the wind’s voice, nourishes it with a largesse of plants and animals, and in its countless functions and counsels is absorbed into the community’s nexus of rights and duties.

What the ecological ceremonial does, in effect, is socialize the natural world and complete the involvement of society with nature. Here, the ceremonial, despite its naively fictive content, speaks more truthfully to the richly articulated interface between society and nature than concepts that deal with the natural world as a "matrix," "background," or worse, "precondition" for the social world. Indeed, far from dealing with nature as an "It" or a "Thou" (to use Martin Suber’s terms), the ceremonial validates nature as kin, a blooded, all-important estate that words like citizen can never attain. Nature is named even before if is deified; it is personified as part of the community before it is raised above it as "supernature." To the pygmies of the Ituri forest, it is "Ndura" and to the settled Bantu villagers the same word strictly designates the forest that the pygmies regard as a veritable entity in itself, active and formative in all its functions.

Hence, the very notion of nature is always social at this point in human development — in an ontological sense that the protoplasm of humankind retains an abiding continuity with the protoplasm of nature. To speak in the language of organic society, the blood that flows between the community and nature in the process of being kin is circulated by distinct acts of the community: ceremonials, dances, dramas, songs, decorations, and symbols. The dancers who imitate animals in their gestures or birds in their calls are engaged in more than mere mimesis; they form a communal and choral unity with nature, a unity that edges into the intimate intercourse of sexuality, birth and the interchange of blood. By virtue of a community solidarity that such widely bandied terms as stewardship can hardly convey, organic societies “hear” a nature and "speak" for a nature that will be slowly muffled and muted by the "civilizations" that gain historic ascendency over them. Until then, nature is no silent world or passive environment lacking meaning beyond the dictates of human manipulation. Hence, social ecology has its origins in humanity’s initial awareness of its own sociality — not merely as a cognitive dimension of epistemology but as an ontological consociation with the natural world.

I do not mean to deny the old epistemological canon that human beings see nature in social terms, preformed by social categories and interests. But this canon requires further articulation and elaboration. The word social should not sweep us into a deluge of intellectual abstractions that ignore the distinctions between one social form and another. It is easy to see that organic
society’s harmonized view of nature follows directly from the harmonized relations within the early human community. Just as medieval theology structured the Christian heaven on feudal lines, so people of all ages have projected their social structures onto the natural world. To the Algonquians of the North American forests, beavers lived in clans and lodges of their own, wisely cooperating to promote the well-being of the community. Animals also had their magic, their totem ancestors (the elder brother), and were invigorated by the Manitou, whose spirit nourished the entire cosmos. Accordingly, animals had to be conciliated or else they might refuse to provide humans with skins and meat. The cooperative spirit that formed a basis for the survival of the organic community was an integral part of the outlook of preliterate people toward nature and the interplay between the natural world and the social.

We have yet to find a language that adequately encompasses the quality of this deeply imbedded cooperative spirit. Expressions like "love of nature" or "communism," not to speak of the jargon favored by contemporary sociology, are permeated by the problematical relationships of our own society and mentality. Preliterate humans did not have to "love" nature; they lived in a kinship relationship with it, a relationship more primary than our use of the term love. They would not distinguish between our "esthetic" sense on this score and their own functional approach to the natural world, because natural beauty is there to begin with — in the very cradle of the individual’s experience. The poetic language that awakens such admiration among whites who encounter the spokesmen for Indian grievances is rarely "poetry" to the speaker; rather, it is an unconscious eloquence that reflects the dignity of Indian life.

So too with other elements of organic society and its values: cooperation is too primary to be adequately expressed in the language of western society. From the outset of life, coercion in dealing with children is so notably rare in most preliterate communities that western observers are often astonished by the gentleness with which so-called primitives deal with the most intractable of their young. Yet in preliterate communities the parents are not "permissive"; they simply respect the personality of their children, much as they do that of the adults in their communities. Until age hierarchies begin to emerge, the everyday behavior of parents fosters an almost unbroken continuity in the lives of the young between the years of childhood and adulthood. Farley Mowatt, a biologist who lived on the Canadian barrens among the last remnant band of the Ihalmiut Eskimo, noted that if a boy wished to become a hunter, he was not scolded for his presumption or treated with amused condescension. To the contrary, his father seriously fashioned a miniature bow and some arrows that were genuine weapons, not toys. The boy then went out to hunt, encouraged by all the traditional words of good luck that the Ihalmiut accorded an experienced adult. On his return, Mowatt tells us,

He is greeted as gravely as if he were his father. The whole camp wishes to hear of his hunt, and he can expect the same ridicule at failure, or the same praise if he managed to kill a little bird, which would come upon a full grown man. So he plays, and learns, under no shadow of parental disapproval, and under no restraint of fear.

The Ihalmiut are not exceptional. The inherently nonauthoritarian relationships Mowatt encountered between Eskimo children and adults is still quite common in surviving organic societies. It extends not only to ties between, children and adults but also to the prevailing notions of property, exchange, and leadership. Here again, the terminology of western society fails us. The word property connotes an individual appropriation of goods, a personal claim to tools, land, and other resources. Conceived in this loose sense, property is fairly common in organic societies, even in groups that have a very simple, undeveloped technology. By the same token, coopera-
tive work and the sharing of resources on a scale that could be called communistic is also fairly common. On both the productive side of economic life and the consumptive, appropriation of tools, weapons, food, and even clothing may range widely — often idiosyncratically, in western eyes — from the possessive and seemingly individualistic to the most meticulous, often ritualistic, parceling out of a harvest or a hunt among members of a community.

But primary to both of these seemingly contrasting relationships is the practice of usufruct, the freedom of individuals in a community to appropriate resources merely by virtue of the fact that they are using them. Such resources belong to the user as long as they are being used. Function, in effect, replaces our hallowed concept of possession — not merely as a loan or even "mutual aid," but as an unconscious emphasis on use itself, on need that is free of psychological entanglements with proprietorship, work, and even reciprocity. The western identification of individuality with ownership and personality with craft — the latter laden with a metaphysics of selfhood as expressed in a crafted object wrested by human powers from an intractable nature — has yet to emerge from the notion of use itself and the guileless enjoyment of needed things. Need, in effect, still orchestrates work to the point where property of any kind, communal or otherwise, has yet to acquire independence from the claims of satisfaction. A collective need subtly orchestrates work, not personal need alone, for the collective claim is implicit in the primacy of usufruct over proprietorship. Hence, even the work performed in one's own dwelling has an underlying collective dimension in the potential availability of its products to the entire community.

Communal property, once property itself has become a category of consciousness, already marks the first step toward private property — just as reciprocity, once it too becomes a category of consciousness, marks the first step toward exchange. Proudhon's celebration of "mutual aid" and contractual federalism, like Marx's celebration of communal property and planned production, mark no appreciable advance over the primal principle of usufruct. Both thinkers were captive to the notion of interest, to the rational satisfaction of egotism.

There may have been a period in humanity's early development when interest had not yet emerged to replace complementarity, the disinterested willingness to pool needed things and needed services. There was a time when Gontran de Poncins, wandering into the most remote reaches of the Arctic, could still encounter "the pure, the true Eskimos, the Eskimos who knew not how to lie" — and hence to manipulate, to calculate, to project a private interest beyond social need. Here, community attained a completeness so exquisite and artless that needed things and services fit together in a lovely mosaic with a haunting personality of its own.

We should not disdain these almost utopian glimpses of humanity's potentialities, with their unsullied qualities for giving and collectivity. Preliterate peoples that still lack an "I" with which to replace a "we" are not (as Levy-Bruhl was to suggest) deficient in individuality as much as they are rich in community. This is a greatness of wealth that can yield a lofty disdain for objects.[8]

Cooperation, at this point, is more than just a cement between members of the group; it is an organic melding of identities that, without losing individual uniqueness, retains and fosters the unity of consociation. Contract, forced into this wholeness, serves merely to subvert it—turning an unthinking sense of responsibility into a calculating nexus of aid and an unconscious sense of collectivity into a preening sense of mutuality. As for reciprocity, so often cited as the highest evocation of collectivity, we shall see that it is more significant in forming alliances between groups than in fostering internal solidarity within them.

Usufruct, in short, differs qualitatively from the quid pro quo of reciprocity, exchange, and mutual aid — all of which are trapped within history's demeaning account books with their "just"
ratios and their "honest" balance sheets. Caught in this limited sphere of calculation, consociation is always tainted by the rationality of arithmetic. The human spirit can never transcend a quantitative world of "fair dealings" between canny egos whose ideology of interest barely conceals a mean-spirited proclivity for acquisition. To be sure, social forces were to fracture the human collectivity by introducing contractual ties and cultivating the ego's most acquisitive impulses. Insofar as the guileless peoples of organic societies held to the values of usufruct in an unconscious manner, they remained terribly vulnerable to the lure, often the harsh imposition, of an emerging contractual world. Rarely is history notable for its capacity to select and preserve the most virtuous traits of humanity. But there is still no reason why hope, reinforced by consciousness and redolent with ancestral memories, may not linger within us as an awareness of what humanity has been in the past and what it can become in the future.

Contractual relations — of more properly, the "treaties" and "oaths" that give specifiable forms to community life—may have served humanity well when compelling need or the perplexities of an increasingly complex social environment placed a premium on a clearly defined system of rights and duties. The more demanding the environment, the more preliterate peoples must explicate the ways in which they are responsible for each other and how they must deal with exogenous factors — particularly nearby communities — that impinge on them. Need now emerges as an ordering and structuring force in institutionalizing the fairly casual, and even pleasurable, aspects of life. Sexual, kinship, reciprocal, federative, and civil areas of the community must acquire greater structure — to deal not only with a more pressing nature but particularly one that includes adjacent communities staking out claims of their own to a common environment. Such claims are internalized by the community itself as a system of sharing. And not only do interests now arise that must be carefully and later meticulously articulated, but, ironically, they also arise from individuals who begin to feel that they carry visibly heavier burdens and responsibilities within the community. These individuals are the nascent "oppressed" (often women) and those we might regard as the nascent "privileged."

Men and women in preliterate communities need each other not only to satisfy their sexual desires but also for the material support they give to each other.[9] Their marriage establishes a primary division of labor — a sexual division of labor with a sexualized economy as well — that tends to apportion hunting and pastoral tasks to men, including the defense of the community and its relationship to the outsider, and domestic, food-gathering, and horticultural responsibilities to women. By a sexual division of labor, I do not mean merely a biological one, important as the biological dimension may be, but an economy that acquires the very gender of the sex to which it is apportioned. Nor was it necessarily men who formulated the apportionment of the community's material activities between the sexes. More likely than not, in my view, it was women who made this apportionment with a sense of concern over the integrity of their richly hallowed responsibilities and their personal rights. Only later did the emergence of more complex and hierarchical social forms turn their domestic roles against them. This development, as we shall see, was to come from a male envy that must be carefully unravelled.

At a low subsistence level and in a fairly primal community, both divisions of labor are needed for the well-being, if not the survival, of all its members; hence, the sexes treat each other with respect. Indeed, the ability of a man or woman to perform well in this division of labor profoundly influences the choice of a mate and preserves the integrity of a marriage — which is often dissolved by the woman, whose responsibilities in sheltering, feeding, and raising the young visibly outweigh the man's usefulness in discharging these all-important functions. Given the woman's
de facto role in the early community’s social arrangements, our obsessive preoccupation with "primitive monogamy" seems almost preposterous — if it weren’t so plainly ideological and obfuscatory.

The blood-tie and the rights and duties that surround it are embodied in an unspoken oath that comprised the only visible unifying principle of early community life. And this bond initially derives from woman. She alone becomes the very protoplasm of sociality: the ancestress that cements the young into lasting consociation, the source of the blood that flows in their veins, the one who nourishes a commonality of origins, the rearer who produces a mutuality of shared physical and spiritual recognition that extends from infancy to death. She is the instructress in the basic ways of life, the most indisputable personification of community as such, conceived as an intimate familial experience. The young, who first see each other as kin — as common flesh, bone, and blood through their mother — later see each other with an intense sense of identity through her memory, and only faintly in the father, whose physical features they closely resemble.

With the commonality of blood comes the commanding oath that ordains unequivocal support between kin. This support entails not only sharing and devotion but the right to summon an unquestioned retribution on those who injuriously despoil the blood of a kinsperson. Beyond the obvious material needs that must be satisfied for survival itself, the claims of the blood oath provide the first dictates that the primal community encounters. They are the earliest communal reflexes that emerge from human consociation, although deeply laden with mystery. Community, through the blood oath, thus affirms itself with each birth and death. To violate it is to violate the solidarity of the group itself, to challenge its sense of communal mystery. Hence, such violations, be they from within the group or from without, are too heinous to contemplate. Only later will dramatic changes in the most fundamental premises of organic society make kinship and its claims a consciously debatable issue and a subject for ceremonial exploration.[10]

Mere reflexes, however, are too binding, too defensive, too rigid and self-enclosing to permit any broader social advances. They do not allow for a social solidarity based on conscious alliances, on further social constructions and elaborations. They constitute an inward retreat into a guardedness and suspicion toward all that is exogenous to the community — a fear of the social horizon that lies beyond the limited terrain staked out by the blood oath. Hence, necessity and time demand that ways be found to place the community in a much larger social matrix. Obligations must be established beyond the confines of the self-enclosed group to claim new rights that will foster survival — in short, a broader system of rights and duties that will bring exogenous groups into the service of the community in periods of misfortune and conflict. Limited by the blood oath, allies are difficult to find; the community, based on association through kinship alone, finds it impossible to recognize itself in other communities that do not share common ancestral lineages. Unless such lineages can be created by intermarriages that recreate the blood oath on its primal terms of shared kinship, new oaths must be devised that, while secondary to blood, can find a comparable tangibility in things. Claude Levi-Strauss’s notion to the contrary notwithstanding, women are decidedly not such "things" that men can trade with each other to acquire allies. They are the origins of kinship and sociality — the arché of community and its immanent power of solidarity — not little pastries that can be savored and traded away in a Parisian bistro.

Even "things" as such do not suffice, for they suggest a system of accounts and ratios that stand at odds with organic society’s practice of usufruct. Hence, before things can become gifts — I leave aside their later debasement into commodities — they first become symbols. What initially counts for early preliterate peoples is not a thing’s usefulness in the economy of organic society
but its symbolism as the physical embodiment of reciprocity, of a willingness to enter into mutual obligation. These are the treaties that extend beyond the blood oath into social oaths: the early elaboration of the biological community into human society, the first glimmerings of a universal humanitas that lies beyond the horizon of a universal animalitas.

As preliterate communities extended their range of acquired "relatives," the traditional kinship nexus was probably increasingly permeated by the social. Marriage, reciprocity, the ritualistic adoption of strangers as blood relatives, and intracommunity institutions like fraternities and totemic societies must have produced a slow consolidation and layering of responsibilities, particularly in more dynamic organic societies, that were to be richly articulated by custom and ritual. From this social substance there began to emerge a new civil sphere parallel to the older domestic sphere.

That this civil sphere was free of coercion and command is indicated by our evidence of "authority" in the few organic societies that have survived European acculturation. What we flipantly call "leadership" in organic societies often turns out to be guidance, lacking the usual accoutrements of command. Its "power" is functional rather than political. Chiefs, where they authentically exist and are not the mere creations of the colonizer's mind, have no true authority in a coercive sense. They are advisors, teachers, and consultants, esteemed for their experience and wisdom. Whatever "power" they do have is usually confined to highly delimited tasks such as the coordination of hunts and war expeditions. It ends with the tasks to be performed. Hence, it is episodic power, not institutional; periodic, not traditional — like the "dominance" traits we encounter among primates.

Our entire language is permeated by historically charged euphemisms that acquire a reified life of their own. Obedience displaces allegiance, command displaces coordination, power displaces wisdom, acquisition displaces giving, commodities displace gifts. While these changes are real enough historically with the rise of hierarchy, class, and property, they become grossly misleading when they extend their sovereignty to language as such and stake out their claim to the totality of social life. When used as tools in ferreting out the memory of humanity, they do not help to contrast present to past and reveal the tentative nature of the existing world and of prevailing patterns of human behavior; to the contrary, they assimilate the past to the present and in the very pretence of illuminating the past, they cunningly conceal it from our eyes. This betrayal by language is crassly ideological and has served authority well. Behind the inextricable web of history, which so often prevents us from viewing a long development from the point of its origins and beclouds us with an ideology of "hindsight," lies the even more obfuscating symbolism of a language nourished by deception. For remembrance to return in all its authenticity, with the harsh challenge it presents to the existing order, it must retain its fidelity to the arché of things and attain a consciousness of its own history. In short, memory itself must "remember" its own evolution into ideology as well as the evolution of humanity it professes to reveal[11]

Anthropological etiquette requires that I occasionally sprinkle my remarks with the usual caveats about my use of "selective data," my proclivity for "rampant speculation," and my "normative interpretation" of disputable research materials. Accordingly, the reader should realize that by interpreting the same material differently, one could show that organic society was egotistical, competitive, aggressive, hierarchical, and beleaguered by all the anxieties that plague "civilized" humanity. Having made this obeisance to convention, let me now argue the contrary. A careful review of the anthropological data at hand will show that communities like the Hopi, Wintu, Iñali, and others cited here and in the following pages were not culturally unique;
indeed, where we find an organic society in which our modern values and traits prevail, this usually can be explained by unsettling technological changes, invasions, problems of dealing with a particularly difficult environment, and, above all, by contacts with whites.

Paul Radin, summing up decades of anthropological experience, research, and fieldwork, once observed:

> If I were asked to state briefly and succinctly what are the outstanding features of aboriginal civilizations, I, for one, would have no hesitation in answering that there are three: the respect for the individual, irrespective of age or sex; the amazing degree of social and political integration achieved by them; and the existence of a concept of personal security which transcends all governmental forms and all tribal and group interests and conflicts.

These features can be summarized as: complete parity or equality between individuals, age-groups and sexes; usufruct and later reciprocity; the avoidance of coercion in dealing with internal affairs; and finally, what Radin calls the "irreducible minimum" — the "inalienable right" (in Radin’s words) of every individual in the community "to food, shelter and clothing" irrespective of the amount of work contributed by the individual to the acquisition of the means of life. "To deny anyone this irreducible minimum was equivalent to saying that a man no longer existed, that he was dead" — in short, to cut across the grain of the world conceived as a universe of life.

I do not mean to imply that any existing "primitive" communities can be regarded as models for early periods of human social development. They are the remnant bands of a long history that has always towed them along ways far removed from an ancestral world that separated humanity from animality. More likely than not, the solidarity that existed in Radin’s "aboriginal civilizations," their high respect for the natural world and the members of their communities, may have been far more intense in prehistory, when there were none of the divisive political and commercial relations of modern capitalism that have so grossly distorted existing organic societies.

But culture traits do not exist in a vacuum. Although they may be integrated in many different and unexpected ways, certain characteristic patterns tend to emerge that yield broadly similar institutions and sensibilities, despite differences in time and location. The cultural facts of dress, technics, and environment that link prehistoric peoples with existing "primitives" is so striking that it is difficult to believe that Siberian mammoth hunters of yesteryear, with their fur parkas, bone tool kit, and glaciated surroundings were so dissimilar from the Arctic seal hunters of de Poncin’s day. The physical pattern that has fallen together here has a unity that justifies a number of related cultural inferences.

Thus, the presence of female figurines, obviously laden with magical or religious significance, in the debris of a prehistoric hunting camp or a Neolithic horticultural village suggests the reasonable probability that the community accorded women a social prestige that would be difficult to find in the patriarchal societies of pastoral nomads. Indeed, such a community may even have traced its lineage system through the mother’s name (matrilineal descent). If paleolithic bone implements are etched with cult-like drawings of animals, we have adequate reason to believe that the community had an animistic outlook toward the natural world. If the size of prehistoric house foundations is noteworthy for the absence of large individual dwellings and the adornments in burial sites exhibit no conspicuous wealth, we can believe that social equality existed in
the community and that it had an egalitarian outlook toward its own members. Each trait, found singly, may not be convincing support for such general conclusions. But if they are all found together and if they are sufficiently widespread to be characteristic of an entire social era, it would certainly require a hard-nosed empirical outlook and an almost perverse fear of generalization not to accept these conclusions.

In any case, some ten thousand years ago, in an area between the Caspian Sea and the Mediterranean, nomadic bands of hunter-gatherers began to develop a crude system of horticulture and settle down in small villages, where they engaged in mixed farming. They were followed quite independently some four or five thousand years later in a similar development by Indians of central Mexico. The development of horticulture, or gardening, was probably initiated by women. Evidence for this belief comes from studies of mythology and from existing preliterate communities based on a hoe-gardening technology. In this remote period of transition, when a sense of belonging to a relatively fixed soil community increasingly replaced a nomadic outlook, social life began to acquire entirely new unitary qualities that (to borrow a term devised by Erich Fromm) can best be called matricentric. By using this term, I do not wish to imply that women exercised any form of institutional sovereignty over men or achieved a commanding status in the management of society. I merely mean that the community, in separating itself from a certain degree of dependence on game and migratory animals, began to shift its social imagery from the male hunter to the female food-gatherer, from the predator to the procreator, from the camp fire to the domestic hearth, from cultural traits associated with the father to those associated with the mother.[12] The change in emphasis is primarily cultural. "Certainly 'home and mother' are written over every phase of neolithic agriculture," observes Lewis Mumford, "and not least over the new village centers, at least identifiable in the foundations of houses and graves." One can agree with Mumford that it was woman who probably tended the garden crops and accomplished those masterpieces of selection and cross-fertilization which turned raw wild species into the prolific and richly nutritious domestic varieties; it was woman who made the first containers, weaving baskets and coiling the first clay pots . . . . Without this long period of agricultural and domestic development, the surplus of food and manpower that made urban life possible would not have been forthcoming.[13]

Today, one would want to replace some of Mumford's words, such as his sweeping use of "agriculture," which men were to extend beyond woman's discovery of gardening into the mass production of food and animals. We would want to confine "home and mother" to early phases of the Neolithic rather than "every phase." Similarly, where the selection of edible plant varieties ends and cross-fertilization for new ones begins is a highly blurred interface in the prehistory of food cultivation. But the spirit of Mumford's remarks is even more valid today than it was two decades ago, when a heavy-handed, male-oriented anthropology would have rejected it as sentimental.

If anything, woman's stature in inscribing her sensibilities and her hands on the beginnings of human history has grown rather than diminished. It was she who, unlike any other living creature, made the sharing of food a consistent communal activity and even a hospitable one that embraced the stranger, hence fostering sharing as a uniquely human desideratum. Birds and mammals, to be sure, feed their young and exhibit extraordinary protectiveness on their behalf. Among mammals, females provide the produce of their bodies in the form of milk and warmth. But only woman was to make sharing a universally social phenomenon to the point where her young — as siblings, then male and female adults, and finally parents — became sharers irrespec-
tive of their sex and age. It is she who turned sharing into a hallowed communal imperative, not merely an episodic or marginal feature.

Finally, we cannot ignore the fact that woman's foraging activities helped awaken in humanity an acute sense of place, of oikos. Her nurturing sensibility helped create not only the origins of society but literally the roots of civilization — a terrain the male has arrogantly claimed for himself. Her "stake in civilization" was different from that of the predatory male: it was more domestic, more pacifying, and more caring. Her sensibility ran deeper and was laden with more hope than the male's, for she embodied in her very physical being mythology's ancient message of a lost "golden age" and a fecund nature. Yet ironically she has been with us all the time with a special genius and mystery — one whose potentialities have been brutally diminished but ever present as a voice of conscience in the bloody cauldron that men have claimed for their "civilization."

The benign qualities nurtured in this Neolithic village world are perhaps no less significant than its material achievements. A close association exists between communal management of land and matrilineal descent in surviving gardening cultures. Clan society, perhaps a slow reworking of totemic cults in hunting bands, may have reached its apogee in this period and, with it, a communal disposition of the land and its products. "To live with" had probably become "to share," if the two expressions were ever different in their meaning. In the remains of early Neolithic villages, we often sense the existence of what was once a clearly peaceful society, strewn with symbols of the fecundity of life and the bounty of nature. Although there is evidence of weapons, defensive palisades, and protective ditches, early horticulturists seem to have emphasized peaceful arts and sedentary pursuits. Judging from the building sites and graves, there is little evidence, if any, that social inequality existed within these communities or that warfare marked the relationships between them.

Presiding over this remote world was the figure and symbolism of the Mother Goddess, a fertility principle so old in time that its stone remains have even been found in Paleolithic caves and encampments. Hunter-gatherers, early horticulturists, advanced agriculturists, and the priests of "high civilizations" have imparted utterly contradictory traits to her — some deliciously benign, others darkly demonic. But it is more than fair to assume that in the early Neolithic, the priests had not yet sculpted the cruel, Kali-like image into her figure. Apparently, like Demeter, she was more of a feminine principle, latent with loving and mourning, not the mere fertility symbol — the magic thing that endeared her to hunter-gatherers. That she could not remain untainted by patriarchy is obvious from a reading of the Odyssey, in which the island-hopping seafarers debase woman and her domain to cruel chthonic enchantresses who devour the trusting warriors in distress.

What strongly reinforces interpretations of the goddess as a more giving principle is the unqualified nature of mother-love itself in contrast to the conditional love associated with patriarchy. Erich Fromm, in the provocative essays he prepared for the Institute for Social Research, noted that woman's love, compared with that of the judgmental patriarch who provides love as a reward for the child's performance and fulfillment of its duties, "is not dependent on any moral or social obligation to be carried out by the child; there is not even an obligation to return her love." This unconditional love, without expectation of any filial reward, yields the total deobjectification of person that makes humanness its own end rather than a tool of hierarchy and classes. To assume that the goddess did not symbolize this untainted sense of identification is to question her association with the feminine — in short, to turn her into a god, which priestly corporations were to do later with extraordinary deftness. Odysseus, in degrading Demeter to Circe, also re-
veals how the lovely sirens might have charmed humans and beasts into a sense of commonality with each other. Homer's epic, however, will forever hide from us the intriguing possibility that their song originally gave to humanity the music of life rather than the luring melody of death.

How close the early Neolithic village world may have been to that of the early Pueblo Indians, which the most hardened white invaders were to describe in such glowing terms, may never be known. Yet the thought lingers that, at the dawn of history, a village society had emerged in which life seemed to be unified by a communal disposition of work and its products; by a procreative relationship with the natural world, one that found overt expression in fertility rites; by a pacification of the relationships between humans and the world around them. The hunter-gatherers may have left the world virtually untouched aside from the grasslands they cleared for the great herds, but such an achievement is safely marked by its absence of activity. There is a want of environmental artistry, of a landscape that has been left the better for humanity's presence, one that has the breath of mind as well as spirit bestowed upon it. Today, when the hunter-gatherer's mere parasitism of the environment has emerged as a virtue in juxtaposition to contemporary man's insane exploitation, we tend to fetishize restraint to the point of passivity and doing. Yet the matricentric horticulturists managed to touch the earth and change it, but with a grace, delicacy, and feeling that may be regarded as evolution's own harvest. Their archaeology is an expression of human artfulness and natural fulfillment. Neolithic artifacts seem to reflect a communion of humanity and nature that patently expressed the communion of humans with each other: a solidarity of the community with the world of life that articulated an intense solidarity within the community itself. As long as this internal solidarity persisted, nature was its beneficiary. When it began to decay, the surrounding world began to decay with it — and thence came the long wintertime of domination and oppression we normally call "civilization."
3. The Emergence of Hierarchy

The breakdown of early Neolithic village society marks a decisive turning point in the development of humanity. In the millenia-long era that separates the earliest horticultural communities from the "high civilizations" of antiquity, we witness the emergence of towns, cities, and finally empires — of a qualitatively new social arena in which the collective control of production was supplanted by elitist control, kinship relations by territorial and class relations, and popular assemblies or councils of elders by state bureaucracies.

This development occurred very unevenly. Where settled agricultural communities were invaded by pastoral nomads, the shift from one social arena to another may have occurred so explosively that it acquired apocalyptic proportions. Languages, customs, and religions seemed to replace each other with bewildering rapidity; old institutions (both heavenly and earthly) were effaced by new ones. But such sweeping changes were rare. More often than not, past and present were subtly melded together into a striking variety of social forms. In such cases, we witness a slow assimilation of traditional forms to new ends, a repeated use of old relationships for new purposes. In the complex interpenetration of old by new, early social forms may have lingered on through the entire span of post-Neolithic history. Not until the emergence of capitalism did the peasant village and its cultural repertory disappear as the locus of rural life — a fact that will be of considerable importance when we consider humanity's legacy of freedom.

Actually, the most complete shift occurred in the psychic apparatus of the individual. Even as the Mother Goddess continued to occupy a foremost place in mythology (but often adorned with the demonic traits required by patriarchy), women began to lose whatever parity they had with men—a change that occurred not only in their social status but in the very view they held of themselves. Both in home and economy, the social division of labor shed its traditional egalitarian features and acquired an increasingly hierarchical form. Man staked out a claim for the superiority of his work over woman's; later, the craftsman asserted his superiority over the food cultivator; finally, the thinker affirmed his sovereignty over the workers. Hierarchy established itself not only objectively, in the real, workaday world, but also subjectively, in the individual unconscious. Percolating into virtually every realm of experience, it has assimilated the syntax of everyday discourse — the very relationship between subject and object, humanity and nature. Difference was recast from its traditional status as unity in diversity into a linear system of separate, increasingly antagonistic powers — a system validated by all the resources of religion, morality, and philosophy.

What accounts for these vast changes in humanity's development, aside from the meteoric impact of the great historical invasions? And were their darker, often bloody aspects the unavoidable penalties we had to pay for social progress? Our answers to these questions touch on one of the major social problematics of our time — the role of scarcity, reason, labor, and technics in wrenching humanity from its "brutal" animal world into the glittering light of "civilization," or in Marxian terminology, from a world dominated by "necessity" to one dominated by "freedom." My use here of the word dominated is not to be taken lightly; its implications for Marxian theory...
will be examined later in this work. For the present, let me note that Enlightenment and, more pointedly, Victorian ideologies — the ideologies that Marx shared in their broad contours with liberal economists — explained "man's ascent" from Neolithic "barbarism" to capitalism in strikingly similar ways. These explanations are worth reexamining — not so much to refute them but to place them in a larger perspective than nineteenth-century social theory could possibly attain.

According to these views, history's onward march from the stone age to the modern occurred primarily for reasons related to technological development: the development of advanced agricultural techniques, increasing material surpluses, and the rapid growth of human populations. Without the increases in material surpluses and labor "resources" that Neolithic society first began to make possible, humanity could never have developed a complex economy and political structure. We owe the advent of "civilization" to the early arts of systematic food cultivation and increasingly sophisticated tools like the wheel, kiln, smelter, and loom. All these provided an increasing abundance of food, clothing, shelter, tools, and transportation. With this basic reserve of food and technics, humanity acquired the leisure time to gain a greater insight into natural processes and settled into sedentary life-ways from which emerged our towns and cities, a large-scale agriculture based on grains, the plow, and animal power, and finally a rudimentary, machine technology.

But this development, presumably so rich in promise for humanity's self-fulfillment, has not been free of a Janus-faced ambiguity, of its dark side and treacherous aspects. The stream of human progress has been a divided one: The development toward material security and social complexity has generated contrapuntal forces that yield material insecurity and social conflict unique to "civilization" as such. On the one side, without the agrarian economy that the early Neolithic introduced, society would have been mired indefinitely in a brute subsistence economy living chronically on the edge of survival. Nature, so the social theorists of the past century held, is normally "stingy," an unyielding and deceptive "mother." She has favored humanity with her bounty only in a few remote areas of the world. Rarely has she been the giving nurturer created in distant times by mythopoeic thought. The "savage" of Victorian ethnography must always struggle (or "wrestle," to use Marx's term) with her to perpetuate life — which is ordinarily miserable and mercifully brief, tolerable at times but never secure, and only marginally plentiful and idyllic. Humanity's emergence from the constrictive world of natural scarcity has thus been perceived as a largely technical problem of placing the unyielding forces of nature under social command, creating and increasing surpluses, dividing labor (notably, separating crafts from agriculture), and sustaining intellectually productive urban elites. Thus, given the leisure time to think and administer society, these elites could create science, enlarge the entire sphere of human knowledge, and sophisticate human culture.[14] As Proudhon plaintively declared, echoing the prevailing spirit of the time:

Yes, life is a struggle. But this struggle is not between man and man — it is between man and Nature; and it is each one's duty to share it.

Marx assumed the same view toward the "burden of nature." But he placed considerable emphasis on human domination as an unavoidable feature of humanity's domination of the natural world. Until the development of modern industry (both Marx and Engels argued), the new surpluses produced by precapitalist technics may vary quantitatively, but rarely are they sufficient to provide abundance and leisure for more than a fortunate minority. Given the relatively low level of preindustrial technics, enough surpluses can be produced to sustain a privileged class of rulers, perhaps even a substantial one under exceptionally favorable geographic and climatic
conditions. But these surpluses are not sufficient to free society as a whole from the pressures of want, material insecurity, and toil. If such limited surpluses were equitably divided among the multitudes who produce them, a social condition would emerge in which "want is made general," as Marx observed, "and with want the struggle for necessities and all the old shit would necessarily be reproduced." An egalitarian division of the surpluses would merely yield a society based on equality in poverty, an equality that would simply perpetuate the latent conditions for the restoration of class rule. Ultimately, the abolition of classes presupposes the "development of the productive forces," the advance of technology to a point where everyone can be free from the burdens of "want," material insecurity, and toil. As long as surpluses are merely marginal, social development occurs in a gray zone between a remote past in which productivity is too low to support classes and a distant future in which it is sufficiently high to abolish class rule.

Hence emerges the other side of humanity's drama: the negative side of its development, which conveys the real meaning of the "social problem" as used by Marxian theorists. Technical progress exacts a penalty for the benefits it ultimately confers on humanity. To resolve the problem of natural scarcity, the development of technics entails the reduction of humanity to a technical force. People become instruments of production, just like the tools and machines they create. They, in turn, are subject to the same forms of coordination, rationalization, and control that society tries to impose on nature and inanimate technical instruments. Labor is both the medium whereby humanity forges its own self-formation and the object of social manipulation. It involves not only the projection of human powers into free expression and selfhood but their repression by the performance principle of toil into obedience and self-renunciation. Self-repression and social repression form the indispensable counterpoint to personal emancipation and social emancipation.

For the present, it is important to ask if the problematic I have so summarily presented is quite as autonomous as earlier social theorists have claimed. Is it an inescapable drama — a dialectic that is woven into the human condition as the very substance of history? Does our "deseMBEDdedness" from nature, our "ascent to civilization," and our human fulfillment involve a penalty — the domination of human by human as a precondition for the domination of nature by humanity — that may well turn the "success" of this historic project into a grim mockery by yielding the dehumanization of humanity and the immolation of society?

In trying to answer these questions, we are again burdened by all the paradoxes created by hindsight. The drama that Victorian thought presents would seem irrefutable if we were to look backward from a history layered by stages in which the last stage imparts functions to the first such that every stage is a logical social descendant of previous ones. There is a certain wisdom in the view that the present enlarges the meaning of the past, which does not yet know itself fully in the light of its "destiny." But the notion of "destiny" must never be simplified to mean predestiny. History might well have followed different paths of development that could have yielded "destinies" quite different from those confronting us. And if so, it is important to ask what factors favored one constellation of possibilities over others. For the factors that have shaped our own history are deeply embedded in our sensibilities as the bad habits of the past — habits that we will have to cope with if we are to avoid the dark side of the future that lies before us.

Let us consider a factor that has played an important ideological role in shaping contemporary society: the "stinginess" of nature. Is it a given that nature is "stingy" and that labor is humanity's principal means of redemption from animality? In what ways are scarcity, abundance, and post-scarcity distinguishable from each other? Following the thrust of Victorian ideology, do
class societies emerge because enough technics, labor, and "manpower" exist so that society can plunder nature effectively and render exploitation possible, or even inevitable? Or do economic strata usurp the fruits of technics and labor, later to consolidate themselves into clearly definable ruling classes?

In asking these questions, I am deliberately reversing the way in which Victorian social theorists have typically oriented such inquiries. And I am asking not if the notion of dominating nature gave rise to the domination of human by human but rather if the domination of human by human gave rise to the notion of dominating nature. In short, did culture rather than technics, consciousness rather than labor, or hierarchies rather than classes either open or foreclose social possibilities that might have profoundly altered the present human condition with its diminishing prospects of human survival?

Our contemporary commitment to the "logic of history" in its typically economistic form has made it difficult to provide a serious and meaningful account of the explosive clashes between tradition and innovation that must have occurred throughout history. Instead of looking at the past from the standpoint of its origins, we have made both past and future captive to the same belief in economic and technical inexorability that we have imposed on the present. Hence we have been serving up the present as the history of the past — a typically economistic history that slights the need for far-reaching changes in lifestyle, wants, sexual status, definitions of freedom, and communal relations. Accordingly, the stance we take with respect to human social development has a relevance that goes beyond our consciousness of the past. Recast in a more open and intellectually unconstrained manner, it may well provide us with a vision that significantly alters our image of a liberated future.

How easily we can slip into a conventional historical stance can be seen from recent fervent controversies around the meaning given to the concept of scarcity. It has become rather fashionable to describe scarcity simply as a function of needs so that the fewer our needs and the smaller our tool-kit, the more "abundant," even "affluent," nature becomes. In its divine simplicity, this contention removes the need to strike a balance between humanity's obvious potentialities for producing a rich literary tradition, science, a sense of place, and a broad concept of shared humanity on the one side, and, on the other, the limits that an oral tradition, magic, a nomadic way of life, and a parochial sense of folkdom based on kinship place on these potentialities. Actually, by emphasizing material affluence per se in terms of needs and resources, this functional approach to scarcity subtly capitulates to the very economistic stance it is meant to correct. It merely recreates from a hunter-gatherer viewpoint a calculus of resources and wants that a bourgeois viewpoint imparted to social theory during the last century.

At the risk of an excursus, which may try the reader's patience, I would like to discuss the issue of scarcity in somewhat general terms and then return to my more concrete account of the emergence of hierarchy. Scarcity is not merely a functional phenomenon that can be described primarily in terms of needs or wants. Obviously, without a sufficiency in the means of life, life itself is impossible, and without a certain excess in these means, life is degraded to a cruel struggle for survival, irrespective of the level of needs. Leisure time, under these conditions, is not free time that fosters intellectual advances beyond the magical, artistic, and mythopoeic. To a large extent, the "time" of a community on the edge of survival is "suffering time." It is a time when hunger is the all-encompassing fear that persistently lives with the community, a time when the diminution of hunger is the community's constant preoccupation. Clearly, a balance must be struck between a sufficiency of the means of life, a relative freedom of time to fulfill

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one's abilities on the most advanced levels of human achievement, and ultimately, a degree of self-consciousness, complementarity, and reciprocity that can be called truly human in full recognition of humanity's potentialities. Not only the functional dictates of needs and wants but also a concept of human beings as more than "thinking animals" (to use Paul Shepard's expression) must be introduced to define what we mean by scarcity.

These distinctions raise a second and perhaps more complex problem: scarcity can not only impair human survival but also impede the actualization of human potentialities. Hence, scarcity can be defined in terms of its biological impact and also its cultural consequences. There is a point at which society begins to intervene in the formation of needs to produce a very special type of scarcity: a socially induced scarcity that expresses social contradictions. Such scarcity may occur even when technical development seems to render material scarcity completely unwarranted. Let me emphasize that I am not referring, here, to new or more exotic wants that social development may turn into needs. A society that has enlarged the cultural goals of human life may generate material scarcity even when the technical conditions exist for achieving out-right superfluity in the means of life.

The issue of scarcity is not merely a matter of quantity or even of kind; it can also be a socially contradictory hypostatization of need as such. Just as capitalism leads to production for the sake of production, so too it leads to consumption for the sake of consumption. The great bourgeois maxim, "grow or die," has its counterpart in "buy or die." And just as the production of commodities is no longer related to their function as use-values, as objects of real utility, so wants are no longer related to humanity's sense of its real needs. Both commodities and needs acquire a blind life of their own; they assume a fetishized form, an irrational dimension, that seems to determine the destiny of the people who produce and consume them. Marx's famous notion of the "fetishization of commodities" finds its parallel in a "fetishization of needs." Production and consumption, in effect, acquire suprahuman qualities that are no longer related to technical development and the subject's rational control of the conditions of existence. They are governed instead by an ubiquitous market, by a universal competition not only between commodities but also between the creation of needs — a competition that removes commodities and needs from rational cognition and personal control.[15]

Needs, in effect, become a force of production, not a subjective force. They become blind in the same sense that the production of commodities becomes blind. Orchestrated by forces that are external to the subject, they exist beyond its control like the production of the very commodities that are meant to satisfy them. This autonomy of needs, as we shall see, is developed at the expense of the autonomy of the subject. It reveals a fatal flaw in subjectivity itself, in the autonomy and spontaneity of the individual to control the conditions of his or her own life.

To break the grip of the "fetishization of needs," to dispel it, is to recover the freedom of choice, a project that is tied to the freedom of the self to choose. The words freedom and choice must be emphasized: they exist conjointly and are tied to the ideal of the autonomous individual who is possible only in a free society. Although a hunter-gatherer community may be free from the needs that beleaguer us, it must still answer to very strict material imperatives. Such freedom as it has is the product not of choice but of limited means of life. What makes it "free" are the very limitations of its tool-kit, not an expansive knowledge of the material world. In a truly free society, however, needs would be formed by consciousness and by choice, not simply by environment and tool-kits. The affluence of a free society would be transformed from a wealth of things into a wealth of culture and individual creativity. Hence, want would depend not only
on technological development but also on the cultural context in which it is formed. Nature’s "stinginess" and technology’s level of development would be important, but only as secondary factors in defining scarcity and need.

The problems of needs and scarcity, in short, must be seen as a problem of selectivity — of choice. A world in which needs compete with needs just as commodities compete with commodities is the warped realm of a fetishized, limitless world of consumption. This world of limitless needs has been developed by the immense armamentarium of advertising, the mass media, and the grotesque trivialization of daily life, with its steady disengagement of the individual from any authentic contact with history. Although choice presupposes a sufficiency in the means of life, it does not imply the existence of a mindless abundance of goods that smothers the individual’s capacity to select use-values rationally, to define his or her needs in terms of qualitative, ecological, humanistic, indeed, philosophical criteria. Rational choice presupposes not only a sufficiency in the means of life with minimal labor to acquire them; it presupposes above all a rational society.

Freedom from scarcity, or post-scarcity, must be seen in this light if it is to have any liberatory meaning. The concept presupposes that individuals have the material possibility of choosing what they need — not only a sufficiency of available goods from which to choose but a transformation of work, both qualitatively and quantitatively. But none of these achievements is adequate to the idea of post-scarcity if the individual does not have the autonomy, moral insight, and wisdom to choose rationally. Consumerism and mere abundance are mindless. Choice is vitiated by the association of needs with consumption for the sake of consumption — with the use of advertising and the mass media to render the acquisition of good an imperative — to make "need" into "necessity" devoid of rational judgment. What is ultimately at stake for the individual whose needs are rational is the achievement of an autonomous personality and selfhood. Just as work, to use Marx’s concepts, defines the subject’s identity and provides it with a sense of the ability to transform or alter reality, so needs too define the subject’s rationality and provide it with a capacity to transform and alter the nature of the goods produced by work. In both cases, the subject is obliged to form judgments that reflect the extent to which it is rational or irrational, free and autonomous or under the sway of forces beyond its control. Post-scarcity presupposes the former; consumerism, the latter. If the object of capitalism or socialism is to increase needs, the object of anarchism is to increase choice. However much the consumer is deluded into the belief that he or she is choosing freely, the consumer is heteronomous and under the sway of a contrived necessity; the free subject, by contrast, is autonomous and spontaneously fulfills his or her rationally conceived wants.

In summary, it is not in the diminution or expansion of needs that the true history of needs is written. Rather, it is in the selection of needs as a function of the free and spontaneous development of the subject that needs become qualitative and rational. Needs are inseparable from the subjectivity of the “needer” and the context in which his or her personality is formed. The autonomy that is given to use-values in the formation of needs leaves out the personal quality, human powers, and intellectual coherence of their user. It is not industrial productivity that creates mutilated use-values but social irrationality that creates mutilated users.

Scarcity does not mean the same thing when applied to a "savage," peasant, slave, serf, artisan, or proletarian, any more than it means the same thing when it is applied to a chieftain, lord, master, noble, guild-master, or merchant. The material needs of a "savage," peasant, slave, serf, artisan, and proletarian are not so decisively different from each other, but the most important differences that do arise derive from the fact that their individual definitions of scarcity have
changed significantly as a result of differences between need structures. Often, the needs of these oppressed classes are generated by their ruling-class counterparts. The history of white bread in the anthropology of needs, for example, is a metaphor for the extent to which tastes associated with gentility — not with physical well-being and survival — are turned into the needs of the lowly as compellingly, in the fetishism of needs, as the very means of survival. Similarly, the ascetic rejection by the lowly of their rulers' needs has functioned as a compensating role in imparting to the oppressed a lofty sense of moral and cultural superiority over their betters. In both cases, the fetishism of needs has impeded humanity in using its technics rationally and selecting its needs consciously.

Our own skewed concepts of scarcity and needs are even more compelling evidence of this fetishism. Until comparatively recent times, needs retained some degree of contact with material reality and were tempered by some degree of rationality. For all the cultural differences that surrounded the concept of scarcity and needs in the past, their fetishization was almost minimal by comparison with our own times. But with the emergence of a complete market society, the ideal of both limitless production and limitless needs became thoroughly mystified — no less by socialist ideologues than by their bourgeois counterparts. The restraints that Greek social theorists like Aristotle tried to place on the market, however much they were honored in the breach, were completely removed, and objects or use-values began to infiltrate the lofty human goals that society had elaborated from the days of their conception in the polis. The ideals of the past, in effect, had become so thoroughly bewitched by things that they were soon to become things rather than ideals. Honor, today, is more important as a credit rating than a sense of moral probity; personality is the sum of one's possessions and holdings rather than a sense of self-awareness and self-cultivation. One can continue this list of contrasts indefinitely.

Having demolished all the ethical and moral limits that once kept it in hand, market society in turn has demolished almost every historic relationship between nature, technics, and material well-being. No longer is nature's "stinginess" a factor in explaining scarcity, nor is scarcity conceived as a function of technical development that explains the creation or satisfaction of needs. Both the culture and the technics of modern capitalism have united to produce crises not of scarcity but of abundance or, at least, the expectation of abundance, all chit-chat about "diminishing resources" aside. Western society may accept the reality of economic crises, inflation, and unemployment, and popular credulity has not rejected the myth of a "stingy" nature that is running out of raw materials and energy resources. Abundance, all the more because it is being denied for structural economic reasons rather than natural ones, still orchestrates the popular culture of present-day society. To mix solid Victorian metaphors with contemporary ones: if "savages" had to perform heroic technical feats to extricate themselves from the "claw-and-fang" world of the jungle and arrive at a sense of their humanity, then modern consumers of market society will have to perform equally heroic ethical feats to extricate themselves from the shopping malls and recover their own sense of humanity.

To "disembodied" themselves from the shopping mall, they may require more powerful agents than ethics. They may well require a superfluity of goods so immense in quantity that the prevailing fetishism of needs will have to be dispelled on its own terms. Hence, the ethical limits that were so redolent with meaning from Hellenic times onward may be inadequate today. We have arrived at a point in history's account of need where the very capacity to select needs, which freedom from material scarcity was expected to create, has been subverted by a strictly appetitive sensibility. Society may well have to be overindulged to recover its capacity for selectivity.
lecture society about its “insatiable” appetites, as our resource-conscious environmentalists are wont to do, is precisely what the modern consumer is not prepared to hear. And to impoverish society with contrived shortages, economic dislocations, and material deprivation is certain to shift the mystification of needs over to a more sinister social ethos, the mystification of scarcity. This ethos — already crystallized into the “life-boat ethic,” “triage,” and a new bourgeois imagery of “claw-and-fang” called survivalism — marks the first steps toward ecofascism.

If terms like scarcity and need are so conditional, once humanity is assured survival and material well-being, why did history betray the rich humanistic ideals it was to create so often in the past — especially when an equitable distribution of resources could have made them achievable? At the threshold of history, as a reading of the ancient texts indicates, an inertial tendency developed in which the attainment of the few to a high estate was inextricably identified with the debasement of the many to a low estate. The bas reliefs of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and later the writings of Plato and Aristotle, leave no doubt that the precondition for the emergence of tribal “big men” involved not only material sufficiency but cultural inferiority. Power, personality, and social immortality are entangled completely with powerlessness, depersonalization, and often genocide. “Big” and “small” have never been differences in size, socially speaking, but differences in contrast, just like “needs” and “luxuries” or “scarcity” and “security.” Even to a mind as perceptive as Aristotle’s, the greatness of the Hellenes was nature’s compensation for the deficiencies of the barbarians. This notion, so compelling in all the relationships between ruler and ruled, often favors display over personal wealth, generosity over acquisition, hardiness over comfort, and self-denial over luxury. It is the former traits, rather than the latter, that elevate the “well-born” over the “ill-born.” Much that passes for luxury in the precapitalist world was a lavish exhibition of power rather than pleasure. Repression has commonly been the affirmation of authority, not merely of exploitation, and we often misinterpret history when we suppose that the knout has been applied solely to extract labor rather than obedience. Indeed, the ruling classes of the past have dealt with the ruled as children, not merely as toilers — a fit that has its template as much in patriarchy as it does in technics.

But how did these hierarchical values crystallize out of the egalitarian communities I have described up to now? What social substance gave them reality long before classes and states emerged to give them almost unchallenged power? To ignore the increases in productivity and population of the early Neolithic would be as simplistic as to make them the all-important factor that changed early society’s complementary values into later society’s egocentric ones. Growing surpluses and “manpower” are much too weighty a fact to be ignored in explaining humanity’s movement into history.

But here, too, we encounter a paradox that reverses the conventional interpretation: surpluses in goods and labor are given in producing “civilization.” The Neolithic villagers were more a species of homo collectivicus than the homo economicus we are today. Their social outlook was shaped by the habits of usufruct and the norms of the irreducible minimum, not by appetites of acquisition and rivalry. Cast into the avaricious and atomized world of capitalism, they would be horrified by the impersonal relationships and grasping egotism of bourgeois society. Thus, the psychological, institutional, and cultural problems these villagers faced in dealing with their new surpluses must have been formidable. How could they dispose of them without transgressing the community’s norms of usufruct, complementarity and the irreducible minimum? How could they preserve the harmony and unity of the community in the face of new possibilities for differentials of wealth?
To answer these questions in terms of today's social standards would have been impossible, for these standards had yet to be devised. Many other standards, often totally at odds with our own, were adopted — most notably, disaccumulation rather than accumulation, of which the potlatch ceremonies of the Northwest Coast Indians are an extreme example. Even if we look beyond tribal life to more politically organized societies, we witness an orgy of mortuary construction and the rearing of lavish public buildings of which Egypt's pyramids and Mesopotamia's ziggurats are extreme examples of another kind. Conventional theories based on class analyses to the contrary notwithstanding, rulership rested less on proprietorship, personal possessions, wealth, and acquisition — in short, the objects that confer power — than it did on the symbolic weight of status, communal representation, religious authority, and the disaccumulation of goods that the Neolithic village had hallowed.

Hence, the moral premises of the early Neolithic village were never totally discarded until millennia later, with the emergence of capitalism. They were manipulated, modified, and often grotesquely distorted. But they persisted like an incubus within society as the memory of a "golden age." It is difficult to understand how notions of scarcity, emerging surpluses, technical advances, and authoritarian values could have contributed to the formation of classes and the State in the face of the distributive problems surpluses created for these egalitarian societies. The resistance of the Neolithic village to social forms like class, private property, acquisitiveness, and even patriarchy may well have exceeded the difficulties that "free market" capitalism encountered in removing the resistance of English agrarian society to a market economy (to borrow from Karl Polanyi's account). Just as we must look within the medieval world to find the germinal bourgeois spirit that eventually dissolved the manor and guilds of feudal society, so we must look within the primordial community to find the early embryonic structures that transformed organic society into class society. These structures must be regarded as more fundamental than classes. They were hierarchies rooted in age, sex, and quasi-religious and quasi-political needs that created the power and the material relationships from which classes were formed. Given organic society's emphasis on usufruct, complementarity, and the irreducible minimum, it is difficult to believe that class rule, private property, and the State could have emerged, fully accoutred and omnipresent, largely because surpluses rendered their existence possible.

Organic societies, even the most egalitarian, are not homogeneous social groups. Each member of the community is defined by certain everyday roles based on sex, age, and ancestral lineage. In early organic societies, these roles do not seem to have been structured along hierarchical lines, nor do they seem to have involved the domination of human by human. Generally, they simply define the individual's responsibilities to the community: the raw materials, as it were, for a functional status in the complex nexus of human relationships. Lineage determines who can or cannot marry whom, and families related by marriage are often as obligated to help each other as are kin directly related by blood ties. Age confers the prestige of experience and wisdom. Finally, sexual differences define the community's basic division of labor.

Even before material surpluses began to increase significantly, the roles each individual played began to change from egalitarian relationships into elites based increasingly on systems of obedience and command. To make this assertion raises a number of very provocative questions. Who were these emerging elites? What was the basis of their privileges in early society? How did they rework organic society's forms of community status — forms based on usufruct, a domestic economy, reciprocity, and egalitarianism — into what were later to become class and exploitative
societies? These questions are not academic: they deal with emotionally charged notions that still lurk to this very day in the unconscious apparatus of humanity, notably the influence of biological facts, such as sex, age, and ancestry on social relationships. Unless these notions are carefully examined and the truths separated from the untruths, we are likely to carry an archaic legacy of domination into whatever social future awaits us.

Of the three roles cited, the sex-linked and age-linked are the most important and somewhat intertwined in the development of the hierarchies that preceded social classes and economic exploitation. For the purposes of clarity, however, we must explore these roles separately. To argue over whether the socialization of individuals into sex-related roles is based on biological facts would be to belabor the obvious; the physical differences between men and women clearly produce different sex-related capacities, at least in materially undeveloped societies. But the nature of these capacities and the extent to which they are reflected by the status of women in preliterate communities are issues that have been so highly colored by cultural biases that rarely are they adequately examined in the anthropological literature. Melville Jacobs rightly warns us that:

Anthropologists of Euro-American origins face a problem of examining their projections of ideas and feelings about women’s status into another sociocultural system. To put it badly, judgments by anthropologists about the status of the feminine sex, when the provenience of such scientists is in western civilization whose women occupied a low status throughout the Christian era, are at once suspect if they have not obtained word-for-word native comments and then closely analyzed both them and overt behavior. And this is not a kind of research which can be completed in a day or two.

Such research has yet to be completed for most cultures, despite generations of sharp dispute in modern anthropology.

The fact is that male biases toward women almost consistently color what little research has been done on this touchy subject. Even though they may deny it, men (including the older generation of anthropologists) tend to believe that women are physically "weak" and that they inherently depend on men for their material survival in nature. In more imaginative moments, they regard women as emotionally "fragile" and innately lacking a capacity for "abstract thought."[16]

These notions find no support from disinterested research. Although women are normally physically weaker and shorter than men of the same ethnic background, the word weaker, here, is a relative term: it is relative to the muscular differences between women and men, not to the survival tasks that are imposed on humanity by the natural world. Male prejudice notwithstanding, women who have engaged in arduous work for most of their lives can match men in most physically demanding tasks, as many anthropological accounts of preliterate communities unwittingly reveal. They can certainly learn to hunt as well as men, given the opportunity to do so; normally, in fact, they catch whatever small animals they can find as part of their food-gathering activities. In many cultures, women not only collect the community’s plant food, but they also do most of the fishing. If the family’s shelter is a small one, it is usually they who build it, not the men. Women show as much endurance as men on long marches, and they commonly carry the same or heavier burdens.[17]

Where women haven’t been conditioned into abject passivity, their emotional fortitude and mature behavior often make the men seem like spoiled children. As to their capacity for "abstract thought," women probably contributed a sizable number of religious formulators — the true "generalizers" in preliterate communities — to the prehistory of humanity, as the wide prevalence of Celtic and Nordic shamanesses and prophetesses attests. Nor should we forget, here, that the
oracular messages at Delphi, on which the leading men of ancient Greece counted for guidance, were delivered by priestesses. If it was priests who interpreted these cryptic messages to suppliants, this may well have been a patriarchal modification of a more archaic practice, when female prophetesses and chthonic "matriarchal" goddesses occupied a preeminent religious position in organic society.

So much for the "innate" limitations that men so often attribute to women. As for their early status, a careful survey of food-gathering and hunting communities reveals that women enjoyed a higher degree of parity with men than we have been commonly led to believe. Both sexes occupy a distinctly sovereign role in their respective spheres, and their roles are much too complementary economically to make the domination of women by men the comfortable social norm that biased white observers served up generations ago to allay the guilt-feelings of Victorian patriarchs. In daily life, women withdraw into a sorority based on their domestic and food-gathering activities and men into a fraternity of hunters. There, both sexes are completely autonomous.

The sharply etched distinctions between "home" and the "world" that exist in modern society do not exist in organic communities. There, home and world are so closely wedded that a man, shut out from a family, is literally a non-social being — a being who is nowhere. Although the male tends, even in many egalitarian communities, to view himself as the "head" of the family, his stance is largely temperamental and accords him no special or domestic power. It is simply a form of boastfulness, for the hard facts of life vitiate his pretenses daily. Woman's food-gathering activities usually provide most of the family's food. She not only collects the food, but prepares it, makes the family's clothing, and produces its containers, such as baskets and coiled pottery. She is more in contact with the young than the male and takes a more "commanding" role in their development. If her husband is too overbearing, she can unceremoniously put him out of the hut or simply return to her own family where she and her children are certain of being provided for no matter what her family thinks of her decision. As she ages, her experience becomes a revered source of wisdom; she becomes a "matriarch" in many cases, the head of the family in fact, if not in form.

What women in preliterate communities distinctly do lack is the male's mobility. The human child's protracted development and dependency — a long period of mental plasticity that is vitally necessary for elaborating a cultural continuum — restricts the mother's capacity to move about freely. The primal division of labor that assigned hunting tasks to the male and domestic tasks to the female is based on a hard biological reality: A woman, coupled to a noisy infant, can scarcely be expected to practice the stealth and athleticism needed to hunt large animals. By its very nature, the mother-child relationship limits her to comparatively sedentary lifeways. Moreover, if woman is not weak in terms of her capacity to do hard work, she is certainly the "weaker sex" when pitted against armed, possibly hostile men from an alien community. Women need their men not only as hunters but also as guardians of the family and the group. Men become the community's guardians not by virtue of usurpation, but because they are better equipped musculously in a materially undeveloped culture to defend their community against hostile marauders.[18]

Without saying as much, Elizabeth Marshall Thomas recounts an episode that sums up this hard reality in a striking fashion. As she and her party approached a suspicious group of Bushmen, the band "drew back and together, the women behind the men, babies in their arms, and watched us hostilely." This is a very primeval tableau. It must have occurred countless times over the ages — the women, with babies in their arms behind the men, their protectors. And it is also a very revealing tableau, latent with major implications for the future development of the early
group. For not only hunting, but also defense and later war are part of the male's division of labor. Insofar as these responsibilities require the conscious administrative coordination of people and resources, they are not merely hard biological facts of life; instead, they are uniquely social facts, or what we, in the modern world, are likely to call political.

As bands began to increase in size and number, and they began to differentiate into clans, tribes, tribal federations and make war on each other, an ever larger social space emerged that was increasingly occupied by men. Men tended to become the clan heads or tribal chiefs and fill the councils of tribal federations. For all of this was "men's work," like hunting and herding animals. They had the mobility and physical prowess to defend their own communities, attack hostile communities, and thereby administer an extrabiological, distinctly social sphere of life.

In communities where matrilineal descent carried considerable cultural weight and woman's horticultural activities formed the basis of economic life, she assumed social roles very similar in form to those of the man's. Usually, she occupied these roles on the clan level, rarely on the tribal one. Moreover, she almost invariably shared her social role with males. In a matricentric society, these males were her brothers, not her husband. What woman's social eminence in matricentric communities reveals, however, is that the male's rising position in social affairs results not from any conscious degradation of woman to a domestic "unworldly" sphere. To the contrary, what it clearly shows is that, in the beginning at least, the male did not have to "usurp" power from the female; indeed, social "power" as such did not exist and had yet to be created. The social sphere and the man's position in it emerged naturally. The primordial balance that assigned complementary economic functions to both sexes on the basis of parity slowly tipped toward the male, favoring his social preeminence.

But here I must introduce a discordant note. Even as the scale tipped slowly toward the male, his increasing preeminence began to alter the temperament of the primeval group. The social sphere emerged not only as an elaboration of the role in the division of labor; it also tended to assimilate his temperament as a hunter, a guardian, and eventually as a warrior. Doubtless, the new development toward a male-oriented culture occurred very slowly and with many lapses, generally modified by the shifting economic roles of the sexes in the course of social development. In largely food-gathering societies, the community seems to be essentially matricentric in culture and temperament; so, too, in early horticultural societies. On the other hand, in predominantly hunting and pastoral societies, a patricentric culture and temperament seems to predominate. Yet, on this obscure shifting ground of prehistory, one senses a slow crystallization of social norms and moods along male-oriented lines, even before elaborate hierarchies and economic exploitation emerge. With the rise of cities, the biological matrix of social life is almost completely shattered. Kinship ties are replaced by civic ties; the natural environment by a man-made environment; the domestic sphere by a political sphere. Not only patricentricity but patriarchy, for which there is no female analogue in organic communities, come into their own completely.[19]

But this development occurs much later. For the present let us examine the differences in temperament between the two sexes and determine if the shift from a matricentric to a patricentric outlook introduced the elements of domination into preliterate societies.

The male, in a hunting community, is a specialist in violence. From the earliest days of his childhood, he identifies with such "masculine" traits as courage, strength, self-assertiveness, decisiveness and athleticism — traits necessary for the welfare of the community. The community, in turn, will prize the male for these traits and foster them in him. If he becomes a good hunter, he will be highly regarded by everyone: by envious men and admiring women, by respectful chil-
Children and emulative youths. In a society preoccupied with the problem of survival and obliged to share its resources, a good hunter is an asset to all.

Similarly, the female is a specialist in child rearing and food-gathering. Her responsibilities focus on nurture and sustenance. From childhood she will be taught to identify with such "feminine" traits as caring and tenderness, and she will be trained in comparatively sedentary occupations. The community, in turn, will prize her for these traits and foster them in her. If she cultivates these traits, she will be highly regarded for her sense of responsibility to her family, her skill and artfulness. In a matricentric society, these traits will be elevated into social norms that could well be described as the temperament of the community. We find this temperament today in many American Indian and Asian villages that practice horticulture, even if the kinship system is patrilineal. Similarly, in a patricentric society, "masculine" traits will be elevated into the norms of a community temperament, although they rarely coexist with matrilineal systems of kinship.

There is no intrinsic reason why a patricentric community, merely because it has a "masculine" temperament, must be hierarchical or reduce women to a subjugated position. The economic roles of the two sexes are still complementary; without the support that each sex gives to the other, the community will disintegrate. Moreover, both sexes still enjoy complete autonomy in their respective spheres. In projecting our own social attitudes into preliterate society, we often fail to realize how far removed a primordial domestic community is from a modern political society. Later, in a review of early mythology, I shall show that the concept of power is still highly amorphous and undifferentiated in the primordial world. As long as the growing civil sphere is a pragmatic extension of the male's role in the division of labor, it is merely that and no more. Even while the civil sphere is expanding, it is still rooted in domestic life and, in this sense, enveloped by it; hence, the numinous power that surrounds woman in the most patricentric of primordial societies.

Only when social life itself undergoes hierarchical differentiation and emerges as a separate terrain to be organized on its own terms do we find a conflict between the domestic and civil spheres — one that extends hierarchy into domestic life and results not only in the subjugation of woman, but in her degradation. Then, the distinctively "feminine" traits, which primordial society prizes as a high survival asset, sink to the level of social subordination. The woman's nurturing capacities are degraded to renunciation; her tenderness to obedience. Man's "masculine" traits are also transformed. His courage turns into aggressiveness; his strength is used to dominate; his self-assertiveness is transformed into egotism; his decisiveness into repressive reason. His athleticism is directed increasingly to the arts of war and plunder.

Until these transformations occur, however, it is important to know the raw materials from which hierarchical society will raise its moral and social edifice. The violation of organic society is latent within organic society itself. The primal unity of the early community, both internally and with nature, is weakened merely by the elaboration of the community's social life — its ecological differentiation. Yet, the growing civil space occupied by the male is still enveloped in a natural matrix of blood-ties, family affinities, and work responsibilities based on a sexual division of labor. Not until distinctively social interests emerge that clash directly with this natural matrix and turn the weaknesses, perhaps the growing tensions, of organic society into outright fractures, will the unity between human and human, and between humanity and nature, finally be broken. Then power will emerge, not simply as a social fact, with all its differentiations, but as a concept — and so will the concept of freedom.
To find what is perhaps the one primary group that, more than any other in preliterate communities, transects kinship lines and the division of labor — that in its own right forms the point of departure for a separate social interest as distinguished from the complementary relations that unite the community into a whole — we must turn to the age group, particularly to the community's elders. To be born, to be young, to mature, and finally to grow old and die is a natural fact — as much as it is to be a woman, a man, or belong to a blood-lineage group. But the older one becomes, the more one acquires distinct interests that are not "natural." These interests are uniquely social. The later years of life are a period of diminishing physical powers; the declining years, a period of outright dependency. The aging and the aged develop interests that are tied neither to their sexual roles nor to their lineage. They depend for their survival ultimately on the fact that the community is social in the fullest sense of the term; that it will provide for them not because they participate in the process of production and reproduction, but because of the institutional roles they can create for themselves in the social realm.

The sexes complement each other economically; the old and the young do not. In preliterate communities, the old are vital repositories of knowledge and wisdom, but this very function merely underscores the fact that their capacities belong largely to the cultural and social sphere. Hence, even more than the boasting self-assertive male who may be slowly gaining a sense of social power, the aging and the aged tend to be socially conscious as such — as a matter of survival. They share a common interest independent of their sex and lineage. They have the most to gain by the institutionalization of society and the emergence of hierarchy, for it is within this realm and as a result of this process that they can retain powers that are denied to them by physical weakness and infirmity. Their need for social power, and for hierarchical social power at that, is a function of their loss of biological power. The social sphere is the only realm in which this power can be created and, concomitantly, the only sphere that can cushion their vulnerability to natural forces. Thus, they are the architects par excellence of social life, of social power, and of its institutionalization along hierarchical lines.

The old can also perform many functions that relieve young adults of certain responsibilities. Old women can care for the children and undertake sedentary productive tasks that would otherwise be performed by their daughters. Similarly, old men can make weapons and teach their sons and grandsons to use them more effectively. But these tasks, while they lighten the burdens of the young, do not make the old indispensable to the community. And in a world that is often harsh and insecure, a world ruled by natural necessity, the old are the most dispensable members of the community. Under conditions where food may be in short supply and the life of the community occasionally endangered, they are the first to be disposed of. The anthropological literature is replete with examples in which the old are killed or expelled during periods of hunger, a practice that changes from the episodic into the customary in the case of communities that normally leave their aged members behind to perish whenever the group breaks camp and moves to a different locale.

Thus, the lives of the old are always clouded by a sense of insecurity. This sense is incremental to the insecurity that people of all ages may feel in materially undeveloped communities. The ambiguity that permeates the outlook of the primordial world toward nature — a shifting outlook that mixes reverence or ecological adaptation with fear — is accented among the aged with a measure of hatred, for insofar as fear is concerned they have more to fear from nature's vicissitudes than do the young. The nascent ambiguities of the aged toward nature later give rise to Western "civilization's" mode of repressive reason. This exploitative rationality pits civil society against
domestic society and launches social elites on a quest for domination that, in a later historical context, transforms insecurity into egotism, acquisitiveness, and a craze for rule — in short, the social principle graduated by its own inner dialectic into the asocial principle. Here, too, are the seeds for the hatred of eros and the body, a hatred, in turn, that forms the archetypal matrix for willful aggression and the Thanatic death wish.

Initially, the medium by which the old create a modicum of power for themselves is through their control of the socialization process. Fathers teach their sons the arts of getting food; mothers, their daughters. The adults, in turn, consult their parents on virtually every detail of life, from the workaday pragmatic to the ritual. In a preliterate community, the most comprehensive compendium of knowledge is inscribed on the brains of the elders. However much this knowledge is proffered with concern and love, it is not always completely disinterested; it is often permeated, even if unconsciously, by a certain amount of cunning and self-interest. Not only is the young mind shaped by the adults, as must necessarily be the case in all societies, but it is shaped to respect the wisdom of the adults, if not their authority. The harsh initiation ceremonies that many preliterate communities inflict on adolescent boys may well have the purpose of using pain to "brand" the elders' wisdom on young minds, as a number of anthropologists contend; but I would also suggest that it "brands" a sense of their authority as well. The aged, who abhor natural necessity, become the embodiment of social necessity: the dumb "cruelty" that the natural world inflicts on them is transmitted by social catalysis into the conscious cruelty they inflict on the young. Nature begins to take her revenge on the earliest attempts of primordial society to control her. But this is nature internalized, the nature in humanity itself. The attempt to dominate external nature will come later, when humanity is conceptually equipped to transfer its social antagonisms to the natural world outside. By drinking at the magic fountain of wisdom, however, the educators are educated into the temperament of repressive rationality. The toll demanded by nature in the Norse cosmography is already being claimed: the wounded eye of Odin begins to lose its vision.

In fairness to primordial society, we must note that hierarchy founded merely on age is not institutionalized hierarchy. Rather, it is hierarchy in its most nascent form: hierarchy embedded in the matrix of equality. For age is the fate of everyone who does not die prematurely. To the extent that privileges accrue to the elders, everyone in the community is heir to them. Inasmuch as these privileges vary with the fortunes of the community, they are still too tenuous to be regarded as more than compensations for the infirmities that elders must suffer with the aging process. The primordial balance that accords parity to all members of the community, women as well as men, is thereby perpetuated in the privileges accorded to the old. In this sense they cannot be regarded simply as privileges.

What is problematical in the future development of hierarchy is how the elders tried to institutionalize their privileges and what they finally achieved. Radin, in a perceptive if overly ruthless discussion of age-linked hierarchy, notes that the elders in food-gathering communities "almost always functioned as medicine-men of some kind or another," and, with the development of clan-agricultural societies, acquired their "main strength" from the "rituals and ritualistic societies which they largely controlled." Social power begins to crystallize as the fetishization of magical power over certain forces of nature. In trying to deal with this dialectical twist, we must refocus our perspective to include an entirely unique mode of social sensibility and experience, one that is strikingly modern: the sensibility and experience of the elder cum shaman.
The shaman is a strategic figure in any discussion of social hierarchy because he (and, at times, she, although males predominate in time) solidifies the privileges of the elders — a general stratum in the primordial community — into the particularized privileges of a special segment of that stratum. He professionalizes power. He makes power the privilege of an elect few, a group that only carefully chosen apprentices can hope to enter, not the community as a whole. His vatic personality essentially expresses the insecurity of the individual on the scale of a social neurosis. If the male hunter is a specialist in violence, and the woman food-gatherer a specialist in nurture, the shaman is a specialist in fear. As magician and divinator combined in one, he mediates between the suprahuman power of the environment and the fears of the community. Weston La Barre observes that in contrast to the priest, who "implores the Omnipotent," the shaman is "psychologically and socially the more primitive of the two . . . . External powers invade and leave his body with practiced ease, so feeble are his ego boundaries and so false his fantasies." Perhaps more significant than this distinction is the fact that the shaman is the incipient State personified. As distinguished from other members of the primordial community, who participate coequally in the affairs of social life, the shaman and his associates are professionals in political manipulation. They tend to subvert the innocence and amateurism that distinguishes domestic society from political society. Shamans "banded informally [together] even in the simplest food-gathering civilizations," notes Radin. "As soon as the clan political patterns emerged we find them formally united together, either in one group or separately." Bluntly stated, the shamanistic groups to which Radin alludes were incipient political institutions.

Their political role is given greater emphasis by Weston La Barre in his massive study of shamanism and crisis cults:

Every cultist ingroup is incipiently an autonomous entity, a closed society, a political unit, and therefore every Church is a potential State. Overemphasized in explaining crisis cults, the political has been curiously neglected in most studies of shamanism. Both North American and Siberian shamans . . . were often leaders as well as protectors of their groups; and South American shaman-messiahs commonly combined political and magical power over men and cosmos alike. Paul Roux has studied the power equally over the elements and political events among the shamans of Genghis Khan; and Rene de Nebesky-Wojkowitz has shown that the state oracle or ceremonial divination in Tibet is a prophetic trance of distinctly shamanistic character. The ancient Chinese wu were political shamans too. Clearly the Asiatic and American shaman has the same traditional roots, and his intrinsic political aspect reappears strikingly in the messianic ghost dance prophets of North America and in the god-kings and shaman-chiefs of South America, Amazonian and Andean alike.

For several pages thereafter, La Barre adduces data of a similar character for almost every area of the world and nearly every early civilization, including the Greco-Roman.

But the shaman’s position in primordial society is notoriously insecure. Often highly remunerated for his magical services, he might be as vindictively attacked, perhaps assassinated outright, if his techniques fail. Thus, he must always seek alliances and, more significantly, foster the creation of mutually advantageous power centers for his protection from the community at large. As a quasi-religious formulator, a primitive cosmologist, he literally creates the ideological mythos that crystallizes incipient power into actual power. He may do this in concert with the elders, enhancing their authority over the young, or with the younger but more prominent warriors, who
tend to form military societies of their own. From them, in turn, he receives the support he so
direly needs to cushion the ill-effects that follow from his fallibility. That he may compete with
these powers and attempt to usurp their authority is irrelevant at this period of development. The
point is that the shaman is the demiurge of political institutions and coalitions. He not only vali-
dates the authority of the elders with a magico-political aura but, in his need for political power,
he tends to heighten the “masculine” temperament of a patricentric community. He exaggerates
the aggressive and violent elements of that temperament, feeding it with mystical sustenance
and supernatural power.

Domination, hierarchy, and the subordination of woman to man now begin to emerge. But
it is difficult to delineate in this development the emergence of organized economic classes and
the systematic exploitation of a dominated social stratum. The young, to be sure, are placed
under the rule of a clan or tribal gerontocracy; the elders, shamans, and warrior chiefs, in turn,
acquire distinct social privileges. But so ingrained in society are the primordial rules of usufruct,
complementarity and the irreducible minimum that the economy of this early world proves to
be surprisingly impervious to these sociopolitical changes. "The majority of aboriginal tribes," 
observer Radin, "possessed no grouping of individuals based on true class distinctions." He adds
that "Slaves not a few of them had, but, while their lives were insecure because they had no
status, they were never systematically forced to do menial work or regarded as an inferior and
degraded class in our sense of the term." Men of wealth there were, too, in time, but as Manning
Nash observes, "in primitive and peasant economies leveling mechanisms play a crucial role
in inhibiting aggrandizement by individuals or by special groups." These leveling mechanisms
assume a variety of forms:

forced loans to relatives or co-residents; a large feast following economic success; a rivalry of
expenditures like the potlatch of the Northwest Coast Indians in which large amounts of valu-
able goods were destroyed; the ritual levies consequent on holding office in civil and religious
hierarchies in Meso-America; or the giveaways of horses and goods of the Plains Indians. Most
small-scale economies have a way of scrambling wealth to inhibit reinvestment in technical ad-
advance, and this prevents crystallization of class lines on an economic base.

In fact, independent wealth, the most precious of personal goals in bourgeois society, tends to
be highly suspect in preliterate societies. Often, it is taken as evidence that the wealthy individual
is a sorcerer who has acquired his riches by a sinister compact with demonic powers. Wealth so
acquired is "treasure," bewitched power concretized, the stuff from which mythology weaves its
Faustian legends. The very "independence" of this wealth — its freedom from direct social control
— implies a breach with the most basic of all primordial rules: the mutual obligations imposed by
blood ties. The prevalence of the lineage system, as distinguished from "civilization's" territorial
system, implies that, even if hierarchy and differentials in status exist, the community consists of
kin; its wealth, as Patrick Malloy observes, must be "used to reinforce or expand social relations,"
not weaken or constrict them. Wealth can be acquired only within the parameters of the lineage
system, and it effectively filters down to the community through the workings of the "leveling
system." As Malloy astutely observes: the "richest man" in the community will frequently "be the
worst off because he has given all of his material wealth away." He has definite obligations "to
provide gifts when requested, take care of bride-wealth, and other important functions critical
to the survival of the community."

Thus, nature still binds society to herself with the primal blood oath. This oath validates not
only kinship as the basic fact of primordial social life, but its complex network of rights and duties.
Before hierarchy and domination can be consolidated into social classes and economic exploitation; before reciprocity can give way to the "free exchange" of commodities; before usufruct can be replaced by private property, and the "irreducible minimum" by toil as the norm for distributing the means of life — before this immensely vast complex can be dissolved and replaced by a class, exchange, and propertied one, the blood oath with all its claims must be broken.

Hierarchy and domination remain captive to the blood oath until an entirely new social terrain can be established to support class relations and the systematic exploitation of human by human. We must fix this preclass, indeed, preeconomic, period in social development clearly in our minds because the vast ideological corpus of "modernity" — capitalism, particularly in its western form — has been designed in large part to veil it from our vision. Even such notions as primitive communism, matriarchy, and social equality, so widely celebrated by radical anthropologists and theorists, play a mystifying role in perpetuating this veil instead of removing it. Lurking within the notion of primitive communism is the insidious concept of a "stingy nature," of a "natural scarcity" that dictates communal relations — as though a communal sharing of things is exogenous to humanity and must be imposed by survival needs to overcome an "innate" human egoism that "modernity" so often identifies with "selfhood." Primitive communism also contains the concept of property, however "communal" in character, that identifies selfhood with ownership. Usufruct, as the transgression of proprietary claims in any form, is concealed by property as a public institution. Indeed, "communal property" is not so far removed conceptually and institutionally from "public property," "nationalized property," or "collectivized property" that the incubus of proprietorship can be said to be removed completely from sensibility and practices of a "communist" society. Finally, "matriarchy" the rule of society by women instead of men, merely alters the nature of rule; it does not lead to its abolition. "Matriarchy" merely changes the gender of domination and thereby perpetuates domination as such.

"Natural scarcity," "property," and "rule" thus persist in the very name of the critique of class society, exploitation, private property, and the acquisition of wealth. By veiling the primordial blood oath that constrains the development of hierarchy and domination into class society, economic exploitation, and property, the class critique merely replaces the constraints of kinship with the constraints of economics instead of transcending both to a higher realm of freedom. It reconstitutes bourgeois right by leaving property unchallenged by usufruct, rule unchallenged by nonhierarchical relationships, and scarcity unchallenged by an abundance from which an ethical selectivity of needs can be derived. The more critical substrate of usufruct, reciprocity, and the irreducible minimum is papered over by a less fundamental critique: the critique of private property, of injustice in the distribution of the means of life, and of an unfair return for labor. Marx's own critique of justice in his remarks on the Gotha Program remains one of the most important contributions he made to radical social theory, but its economistic limitations are evident in the tenor of the work as a whole.

These limitations acquire an almost stark character in the European centricity of his sense of history, particularly as revealed in his emphasis on the "progressive role of capitalism" and his harsh metaphors for the noncapitalist world. Is it true, as Marx emphasized, that "human progress," after mastering "the results of the bourgeois epoch, the market of the world and the modern powers of production" by placing them "under the common control of the most advanced peoples" (notably, Europeans) will "cease to resemble that hideous pagan idol, who would not drink the nectar but from the skulls of the slain"? These remarks reveal Victorian arrogance at
its worst and patently neglect the vital "prehistory" that the nonwestern world had elaborated over many millenia of development.

It is important to remember that class society is not the creation of humanity as a whole. In its most ruthless form, it is the "achievement" of that numerically small proportion of "advanced peoples" who were largely confined to Europe. By far, the great mass of human beings who occupied the planet before the Age of Exploration had developed alternatives of their own to capitalism, even to class society. By no means do we have the right to regard them as arrested societies that awaited the gentle caress of "civilization" and the sculpting of the crucifix. That their social forms, technologies, cultural works, and values have been degraded to mere "anthropologies" rather than histories in their own right is testimony to an intellectual atavism that views anything but its own social creations as mere "remains" of its "prehistory" and the "archaeology" of its own social development.

What we so arrogantly call the "stagnation" of many non-European societies may well have been a different, often highly sensitive, elaboration and enrichment of cultural traits that were ethically and morally incompatible with the predatory dynamism Europeans so flippantly identify with "progress" and "history." To fault these societies as stagnant for elaborating qualities and values that Europeans were to sacrifice to quantity and egoistic acquisition tells us more about European conceptions of history and morality than non-European conceptions of social life.

Only now, after our own "pagan idols" such as nucleonics, biological warfare, and mass culture have humiliated us sufficiently, can we begin to see that non-European cultures may have followed complex social paths that were often more elegant and knowledgeable than our own. Our claims to world cultural hegemony by right of conquest has boomeranged against us. We have been obliged to turn to other cultures not only for more humane values, more delicate sensibilities, and richer ecological insights, but also for technical alternatives to our highly mystified "powers of production" — powers that have already begun to overpower us and threaten the integrity of life on the planet. But until recently, our prevailing system of domination not only blinded us to the full history of our own social development; it also prevented a clear understanding of alternative social developments — some vastly better than our own, others as bad but rarely worse. If these developments are to provide us with alternative ethical and technical pathways to a better future, we must first reexamine the vast legacy of domination that has so far blocked our vision.
4. Epistemologies of Rule

The shift from hierarchical to class societies occurred on two levels: the material and the subjective. A clearly material shift was embodied in the emergence of the city, the State, an authoritarian technics, and a highly organized market economy. The subjective shifts found expression in the emergence of a repressive sensibility and body of values — in various ways of mentalizing the entire realm of experience along lines of command and obedience. Such mentalities could very well be called epistemologies of rule, to use a broad philosophical term. As much as any material development, these epistemologies of rule fostered the development of patriarchy and an egoistic morality in the rulers of society; in the ruled, they fostered a psychic apparatus rooted in guilt and renunciation. Just as aggression flexes our bodies for fight or flight, so class societies organize our psychic structures for command or obedience.

A repressive rationality, not to be confused with reason as such, rendered the social change from organic society to class society highly ambiguous in character. Reason has always identified human fulfillment with a consciousness of self, with logical clarity, and with salvation from humanity’s complete absorption into the misty world of the mythopoeic. Even matters of faith and religion have been interpreted rationally — as highly systematic theologies rationally derived from a few fundamental beliefs. But this vast project of humanization — from organic to class society — occurred without a clear ethical basis for human fulfillment, one that had a definite rational content. Hence the emergence of class society was to be burdened from its outset by a paradox: how can reason, conceived as a tool or method for achieving ethical goals, be integrated with reason conceived as the inherent feature or meaning of these ethical goals?

Tragically, it was not left to reason alone, as the great thinkers of the Enlightenment so optimistically believed, to resolve this paradox. Crises have riddled class society from its inception. In the western world, at least, they have produced a legacy of domination so formidable that it threatens to push us into an abyss that may engulf social life itself. The result has been the emergence of a misplaced antirationalism so blistering and introverted in its hostility to mind that it has literally lost sight of the legacy of domination itself. In surrendering mind to intuition, rationality to mere impulse, coherence to eclecticism, and wholeness to a mystical “oneness,” we may very well reinforce this legacy if only because we refuse to dispel it with the means of rational analyses.

In our reaction to Enlightenment thought, we must rescue reason without becoming "rationalistic," without reducing reason to mere technique. Rarely has society been so direly in need of a clear understanding of the way we mentalize rule and of the history of domination than today, when the very survival of humanity is at stake. In any case, it is only in the use of reason rather than in rationalizing about reason that mind reveals its promises and pitfalls. It would be better to use our rational faculties and reflect on them later than to lose them altogether to a dark heritage that may obliterate mind itself.

The material and subjective levels on which hierarchical societies crystallized into class societies are not sharply separable. Or to use the language of Victorian social thought, we cannot
comfortably speak of one level as the "base" for the other; both, in fact, are inextricably intertwined. The city, which from the beginnings of history appears as the "effect" of basic changes from kinship to territorialism, is so crucially important as the arena for dissolving the blood oath that it can only be regarded as a "cause," however ancillary it seems to important changes in technics and ideology. In fact, urban life from its inception occupies such an ambiguous place in the commonsense logic of cause and effect that we would do well to use these concepts gingerly.

This much is clear: the blood oath which, more than any single factor, held together primordial values and institutions with a certain degree of integrity, could only be surmounted after the claims of blood ties could be replaced by those of civic ties. Only after the territorial system began to dissolve the kinship system or, at least, attenuate its nexus of responsibilities, could hallowed terms like brother and sister cease to be compelling natural realities.[20] Thereafter, "brotherhood" increasingly came to mean a commonality of material and political interests rather than those of kinship, and "sisters" were to become the means for establishing alliances — for uniting males into social fraternities based on military, political, and economic needs.

The social and cultural impact of these material and subjective factors, so clearly rooted in the development of the city and State, can hardly be overstated. Humanity was to cling to the primal blood oath with such tenacity that primordial social forms often remained intact even after they had been divested of their content. In many cases, the clans were not immediately destroyed; often they were retained and like the extended family persisted as mere shadows of the past. In fact, they were subtly reworked in certain societies into instrumentalities of the newly emerging State — first, in the service of early priestly corporations, later, in vestigial form, in the service of the military chieftains and kings.

Here we sense the ideological activities of the early priesthood that had emerged from a reworking of shamanism. By freeing itself from the social vulnerabilities of the shaman, whose body constituted a mere vessel for spirits, the priestly corporation had acquired the role of a cosmic brokerage firm between humanity and its increasingly anthropomorphic deities — deities no longer to be confused with the nature spirits that peopled the environment of organic society. Theology began to gain ascendancy over divination. Seemingly rational accounts of the origins, workings, and destiny of the cosmos — laden with an epistemology of rule — tended to replace magic. By emphasizing the "guilt" of the human "wrong-doer" and the "displeasure" of the deities, the priestly corporation could acquire an immunity to failure that the shaman had always lacked.

The technical failures of the shaman, which typically rendered his social status so insecure in primordial society, could be reinterpreted by the emerging priesthood as evidence of the moral failure of the community itself. Drought, diseases, floods, locust infestations, and defeats in warfare — to cite the Biblical afflictions of ancient humanity — were reinterpreted as the retribution of wrathful deities for communal wrong-doing, not merely as the dark work of malevolent spirits. Technical failure, in effect, was shifted from the priestly corporation to a fallen humanity that had to atone for its moral frailties. And only priestly supplications, visibly reinforced by generous sacrifices in the form of goods and services, could redeem humanity, temper the punitive actions of the deities, and restore the earlier harmony that existed between humanity and its gods. In time, sacrifice and supplication became a constant effort in which neither the community nor its priestly corporation could relent. When this effort was institutionalized to the extent that the episodic became chronic, it created the early theocracies that go hand-in-hand with early cities, whose foci were always the temple, its priestly quarters, its storehouses, craft shops, and the dwellings of its artisans and bureaucracies. Urban life began with an altar, not simply a mar-
ketplace, and probably with walls that were meant to define sacred space from the natural, not simply as defensive palisades.

It is breathtaking to reflect on the intricate variety of ideological threads in this new tapestry, with its stark insignias of class and material exploitation. By converting mundane nature spirits and demons into humanlike supernatural deities and devils, the priestly corporation had cunningly created a radically new social and ideological dispensation — indeed, a new way of mentalizing rule. The guardian deity of the community increasingly became a surrogate for the community as a whole — literally, a personification and materialization of a primal solidarity that gradually acquired the trappings of outright social sovereignty. Ludwig Feuerbach was to unwittingly mislead us when he declared that our humanlike gods and goddesses were the projections of humanity itself into a larger-than-life religious world; actually, they were the projection of the priestly corporation into an all-too-real pantheon of social domination and material exploitation.

In any case, the communal lands and their produce, once available to all by virtue of the practice of usufruct, were now seen as the endowment of a supernatural deity whose earthly brokers voiced its wishes, needs, and commandments. Ultimately, they acquired theocratic sovereignty over the community, its labor, and its produce. Communal property, to toy with a contradiction in terms, had emerged with a vengeance as the communism of the godhead and its earthly administrators. The communal whole, which had once been at the disposition of the community as a whole, was now placed at the disposition of the deified "One," if only a patron deity in a supernatural pantheon, who in the very role of personifying the community and its unity had turned it into an obedient congregation ruled by a priestly elite. The nature spirits who had peopled the primordial world were absorbed into tutelary deities. The Mother Goddess who represented the fecundity of nature in all its diversity, with its rich variety of subdeities, was trampled down by the "Lord of Hosts," whose harsh moral codes were formulated in the abstract realm of his heavenly Supernature.

The clan, too, like the priestly corporation, was transformed into an economic corporation. Community, once conceived as the vital activity of communizing, became the source of passive communal labor, a mere instrument of production. Communal traits were valued insofar as they lent themselves to technical coordination, exploitation, and rationalization — a very ancient commentary on the exploitative nature of a communism structured around hierarchy. Hence clan society, far from being initially effaced, was used against itself to produce a wealth of material objects. The priestly corporation, in effect, had become a clan unto itself that raised itself like the Hebrew Levites above all clans. It had become something quite new: a class.

Accumulated wealth, now conceived as the sum of humanity’s material sacrifices to the deities, was divested of the demonic traits that organic society had imputed to treasure. The wealthy temples that emerged in the Old World and New are testimony to a sacralization of accumulated wealth; later, of booty as the reward of valor; and finally, tribute as the result of political sovereignty. Gifts, which once symbolized alliance between people in mutual support systems, were now transformed into tithes and taxes for supernatural and political security. This steady reworking of the communal clans into labor forces, of communal lands into proprietary sacerdotal estates, of conciliatory myths into repressive religious dramas, of kinship responsibilities into class interests, of hierarchical command into class exploitation — all were to appear more like shifts of emphasis in traditional systems of right rather than marked ruptures with hallowed customs. Leaving the catastrophic effects of invasions aside, primordial society seems to have
been seduced into the new social disposition of class society without clearly departing from the outlines of organic society.

But it was not within the temple precincts alone that these changes occurred. Fairly recent data from Mesopotamia and Robert McAdams's admirable comparisons of Mesoamerica with Mesopotamia reveal that the civil sphere of the male warrior was as deeply implicated in transforming organic society into class society as the sacerdotal sphere of the priestly corporation. The priesthood has the power of ideology — by no means insignificant, but a power that relies on persuasion and conviction. The warrior has the power of coercion — one that relies on the more compelling effects of physical prowess, weaponry, and violence. While the interests of the priestly corporation and the military society intertwine, at times quite intimately, they often unravel and oppose each other. The warrior who confronts his opponent tends to be more demanding and certainly more thoroughgoing in the exercise of his interests than the priest who stands between the community and its deities as a sacerdotal agent or broker. Neither the ideologies nor the institutions these different historical figures create are identical or even calculated to produce the same social effects. The warrior societies that emerged within organic society were more thoroughgoing in uprooting it than the priestly corporations that emerged outside it — after it had already undergone considerable modification by hierarchical institutions and relegated shamanistic practices to a folk magic and medicine. The warriors supplanted their theocratic predecessors, actually leaning to all appearances on the very ideological changes that the theocracies had produced. Hence, it was the warrior chieftain and his military companions from whom history recruited its classical nobility and its manorial lords, who produced the political State, and later, the centralized monarchy with priestly vestiges of its own. This largely military fraternity cut across the lineage system of clan society with the power of a battle ax and eventually all but destroyed its hold on social life. And again, the clans persisted, like the capulli of the Aztecs and the ascriptive family units of Sumerian society, although they were steadily divested of social power.

Theocracies are not incompatible with certain democratic features of tribal life, such as popular assemblies and councils of elders. Insofar as the privileges of the priestly corporation are respected, tribal democracy and theocracy may actually reinforce each other institutionally — the one, dealing with the material concerns of the body politic, the other dealing with the material concerns of the temple and the sacred. Between them, an active division of functions may emerge that the fraternal military societies can only regard as a humiliating restriction of their hunger for civil power. The earliest conflicts between Church and State were initially, in fact, three-way conflicts that involved the democratic claims of the clans — and, ultimately, their complete removal from the conflict.

As I have argued for years, the State is not merely a constellation of bureaucratic and coercive institutions. It is also a state of mind, an instilled mentality for ordering reality. Accordingly, the State has a long history — not only institutionally but also psychologically. Apart from dramatic invasions in which conquering peoples either completely subdue or virtually annihilate the conquered, the State evolves in gradations, often coming to rest during its overall historical development in such highly incomplete or hybridized forms that its boundaries are almost impossible to fix in strictly political terms.

Its capacity to rule by brute force has always been limited. The myth of a purely coercive, omnipresent State is a fiction that has served the state machinery all too well by creating a sense of awe and powerlessness in the oppressed that ends in social quietism. Without a high
degree of cooperation from even the most victimized classes of society such as chattel slaves and serfs, its authority would eventually dissipate. Awe and apathy in the face of State power are the products of social conditioning that renders this very power possible. Hence, neither spontaneous or immanent explanations of the State's origins, economic accounts of its emergence, or theories based on conquest (short of conquests that yield near-extirmination) explain how societies could have leaped from a stateless condition to a State and how political society could have exploded upon the world.

Nor was there ever a single leap that could account for the immense variety of states and quasi-states that appeared in the past. The early Sumerian state, in which the governing ensi, or military overlords, were repeatedly checked by popular assemblies; the Aztec state, which was faced with a tug-of-war between the capulli and the nobility; the Hebrew monarchies, which were repeatedly unsettled by prophets who invoked the democratic customs of the "Bedouin compact" (to use Ernst Bloch's term); and the Athenian state, institutionally rooted in direct democracy — all of these, however much they differ from each other and conflict with the centralized bureaucratic states of modern times, constitute very incomplete developments of the State. Even the highly bureaucratic Pharoanic State of the Ptolemies left much of Egyptian village life untouched, despite its demands for taxes and corvee labor. The centralized states that emerged in the Near East and Asia were not as invasive of community life at the base of society as is the modern State, with its mass media, highly sophisticated surveillance systems, and its authority to supervise almost every aspect of personal life. The State, in the authentically finished, historically complete form we find today, could have emerged only after traditional societies, customs, and sensibilities were so thoroughly reworked to accord with domination that humanity lost all sense of contact with the organic society from which it originated.

Clan society was not effaced in a single or dramatic stroke, any more than the State was to be established in a single historical leap. Until they were neutralized as a social force, the clans still retained large areas of land during the early urban phase of society. The warrior societies, for their part, reinforced their military power with economic power by claiming the lands of conquered peoples, not of their own folk, as private booty. Extratribal conquest, in effect, was to lead to the war chieftain's aggrandizement with large private estates, often worked by their aboriginal inhabitants as serfs. As for the warrior societies that clustered around the chieftains, the most permanent spoils of battle and victory were the lands they carved out as their own demesnes — estates, in effect — which they then elaborated into an internal manorial hierarchy of villeins, tenants, serfs, and slaves. Judging from Mesoamerican data, the manorial economy eventually began to outweigh the capulli economy in sheer acreage and produce. Indeed, Sumerian records and Spanish accounts of Aztec society tell a woeful tale of the gradual sale of the clan lands to the manors and the reduction of the food cultivators, free or captive, to a serf-like or tenant status.[21]

Beyond the city walls, in the more remote areas of the society, village life still retained much of its vitality. The old ways were to remain, however faintly and vestigially, into modern times. But the blood oath, with its highly variegated customs and rituals, became more symbolic than real. Class society had supplanted hierarchical society, just as hierarchical society had supplanted the egalitarian features of organic society.

This sweeping shift from social ties based on kinship, usufruct, and complementarity to classes, proprietorship, and exploitation could not have occurred without concomitant changes in technics. Without the large-scale, animal-powered plow agriculture, now generally managed by males, that replaced woman's digging stick and hoe, it is difficult to conceive that surpluses
would have arisen in sufficient quantity to support professional priests, craftsmen, scribes, courts, kings, armies, and bureaucracies — in short, the vast paraphernalia of the State. Yet several cultural paradoxes confront us. Aztec society, despite its obvious class structure, exhibited no technological advances beyond the simplest pueblo communities. Among American Indian societies we find no plows that furrow the earth, no wheels for transportation although they appear in Aztec toys, no domestication of animals for agricultural purposes. Despite their great engineering feats, there was no reduction of food cultivation from a craft to an industry. Conversely, in societies where plows, animals, grains, and great irrigation systems formed the bases for agriculture, primordial communal institutions were still retained together with their communal distributive norms. These societies and their values persisted either without developing classes or by coexisting, often ignominiously, with feudal or monarchical institutions that exploited them ruthlessly — but rarely changed them structurally and normatively.

More commonly than not, humanity either did not "advance" into class society or did so only in varying degrees. Plow agriculture, grains, and the elaboration of crafts may have provided the necessary condition for the emergence of cities, classes, and exploitation in many areas of the world, but they never provided sufficient conditions. What renders European society, particularly in its capitalist form, so historically and morally unique is that it surpassed by far every society, including the Near Eastern ones in which it was rooted, in the extent to which economic classes and economic exploitation — indeed, economics as we know it today — colonized the most intimate aspects of personal and social life.

The centrality of the city in achieving this transformation can hardly be overemphasized. For it was the city that provided the territory for territorialism, the civic institutions for citizenship, the marketplace for elaborate forms of exchange, the exclusivity of quarters and neighborhoods for classes, and monumental structures for the State. Its timbers, stones, bricks, and mortar gave enduring tangibility to social, cultural, institutional, and even moral changes that might have otherwise retained the fugitive quality of mere episodes in humanity's convoluted history or simply been absorbed back into nature, like an abandoned field reclaimed by forest. By virtue of its endurance and growth, the city crystallized the claims of society over biology, of craft over nature, of politics over community. Like the cutting edge of class society's battleaxe, it fought back the ever-invasive claims of kinship, usufruct, and complementarity, affirming the sovereignty of interest and domination over sharing and equality. For a conquering army to obliterate a culture's city was to annihilate the culture itself; to reclaim the city, be it a Jerusalem or a Rome, was to restore the culture and the people who had created it. On the very urban altars of the blood oath, the city drained kinship of its content while exalting its form, until the husk could be discarded for a mere reproductive unit we euphemistically call the "nuclear family."

However sweeping these objective changes toward class society may have been, they are not nearly as challenging as the changes that had to be achieved in the subjective realm before classes, exploitation, acquisition, and the competitive mentality of bourgeois rivalry could become part of humanity's psychic equipment. We gravely misjudge human nature if we see it only through an epistemology of rule and domination, or worse, class relationships and exploitation. Howard Press has observed that "separation is the archetypal tragedy." But there are different ways to separate. Although this "tragedy" may be necessary to allow the individual to discover his or her uniqueness and identity, it should not have to assume the socially explosive form of rivalry and competition between individuals.
A phenomenology of the self has yet to be written that takes into account the conciliatory and participatory aspects of self-formation. The "I" that emerges from the welter of "its," the magic boundary that the infant must cross to distinguish itself from the undifferentiated experiences that flood its sensorimotor apparatus, is not the product of antagonism. Fear has to be learned; it is a social experience — as is hatred. The commonly accepted ideology that the enlargement of egocentricity is the authentic medium in which selfhood and individuality come into their own is a bourgeois trick, the rationale for bourgeois egotism. This notion is contradicted by Piaget's life-long researches into the early years of childhood. As he observes,

Through an apparently paradoxical mechanism whose parallel we have described apropos of the egocentrism of thought of the older child, it is precisely when the subject is most self-centered that he knows himself the least, and it is to the extent that he discovers himself that he places himself in the universe.

Accordingly, Piaget finds that language, reflective thought, and the organization of a spatial, causal, and temporal universe become possible "to the extent that the self is freed of itself by finding itself and so assigns itself a place as a thing among things, an event among events."

Early humanity could never have survived without being (in Piaget's sense) "a thing among things, an event among events." Social Darwinism aside, creatures specialized in the powerful neurophysical capacity to mentalize and conceptualize, to plan and calculate would have destroyed themselves in a Hobbesian war of all against all. Had reason, with its capacity for calculation, been used to divide and destroy rather than unite and create, the very human quality of humanity would have turned upon itself and the species immolated itself ages ago, long before it devised its armamentarium of modern weaponry.

Organic society's conciliatory sensibility finds expression in its outlook in dealing with the external world — notably in animism and magic. Basically, animism is a spiritual universe of conciliation rather than an aggressive form of conceptualization. That all entities have "souls" — a simple "identity of spirit and being," to use Hegel's words — is actually lived and felt. This outlook pervades the practice of simple preliterate peoples. When Edward B. Tylor, in his classic discussion of animism, notes that an American Indian "will reason with a horse as if rational," he tells us that the boundaries between things are functional. The Indian and the horse are both subjects — hierarchy and domination are totally absent from their relationship. "The sense of an absolute psychical distinction between man and beast, so prevalent in the civilized world, is hardly to be found among lower (sic) races." The very epistemology of these "lower races" is qualitatively different from our own.

Preliterate epistemology tends to unify rather than divide: it personifies animals, plants, even natural forces and perfectly inanimate things as well as human beings. What are often mere abstractions in our minds acquire life and substance in the preliterate animistic mind. To the animist, man's soul, for example, is his breath, his hand, his heart, or other such clearly substantial entities.

This animistic outlook in its many modifications will pervade the mind long after the passing of organic society. Our difficulty in dealing with the seemingly paradoxical qualities of Greek philosophy stems from the tension between its animistic outlook and secular reason. Thales and the Ionian thinkers, although apparently rationalistic in the sense that their outlook was secular and based on logical causality, nevertheless saw the world as alive, as an organism, "in fact," as Collingwood observes, "as an animal." It is something "ensouled . . . within which are lesser organisms having souls of their own; so that a single tree or a single soul, is according to [Thales], both
a living organism in itself and also a part of the great living organism which is the world." This animistic outlook lingers on in Greek philosophy well into Aristotle's time; hence the difficulty we encounter in neatly classifying Hellenic thought into "idealist" and "materialist" compartments.

Magic, the technique that the animist employs to manipulate the world, seems to violate the conciliatory epistemology of this sensibility. Anthropologists tend to describe magical procedures as "primitive man's" fictive techniques for "coercion," for making things obey his will. A closer view, however, suggests that it is we who read this coercive mentality into the primordial world. By magically imitating nature, its forces, or the actions of animals and people, preliterate communities project their own needs into external nature; it is essential to emphasize that external nature is conceptualized at the very outset as a mutualistic community. Prior to the manipulative act is the ceremonious supplicatory word, the appeal to a rational being — to a subject for cooperation and understanding. Rites always precede action and signify that there must be communication between equal participants, not mere coercion. The consent of an animal, say a bear, is an essential part of the hunt in which it will be killed. When its carcass is returned to the camp, Indians will put a peace pipe in its mouth and blow down it as a conciliatory gesture. Simple mimesis, an integral feature of magic and ritual, implies by its very nature unity with the "object," a recognition of the "object's" subjectivity. Later, to be sure, the word was to be separated from the deed and become the authoritarian Word of a patriarchal deity. Mimesis, in turn, was to be reduced to a strategy for producing social conformity and homogeneity. But the ritual of the word in the form of incantations and work songs reminds us of a more primordial sensibility based on mutual recognition and shared rationality.

I do not mean that organic society lacked a sense of particularity in the manifold of this experiential unity. To the animist, bears were bears and not bisons or human beings. The animist discriminated between individuals and species as carefully as we do — often exhibiting a remarkable attention to detail as revealed in late Paleolithic cave paintings. The repressive abstraction of the individual bear into a bear spirit, a universalizing of the spirit of bears that denies their specificity, is, I suspect, a later development in the elaboration of the animistic spirit. In rendering the individual bear subject to manipulative forms of human predation, generalization in this form marks the first steps toward the objectification of the external world. Before there were bear spirits there were probably only individual bears, as Tylor suggests, when he tells us that if "an Indian is attacked and torn by a bear, it is that the beast fell upon him intentionally in anger, perhaps to revenge the hurt done to another bear." A bear that has will, intentionality, and knows anger is not a mere epiphenomenon of a bear spirit; it is a being in its own right and autonomy.

By abstracting a bear spirit from individual bears, by generalizing from the particular to the universal, and further, by infusing this process of abstraction with magical content, we are developing a new epistemology for explaining the external world. If the individual bear is merely an epiphenomenon of an animal spirit, it is now possible to objectify nature by completely subsuming the particular by the general and denying the uniqueness of the specific and concrete. The emphasis of the animistic outlook thereby shifts from accommodation and communication to domination and coercion.

This intellectual process probably occurred in gradual steps. The Orpheus legend, one of the most archaic in mythology, is still based on the notion of a guardian spirit rather than a master of animals. Orpheus charms the animal universe into reconciliation and harmony. He is a pacifier in a brute world of "claw and fang." From the Orpheus legend, we sense the existence of a time when pacification and abstraction were not mutually exclusive processes. But effect a slight shift
in the emphasis of the legend and we pass from the imagery of a guardian of animals into that of a master of animals. This shift is probably the work of the shaman who, as Ivar Paulson suggests, concomitantly embodies the protector of game — the master of their spirits — and the helper of the hunter. The shaman magically delivers the hunted animal into the hands of the hunter: he is the master implied in mastery. As both elder and professional magician, he establishes the new, quasi-hierarchical boundaries that subvert the old animistic outlook.

That hallowed process called Reason, of generalization and classification, appears very early in an involuted and contradictory form: the fictive manipulation of nature begins with the real manipulation of humanity. Although the shaman's efforts to give greater coherence to the world will become social power that confers upon humanity greater control over the external world, the shaman and, more precisely, his successor — the priest — initially divides this world to manipulate it. Women, as shamannesses or priestesses, are no more immune to this phenomenon than men. In either case, Weston La Barre is certainly correct in saying that early hunter-gatherers projected the social structure of secular power onto the supernatural just as other groups do: "The fit of myth to the social structure of a hunting band is exact. Myth anticipated no later social dispensation, for religion reflected only the then contemporary social structure."

Moreover, as we can suspect, the shamans and priests are always at work. They not only generalize and formulate, but they regeneralize and reformulate. The early coalitions they form with the elders and warrior-chiefs, later the conflicting issues they face with the emergence of increasingly complex agricultural societies, place new demands upon their ideological ingenuity which, in turn, lead to new generalizations and formulations. After their death, the more renowned shamans and priests become the raw materials for producing godheads. A compromise is struck between animism and religion, one that phases shamanism into the priestly corporation. The early deities reveal this new melding by combining an animal face with a human body or vice versa, as in the cases of the Sphinx and the Minotaur. Inexorably, this process of continual substitution yields a pantheon of deities that are entirely human, even in their capricious behavior.

As society slowly develops toward hierarchy and then into class structures, so too do the deities. In a hierarchical society that is still saturated with matricentric traditions, the foremost deity is the Mother Goddess, who personifies fertility and soil, the cojoined domains of sexuality and horticulture. In a well-entrenched patricentric society — one that introduces the male, his beasts, and the plow into food cultivation — the Mother Goddess acquires a male consort, to whom she gradually yields her eminence as patriarchy becomes prevalent. This process continues onward across the threshold of “civilization” into urban societies until the socialization of the deities leads to political theogonies. If the community confers in assemblies, so too do the deities; if the impact of war on primitive urban democracies leads to the establishment of a supreme ruler, a supreme deity also tends to emerge. As long as the world is under the sway of shamanistic and, more significantly, priestly mediation, it tends to remain embedded in a religious matrix. Nor does it ever free itself of the mythopoetic and religious as long as human dominates human. Social divisions are obscured by myth and mythology: even the warrior-chieftain tries to validate his social status by becoming a priest or a deity. Authoritarian social forces are made to appear as natural forces, like the deities that personify or seem to manipulate them.

Where nature is touched by the works of the food cultivator, humanity had no difficulty in devising deities that are part of the earth and domestic hearth: folk gods and folk goddesses whose behavior was often determined by seasonal cycles or human supplication. Wars, catastrophes, famines, and great misfortunes occurred, to be sure, but they occurred against the background of
The deities of Mesopotamia, for example, may seem more unruly and harsher than those that presided over the destiny of Egypt; the behavior of the river in the former land was less predictable and more destructive than that of the latter. Significant as they may be, however, the differences between the deities in the two great alluvial civilizations were differences in degree rather than in kind. Nature was still a nurturing mother who provided care and solicitude. She bestowed lush harvests and security to the community who revered her and never failed to provide her with a ceremonial bounty of its own.

But contrast these well-tilled lands with the arid steppes and the parched desert of the Bedouin. Here, insecurity and conflict between patriarchal warrior-shepherds over water rights and herds are a chronic human condition, and it is easy to see why new deities begin to emerge who assume a more terrible visage than that of the agriculturalists’ nature spirits, gods, and goddesses. Here, nature seems very much like a clenched fist that capriciously stamps out man and his herds. No domestic hearth exists from which he can warm his soul after the labors of the day; only the nomad’s camp with its ambience of impermanence. Nor are there lush fields, crisscrossed by cool streams. For the Bedouin, only the heavens are blue, presided over by a scorching sun. The wide horizon, broken by stark mountains and plateaus, instills a sense of the infinity of space, of the transcendental and other-worldly. Woman, the embodiment of fecundity and a relatively benign nature to the agriculturist, has no symbolic place in this stark universe—except perhaps as a mere vessel to produce sons, herdsmen, and warriors. She is not so much exploited as simply degraded.[22]

These pastoral nomads, separated from agriculture by climatic changes or by population pressures on the land, are an expelled, ever-wandering, and restless people. They are accursed by the very chthonic deities that still linger among them as ghosts of a lost Eden. As herdsmen, they are a people who live mainly among domestic beasts, each of which is an alienable quantum; the mere number of animals the patriarch owns is a measure of his wealth and prestige. Power and fortune can be determined with numerical exactness: by the size of one’s herds and the number of one’s sons. From these people—historically the Hebrews, who articulate the pastoral sensibility par excellence—a new epistemology of rule and a new deity will emerge, based on the infinite, the harsh expression of male will, and the often cruel negation of nature. As noted by H. and H. A. Frankfort,

The dominant tenet of Hebrew thought is the absolute transcendence of God. Yahweh is not in nature. Neither earth nor sun nor heaven is divine; even the most potent natural phenomena are but reflections of God’s greatness. It is not even possible to name God . . . . He is holy. That means he is sui generis . . . . It has been rightly pointed out that the monotheism of the Hebrews is a correlate of their insistence on the unconditioned nature of God. Only a God who transcends every phenomenon, who is not conditioned by any mode of manifestation—only an unqualified God can be the one and only ground of all existence.

Behind such cosmogonies lies the dialectic of a contradictory rationality, at once liberating and repressive—as reason embedded in myth. Doubtlessly, real intellectual powers are being exercised; they are actualizing themselves with mythopoeic materials. The graduation of animistic thought from the individual to the species, from bears to the “bear spirits,” is an obvious preliminary to a conception of natural forces as humanly divine. The deities are subtle evidence of humanity’s presence in nature as a natural force in its own right.

It is tempting, here, to see the steppe lands and particularly the desert as domineering environments that brought humanity into subjugation to nature and to view the Bedouin as involved in
a bitter "struggle" with nature. Yet such an image would be very simplistic. To the Bedouijn, the starkness of the nomad's arid world was often seen as a source of purification, indeed of moral and personal freedom. To the great Hebrew prophets, most notably figures like Amos, the desert was above all the land to which one returned to find the strength of character and moral probity to fight injustice. Hence the nobility that was imputed to the herdsman, who, wandering with his flocks and left to his own thoughts, came closer to the deity than the food cultivator. His contact with the desert imbued him with a sense of righteousness. The significance of the Semitic contribution to our western sensibility lies not simply in the patriarchal edge it gave to the already existing hierarchies of agricultural societies — a contribution I have emphasized here for heuristic purposes. It also lies in the moral probity and transcendental mentality that generalized the concrete image of nature so prevalent among peasant peoples into a Supernature that was as strikingly intellectual as it was willful in its abstractness.

Hence with the Hebrews, religion exhibits a growing tendency to abstract, to classify, and to systematize. For all its obvious contradictions, the Hebrew Bible is a remarkably coherent account of humanity's evolution into society. Even in the Hebrews' devaluation of natural phenomena we have a break with mythopoeic thought as such, a rupture with phenomena as fantasy, a willingness to deal with life on realistic and historical terms. Social history, as the will of God, replaces natural history as the cosmogony of spirits, demons, and divine beings. The Hebrews, as the Frankforts emphasized, propounded not a speculative theory, but revolutionary and dynamic teaching. The doctrine of a single, unconditional, transcendent God rejected time-honored values, proclaimed new ones, and postulated a metaphysical significance for history and for man's actions.

The destiny of man moves to the center of the intellectual stage: it is his fate and that of his species, albeit in the form of the "chosen people," that forms a central theme in the Hebrew Bible. But an antithetical rationality permeates this "revolutionary and dynamic teaching." With the Hebrews, the epistemology of rule comes into its own as a transcendental conception of order. Domination becomes sui generis: it divides the indivisible by fiat. Merely to relegate the Hebrew Yahweh to a monotheistic preemption of a multifarious nature or even the human deities who peopled the pagan world is a simplification. Indeed, such efforts had been in the air for centuries before Judaism had acquired eminence by turning, in its Christian form, into a world religion. Nor were the Hebrews the only people to regard themselves as chosen; this is a tribal archaism that most preliterate and later literate people symbolize in their ethnic nomenclature when they describe themselves as "The People" and others as "strangers" or "barbarians."

What renders the Hebrew Bible unique is that it is self-derivative: God's will, as it were, is God. No cosmogony, morality, or rationality is necessary to explain it, and man's duty is to obey unquestioningly. When Moses first encounters Yahweh and asks for his name, the reply is a damning intonation: "I am that I am." And further: "I Am hath sent me unto you." What Moses confronts is not merely an only God or a jealous one; he confronts a nameless God whose transcendence closes Him to all being beyond His own existence and will. The concrete now completely becomes the mere product of the universal; the principle, by which animism and early cosmogonies are to evolve from the particular to the general, has been totally reversed. The order of things emerges not from nature to Supernature, but from Supernature to nature.

Characteristically, the biblical notion of creation "is not a speculative cosmogony," Rudolph Bultmann observes, "but a confession of faith in God as Lord. The world belongs to him and he upholds it by his power." This world is now pervaded by hierarchy, by ruler and ruled, over whom
presides that nameless abstraction, the Lord. Man, viewed from the Lord's eyes, is an utterly abject creature, yet, viewed from ours, a hierarch in his own right. For the Lord ordains that Noah will be "feared" by "every beast of the earth," by "every fowl in the air," and by "all that moveth upon the earth and . . . all the fishes of the sea." The communication that the animist magically achieves with the hunted animal, first as an individuated being and later as an epiphenomenon of a species-spirit, is not transformed into "fear." That animals can feel "fear" still acknowledges their subjectivity — a feeling, ironically, they share with people who are inspired by the "fear of God" — but it is a subjectivity that is placed under human domination.

Equally as significant, people too are caught in a nexus of human domination. Biblical power is the mana that all masters can use against their slaves: ruler against ruled, man against woman, the elders against the young. Hence we need have no difficulty in understanding why the Hebrew Bible becomes a universalized document: the supreme code of the State, school, workshop, body politic, and family. It is mana that has acquired metaphysical trappings which make it virtually invulnerable to the incredulity an increasingly secularized world brings to the mana of the warrior chieftain, divine king, and domestic patriarch. "Hebrew thought did not entirely overcome mythopoeic thought," observe the Frankforts. "It created, in fact, a new myth — the myth of the Will of God." Yet more than myth is involved in Yahweh's injunctions. Behind the stories, episodes, and history that the Hebrew Bible contains is a nascent philosophical apriorism that links human sovereignty with aggressive behavior. The perpetuation of hierarchy, in effect, appears as a matter of human survival in the face of inexorable forces.

Yahweh's will completes the growing separation between subject and object. More significantly, His will divided the two not simply as particulars that make for a richer wholeness, but antagonistically: the object is subjugated to the subject. They are divided as opposites that involve a denial of the concrete, of facticity, and of the body by the abstract, the universal, and the mind. Spirit can now be opposed to reality, intellect to feeling, society to nature, man to woman, and person to person, because the order of things as expressed by Yahweh's "I Am" has so ordained it. One does not have to invoke custom, law, or theory to explain this order; the transcendental Will of God — a god who is sui generis — has ordered this dispensation. It is not for man to question His omnipotence.

This religious separation of the world's order in terms of sovereignty rather than complementarity was to serve its acolytes well. For the emerging ruling classes and the State, it provided an ideology of unreasoned obedience, of rule by fiat and the powers of supernatural retribution. And it had achieved this sweeping transformation not by invoking nature and her deities — the "bear spirit," the part-human and part-animal deities typified by Egyptian religio-animism, or by the irascible anthropomorphic deities of Sumer and Greece — but by invoking a completely disembodied, abstract, and nameless Supernature that allowed for the codification of pure belief without the constraints of empirical reality. The desert landscape of the Bedouin merely sharpened this ideology but did not form it, for the "Bedouin compact" tends to belie its political claims of unrestricted sovereignty. Indeed, it is doubtful that an ideology so demanding of subservience and obedience by patriarchs as well as their wives, children, and retainers could have come from simple Bedouins who were soon to settle down to an agricultural way of life. This ideology was patently fashioned by priests and military commanders, by stern lawgivers and Spartan-like soldiers so clearly embodied in the figure of a Moses. That the Lord demands from Moses a tent of goat's hair for his earthly dwelling suggests that the ideology, in its early parts in the Hebrew Bible, was formulated when the confederated Hebrew tribes were pushing their way into
Canaan. Later it was elaborated, after their conquest of the land, into a richly humanistic and highly idealistic ethical document.[23]

With the Greeks, the epistemology of rule is transformed from a moral principle, based on faith, into an ethical principle, based on reason. Although mythopoeic thought is never absent from the Hellenic cultural legacy, it either takes on a highly intellectualized form or is preempted by mind, or nous. The Greek realm of reason is not focused on Supernature; its authentic locus is the polis, or the so-called city-state.

Like the Semitic patriarchal clan, the polis, too, is partly shaped by a compelling natural environment: mountains that wrinkle the Greek promontory and foster a high degree of communal autonomy and personal virtuosity in nearly all tasks from agriculture to metallurgy and war. The word amateur is Latin in origin, but it accurately reflects the Hellenic predisposition to a modest degree of competence in all fields, for balance and self-sufficiency (autarkeia), that has so characteristically marked mountain-dwelling communities in the past and placed the imprint of self-reliance, character, hardiness, and a freedom-loving spirit on their inhabitants. For such peoples, independence of spirit tended to become an end in itself, although their isolation could also yield a narrow parochialism that militated against any real breadth of vision.

Hellenic intellectualism was centered primarily in the coastal and island poleis of antiquity, where a rare balance was struck between the free-ranging spirit of their mountain origins and the cosmopolitan spirit of their maritime contacts. Within these poleis, specifically the Athenian, a new dualism emerged: Home, or oikos, and the agora (a marketplace which, in time, was transformed into a highly variegated civic center) were counterposed to each other. The agora, more broadly, the polis itself "was the sphere of freedom," as Hannah Arendt has noted, echoing the motif of Aristotle's Politics. To the extent that home and polis were related to each other, it was a matter of coarse that the mastering of the necessities of life in the household was the condition for freedom of the polis . . . . What all Greek philosophers, no matter how opposed to polis life, took for granted is that freedom is exclusively located in the political realm, that necessity is primarily a prepolitical phenomenon, characteristic of the private household organization, and that force and violence are justified in this sphere because they are the only means to master necessity — for instance, by ruling over slaves — and to become free. Because all human beings are subject to necessity, they are entitled to violence toward others; violence is the prepolitical act of liberating oneself from the necessity of life for the freedom of the world.

This epistemological dualism between necessity and freedom, a dualism utterly alien to Hebrew monistic thought, rested on such sweeping assumptions about nature, work, individuality, reason, woman, freedom, and technics that it would require a separate work to deal with them adequately. Here, I offer a cursory examination of some of these assumptions, with particular reference to the western legacy of domination, and leave their implications to a later study.

To begin with, Greek rationality did not quite foster a rejection of nature. A nature tamed by man, notably the orderly fields of the agriculturalist and the sacred groves of the deities, was a pleasing desideratum. They were refreshing to the eye and to the spirit. Nature, in this form, was infused with reason and sculpted by human creativity. What the Greeks thoroughly feared and resisted was wild, untamed nature (as Havelock Ellis was to emphasize) — a barbarian nature, as it were. Wild nature was not merely prepolitical; it was beyond the realm of order. Neither reason nor necessity could find a home in the tangle of the unbridled forest and its perils. The Greek notion of man's domination of nature — a notion that was no less real than the modern — could not find fixity and meaningfulness there. In the Greek mind, the polis, which included its well-
tilled environs, waged a constant battle against the encroachment of the unruly natural world and its barbarian denizens. Within its confines, the polis created a space not only for discourse, rationality, and the "good life," but even for the oikos, which at least had its own realm of order, however prepolitical in character. Underpinning the supremacy of the polis over the oikos was a more universal dualism, the supremacy of order or kosmos over meaningless dissolution or chaos. All of Greek nature philosophy took these intellectual coordinates — particularly as they referred to the coherence of the polis against the forces for incoherence — as their basic reference points. The love of wild nature was to come later, with the European Middle Ages.

By the same token, Greek rationalism did not denigrate work and materiality. Indeed, the Athenian yeoman, the hoplite who as farmer-citizen formed the military backbone of the classical democracy, worked hand-in-hand with his hired help and such slaves as he could afford to own. Often, this small labor force shared the same fare and material conditions of life. The Greek love of the human body, of athleticism, and respect for physical form is proverbial. What Greek rationalism thoroughly denigrated — and we speak of its elites — was the toil associated with trade and the pursuit of gain. For in the marketplace lay the forces that threatened to undermine the Hellenic ideal of self-sufficiency, balance, and limit — that is, of the kosmos that could be undermined so easily by chaos when the vigilance of reason was relaxed.

In a widely quoted passage, Aristotle articulated this fear with a clarity that is characteristically Hellenic. There are some people who believe that getting wealth is the object of household management and the whole idea of their lives is that they ought either to increase their money without limit, at any rate not to lose it. The origin of this disposition in men is that they are intent upon living only, and not upon living well; and, as their desires are unlimited, they also desire that the means of gratifying them should be without limit.

For Aristotle, the threat of the unlimited lies not only in imbalance and dependence; it also lies in the subversion of form — without which identity itself dissolves and the meaningful is supplanted by the meaningless.

Hence, even more than the equipoise provided by balance, the Greeks sought an orderly arrangement of the dualities they had introduced into the western intellectual tradition: the duality between nature and society, work and free time, sensuousness and intellect, individual and community. The dualities existed and acquired meaning only because they existed contrapuntally, each in opposition to and in conjunction with the other. The genius of reason was to recognize and adjust the tension between them by giving both epistemological and social priority to the second term in the duality over the first. Even the polis, conceived as the realm of freedom, was continually beleaguered by the problem of whether the community would be capable of maintaining an identity between the collective interest and the individual. "In Athenian ideology the state was both superior and antecedent to its citizens," observes Max Horkheimer. As it turned out, at least for a brief period of time:

This predominance of the polis facilitated rather than hindered the rise of the individual: it effected a balance between the state and its members, between individual" freedom and communal welfare, as nowhere more eloquently depicted than in the Funeral Oration of Pericles.

But in the Hellenic mind, order always had to resist disorder — kosmos to resist chaos. This imagery is essential in achieving any understanding of how the Greeks — and every European ruling class that was to follow the decline of the polis — were to think about the human condition. Its accolades to balance and equipoise notwithstanding, the predominant note in Hellenic thought was always a hierarchical organization of reality. It was always stated in rational and
secular terms, but we cannot forget that chaos had a very mundane and earthy substantiality in the form of a large population of slaves, foreigners, women and potentially unruly freedmen who were placed in an inferior status within the polis or had no status at all.

The principal architects of Greece's hierarchical epistemology — Plato and Aristotle — had a long philosophical pedigree rooted in pre-Socratic nature philosophy. How to account for domination of literally half of the polis, its women, and a very substantial number of slaves? How to deny civil and political rights to the alien residents and freedmen who literally infested the polis and provided for its most essential day-to-day services? These questions had to be resolved on rational terms, without recourse to myths that opened the door to chaos and its dark past.

For both Plato and Aristotle, a rational answer required intellectual objectivity, not the divine revelation and deified Will of early Hebrew social thought. The notion of human equality (which the Bible does not exclude and which its greatest prophets, in fact, emphasized) had to be impugned on naturalistic grounds — an ordered rational nature that the Greek mind could accept. Here, both Plato and Aristotle agreed. But they were divided on the locus of this nature, the actual cauldron in which differences between people could be stratified in systems of command and obedience.

Plato's strategy was, in many ways, the more atavistic: Differences in individual capacities and performances stem from differences in souls. The few who are equipped to rule — the guardians in Plato's idealized society (mistitled The Republic) — are born with "gold" and "silver" souls. Those with "gold" souls are destined by their inborn spiritual qualities to be the philosopher-rulers of the polis; those with "silver" souls, its warriors. The two are trained alike in a rigorous regimen that fosters athleticism, communal sharing of all possessions and means. of life — a family-like solidarity that essentially turns the entire stratum into a large oikos — and a Spartan-like denial of luxuries and comfort. Later, the visibly "gold" and "silver" souls are functionally separated — the former, to develop their intellectual and theoretical qualities, the latter to elaborate their capacity to fulfill practical, generally military, responsibilities.

The remainder of the population — its farmers, craftsmen, and merchants, who have "bronze" or "iron" souls — are hardly mentioned. Apparently, they will enjoy more secure lives sculpted by their guardians. But their lifeways do not appear to be very different from that of the commoners in Plato's day. The Republic is thus essentially authoritarian — in some respects, totalitarian. The philosopher-rulers are free to blatantly (or "nobly," in Plato's words) lie to the entire populace in the interests of social unity and purge the polis of "ignoble" ideas and literature. Here, Plato notoriously includes Homeric poetry and probably the contemporary drama in his day that he viewed as degrading to humanity's image of the gods.

On the other hand, women in the guardian stratum enjoy complete, indeed unrestricted, equality with men. Plato, having removed the oikos from the life of the ruling class and replaced it with a form of domestic communism, has shifted the realm of necessity, of the prepolitical, to the shoulders of the commoners. With inexorable logic, he sees no reason why women in the guardian stratum should now be treated any differently from the men. Hence, all that is to limit their activities — be it war, athletics, education, or philosophical pursuits — are their physical abilities. They may be philosopher-rulers no less than men of comparable intellectual stature. Nor are the "gold" or "silver" souls that "mutate," as it were, among the commoners to be kept from entering the guardian stratum. Similarly, "bronze" or "iron" souls that appear among the children of the guardians are to be plucked from the ruling stratum and placed among the commoners.[24]
Despite all the accolades The Republic was to receive over the centuries after it was composed, it is not a utopia, a vision of a communist society, or in any sense of the term a democracy. It is an ideal form, an eidos, in Plato's metaphysical world of forms. What must be emphasized, here, is that Plato's rationality is ruthlessly, even cynically or playfully, hierarchical. The polis, if it was to survive from Plato's viewpoint, had to yield to the "cruelty of reason," so to speak, and follow the full logic of domination. Without hierarchy and domination, there can be no kosmos, no order. The Greeks — and they alone are of concern to Plato — must drastically alter the polis along the lines dictated by a repressive epistemology.

For Aristotle, The Republic's rationalistic ideality is misplaced. Its theoretical purity removes it from his category of practical reason to which the formulation of a rational polis and its administration belong. Hence Aristotle stands at odds with Plato's "cruelty of reason," which dematerializes the pragmatic problems of ordering the polis along workable lines. His Politics undertakes a severe critique of the ideal polis as such, including Plato's and those proposed by his predecessors. Perhaps no work was to exercise a more profound influence on western social thought. What counts for our purposes is Aristotle's intensely critical strategy and concerns. Reason must exorcise its own myths, notably Plato's attempt at ideality and its proclivity to remove itself from the practical problems of social administration and reconstruction.

Aristotle's principal concerns in the Politics are distinctly those of his time: slavery, the nature of citizenship, and the rational classification of poleis that validates the choice of one type over another. Throughout, reason must be informed by ethics and by the desire of rational man to lead the "good life," which by no means is confined to the material. The work clearly establishes a rational basis for slavery and patriarchy, and a political meritocracy as the authentic arenas for citizenship. For Aristotle, the Greeks have been endowed by geography, climate, and their innate intellectual qualities to rule not only the barbarians, but also slaves and women — both of whom are "prepolitical" and benefit profoundly by the "higher" mental faculties of their male masters. Given the woman's and slave's "inferior" rationality, their inability to formulate policies and meaningful courses of behavior, they, no less than their masters, benefit from his "superior" rationality and his capacity to give them direction and govern their nonrational behavior. Slavery and patriarchy, in effect, are seen as the gifts of reason, not its chains.

Despite their differences, Plato and Aristotle elaborated social theories with a consistency and logic that must have seemed impeccable to many of their successors. And both laid not only the foundations for a rational social philosophy but established a repressive epistemological tradition that spans entire ages of western thought. Various sociobiologies were to draw their inspiration from Platonistic and neo-Platonic theories. Aristotelian theory was to acquire an incredible composite legacy that reaches into Thomistic theology and, despite its severe class orientation, into "scientific socialism."

Most important of all, the two thinkers, indeed Hellenic thought as a whole, universalized hierarchy as rational — perhaps democratic when possible, often totalitarian when necessary. By its very existence, the polis created a new tradition in western notions of citizenship and imparted to them an unprecedented secularity that gave modern social thought its authentic foundations. It also created the issues that were to beleaguer the western mind and praxis for centuries to come — and a thoroughly repressive mentality for dealing with them. For better or worse, we are in no sense free of this legacy's worldliness, candor, and logic. Cross-fertilized with Hebrew thought, European intellectuality was born in classical Athens and wound its way through the centuries until, like it or not, we still remain its heirs.
The Hebrew and Hellenic mentalities were similar in their firm commitment to hierarchical relations structured around faith or rationality. Objectively, we have come a long way from the cunning of the priestly corporation in turning clan values against organic society; from the rise and commanding role of the warrior-chieftains and their entourages in the expansion of the male's civil sphere; from the disintegration of a communal economy into a manorial one; and finally, from the emergence of the city as the arena for dissolution of kinship relationships and the blood oath by citizenship, class interests, and the State. We have seen how the transcendental will of Yahweh and the rational elements of Hellenic epistemology have structured differentia along antagonistic lines, violating the animist's sense of complementarity and interpretation of concrete reality along conciliatory lines.

The legacy of domination thus develops as a manipulation of primordial institutions and sensibilities against each other, often by mere shifts of emphases in social reality and personal sensibility. Abstraction and generalization, whether as faith or reason, are used not to achieve wholeness or completeness but to produce a divisive antagonism in the objective and subjective realms. Other possible epistemologies, which might have favored a more "relaxed opening of the self to insight," to use Alvin Gouldner's words, have been ignored in favor of "values centering on mastery and control." This needlessly divisive development can be seen as a betrayal of society and sensibility to what the western mind has claimed for itself as the "history of mankind." Now that we are beginning to reap the terrible harvest of this betrayal, we must challenge the claims of that history to sovereignty.

But the story of this betrayal does not end with these institutional and subjective changes. It reaches further into the core of the psyche by internalizing hierarchy and domination as eternal traits of human nature. More than Yahweh's will and classical antiquity's rationality are needed to secure rule as an integral feature of selfhood. This feature entails not only humanity's commitment to its own self-repression through faith and reason; it must also police itself internally by acquiring a self-regulating "reality principle" (to use Freud's terms) based on guilt and renunciation. Only then can the ruled be brought into full complicity with their oppression and exploitation, forging within themselves the State that commands more by the power of the "inner voice" of repentance than the power of mobilized physical violence.

Neither Freud nor Marx have helped us fully understand this process. Each in his own way has absolved "civilization," specifically its western form, from its very real guilt in formulating a reality principle based on rule. By making self-repression (Freud) and self-discipline (Marx) the historic knout for achieving mastery over nature — and ultimately Freud's view, no less than Marx's, comes down to precisely this Victorian social project — they have made domination an indispensable phase or moment in the dialectic of civilization. Whether as sublimation or production, the self-mastery of humanity persists as a precondition for social development.

Terms like repression, renunciation, and discipline, used in their typical psychological sense, have all too often been euphemisms for oppression, exploitation, and powerlessness. And they have been shrewdly linked to "historic purposes" that have never served the ends of "civilization," whatever these may be, but simply the aggrandizement and power of elites and ruling classes. To a large extent, the theoretical corpus of Marx and Freud blur and conceal the extent to which such attempts to manipulate the self are actually extensions of class interests into selfhood. But it is now becoming patently clear that these interests are forging an apathetic, guilt-ridden, will-less psyche that serves not to foster social development but to subvert it. The mastery of human by human, both internally and externally, has actually begun to erode selfhood itself. By rendering
personality increasingly inorganic, it has been pulverizing the very self that presumably lends itself to repression and discipline. In terms of contemporary selfhood, there is simply very little left to shape or form. "Civilization" is "advancing" not so much on the back of humanity but, eerily enough, without it.

More recently, sociobiology has provided its own reinforcement to this Freudo-Marxian "paradigm." The notion that the human brain, as a product of biological evolution, contains primal autonomic, "animalistic," and, capping them both, "higher," more complex cerebral components that must modify, repress, or discipline the raw impulses of the "lower" "animalistic" brain to avoid behavioral and social disorder is patently ideological. Its genesis in Hellenic dualism is obvious. That we have layered brains that perform many functions unthinkingly is doubtlessly neurologically sound. But to impute to specific layers social functions that are distinctly biased by hierarchical and class interests; to create an all-embracing term like "civilization" that incorporates these interests into a biology of the mind; and, finally, to foster a Victorian hypostatization of work, renunciation, guilt, sublimation, and discipline in the service of industrial production and profitable surpluses — all of this is to anchor the shibboleths of Yahweh's will and Hellenic repressive rationality in evolution and anatomy.

To render this ideological development more clearly, let us return to certain assumptions that are built into psychoanalytic categories and see how well they hold up anthropologically. When speaking of organic societies, is it meaningful to say that social life creates a repressive "reality principle"? That the need for productive activity requires the deferral of immediate satisfaction and pleasure? That play must give way to work and complete freedom to social restrictions that make for security? Or, in more fundamental terms, that renunciation is an inherent feature of societal life and guilt is the constraint that society instills in the individual to prevent the transgression of its rules and mores?

I admit that these questions greatly simplify the role that the Freudians and Freudo-Marxians assign to a repressive rationality. Yet it is precisely at levels where psychoanalytic arguments are most simplified that we find the most important differences between organic and hierarchical societies. Perhaps the best general answer that might be given to all of these questions is this: there is very little to renounce or repress when very little has been formed. The sharply etched instincts that psychologists of the past imputed to human nature are now known to be rubbish. A human nature does exist, but it seems to consist of proclivities and potentialities that become increasingly defined by the instillation of social needs. The sexual instinct becomes an object of repression when society overstimulates it and concomitantly frustrates what it has exaggerated in the first place — or, of course, when society just blocks the adequate satisfaction of minimal biosexual needs. Even pleasure, conceived as the fulfillment of desire or as a broad "principle" (to follow Freudian nomenclature), is socially conditioned. If immediate gratification is frustrated by the natural world itself, no renunciatory apparatus is required to "repress" this "need." The "need," if it exists at all, simply cannot be fulfilled, and what is most human about human nature is that human beings can know this harsh fact.

In organic societies, social life more or less approximates this state of affairs. Nature generally imposes such restrictive conditions on human behavior that the social limits encountered by the individual are almost congruent with those created by the natural world. The "superego" and "ego," to use Freudian categories, formed by the child seem to be (as they so often are in fact) the products of natural limitations transmuted into social relationships. The sharp tension between the child and its parents and between the individual and society, which repression presupposes,
is attenuated by the fact that the natural world forms the matrix for the social world and places limits on its development. Stated in Freudian terms, the "pleasure principle" is formed by the "reality principle." The two are simply not distinguishable from each other to the extent that they are in hierarchical and class societies. Hence, they barely exist as separate principles, and the antagonism between them is virtually meaningless. The receptive sensibility, so characteristic of organic society, has yet to be subverted by the demanding, aggressive attitude that provides "civilization" with its rationale for repressive reason and institutions.

Accordingly, organic societies do not make the moral judgments we continually generate against transgressions of our social rules. In the preliterate world, cultures are normally concerned with the objective effects of a crime and whether they are suitably rectified, not with its subjective status on a scale of right and wrong. "Viewed from certain African data, a crime is always a wrong done to society which has been detected," notes Paul Radin. "A wrong committed in full knowledge that it was such but which has not been detected is simply a fact that has no social consequences." While there may be a "spiritual" dimension to a "wrongdoer's state of mind," there is "no feeling of sin in the Hebrew Christian meaning of the term." All that society asks of the wrongdoer is that he or she merely recognize that an offense has been committed against the harmony of the community. If the offense is redressed, no stigma is attached to the action. "This serves, as a matter of fact, as the best and most effective deterrent to wrongdoing," Radin emphasizes with characteristic utilitarian fervor. He goes on to note that when a Bantu was asked whether he was penitent at the time he committed a certain crime and the native answered, "No, it had not been found out then," there was no cynicism implied nor was this a sign of moral depravity. No disturbance in the harmony of the communal life had occurred.

The native may feel shame if the transgression is discovered or may lose face as a result of public disapproval, but he or she does not feel guilt, notably, an internalized sense of self-blame and anxiety that evokes repentance and a desire for atonement.[25]

Guilt and repentance, as distinguished from shame and the practical need to redress the effects of a social transgression, become character traits with the emergence of morality. Historically, the formulation of moral precepts is initially the work of the prophet and priest; later, in its more sophisticated forms, as ethics, it is the realm of the philosopher and political thinker. These precepts reflect an entirely different mental state than what occurs in organic society. To say that social transgressions are "bad" and that obedience to society's mores is "good" is quite different from saying that one behavior upholds the harmony of the group and that another disrupts it. "Good" and "bad" are moral and later ethical judgments. They are not delimited exclusively to acts. What makes "good" and "bad" particularly significant is that they are evidence of the subtle introjections of social codes into the individual's psyche: the judgments individuals make when they take counsel with their consciences — that enormously powerful product of socialization. We shall later see that morality, particularly as it phases into its rational form as ethics, fosters the development of selfhood, individuality, and a new cognizance of the good and the virtuous. Here, I am primarily concerned with those highly opaque emotional sanctions called customs. Viewed from this perspective, morality was devised to mystify and conceal a once-unified, egalitarian system of behavior. The seemingly moral standards of that community were centered not around the "sinfulness" of behavior or the unquestioning commands of a patriarchal deity and a despotic State, but around the functional effects of behavior on the integrity and viability of the community.[26]
With the breakdown of the organic community, privilege began to replace parity, and hierarchical or class society began to replace egalitarian relationships. Moral precepts could now be used to obscure the mutilation of organic society by making social values the subject-matter of ideological rather than practical criteria. Once acts were transferable from the real world to this mystified realm, society’s rules were free to mystify reality itself and obscure the contradictions that now emerged in the social realm.

But, as yet, this process was merely the ideological side of a more crucial restructuring of the psyche itself. For morality not only staked out its sovereignty over overt behavior as restraints on "immoral" acts; it went further and assumed guardianship against the "evil" thoughts that beleaguered the individual’s mind. Morality demands not only behavioral "virtue" but spiritual, psychic, and mental as well. The rational evaluation of right and wrong is ignored. That was to be left to ethics. Hierarchy, class, and ultimately the State penetrate the very integument of the human psyche and establish within it unreflective internal powers of coercion and constraint. In this respect, they achieve a "sanitizing" authority that no institution or ideology can hope to command. By using guilt and self-blame, the inner State can control behavior long before fear of the coercive powers of the State have to be invoked. Self-blame, in effect, becomes self-fear — the introjection of social coercion in the form of insecurity, anxiety and guilt.

Renunciation now becomes socially meaningful and "morally" invaluable to history's ruling elites because there really is something to renounce: the privileges of status, the appropriation of material surpluses, even the lingering memory of an egalitarian order in which work was pleasurable and playful and when usufruct and the irreducible minimum still determined the allocation of the means of life. Under the conditions of class rule, a "pleasure principle" does, in fact, emerge. And it stands sharply at odds with a "reality principle" whose limits were once congruent with those imposed by nature. To the extent that the ruling few are freed from these limits by the toiling many, the tension between the two principles is increasingly exacerbated; it assumes the form not only of a social trauma, notably, as class conflict, but also of psychic trauma in the form of guilt, renunciation, and insecurity.

But here the Freudian drama completely deceives us — and reveals an extraordinary reactionary content. The fact that nature’s limits constitute the only "reality principle" of organic society is ignored; indeed, it is displaced by a mythic "pleasure principle" that must be constrained by guilt and renunciation. Cooperative nature is turned into predatory nature, riddled by egoism, rivalry, cruelty, and the pursuit of immediate gratification. But "civilization," formed by rationality, labor, and an. epistemology of self — repression, produces a "reality principle" that holds unruly nature under its sovereignty and provides humanity with the matrix for culture, cooperation, and creativity. Freud’s transposition of nature and "civilization" involves a gross misreading of anthropology and history. A "reality principle" that, in fact, originates in nature’s limits, is transmuted into an egoistic pursuit for immediate gratification — in short, the very "pleasure principle" that social domination has yet to create historically and render meaningful. The natural home of humanity, to borrow Bloch’s terminology, which promotes usufruct, complementarity, and sharing, is degraded into a Hobbesian world of all against all, while the "civilized" home of humanity, which fosters rivalry, egotism, and possessiveness, is viewed as a Judea-Hellenic world of morality, intellect, and creativity. Freud’s drastic reshuffling of the "pleasure principle" and "reality principle" thus consistently validates the triumph of domination, elitism, and an epistemology of rule. Divested of what Freud calls "civilization," with its luxuriant traits of domination,
repressive reason, and renunciation, humanity is reduced to the "state of nature" that Hobbes was to regard as brutish animality.

Shame has no place in this Freudian universe — only guilt. "Civilization," whose ends this specious "reality principle" is meant to serve, turns out to be precisely the class and exploitative society unique to western capitalism — a "civilization" of unadorned domination and social privilege.[27] Freud’s congruence of views with Marx is often remarkable in their common orientation toward "civilization." For Freud, work "has a greater effect than any other technique of living in the direction of binding the individual more closely to reality; in his work he is at least securely attached to a part of reality, the human community."

Ultimately, it is not the ends of "civilization" that are served by the Freudian "reality principle" but the ends of the "pleasure principle" that the ruling elites have preempted for themselves. It is not nature that fosters an unruly psychic animality with its appetite for immediate gratification, but a hierarchical "reality principle" — an epistemology of rule — one that rests on domination and exploitation. The truly brutish "mob" that Freud fearfully associated with the ascendancy of aggressive instincts over sweet reason exists on the summits of "civilization," not at its base. Freud’s pessimism over the fate of "civilization" may have been justified, but not for the reasons he advanced. It is not a repressed humanity whose aggressiveness threatens to extinguish "civilization" today but the very architects of its superego: the bureaucratic institutions and their "father-figures" that rule society from above.
5. The Legacy of Domination

The hierarchical origins of morality occur in the early and classical forms of family organization — in the moral authority claimed by its male head. The Bible provides ample evidence of the sovereignty enjoyed by the patriarch in dealing with his wives and children. To put it bluntly, they were his chattels, like the animals that made up his herds. His power over them lacked all restraint but that evoked by compassion and by the feeling of immortality he derived from the living products of his loins. Whether or not the son be cast in the image of the father, both are nevertheless made in the image of the deity who thereby unites them by covenant and blood. The demanding characteristics of father-love, in contrast to the selfless characteristics of mother-love, represent the male’s resolution of his quarrel with eternity. The Hebrew patriarchs required no heaven or immortal soul, for both of them existed in the physical reality of their sons.

More intriguing, however, is the paternal authority claimed by the Greeks, whose philosophers tried to give moral precepts a rational or ethical — not a divine — sanction. Initially, the head of the household occupied an almost regal position with respect to other members of the family. Despite the rational dimension Hellenic philosophy tried to impart to social relationships, however, its capacity to invade the family was initially limited. As E. R. Dodds was to observe in a fascinating study of the issue:

Over his children his authority is in early times unlimited: he is free to expose them in infancy [that is, engage in infanticide] and in manhood to expel an erring or rebellious son from the community, as Theseus expelled Hippolytus, as Oeneus expelled Tydeus, as Trophios expelled Pylades, as Zeus himself cast out Hephaestos from Olympus for siding with his Mother.

Until well into the sixth century B.C., the son "had duties but no rights; while his father lived, he was a perpetual minor." In its classical form, patriarchy implied male gerontocracy, not only the rule of males over females. The young, irrespective of their sex, were placed rigorously under the moral and social authority of the oldest members of the family.

The Greek patriarch’s commanding position over the private lives of his wards was to be sharply attenuated by the State, which was to stake out its own claims over young males whom it needed for bureaucrats and soldiers. But in that shadowy period of transition when the late Neolithic phased into Bronze-Age and Iron-Age "civilizations," when strongly patriarchal invaders were to overwhelm settled, often matricentric, cultures, male-oriented family structures formed the basic social elements of the community and starkly imprinted wide-ranging values on social life. Indeed, they helped to prepare the moral underpinnings of political institutions and the State — ironically, the very structures by which they were to be ultimately absorbed.

Even before social classes emerged and the priesthood established quasi-political temple despotisms over society, the patriarch embodied in a social form the very system of authority that the State later embodied in a political form. In the next chapter, we shall examine the curious dialectical tension between the patriarchal family and the State that gave rise to ideas of justice and
ethics — a dialectic in which the father was transformed from a tyrant into a judge and later from a judge into a teacher. But until patriarchal power was attenuated by political forces, it was the father who embodied not only a prepolitical morality of social domination, but more specifically, a morality that entailed visions of the domination of nature.

The earliest victim of this domineering relationship was human nature, notably, the human nature of woman. Although patriarchy represents a highly authoritarian form of gerontocracy in which the elders initially began to rule society as a collective whole, woman increasingly lost her parity with man as the latter gained social ascendancy over the domestic sphere of life with the expansion of his civil sphere. Patricentricity and finally patriarchy came completely into their own. By the same token, woman became the archetypal Other of morality, ultimately the human embodiment of its warped image of evil. That the male still opposes his society to woman’s nature, his capacity to produce commodities to her ability to reproduce life, his rationalism to her “instinctual” drives has already received enough emphasis in the anthropological and feminist literature. Accordingly, woman enters into man’s moral development as its antipode — the antithetical and contrasting factor par excellence — in shaping its tenets. Personally, she has no part “in the efficiency on which [the male’s] civilization is based,” observe Horkheimer and Adorno in their superb discussion of her status:

It is man who has to go out into an unfriendly world, who has to struggle and produce. Woman is not a being in her own right, a subject. She produces nothing but looks after those who do; she is a living monument to a long-vanished era when the domestic economy was self-contained.

In a civilization that devalues nature, she is the "image of nature," the "weaker and smaller," and the differences imposed by nature between the sexes become "the most humiliating that can exist in a male-dominated society . . . a key stimulus to aggression."[28]

Yet woman haunts this male "civilization" with a power that is more than archaic or atavistic. Every male-oriented society must persistently exorcise her ancient powers, which abide in her ability to reproduce the species, to rear it, to provide it with a loving refuge from the "unfriendly world," indeed, to accomplish those material achievements — food cultivation, pottery, and weaving, to cite the most assured of woman’s technical inventions — that rendered that world possible, albeit on terms quite different from those formulated by the male.

Even before man embarks on his conquest of man — of class by class — patriarchal morality obliges him to affirm his conquest of woman. The subjugation of her nature and its absorption into the nexus of patriarchal morality forms the archetypal act of domination that ultimately gives rise to man’s imagery of a subjugated nature. It is perhaps not accidental that nature and earth retain the female gender into our own time. What may seem to us like a linguistic atavism that reflects a long-gone era when social life was matricentric and nature was its domestic abode may well be an on-going and subtly viable expression of man’s continual violation of woman as nature and of nature as woman.

The symbolism of this violation already appears early in primordial ceremonies, almost as though the wish is father to the act and its ritualistic affirmation in mere drama is a harbinger of its later reality. From the depths of the Ituri forest to the gilded confines of the Church, woman is raised up to her appropriate eminence all the more to cast her down in subjugation to man. Even the central African pygmies, Turnbull’s Forest People, have the equivalent of Eve or Pandora, who
alternately seduces and succors the male, but in the end must never be permitted to "dominate" him. Her association with the arts of "civilization" is permeated by an envious negativity. Eve seduces Adam into eating the fruit of the tree of right and wrong, only to afflict him with the curse of knowledge. Her Hellenic sister, Pandora, exposes man to the ills that follow the loss of all innocence. And the Sumerian "harlot" who sleeps with Enkidu in the Gilgamesh Epic irrevocably denatures him by separating him from his friends, the beasts of the plains and forest. The Odyssey is a spiteful expedition through history in which the epic exorcises the ancient female deities by ridiculing them as perverse harriands.

But patriarchal morality reduces woman not merely to a generalized Hegelian Other who must be opposed, negated, and contained, as Simone de Beauvoir emphasized a generation ago; it particularizes this otherness into a specific hatred of her inquisitiveness, of her probing subjectivity and curiosity. Even in denying woman's "being in her own right," man affirms it by damning Eve for responding to the serpent, Pandora for daring to open the box of afflictions, and Circe for her power of prevision. A gnawing sense of inferiority and incompleteness stamps every aspect of the newly emergent male morality: evil abounds everywhere, pleasure and the senses are deceptive, and the chaos that always threatens to engulf the kosmos must be constantly warded off lest nature reclaim "civilization." Ironically, there is no denial, here, of woman's subjectivity but a shrieking fear of her latent powers and the possibility that they may be stirred back into life again.

Hence, patriarchal morality must bring her into complicity with the male's ever-tremulous image of her inferiority. She must be taught to view her posture of renunciation, modesty, and obedience as the intrinsic attributes of her subjectivity, in short, her total negation as a personality. It is utterly impossible to understand why meaningless wars, male boastfulness, exaggerated political rituals, and a preposterous elaboration of civil institutions engulf so many different, even tribal, societies without recognizing how much these phenomena are affirmations of male activity and expressions of his "supremacy." From the mindless and incessant conflicts that New Guinean peoples wage between themselves to the overly meticulous institutionalization of political forms, the male is ever-active and "overburdened" by his responsibilities — often because there is so little for him to do in primordial communities and even in many historical societies. But his increasing denigration of woman and his transposition of otherness from a conciliatory to antagonistic relationship generates a hostile ambience in society — a meanness of spirit, a craving for recognition, an aggressive appetite, and a terrifying exaggeration of cruelty — that is to render man increasingly prone to the victimization of his own kind. The slave is the male incarnation of the long-enslaved woman: a mere object to be possessed and used by the canons of patriarchal morality. The structuring of otherness antagonistically, which Hegel celebrated as the first steps toward self-identity, becomes an epistemology that devalues humanity into an aggregate of mere objects, a psychological regression that ultimately leads to the arrogant conception of human beings as the mere embodiment of labor.

As victim and aggressor, woman and man are thus brought into blind complicity with a moral system that denies their human nature and ultimately the integrity of external nature as well. But latent forever in the repressive morality that emerges with patriarchy is a smoldering potentiality for revolt with its explosive rejection of the roles that socialization has instilled in all but the deepest recesses of human subjectivity. The moral constraints imposed by patriarchy and finally by class rule remain a constant affront to human rationality. From the ashes of morality arises the program of a new approach to right and wrong — a rational discipline called ethics — that is
free of hierarchically instilled patterns of behavior. From ethics will emerge rational criteria for evaluating virtue, evil, and freedom, not merely blame, sin, and their penalties. Ethics may try to encompass morality and justify its epistemologies of rule, but it is always vulnerable to the very rational standards it has created to justify domination.

Self-denial and the increasingly heightened contradictions of rule create tensions so inherently destabilizing to "civilization" that class society must always be armored — not only psychologically by the State it cultivates within the individual, but physically by the State it institutionalizes. As Plato reminded the Athenians, the slave's nature is an unruly one, a philosophical formulation for a condition that could periodically become an explosive social reality. Where morality and psychic introjection fail to contain mounting social and personal contradictions, class society must have recourse to outright coercion — to the institutionalized system of force we call the political State.

Between society and the fully developed political State there is ultimately a historical point where the psychic constraints created by repressive socialization and morality begin to deteriorate. No longer can social and personal contradictions be resolved by means of discourse. All that remains is recourse to the threat of brute violence. Precapitalist society never shunned this possibility or cloaked it with sanctimonious homilies about the sacredness of life. It candidly admitted that coercion was its ultimate defence against social and popular unrest.

One might conjecture that the State as an instrument of organized violence evolved from the open exercise of violence. This has been the thesis of many radical theorists such as Proudhon. Yet there is much that so reductionist a view leaves unanswered historically, as both Marx and Kropotkin implied in a number of their writings.[29] The State did not simply explode on the social horizon like a volcanic eruption. Pastoral invasions may have accelerated its development dramatically, but a leap from stateless to State forms is probably a fiction.

The fact that the State is a hybridization of political with social institutions, of coercive with distributive functions, of highly punitive with regulatory procedures, and finally of class with administrative needs — this melding process has produced very real ideological and practical paradoxes that persist as major issues today. How easily, for example, can we separate State from society on the municipal, economic, national, and international levels? Is it possible to do so completely? Have State and society become so inextricably interwoven that a free society is impossible without certain State features such as the delegation of authority? In short, is freedom possible without the "depoliticized" State Marx was to proffer, or a "minimum" State, as some of his "libertarian" acolytes have contended? An attempt to answer these questions must be deferred to the closing chapters of this book. For the present, what concerns us are those attributes of the State that have meshed it with society to a point where our ability to distinguish between the two is completely blurred.

Clearly, a distinction must first be made between social coercion and social influence. Despite their similarities, the two are not identical: Weber's charismatic leader at the beginnings of history is hardly the same as an impersonal bureaucracy near its end. The first is personal; the second, institutional. To take this distinction still further, hierarchical relationships that are based on personality are notoriously loose, ad hoc, and easily disassembled, like the "dominance-submission hierarchies" ethologists so readily impute to primates. Bureaucratic relationships, by contrast, are notoriously rigid, sclerotic, and intentionally divested of all personality. They tend to be self-perpetuating and self-expansive. As mere instruments of rule, bureaucratic structures are quintessentially hierarchical; indeed, they are the political expression of objective power, of

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power that "merely" happens to be executed by people who, as bureaucrats, are totally divested of personality and uniqueness. Accordingly, for many areas of the modern world, such people have been turned almost literally into a State technology, one in which each bureaucrat is interchangeable with another including, more recently, with mechanical devices.\[30\]

The difference between social coercion and social influence is clearly seen in seemingly hierarchical societies that are still politically undeveloped. The fairly stratified Northwest Coast Indians provide a good example that could easily be extended to include the more sophisticated cultures of Polynesia. These Indian societies had slaves, and presumably the very "last and lowliest citizen knew his precise hereditary position with an [exactly] defined distance from the chief," observes Peter Farb. But, in point of fact, they could hardly be called State-structured communities. The chief "had no political power and no way to back up his decisions." His social influence was based on prestige. He lacked any "monopoly of force." If he failed to perform his duties to the satisfaction of the community, he could be removed. Indeed, despite the highly stratified structure of these communities, they were not a "class society" in any modern sense of the term. Stratification was based on whether one was more closely related by blood ties to the chief or less related — literally, to use Farb's term, a matter of "distance from the chief." In short, lineage determined status, not economic position or institutional gradations. "To insist upon the use of the term 'class system' for Northwest Coast society," observes P. Drucker, "means that each individual was in a class by himself" — a situation that more closely resembles primate "hierarchies" than the institutionalized stratification we associate with a class society.

What initially characterizes the emergence of the State is the gradual politicization of important social functions. From Indian American to the most distant reaches of Asia, we find considerable evidence that personal status roles, very similar in principle to the chieftainships of the Northwest Coast Indians, were slowly transformed into political institutions, a transformation that involved not only coercion but the satisfaction of genuine social needs. One of the principal needs these institutions satisfied was the redistribution of goods among ecologically and culturally disparate areas. In the absence of local markets, the kingly figures who rose to prominence in the Nile valley, on the Mesopotamian plains, in the Peruvian mountains, and in the river valleys of India and China made it possible for the produce of food cultivators, hunters, animal herders, and fishermen to reach communities, including administrative cities, that might otherwise have had access to only a limited variety of goods. Although similar functions had been performed earlier by temple storehouses on a local scale, the monarchs of ancient civilizations graduated these functions to an imperial scale.

Moreover, they also served to buffer periods of "feast" and "famine." The story of Joseph is more than a Biblical parable on consanguineal responsibilities and allegiances. It exemplifies autocratic ideology that intermingles the social with the political principle in the mystified world of prophetic dreams. Joseph embodies the combined roles of the clairvoyant with the vizier, the mythopoetic figures with the calculating rational functionary. If Gilgamesh reminds us of the warrior who must be socialized from deity into king, Joseph reminds us of a still earlier change: the tribal shaman who is to become an explicitly political figure before society and the State are clearly distinguishable. His story, in fact, confronts us with one of the paradoxes of the past that remains with us today: where does the political seer (from the charismatic leader to the constitutional theorist) end and the social administrator, pure and simple, begin? Indeed, where can the State be distinguished from the socially pragmatic functions it begins to absorb? These
are no idle questions, as we shall see, for they haunt us continually in our attempts to reconstruct a vision of a free and human social future.

Joseph is also one of the earliest political professionals, and professionalism is a hallmark of statism — the abolition of social management as an "amateur" activity.[30] Canons of efficiency become a political morality in themselves, thereby replacing the still unarticulated notion of informal, presumably inefficient forms of freedom. Even more than Yahweh, the State is a jealous god. It must preempt, absorb, and concentrate power as a nutritive principle of self-preservation. This form of political imperialism over all other prerogatives of society produces a rank jungle of metaphysical statist ideologies: the Enlightenment’s identification of the State with society, Hegel’s concept of the State as the realization of society’s ethical idea, Spencer’s notion of the State as a "biological organism," Bluntschli’s vision of the State as the institutionalization of a "collective will," Meyer’s idealization of the State as an organizing principle of society. One can go on indefinitely and selectively piece together a corporative vision of the State that easily lends itself to Fascist ideology.

Historically, the State obliterates the distinction between governance and administration. The so-called primitive peoples in organic societies were acutely conscious of this difference. The closer we come to cultures organized in bands and comparatively simple tribes, the more "rule" is an ad hoc, noninstitutionalized system of administration. Even the Crow Indian military and religious societies (actually, club-like fraternities) are examples not of government but of administration. In contrast to the permanent institutionalized structures based on obedience and command that government presupposes even on the most rudimentary levels, Crow societies were marked by a rotation of functions and by episodic sovereignty for very limited and well-defined ends. Such sovereignty as these societies enjoyed over the community as a whole was largely functional: they primarily policed the bison hunts, a project whose success involved a high degree of coordination and discipline.

To call these activities "governmental" rather than "administrative" and to see in them evidence of a fully developed State rather than political functions of the most rudimentary kind is not mere word-play. It reflects conceptual confusion at its worst. In political ideologies of all types, the abuse of terms like government and administration turn the State into the template for a free society, however much its functions are reduced to a "minimum." Ultimately, this confusion provides the State with the ideological rationale for its maximum development, notably the Soviet-type regimes of Eastern Europe. Like the market, the State knows no limits; it can easily become a self-generating and self-expanding force for its own sake, the institutional form in which domination for the sake of domination acquires palpability.

The State’s capacity to absorb social functions provides it not only with an ideological rationale for its existence; it physically and psychologically rearranges social life so that it seems indispensable as an organizing principle for human consociation. In other words, the State has an epistemology of its own, a political one that is imprinted upon the psyche and mind. A centralized State gives rise to a centralized society; a bureaucratic State to a bureaucratic society; a militaristic State to a militaristic society—and all develop the outlooks and psyches with the appropriate "therapeutic" techniques for adapting the individual to each.

In restructuring society around itself, the State acquires superadded social functions that now appear as political functions. It not only manages the economy but politicizes it; it not only colonizes social life but absorbs it. Social forms thus appear as State forms and social values as political values. Society is reorganized in such a way that it becomes indistinguishable from the
State. Revolution is thus confronted not only with the task of smashing the State and reconstructing administration along libertarian lines; it must also smash society, as it were, and reconstruct human consociation itself along new communal lines. The problem that now faces revolutionary movements is not merely one of reappropriating society but literally reconstituting it.[31]

But this melding of State and society, as we shall see, is a fairly recent development. Initially, what often passes for the State in the sociological literature of our time is a very loose, unstable, indeed, even a fairly democratic ensemble of institutions that have very shallow roots in society. Popular assemblies of citizens are rarely complete State forms, even when their membership is resolutely restricted. Nor are chieftainships and rudimentary kingships easily resolvable into authentic political institutions. During early stages of antiquity, when councils and centralized institutions begin to assume State-like forms, they are easily unravelled and governance returns again to society. We would do well to call the tenuous political institutions of Athens quasi-State forms, and the so-called Oriental despotisms of antiquity are often so far-removed from village life that their control of traditional communities is tenuous and unsystematic.

The medieval commune is marked by equally striking ambiguities in the relationships between State and society. What renders Kropotkin’s discussion of the commune so fascinating in Mutual Aid is his very loose use of the term State to describe its system of self-governance. As he emphasizes,

Self-jurisdiction was the essential point, and self-jurisdiction meant self-administration. But the commune was not simply an autonomous part of the State — such ambiguous words had yet to be invented by that time — it was a State in itself. It had the right of war and peace, of federation and alliance with its neighbors. It was sovereign in its own affairs, and mixed with no others. The supreme political power could be vested in a democratic forum, as was the case in Pskov, whose vyeche sent and received ambassadors, concluded treaties, accepted and sent away princes, or went on without them for dozens of years; or it was vested in, or usurped by, an aristocracy of merchants or even nobles as was the case in hundreds of Italian and middle European cities. The principle, nevertheless, remained the same: The city was a State and — what is perhaps more remarkable — when the power in the city was usurped by an aristocracy of merchants or even nobles, the inner life of the city and the democratism of its daily life did not disappear: they depended but little upon what could be called the political form of the State.

Given Kropotkin’s highly sophisticated anarchist views, these lines are remarkable — and they actually cast considerable light on the formation of the State as a graded phenomenon. The State acquires stability, form, and identity only when personal loyalties are transmuted into depersonalized institutions, power becomes centralized and professionalized, custom gives way to law, and governance absorbs administration. But the decisive shift from society to the State occurs with the most supreme political act of all: the delegation of power. It is not insignificant that heated disputes, both theoretically and historically, have revolved about this crucially important act. Social contract theory, from Hobbes to Rousseau, recognized in the delegation of power an almost metaphysical centrality. The social contract itself was seen as an act of personal disempowerment, a conscious surrender by the self of control over the social conditions of life. To Hobbes and Locke, to be sure, the delegation of power was restricted by the security of life (Hobbes) and its extension through labor into the sanctity of property (Locke).

Rousseau’s views were sterner and more candid than those of his British predecessors. In a widely quoted passage in The Social Contract, he declared:
Sovereignty, for the same reason as it makes it inalienable, cannot be represented. It lies essentially in the general will, and will does not admit of representation: it is either the same, or other; there is no intermediate possibility. The deputies of the people, therefore, are not and cannot be its representative: they are merely its stewards, and can carry through no definitive acts. Every law the people has not ratified in person is null and void — is, in fact, not a law. The people of England regards itself as free: but it is grossly mistaken: it is free only during the election of members of parliament. As soon as they are elected, slavery overtakes it, and it is nothing.

Removed from the general context of The Social Contract, this passage can be easily misunderstood. But what is important is Rousseau’s clear distinction between deputation and delegation, direct democracy and representation. To delegate power is to divest personality of its most integral traits; it denies the very notion that the individual is competent to deal not only with the management of his or her personal life out with its most important context: the social context. Certainly early societies did not deal with the issue of delegated power in terms of selfhood and its integrity, but the historical record suggests that they functioned as though these issues profoundly influenced their behavior.

The problem of delegated power emerged most clearly in the affairs of the "city-state." Indeed, beyond localized social areas, the problem itself becomes elusive and obscure if only because it loses its human scale and comprehensibility. In Sumerian history according to Henri Frankfort, the earliest "city-states" were managed by "equalitarian assemblies," which possessed "freedom to an uncommon degree." Even subjection to the will of the majority, as expressed in a vote, was unknown. The delegation of power to a numerical majority, in effect, was apparently viewed as a transgression of primal integrity, at least in its tribal form. "The assembly continued deliberation under the guidance of the elders until practical unanimity was reached." As the city-states began to expand and quarrel over land and water-rights, the power to wage war was conferred on an ensi or "great man." But this delegation of power would revert to the assembly once a conflict between the "city-states" came to an end. As Frankfort notes, however,

The threat of an emergency was never absent once the cities flourished and increased in number. Contiguous fields, questions of drainage and irrigation, the safe-guarding of supplies by procuring safety in transit — all these might become matters of dispute between neighboring cities. We can follow through five or six generations a futile and destructive war between Umma and Lagash with a few fields of arable land as the stakes. Under such conditions the kingship [bala] seems to have become permanent.

Even so, there is evidence of popular revolts, possibly to restore the old social dispensation or to diminish the authority of the bala. The records are too dim to give us a clear idea of all the issues that may have produced internal conflicts within Sumerian cities, but a leap from tribalism to despotism is obvious myth.

The issue of delegating power while affirming the competency of the body politic achieves an extraordinary degree of consciousness and clarity in classical Athens. Perikles’ Funeral Oration is one of the most remarkable vestiges we have of polis democracy, as reconstructed by one of its opponents, Thukydides. The oration celebrates not only civic duty and freedom; it strongly affirms the claims of personality and private freedom. Athens' laws "afford equal justice to all in their private differences," Perikles is reported to have declared, and "class considerations" do not "interfere with merit; nor again does poverty bar the way. If a man is able to serve the polis, he is not hindered by the obscurity of his position." Political freedom extends also to our ordinary life. There, far from exercising a jealous surveillance over each other, we do not feel called upon
to be angry with our neighbour for doing what he likes, or even indulge in those injurious looks which cannot fail to be offensive, although they inflict no positive penalty. But all this ease in our private relations does not make us lawless as citizens.

From these personally exhilarating observations, for which there is no available precedent in the classical literature, the oration builds up to a keen worldly sense of Athens as a polis that transcends the confines of a tradition-bound community:

We throw open our city to the world, and never by alien acts exclude foreigners from any opportunity of learning or observing, although the eyes of an enemy may occasionally profit by our liberality, trusting less in system and policy than to the native spirit of our citizens; while in education, where our rivals from their very cradles by a painful discipline seek after manliness, at Athens we live exactly as we please and yet are just as ready to encounter every legitimate danger.

Perikles' confidence in the integrity of the polis is built upon his expansive confidence in the integrity of its citizens. Here, the Athenian ideal of citizenship as the physical reality of the body politic — indeed, as society incarnated into an assembled community of free individuals who directly formulate and administer policy — finds a conscious expression that it does not achieve again until very recent times. To Perikles, all Athenians are to be viewed as competent individuals, as selves that are capable of self-management, hence their right to claim unmediated sovereignty over public affairs. The genius of Athens lies not only in the completeness of the polis but in the completeness of its citizens, for while Athens may be "the school of Hellas," Perikles doubts "if the world can produce a man, who where he has only himself to depend upon, is equal to so many emergencies and graced by so happy a versatility, as the Athenian." The Greek concept of autarkeia, of individual self-sufficiency graced by an all-roundedness of selfhood, forms the authentic basis of Athenian democracy. Not surprisingly, this famous passage, which begins with a paean to the community, Athens, ends with its warmest tribute to the individual — the Athenian.

We have very few statements, including the declarations of human rights produced by the great revolutions, that bear comparison with Perikles'. The great oration exhibits a sensitive balance between community and individual, and an association of social administration with competence that rarely achieves comparable centrality in later statements on freedom. It is not in "god" that the Athenian polis placed its "trust," but in itself. The practice of a direct democracy was an affirmation of citizenship as a process of direct action. Athens was institutionally organized to convert its potentially monadic citizenry from free-floating atoms into a cohesive body politic. Its regular citizen assemblies (Ecclesia), its rotating Council of Five Hundred (Boule), and its court juries that replicated in the hundreds the polis in miniature, were the conscious creations of a public realm that had largely been fostered intuitively in tribal societies and were rarely to rise to the level of rational practice in the centuries to follow. The entire Athenian system was organized to obstruct political professionalism, to prevent the emergence of bureaucracy, and to perpetuate an active citizenry as a matter of design. We may rightly fault this democracy for denying power to slaves, women, and resident aliens, who formed the great majority of the population. But these traits were not unique to Athens; they existed throughout the Mediterranean world in the fifth century B.C. What was uniquely Athenian were the institutional forms it developed for a minority of its population — forms that more traditional "civilizations" rendered into the privilege of only a very small ruling class.
Conflicts over delegation and deputation of power, bureaucracy, and the citizen’s claims to competence appear throughout history. They recur in the medieval commune, in the English, American, and French revolutions, in the Paris Commune of 1871, and even recently in the form of popular demands for municipal and neighborhood autonomy. Like a strange talisman, these conflicts serve almost electrically to dissociate the social claims of the State from the political claims of society. The issue of public competence penetrates the ideological armor that conceals State functions from social to separate governance from administration, professionalism from amateurism, institutionalized relations from functional ones, and the monopoly of violence from the citizens in arms. Athenian institutions were unique not merely because of their practices, but because they were the products of conscious intent rather than the accidents of political intuition or custom. The very practice of the Athenians in creating their democratic institutions was itself an end; it was equivalent to the polis conceived as a social process.

A very thin line separates the practice of direct democracy from direct action.[32] The former is institutionalized and self-disciplined; the latter is episodic and often highly spontaneous. Yet a relationship between an assembled populace that formulates policies in a face-to-face manner and such actions as strikes, civil disobedience, and even insurrection can be established around the right of a people to assume unmediated control over public life. Representation has been validated by an elitist belief that the only select individuals (at best, selected by virtue of experience and ability, at worst, by birth) are qualified to understand public affairs. Today, representation is validated by instrumental reasons, such as the complexity of modern society and its maze of logistical intricacies.

Hellenic democracy acquired a particularly onerous — actually, fearsome — reputation as a "mobocracy," which is a modern translation of its opponents’ views in the fifth century B.C., perhaps because it revealed that direct action could be institutionalized without being bureaucratized. Hence, direct action could be turned into a permanent process — a permanent revolution — not merely a series of episodic acts. If it could be shown that direct action as a form of self-administration serves to stabilize society, not reduce it to chaotic shambles, the State would be placed in the dock of history as a force for violence and domination.

A few important questions remain. Under what social conditions can direct action be institutionalized as a direct democracy? And what are the institutional forms that could be expected to produce this change? The answers to these questions, like others we have raised, must be deferred to the closing portions of the work. What we can reasonably ask at this point is what kind of citizen or public self — what principle of citizenship and selfhood — forms the true basis for a direct democracy? The common principle that legitimates direct action and direct democracy is a body politic’s commitment to the belief that an assembled public, united as free and autonomous individuals, can deal in a competent, face-to-face manner with the direction of public affairs.

No concept of politics has been the target of greater derision and ideological denunciation by the State, for it impugns every rationale for statehood. It substitutes the ideal of personal competency for elitism, amateurism for professionalism, a body politic in the protoplasmic sense of a face-to-face democracy for the delegation and bureaucratization of decision-making and its execution, the re-empowerment of the individual and the attempt to achieve agreement by dialogue and reason for the monopoly of power and violence. From the State’s viewpoint, the public “usurpation” of social affairs represents the triumph of chaos over kosmos. And if the legacy of domination has had any broader purpose than the support of hierarchical and class interests, it has been the attempt to exorcise the belief in public competence from social discourse itself. Al-
though direct democracy has received more gentle treatment as an archaism that is incompatible with the needs of a "complex" and "sophisticated" society, direct action as the training ground for the selfhood, self-assertiveness, and sensibility for direct democracy has been consistently denounced as anarchy, or equivalently, the degradation of social life to chaos.[33]

One society — capitalism, in both its democratic and totalitarian forms — has succeeded to a remarkable degree in achieving this exorcism — and only in very recent times. The extraordinary extent to which bourgeois society has discredited popular demands for public control of the social process is the result of sweeping structural changes in society itself. Appeals for local autonomy suggest politically naive and atavistic social demands only because domination has become far more than a mere legacy. It has sedimented over every aspect of social life. Indeed, the increasingly vociferous demands for local control may reflect the extent to which community itself, be it a municipality or a neighborhood, is faced with extinction.

What makes capitalism so unique is the sweeping power it gives to economics: the supremacy it imparts to homo economicus. As Marx, who celebrated this triumph as an economic historian with the same vigor he was to condemn it as a social critic, observed:

The great civilizing influence of capital [lies in] its production of a stage of society in comparison to which all earlier ones appear as mere local developments of humanity and as nature-idolatry. For the first time, nature becomes purely an object of humankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself; and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production.

Much of this quotation was written in bad faith, for no one was more mindful in his day that the fear of capital and attempts to contain it on ethical grounds reach back to Aristotle's time and even earlier. But the effects of capitalism and its historical uniqueness are accurately represented. In every precapitalist society, countervailing forces (all "nature-idolatry" aside) existed to restrict the market economy. No less significantly, many precapitalist societies raised what they thought were insuperable obstacles to the penetration of the State into social life. Ironically, Marx, more so than the major social theorists of his day, recognized the power of village communities to resist the invasion of trade and despotic political forms into society's abiding communal substrate.

In Capital, Marx meticulously explored the remarkable capacity of India's traditional village society to retain its archetypal identity against the corrosive effects of the State. As he observed:

Those small and extremely ancient Indian communities, for example, some of which continue to exist to this day, are based on the possession of the land in common, on the blending of agriculture and handicrafts and on an unalterable division of labor, which serves as a fixed plan and basis for action whenever a new community is started . . . . The law which regulates the division of labour in the community acts with the irresistible authority of a law of nature, while each individual craftsman, the smith, the carpenter and so on, conducts in his workshop all the operations of his handicraft in the traditional way, but independently; without recognizing any authority. The simplicity of the productive organism in these self-sufficing communities which constantly reproduce themselves in the same form and, when accidentally destroyed, spring up again on the same spot and with the same name — this simplicity supplies the key to the riddle of the unchangeability of Asiatic societies, which is in such striking contrast with the constant dissolution and refounding of Asiatic states, and their never-ceasing changes of dynasty. The structure
of the fundamental economic elements of society remains untouched by the storms which blow up in the cloudy regions of politics.

Again, one could wish for a less economistic and perhaps less technical interpretation of the Asian village whose elaborate culture seems to completely elude Marx’s attention in these passages. So overwhelming was this cultural “inertia” that nothing short of genocidal annihilation could overcome its capacity to resist invasive economic and political forces.[34]

A similar role was played by the guilds of medieval Europe, the yeomanry of Reformation England, and the peasantry of western Europe. Well into the twentieth century, farmers in townships (or comparatively isolated farmsteads) and urban dwellers were locked into clearly definable neighborhoods, extended families, strong cultural traditions and small, family-owned retail trade. These systems coexisted with the burgeoning industrial and commercial apparatus of capitalist America and Europe. Although a market economy and an industrial technology had clearly established their sovereignty over these areas, the self retained its own nonbourgeois refuge from the demands of a purely capitalistic society. In home and family (admittedly patricentric and parochial), in town or neighborhood, in a personalized retail trade and a relatively human scale, and in a socialization process that instilled traditional verities of decency, hospitality, and service, society still preserved a communal refuge of its own from the atomizing forces of the market economy.

By the middle of the present century, however, large-scale market operations had colonized every aspect of social and personal life. The buyer-seller relationship — a relationship that lies at the very core of the market — became the all-pervasive substitute for human relationships at the most molecular level of social, indeed, personal life. To "buy cheaply" and "sell dearly" places the parties involved in the exchange process in an inherently antagonistic posture; they are potential rivals for each other’s goods. The commodity — as distinguished from the gift, which is meant to create alliances, foster association, and consolidate sociality — leads to rivalry, dissociation, and asociality.

Aside from the fears that philosophers from Aristotle to Hegel have articulated in their concern for the dissociative role of a commerce and industry organized for exchange, society itself had long buffered exchange with a social etiquette of its own — one that still lingers on in the vestigial face-to-face archaic marketplace of the bazaar. Here, one does not voice a demand for goods, compare prices, and engage in the market’s universal duel called "bargaining." Rather, etiquette requires that the exchange process begin gracefully and retain its communal dimension. It opens with the serving of beverages, an exchange of news and gossip, some personal chit-chat, and, in time, expressions of admiration for the wares at hand. One leads to the exchange process tangentially. The bargain, if struck, is a bond, a compact sealed by time-honored ethical imperatives.

The apparently noncommercial ambience of this exchange process should not be viewed as mere canniness or hypocrisy. It reflects the limits that precapitalist society imposed on exchange to avoid the latent impersonality of trade, as well as its potential meanness of spirit, its insatiable appetite for gain, its capacity to subvert all social limits to private material interest, to dissolve all traditional standards of community and consociation, to subordinate the needs of the body politic to egoistic concerns.

But it was not only for these reasons that trade was viewed warily. Precapitalist society may well have seen in the exchange of commodities a return of the inorganic, of the substitution of things for living human relationships. These objects could certainly be viewed symbolically
as tokens of consociation, alliance and mutuality — which is precisely what the gift was meant to represent. But divested of this symbolic meaning, these mere things or commodities could acquire socially corrosive traits. Left unchecked and unbuffered, they might well vitiate all forms of human consociation and ultimately dissolve society itself. The transition from gift to commodity, in effect, could yield the disintegration of the community into a market place, the consanguinal or ethical union between people into rivalry and aggressive egotism.

That the triumph of the commodity over the gift was possible only after vast changes in human social relationships has been superbly explored in the closing portion of Capital. I need not summarize Marx’s devastating narration and analysis of capitalist accumulation, its "general law," and particularly the sweeping dislocation of the English peasantry from the fifteenth century onward. The gift itself virtually disappeared as the objectification of association. It lingered on merely as a byproduct of ceremonial functions. The traditional etiquette that buffered the exchange process was replaced by a completely impersonal, predatory — and today, an increasingly electronic — process. Price came first, quality came later; and the very things that were once symbols rather than mere objects for use and exchange were to become fetishized, together with the "needs" they were meant to satisfy. Suprahuman forces now seemed to take command over the ego itself. Even self-interest, which Greek social theory viewed as the most serious threat to the unity of the polis, seemed to be governed by a market system that divested the subject of its very capacity to move freely through the exchange process as an autonomous buyer and seller.

Ironically, modern industry, having derived from archaic systems of commerce and retailing, has returned to its commercial origins with a vengeful self-hatred marked by a demeaning rationalization of trade itself. The shopping mall with its extravagant areas delivered over to parked motor vehicles, its sparsity of sales personnel, its cooing "muzak," its dazzling array of shelved goods, its elaborate surveillance system, its lack of all warmth and human intercourse, its cruelly deceptive packaging, and its long check-out counters which indifferent and impersonally record the exchange process — all speak to a denaturing of consociation at levels of life that deeply affront every human sensibility and the sacredness of the very goods that are meant to support life itself.

What is crucially important here is that this world penetrates personal as well as economic life. The shopping mall is the agora of modern society, the civic center of a totally economic and inorganic world. It works its way into every personal haven from capitalist relations and imposes its centricity on every aspect of domestic life. The highways that lead to its parking lots and its production centers devour communities and neighborhoods; its massive command of retail trade devours the family-owned store; the subdivisions that cluster around it devour farmland; the motor vehicles that carry worshipers to its temples are self-enclosed capsules that preclude all human contact. The inorganic returns not only to industry and the marketplace; it calcifies and dehumanizes the most intimate relationships between people in the presumably invulnerable world of the bedroom and nursery. The massive dissolution of personal and social ties that comes with the return of the inorganic transforms the extended family into the nuclear family and finally delivers the individual over to the purveyors of the singles’ bars.

With the hollowing out of community by the market system, with its loss of structure, articulation, and form, we witness the concomitant hollowing out of personality itself. Just as the spiritual and institutional ties that linked human beings together into vibrant social relations are eroded by the mass market, so the sinews that make for subjectivity, character, and self-definition are divested of form and meaning. The isolated, seemingly autonomous ego that bourgeois soci-
ety celebrated as the highest achievement of "modernity" turns out to be the mere husk of a once fairly rounded individual whose very completeness as an ego was possible because he or she was rooted in a fairly rounded and complete community.

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As the inorganic replaces the organic in nature, so the inorganic replaces the organic in society and personality. The simplification of the natural world has its uncanny parallel in the simplification of society and subjectivity. The homogenization of ecosystems goes hand in hand with the homogenization of the social environment and the so-called individuals who people it. The intimate association of the domination of human by human with the notion of the domination of nature terminates not only in the notion of domination as such; its most striking feature is the kind of prevailing nature — an inorganic nature — that replaces the organic nature that humans once viewed so reverently.

We can never disembowel ourselves from nature any more than we can disembowel ourselves from our own viscer. The technocratic "utopia" of personalized automata remains a hollow myth. The therapies that seek to adjust organic beings to inorganic conditions merely produce lifeless, inorganic, and depersonalized automata. Hence, nature always affirms its existence as the matrix for social and personal life, a matrix in which life is always embedded by definition. By rationalizing and simplifying society and personality, we do not divest it of its natural attributes; rather, we brutally destroy its organic attributes. Thus nature never simply coexists with us; it is part of every aspect of our structure and being. To turn back natural evolution from more complex forms of organic beings to simpler ones, from the organic to the inorganic, entails the turning back of society and social development from more complex to simpler forms.

The myth that our society is more complex than earlier cultures requires short shrift; our complexity is strictly technical, not cultural; our effluvium of "individuality" is more neurotic and psychopathic, not more unique or more intricate. "Modernity" reached its apogee between the decades preceding the French Revolution and the 1840s, after which industrial capitalism fastened its grip on social life. Its career, with a modest number of exceptions, has yielded a grim denaturing of humanity and society. Since the middle of the present century, even the vestiges of its greatness — apart from dramatic explosions like the 1960s — have all but disappeared from virtually every realm of experience.

What has largely replaced the sinews that held community and personality together is an all-encompassing, coldly depersonalizing bureaucracy. The agency and the bureaucrat have become the substitutes for the family, the town and neighborhood, the personal support structures of peoples in crisis, and the supernatural and mythic figures that afforded power and tutelary surveillance over the destiny of the individual. With no other structure to speak of but the bureaucratic agency, society has not merely been riddled by bureaucracy; it has all but become a bureaucracy in which everyone, as Camus was wont to say, has been reduced to a functionary. Personality as such has become congruent with the various documents, licenses, and records.
that define one's place in the world. More sacred than such documents as passports, which are
the archaic tokens of citizenship, a motor vehicle license literally validates one's identity, and a
credit card becomes the worldwide coinage of exchange.

The legacy of domination thus culminates in the growing together of the State and society —
and with it, a dissolution of the family, community, mutual aid, and social commitment. Even a
sense of one's personal destiny disappears into the bureaucrat's office and filing cabinet. History
itself will be read in the microfilm records and computer tapes of the agencies that now form
the authentic institutions of society. Psychological categories have indeed "become political cate-
go
gories," as Marcuse observed in the opening lines of his Eros and Civilization, but in a pedestrian
form that exceeds his most doleful visions. The Superego is no longer formed by the father or
even by domineering social institutions; it is formed by the faceless people who preside over the
records of birth and death, of religious affiliation and educational pedigree, of "mental health"
and psychological proclivities, of vocational training and job acquisition, of marriage and divorce
certificates, of credit ratings and bank accounts; in short, of the endless array of licenses, tests,
contracts, grades, and personality traits that define the status of the individual in society. Political
categories have replaced psychological categories in much the same sense that an electrocardio-

dograph has replaced the heart. Under state capitalism, even economic categories become political
categories. Domination fulfills its destiny in the ubiquitous, all-pervasive State; its legacy reaches
its denouement in the dissolution, indeed, the complete disintegration, of a richly organic society
into an inorganic one — a terrifying destiny that the natural world shares with the social.

Reason, which was expected to dispel the dark historic forces to which a presumably unknow-
ing humanity had been captive, now threatens to become one of these very forces in the form
of rationalization. It now enhances the efficiency of domination. The great project of western
speculative thought — to render humanity self-conscious — stands before a huge abyss: a yawning
chasm into which the self and consciousness threaten to disappear. How can we define the
historical subject — a role Marx imputed to the proletariat — that will create a society guided
by selfhood and consciousness? What is the context in which that subject is formed? Is it the
workplace, specifically, the factory? Or a new emancipated polis? Or the domestic arena? Or the
university? Or the countercultural community?

With these questions, we begin to depart from the legacy of domination and turn to counter-
vailing traditions and ideals that may provide some point of departure for a solution. We must
turn to the legacy of freedom that has always cut across the legacy of domination. Perhaps it
holds some clue to a resolution of these problems — problems which, more than ever, leave our
era suspended in uncertainty and riddled by the ambiguities of rationalization and technocratic
power.
6. Justice — Equal and Exact

The notion of "freedom" does not seem to exist in organic society. As we saw earlier, the word is simply meaningless to many preliterate peoples. Lacking any institutionalized structure of domination, they have no way of defining a condition that is still intrinsically part of their social lives — a condition into which they grow without the elaborate hierarchical and later class structures of the late Neolithic and of "civilization." As "freedom" and "domination" are not in tension with each other, they lack contrast and definition.

But the very lack of distinction between "freedom" and "domination" leaves organic society unguarded against hierarchy and class rule. Innocence exposes the community to manipulation on the most elementary levels of social experience. The elders, shamans, later the patriarchs, priestly corporations, and warrior chieftains, who are to corrode organic society, need only produce shifts in emphasis from the particular to the general — from specific animals to their spirits; from zoomorphic to anthropomorphic deities; from usufruct to communal property; from demonic treasure to kingly storehouses; from gifts to commodities; finally, from mere barter to elaborate marketplaces.

History may have been bloody and its destiny may be a universal tragedy with heroic efforts and lost possibilities punctuating its long career. But a body of hopeless ideals and a meaningless movement of events it was not. With the loss of innocence appeared new concepts that were to have a highly equivocal effect on social development, a certain ideological armoring, a growth of intellectual powers, an increasing degree of individuality, personal autonomy, and a sense of a universal humanitas as distinguished from folk parochialism. To be expelled from the Garden of Eden can be regarded, as Hegel was to say, as an important condition for its return — but on a level that is informed with a sophistication that can resolve the paradoxes of paradise.

The universalization of ideas acquires its most beguiling intellectual form in the ever-expansive meaning people give to freedom. Once unfreedom emerges to yield the notion of freedom, the notion acquires a remarkable logic of its own that produces, in its various byways and differentia, a richly articulated body of issues and formulations — a veritable garden from which we can learn and from which we can pluck what we want to make an attractive bouquet. From the loss of a society that was once free comes the vision of an admittedly embellished, often extravagantly fanciful golden age — one that may contain norms even more liberatory in their universality than those which existed in organic society. From a "backward-looking" utopianism, commonly based on the image of a bountiful nature and unfettered consumption arises a "forward-looking" utopianism based on the image of a bountiful economy and unfettered production. Between these two extremes, religious and anarchic movements develop a more balanced, although equally generous, vision of utopia that combines sharing with self-discipline, freedom with coordination, and joy with responsibility.

Almost concomitantly with this utopian development, largely "underground" in nature, we witness the open emergence of justice — first, as a surrogate for the freedom that is lost with the decline of organic society, later as the ineffable protagonist of new conceptions of freedom. With
justice, we hear the claims of the individual and the ideal of a universal humanity voice their opposition to the limits imposed on personality and society by the folk collective. But freedom, too, will divide and oppose itself as mere "happiness" (Marx) and extravagant "pleasure" (Fourier) — as we shall see in the chapters that follow. So, too, will labor — conceived as the indispensable toil in which every society is anchored or as the free release of human powers and consociation even in the realm of demanding work.

Coherence requires that we try to bring these various components of the legacy of freedom together. Coherence also requires that we try to interlink our project with nature to impart rationality not only to social but also to natural history. We must explore the values, sensibilities, and technics that harmonize our relationship with nature as well as ourselves. Coherence finally requires that we try to bring together the threads of these shared histories — natural and social — into a whole that unites differentia into a meaningful ensemble, one that also removes hierarchy from our sense of meaning and releases spontaneity as an informed and creative nisus.

But a strong caveat must here be raised: ideas, values, and institutions are not mere commodities on the shelves of an ideological supermarket; we cannot promiscuously drop them into shopping carts like processed goods. The context we form from ideas, the ways we relate them, and the meanings we impart to them are as important as the components and sources from which our "whole" is composed. Perhaps it is true, as the world of Schiller seemed to believe, that the Greeks said everything. But if so, each thinker and practitioner said it in very specific ways, often rooted in very limited social conditions and for very different purposes. We can never return to the setting in which these ideas were formed — nor should we try. It is enough that we understand the differences between earlier times and our own, earlier ideas and our own. Ultimately, we must create our own context for ideas, if they are to become relevant to the present and future. And we must discern the older contexts from which they emerged — all the more not to repeat them. To put it quite bluntly, freedom has no "founding fathers," only free thinkers and practitioners. If it had such "fathers," it would also be direly in need of morticians to inter it, for that which is "founded" must always answer to the claims of mortality.

Freedom, conceived as a cluster of ideals and practices, has a very convoluted history, and a large part of this history has simply been unconscious. It has consisted of unstated customs and humanistic impulses that were not articulated in any systematic fashion until they were violated by unfreedom. When the word freedom did come into common usage, its meaning was often consciously confused. For centuries, freedom was identified with justice, morality, and the various perquisites of rule like "free time," or else it was associated with "liberty" as a body of individual, often egoistic, rights. It acquired the traits of property and duties, and was variously cast in negative or positive terms such as "freedom from . . ." or "freedom for . . . ."

Not until the Middle Ages did this Teutonic word (as we know it) begin to include such metaphysical niceties as freedom from the realm of necessity or freedom from the fortunes of fate, the Ananke and Moira that the Greeks added to its elucidation. The twentieth century has made a mockery of the word and divested it of much of its idealistic content by attaching it to totalitarian ideologies and countries. Thus, to merely "define" so maimed and tortured a word would be utterly naive. To a large extent, freedom can best be explicated as part of a voyage of discovery that begins with its early practice — and limits — in organic society, its negation by hierarchical and class "civilizations," and its partial realization in early notions of justice.

Freedom, an unstated reality in many preliterate cultures, was still burdened by constraints, but these constraints were closely related to the early community’s material conditions of life. It
is impossible to quarrel with famine, with the need for coordinating the hunt of large game, with seasonal requirements for food cultivation, and later, with warfare. To violate the Crow hunting regulations was to endanger every hunter and possibly place the welfare of the entire community in jeopardy. If the violations were serious enough, the violator would be beaten so severely that he might very well not survive. The mild-mannered Eskimo would grimly but collectively select an assassin to kill an unmanageable individual who gravely threatened the well-being of the band. But the virtually unbridled "individualism" so characteristic of power brokers in modern society was simply unthinkable in preliterate societies. Were it even conceivable, it would have been totally unacceptable to the community. Constraint, normally guided by public opinion, custom, and shame, was inevitable in the early social development of humanity — not as a matter of will, authority, or the exercise of power, but because it was unavoidable.

Personal freedom is thus clearly restricted from a modern viewpoint. Choice, will, and individual proclivities could be exercised or expressed within confines permitted by the environment. Under benign circumstances, behavior might enjoy an extraordinary degree of latitude until it was restricted by the emergence of blatant social domination. But where domination did appear, it was a thankless phenomenon which, more often than not, yielded very little of that much-revered western shibboleth, "dynamism," in the social development of a community. Polynesia, with its superb climate and rich natural largesse of produce, was never the better for the emergence of hierarchy, and its way of life was brought to the edge of sheer catastrophe by European colonizers. "Where nature is too lavish, she keeps [man] in hand, like a child in leading strings," Marx was to disdainfully observe of cultures in benign environments that were often more devoted to internal elaboration than "social progress." "It is not the tropics with their luxuriant vegetation, but the temperate zone, that is the mother country of capital."

But organic society, despite the physical limitations it faced (from a modern viewpoint), nevertheless functioned unconsciously with an implicit commitment to freedom that social theorists were not to attain until fairly recent times. Radin's concept of the irreducible minimum rests on an unarticulated principle of freedom. To be assured of the material means of life irrespective of one's productive contribution to the community implies that, wherever possible, society will compensate for the infirmities of the ill, handicapped, and old, just as it will for the limited powers of the very young and their dependency on adults. Even though their productive powers are limited or failing, people will not be denied the means of life that are available to individuals who are well-endowed physically and mentally. Indeed, even individuals who are perfectly capable of meeting all their material needs cannot be denied access to the community's common produce, although deliberate shirkers in organic society are virtually unknown. The principle of the irreducible minimum thus affirms the existence of inequality within the group — inequality of physical and mental powers, of skills and virtuosity, of psyches and proclivities. It does so not to ignore these inequalities or denigrate them, but on the contrary, to compensate for them. Equity, here, is the recognition of inequities that are not the fault of anyone and that must be adjusted as a matter of unspoken social responsibility. To assume that everyone is "equal" is patently preposterous if they are regarded as "equal" in strength, intellect, training, experience, talent, disposition, and opportunities. Such "equality" scoffs at reality and denies the commonality and solidarity of the community by subverting its responsibilities to compensate for differences between individuals. It is a heartless "equality," a mean-spirited one that is simply alien to the very nature of organic society. As long as the means exist, they must be shared as much as possible
according to needs — and needs are unequal insofar as they are gauged according to individual abilities and responsibilities.

Hence, organic society tends to operate unconsciously according to the equality of unequals — that is, a freely given, unreflective form of social behavior and distribution that compensates inequalities and does not yield to the fictive claim, yet to be articulated, that everyone is equal. Marx was to put this well when, in opposition to "bourgeois right" with its claim of the "equality of all," freedom abandons the very notion of "right" as such and "inscribes on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." Equality is inextricably tied to freedom as the recognition of inequality and transcends necessity by establishing a culture and distributive system based on compensation for the stigma of natural "privilege."

The subversion of organic society drastically undermined this principle of authentic freedom. Compensation was restructured into rewards, just as gifts were replaced by commodities. Cuneiform writing, the basis of our alphabetic script, had its origins in the meticulous records the temple clerks kept of products received and products dispersed, in short, the precise accounting of goods, possibly even when the land was "communally owned" and worked in Mesopotamia. Only afterwards were these ticks on clay tablets to become narrative forms of script. The early cuneiform accounting records of the Near East prefigure the moral literature of a less giving and more despotic world in which the equality of unequals was to give way to mere charity. Thereafter "right" was to supplanted freedom. No longer was it the primary responsibility for society to care for its young, elderly, infirm, or unfortunates; their care became a "private matter" for family and friends — albeit very slowly and through various subtly shaded phases. On the village level, to be sure, the old customs still lingered on in their own shadowy world, but this world was not part of "civilization" — merely an indispensable but concealed archaism.

With the corning of the warriors and their manorial economy, a new social disposition arose: the warrior code of might. But mere coercion alone could not have created the relatively stable society, largely feudal in structure and values, that is described for us in such detail by the Homeric poets. Rather, it was the ethos of coercion — the mystification of courage, physical prowess, and a "healthy" lust for combat and adventure. It was not might as such but the belief in the status, indeed, the mana, that might conferred on the individual that led to an ideology of coercion, which the victor and his victim mutually acknowledged and celebrated. Accordingly, fortune itself — a derivative of the goddess of chance Tyche (Greek), or Fortuna (Latin) — acquired the form of a metaphysical principle. Very few expressions, possibly incantations, are older than the "casting of the die" and the "fortunes of war." Tyche and Fortuna now emerged as the distinct correlates of bronze-age warrior athleticism.

These bronze-age societies were clearly class societies, and wealth in the form of booty garnered by raids abroad and surpluses at home figured profoundly in their notions of fortune. "The world of Agamemnon and Achilles and Odysseus was one of petty kings and nobles," observes M. I. Finley, "who possessed the best land and considerable flocks, and lived a seignorial existence, in which raids and local wars were frequent." Power and social activity centered around the noble's household, which was in fact a fortress. Power in this society "depended upon wealth, personal prowess, connexions by marriage and alliance, and retainers." Wealth was indeed a crucial factor: its accumulation and acquisition determined the capacity of a noble to acquire retainers, who were often little less than mercenaries, to acquire arms, and to wage war. Marriage was less an instrument of clan alliances than of dynastic power; the Homeric noble acquired land and wealth, not merely kinsmen, with a favorable match. In fact, the "alliances" he established were marked
by a great deal of treachery and faithlessness, features that are characteristic of a political society rather than a tribal one. Tribal society was clearly waning:

There is no role assigned to tribes or other large kinship groups. In the twenty years Odysseus was away from Ithaca, the nobles [suitors of Penelope, Odysseus' wife] behaved scandalously toward his family and his possessions; yet his son Telemachus had no body of kinsmen to whom to turn for help, nor was the community fully integrated. Telemachus' claims as Odysseus' heir were acknowledged in principle, but he lacked the [material and physical] power to enforce them. The assassination of Agamemnon by his wife Clytaemnestra and her paramour Aegis thus placed an obligation of vengeance on his son Orestes, but otherwise life in Mycenae went on unchanged, except that Aegisthus ruled in Agamemnon's place.

Apparently, these dynastic quarrels, assassinations, and usurpations were not of special concern to the "masses," who lived an unchronicled inner life in their obscure communities. They simply went about their own business, working their own parcels of land or the "best land" explicitly owned by the nobles. They herded the nobles' "considerable flocks." As a class apart, theirs was also an interest apart. Nowhere in the Homeric narratives do they seem to have intervene in the conflicts of the heroes. So considerably weakened were the powers of the democratic tribal institutions and so extensively had kinship ties been replaced by territorial ties and class relationships that when Telemachus pleaded his case against the suitors to the assembly of Ithaca, the assembly "took no action, which is what the assembly always did in the two [Homeric] poems." Homer's nobles, to be sure, still lived by an aristocratic code of honor, "including table fellowship, gift-exchange, sacrifice to the gods and appropriate burial rites," but this aristocratic code and its obvious roots in early society were now continually violated by greed, acquisitiveness, and egotism.

The nobles of the Odyssey were an exploitative class — not only materially but psychologically, not only objectively but subjectively. The analysis of Odysseus (developed by Horkheimer and Adorno) as the nascent bourgeois man is unerring in its ruthless clarity and dialectical insight. Artifice, trickery, cunning, deception, debasement in the pursuit of gain — all marked the new "discipline" that the emerging rulers imposed on themselves to discipline and rule their anonymous underlings. "To be called a merchant was a grave insult to Odysseus," Finley observes; "men of his class exchanged goods ceremoniously or they took it by plunder." Thus was the primordial code of behavior honored formally. But "valor" became the excuse for plunder, which turned into the aristocratic mode of "trade." Honor had in fact acquired its commodity equivalent. Preceding the prosaic merchant with goods and gold in hand was the colorful hero with shield and sword.

Indeed, the commodity continued to make its pedestrian way against all codes. In Homeric times there is "seafaring and a vital concern for trade, more exactly for the import of copper, iron, gold and silver, fine cloths and other luxuries," notes Finley. "Even chieftains are permitted to go on expeditions for such purposes, but generally trade and merchandising seem to be the business of foreigners." Thus is status adorned, affirmed, and its appetite for accoutrements and luxuries (the material substance of privilege) satisfied by the statusless.

Here, we witness a radically new social dispensation. When chieftains, however few in number, are prepared to intermingle with foreigners, indeed pedestrian traders, and truck with them, even the warrior code is in the balance. Might as right can no longer enjoy its high prestige in society's
distribution of goods. A new ethos had to emerge if the integrity of trade and the security of traders was to be preserved and port cities were to become viable commercial centers. Piracy and looting could only be episodic: their rewards were indeed the mere bounty and spoils of war. And the nobles of bronze-age Greece were by no means ossified creatures of custom and tradition. Like their peers in England, millenia later (as the enclosure movements of the fifteenth century onward were to show), they were governed by naked self-interest and by an increasing desire for the better things of life.

The new code that was now to supplant valor and coercion also had a very old pedigree, notably in a reciprocity that had become standardized and lost its "accidental form" (to use Marx's terminology) as a mode of exchange; indeed, one that was built on a clear and codifiable notion of equivalents. The notion of equivalence, as distinguished from usufruct, the irreducible minimum, and the equality of unequals, was not without its cosmic grandeur in the literal sense of a formal, quantifiable, even geometric order. Tyche and Fortuna are too irascible to support the spirit of calculation, foresight, and rationality required by systematic commerce. Chance is in the "lap of the gods," and in Homeric Greece, these deities were hardly the most stable and predictable of cosmic agents. Until capitalism completed its hold on social life, merchants were the pariahs of society. Their insecurities were the most conspicuous neuroses of antiquity and the medieval world, hence their need for power was not merely a lust but a compelling necessity. Despised by all, disdained even by the ancient lowly, they had to find firm and stable coordinates by which to fix their destinies in a precarious world. Whether as chieftain or as statusless trader, he who would venture on the stormy waves of commerce needed more than Tyche or Fortuna by which to navigate.

The new code that edged its way into those preceding it picked up the principle of an exact, quantifiable equivalence from advanced forms of reciprocity, but without absorbing their sense of service and solidarity. Might was brought to the support of fair-dealings and contract, not merely to violent acquisition and plunder. The cosmic nature of equivalence could be validated by the most dramatic features of life. "Heaven and hell . . . hang together," declare Horkheimer and Adorno — and not merely in the commerce of the Olympian gods with the chthonic deities, of good with evil, of salvation with disaster, of subject with object. Indeed, equivalence is as ancient as the very notions of heaven and hell, and is to have its own involuted dialectic as the substitution of Dike for Tyche and Justitia for Fortuna.

In the heroic age that celebrated Odysseus' long journey from Troy to Ithaca, men still traced equivalence back to its "natural" origins:

Just as the Gemini — the constellation of Castor and Pollux — and all other symbols of duality refer to the inevitable cycle of nature, which itself has its ancient sign in the symbol of the egg from which they came, so the balance held by Zeus, which symbolizes the justice of the entire patriarchal world, refers back to mere nature. The step from chaos to civilization, in which natural conditions exert their power no longer directly but through the medium of human consciousness, has not changed the principle of equivalence. Indeed, men paid for this very step by worshipping what they were once in thrall to only in the same way as all other creatures. Before, the fetishes were subject to the law of equivalence. Now equivalence has itself become a fetish. The blindfold over Justitia's eyes does not only mean that there should be no assault upon justice, but that justice does not result in freedom."[34]
Justitia, in fact, presides over a new ideological dispensation of equality. Not only is she blindfolded; she also holds a scale by which to measure exchange fairly — "equal and exact." Guilt and innocence are juridical surrogates for the equitable allotments of things that appear in the marketplace. Indeed, all scales can ever do is to reduce qualitative differences to quantitative ones. Accordingly, everyone must be equal before Justitia; her blindfold prevents her from drawing any distinctions between her supplicants. But persons are very different indeed, as the primordial equality of unequals had recognized. Justitia's rule of equality — of equivalence — thus completely reverses the old principle. Inasmuch as all are theoretically "equal" in her unseeing eyes, although often grossly unequal in fact, she turns the equality of unequals into the inequality of equals. The ancient words are all there, but like the many changes in emphasis that placed the imprint of domination on traditional values and sensibilities, they undergo a seemingly minor shift.

Accordingly, the rule of equivalence, as symbolized by the scales in Justitia's hand, calls for balance, not compensation. The blindfold prevents her from making any changes of measure due to differences among her supplicants. Her specious "equality" thus yields a very real inequality. To be right is to be "just" or "straight," and both, in turn, negate equality on its own terms. Her "just" or "straight" judgment yields a very unbalanced and crooked disposition that will remain concealed to much of humanity for thousands of years — even as the oppressed invoke her name as their guardian and guide.

Rarely has it been possible to distinguish the cry for Justice with its inequality of equals from the cry for Freedom with its equality of unequals. Every ideal of emancipation has been tainted by this confusion, which still lives oh in the literature of the oppressed. Usufruct has been confused with public property, direct democracy with representative democracy, individual competence with populist elites, the irreducible minimum with equal opportunity. The demand of the oppressed for equality acquires, as Engels put it, "a double meaning." In one instance, it is the "spontaneous reaction against the social inequalities, against the contrast of rich and poor . . . surfeit and starvation; as such it is the expression of the revolutionary instinct and finds its justification in that, and indeed only in that." In the other instance, the demand for equality becomes a reaction against justice as the rule of "equivalence" (which Engels sees simply as the "bourgeois demand for equality"), and "in this case it stands and falls with bourgeois equality itself." Engels goes on to emphasize that the demand of the oppressed for equality ("the proletarian demand for equality") is "the demand for the abolition of classes." But more than the abolition of classes is involved in freedom. In more general terms, "the proletarian demand for equality" is a demand for the "injustice" of an egalitarian society. It rejects the rule of equivalence for the irreducible minimum, the equalization by compensation of inescapable inequalities, in short, the equality of unequals. This demand has been repeatedly thrown out of focus, often for centuries at a time, by stormy battles for Justice, for the rule of equivalence.

The realm of justice, however, also prepares the ground for freedom by removing the archaism that linger on from the folk world of equality. Primordial freedom with its rule of the irreducible minimum and its equality of unequals was strikingly parochial. Aside from its lavish code of hospitality, organic society made no real provisions for the rights of the stranger, the outsider, who was not linked by marriage or ritual to the kin group. The larger world beyond the perimeter of "The People" was "inorganic," to use Marx's appropriate term. Loyalties extended in varying degrees of obligation to those who shared the common blood oath of the community and to allies united by material systems of gift reciprocity. The notion of a humanity in which all human
beings are considered united by a common genesis was still largely alien. Primordial peoples may be inquisitive, shy, or cordial toward strangers — or they may kill them for the most whimsical reasons. But they owe the stranger no obligation and are bound by no code that requires respect or security for the unpredictable new being that is in their midst — hence, the unpredictability of their own behavior. Even Hellenic society, despite its high claims to rationality, did not advance to a point where the resident alien enjoyed authentic social, much less political, rights beyond the security and protection the polis owed to everyone who lived within its precincts. For much of the ancient world, this dubious status of the stranger was a distinctly widespread condition, despite the crucial services such aliens performed for the community and its citizens.

Breaking the barriers raised by primordial and archaic parochialism was the work of Justitia and the rule of equivalence. And far from constituting an authentic "break," the changes came very slowly. Nor were these changes the work of abstract theorists or the fruits of an intellectual awakening. The agents for the new juridical disposition in the rights of city dwellers were the strangers, who often serviced the city with craft or commercial skills. They were helped by the oppressed generally, who could hope to escape the whimsies and insults of arbitrary rule only by inscribing their rights and duties in an inviolable, codified form. Justitia, Dike, or whatever name she acquires in the "civilizations" of antiquity, is in large part the goddess of the social and ethnic outsider. Her rule of equivalence honors the plea for equity, which must be clearly defined in a written legal code if her scale and sword can redress the inequities that the "outsider" and the oppressed suffer under arbitrary rule. Thus, Justitia must be armed not only with a sword but with the "legal tablets" that unequivocally define rights and duties, security and safety, rewards and punishments.

The earliest of these legal tablets, the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1790 B.C.), still contains distinct class biases and the instrumentalities of class oppression. Like the Mosaic lex talionis, the rule of equivalence is enforced with all the fury of class vengeance. The price for social infractions is paid with eyes, ears, limbs, and tongues, not to speak of life itself. But the Code does not try to conceal the "unequal" class nature of this vengeance: nobles get the better of commoners, men of women, and freemen of slaves. Here, the appropriation of primordial society's equality of "unequals," however perverted its form, still claims its penalty. But the Code also weights privilege with a greater burden of social responsibility. Although the nobles of Hammurabi's time "possessed a great many perquisites of rank," as Howard Becker and Harry Elmer Barnes tell us, "including the right to exact heavily disproportionate retaliation for personal injuries . . . [they] could also be more severely punished for their offenses and, guilty or not, had higher fees to pay."

The later codes were to free themselves from most of these inequitable "archaisms." From the eighth century B.C. onward, we can observe in Hebrew Palestine and in Greece a steady unfolding of the dialectic of justice: the slow transformation of organic society's equality of unequals into class society's inequality of equals. The Mosaic lex talionis was fully established as the law of the land, despite such token concessions to the poor in the Deuteronomic Code as mortgage restrictions, the release every seventh year of Hebrew bondsmen from debt slavery, and the hollowing of the fiftieth year as a "jubilee" in which everyone reacquires their possessions. Like the injunction in Leviticus that every debt slave be treated as a "hired servant and as a sojourner," these gestures were largely symbolic. Debt slavery alone, with its humiliating status of craven service, violated the very soul of the ancient desert democracy — the "Bedouin compact" — around which the Hebrew tribes were united during their invasion of Canaan. That it could have entered
into the juridical life of the community at all was a cruel acknowledgement of the compact’s dissolution.

In Athens, the reforms initiated by Solon opened the way to juridical equality based on political equality, or what has been called Hellenic democracy. Justice now openly functioned as the rule of equivalence, the rule of commodity equivalence, which produced new classes and inequities in personal power and wealth even as it guarded the demos, the people of Athenian ancestry, from the exercise of arbitrary social power. Yet within the framework of a society presumably governed by law instead of persons, it was only the demos that had complete custody of the political system. Perikles’ funeral oration may mark a secular and rational ascent in the direction of recognizing the existence of a humanitas, but it provides us with no reason to believe that the “barbarian” world and, by definition, the “outsider,” were on a par with the Hellene and, juridically, the ancestral Athenian.

In fact, Athenian alien residents not only lacked the right to participate in assemblies like the Ecclesia and the Boule or in the jury system; they had no explicit juridical rights of their own beyond the security of their property and lives. As we know, they could buy no land in the polis. Even more strikingly, they had no direct recourse to the judicial system. Their cases could only be pleaded by citizens in Athenian courts. That their rights were thoroughly respected by the polis may speak well for its ethical standards, but it also attests to the exclusivity of the ruling elite whose intentions, rather than laws, were the guarantors of the alien’s rights.

Aristotle, an alien resident of Athens, does not equivocate on the superiority of the Hellenes over all other peoples. In citing the failure of the highly spirited “barbarians” of the north to organize into poleis that could “rule their neighbors,” he reveals the extent to which he, together with Plato, identified the polis with social domination. Moreover, he rooted the capacity of the Hellenes to form poleis, to “be free,” and to be “capable of ruling all mankind” in their ethnic origins and their existence as the Hellenic genos.[36] Blood, as well as geography, confers the capacity to rule. Aristotle sees the Hellenes as diversified such that “some have a one-sided nature” and “others are happily blended” in spiritedness and intelligence. But to him the ability to form poleis, to “rule,” is a “natural quality” that allows for no social qualifications.

The formal disappearance of the blood group into a universal humanitas that sees a common genesis for every free individual was not to receive juridical recognition until late in antiquity, when the Emperor Caracalla conferred citizenship on the entire nonslave male population of the Roman Empire. It may well be that Caracalla was as eager to enlarge the tax base of the Empire as he was to prop up its sagging sense of commonality. But the act was historically unprecedented. For the first time in humanity’s evolution from animality to society, an immense population of highly disparate strangers ranging throughout the Mediterranean basin were brought together under a common political rubric and granted equal access to laws that had once been the privilege of only a small ethnic group of Latins. Juridically, at least, the empire had dissolved the exclusivity of the folk, the kin group, that had already devolved from tribal egalitarianism into an aristocratic fraternity of birth. According to the strictures of late Roman law, genealogy was dissolved into meritocracy and the blood relationship into a territorial one, thereby vastly enlarging the horizons of the human political community.

Caracalla’s edict on citizenship was reinforced by a growing, centuries-long evolution of Roman law away from traditional patriarchal absolutism and the legal subordination of married women to their husbands. In theory, at least, the notion of the equality of persons was very much in the air during late imperial times. By the third century A.D., Roman “natural law” —
that combined body of jurisprudence variously called the ius naturale and the ius gentium — acknowledged that men were equal in nature even if they fell short of this condition in society. The departure this idea represented from Aristotle’s concept of “mankind” was nothing less than monumental. Even slavery, so basic to Roman economic life, had been placed at odds with the Hellenic notion of the slave’s inborn inferiority. To Roman jurists of the imperial period, servitude now derived not from the natural inferiority of the slave but, as Henry Maine has observed, "from a supposed agreement between victor and vanquished in which the first stipulated for the perpetual services of his foe; and the other gained in consideration the life which he had legitimately forfeited." Chattel slavery, in effect, was increasingly viewed as contractual slavery. Although Roman society never ceased to view the slave as more than a "talking instrument," its legal machinery for dealing with slaves was to belie this degradation by the restrictions imposed in late imperial times on the appallingly inhuman practices of the republican period.

The notion of a universal humanity would probably not have remained more than a political strategy for fiscal and ideological ends were it not for the emergence of a new credo of individuality. The word humanity is a barren abstraction if it is not given existential reality by self-assertive personalities who enjoy a visible degree of autonomy. Such beings could hardly be created by an imperial edict. To the extent that organic society declined, so too did the intense sense of collectivity it had fostered. A new context had to be created for the individual that would render it functional in an increasingly atomized world. Not that classical antiquity or the medieval world ever produced the random, isolated, socially starved monads who people modern capitalist society. But the waning of primordial society placed a high premium on a new type of individual: a resourceful, comparatively self-sufficient, and self-reliant ego that could readily adapt itself to — if not "command" — a society that was losing its human scale and developing more complex political institutions and commercial ties than any human community had known in the past.

Such individuals had always existed on the margins of the early collective. They were ordinarily given a certain degree of institutional expression if only to provide a safety valve for marked personal idiosyncracies. Tribal society has always made allowances for aberrant sexual behavior, exotic psychological traits, and personal ambition (the "big man" syndrome) — allowances that find expression in a high degree of sexual freedom, shamanistic roles, and an exaltation of courage and skill. From this marginal area, society recruited its priests and warrior-chieftains for commanding positions in later, more hierarchical institutions.

But this development is not simply one of breakdown and recomposition. It occurs on a personal level and a social level — egocentric and sociocentric. Viewed on the personal level, the individual accompanies the emergence of "civilization" like a brash, unruly child whose cries literally pierce the air of history and panic the more composed, tradition-bound collectivity that continues to exist after the decline of organic society. The ego’s presence is stridently announced by the warrior, whose own "ego boundaries" are established by transgressing the boundaries of all traditional societies. The Sumerian hero Gilgamesh, for example, befriends the stranger, Enkidu, who shares his various feats as a companion, not a kinsman. Valor, rather than lineage, marks their myth-beclouded personal traits.

But misty, almost stereotyped figures like Gilgamesh seem like metaphors for individuality rather than the real thing. More clearly etched personalities like Achilles, Agamemnon, and the Homeric warriors are often cited as the best candidates for western conceptions of the newly born ego. "The model of the emerging individual is the Greek hero," observes Max Horkheimer in his fascinating discussion of the rise and decline of individuality. "Daring and self-reliant, he
triumphs in the struggle for survival and emancipates himself from tradition as well as from the tribe." That these qualities of daring and self-reliance were to be prized in the Greco-Roman world is accurate enough, but it is doubtful if the model is properly placed. In fact, the most striking egos of the archaic world were not the bronze-age heroes celebrated by Homer but the iron-age antiheroes so cynically described by Archilochus. Indeed, Archilochus himself was the embodiment of this highly unique personality. He links a hidden tradition of the ego's self-assertion in organic society with the calculating individual of emerging "civilization."

Unlike a quasi-mythical despot like Gilgamesh or a newly-arrived aristocrat like Achilles, Archilochus speaks for a remarkable breed: the displaced, wandering band of mercenaries who must live by their wits and cunning. He is no Homeric hero but rather something of an armed bohemian of the seventh century B.C. His self-possession and libertarian spirit stand in marked contrast to the disciplined lifeways that are congealing around the manorial society of his day. His very existence almost seems improbable, even an affront to the heroic posture of his era. His occupation as the itinerant soldier reflects the sweeping decomposition of society; his arrogant disdain for tradition exudes the negativity of the menacing rebel. What cares he for the shield he has abandoned in battle? "Myself I saved from death; why should I worry about my shield? Let it be gone: I shall buy another equally good." Such sentiments could never have been expressed by a Homeric hero with his aristocratic code of arms and honor. Nor does Archilochus judge his commanders by their mean and status. He dislikes a "tall general, striding forth on his long legs; who prides himself on his locks, and shaves his chin like a fop. Let him be a small man," he declares, "perhaps even bow-legged, as long as he stands firm on his feet, full of heart."

Archilochus and his wandering band of companions are the earliest record we have of that long line of "masterless men" who surface repeatedly during periods of social decomposition and unrest — men, and later women, who have no roots in any community or tradition, who colonize the world's future rather than its past. Their characters are literally structured to defy custom, to satirize and shatter established mores, to play the game of life by their own rules. Marginal as they may be, they are the harbingers of the intensely individuated rebel who is destined to "turn the world upside down." They have broad shoulders, not puny neuroses, and express themselves in a wild, expletive-riddled poetry or oratory. Society must henceforth always warily step aside when they appear on the horizon and silently pray that they will pass by unnoticed by its restive commoners — or else it must simply destroy them.

But these are the few sharply etched personalities of history, the handful of marginal rebels whose significance varies with the stability of social life. Their fortunes depend upon the reception they receive by much larger, often inert, masses of people. On another, more broadly based level of history, the notion of individuality begins to percolate into these seemingly inert "masses," and their personalities are emancipated not by Archilochus and his type but by society itself, which has a need for autonomous egos who are free to undertake the varied functions of citizenship. The development of the individual on this social level, in short, is not an isolated, idiosyncratic personal phenomenon; it is a change in the temper, outlook, and destiny of millions who are to people "civilization" for centuries to come and initiate the history of the modern ego up to the present day. Just as the contemporary proletariat was first formed by severing a traditional peasantry from an archaic manorial economy, so the relatively free citizen of the classical city-state, the medieval commune, and the modern nation-state was initially formed by severing the young male from an archaic body of kinship relationships.
Like the blood oath, the patriarchal family constituted a highly cohesive moral obstacle to political authority — not because it opposed authority as such (as was the case with organic society) but rather because it formed the nexus for the authority of the father. Ironically, patriarchy represented, in its kinship claims, the most warped traits of organic society in an already distorted and changing social world.[37] Here, to put it simply, gerontocracy is writ large. It answers not to the needs of the organic society’s principle of sharing and solidarity but to the needs of the oldest among the elders. No system of age hierarchy has a more overbearing content, a more repressive mode of operation. In the earliest form of the patriarchal family, as we have seen, the patriarch was answerable to no one for the rule he exercised over the members of his family. He was the incarnation, perhaps the historical source, of arbitrary power, of domination that could be sanctioned by no principle, moral or ethical, other than tradition and the ideological tricks provided by the shaman. Like Yahweh, he was the primal "I" in a community based on the "we." To a certain extent, this implosion of individuation into a single being, almost archetypal in nature, is a portent of widespread individuality and egotism, but in a form so warped that it was to become the quasi-magical personification of Will before a multitude of individual wills were to appear.

Justice slowly transformed the patriarch’s status, first by turning the feared father into the righteous father, just as it transformed Yahweh from a domineering, jealous God into a just God. Patriarchy, in effect, ceased to be mere arbitrary authority. It became juridical authority that was answerable to certain precepts of right and wrong. By turning the crude, warrior morality of "might is right" into the rule of equivalence and the lex talionis of equity, justice produced the transition from mere arbitrary coercion to coercion that must be justified. Coercion now had to be explained according to concepts of equity and inequity, right and wrong. Justice, in effect, provided the transition from arbitrary and even supernatural power to juridical power. From a tyrant, the patriarch became a judge and relied on guilt, not merely fear, to assert his authority.

This transformation of the patriarch’s status occurred as a result of genuine tensions in the objective world. The elaboration of hierarchy, the development of incipient classes, and the early appearance of the city and State combined as social forces to invade the family and stake out a secular claim on the role of the patriarch in the socialization and destiny of the young. Organized religions, too, staked out their own claim. Women were largely excluded from this process of secularization and politicization; they remained the chattels of the male community. But the young men were increasingly called upon to take on social responsibilities as soldiers, citizens, bureaucrats, craftsmen, food cultivators — in short, a host of duties that could no longer be restricted by familial forms.

As society shifted still further from kinship to territorial forms, from broadly hierarchical to specifically class and political forms, the nature of patriarchy continued to change. Although patriarchy retained many of its coercive and juridical traits, it became increasingly a mode of rational authority. Young men were granted their birthright as citizens. No longer were they merely sons; the father was obliged to guide his family according to the ways of reason. He was not simply the just father, but also the wise father. In varying degrees, conditions now emerged for devaluing the patriarchal clan-family and for its substitution by the patricentric nuclear family, the realm of a highly privatized monogamous relationship between two parents and their offspring. Under the aegis of justice, the State acquired increasing control over the highly insulated domestic world-initially, by dissolving the internal forces that held the patriarchal family together with its own juridical claims. [38]
The dissolution of the all-encompassing patriarchal "I" into fairly sovereign individuals with "egoboundaries" of their own gained greater impetus with the expansion of the polis into the cosmopolis — with the small, self-enclosed "city-state" into the large, open "world city" of the Hellenistic era. With the growing role of the stranger as craftsman, trader, and sea-faring merchant, the notion of the demos united by blood and ethical ties into a supreme collective entity gave way to the claims of the individual. Now, not merely citizenship but the private interests of the wayfaring ego, partly shaped by the problems of economic interest, became the goals of individuality. The cosmopolis is a tremendous commercial emporium and, for its time, a merchant's playground. We can closely trace the individual's fortunes from the kinship group and from the enclave of the patriarch, into the "city-state," particularly the Athenian polis, where individuality assumes richly articulated civic qualities and a vibrant commitment to political competence. From the "brother" or "sister" of organic society, the individual is transformed into the "citizen" of political society, notably the small civic fraternity.[39]

But as the civic fraternity expands in scope beyond a humanly comprehensible scale, the ego does not disappear; it acquires highly privatized, often neurotic, traits that center around the problems of a new inwardness. It retreats into the depths of subjectivity and self-preoccupation. The cosmopolis does not offer the social rewards of the polis — a highly charged civicism, an emphasis on the ethical union of competent citizens, or firm bonds of solidarity or philia.

Nor does it offer a new sense of community. Hence, the ego must fall back on itself, almost cannibalistically as we shall see in our own era, to find a sense of meaning in the universe. Epicurus, the privatized philosopher of retreat par excellence, offers it a garden in which to cultivate its thoughts and tastes — with a wall, to be sure, to block it off from the bustle of a social world it can no longer control. Indeed, the State itself takes its revenge on the very insolent creature it helps to create: the "world citizen," who is now helpless under the overbearing power of a centralized imperial apparatus and its bureaucratic minions.

Nevertheless, the ego requires more than a place, however well-cultivated, in which to find its bearings. Divested of its niche in the polis, it must find a new niche in the cosmopolis — or, as any cosmopolis literally suggests, in the kosmos. Humanitas now becomes a kosmos, a new principle for ordering experience; and the "city-state," like the folk world before it, becomes an object of ideological derision. Initially, this derisive outlook takes the form of the politically quietistic philosophy of Stoicism that the educated classes embrace in late antiquity.

The Stoics, whose ideas were to nourish the Christian clergy for centuries to come, brought the fruits of justice — the individuated ego and the ideal of "universal citizenship" — into convergence with each other during the age of the cosmopolis and Empire. Epictetus, whose writings appeared during one of the most stable periods of the Imperial Age, radically clears the ground for this new, rather modern, type of ego. From the outset, he harshly derides the polis's sense of exclusivity as atavistic:

Plainly you call yourself Athenian or Corinthian after that more sovereign realm which includes not only the very spot where you were born, and all your household, but also that region from which the race of your forebears has come down to you.

But this is patently absurd, he declares, and shallow:

When a man has learned to understand the government of the universe and has realized that there is nothing so great or sovereign or all-inclusive as this frame of
things wherein men and God are united, and that from it comes the seeds from which are sprung not only my father or grandfather, but all things that are begotten and that grow upon the earth, and rational creatures in particular — for these alone are by nature fitted to share in the society of God, being connected with Him by the bond of reason — why should he not call himself a citizen of the universe and a son of God?

In its universality and sweep, this statement voiced nearly two thousand years ago matches the most fervent internationalism of our own era. But here Epictetus was formulating not a program for institutional change but rather an ethical stance. Politically, the Stoics were utterly quietistic. Freedom, to Epictetus, consists exclusively of internal serenity, of a moral insulation from the real world — one that is so all-inclusive that it can reject every material need and social entanglement, including life itself. By the very nature of a "freedom" carried to such quietistic lengths, it is impossible for any being to be disturbed or hindered by anything but itself. It is a man's own judgement which disturbs him. For when the tyrant says to man, "I will chain your leg," he that values his leg says: "Nay, have mercy;" but he that values his will says: "If it seems more profitable to you, chain it."

In his own way, Max Stirner, the so-called individualistic anarchist of the early nineteenth century, was to turn this Stoic notion of the utterly self-contained ego on its feet and infuse it with a militancy — indeed, an arrogance — that would appall the Stoics. But in principle, both Epictetus and Stirner created a utopistic vision of individuality that marked a new point of departure for the affirmation of personality in an increasingly impersonal world.

Had this doctrine of worldly disenchantment and personal withdrawal drifted off into history with the empire that nourished it, later periods might have seen it merely as the passionless voice of a dying era, like the exotic cults and world-weary poems that intoned the end of antiquity. But Christianity was to rework Stoicism's quietistic doctrine of personal will into a new sensibility of heightened subjectivity and personal involvement, inadvertently opening new directions for social change. It is easy — and largely accurate — to say that the Church has been a prop for the State. Certainly Paul's interpretation of Jesus' message to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" leaves the troubled world unblemished by any political and social challenges. Early Christianity had no quarrel with slavery, if we interpret Paul's injunctions correctly. Yet when Paul persuades Onesimus, the runaway Christian slave, to return to his Christian master, Onesimus is described as "that dear and faithful brother who is a fellow citizen of yours," for slave, master, and Paul are themselves "slaves" to a higher "Master in heaven." "Citizen" and "slave," here, are used interchangeably. Accordingly, Christianity entered into a deep involvement with the fortunes of the individual slave. Between Christian priest and human chattel there was a confessional bond that was literally sanctified by a personal deity and by the intimate relationship of a sacred congregation.

This existential quality reflects a feature of Christianity that has survived every epoch since its appearance: Universal citizenship is meaningless in the absence of real, unique, concrete citizens. The concept that humanity is a "flock" under a single Shepherd attests to the equality of all persons under a single loving God. They are equal not because they share a political recognition of their commonality but rather a spiritual recognition by their Father. In Jesus, social rank and hierarchy dissolve before the leveling power of faith and love. On this spiritual terrain, worldly masters can be less than their slaves in the eyes of God, the wealthiest less than the poorest, and
the greatest of kings less than their lowliest subjects. An all-pervasive egalitarianism liberates
the subject from all ranks, hierarchies, and classes that are defined by social norms. Not merely
citizenship but the principle of equality of all individuals and the absolute value of every soul
unites the citizens of the Heavenly City into a "holy brotherhood."

The worldly implications of this message are stated far more compellingly in the exegetical lit-
erature of Augustine than in the holy writ of Paul. Like Epictetus and Paul, Augustine completely
dissolves the genos into a "Heavenly City" that invites humanity as a whole to become its citizens.
No folk ideology can admit this kind of conceptual framework into its outlook of the world. By
contrast, the Heavenly City — for Augustine, its early voice is the universal Church — melds all
diversity among peoples, all citizens from all nations and tongues [into] a single pilgrim band. She
takes no issue with that diversity of customs, laws, and traditions whereby human peace
is sought and maintained. Instead of nullifying or tearing down, she preserves and appropriates
whatever in the diversities of divers races is aimed at one and the same objective of human peace,
provided only that they do not stand in the way of faith and worship of the one supreme and
true God.

Lest this be dismissed merely as Stoic and Pauline quietism — or worse, clerical opportunism
that renders the Church infinitely adaptable — Augustine adds that the
Heavenly City, so long as it is wayfaring on earth, not only makes use of earthly peace but
fosters and actively pursues along with other human beings a common platform in regard to all
that concerns our pure human life and does not interfere with faith and worship.

The Church does not merely render unto Caesar what is Caesar's; it replaces his claims to
dominus by a clerical dominion and his claims to deus by a heavenly deity:

This peace the pilgrim City already possesses by faith and it lives holily and according to this faith as long as, to attain its heavenly competition, it refers every good act done for God or for his fellow man. I say "fellow man" because, of course, any community life must emphasize social relationships.

Augustine's ambiguities are more explosive and implicitly more radical than his certainties. La-
tent in these remarks is the potential quarrel of Church with State that erupts with Pope Gregory
VII and the investiture crisis of the eleventh century. The ecumenicalism of the remarks opens
the way to outrageous compromises not only with paganism and its overt naturalistic proclivities
but to anarchic tendencies that demand the rights of the individual and the immediate establish-
ment of a Heavenly City on earth. The "peace of the pilgrim City" will be reduced to a chimera by
unceasing "heresies," including demands for a return to the communistic precepts and egalitari-
anism of the apostolic Christian congregation. Finally, Augustine's historicism admits not only
of the indefinite postponement of Christ's return to earth (so similar to the unfulfilled promise
of communism in the Marxian legacy) but also of the eventual certainty of Christ's return to
right the ills of the world in a distant millennia! era. Owing to his ambiguities, Augustine created
immense problems that beleaguered western Christianity for centuries and enriched the western
conception of the individual with not only a new sense of identity but also a new sense of
enchantment.

The secularization of the individual and the disenchantment of personality that came with
Machiavelli's emphasis on the amorality of political life and Locke's notion of the proprietary in-
dividual divested the self and humanity of their utopian content. Tragically, both were reduced

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to objects of political and economic manipulation. Christianity had made the self a wayfaring soul, resplendent with the promise of creative faith and infused with the spell of a great ethical adventure. Bourgeois notions of selfhood were now to make it a mean-spirited, egoistic, and neurotic thing, riddled by cunning and insecurity. The new gospel of secular individuality conceived the self in the form homo economicus, a wriggling and struggling monad, literally possessed by egotism and an amoral commitment to survival.

From the sixteenth century onward, western thought cast the relationship between the ego and the external world, notably nature, in largely oppositional terms. Progress was identified not with spiritual redemption but with the technical capacity of humanity to bend nature to the service of the marketplace. Human destiny was conceived not as the realization of its intellectual and spiritual potentialities, but as the mastery of "natural forces" and the redemption of society from a "demonic" natural world. The outlook of organic society toward nature and treasure was completely reversed. It was nature that now became demonic and treasure that now became fecund. The subjugation of human by human, which the Greeks had fatalistically accepted as the basis for a cultivated leisure class, was now celebrated as a common human enterprise to bring nature under human control.

This fascinating reworking of Christian eschatology from a spiritual project into an economic one is fundamental to an understanding of liberal ideology in all its variants — and, as we shall see, to Marxist socialism. So thoroughly does it permeate the "individualistic" philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, and the classical economists that it often remains the unspoken assumption for more debatable social issues. With Hobbes, the "state of nature" is a state of disorder, of the "war of all against all." The material stinginess of physical nature reappears as the ethical stinginess of human nature in the isolated ego's ruthless struggle for survival, power, and felicity. The chaotic consequences that the "state of nature" must inevitably yield can only be contained by the ordered universe of the State.

What is more important than Hobbes' notion of the State is the extent to which he divests nature of all ethical content. Even more unerringly than Kepler, who marvelled at the mathematical symmetry of the universe, Hobbes is the mechanical materialist par excellence. Nature is mere matter and motion, blind in its restless changes and permutations, without goal or spiritual promise. Society, specifically the State, is the realm of order precisely because it improves the individual's chances to survive and pursue his private aims. It is not far-fetched to say that Hobbes' ruthless denial of all ethical meaning to the universe, including society, creates the intellectual setting for a strictly utilitarian interpretation of justice. To the degree that liberal ideology was influenced by Hobbes' work, it was forced to deal with justice exclusively as a means to secure survival, felicity, and the pragmatics of material achievement.

Locke, who tried to soften this Hobbesian legacy with a benign concept of human nature, deals more explicitly with external nature. But, ironically, he does so only to degrade it further as the mere object of human labor. Nature is the source of proprietorship, the common pool of resources from which labor removes the individual's means of life and wealth. Whatsoever man "removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his Labour with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property." Lest it be thought that nature and labor join people together, Locke assures us that the very opposite is the case:

It being by him removed from the common state nature placed it in, hath by this labour something annexed to it, that excludes the common right of other Men. For
this Labour being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer, no man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to, at least where there is enough, and as good left in common for others.

What raises Locke beyond mere proprietary platitudes is the pronounced function he imparts to labor. The isolated ego, which Hobbes rescued from the hazards of mechanical nature by a political covenant, Locke strikingly rescues by an economic one. So far, Hobbes and Locke are as one in the extent to which they filter any spiritual qualities out of their social philosophies. Where Hobbes is arrested by the problem of human survival in a basically chaotic or meaningless world, Locke advances the higher claims of property and person, and perhaps more strikingly for our age, the crucial role of labor in shaping that most fascinating piece of property — the individual itself. For it is "Labour, in the Beginning, [that] gave a Right of Property, where-ever any one was pleased to imply it, upon what was common," and it was property "which Labour and industry began" that underpinned the "Compact and Agreement" that created civil society. The individual achieves its identity as the "Proprietor of his own Person, and the actions or Labour of it." Human activity, in effect, is human labor. How profoundly Locke opened a gulf between Greco-Christian thought and liberal ideology can best be seen when we recall that for Aristotle, human activity is basically thinking, and for Christian theology, spirituality.

This reduction of social thought to political economy proceeded almost unabashedly into the late nineteenth century, clearly reflecting the debasement of all social ties to economic ones. Even before modern science denuded nature of all ethical content, the burgeoning market economy of the late Middle Ages had divested it of all sanctity. The division within the medieval guilds between wealthy members and poor ultimately dispelled all sense of solidarity that had united people beyond a commonality of craft. Naked self-interest established its eminence over public interest; indeed, the destiny of the latter was reduced to that of the former. The objectification of people as mere instruments of production fostered the objectification of nature as mere "natural resources."

Work too had lost its sanctity as a redemptive means for rescuing a fallen humanity. It was now reduced to a discipline for bringing external nature under social control and human nature under industrial control. Even the apparent chaos that market society introduced into the guild, village, and family structure that formed the bases of the preindustrial world was seen as the surface effects of a hidden lawfulness in which individual self-interest, by seeking its own ends, served the common good. This "liberal" ideology persisted into the latter part of the twentieth century, where it is celebrated not merely within the confines of church and academy, but by the most sophisticated devices of the mass media.

But what, after all, was this common good in a society that celebrated the claims of self-interest and naked egotism? And what redemption did onerous toil provide for a humanity that had been summoned to surrender its spiritual ideals for material gain? If liberalism could add nothing to the concept of justice other than Locke's hypostatization of proprietorship, and if progress meant nothing more than the right to unlimited acquisition, then most of humanity had to be excluded from the pale of the "good life" by patently self-serving class criteria of justice and progress. By the end of the eighteenth century, liberal theory had not only been debased to political economy, but to a totally asocial doctrine of interest. That human beings acted in society at all could be explained only by the compulsion of needs and the pursuit of personal gain. In a mechanical
world of matter and motion, egotism had become for isolated human monads what gravitation was for material bodies.

The most important single effort to provide liberalism with an ethical credo beyond mere proprietorship and acquisition was made in the same year that the French sans culottes toppled the most luminous stronghold of traditional society. In 1789, Jeremy Bentham published his Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation, advancing the most coherent justification for private interest as an ethical good. In a majestic opening that compares with Rousseau’s Social Contract and Marx’s Communist Manifesto, Bentham intoned the great law of utilitarian ethics:

Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, pain and pleasure. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as determine what we should do.

In any case, they “govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think.” Thus caught up in the universal principles that predetermine our behavior irrespective of our wishes — a formula that lies at the heart of scientism, whether liberal or socialist — Bentham abandoned “metaphor and declamation” for a calculus of pain and pleasure, a system of moral bookkeeping that identifies evil with the former and good with the latter. This utilitarian calculus is explicitly quantifiable: Social happiness is seen as the greatest good for the greatest number. Here, social good comprises the sum of pleasures derived by the individuals who make up the community. To the sensory atomism of Locke, Bentham added an ethical atomism of his own, both of which seem to form exact fits to a monadic age of free-floating egos in a free-falling marketplace:

Sum up all the values of all the pleasures on the one side, and those of all the pains on the other. The balance, if it is on the side of the pleasure, will give the good tendency of the act upon the whole and if on the side of pain, the bad tendency of it upon the whole.

What applies to the individual, in Bentham’s view, can be extended to the community as the sum of all good and bad tendencies to which each of its members is exposed.

Rarely do we encounter in Justitia’s checkered career a more unadorned attunement of her scale to ethical quanta. Even acts that yield a calculable predominance of pleasure or pain are atomized and lend themselves, in Bentham’s view, to clearly delineable episodes, just like chapters in a Richardson novel. What is striking about Bentham’s ethical atomism is the kind of rationality it employs. Aristotle’s ethics, too, was built on the idea of happiness. But happiness in the Greek view was a goal we pursued as an “an end in itself,” not as a “means to something else.” It was derived from the very nature of human beings as distinguished from all other living things, a nature that could never be formulated with the precision of mathematics. If happiness was a rational and virtuous way of life, as Aristotle argued, it attained its full realization in the contemplative mind and in an ethical mean that rose above excess of any kind.

Bentham, by contrast, offered his readers no ethics in any traditional sense of the term but rather a scientistic methodology based on a digital calculation of pleasurable and painful units. The qualitative intangibles of human sentiments were coded into arithmetic values of pleasure and pain that could be cancelled or diminished to yield “surpluses” of either happiness or misery. But to dismiss Bentham merely as an ethical bookkeeper is to miss the point of his entire
approach. It is not the ethical calculus that comprises the most vulnerable features of utilitarian
ethics but the fact that liberalism had denatured reason itself into a mere methodology for calcu-
lating sentiments — with the same operational techniques that bankers and industrialists use to
administer their enterprises. Nearly two centuries later, this kind of rationality was to horrify a
less credulous public as a form of thermonuclear ethics in which varying sums of bomb shelters
were to yield more or less casualties in the event of nuclear war.

That a later generation of liberals represented by John Stuart Mill rebelled against the crude
reduction of ethics to mere problems of functional utility did not rescue liberalism from a patent
loss of normative concepts of justice and progress. Indeed, if interests alone determine social
and ethical norms, what could prevent any ideal of justice, individuality, and social progress
from gaining public acceptance? The inability of liberal theory to answer this question in any
terms other than practical utility left it morally bankrupt. Henceforth, it was to preach a strictly
opportunistic message of expediency rather than ethics, of meliorism rather than emancipation,
of adaptation rather than change.

But we are concerned, for the moment, with liberalism not as a cause or ideology, but rather
as the embodiment of justice. Anarchism and revolutionary socialism profess to be concerned
with freedom. Fascism is concerned neither with justice nor freedom but merely with the instru-
mentalities of naked domination; its various ideologies are purely opportunistic. Hence the fate
of justice reposes with the fate of the ideas of such serious thinkers as John Stuart Mill and his
followers. Their failure to elicit an ethics from justice that could rest on its rule of equivalence
leaves only Bentham's utilitarian ethics — a crude, quantitative theory of pains and pleasures —
as justice's denouement.

Let us not deceive ourselves that Bentham's methodology or, for that matter, his ethics have
dropped below the current ideological horizon. It still rises at dawn and sets at dusk, resplendent
with the multitude of colors produced by its polluted atmosphere. Terms like "pleasure" and
"pain" have not disappeared as moral homilies; they merely compete with terms like "benefits"
and "risks," "gains" and "losses," the "tragedy of the commons," "triage," and the "lifeboat ethic." The
inequality of equals still prevails over the equality of unequals. What is so stunning to the careful
observer is that if justice never came to compensate but merely to reward, its spirit has finally
become mean and its coinage small. Like every limited ideal, its history has always been greater
than its present. But the future of justice threatens to betray even its claims to have upheld the
"rights" of the individual and humanity. For as human inequality increases in fact, if not in theory,
its ideology of equivalence assails the ideal of freedom with its cynical opportunism and a sleazy
meliorism.
7. The Legacy of Freedom

The most triumphant moment of Justitia does not occur in her apotheosis as "bourgeois right," when the marketplace gives materiality to the rule of equivalence. Rather, it occurs in those times of transition when justice is extricating itself from the parochial world of organic society. This is the heroic moment of innocence, before the materiality of equivalence in the form of the commodity reclaims an early idealism. At this time, justice is emergent, creative, and fresh with promise — not worn down by history and the musty logic of its premises. The rule of equivalence is still loosening the grip of the blood oath, patriarchy, and the civic parochialism that denies recognition to individualism and a common humanity. It is opening society's door to personality with all its wild eccentricities and to the stranger as the shadowy figure of the "outsider." But by the bourgeois era, particularly its nineteenth-century cultural apogee, individual fulfillment reveals itself as naked egotism, and the dream of a common humanity becomes the threadbare cloak for harsh social inequalities. Penalty for reward is inscribed all over the face of the century and measured out unrelentingly in the cruel dialectic of the inequality of equals. Heaven and hell indeed hang together, as Horkheimer and Adorno observe.

What, then, of freedom — of the equality of unequals? Where does it begin to separate from the liberatory achievements of justice and pick up its own thread of development? I do not mean a return to organic society; instead, I mean a new advance that will include the individuality fostered by justice's maxim of equals and the shared participation of the individual in a common humanity.

The word "freedom" initially appears in a Sumerian cuneiform tablet that gives an account of a successful popular revolt against a highly oppressive regal tyranny, thousands of years ago. In The Sumerians, Samuel Noah Kramer tells us that "in this document . . . we find the word 'freedom' used for the first time in man's recorded history; the word is amargi which . . . means literally 'return to the mother.'" Alas, Kramer wonders, "we still do not know why this figure of speech came to be used for 'freedom.'" Thereafter, "freedom" retains its features as a longing to "return to the mother," whether to organic society's matricentric ambience or to nature perceived as a bountiful mother. The classical world is preoccupied with justice, fair dealings, individual liberty, and enfranchisement of the outsider in the world city, rather than with freedom's equality of unequals. Freedom is viewed as utopistic and fanciful, and relegated to the underworld of repressed dreams, mystical visions, and Dionysian "excesses" like the Saturnalia and other ecstatic mystical rituals.

As theory and an explicit ideal, freedom again rises to the surface of consciousness with Christianity. When Augustine places the wayfaring "Heavenly City" into the world as a force for social change, he also locates it in a meaningful, purposeful historical drama that leads to humanity's redemption. Hence humankind is removed from the meaningless recurring cycles of ancient social thought. Here we encounter the radical face of history's "double meaning" as it was developed by the Christian fathers. According to Augustine, creation initiates a distinctly linear, time-laden evolution analogous to the individual's own stages of life. The period from Adam to Noah is
humanity’s childhood, Noah to Abraham its boyhood, Abraham to David its youth, and David
to the Babylonian captivity its manhood. After this, history passes into two concluding periods
beginning with the birth of Jesus and ending with the Last Judgment. Within this history, the
heavenly and earthly cities are engaged in an irreconcilable series of conflicts in which each
achieves episodic triumphs over the other. However, a dialectic of corruption and germination
assures the triumph of the heavenly city over the earthly. Redemption thus ceases to be the
arbitrary whim of a deity; it ceases, in effect, to be exclusively transcendental and becomes an-
thropological. History imparts to faith a logic and intelligibility that inspires hope, meaning, and
action. Augustine’s view of redemption is prospective rather than retrospective; the “golden age”
of the pagan now lies in a historically conditioned future, one that is to be attained in a battle with
evil, rather than a long-lost natural past. In Augustine’s time, this vision served to diffuse the mil-
enarian hopes of the emerging Christian world for an imminent Second Coming of Christ. But
it later haunted the Church like a postponed debt, whose claims must be honored by its clerical
creditors sooner or later.

The decisive idea in Augustine’s work, observes Ernst Bloch, is that for the first time a political
utopia appears in history. In fact, it produces history; history comes to be as saving history in
the direction of the kingdom, as a single unbroken process extending from Adam to Jesus on the
basis of the Stoic unity of mankind and the Christian salvation it is destined for.

By placing Christian eschatology in a historical context, Augustine initiates a concept of utopia
that is earthbound and future-oriented. History has a goal that extends beyond cyclic return
to a final culmination in the practical affairs of humanity. Biblical narrative parallels personal
development; hence it ceases to be an inventory of miracles, rewards, and punishments. The
“world order,” in turn, ceases to be the consequence of a transcendental world that exists beyond
it, however much Augustine permeates it with the Will of God. It is an order in which that Will
is immanent in the earthly world as well, an order that includes causally related events as well
as miraculous ones.

But Augustine not only provides us with the first notion of a political utopia; he emphatically
denigrates political authority. To be sure, early Christianity had always viewed political entangle-
ments as tainted. Like the Stoics before them, the Church fathers of the late Roman world articulated
the individual’s feelings of increasing separation from all levels of political power and social
control. Gone were the popular assemblies of the polis, the hoplites or militias of citizen-farmers,
the citizen-amateurs chosen by lot to administer the day-to-day affairs of the community. The
Roman republic and, more markedly, the empire had long replaced them with senatorial and
imperial rulers, professional armies, and an elaborate, far-flung bureaucracy. For Stoicism and
Christianity to preach a gospel of abstinence from political activism merely expressed in spiritual
and ethical terms a situation that had become firmly established as fact. It neither challenged the
political order of the time nor acquiesced to it, but merely acknowledged existing realities.

By contrast, Augustine did more than counsel indifference to political authority; he denounced
it. Franz Neumann, describing what he calls the “Augustinian position,” acutely notes the dual
nature of this denunciation. Augustine viewed politics as evil: “Political power is coercion, even
in origins and purpose.” For human to dominate human is “unnatural”:

Only at the end of history with the advent of the Kingdom of God can and will co-
ercion be dispensed with. From this philosophy derive two radically different, yet
inherently related, attitudes: that of total conformism and that of total opposition to
political power. If politics is evil, withdrawal is mandatory. Forms of government and objectives of political power become irrelevant. Salvation can be attained through faith, and early life should be a mere preparation for it. Monasticism is the first consequence. By the same token, however, the demand for the immediate destruction of politics and the establishment of a Kingdom of God may equally be supported by the Augustinian premise. The Anabaptist movement [of the Reformation era] was perhaps the most striking manifestation of the total rejection of society.

More accurately, the Anabaptists rejected the political world represented by the State. The conflict latent in this dual message of political quietism and messianic activism could hardly be suppressed once the Christian doctrine became increasingly secularized. The Church was the major factor behind its own transformation from an other-worldly into a worldly power — notably by its growing conflict with the temporal power to which Pauline Christianity had entrusted humanity’s worldly destiny. The most explosive of these conflicts developed in the eleventh century, when Pope Gregory VII forbade the lay investiture of bishops and claimed this authority exclusively for the Papacy. The dispute reached its culmination when the Holy See excommunicated the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry IV, for contumaciously resisting the Church’s claims, and called upon Henry’s subjects to deny him fealty.

This was more than an extension of ecclesiastical power. Gregory was asserting the higher authority of spiritual over political power. In so doing, he challenged political power and placed it in a tainted ethical light. Accordingly, the Pope traced political authority as such back to evil and sin in a fashion that makes the Augustinian position seem tepid by comparison. Thus, declaimed Gregory,

> Who does not know that kings and rulers took their beginning from those who, being ignorant of God, have assumed, because of blind greed and intolerable presumption, to make themselves masters of their equals, namely men, by means of pride, violence, bad faith, murder, and nearly every kind of crime, being incited thereto by the prince of the world, the Devil?

Taken by themselves, these heady words match the most stinging attacks that were to be leveled against political authority by the revolutionary chiliastic leaders of the Reformation period. Thereafter, Christian doctrine became increasingly social and secular until religious disputes barely concealed harsh clashes over the implications of the Augustinian position. The eventual submission of sacerdotal to secular power did not terminate these conflicts. To the contrary, it made them outrageously worldly in character. In the twelfth century, John of Salisbury bluntly turned his back on the feudal hierarchy of his day, a hierarchy based on the unquestioning obedience of ruled to ruler, and proceeded to explore the validity of governance by law. Tyranny — by which John meant the disregard of law as dictated by the people — was beyond legitimation and could be overthrown by force. This far-reaching, avowedly revolutionary position was drawn not from the Christian father Augustine, but from the republican theorist Cicero. Its medievalistic references to “princes” and “kings” aside, it had a distinctly republican ring.

While Christian doctrine drifted into Thomistic scholasticism, with its explicit justification of hierarchy and its designation of political power as “natural,” Joachim of Fiore, almost a contemporary of John of Salisbury, brought the radical eschatology of Christianity completely into the open. Joachim’s goal was not to “cleanse the Church and State of their horrors,” observes Bloch. “They were abolished instead, or rather a lux nova was kindled in it — the ‘Third Kingdom,’ as the Joachimites called it.” The Third Kingdom — the coming historical stage illumined by the Holy
Spirit — was to succeed the Old Testament stage based on the Father and the New Testament stage based on the Son. With the illumination provided by the Holy Spirit, all masters, both spiritual and temporal, would disappear, and "wheat" would replace the "grass" brought by the Old Testament era and the "sheaves" brought by the New.

Joachimism fed directly into the great chiliastic movements that swept through the medieval world in the fourteenth century and surfaced again during the Reformation. Bloch's assessment of Joachim's influence is worth noting:

> For centuries, genuine and forged writings of Joachim's remained in circulation. They appeared in Bohemia and in Germany, even in Russia, where sects aspiring to original Christianity were clearly influenced by the Calabrian preaching. The Hussites' "kingdom of God in Bohemia" — repeated a hundred years later in Germany by the Anabaptists — meant Joachim's civitas Christi. Behind it lay the misery that had come long since; in it lay the millennium whose coming was due, so men struck a blow of welcome. Special attention was paid to the abolition of wealth and poverty; the preaching of those seeming romantics took brotherly love literally and interpreted it financially. "During its journey on earth," Augustine had written, "the City of God attracts citizens and gathers friendly pilgrims from all nations, regardless of differences due to customs, laws, and institutions that serve material gain and assure earthly peace." The Joachimites' coming civitas Dei, on the other hand, kept a sharp eye on institutions that served material gain and exploitation, and the tolerance it practiced — namely, toward Jews and heathens — could not but be alien to international ecclesiasticism. Its criterion for citizenship was not whether a man had been baptized, but whether he heard the fraternal spirit in himself.

The Joachimite "financial" interpretation of brotherly love carried Christian eschatology beyond the confines of the Augustinian position into a distinctly secular social philosophy and movement. The social theories of Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Locke owe their secular quality to the assimilation of "other-worldliness" to "this-worldliness," a process that begins with John of Salisbury and Joachim of Fiore. Christian social theory, particularly its radical wing, had overcome the duality between heaven and earth on which Pauline Christianity had been nourished. Once the split was transcended, heavenly questions were superseded by practical problems of law, power, authority, equality, and freedom. Pope Gregory VII had opened sluice gates that his era could never again close. Once the Church itself became the plaything of the temporal powers and the papacy an instrument of Rome's local patriciate, heaven too began to lose its hypnotic power over the human mind, and hope ceased to find refuge in the spiritual dispensation of an otherworldly King. When the Puritans of 1649 removed the head of Charles I in the name of a new religious credo, they effectively removed the head of their heavenly Father as well. In the following century, the Parisian sans culottes were to remove kingly and queenly heads with invocations to no higher authority than reason.

Christian historicism, with its promise of an early utopistic future, taken together with the Church's appeals for direct popular support against anticlerical abuses by lay authority, had a strong influence on radical social movements of medieval and early modern times. Until Marxist socialism acquired the status of official dogma in nearly half the world, Christianity was to play a predominant role in the spiritual and intellectual life of western society. No doctrine could kindle
more fervent hopes among the oppressed, only to dash them to the ground when the clerical and
civil powers periodically combined to repress subversive sects and radical popular movements.
Contradictions within Christian religious precepts were to provide the grindstone for sharpen-
ing the knives of social criticism, which, in turn, gave rise to new ideas for social reconstruction.
Despite its patently conflicting messages, Christianity offered the principles, examples, social
metaphors, ethical norms, and above all a spiritual emphasis on the virtuous life that were to
foster an unprecedented zealotry in periods of social rebellion. Its ethical impact on medieval
movements for change contrasts sharply with economistic and materialistic explanations of hu-
man behavior. Such a tremendous movement as Anabaptism — a movement that enlisted nobles
and learned sectarians as well as poor townspeople and peasants in support of apostolic commu-
nism and love — could not have emerged without anchoring its varied ideals in Christian ethical
imperatives. These ideals outweighed life itself in the eyes of its acolytes.

To describe religion, particularly Christianity, as the "heart of a heartless world," as Marx does,
is not to dismiss religion but to acknowledge its autonomous existence as an ethical dimension
of society. From the late Roman world to the Enlightenment, every significant radical ideal was
cast in terms of Christian doctrine. Even when people looked backward toward a lost golden age
or forward to a Last Kingdom, they often also looked upward to a "heavenly" dispensation for
inspiration, if not validation. Christian doctrine was a stellar body in the world's firmament of
belief — a source of illumination that would not be discarded as a guiding force in human affairs
until the eighteenth or nineteenth century.

Freedom's equality of unequals had never totally disappeared as a principle of "compensation,"
if only because this principle could be used to provide credibility for privilege as well as equality.
Where justice assailed the inequities of class rule or its claims to status as a matter of birth,
the notion of "compensation" reinforced these inequities by according to "unequals" a greater
"compensatory" increment in power, wealth, and authority. "Compensation" acknowledged the
"superiority" of the slave master and feudal lord over their slaves and serfs; it accorded the ruler
the authority and means to live according to the norms of rulership. Ironically, the nobles of
imperial Rome and feudal Europe claimed the "freedom" to live on very unequal terms with the
oppressed and exploited beneath them. Normally, it was to Caesar and the feudal monarchs, not
to local satraps and lords, that the oppressed turned for justice. Neither freedom nor justice were
prevalent as principles in European manorial society; rather, a fairly precise system of rights
and duties was established between ruling and ruled classes, based on highly modified customs
and traditions that derived from tribal times. Territorial lords were to be compensated for their
military prowess in defending their lands and subjects from "barbarian" raiders — and from the
dynastic conflicts generated by feudal society itself. Villeins, peasants, and serfs were also to be
compensated for the material support they gave to secure safety and peace in a very troubled
era.[41] In effect, compensation for inequalities had been denatured into privilege.

Wherever this system of rights and duties broke down, the oppressed often returned to the
egalitarian premises that had nourished the principle of compensation. To the oppressed, what
held for the territorial lords could easily hold for them; they too could claim the privileges con-
ferred by "inequality." Hence the "backward look" to a golden age was not always evidence of
nostalgia or of an ethical drama in which authority and oppression were unavoidable penalties
for original sin and the loss of innocence. Often, the "backward look" involved an attempt by the
oppressed to restore freedom's equality of unequals — to recover the very premises from which
ruling classes had reworked ancient traditions to support their own "compensatory" privileges.
But with Christianity, this “backward look” acquired a vibrant sense of futurity — and not only because of Augustinian or Joachimite historicism. To the pagan world, the memory of a golden age elicited basically quietistic and nostalgic responses. Even in the ancient cycles of eternal recurrence, it was doomed to be succeeded by faulted epochs. From Plato to the Stoics, social theory contains a quietistic core, a sense of fatalism and resignation, in which “ideal” poleis are frozen in their ideality and their distance from the real world, or else reduced to private gardens as loci for an ethical retreat. Within any given social cycle, the golden age could no longer be expected to return; there was no point in striving for it. All epochs in the cycle were as predetermined as the inexorable cycles of nature. To be sure, the oppressed or the morally inspired did not always heed this fate that the ruling classes of antiquity imparted to history; plebians and slaves could rise in great insurrectionary conflicts. But rarely were domination and slavery brought into question. The slave’s dream of freedom, as some shortlived but successful rebellions suggest, was to turn the slave-master into a slave. Vengeance, not hope, was the poor man’s notion of settling his accounts with his oppressor.

Christianity, by contrast, offered a different vision. Authority, laws, domination, and servitude were explained by the need to restrain a “fallen humanity.” Sin, like the afflictions in Pandora’s box, had been released by woman’s “accursed curiosity,” but redemption and its abolition of authority, laws, domination, and servitude lay in the offering. The Christian clergy retained an activist stance toward absolution and brought the flock into motion to fight sin, Moslem infidels, and the territorial lords as the needs of the Church hierarchy required. Hence, to look back to the Garden of Eden was actually to look forward to its recovery, not to bemoan its disappearance. The ethical drama that eventually would yield its recovery was an active struggle with the powers of evil and wrong: humanity made its own history. Yahweh, as the transcendent expression of Will, had been transmuted into the many existential wills of the Christian congregation. With the Christian emphasis on individuality and a universal humanity, Fortuna now returned in a more spiritual light to remove any notion of predetermination of one’s personal fate — a feeling that Calvin was to challenge during the Reformation. The Christian ethical drama became a battleground — not a stage — that was occupied by free-willing combatants, not stylized, carefully rehearsed actors. The masks used in classical drama to express an actor’s sentiments were removed to show the real face of the medieval and modern individual. If there was any script, it was the Bible — with all its wrenching ambiguities — not the cold and carefully wrought hexameters of ancient tragedy.

This battleground was marked by several striking features that greatly influenced European struggles for freedom. Its paradisical gardens were located not only in time but also in place.[42] Consigned as they might be to the past, they nevertheless occupied a geographic area on earth. As such, they posed a constant subversive affront to the class and priestly emphasis on the supernatural with its afterlife rewards for obedience and virtue. This implicit opposition of nature to Supernature — of earthly rewards to heavenly — is crucial. It flouts the authority of heaven and tests the ingenuity of humanity to find its haven of freedom and abundance within life itself and on the earth. Hence, such visions were not a utopos, or “no place” but a distinct “some place” with definite boundaries. Historically, attempts to locate the Garden of Eden were made repeatedly — not only symbolically but also geographically. Ponce de Leon’s pursuit of the “Fountain of Youth” is merely one of innumerable explorations that for centuries occupied the lives and claimed the fortunes of explorers.
Certainly, the oppressed believed that the Garden of Eden was still on earth, not in heaven — in nature, not in Supernature. In the outrageously heretical medieval image of such a garden, the "Land of Cokaygne," this place was the creation of a bountiful maternal natural world — an amargi — not an austere paternal deity. The utterly anarchic fourteenth-century version of this "some place" broadly satirizes the Christian heaven, against which it opposes an almost Dionysian, sensuously earthy world of nature — a world that, like maternal love, gives freely of its fruits to a denied and deserving humanity:

Though paradise be merry and bright, Cokaygne is a fairer sight. What is there in Paradise but grass and flowers and green boughs?

By contrast, Cokaygne has "rivers great and fine of oil, milk, honey, and wine." Food is bountiful, cooked and baked by nature's own hand; eternal day replaces night, peace replaces strife, and "all is common to young and old, to stought and stern, meek and bold."

Cokaygne, merely by virtue of its location, openly flouts clerical sensibilities. "Far in the sea, to the West of Spain, is a land called Cokaygne." In his analysis of the poem, A. L. Morton adds:

This westward placing clearly connects Cokaygne with the earthly paradise of Celtic mythology. Throughout the Middle Ages the existence of such a paradise was firmly believed in, but the church always placed its paradise in the East and strongly opposed the belief in a western paradise as a heathen superstition. In spite of this ecclesiastical opposition the belief persisted . . . . So strong were these beliefs that in the form of St. Branden's Isle the western paradise had to be christianised and adopted by the Church itself, and a number of expeditions were sent out from Ireland and elsewhere in search of the Isle. Nevertheless, the fact that Cokaygne is a western island is an indication that the Cokaygne theme is of popular and pre-Christian character, and the western placing may in itself be taken as one of the specifically anti-clerical features.

The heretical insouciance of the poem is revealed most clearly in its flagrantly "common" tastes, if not in its déclassé and bohemian tone. To the modern mind, it is notable for its lack of any technological means to achieve its bounty; such a technology, in any case, was hopelessly beyond human achievement at the time. More importantly, there is no toil in Cokaygne, no compulsory exertion, no need to master oneself or others for labor. Cokaygne is created not by humanity, its arts, or its institutions but by nature, which gives freely of its wealth and pleasures. The notion of nature as a realm of "scarce resources," which is articulated clearly in Aristotle's Politics, has yielded to the notion of nature as a realm of plenty and abundance; hence, no need exists for institutions and restrictions of any kind, or for hierarchy and domination. Indeed, Cokaygne is not a society at all but a fecund land, and its human inhabitants may live in it without placing any constraints on their desires. It is libertarian — indeed, deliciously libertine — because nature is no longer the product of a stern, demanding Creator; it is instead an emancipated nature that goes hand in hand with an emancipated humanity and an emancipation of human fantasy.

The premises on which the entire vision of Cokaygne rests are strangely modern. Peace, harmony, and freedom in the most absolute sense are predicated on material superfluity. People require no protection or rule; their every desire can be satisfied without technics or the need to
bring other human beings into personal or institutional subjugation. No war, conflict, or violence mars Cokaygne’s landscape. In the sheer splendor of this plenty and the givingness of nature, the “pleasure principle” and “reality principle” are in perfect congruence. Hence no conceivable tensions need disturb the security and peace of Cokaygne. Pleasure is the rule, abundance enables desire to replace mere need, because every wish can be fulfilled without exertion or technical strategies.

Cokaygne further implies a view of human nature that is benign rather than conceived in sin. Humanity is afflicted not because it has eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge but because it has eaten of the bitter root of scarcity. Scarcity is not the penalty of sin but rather its cause. Given a level of abundance that removes this bitter root, individuals have no need to dominate, manipulate, or empower themselves at the expense of others. The appetite for power and the desire to inflict harm are removed by nature’s sheer fecundity.

The land of Cokaygne appears again, as a sanctuary of privilege in Rabelais’s Abbey of Theleme. But for the present, I wish to emphasize that Cokaygne is a consumerist concept of freedom, involving no labor, technics, or canons of productivity. This concept is woven through the broad popular movements of history for centuries. And even where it ebbs briefly, Cokaygne is recovered by heretical elites, by the “elect” who acknowledge no authority or denial of pleasure other than that dictated by their own “inner light.” Allowing unrestrained freedom to consume, to take from life its preferred riches, this vision of freedom acquires a distinctly utopian form. It passes from imagery and geography into a cerebral sensibility — a philosophy, as it were — and a way of life that is represented by the Brethren of the Free Spirit. During the Reformation, it degenerates into the “military communism” of the Adamite plunderers. In our own time, it acquires distinctly esthetic qualities among the Symbolist and Surrealist artists whose demand for the fulfillment of desire are inscribed as slogans on the walls of Paris during the May-June events of 1968. Charles Fourier’s utopian visions incorporate the problematic of scarcity, need, and labor that this tradition of freedom seeks to resolve by natural, elitist, or esthetic means; but his phalansteries, the basic units of his utopia, are technically oriented and involve a recourse to strategies that root it only partly in the Cokaygne imagery.

In contrast to these consumerist concepts, we also witness the emergence of productivist concepts of freedom. These notions of humanity’s ability to create a communistic, sharing, and nonauthoritarian society have their material roots in science, technics, and the rational use of labor. In this vision, the means that will yield the reconciliation of human with human are supplied not by nature but by “man” himself. Utopias of plenty will be created by his labor and consciousness, by his capacity to organize society for the attainment of producer-oriented ends. Freedom thus is seen as the technical rationalization of the means of production, a project often associated with the concept of reason itself. The means, as it were, tend to become the ends of the utopian project and human emancipation. Nature is perceived as neither fecund nor even generous but, in varying degrees, ungiving and intractable to human goals.

Initially, this tendency in the realm of freedom is highly ascetic. Inequality will be overcome by a humane, loving denial of the means of life by fortunate individuals for the less fortunate. Everyone works as best as he or she can to create a common fund of goods that is parcelled out according to authentically valid needs. Radical Christian sects like the Hutterites emphasized the ethical rather than material desiderata that come with this simple communistic way of life. Communism to them was a spiritual discipline, not an economy. Later, the concept of a free, productive, communistic community draws its primary, although by no means exclusive,
inspiration from economic motives that involve the fostering of self-interest ("class interest") and
technical innovation. A distinctly bourgeois spirit infuses, if not totally replaces, an ethical ideal.
In contrast to visions of a golden age and the Last Kingdom, the realm of freedom is seen not as a
backward-looking world of the past but a forward-looking world of the future in which humanity
must fashion itself — often in conflict with internal as well as external nature.

But to sharply polarize earlier visions of freedom around categories such as consumerist or
productivist, hedonistic or ascetic, and naturalistic or antinaturalistic is grossly artificial and one-
sided. Insofar as they aspired to freedom, the sects and movements that commonly are grouped
in these categories were opposed to hierarchy as they understood it in their day (particularly
in its exaggerated ecclesiastical form) and intuitively favored a dispensation of the means of
life based on the equality of unequals. Beyond these two attributes, however, difficulties arise.
Ordinarily, many of the medieval and Reformation visions of freedom were highly eclectic and,
like the concept of justice, pregnant with double meanings. Moreover, whether these visionaries
regarded themselves as rebels or conformists in regard to Christianity's "true" meaning, their
ideas were guided by Christian precept. The Bible provided the common realm of discourse and
dispute among all parties. Until the Reformation, when the breakdown of feudal society led to an
explosion of community experiments, the individuals and groups who held to various libertarian
ideals were small in number, often widely scattered, and lived extremely precarious lives. Their
ideals were largely formed in the crucible of social transition — in periods of tumultuous change
from one historic era to another.

Thus, groups that, during the breakdown of the ancient world and the years of early Chris-
tianity, might have emphasized a productivist and ascetic outlook sometimes shifted their per-
spectives during more stable periods to a consumerist and hedonistic interpretation of freedom.
Comparatively large popular movements from the late imperial Roman era became highly elitist
sects during medieval times and developed a harshly predatory view of their rights and their
freedoms. Naturalistic folk visions of freedom like the Land of Cokaygne underwent a strange
shifting of meanings, acquiring a rabidly anticlerical character at one time, becoming a visceral,
earthly, and attainable "paradise" at another time, and providing a source of ribald satire at still
a third. The Reformation and the English Revolution of the late 1640s brought virtually all these
tendencies to the surface in the form of rebellions and significant practical experiments. After
that they faded away and were supplanted by secular utopias, more systematically wrought ide-
als, and major social movements such as anarchism and socialism. Hence, when speaking of
consumerist or productivist visions of freedom, one must bear in mind that they often merged
and changed over time, being embodied either as ideals of small sects or as social movements
that gripped the imagination of sizable segments of the population.

Although Biblical interpretation and exegesis formed the arena for the eschatological debates
and conflicts of the late imperial and medieval worlds, the sources for nearly all versions of
the Last Kingdom or Last Days were highly eclectic. Ideologically, the opening centuries of the
Christian era were no less tumultuous that the Reformation some thirteen hundred years later.
The very consolidation of Christianity as an organized body of canon and dogma hung in the
balance — less because of its conflicts with entrenched pagan religions than because of its own
internal divisions. At the outset, the Pauline Church in Rome (from which Catholicism was to
emerge) stood sharply at odds with its Jamesian counterpart in Jerusalem. The two centers of the
new faith were divided not only by geography but also by conflicting views of Christianity as
a world religion. Pauline Christianity stood for accommodation to the Roman State and for an
ideologically ecumenical orientation toward the gentiles. Jamesian Christianity centered around a nationalistic resistance to the "whore" Rome and around the preservation of a largely Judaic body of traditions. Christianity's problem of distancing itself from its Judaic origins was tragically resolved by the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Thereafter, the Jamesian Church disappeared with the destruction of Judea and the uncompromising Zealots who had produced the Christian Messiah.

But the Church's drift toward reconciliation with the State now encountered a crisis. The "gnostic revolt," as it has been so broadly depicted, formed a radically unique reinterpretation of the Judaic-Christian doctrine and of the early Church's conciliatory attitude toward political authority. Viewed from a religious aspect, gnosis is literally "illuminated" by its Hellenic definition as "knowledge." Its emphasis on religion tends to be avowedly intellectual and esoteric. But more so than the Greek ideals of wisdom (sophia) and reason (nous), its emphasis on revelation is consistently otherworldly. And its eschatological orientation draws amply on the archaic cosmogonies of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity itself, and a wide variety of pagan cults that invaded Roman society during its decline. Neither Judaism nor Pauline Christianity were immune to any of these far-reaching syncretic melds of religious and quasireligious belief. But Judaic nationalism aside, their battlegrounds were narrower than those of the gnostic religions that began to emerge in the second and third centuries A.D.

Gnosticism must be dealt with very prudently before any of its tendencies are described as a Christian "heresy." In its Manichaean form, it is simply a different religion, like Islam or Buddhism. In its Ophite form, it is a total, utterly anarchistic, inversion of Christian canon and dogma. And in its Marcionite form, its point of contact with Christianity is both too intimate and too challenging to be regarded as either Christian or non-Christian. In virtually all its forms (and they are too numerous to elucidate here), gnosticism slowly percolated through the Christian world, affecting later radical sects and movements that were to open startling new visions of personal and social freedom. Gnosticism matured as a rival of Christian doctrine in the medieval Cathari, and it circuitously and indirectly influenced deviations from Christianity such as the Brethren of the Free Spirit, certain creeds of apostolic Christianity, and early historical schisms in Protestantism. It finally reappeared as an increasingly worldly pantheism among revolutionary radicals in the English Revolution, such as Gerrard Winstanley, the Digger leader. In these five major trends that were to destabilize almost every form of entrenched or emerging orthodoxy, gnosticism either anticipated or influenced the religio-social conflicts that were to profoundly expand the legacy of freedom — a legacy conceived as a history of not only doctrines but also of social movements.

The "gnostic religion," as Hans Jonas has called it in his matchless account of the subject, is much too complex to discuss in detail here. Our proper concerns are those common features that give a remarkably emancipatory quality to doctrines loosely described as "gnostic Christianity." Christian gnostics shared with other gnostics a dramatic dualism, a Platonistic doctrine of the "three-souls" and an "ethics" (if such it can be called) that exhibits very challenging, indeed modern concepts of human freedom and the meaning of the human condition.

What unified the "gnostic religion" is a cosmogonic drama and an eschatology as compelling as the Judeo-Christian. Basically, the human condition is shaped by a conflict between two principles: the "good" and its "other" which commonly is interpreted as an evil malevolent, or even "Satanic" principle. These principles ordinarily were personified as deities by the gnostics, but it would be a crucial error to identify them with the Judeo-Christian drama of a heavenly deity and his demonic alter ego. To be sure, Manichaeanism, which became Pauline Christianity's most important rival in the third and fourth centuries, patently absorbed the image of a God who is lit-
eraly represented by light and a Satan who is conceived as darkness and materiality. Valentinus (c.125-160), whose gnostic theology exercised considerable influence in Rome and North Africa, developed a highly exotic cosmogony of "Aeons" that terminate in the person of Jesus, who provides humanity with the gnosis for divining the conflict between the Demiurge, the creator of the material world, and the Mother or Sophia, who can be represented for our purposes as a banished spiritual principle. Salvation occurs when the cosmos is restored to a universal "fullness" of spirit by the marriage of Sophia to Jesus. With few exceptions, the Christian gnostics grouped human souls into the spiritually pure and illuminated pneumatics, the imperfect psychics who could be illuminated, and the hopelessly material hylics, who are incapable by their very constitution of redemption and illumination. These distinctions played a significant role in the imagery of an "elect" or "chosen" elite whose claims upon society are virtually limitless, owing to their own perfect and pure nature. Similar distinctions were to mark some of the most radical heresies of the Middle Ages and Reformation.

In terms of gnosticism's ethical consequences, the doctrine closest to Christianity itself, and perhaps more accessible to a Christological interpretation of personal and social behavior, is the Gospel of Marcion (c. 144), who precedes Valentinus. A Christian bishop who was later excommunicated from the Roman Church, Marcion started from a highly selective reinterpretation of the New Testament. He does not burden us with the mythological material that often preoccupied the gnostic teachers, nor does he resort to the dubious allegorical interpretations central to the Catholic theologians of his day and ours. He claims to interpret the meaning of the gospel and the passion of Jesus literally — indeed, to single out in Paul's writings the truly authentic Christian creed. Hence, not only do his views seem to retain a clear Christian identity (a fact that vexed the Church fathers enormously), but also his work became their most disquieting doctrinal "heresy." Nevertheless, at its core Marcionism remained irredeemably gnostic and opened the most dramatic cleavage in Christian doctrine, a cleavage in which later "heresies" were to find refuge. His gnosticism has a simplicity that is not encountered in other gnostic teachers. Its very directness gave his "heresy" far-reaching ethical consequences that were later echoed by such cultic groups as the Ophites in Marcion's own era, the Free Spirit conventicles in the Middle Ages, and the Puritan "Saints" in the English Revolution.

Like the gnostic doctrines generally, Marcion's doctrines are rigorously dualistic. The world, including humanity, has been created by a Demiurge, an oppressive creator. In marked contrast is a superior, unknown God, an "alien" acosmic deity who embodies "goodness" and is the father of the Christ person. The "good" God is the alien, even to the people whose salvation Jesus is to achieve. By the same token, this deity is alien to the cosmos that has been created entirely by the Demiurge. Each divinity is separate from and antithetical to the other. The Demiurge is "just"; his antithesis, the alien God, is "good." Here, Marcion uncannily opposes "justness" or justice to "goodness" — which, by a mere fraction of a step forward, could yield the concept of "freeness." This remarkable antithesis between a calculating, petty "justness" and a generous, overflowing "goodness" expresses one of the most remarkable insights in the legacy of freedom. Marcion does not equivocate about the moral contrast created by these two deities. Like the petty, weak, mean-spirited world he has created, the Demiurge is worthy of his own product, as the Church father Tertullian complained: "Turning up their noses, the utterly shameless Marcionites take to tearing down the work of the Creator" — and, one could add, the Creator himself. As to the "good" God of Marcion, Tertullian tells us that he is "naturally unknown and never except in the Gospel revealed." He is as alien to humanity as he is to everything the Demiurge has created, but
his overflowing goodness induces him to send his Son into the Demiurge's world and redeem its human habitants.

Examining Marcion's ethical conclusions raises the question whether he advances any ethics at all. Disapproval, aversion, distaste for the "just" Demiurge and his world are apparent, but there is no evidence that Marcion has any other ethical stance. In a cosmos that is tainted but blameless and burdened by justice rather than goodness, it is unfair to ask whether Marcion believes in the existence of evil — even whether "goodness" can have meaning beyond its antithetical and polarized relationship to justice. Humanity's redemption seems to involve a transcendence rather than an act of ethical hygiene. Insofar as human behavior is concerned, Marcion preaches a gospel of uncompromising asceticism — not as a matter of ethics, as Hans Jonas observes, "but of metaphysical alignment." By refusing to participate in sensual pleasures and worldly events, the Marcionites functioned as obstructionists to the Demiurge's creation; the reproduction of the species, for example, merely reproduces the world from which humanity must be rescued.

Marcion's amoral asceticism not only provides a sweeping inversion of the ascetic ideal but also unintentionally lends itself to an utterly libertine approach.[43] The Ophites, a gnostic cult that surfaced in North Africa, extended Marcion's "amoral" stance and his interpretation of the Old Testament to the point of an overt nihilistic "morality." Granting Marcion's view of the Old Testament and most of the New Testament as tainted documents of the "just" God, the Ophites concluded that a correct interpretation of the Garden of Eden allegory ennobles the serpent and Eve. By persuading Eve and, through her, Adam to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, the serpent introduces gnosis into the world. It is not accidental that the "just" deity views this seduction as "original sin," for with gnosis humanity acquires the means to discover the truly despicable nature of the Creator and unmask him and his narrowness of spirit. Hippolytus, in his account of the Peratal, an Ophic cult, extends this dramatic inversion to include the murder of Abel by Cain:

> This general Serpent is also the wise Word of Eve. This is the mystery of Eden; this is the river 'that flows out of Eden. This is also the mark that was set upon Cain, whose sacrifice the god of this world did not accept whereas he accepted the bloody sacrifice of Abel: for the lord of this world delights in blood. This Serpent is he who appeared in the latter days in human form at the time of Herod.

Radical "amorality" thus turns upon ascetism to encourage unrestrained freedom and the open defiance of the Demiurge's moral tenets. In contrast to Marcion, the Ophites accept the three-soul classification of gnosticism, with its pneumatics, psychics, and hylics. Marcion would not have accepted this prototypic notion of the "elect," which infected not only official Christianity but also many of the radical "heresies" that were ideologically related to gnosticism. In fact, here we reach the limits of gnosticism as a "gospel" of freedom. Things being what they are, only the few — an elite by nature modeled partly on Plato's "guardians" (albeit without their "asceticism" and "communism") — are free to indulge their every appetite. If gnosticism had been left at this point, it would have retreated back to a questionable libertinism that could no longer be identified with Marcion's generous libertarian message.

What matters is not so much the elitist conclusions that the gnostic cults adopted but the eschatological strategy they used — a strategy that could easily be divested of its elitist sequelae. Based on this strategy, the claim of cults such as the Ophites to "forbidden things" (including
orgiastic ones) could also be viewed as a "metaphysical alignment." All "moral" judgment, not 
only that of the orthodox Christian, is tainted. The "moral" code is merely the "complement of 
the physical law, and as such the internal aspect of the all-pervading cosmic rule," observes Jonas. 
"Both emanate from the lord of the world as agencies of his rule, unified in the double aspect of the 
Jewish God as creator and legislator." Human will in normative law is appropriated "by the same 
powers that control his body. He who obeys it has abdicated the authority of his self. To defy the 
authority of the Creator and his juridical minions was turned from a "merely permissive privilege 
of freedom" into "a positive metaphysical interest in repudiating allegiance to all objective norms 
..."

Jonas sees in gnostic libertinism more than mere defiance; it is "a positive obligation to perform 
every kind of action, with the idea of rendering to nature its own and thereby exhausting its 
powers." Accordingly, "sinning" becomes "something like a program." Its completion is a "due 
rendered as the price of ultimate freedom." Jonas concludes that it is doubtful whether 
the preachers of these views lived up to their own professions. To scandalize has always been 
the pride of rebels, but much of it may satisfy itself in provocativeness of doctrine rather than of 
deeds. Yet we must not underrate the extremes to which revolutionary defiance and the vertigo 
of freedom could go in the value-vacuum created by the spiritual crisis. The very discovery of 
a new vista invalidating all former norms constituted an anarchical condition, and excess in 
thought and life was the first response to the import and dimensions of that vista.

But can this exploration of the gnostics end with a discipline of indiscipline? A wild compulsion 
to be free? Gnosticism's commitment to "goodness" and physical indulgence implies the latent 
existence of more creative impulses than a "moral nihilism." We hear the message of Rabelais's 
Abbey of Theleme, whose devotees are no longer spiritual pneumatics but earthly rationalists; 
we also hear the message of Fourier's "phalanstery," which resonates with a radically new social, 
cultural, and technical dispensation: its psychological cosmos of personal affines, its gastronomic 
delights, its artistic and variegated organization of labor, its concept of work as play, and its 
generous (for Fourier's time) commitment to the emancipation of women. No hierarchy or system 
of domination infects this message. Fourier can be placed at least partly in the gnostic tradition 
by virtue of his emphasis on human spontaneity, personal freedom, and a refusal to deny the 
claims of the flesh. This is even more true for Rabelais, perhaps because of his elitist Renaissance 
proclivities and his clerical background. Ultimately, the denial of justice for "goodness" and of 
repression for freedom provide a more secure common ground for the humanistic utopians of 
the modern world and the gnostics of the ancient world than their dizzying idiosyncracies would 
lead us to believe.

We also hear another message. Where imagination is permitted to outstrip all the constraints 
that ideology, morality, and "law" place on human creative powers, what emerges is the voice of 
art, not merely of theology. Religion has always been a ritualized drama that appeals to aesthetic 
needs as well as to faith. And gnosticism shared with the cultic mysteries of the ancient world, 
as well as with Christianity, a need to achieve a derangement of the senses, an ecstatic union 
of spirit with body that theology described as a union of worshipper with deity. A world that is 
rendered askew is a world that can be seen anew — and changed according to the dictates of art 
as well as reason. Herein lies the great power of imagination that has vitalized radical movements 
for centuries: a "world turned upside down" that has been the goal of great anarchic movements, 
from the ancient world to the French student radicals of 1968.
Gnosticism, by giving desire an unyielding claim on the entire universe of experience, does not seem to limit its credo of "illumination" to a limited place in personal life. Its appeal to defiance as an "obligation" is a program for everyday life. The gnostic experience, if such it can be called, is not locked into episodic rituals and ceremonies; it is an ongoing, unrelieved calling. Gnosis is expected to transfigure every detail of one's encounter with reality — to create a transmundane reality of "goodness" that is close to a communion with the true God. To use the language of Surrealism, it places a "halo" over the ordinary things and events that normally drift by us unperceived. The very spontaneity it fosters in the self is the correlate of a permanent state of desire rather than mere need, of a passionate perception of the world rather than one deadened by custom, routine, and predictability.

If these creative, indeed, esthetic, aspects of the radical gnostic "programs" are depicted accurately, then the closing centuries of antiquity anticipated a more universal secular impulse to freedom than a strictly religious interpretation of gnosticism would lead us to believe. What gnosticism seems to imply is a colonization of every aspect of human experience by desire. Schiller's dream of an esthetically enchanted world and Breton's hypostatization of "the marvelous" as the explosive grenades that unsort the world of given reality would be coterminous with the gnostic experience of "ecstatic illumination." But the gnostics were not "political animals" in Aristotle's sense of the term. They were not citizens of the polis or cosmopolis but ultimately of a highly spiritual world. They emphasized inward-oriented experiences, not an active contact with the social world. The Cathari, a gnostic sect that flourished during the Middle Ages, had a program for self-extinction. Their extreme rejection of the "hylic" or material — from reproduction to food — would have guaranteed a retreat from the Demiurge's cosmos into an utterly ineffable one had the Albigensian "crusade" of the thirteenth century not led to their virtual extermination.

Communism, which cannot easily be reduced to cultic conventicles, drew its inspiration from Acts in the New Testament and other "Judaic" writings that Marcion would have banished from Christian canon and dogma. Because it was apostolic in its efforts to establish its ethical legitimacy and superiority against the Church's self-interest and greed, communism has no discernible roots in ancient gnosticism. But Christianity's ample history — be it the account of its wayward hierarchy or of their "heretical" opponents — is not a story of doctrinal consistency. Just as the Church was to bend before the onslaught of changing events, so too did the devout congregations outside its fold. By the time of Luther and Calvin — and perhaps most markedly during the English Revolution of the seventeenth century — heretical and recalcitrant congregations of revolutionary heretical "Saints" (as they called themselves) were to surface from their hidden folds in Christian society and move to the center of political life. We shall investigate the activities of these "Saints," their various tendencies, their politics, and their growing secularity in the following chapter. Particularly in the British Isles, the Puritan radicals ceased to be mere spiritual conventicles; from religious "Saints" they became "God's Englishmen." Once-hidden heretical congregations and religious pulpits now occupied the seats of rebellious parliaments, parliamentary rostrums, and (perhaps more compellingly) the tents, barracks, and military councils of Oliver Cromwell's New Model army.

What is significant about this sweeping entry of Christian heretics into political institutions is not merely the secularity of the development. At heart, most of the erstwhile heretics were theocrats — and not very tolerant ones at that, particularly in matters of religious dogma. The various Puritan sects of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had no love for their enemies and no charity toward "Papists," however uneasily they lived with one another within a
common Protestant fold. But they were nonconformists. Their hatred of authority often greatly exceeded their hatred of official religious dogma. The attempt of official English Protestantism (that is, the Anglican Church’s attempt to contain its Presbyterian dissidents, and the dissidents’ attempt, once they became ascendant, to contain the Puritans) was nearly as fierce as the efforts of the English Church as a whole to exorcise its Catholic past. Nonconformity thus introduced a millenia-long tradition of fiery disputes over ecclesiastical structure as such. The Church policy raised stormy questions and, finally, rebellions around the right of the king to head the English Church, the right of bishops to control congregations, and the freedom of the congregation — indeed, of each member — to answer to no authority whatever beyond the claims of his or her "inner voice."

Christianity, in effect, had inadvertently spawned a remarkably new "politics": a politics distinctly libertarian in its orientation, often anarchic in its structure, and remarkably unfettered in the restrictions it placed on individual freedom. It had created an ethical arena for a godly citizenship whose libertarian scope was even broader than that of the Athenian concept of citizenship. Unlike the citizen of the polis, the Christian "heretic" had to recognize that one was answerable only to God, and hence had to be in a higher estate of citizenship in the New Jerusalem than in the earthly city. By visualizing themselves as God's "elect," the "Saints" may have been elitists, especially when they were forced by persecution into the medieval and early Reformation underground of damned heretics. But as the Reformation provided a sweeping impetus for social activism, and as theocracies appeared in Geneva under Calvin, in Scotland under Knox, and finally in England under Cromwell, questions of authoritarian versus libertarian structure ceased to be merely ecclesiastical issues. They became political and social issues as well. The Puritan New Model army that brought English royalty to its knees and placed King Charles on the scaffold was itself a richly articulated, often raging body of radical congregations — the arena of fiery heretical sermonizers — that was represented by rank-and-file "agitators" (as the soldiers’ representatives were actually called) who sat on the Army Council together with major-generals. Together they formulated and furiously argued over issues of not only military policy but also social and political policy. On at least two occasions, Cromwell nearly lost control of his own military "Saints" in near or outright mutinies.

By spawning nonconformity, heretical conventicles, and issues of authority over person and belief, Christianity created not merely a centralized authoritarian Papacy but also its very antithesis: a quasireligious anarchism. Up to the seventeenth century and for several generations later, particularly in America, the political and social structures of freedom were as central to Christian discourse as were issues of religious ideology.

From the eighteenth-century Enlightenment until our own time, the waning of this realm of discourse on the structures of freedom was to have the same tragic consequences as the secularization of the individual and the disenchantment of personality to which I have already alluded. The moral issues of freedom were to suffer a decline with the secularism introduced by Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Bentham, and the Victorian liberals. In addition, the very notion that freedom — that is, active citizenship in the Periklean and Hellenic sense — presupposes the existence and development of certain distinct libertarian institutions was to be eclipsed by debates and analyses on the subjects of property ownership, the mystique of nationhood (and the nation-state), and the tendency to equate institutional centralization with social rationalism. Hobbes, Locke, and Marx were obviously concerned with security and property when they did not discourse on the nature and need of centralized authority. The active revolutionaries of the
modern era—Cromwell, Robespierre, Babeuf, Blanqui, and Lenin, to cite the most familiar of the lot—were dogmatic centralists who often moved beyond the limits of liberal republicanism in order to foster highly authoritarian political forms. Except for rejoinders by the anarchists and certain utopian socialists who had emerged from the French Revolution, Christian heretics faded out of the revolutionary tradition into a historical limbo, at least until comparatively recent times. The nation-state was now equated with community; the notion of a representative republic, with the direct democracy of the polis. The very terms of the debate over authority had become so distorted that the debate itself virtually ceased to be intelligible to later generations.

The imagery of a recurring history, largely cyclic in character, often replaced Christianity’s eschatological vision of the Last Days, with its populist reward of a Land of Cokaygne or at least an earthly Jerusalem. The republican ideal that permeated the Great French Revolution was always haunted by a Caesarist shadow, a republican Bonapartism, that its own contemporary historians justified as a stabilizing factor in Europe’s march toward freedom, specifically toward freedom of trade. The Jacobins read Plutarch not only as a guide to Roman virtue but also as a revolutionary handbook; perhaps it was more germane as a source of social forecasts than Rousseau’s Social Contract, which was read as a source of social theory. They awaited their Napoleon as surely as the Roman plebes awaited their Caesar. Seeing the world with the new sense of recurrence that had replaced the Christian emphasis on a linear history, they viewed their cards as stacked and accepted the fall of the republic itself fatalistically—indeed, in almost a dreamlike trance, if Robespierre’s personal passivity between his overthrow and his execution is any indication.

With the exception of the Paris Commune of 1871, which exploded as an anarchic confederal image of a France administered by a Commune composed of decentralized communes, European socialism had decorated itself with republican trappings at best and dictatorial ones at worst. By the autumn of 1917, Lenin had combined Brutus and Caesar in one person. Despite his slogan of "All Power to the Soviets!"—and even earlier in the summer of the same year, "All Power to the Shop Committees!" (a strictly anarchosyndicalist demand)—Lenin readily dispensed with both forms and replaced them by the Party as a State organ.

The Party, as such, was the unique structural innovation of the post-Reformation era. Its contemporaneity and its impact on political life have rarely been fully appreciated. From the twelfth century onward, Christian heretics found their home in the small, highly decentralized, personally intimate conventicle—an almost cellular type of association that fostered an intense form of intimacy and support that was sorely lacking in the larger Christian congregations of the time. These family-like units lent themselves uniquely to a confederal form of interaction among groups from which, cell by cell, a truly organic body politic could be constructed. With the onset of the Reformation, as such groups became increasingly involved in secular affairs, they functioned more like social organisms than like State or political institutions. Brotherhoods such as the Hutterites even became alternative communistic societies, self-sufficient and complete unto themselves. Perhaps even more striking is the fact that the conventicle form of association never disappeared, despite the ascendancy of the Party. Completely secular in character but no less small, intimate, and decentralized, it persisted within the Spanish anarchist movement as the "affinity group." From Spain it spread throughout the world with the recent growth of libertarian organizations, acquiring the names of "collective," "commune," and "cooperative" with the emergence of the New Left in the 1960s.

By contrast, the Party was simply a mirror-image of the nation-state, and its fortunes were completely tied to the State’s development. The Party was meant to be very large, often em-
bracing sizable masses of people who were knitted together bureaucratically in depersonalized, centralized organs. When the Party was not "in power," it was merely the disinherited twin of the State apparatus, often replicating it in every detail. When the Party was "in power," it became the State itself. Rarely has it been understood that the Bolshevik Party and the Nazi Party were themselves complete State apparatuses that completely supplanted the preexisting State structures they "seized." Hitler, no less than Lenin, was to follow Marx's famous maxim that the State must not be merely occupied but "smashed" and replaced by a new one.

But Marx was stating a fact about parties in general that, after the French Revolution, had already ceased to be a novelty. The modern State could more properly be called a "party-state" than a "nation-state." Organized from the top downward with a bureaucratic infrastructure fleshed out by a membership, the Party possesses an institutional flexibility that is much greater than that of the official State. Structurally, its repertory of forms ranges from the loosely constructed republic to highly totalitarian regimes. As a source of institutional innovation, the Party can be sculpted and molded to produce organizational, authoritarian forms with an ease that any State official would envy. And once in power, the Party can make these forms part of the political machinery itself. Our own era has given the Party an autonomy unequaled by any State institution, from the ancient pharaohs to the modern republics. As the history of Russian Bolshevism and German fascism dramatically demonstrated, parties have shaped European states more readily than states have shaped their parties.

Yet the ascendency of the nation-state, the party, and, in more recent years, the highly centralized bureaucratic State did not lack ideological reactions against them. The English "Saints" who carried Cromwell to power never encountered the highly coordinated institutions or even the centralized bureaucracies that the absolute monarchs of the European continent and, perhaps, more significantly, the Jacobin "despotism of freedom" had fashioned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Only the Papacy, a feeble institution by the time of the English Revolution, had anticipated any statelike apparatus like the French Revolution was to produce. The Tudor and Stuart monarchies, while more centralized than English royal houses of the past, were still too inept to anticipate the world of nation-states that would follow.

The French Revolution — first under Robespierre and later under Bonaparte — had fashioned the centralized nation-state with a vengeance. For the first time in Europe, the word "Saint" was replaced by the word "patriot." While Marx exulted in the willful ruthlessness of the nation-state, lesser-known revolutionaries drew less favorable, icily clear antiauthoritarian lessons of their own. One such was Jean Varlet, a popular street orator (or Enragé) of 1793 who managed to survive Robespierre's murderous purge of the Parisian radicals. Varlet decided (flatly contradicting his more celebrated contemporary, Gracchus Babeuf) that "Government and Revolution are incompatible." This statement, in its sweep and generality, was more unequivocal than any conclusion voiced by the radical "Saints" about the State or even authority. It was anarchist. Indeed, Varlet had been the target of this very epithet by his liberal opponents in the feverish days of 1793 — as, in fact, the Levellers had been in the English Revolution more than a century earlier, when a paper favorable to Cromwell described them as "Switzerizing Anarchists."

The term was to stick and to acquire an ever richer meaning on the margins of European and American society. Both Thomas Paine and Jefferson drew conclusions somewhat similar to those of Varlet from the quasidictatorship of the Jacobins and its Bonapartist sequela. Even more significant than Paine's derogatory remarks about government were the essentially reconstructive confederal notions that Jefferson advanced to Destutt de Tracy in 1811. Concerned with the need
for relatively federalist institutional forms at the base of society, Jefferson astutely diagnosed the reasons why republican France so easily slipped into imperial France with Napoleon’s coup d’etat:

The republican government of France was lost without a struggle because the party of "un et indivisible" had prevailed. No provincial [and one could easily add, local] organizations existed to which the people might rally under the laws, the seats of the Directory were virtually vacant, and a small force sufficed to turn the legislature out of their chamber, and salute its leader chief of the nation.

Having concentrated all political authority in the national State, the Jacobins and their successors, the Directory, had denuded the country of all local, decentralized foci of power from which the revolution could mount an effective resistance to the Bonapartist monarchy.

That Jefferson imputed a greater wisdom to the American Revolution for its confederal orientation raises issues that must be deferred to a later discussion. Jefferson himself was no "Switzerlandizing Anarchist," and the American Revolution did not reproduce Switzerland’s cantonal form of confederation.[44] But a confederalist orientation was to linger on in the writings of Proudhon, who provocatively declared himself to be an "anarchiste"; in Bakunin, who was to help make anarchism into a movement; and in Kropotkin, who was to vastly enrich anarchism with a wealth of historical traditions, a strikingly pragmatic vision of the technological and social alternatives it offered, and a creative vision drawn largely from the writings of Robert Owen and Charles Fourier.
8. From Saints to Sellers

But what of the social movements that these expanding notions of freedom were meant to influence? What of the ancient tribes who crossed the threshold into "civilization," the plebes and slaves to whom Christianity appealed, the discontented congregations of the "elect" and the unruly conventicles of the radical "Saints," the mystics and realists, the ascetics and hedonists, the pacifists and warriors of Christ who were to "turn the world upside down"? Up to now, I have explored the legacy of freedom in terms of its development as a theory. But how did the legacy function as a social movement, and how did the social movement react back upon the legacy, raising problems not only of faith and "Sainthood" but in our own time problems of economics, technics, and the impact of a marketplace of sellers? To understand the legacy of freedom as it was lived, not only thought, we must immerse our ideas in the rich flux of reality and sort out their authenticity in the earthy experiences of the oppressed.

Historically, the earliest expression of freedom within the realm of unfreedom consists of popular attempts to restore the irreducible minimum and the circulation of wealth frozen in the temples, manors, and palaces of the ruling elites. The "big men" — initially, the tribal warrior-chieftains, later the nobles and monarchs of the secular realm and their priestly counterparts — were the custodians of society’s use-values. They collected them in storehouses (an action partly justified by the Biblical story of Joseph) and redistributed them according to a hierarchy of values that increasingly reinforced their authority. The early history of "civilization" is largely an account of the custodians' expanding grip on the productive process: their deployment and rationalization of labor, their control over its fruits, and their personal appropriation of an increasingly larger fraction of the labor process and its social product.

But this history is also an account of the mystification of the social wealth they siphoned off to reinforce their power. Treasure — in the form of large ornate structures, costly furnishings and attire, jewels, art works, storehouses of products, even intangibles such as writing and knowledge — looms over the "masses" as the materialization of an all-pervasivemalevolent force. The shamans and priests did their work well by transforming mundane things into transmundane things, objects into symbols; they thereby restructured the very process of generalization — which must itself be emancipated from hierarchy — into the supernatural imagery of transubstantiation. The ancient mysteries invaded the mental processes of humanity and changed them epistemologically from gnosis into the warped form of a sacrament: real bread was turned into the "body" of Christ and real wine into his "blood." Even in the distant, pre-Christian era of antiquity, the real things that the primordial world generously recycled within the community to satisfy real needs were turned into sacramental things consecrating power and hierarchy. The "fetishization" of use-values long preceded the "fetishization" of exchange-values and market-generated "needs."

Consolidated as mystified power and authority, the treasure of the ruling elites had to be exorcised. It had to be removed from the hands of the hierarchical strata who guarded it. It also had to be stripped of its mystified traits by a two-fold process of dissolution: firstly, by restoring this treasure to the natural, comprehensible forms of mundane use-values in order to render autho-
ity itself mundane and controllable; secondly, by recirculating wealth within the community in order to restore the principle of usufruct. Accordingly, by plundering, redistributing, or even "purifying" property with the torch of the incendiary, the "masses" were not merely oriented toward a consumerist disposition of wealth, but were also demystifying its institutional function as a force for domination — as well as restoring the primordial principles of the irreducible minimum and the equality of unequals. In this tradition-laden version of the "black redistribution," we find a rational attempt to subvert the hold of objects as the incarnation of hierarchy and domination over the lives of human beings. These expropriative explosions of the people, which so often are dismissed as the "plundering" expeditions of "primitive rebels" (to use Eric Hobsbawn's fatuous characterization), were surprisingly sophisticated in their intentions. They recur throughout history. Even the most unadorned consumerist visions of freedom have a broader social dimension than we normally suppose; they are concerned not only with the satisfaction of human needs but with the desymbolization of power and property.

But two epistemologies are in conflict here. The ruling classes react to the "black redistribution" not only with personal fear and a savage lust for vengeance, but with horror toward the desecration of their hierarchical vision of "order." The "black redistribution" affronts not only their own proprietary claim to the social product but also their view of the social product as a kosmos of proprietary claims. Perhaps the earliest record we have of these reactions is a lamentation by a member of the privileged classes, recounting a peasant rebellion that apparently swept over the Nile Valley at the beginning of ancient Egypt's "feudal" period (c. 2500 B.C.):

Behold the palaces thereof, their walls are dismantled . . . . Behold, all the craftsmen, they do no work; the enemies of the land impoverish its crafts. [Behold, he who reaped] the harvest knows naught of it; he who has not plowed [fills his granaries] . . . . Civil war pays no taxes . . . . For what is a treasure without its revenues? . . . Behold, he who has no yoke of oxen is [now] possessor of a herd; and he who found no plow-oxen for himself is [now] owner of a herd. Behold, he who had no grain is [now] owner of granaries; and he who used to fetch grain for himself [now] has it issued [from his own granary].

Not only had the kosmos fallen apart, but with it the State: "[The] laws of the judgment-hall are cast forth, men walk upon [them] in the public places, the poor break them open in the midst of the streets." James Breasted, from whom this account is drawn, astutely observes that this despoilation of the records, archives, and written laws was "particularly heinous from the orderly Egyptian's point of view; the withdrawing of writings and records from the public offices for purposes of evidence or consultation was carefully regulated." In this sacrilegious act of destruction, the blood oath took its revenge on written legal ties; parity, on status sanctified by codes; usufruct, on the titles that confer ownership of property; and the irreducible minimum, on the accounts of taxes and grain deliveries to the State, nobility, and priesthood.

Thereafter, almost every peasant war was marked not only by the redistribution of property but also by the burning of archives. The impulse for such actions came from the revolutionary impulse, not from the memory of previous revolts, whose history had been largely suppressed. In that distant period related by the Egyptian scribe, the memory of tribal life may still have permeated the reality of "civilization," and the Word, with its moral, legal, and mystical nuances, had not completely replaced the deed. Contract and moral precept still floated on a primordial
quicksand that required many centuries of "civilization" before it could fully harden into class rule and become solidly internalized as guilt, renunciation, and a fear of the "chaotic" impulses that raged in the unconscious of the oppressed.

The memory of later uprisings (which are probably very similar in nature to the one we already have explored) was so completely appropriated by the ruling classes that the historical record is sketchy at best and venal in the accounts it does contain. We know that about the same time the ancient Egyptian peasantry rose against the entrenched class system of the Old Kingdom or possibly the nobility of the Middle Kingdom, a similar uprising occurred in the Sumerian city of Lagash (for which Kramer, puzzled by the literal meaning of the word amargi, provides a fairly complete account). Judging from Athenian references, Sparta's serf-like helots revolted with disconcerting frequency. So troubling was this history of underclass unrest that even the fairly benign Athenian polis lived in uncertainty about its own slave population. Rome, particularly toward the end of its republican era, was apparently destabilized by a series of slave and gladiatorial revolts, among which Spartakus's historic rebellion (73 B.C.) was apparently the most far-reaching and dramatic. This army of slaves and gladiators, later joined by impoverished free people, engaged in a series of major looting expeditions that swept over the Campania and southern Italy until it was crushed by Crassus and Pompey.

However, Greece and Rome's class conflicts were largely confined to disputes between commoners and nobles over demands for a fair redistribution of the land, the cancellation of mortgages, and greater juridical equality. Within the prevailing system of ownership and political authority, quasinationalist uprisings afflicted both city-states after they were drawn into the pursuit of imperial ends. But these conflicts rarely involved deep-seated internal social changes either at home or abroad.

Only with the advent of Christianity did the libidinal, instinctive movement for freedom resurge — not only as gnosticism but also as a radical interpretation of canonical ideals. Even seemingly "orthodox" Christian communities exhibited these communistic and fervently millenarian qualities, which were to unsettle western society for centuries. Apostolic deeds were used against the ecclesiastical Word — the one as bluntly secular, the other as cunningly divine. The covenant of justice — Old Testament law — was transmuted into the covenant of freedom as practiced by the early Christian congregations that apparently existed in ancient Judea before the fall of Jerusalem.

Christianity's mixed message can be grouped into two broad and highly conflicting systems of belief. On one side there was a radical, activistic, communistic, and libertarian vision of the Christian life largely drawn from the Jamesian Church in Jerusalem; on the other side there was a conservative, quietistic, materially unworldly, and hierarchical vision that seems to derive from the Pauline Church in Rome. The radical interpretation of a devout life and Christian eschatology may have had even more canonical support than the conservative, despite the Roman Church's apparent purging of the New Testament to remove the radical ideals of its Jamesian progenitors. Apostolic Christianity advances a vision of the earliest community of believers that stands sharply at odds with the surrounding Roman world. Communal sharing — communism — is one of its most outstanding features. According to Acts, "all that believed were together, and had all things in common, and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them all, according as every man had need." As if to reinforce this view of the Christian life, the gospel intones: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul, not one of them said that all of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common." If we
take this description of the early Christian community literally (and there is no reason why we shouldn't), the first believers practiced not merely communism but usufruct.

The Pauline Church in Rome reinforced this apostolic account. Barnabas (c. 130), in his "Epistle to the Christians," made the gospel message a practical injunction: the true believer should "communicate in all things with thy neighbor" and "shall not call things thine own." Justin the Martyr (c. 100-165) urged that the redeemed "who loveth the path to riches and possessions above any other now produce what we have in common and give to everyone who needs." Tertullian (c. 160-230), already faced with radical "heresies" that were to rend the Church of his day, nevertheless emphasized that "We acknowledge one all-embracing commonwealth — the world." Having cited the Christian doctrine of a universal humanitas, as distinguished from a parochial folk or a selected elite (a distinction he apparently found it still necessary to make), Tertullian then declared that Christians were "one in mind and soul, we do not hesitate to share all our earthly goods with one another. All things are common among us but our wives." Although the Church dealt with such descriptions, possibly such admonitions, very warily, these it probably could not expunge. Apparently, the Acts and the writings of the Church fathers cited here were too well-known to be suppressed or reduced to apocryphal writings. The Church encountered similar problems in dealing with the gospel of Matthew, in ritual and language the most Judaic of the New Testament writings, and with the gospels of Mark and Luke, both of which reveal strong biases against wealth and proprietary proclivities.

No less important are the apocalyptic visions advanced in Matthew and particularly in Revelation. These visions of the Last Days, together with similar prophecies in the Old Testament, attained immense popularity among the early Christian congregations and surged up as an explosive program for "heretical" tendencies and movements during the Reformation. Matthew's gospel is wrenched by anger. Jesus comes not to "abolish the Law or the Prophets ... but to complete them." Pacific though Jesus may be, he warns the disciples: "Do not suppose I have come to bring peace to the earth. It is not peace I have to bring, but the sword." "Vipers," the "wrath" of the "Kingdom to come," "vengeance" — all these terms rise up angrily in the text, as much from the mouth of Jesus as from that of John the Baptist (a figure apparently modeled on Amos whose god is a "barn burner," to use Bloch's expression). Revelation or Apocalypse (the original Greek title) is chiliastic to the core; its fiery symbolism aside, it predicts the Last Days in terms of the total annihilation of the Roman Empire, to be followed by the Second Coming of Jesus, the raising of the devout from the dead, and a utopian heaven on earth in the form of a New Jerusalem.

To the early Christians, the Apocalypse and the Second Coming, with its ensuing "millennium, were not spiritual metaphors or remote events. They were earthly and imminent. The all-encompassing renunciation that Jesus demands of his disciples would be meaningless if the "throne of glory," with its promise of repayment "a hundred times over" and its reward of "eternal life," were not close at hand. The huge stakes advanced by both parties in this cosmic bargain — on one side, the heart-wrenching humiliation and crucifixion; on the other, the loss of "houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land" — could hardly be expected to end in a paltry and remote dispensation.

Nor could the early Christian congregations be asked to look forward to less. Norman Cohn has pieced together the various apocalyptic fantasies of the Christian congregations during the first few centuries of persecution into a "paradigm" that was to haunt the Church and guide the
revolutionary eschatological movements of the oppressed for centuries to come. According to this vision:

The world is dominated by an evil, tyrannous power of boundless destructiveness — a power moreover which is imagined not as simply human but as demonic. The tyranny of that power will become more and more outrageous, the suffering of its victims more and more intolerable — until suddenly the hour will strike when the Saints of God are able to rise up and overthrow it. Then the Saints themselves, the chosen, holy people, who hitherto have groaned under the oppressor's heel, shall in their turn inherit dominion over the whole earth. This will be the culmination of history; the Kingdom of the Saints will not only surpass in glory all previous kingdoms, but it will have no successors.

To this "paradigm" must be added a number of vital eschatological visions that are essentially utopian. The "Saints of God" are a devout, earthly people, not necessarily divine otherworldly personages, and they will be led by a holy messiah with miraculous powers. The earthly "Kingdom of God" will be a world of plenty in which, according to the vision of Lactanius (a Christian proselytizer of the fourth century):

The earth shall bear all fruits without man's labor. Honey in abundance shall drip from the rocks, fountains of milk and wine shall burst forth. The beasts of the forests shall put away their wildness and become tame... no longer shall any animal live by bloodshed. For God shall supply all with abundant and guiltless food.

Thus Christianity, during many of its wayward pagan accretions, was to acquire not only a large calendar of saints and miraculous achievements but also, in terms of folk appeal, the ancient land of Cokaygne.

Yet by no means does this "paradigm" yield more than an ascetic social quietism — one that initially recruits martyrs for the Church rather than warriors. The oppressed who joined the early Christian congregations shaped their fantasies in the form of miracles, not muscular conflicts. The mentality of the ancient slave and of impoverished country and city folk left an indelible mark of resignation on the new religion. Unsettling as the early Christian imagery of a vengeful Second Coming may have been to the masters of the Roman world, these Christians lived in a world of portents and omens. Tertullian, for example, tells us of a wondrous vision that had been reported: every morning for forty days a walled city was seen in the sky of Judea, clearly signifying that the heavenly Jerusalem would shortly descend to the earth. Patently, the Second Coming was clearly at hand — indeed, imminent.

After two centuries of passive waiting, however, such miraculous notions of the Apocalypse had been worn to shreds. A new note began to appear in the chiliastic literature. The Latin poet Commodianus advanced a more militant, activistic concept of the Apocalypse based upon violence and crusading zealotry. To Commodianus, the "Saints" were warriors, not mere penitents; they were free, with the Deity's consent, to loot and devastate wantonly. After much battling back and forth between the heavenly hosts and the forces of Antichrist, the holy folk would win over the evil ones and enjoy the rewards of immortality in their New Jerusalem. These consolingly material rewards included not only eternal life but also freedom from the burdens of age, inclement weather, and the ascetic life. The "Saints" could marry and have children; the earth would be rejuvenated, and the "Holy Ones" would enjoy its rich material bounty.

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The "double meaning" of these chiliastic visions did not escape the eyes of the Church fathers. Augustinian Christianity ruthlessly purged the now-established religion of its millenarian fantasies by turning them into spiritual allegories — the device par excellence that the Church was to use repeatedly against any undesirable literal interpretations of the Bible. To Augustine, the Second Coming had essentially arrived with the establishment of the Church. Official Christianity elevated the vision of an earthly paradise to heaven and suppressed as "heresies" any departure from its otherworldly focus. Not that the earthly world could be left to its own ways — Christ, as well as the Church, would intercede to transform it — but the Second Coming was off in the distant future, when the Church's custody of the earth and its task of sorting out the holy from the irredeemable ones had been completed.

The chiliastic visions of a New Jerusalem, however, did not disappear. They were driven underground, only to surface again with the changing social conditions that layered the Middle Ages, often acquiring increasingly radical traits. During their long history, these visions branched off into two types of social movements — the ascetic and the hedonistic — that later intersected very visibly during the Reformation. After this era, they entered into the more worldly revolutionary movements of the capitalist era.

The ascetic movements were austere and messianic, like the early Christian sects; but they were far from quietistic. Their methods were almost maniacally violent and their hatred was directed principally against the clergy. The New Jerusalem they sought to bring to earth has been called "anarcho-communistic" by several scholars, a term not always used very felicitously here, but one with a truthful core to it. By far the largest of the medieval "heresies" were polarized around these Spartan apocalyptic ideals, which found their ideological roots in apostolic descriptions of the early Christian community.

The hedonistic movements veered sharply toward worldly interests. Even their chiliasm tended to lapse into an amoral worldliness that probably scandalized the more austere messianic "heresies" of the time. It seems unlikely that medieval hedonistic tendencies were directly influenced by ancient gnostic ideologies, however close the Brethren of the Free Spirit seem to the Ophites of an earlier era. But the reasoning by which the former arrived at their involuted notion of Christian virtue and unfettered sexuality is more pantheistic than dualistic. The mystical distinction made by Meister Eckhart (c. 1260-1328) between a lofty, unreachable, and unknowable "Godhead" and a God who is overflowing, omnipresent, and close to humanity approximates a gnostic dualism that allows for a transcendental "alien" deity on the one hand and an immanent deity on the other. But Eckhart's immanent deity is a warm, highly Christianized God who appears in each human soul as a "divine spark." Although Eckhart and his disciples surely did not regard themselves as departing from the Church, his mystical theology does seem to encourage an autonomy of action that could have served the ideological needs of hedonistic conventicles well.

The earliest example of a large-scale ascetic "heresy" is the Crusade of the Shepherds (or Pasteureaux), which emerged in the middle of the thirteenth century, when crusades were still largely movements of the oppressed rather than of errant military adventurers and the ruling classes. The Pasteureaux, composed mainly of zealous young people, began to march through the towns of France, at first attacking Jews and then the clergy, whom they accused of being "false shepherds" of their flocks. The movement enjoyed immense popular support and turned into a chronic, century-long assault upon the established institutions of the Church. Cities were taken by force, churches and monasteries were sacked, the homes of wealthy burghers were plundered, and even the Papal residence at Avignon was menaced by one of the Pasteureaux columns. They
finally were excommunicated by Pope John XXII (who also later condemned Eckhart) and ruthlessly hunted down by the territorial lords. Few popular movements in the medieval world seem to have inspired greater fear among the ruling classes of this era or more seriously challenged the very basis of the social order than this "shepherds' crusade."

The Pastoureaux had their German parallel in the Flagellants — the large bands of self-afflicting penitents who scourged themselves and one another with whips and branches. Here, asceticism was carried to the point of ecstatic self-torture; in its own way, it was perhaps more a doctrine of the flesh than a denial of it. Like the Pastoureaux, their focus became increasingly worldly; starting as a spiritually redemptive movement, they soon became a social movement and launched violent attacks upon the clergy — and, implicitly, upon the ruling classes as a whole. Their repudiation of institutional Christianity extended not only to the clergy’s claims to divine authority but even to the validity of the sacrament of the Eucharist. It is questionable whether they accepted any need for priestly intervention between humanity and the deity; they patentely anticipated the Reformation by claiming that they were directly instructed and guided by the Holy Spirit, a notion that lies at the core of virtually all radical Reformation ideologies. Accordingly, they did not hesitate to violently disrupt Church services and angrily orate against the sovereignty of the Papacy.

To confine the anticlerical features of the Pastoureaux, Flagellants, and the later Reformation movements merely to doctrinal disputes or attempts by underclass elements to plunder Church properties would be to gravely misread a deeper constellation of radical motives that often guided such movements. The Church was more than a large property-owner in the Middle Ages, and its wealth was not simply an affront to the Christian commitment to poverty. The Church was also a massive hierarchical structure — the reality and symbol of overbearing authority. To the shepherds and penitents of the thirteenth century — indeed, to the intellectuals in the new universities, the burghers in the new towns, and even the newly emerging proletariat of the Lowlands and northern Italy — the Church’s claim that it would bridge the chasm it had opened between the ordinary individual and the Deity was an affront to Christianity’s gospel of inwardness, selfhood, and its implicit recognition of the accessibility of each soul to God. Christian clerics, no less than the pagan priests before them, viewed themselves as brokers between humanity and the Deity — the surrogates for the congregation’s contact with God.

However spiritual the anticlerical rebellions of the time may seem to the modern mind, the fact remains that anticlericalism had a grossly underrated anarchic dimension. In trying to remove the clergy from its function as humanity’s delegate to the spiritual kingdom, all the anticlerical movements of the time were striking a blow against the notion of representation itself and its denial of the individual’s competence to manage his or her spiritual affairs. That the Church’s wealth was an extraordinarily magnetic lodestone and its moral hypocrisy a source of popular fury are indubitable social facts that surfaced repeatedly. But the Church was also a political challenge. Its hierarchy was offensive to the preindustrial mind because it challenged — indeed, obstructed — the individual’s freedom to participate directly in the spiritual kingdom, to relate to the Deity without mediation, to participate in a direct democracy concerning matters of faith (a free “nation of prophets” as Christopher Hill was to call the radical communities of the English Revolution).

The Church, in effect, gave no recognition to the congregation’s claims to competence; it had a kingdom, not a community; a State, not a polis. Both clerical and temporal lords sensed that anticlerical movements could easily turn into civil insurrections — and such insurrections often
followed religious unrest. The Pastoureaux movement was shortly followed by the repeated insurrections of Flemish workers against the commercial aristocracies of the Lowland cities. The Lollard "heresy" in England and the Lutheran "heresy" in Germany preceded peasant revolts in both countries. Until fairly recent times, religious unrest was often the prelude to social unrest. Widespread religious dissidence fed directly into the English Revolution of the 1640s and the "Great Awakening" influenced the American Revolution of the 1770s.

Accordingly, both the Pastoureaux and the Flagellants were continental precursors of the English Peasants’ Revolt of 1381 and the exhortations of John Ball, one of its leaders (albeit a rather minor one). Economically, the revolt itself had limited goals: the peasants were resisting enserfment and the rigid ceilings that had been imposed on their earnings. But socially, people of the fourteenth century had ceased to think of equality and freedom as the distant practice of a golden age, buried irretrievably in the past. Instead, they began to perceive these ideals as preordained rights that humanity could hope to achieve in the near future.

The fortunes of the English Peasants’ Revolt — its temporary successes and its defeat at the treacherous hands of the monarchy — are matters of historical detail. What counts, here, is the tenor of the sermons that Ball and possibly many of his compatriots delivered to the peasants before and during the uprising. According to Froissart, who chronicled the revolt from an aristocratic viewpoint, Ball staked out the right of all people to social equality and to the means of life. If everyone is "descended from one father and one mother, Adam and Eve, how can the lords say or prove that they are more lords than we — save that they make us dig and till the ground so that they can squander what we produce?" This was a fiery question that must have permeated the entire land, as well as the spirit (if not the goals), of the English Peasants’ Revolt and the continental rebellions that would later follow. Ball’s attack upon the injustices inflicted on the English peasantry was not limited to an appeal for the already ritualized looting expedition that marked many earlier movements. He demanded a more radical and far-reaching "black redistribution": a state of affairs in which "all things are in common and there is neither villein nor noble, but all of us are of one condition."

These social ideals were to find their culmination in the Taborites of Bohemia, a movement that appeared a century or so after the defeat of the English Peasants’ Revolt. The Taborites were an offshoot of the quasi-Protestant Hussites who, in 1419, rebelled in Prague against German and Papal sovereignty. For nearly two decades, the Hussites successfully resisted the Catholic armies of the Emperor Sigismund and the combined forces of the Holy Roman Empire.

But the more extreme Taborites were avowedly communistic in their social ideals. Sending forth their appeals and their armies from their newly founded city of Tabor (named after the mountain of Christ’s transfiguration), they demanded the abolition not only of taxes, dues, rent, and imposts, but also of all private property. Kenneth Rexroth, in his perceptive account of the communal movements of the past, describes them as extreme millenarians, the most militant so far in the history of dissent. They believed that Christ’s Second Coming (disguised as a brigand) and the universal destruction of the evil world would occur almost immediately, at first in 1420; and when that date passed, it was never postponed more than a few years.

The new dispensation was to be very bloody: "In preparation for the coming of the kingdom it was the duty of the brotherhood of saints to drench their swords in the blood of evildoers, indeed to wash their hands in it." Following upon this macabre baptism (an imagery that was not
entirely alien to John Ball and other millenarians), "Christ would appear on a mountain top and celebrate the coming of the kingdom with a great messianic banquet of all the faithful."

Despite their orgiastic commitment to blood and public festivals, the Taborites were largely ascetics. But like many Reformation radicals, they were ecumenically intermixed with hedonistic millenarians. The hedonists were later to be expelled from Tabor and formed the notorious Adamite sect, which actually reflected a very different chiliastic disposition. Both tendencies, in fact, were almost avowedly anarchic: laws were to be abolished, the elect would enjoy immortality, and the Second Coming would create a world of material abundance free from toil and pain, even in childbirth. All human authority would be replaced by a community of free people in which "none shall be subject to another."

In appraising the Taborite commune, Rexroth astutely notes:

If socialism in one country is doomed to become deformed and crippled, communism in one city is impossible for any length of time. Sooner or later the garrison society will weaken but the outside world does not. It is always there waiting, strongest perhaps in times of peace. Tabor was never able to balance its popular communism of consumption with an organized and planned communism of production, nor the exchange of goods between city communes and peasant communes.

As it turned out, when Tabor and the entire Bohemian national movement were crushed by Sigismund, "it was the peasant communism of the Hutterites and Brethren which survived." They linger on with us as parochial colonies that still preserved their Reformation traditions and language as the archeological remains of a long-lost world.

But the Christian communal movement did not disappear with the Reformation. It surfaced again in the English Revolution of the late 1640s and early 1650s, particularly in the north and west of England — the "dark corners of the land," according to the Parliamentary party. A modern breed of "masterless men" like Archilochus millenaria earlier, they lived largely uprooted and wayfaring lives. With their emphasis on private interpretations of Scripture, their hatred of civil and ecclesiastical authority, and their social "democracy of prophets," they fostered a strong sense of spiritual community in regions that the Parliamentarians had virtually abandoned. Here we find the early Quakers, The Familialists, the Seekers, and the Fifth Monarchy men, some of whom actually rose in armed revolt against Cromwell's conservative custodianship of a revolution he had never started. Only when the world, "turned upside down" by the revolution, had been restored to its normal philistine concerns, did eschatological movements disappear completely or take the form of tractable sects and societies. The wide-ranging definitions of freedom raised by the Marcionite gnostics and practiced by ascetic communists such as the Taborites were thoroughly transmuted (often with considerable attrition) into rationally disciplined and highly secular ideologies. Today, we fervently debate their tenets under very different names, hardly mindful of their pedigree or the extent to which they anticipated our theories and practices. The most well-known of these radical movements reached their apogee in the English Revolution, then drastically narrowed their millenarian scope. They became amiable service organizations, such as the Society of Friends (Quakers), with very little awareness of their own fiery, often violent, chiliastic origins.

By the Reformation, most ascetic millenarian movements were grouped under the broad rubric of "Anabaptism," a simple doctrine that rejected infant baptism for adult baptism on the rather
sound basis that only mature people could understand the subtleties of the Christian calling. But
to the ruling classes of the time, including many staid Protestants, the word Anabaptism, like the
word anarchist today, was used more as a pejorative symbol of public opprobrium than as an au-
thentic body of ideas. The term was used promiscuously to include such widely disparate social
and religious movements as the Bohemian nationalists in Prague, the manic Taborite millenari-
ans, and even their frenzied off-shoots such as the Adamite sects or the pacifist Hutterites. It is
fair to say that hardly any founders or early acolytes of Anabaptism were spared the beautitudes
of martyrdom. Insofar as they were real millenarians, all the Anabaptists, real and imaginary,
are utterly separated from our own time by the ideological chasm of religion: the "Second Com-
ing," the miraculous powers of Christ, and the theocratic proclivities that often substituted a
"messianic" hierarchy for an ecclesiastical one. Actually, many of these millenarians were not
communists at all; at best their communism was marginal.

But from this highly mixed welter of independent, often conflicting or intersecting beliefs,
there emerges one figure who bridges the chasm from religious to secular communism. Gerrard
Winstanley is perhaps best known as the leader and theorist of the Diggers, a miniscule group of
agrarian communists who in 1649 tried to cultivate the "free" or waste lands on St. George’s Hill
near London. Actually, these experiments, which were conceived as an "exemplary" effort to pro-
mote communal ideals, were ignored in their day. What really swept the Digger movement into
historical accounts of radical movements was Winstanley’s own pamphlets, and these received
most recognition long after Winstanley himself had passed into history.

As Rexroth accurately emphasizes, "All the tendencies of the radical Reformation" — and, we
may add, the most important millenarian movements of earlier times — "seem to flow together
in Winstanley, to be blended and secularized, and become an ideology rather than a theology.
"Winstanley was not a military communist like the Taborites; he was a committed pacifist, and
so far as we know, he remained one throughout his life. Nor was he a hedonist like the Adamites;
he adhered to a strictly ascetic concept of the righteous life. But his views became markedly
pantheistic, even hostile to any notion of an anthropomorphic deity. His naturalism brings him
very close to Enlightenment social theory: "To know the secrets of nature is to know the works of
God." His denial of a supernatural heaven and hell as a "strange conceit" would have brought him
to the stake a few centuries earlier. He emphasizes the need not only for "communal property"
but perhaps even for usufruct. "The earth with all her fruits of Corn, Cattle, and such like was
made to be a common Store-House of Livelihood," he declares, "to all mankind friend and foe,
without exception." These words are not merely brave but also deeply felt. Reason is the "great
creator" that "made the earth a common treasury" and anarchy (in the literal sense of "no-rule")
was its earliest disposition — for "not one word was spoken in the beginning that one branch of
mankind should rule over another."

In time, these libertarian and communistic ideals suffered from Winstanley’s bitter encoun-
ters with the counter-revolutionary moods following the collapse of the Leveller movement in
1649 and the Cromwell reaction that succeeded it. His Law of Freedom in a Platform or, True
Magistracy Restored, written in 1652, reveals a disenchantment with the outcome of the rev-
olution. The failure of the Digger experiments — more precisely, the popular indifference the
Diggers encountered — had altered Winstanley’s high expectations. His "True Magistracy" is a
representative democracy, not a direct one; it is more punitive than loving, and more centralized
and perhaps needlessly structured than libertarian. Perhaps this vision had been with him from
the beginning, but it stands at odds with some of his earlier, more general views. Nor does his
work end in hope. Few lines are more memorable and touching than the poem that concludes the pamphlet:

Truth appears in Light, Falsehood rules in Power; To see these things to be, is cause of grief each hour. Knowledge, why didst thou come, to wound, and not to cure? I sent not for thee, thou didst me in lure. Where knowledge does increase, there sorrows multiply, To see the great deceit which in the World doth lie . . . . O death where art thou? wilt thou not tidings send? I fear thee not, thou art my loving friend. Come take this body, and scatter it in the Four, That I may dwell in One, and rest in peace once more.

Thereafter, Winstanley faded into the oblivion that ultimately devoured the revolution itself. But more than many proponents of like views, he has received from posterity "the roses of rebels failed."

The hedonistic trend in medieval chiliasm, like the gnostic Ophites, is redolent with aspirations for personal autonomy. Medieval hedonistic conventicles were compellingly individualistic and almost completely free of patricentric values. Christianity’s powerful message of the individual’s sanctity in the eyes of God, its high valuation of personality and the soul, and its emphasis on a universal humanity bred a sense of individuality and freedom that could easily turn against clerical hierarchy and dogma. During the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, a variety of highly radical sects surfaced from the depths of Christianity’s fascinating cauldron of ideas. Some, like the Free Spirit, were quite explicitly radical; others, like the Beghards and Beguines, were less so. Crystallized into conventicular networks and secular orders, these sects produced ideas that severely vexed the Church and brought it into sharp conflict with its own doctrinal offspring.

Perhaps the most important theological issue the Church had to face was the rise of a broadly philosophical pantheistic movement. A thousand years earlier gnosticism had raised the question of how a truly "good" God could have created a woefully sinful world. Its theorists answered this puzzling problem not by anchoring their reply in "original sin" and a fallen humanity but by creating two deities: a "good," transcendental, "alien" God whose son Jesus had come to redeem the world, and a faulty, "just," petty deity who had created the material world from which spiritually pure "pneumatics" enjoyed immunity. If sin and anything "fallen" existed in the gnostic orbit of ideas, it was imputed primarily to the Creator, not to humanity. And the genius of gnosticism was to locate this concept of the defective within the petty realm of "justice," where the rule of equivalence and the lex talionis prevailed, rather than within the realm of ethics, where "goodness" was the norm.

Medieval pantheism, by contrast, tried to raise a dualistic vision of virtue into a unified outlook by seeking to achieve a mystical personal union with the supreme "One," the embodiment of goodness. This outlook stands in marked contrast to both gnostic and Christian dualism and, in fact, leads to Spinoza's later, more Judaic concept of a unifying, "godly" substance. By the thirteenth century, mystics such as David of Dinant and Amaury claimed that matter and mind were identical with God — indeed, that everything could be unified as God. The spread of these pantheistic ideas to the ordinary people of Paris and Strasbourg produced a number of sects such as the New Spirit, the sisterhood of the Beguines and the brotherhood of the Beghards, and most notoriously, the Brethren of the Free Spirit. To these sects, humanity was composed of the same divine substance as God, hence it could enter into direct communion with the deity. Such a view
not only challenged the need for ecclesiastical intervention between humanity and God, but also
gave its acolytes an exhilarating sense of personal freedom that could easily justify the removal
of all worldly restrictions on human behavior and open the way to unrestrained moral license.

The secular "convents" and "monasteries" that now began to proliferate throughout the Low-
lands, France, Germany, and northern Italy quickly staked out coexisting claims to the duties
of their ecclesiastical counterparts. Perhaps the earliest of these new lay institutions, the sister-
hood of the Beguines and the brotherhood of the Beghards, presented the most serious threat
to the Church's authority. Wars and plagues had created a very large number of "masterless"
people, most of whom were forced into lives of beggary and crime. Whether as a charitable act
or from a desire to enlist them in the performance of "good works," a little-known ecclesiastic
named Lambert began to collect the women into lay, nunlike groups — the Beguines — who
were expected to dedicate themselves to charitable activities. They were soon emulated by many
displaced and footloose men — the Beghards — who formed a corresponding male network that
cooperated with the women. The accounts of the two lay orders, largely derived from hostile
clerics, are harshly derogatory. Church and lay groups were rivals for the same charitable sources
of income, and inevitably they entered into sharp conflict with each other. Finally, the Church
began to take action against the orders. In 1311, the lay orders were condemned by the Council of
Vienne and were later partly scattered by the ecclesiastical and territorial lords, although some
Beguine hostels lingered on as charitable almshouses.

But many Beguines and Beghards were absorbed into a new "heresy" — the Brethren of the
Free Spirit. In their account of western mysticism, Thomas Katsaros and Nathaniel Kaplan discuss
how this "heresy" grew at a "tremendous rate" and was primarily responsible for the convening
of the Council of Vienne. To the Church, the acolytes of the Free Spirit may have seemed like the
ultimate of "heresies," if not the very incarnation of Satanism. In any case, the Free Spirit stood
at irredeemable odds with Christian orthodoxy.

According to Jeffrey B. Russell's definitive summary, the Brethren of the Free Spirit "formed
a loosely constructed group of sects during the thirteenth and fourteenth century, especially
in the Rhineland and central Germany." Russell places the "heresy" primarily in the towns "in
which bourgeois patricians had gained control and in which the artisans were in the process of
asserting their rights against the patricians." The period in which the "heresy" flourished was
one of widespread class conflict between the merchant princes and the artisan class, particularly
in Flanders. But Russell rightly notes that "It is not possible to generalize about the social class
of the Brethren." According to one chronicler, "they include monks, priests, and married people;
other describes them as laborers, charcoal burners, blacksmiths, and swineherds; and yet an-
other indicates that they were rough and illiterate men." However, Russell warns us that Marxist
historians may tend to exaggerate the elements of class warfare here, but the doctrines of the
Brethren do clearly indicate that social protest was involved. For instance, they believed that a
handmaiden or serf could take and sell his master's goods without his permission. That tithes
need not be paid to the Church is also a doctrine indicative of more than strictly theological
discontent.

But a radical ethical doctrine — or an "amoral" one in the gnostic sense — there surely was.
It was based on the "belief that the individual Christian is justified by the Holy Spirit dwelling
within him and that it is from within, rather than from the institutional Church, that all grace
proceeds." Accordingly, acolytes of the Free Spirit are in a state of grace, very much like the
nostic "pneumatics," irrespective of their behavior. "A man [and certainly a woman] can perform
a sinful act without being in sin, and as long as he acts with the intention of following the will of the Spirit, his action is good."

Norman Cohn was to impart an almost legendary quality to the Free Spirit among young countercultural radicals of the 1960s by linking it with the mystical anarchism of Heinrich Suso. This Dominican follower of Eckhart, like the master himself, was a highly educated ascetic, and he wrote vigorous denunciations of the more plebian hedonistic sects of the period. Cohn describes a sketch written about 1330 in the chief stronghold of the heresy, Cologne, [in which] the Catholic mystic Suso evokes with admirable terseness those qualities in the Free Spirit which made it essentially anarchic. He describes how on a bright Sunday, as we were sitting lost in meditation, an incorporeal image appeared to his spirit. Suso addresses the image.

"Whence have you come?"

The image answers: "I come from nowhere."

"Tell me, what are you?"

"I am not."

"What do you wish?"

"I do not wish."

"This is a miracle! Tell me, what is your name?"

"I am called Nameless Wildness."

"Where does your insight lead to?"

"Into untrammelled freedom."

"Tell me, what do you call untrammelled freedom?"

"When a man lives according to all his caprices without distinguishing between God and himself, and without before or after."

Suso's dialogue would be tantalizingly incomplete if we did not have other pronouncements by the Brethren of the Free Spirit that clarify its meaning. The dialogue is definitely libertine in its implications and involves the divine in human motivation. Thus, according to some of these pronouncements: "He who recognizes that God does all things in him, he shall not sin. For he must not attribute to himself, but to God, all that he does." A man with a conscience, then, "is himself a Devil, and hell and purgatory, tormenting himself," for "Nothing is sin except what is thought of as sin." As Cohn notes,

Every act performed by a member of this elite was felt to be performed "not in time but in eternity"; it possessed a vast mystical significance and its value was infinite. This was the secret wisdom which one adept revealed to a somewhat perplexed inquisitor with the assurance that it was "drawn from the innermost depths of the Divine Abyss" and worth far more than all the gold in the municipal treasure of Erfurt. "It would be better," he added, "that the whole world should be destroyed and perish utterly than that a 'free man' should refrain from one act to which his nature moves him."

Accordingly, adepts of the Free Spirit gave up all penitential and ascetic behavior for a life of pure pleasure, not merely one of happiness. More than "red," or fiery, their outlook on life was "purple," or sensuous. We have no vocabulary within the framework of ordinary life to describe this remarkable epistemology. It sought more than the physically orgiastic but rather the conversion of reality into a surreality of experience and a divination of the nature of things. The halo later discerned by Andre Breton's Nada in the world around her, even in the most commonplace objects, was here made into a metaphysical principle. But it was a practical principle, not merely an ideological one. Vigils, fasting, and all sensuous denial were brought to an end; the body was
to be indulged with the choicest wines and meats and clothed in the most sensuous garments. At times, the adepts would even dress as nobles which, as Cohn notes, was "a social affront and source of confusion in the Middle Ages, when differences in dress denoted differences in status."

But the acolytes of this extraordinary movement did not stop with such pleasures as food and dress; they proceeded to practice a promiscuous "mystically colored eroticism." Sexual promiscuity was seen not as an act of defilement but rather as one of purification. A woman was all the more "chaste" for partaking of uninhibited sexual intercourse, as, of course, was a man. Indeed, "one of the surest marks of the 'subtle in spirit' was, precisely, the ability to indulge in promiscuity without fear of God or qualms of conscience," observes Cohn.

Some adepts attributed a transcendental, quasimystical value to the sexual act itself, when it was performed by such as they. The Homines intelligentiae called the act "the delight of Paradise" and "the aclivity" (which was the term used for the ascent to mystical ecstasy); and the Thuringian "Blood Friends" of 1550 regarded it as a sacrament, which they called "Christerie." For all alike, adultery possessed a symbolic value as an affirmation of emancipation.

Hence, freedom to the Free Spirit meant even more than the right to orgiastic pleasure, an ecstasy of the senses; it meant total spontaneity of behavior and a cosmic reattunement to nature, the embodiment of God. Perhaps unknown to its acolytes, the Free Spirit restored Supernature to nature, and nature, in turn, to an almost enchanted mythopoetic status in the spiritual balance of things. Such ideas or intuitions were not to die easily; they spoke too deeply to the inner, libidinal recesses of human desire. Hence the Free Spirit, or its doctrines, remained a persistent "heresy" for centuries — one that has recurred right up to the present day as independent rediscoveries by the Symbolists in the late nineteenth century, the Surrealists in the 1920s, and in the counterculture of the 1960s. It constituted an indispensable dimension of freedom as a release from the internal regimentation of feeling and bodily movements — the subjective aspect of the existentially liberated individual. Without this aspect the notion of freedom remains an externalized social abstraction that has no space for its "heretics," its creative artists, and its intellectual innovators.

During the Hussite upheaval, the doctrines of the Free Spirit appeared among the Adamites — the most anarchistic wing of the normally ascetic Taborites. Subjected to harsh persecution within Tabor itself, this group was driven from the city and chased down by the Hussite military commander, Jan Ziska. Those who escaped Ziska's troops fortified themselves on an island in the River Nezarka and established a free, quasimilitary community that combined the hedonistic lifeways of the Free Spirit with the most radical communistic practices of the Taborites. The Adamites were not a quiescent enclave of devoutly religious adepts like the Anabaptists: small as they were in numbers, they were a harsh, demanding social movement that developed its own "amoral" morality and a crusading zealfulness that often degenerated into sheer rapine. Their bloodthirsty expeditions into the surrounding countryside and the butchery they practiced makes it difficult to unravel the problems inherent in "military" or "warrior" communism — problems that I will examine shortly.

The Free Spirit acquired its most idiosyncratic expression during the English Revolution, when a new, albeit harmless, sect — the Ranters — scandalized the Puritan revolutionaries with their own brand of hedonism. A. L. Morton, who has written one of the most comprehensive accounts of their activities and beliefs, emphasizes that both theologically and politically, the Ranters constituted the "extreme left wing of the sects" that abounded at the time. The Ranters pushed all the radical implications of Puritanism and its offshoot sects "to their furthest logical conclusions"
and "even a little beyond." This trend soon culminated in open conflict with the law. As Morton observes,

The conviction that God existed in, and only in, material objects and men led them at once
to a pantheistic mysticism and a crudely plebian materialism, often incongruously combined in
the same person. Their rejection of scripture literalism led sometimes to an entirely symbolic
interpretation of the Bible and at others to a blunt and contemptuous rejection. Their belief that
the moral law no longer had authority for the people of a new age enjoying the liberty of the
sons of God led to a conviction that for them no act was sinful, a conviction that some hastened
to put into practice.

To speak of the Ranters as an organized movement or even as a sect in any organized sense is
to understatement the highly individualistic focus of their ideas. It could be easily argued that there
were almost as many Ranter ideologies as there were Ranters. What stands out clearly amid the
medley of their ideas is not only their hedonistic proclivities, which were often expressed with
wild abandon, but also their scorn for all authority, both civil and religious. Not even the Bible
was immune to denigration. The Ranters Last Sermon depicts the Scriptures, perhaps the most
sacred single document of the English Revolution, as but mere Romance, and contradictory to
itself; only invented by the Witts of Former Ages, to keep People in subjection, and in Egyptian
slavery; likewise, That there was as much truth in the History of Tom Thumb, or The Knights of
the Sun, as there was in that Book.

Unlike earlier "heretics," the writer makes no appeal to authority; authority itself is completely
dissolved in mockery and sarcasm.

Nor could the Ranters claim a monopoly on outwardly sensuous behavior during the revolu-
tionary period. Nudity and probably a mystical belief in the power of uninhibited sexuality to
achieve a communion with God filtered through many sectarian movements of the time. Quite
respectable Quakers, Christopher Hill tells us, made forays beyond the boundaries of asceticism
and went "naked for a sign," with only a loin cloth around their middles." Indeed, the

Quaker doctrine of perfectibility continued to testify against the hatred of the body. . . . [They]
thought lace-making an unsuitable occupation for members of their Society, but they had no
objection to brewing or keeping an ale-house.

Other sectarians were probably prepared to go much further along the road of hedonism or
the respect for the flesh than moderate Ranters, but the ecumenical use of the word "Ranter"
subsumed their doctrines and practices.

Even more than early antiquity's "black redistribution," the medieval folk utopias, Christian-
ity's apocalyptic doctrines, gnosticism's concept of a "good" God who is alien to a petty "just"
Creator, and finally the long line of sectaries that culminated in the overtly secular Ranters — all
increasingly distinguished freedom from justice, the equality of unequals from the inequality of
equals. All their doctrines or practices were based on compensation and complementarity. The
more hedonistic of these sects and movements ventured even further: the concept of freedom
was expanded from a limited ideal of happiness based on the constraints of shared needs into an
ideal of pleasure based on the satisfaction of desire.

But the realization of any of these ideals clearly presupposed the transformation of the individ-
ual and of humanity from a condition of sin to one of "grace," which, in turn, had presuppositions
of its own. Grace could be achieved only by an internal — indeed, a psychological or spiritual —
transformation of one's very sense of being. As conceived by the Christian world, this change
had to be so far-reaching in its depth and scope that it led into the very notion of transubstan-
tiation itself — a radical change in the very substance of selfhood. Christianity, in its official form, imposed the overt discipline of the law, of the Deuteronomic Code, on the faithful; humanity, after all, was unruly and predisposed to evil by original sin. Freedom was to be reserved for heaven — if, indeed, freedom it could be truly called, beyond the moral plentitude voiced by the Sermon on the Mount. On earth, humanity was expected to live by conventional codes of justice, both ecclesiastical and temporal. Luther made heavenly freedom an affair of the inner life, of a deeply subjective faith that had relatively little to do with the earthly world's works; Calvin, by placing a stronger emphasis on works, provided the doctrinal basis for the social activism so congenial to the emerging bourgeoisie and the revolutionary English Puritans. But whether Catholic or Protestant, official Christianity quickly lost its power as a transcendental force. It had always been predisposed to adaptation. Initially, it accommodated itself to Caesar; later (although grudgingly), to feudalism's territorial lords; and finally, to capitalism (for which it provided an image of an entrepreneurial Jesus, who trades in souls and markets the gospel).

The gnostics, by contrast, appealed to the mind and to the power of knowledge in bringing humanity into their unique conception of grace. This lofty endeavor could hardly hope to succeed on doctrinal grounds alone — hence the socially withdrawn nature of gnosticism during late antiquity. "Civilization" had created a new character-structure, a new internal discipline for containing the spirit: a "reality principle" that denied the integrity of the passions, spontaneity, and desire. Society's fear of the Hobbesian "natural man" has antedated by centuries Freud's commitment to "civilization" and its inherently repressive strategies. If gnosis, or knowledge, was to guide human behavior and bring heaven to earth, it had to be reinforced by a psychic "battering ram" that could demolish the individual's "civilized" (that is, carefully policed) character structure. A hallucinogenic strategy had to be devised to derange the Statist, later economistic, epistemology that class society had instilled in the human personality.[45]

One heretical Christian tendency was to choose asceticism as its hallucinogen, thereby totally inverting pleasure, even happiness, in an ecstatic denial of the senses and elementary bodily needs. This "poor man's" pleasure, so to speak, fully recognized the powers of the flesh and acceded to them more by mistreating the body and its urges than by denying them. Ironically, Heinrich Suso is one of the most extraordinary exemplars of this doctrine. The psychotic self-torture he inflicted on his body to achieve a hallucinogenic and ecstatic communion with his gnostic-type deity goes far beyond the outermost limits of asceticism. It reveals a masochistic involvement with the flesh that beggars the martyrdom of the saints.

The hedonistic Ophites, the Free Spirit, Adamites, and Ranters, on the other hand, evoked the rich man's pleasures as a battering ram for deranging "civilization's" "reality principle" and character structure. Their hallucinogenic strategy for producing a personality (not merely a mind) that was receptive to gnosis centered around the uninhibited, spontaneous claims of the body — a "discipline" of indiscipline that deployed the "pleasure principle" to dissolve the "reality principle." Choice foods and garments, sexual promiscuity, the right to steal and even kill were all combined into a program for redemption that had lost all its otherworldly status. What could conceivably be more ecstatic than the orgiastic delirium of uninhibited sexuality that the "good" God surely mandated for the acolyte in his or her rejection of the "just" Creator — the fount of sinful world? Indeed, crime made one an "outlaw" in the literal, almost holy sense of the term: it pitted the acolyte against the Creator's mean-spirited realm of justice and opened the way to a duel between the "divine spark" in the individual and the mundane integument that concealed it. With a few
changes in words this gospel can be suddenly transformed into Bakunin's hypostatization of the bandit and folk attitudes toward banditry.

Moreover, a new world constructed around the rich man's pleasures was a desideratum in itself. It actualized the promise of the folk utopias like Cokaygne, and gave them contemporaneity and an identifiable place, notably in the conventicle of the hedonistic heretics. But here, the hedonistic heretics encountered a dilemma: unrestrained and undiscriminating desire presupposes a plenitude of goods to satisfy the holy community. However, neither nature nor the technological armamentarium of the time could possibly be so all-providing. Asceticism encountered a dilemma of its own: it not only demanded immense material sacrifices for very tenuous ethical rewards, but it also abandoned the very hope of attaining them in a future utopia. The ascetic radicals stood at odds with the time-honored "black redistribution" that insurgent peoples have always invoked; indeed, pleasure itself had ceased to be a desideratum. Neither of the two disciplines could be expected to enlist humanity as a whole (although asceticism — as we shall see — held much greater promise as a popular morality than hedonism).

Hence the hedonists and many of the ascetics turned to an elitist, neo-Platonist doctrine of souls. Only the elect — a small group of "pneumatics" or "Saints" — could hope to achieve grace; their retainers, the "psychics," might aspire to elevate their status to "sainthood" by making contact with the elect, servicing their needs, and heeding their wisdom. The rest of humanity, whether rich or poor, was simply doomed. These unfortunates were the irredeemable minions of the "just" Creator, and they lived in a hopelessly fallen state. They could be plundered and killed; indeed, it became a discipline among the elect to use them for its own ends.

From a theoretical viewpoint, freedom had acquired a scope and — particularly in its gnostic and late medieval forms — a degree of sophistication unprecedented in the history of ideas. The distinction between justice and freedom has yet to make its way through the maze of present-day radical ideologies; apart from a few individual theorists, the two ideals are still victims of considerable confusion. The dual functions of pleasure and asceticism — indeed, of desire and need — have yet to be clarified in contemporary radical thought. So, too, do the notions of scarcity and post-scarcity. The distinction between "freedom from" and "freedom for" — that is, between negative and positive freedom — has been carefully analyzed in categories and juridical tenets; but we still await a full discussion of a reconstructive utopianism that can clarify in practice the broader distinctions between authority and an informed spontaneity.

But what is the historical subject that will create a free society? What is the context within which that subject is formed? The Christian and gnostic radicals faced both these questions more resolutely than they faced the logic of their own premises. They wavered and divided on such issues as the full logic of asceticism and pleasure — a logic which only the ascetic Cathari and the hedonistic Adamites followed to the end — but they were generally clear about which agents would achieve a holy estate. In both cases, the answers were elitist, reflecting a Manichean image of the world composed of "Saints" and "sinners." Christians were expected to accept a divine disposition that favored the "Saints" over the "sinners"; indeed, in the case of the hedonists, they were to accept the exploitation of the "sinners" by the "Saints."

But even in the late Middle Ages such elitist conclusions were hardly the inevitable consequences of Christian or gnostic radicalism. Marcion had never accepted them at the beginnings of the gnostic "heresy," nor had Winstanley at the end of the Christian Reformation. Significantly, both men were ascetic in their outlook. An ascetic social disposition could have enjoyed considerable popular appeal if it was suitably moderated by ethical arguments for a balanced restriction
of needs, as opposed to Cathari fasts to the death or Suso’s orgy of self-torture. The fourteenth
and fifteenth centuries may well have marked a unique watershed for western humanity. His-
tory seemed to be poised at a juncture: society could still choose to follow a course that yielded a
modest satisfaction of needs based on complementarity and the equality of unequals. Or it could
cataapult into capitalism with its rule of equivalence and the inequality of equals, both reinforced
by commodity exchange and a canon of "unlimited needs" that confront "scarce resources."

Many concrete factors favored the choice of the latter over the former. Perhaps, as orthodox
Marxists seem to believe, capitalism was the "inevitable" outcome of European feudalism. Per-
haps — but Christianity and its various "heresies" had opened a transcendental level of discourse
that embraced not only the intellectuals, ecclesiastics, and educated nobles of medieval society,
but also reached out to multitudes of the oppressed, particularly its town dwellers. For all its
shortcomings, medieval society was not only preindustrial but also ethically oriented. It lived
not only on a mundane level of self-interest and material gain but also on an idealistic level of
personal redemption and grace. One cannot explain the early crusades of the poor, on the one
hand, and the extent to which many nobles converted to radical Anabaptist sects, on the other,
without recognizing the enormous importance of the ethical sphere for people of the Middle
Ages.

Hence, the ascetic Christian radicals had a transclass constituency at their disposal: a historical
subject who was neither plebian nor patrician but Christian (in a mutilated but deeply sensitive
meaning of the term). This Christian could be motivated by ethical ideals to an extent that would
puzzle modern individuals. Plunder, exploitation, and the pleasures of the flesh certainly never
lost their hold on the Christian's Janus-faced outlook. Hierarchy, class rule, and "civilization"
had left their deep-seated wounds on Christian society from the days of its inception. But the
medieval outlook was more schizophrenic and sometimes more apocalyptic, in an ethical sense;
than contemporary individuals can ever understand.

This ethical world, to be sure, did not hang freely suspended in the ethereal air of idealism, nor
did it arise from high-minded inspiration alone. It emerged from a richly textured social context
of human-scaled towns, vibrant and highly variegated neighborhoods, and closely-knit villages.
The "masterless" men and women who provided the leavening for the emancipatory intuitions
that abounded were rootless outsiders or footloose wanderers whose functional lineage goes
back to archetypal figures such as Archilochus. But this also was true of the Biblical prophets, of
Jesus and his disciples, and of the Church’s great missionaries. The ideal of a universal humanity
included both the isolated village and the worldwide Christian congregation. The sole passport
of the Middle Ages was evidence of baptism and a testament of common faith.

Accordingly, the congregation’s view of society was more integrated and expansive than it is
today, despite our rhetoric of "one world" and the "global village." Important as material interests
were in the past, even the most oppressed strata in Christian society would have found it difficult
to reduce social problems to economic ones. So richly textured and articulated a society assumed
as a matter of course that material need could not be separated from ethical precept. To attain
a "Christian" society, however broadly such words were interpreted, not only did systems of
ownership and the distribution of goods have to be changed, but even as late as Reformation
times, "matters of the soul" — the accepted mores, beliefs, institutions, and, in a more personal
vein, one’s character and sexual life — required alteration. These broader needs — indeed; this
view of need itself — cannot be reduced to mere "superstructural" ideologies without forcing
the mentality of a market society on a largely manorial one, high technology on artisanship,
an industrial world on a domestic one, an atomized labor force on a highly communal system of production based on guilds and an atomized society on a richly associative body of human relations.

Was capitalism a more "sophisticated" substitute for medieval society? To say "yes" would be arrogant presumption and an insult to the highly complex civilizations, both past and present, that have resisted "modernization." To emphasize the preeminence of contemporary society in history is, subtly, to elevate a deadening, homogenizing mass media over the spiritual yearning elicited by religious ceremonies, a mechanistic scientism over a colorful mythopoetic sensibility, and an icy indifference to the fate of one's immediate neighbors over a richly intertwined system of mutual aid. Now that torture has returned to the modern world as a rationalized technique for interrogation and punishment, the medieval rack has become picayune by comparison. And while modern society no longer drags its heretics to the stake, it incinerates millions of utterly innocent people in gas chambers and nuclear infernos.

Much that we would call the ideological, moral, cultural, and institutional "superstructure" of medieval society was deeply intertwined with its economic and technical "base." Both "superstructure" and "base" were enriched and broadened by the wealth each brought to the other. Economic life and technical development existed within a wide-ranging orbit of cultural restraints as well as cultural creativity. Freedom could be defined not merely in material terms but in ethical terms as well. That capitalism was to distort this wide-ranging orbit and virtually destroy it has already been emphasized but can bear some repetition. The era that separates the Middle Ages from the Industrial Revolution was to be marked by a terrifying deterioration of community life, by a reduction of highly cherished popular ideals to brazen economic interests, and by a disintegration of individuality into egotism. Freedom and the revolutionary subject who had upheld its ideals suffered the denaturing, rationalization, and economization that have become the fate of the human community and the individual. Indeed, capitalism has redefined the terms by which to discuss the nature and prospects of freedom, and in some respects it has expanded the concept of freedom itself. But its economistic focus is very real. Capitalism reflects the authentic economization of society, and of the "social question" itself, by an economy that has absorbed every cultural, ethical, and psychological issue into a material system of needs and technics.

Such economistic interpretations of present-day society are not mere ideological distortions; they accurately depict the dominant reality of our time. What is so troubling about this image is that it makes no attempt to transcend the very level of life it describes. Almost every critique of the "bourgeois traits" of modern society, technics, and individuality is itself tainted by the very substance it criticizes. By emphasizing economics, class interest, and the "material substrate" of society as such, such critiques are the bearers of the very "bourgeois traits" they purport to oppose. They are in perilous default of their commitment to transcend the economic conditions of capitalist society and to recover the ethical level of discourse and ideals capitalism so savagely degraded. In the parlance of many radical theorists, a "rational society" often means little more than a highly rationalized society, and "freedom" often means little more than the effective coordination of humanity in the achievement of economic ends.

By "economizing" the totality of life, capitalism "economized" the "social question," the structures of freedom, and the revolutionary subject. The communal context for this subject has been largely dissolved. The English Revolution imposed a new imperative on the legacy of freedom: to discuss human emancipation meaningfully, one now had to exorcize the demons of material denial, a new system of "scarcity" largely created by the market system, and the nature of tech-
nological development. Freedom is now completely entangled with economics, a liberated life with the notion of "scarce resources," utopia with technics, and the ethical revolutionary subject with the proletariat.

But has the "economization" of freedom been a total regression in our level of discourse? Actually, economics, too, has an ecological dimension. I refer not to "Buddhist," "convivial," "steady-state" or "Third Wave" economics but to the character of work, technics, and needs that a free society must confront. Having uprooted community and dissolved the traditional revolutionary subject of European society, capitalism has forced us to define the relationship of the ethical life to the material. It matters very little, now, whether or not this development is "desirable"; the fact is that it has happened, and we are obliged to deal with its reality. Whether as wound or scar tissue, the "social question" now includes the question of our technical interaction with nature — what Marx called humanity's "metabolism" with nature — not just our attitude toward nature and our ethical interaction with each other.

I do not mean that technical issues can henceforth be substitutes for ethical discourse and relations. But placed in their proper context, they can actually help to reverse the "economization" of social life. Every appeal of human consciousness, be it "class consciousness" or "personal consciousness," is an appeal to the creativity of mind and an expression of belief in human virtue. Marx the "materialist," Hegel "the idealist," Kropotkin the "ecologist," and Fourier the "utopian" have all embarked on the same voyage of hope: a belief in the powers of human reason to attain a free society. None has had a court of appeal more supreme than the sovereignty of thought and insight. The material dispensation that capitalism has created for the future is itself a "freedom" — one that has arisen, ironically, from the very context of bourgeois social relations. It is a freedom not merely to choose the kinds of goods society should produce (the freedom of a productivist utopia), but to choose from among the extravagant, often irrational array of needs that capitalism has created (the freedom of a consumerist utopia). When these two freedoms are melded into a still higher one, the utopian dream that lies ahead can be neither strictly productivist nor consumerist. In light of the freedom to choose products and needs, both as producer and consumer, one can envision a higher ideal of freedom — one that removes the taint of economism and restores the ethical basis of past times, and that is infused with the options opened by technical achievement. Potentially, at least, we are faced with the broadest conception of freedom known thus far: the autonomous individual's freedom to shape material life in a form that is neither ascetic nor hedonistic, but a blend of the best in both — one that is ecological, national, and artistic.

The emergence of a possibility, to be sure, is not a guarantee that it will become an actuality. To draw upon Pottier's lines in his inspired revolutionary hymn, "The Internationale," how will a new society "rise on new foundations"? Under what "banner" can humanity "be all" again? In view of the stark alternatives that faced the Adamites and "military" or "war" communism in modern, authoritarian contexts, how can human society now produce a sufficiency of goods for everyone (rather than an elite) and provide the individual the freedom to choose among needs as well as products? Within the material realm of life, this is the most complete form of human autonomy that we can ever hope to achieve — both as an expression of rational criteria for making choices and of the rational competence of the individual to do so. Indeed, if we can believe in the competence of free individuals to determine policy in the civil realm, we can also believe in the competence of free individuals to determine their needs in the material realm as well.
In any case, the backward look toward a golden age has itself been absorbed by the very past into which it tried to peer. Once capitalism came into the world and tainted it with a "sense of scarcity," one now had to look forward — not only upward toward the heavens but also downward toward the earth — to the material world of technology and production.
9. Two Images of Technology

In trying to examine technology and production, we encounter a curious paradox. We are deeply riven by a great sense of promise about technical innovation, on the one hand, and by a thorough sense of disenchantment with its results, on the other. This dual attitude not only reflects a conflict in the popular ideologies concerning technology but also expresses strong doubts about the nature of the modern technological imagination itself. We are puzzled that the very instruments our minds have conceived and our hands have created can be so easily turned against us, with disastrous results for our well-being — indeed, for our very survival as a species.

It is difficult for young people today to realize how anomalous such a conflict in technical orientation and imagery would have seemed only a few decades ago. Even such a wayward cult hero as Woody Guthrie once celebrated the huge dams and giant mills that have now earned so much opprobrium. The people whom Guthrie and his radical companions of the 1930s addressed had a deep reverence for technology, specifically those skills and devices that we place under the rubric of "technics." New machines, like artistic works, were objects of display that radiantly enraptured not only the connoisseur of futurism, the manufacturer, and the specialist, but the general public in all walks of life. Popular American utopias were unreeled in monumental technocratic images; they embodied power, a preening mastery of nature, physical gigantism, and dazzling mobility. The largely technical "New World of Tomorrow," celebrated in the last of the truly great fairs — New York World's Fair of 1939 — fascinated millions of visitors with its message of human achievement and hope. In fact, technics had become as much a cultural artifact as a mechanical one. The early part of the century witnessed the emergence of an intensely social and messianic art (Futurism, Expressionism, the Bauhaus, to cite the most celebrated ones) that was overwhelmingly technological in its exhortations and in its derogation of more leisurely, reflective, craft-oriented, and organic traditions.

The hold of technics on the social imagery of that time was more fetishistic than rational. Even the First World War, which witnessed a massive use of the new technological armamentarium to slaughter millions of people, did not dispel this technical mythos. Only in the sequelae of the second of these worldwide conflicts, with all its terrifying results, did we begin to witness chilling doubts in the popular mind over the wisdom of technical innovation. Nuclear weaponry, perhaps more than any single factor, has created a popular fear of a "technics-run-wild." The 1960s began to exhibit a pronouncedly antitechnical bias of its own that has since turned into a complex duel between the "high" or "hard" technologies (those associated with fossil and nuclear fuels, industrial agriculture, and synthetics) and the so-called "appropriate" or "soft" technologies (those structured around solar, wind, and hydraulic sources of energy, organically grown food, and human-scale, craftlike industries).

What clearly renders "appropriate" technology increasingly attractive today is not any popular celebration of its achievements or promise; rather, it is a growing fear that we are irretrievably committing ourselves to destructive systems of mass production and widespread problems of environmental pollution. The artistic messiahs of a technocratic society are gone. Humanity now
seems to feel that technology has ensnared it; it has the mein of a victim rather than a beneficiary. If the first half of the century witnessed the emergence of "high" technology as a popular "art-form" because the great majority of the industrialized world's population still lived in small communities with almost antique technical artifacts, the end of the century is witnessing the emergence of "appropriate" technology as a popular "art-form" precisely because "high" technology has placed a gilded cage over the suffocating millions who now clutter the cities and highways of the western world.

The grim fatalism slowly permeating western humanity's response to technics derives in large part from its ethical ambivalence toward technical innovation. The modern mind has been taught to identify technical sophistication with a "good life" and, to a large extent, with a social progressivism that culminates in human freedom. But none of these images has been suitably clarified, at least not from a historical perspective. Today, by far the great majority of people view the "good life" or "living well" (terms that date back to Aristotle) as a materially secure, indeed highly affluent life. Reasonable as this conclusion may seem in our own time, it contrasts sharply with its Hellenic origins. Aristotle's classic distinction between "living only" (a life in which people are insensately driven to the limitless acquisition of wealth) and "living well" or within "limit" epitomizes classical antiquity's notion of the ideal life, however much its values were honored in the breach. To "live well" or live the "good life" implied an ethical life in which one was committed not only to the well-being of one's family and friends but also to the polis and its social institutions. In living the "good life" within limit, one sought to achieve balance and self-sufficiency — a controlled, rounded, and all-sided life. But self-sufficiency, which for Aristotle seems to embody this conceptual constellation of ideals, does "not mean that which is self-sufficient for a man himself, for one who lives a solitary life, but also for parents, children, wife, and in general for his friends and fellow citizens, since man is born for citizenship."

The dichotomy between the modern image of a materially affluent life and the classical ideal of a life based on limit parallels the dichotomy between modern and classical concepts of technics. To the modern mind, technics is simply the ensemble of raw materials, tools, machines, and related devices that are needed to produce a usable object. The ultimate judgment of a technique's value and desirability is operational: it is based on efficiency, skill, and cost. Indeed, cost largely summarizes virtually all the factors that prove out the validity of a technical achievement. But to the classical mind, by contrast, "technique" (or techné) had a far more ample meaning. It existed in a social and ethical context in which, to invoke Aristotle's terms, one asked not only "how" a usevalue was produced but also "why." From process to product, techné provided both the framework and the ethical light by which to form a metaphysical judgment about the "why" as well as the "how" of technical activity. Within this ethical, rational, and social framework, Aristotle distinguished between the "master workers in each craft" who are "more honourable, and know in a truer sense and are wiser than the manual workers." In contrast to their strictly operational subordinates, "who act without knowledge of what they do, as fire burns," master workers act with an insight and ethical responsibility that renders their craft rational.

Techné moreover, covered a wider scope of experience than the modern word technics. As Aristotle explains in Nichomachean Ethics, "All art [techné] is concerned with coming into being, that is, with contriving and considering how something may come into being which is capable of either being or not being, and whose origin is in the maker and not in the thing made." Here he distinguishes the crafted product — even artistic works such as architectural masterpieces and sculpture — from natural phenomena, which "have their origins in themselves." Accordingly,
techné is a "state concerned with making, involving a true course of reasoning. . . ." It is "potency," an essential that techné shares with the ethical "good." All "arts, i.e., productive forms of knowledge, are potencies; they are originative sources of change in another thing or in the artist himself considered as other."

These far-reaching ethical and metaphysical remarks indicate how much the classical image of techné contrasts with the modern image of technics. The goal of techné is not restricted to merely "living well" or living within limit. Techné includes living an ethical life according to an originative and ordering principle conceived as "potency." Viewed even in an instrumental sense, techné thus encompasses not merely raw materials, tools, machines, and products but also the producer — in short, a highly sophisticated subject from which all else originates.[46] To Aristotle, the "master-craftsman" is distinguished subjectively from his apprentices or assistants by virtue of honor, a sense of "why" products are created, and generally a wisdom of things and phenomena. By starting with the rationality of the subject, Aristotle establishes a point of departure for bringing rationalization to the production of the object.

Modern industrial production functions in precisely the opposite way. Not only is the modern image of techné limited to mere technics in the instrumental sense of the term, but also its goals are inextricably tied to unlimited production. "Living well" is conceived as limitless consumption within the framework of a totally unethical, privatized level of self-interest. Technics, moreover, includes not the producer and his or her ethical standards (proletarians, after all, service the modern industrial apparatus in total anonymity) but the product and its constituents. The technical focus shifts from the subject to the object, from the producer to the product, from the creator to the created. Honor, a sense of "why," and any general wisdom of things and phenomena have no place in the world required by modern industry. What really counts in technics is efficiency, quantity, and an intensification of the labor process. The specious rationality involved in producing the object is foisted on the rationalization of the subject to a point where the producer's subjectivity is totally atrophied and reduced to an object among objects.

In fact, the objectification of subjectivity is the sine qua non of mass production. Here, "thought or word becomes a tool [and] one can dispense with actually 'thinking' it, that is, with going through the logical acts involved in verbal formulation of it," notes Horkheimer. He also observes:

As has been pointed out, often and correctly, the advantage of mathematics — the model of all neo-positivistic thinking — lies in just this "intellectual economy." Complicated logical operations are carried out without actual performance of all the intellectual acts upon which the mathematical and logical symbols are based. Such mechanization is indeed essential to the expansion of industry; but if it becomes the characteristic feature of mind, if reason itself is instrumentalized, it takes on a kind of materiality and blindness, becomes a fetish, a magic entity that is accepted rather than intellectually experienced.

Horkheimer's remarks, while seemingly occupied with the impact of a new technics on a waning traditional subjectivity, might easily be read as an account of the effects of a new subjectivity on a waning traditional technics. I do not mean to say that the technics that emerged from this subjectivity did not reinforce it. But if I read the historical record correctly, it is fair to say that long before mass manufacture came into existence, there had already been widespread destruction of community life and the emergence of uprooted, displaced, atomized, and propertyless
"masses" — the precursors of the modern proletariat. This development was paralleled by science's evocation of a new image of the world — a lifeless physical world composed of matter and motion that preceded the technical feats of the Industrial Revolution.

Technics does not exist in a vacuum, nor does it have an autonomous life of its own. Hellenic thought, which appropriately linked craft and art under the rubric of techné, also linked both with the value system and institutions of its society. From this standpoint, a given body of sensibilities, social relations, and political structures were no less the components of technics than the material intentions of the producer and the material needs of society. In effect, techné was conceived holistically, in the sense that we today describe an ecosystem. Skills, devices, and raw materials were interlinked in varying degrees with the rational, ethical, and institutional ensemble that underpins a society; insofar as techné was concerned, all were regarded as an integrated whole. Today, if such "extratechnical" aspects like rationality, ethics, and social institutions seem barren and more inorganic by comparison with those of earlier times, it is because technology in the modern sense of the term is more inorganic. And not because modern technics now determines the "supratechnical," but rather because society has devolved toward the inorganic in terms of its own "social tissue" and structural forms.

For the present, we need a clearer image of what is meant by "technics": the problems of sensibility it raises, the functions it performs, and, of course, the dangers and promises latent in technical innovation. To confine the discussion merely to advances in skills, implements, and the discovery of raw materials is to commit ourselves to a very shallow account of all these issues. Without examining the changes in society that variously opened or closed it to technical innovation, we would have great trouble explaining why a vast body of newly discovered technical knowledge failed to influence one body of social relations, yet seemingly "determined" their form elsewhere or at another time. To say that one society was "ready" for the compass, movable type, or the steam engine, while another was not, blatantly ignores the question of the relationship of society to technology. In the following chapter I shall show more thoroughly that it is neither technical change nor Marx's "production relations" that changed society, but rather an immanent dialectic within given societies themselves, where organized coercion was not directly involved.

Let me begin my exploration of technics and the contrasting images that shape its form and destiny by examining the ideologies that exist around labor — that most human of all technical categories. Short of sexuality, no subject has been more intractable to a reasonably unprejudiced analysis and more encrusted by highly embattled ideologies. Labor, perhaps even more than any single human activity, underpins contemporary relationships among people on every level of experience — whether in terms of the rewards it brings, the privileges it confers, the discipline it demands, the repressions it produces, or the social conflicts it generates. To critically examine these encrustations in their most sophisticated ideological form (notably, Marx's remarkable analysis of labor) is perhaps the most authentic point of departure for approaching the subject.

Here, in contrast to the procedure I have honored so far, the past does not illuminate the present nearly as much as the present illuminates the past and gives it often startling relevance to the future. Owing to our weighty emphasis on the "domination of nature," our economization of social life, our proclivities for technical innovation, and our image of labor as homogeneous "labor-time," modern society may be more acutely conscious of itself as a world based on labor than any society before it. Hence we may occasionally look backward but only to penetrate the mists that obscure our vision.
To the modern mind, labor is viewed as a rarefied, abstract activity, a process extrinsic to human notions of genuine self-actualization. One usually "goes to work" the way a condemned person "goes" to a place of confinement: the workplace is little more than a penal institution in which mere existence must pay a penalty in the form of mindless labor. Expressions like a "nine-to-five job" are highly revealing; they tell us that work, labor, or toil (today one can use any of these words as equivalents) is external to "real life," whatever that may mean. We "measure" labor in hours, products, and efficiency, but rarely do we understand it as a concrete human activity. Aside from the earnings it generates, labor is normally alien to human fulfillment. It can be described in terms of that new suprahuman world of "energetics" — be it psychic, social, "cosmic," or even ecological (if the systems-theorists are correct) — that is comprehensible in the form of the rewards one acquires by submitting to a work discipline. By definition, these rewards are viewed as incentives for submission, rather than for the freedom that should accompany creativity and self-fulfillment. We commonly are "paid" for supinely working on our knees, not for heroically standing on our feet.

Even Marx, who first articulated the abstract character of labor, tends to mystify it as a pre-condition for "freedom" rather than submission — ironically, by tinting labor with humanistic metaphors that it no longer possesses. Capital has a famous comparison between the unconscious activity of the animal and the conscious activity of human beings. Here Marx opposes the worker to Nature as one of her own forces, setting in motion arms and legs, head and hands, the natural forces of his body, in order to appropriate Nature's productions in a form adapted to his own wants. By thus acting on the external world and changing it, he at the same time changes his own nature.

Marx then adduces the illustration of the spider and the bee, which can put to shame many a weaver and architect, but he notes that what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change in form of the material on which he works but he also realizes a purpose of his own that gives the law to his modus operandi, and to which he must subordinate his will.

The apparent "innocence" of this description is highly deceptive. It is riddled by ideology — an ideology that is all the more deceptive because Marx himself is unaware of the trap into which he has fallen. The trap lies precisely in the abstraction that Marx imparts to the labor process, its ahistorical autonomy and character as a strictly technical process. From the outset, one may reasonably ask whether it is meaningful any longer to say that, at the "commencement" of "every labour process," the laborer is permitted to have an imagination, much less to bring it to bear on the production of use-values. Even the process of design by today's architects and other professionals has become a stereotyped process of rational techniques. Moreover, "mindless labor" is not merely a result of mechanization; as I shall reveal, it is the calculated and deliberate product of subordination and control. Finally, is it correct to believe that a multitude of spontaneous creations of human "labour," from cathedrals to shoes, were often guided more by cerebral designs than by esthetic, often undefinable impulses in which art was cojoined with craft?[46] As I also shall note, the vocabulary of technics is a good deal more than cerebral.

Marx's largely technical interpretation of labor clearly reveals itself when he describes the interaction between labor and its materials with the most "organic" metaphors at his command:
Iron rusts and wood rots. Yarn with which we neither weave nor knit, is wasted. Living labour must seize upon these things and rouse them from their death-sleep, change them from mere possible use-values into real and effective ones. Bathed in the fire of labour, they are appropriated as part and parcel of labour’s organism, and, as it were, made alive for the performance of their functions in the process, as elementary constituents of new usevalues, of new products, ever ready as means of subsistence for individual consumption, or as means of production for some new labour-process.

The terms I have emphasized in this passage reveal the extent to which Marx’s own imagination is completely tainted by Promethean, often crassly bourgeois, design images that seemingly prefigure the “use-values” he seeks to “liberate” from the “death-sleep” of nature. Like the island of the Lotus-eaters in the Odyssey, the dreamlike world of nature is presumably a “wasted” one until a Homeric hero, empowered by a Fichtean “Ego,” fires nature from within itself into the “non-Ego” or “otherness” of a challenging antagonist. Hence, despite Marx’s fervent references to William Petty’s concept of a “marriage” between nature and labor, there is no authentic marriage other than a coercive patriarchy that sees the wedding compact as a license from Yahweh to place all of reality under the iron will of the male elders.

The concepts reared by the human imagination in productive activity, as distinguished from the instinctive drives of the spider and bee, are never socially neutral. Nor can they ever be cast in strictly technical terms. From the very outset of the design process, the technical imagination is potentially problematical in even the best of social circumstances. To leave it unquestioned is to ignore the most fundamental problems of humanity’s interaction with nature. I say this not from any conviction that the mind is necessarily fixed by any innate, neo-Kantian structures that define the imaginative process as such. Rather, I contend that the mind and certainly the technical imagination, short of attaining the self-consciousness that western philosophy has established as its most abiding ideal, remain highly vulnerable not only to society’s on-going barrage of cultural stimuli, but also to the very imagery that forms the language of the imagination itself.

To Marx, both the labor process and the cerebral design that guides it are essentially utilitarian: they have an irreducible technical ground, a modus operandi, that acquires the neutrality and rigor of scientific lawfulness. While their effectiveness may be enhanced or diminished by history, the design and the labor processes that execute it are to him ultimately a physical interaction. Indeed, without such an underlying, socially neutral interaction, Marx’s theory of “historical materialism” — with its deus ex machina called the “means of production” — would be as meaningless in Marxian social theory as Hegel’s ruthless teleological system would be without the Hegelian notion of “Spirit.” Both systems must be moved by something that is not itself bogged down in the contingent. Hence the design process and the labor process are necessarily equipped with a suprahistorical refuge from which they can preside over history — and into which Marx retreats from time to time with all the second thoughts that riddle so much of his theoretical corpus.

That Marx and many of his Victorian contemporaries disparaged “nature idolatry” in extremely harsh terms is not accidental. The Romantic movement of the nineteenth century echoed a much broader and ancient sensibility: the view that production should be a symbiotic, not an antagonistic, process. Although the movement was primarily aesthetic, it combined with anarchist theories of mutualism — notably Kropotkin’s extraordinarily prescient writings — to ferret out a much broader “natural design”: a “marriage” between labor and nature that was conceived not as
a patriarchal domination of "man" over nature but as a productive relationship based on harmony, fertility, and creativity. Libertarian and aesthetic movements in the nineteenth century were still heir to the image of a fecund interaction between humanity's craft and nature's potentialities. But labor was seen not as "fire," or industry as a "furnace." The imagery of these movements was drastically different. Labor was viewed as the midwife, and tools as the aids, in delivering nature's offspring: use-values.

Such a view implied that the very "imagination" in which the "architect raises his structure" is socially and ethically derivative. Perceived reality involves an epistemology of domination — or liberation — that cannot be reduced to technical grounds alone. Hence the design images of production, the very figures reared in the minds of engineers, architects, artisans, or laborers, are not socially or ethically neutral. There is no irreducible technical ground from which to formulate a value-free theory of technics and of labor. The images of labor as "fire" and of natural phenomena as enshrouded by a "death-sleep" are formed from the visual reservoir of a highly domineering sensibility. The imagery of modern technical design has its origins in the epistemologies of rule; it has been formed over a long period of time by our very specific way of "knowing" the world — both one another and nature — a way that finds its ultimate apotheosis in industrial agriculture, mass production, and bureaucracy.

Implicit in virtually every contemporary image of labor is a unique image of matter — the material on which labor presumably exercises its "fiery" powers to transform the world. To the modern mind, matter essentially constitutes the fundament of an irreducible "being," whether we choose to make it interchangeable with energy, particles, a mathematical principle, or simply a convenient functional premise. Whatever our choice, we see matter as the base level of substance, the substrate of reality. Indeed, once matter achieves specificity by virtue of its interactions, it ceases by definition to be "matter" and acquires the form of a "something," a reducible particular.

Conceived in this sense, matter completely accords with a quantitative interpretation of reality. It may be fragmented but it remains undifferentiated. Hence, it can be weighed and counted, but without regard to any differences that vitiate its homogeneity for the purposes of enumeration. It may be kinetic but it is not developmental. Hence it poses no problems that demand qualitative interpretation. From a philosophical viewpoint, matter may interact internally, but it lacks immanence or self-formation. Thus, it has reality but lacks subjectivity. Matter, in the modern mind, is not merely despiritized; it constitutes the very antithesis of spirit. Its objectivity is the source of contrast that illuminates our concept of subjectivity. The conventional definition of matter betrays this utterly spiritless conception in a generally despiritized world. It is the stuff that occupies space — the homogeneous material whose presence can be quantitatively determined by its weight and volume.

Our image of labor, in turn, is the despiritized counterpart of matter, located within the dimension of time. Perhaps no view expresses this metaphysical fugue of labor and matter more incisively than Marx's discussion of abstract labor in the opening portions of Capital. Here, abstract labor, measurable by the mere flow of time, becomes the polar conception of an abstract matter, measurable by its density and the volume of space it occupies. Descartes' res extensa, in effect, is complemented by Marx's res temporalis — a conceptual framework that shapes his analysis not only of value but of freedom, whose "fundamental premise" is the "shortening of the working day." Indeed, there is as much Cartesian dualism in Marx's work as there is Hegelian dialectic.
To follow Marx's discussion further, if we strip away the qualitative features of commodities—features which satisfy concrete human wants—then

they have only one common property left, that of being products of labor. But even the product of labor itself has undergone a change in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use-value, we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes that make the product a use-value; we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful things. Its existence as a material thing is put out of sight. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the labor of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labour... A use-value, or useful article... has value only because human labour in the abstract has been embodied or materialized in it. How, then, is the magnitude of this value to be measured? Plainly, by the quantity of the value-creating substance, the labour contained in the article. The quantity of labour, however, is measured by its duration, and labour-time in its turn finds its standard in weeks, days, and hours.

Leaving aside their functions as part of the critique of political economy, these lines are a mouthful in terms of Marx's analytical procedure, his philosophical antecedents, and his ideological purposes. There is nothing "plainly" conclusive about Marx's results because he is neither analyzing a commodity nor strictly generalizing about it. Actually, he is idealizing it—possibly beyond the degree of "ideality" that every generalization requires to transcend its clinging welter of particulars.

The degree of "abstraction" that Marx makes from a commodity's "use value"—from the "material elements and shapes that turn the product into a use-value"—is so far-reaching in terms of what we know about the anthropology of use-values that this very theoretical process must itself be socially justified. In effect, Marx has removed the commodity from a much richer social context than he may have realized, given the scientistic prejudices of this time. Not only is he dealing with the commodity form of use-values, but he also is dealing unreflectively with socially constituted and historically developed traditions and fact—more precisely, presuppositions about technics, labor, nature, and needs that may very well render his analytical procedure and conclusions specious. We do not know whether we get to the "essence" of a commodity—of a use-value produced for the purposes of exchange—if we divest it of its concrete attributes so that its "existence as a material thing" can really be "put out of sight." Perhaps even more fundamental to a commodity are precisely those concrete attributes—its form as a "use-value"—that provide the utopian dimension, the "principle of hope," inherent within every desirable product of nature and technics (its dimension of the "marvelous," as André Breton might have put it). Herein may lie the ultimate contradiction within the commodity—the contradiction between its abstract nature as an exchange-value and its "fecundity" as a use-value in satisfying desire—from which the most basic historical contradictions of capitalism have been spawned.

In any case, Marx's process of idealization yields a more far-reaching result than he could have anticipated clearly. Abstract labor can only produce abstract matter—matter that is totally divested of the "material elements and shapes that make the product a use-value." Neither Marx nor the political economists of his time were in any position to realize that abstract matter, like abstract labor, is a denial of the utopian features—indeed, the sensuous attributes—of concrete matter and concrete labor. Hence "use-value" as the materialization of desire and "concrete labor" as the materialization of play were excluded from the realm of economic discourse; they were left to the utopian imagination (particularly the anarchic realm of fantasy as typified by Fourier).
for elaboration. Political economy had lost its artfulness. Its adepts became a body of “worldly thinkers” whose world, in fact, was defined by the parameters of bourgeois ideology.

For Marx, this development toward a disenchanting “science” was theoretically and historically progressive. Adorno may have said more than he realized when he sardonically accused Marx of wanting to turn the whole world into a factory. For Marxian theory, the reduction of concrete labor into abstract labor is a historical as well as theoretical desideratum. Abstract labor may be a creature of capitalism but, like capitalism itself, it is a necessary “moment” in the dialectic of history. Not only is it a medium for rendering exchange ratios possible on an extensive scale, but, from an even larger perspective, it becomes part of the technical substrate of freedom. By its very plasticity, abstract labor renders human activity interchangeable, the rotation of industrial tasks possible, and the use of machinery flexible. Its capacity to flow through the veins of industry as mere undifferentiated human energy renders the manipulation and reduction of the working day possible and, concurrently, the expansion of the “realm of freedom” at the expense of the “realm of necessity.” If Marx’s communism was meant to be a “society of artists,” he was not prepared to recognize that the colors on their canvases might be limited to varying tints of gray.

To compare the outlook of organic society to this ensemble of ideas is literally to enter a qualitatively different realm of imagery and a richly sensuous form of sensibility. Organic society’s image of the world contrasts radically in almost every detail with Marxian, scientistic, and frankly bourgeois notions of matter, labor, nature, and technics — indeed, with the very structure of the technical imagination it brings to bear upon experience. To speak of organic society’s “outlook” toward these issues or even its “sensibility” rarely does justice to the polymorphous sensitivity of its epistemological apparatus. As my discussion of animism has shown, this sensory apparatus elevated the inorganic to the organic, the nonliving to the living. Even before nature was spiritized, it was personified. But not only was the natural “object” (living or not) a subject in its own right; so, too, were the tools that mediated the relationship between the workers and the material on which they worked. The “labor process” itself assumed the organic character of a unified activity in which work appeared as an element in a gestative process — literally an act of reproduction, of birth.

To be more specific, the technical imagination of organic society — its very mode of conceptualization — far from being strictly utilitarian, exhibited an enchanted synthesis of creative activity. No subject and object were placed in opposition to each other, nor did a linear sequence of events follow one upon the other. Rather, the materials, work process, and transformed result became an organic whole, an ecotechnic synthesis, which more closely approximated a gestative, reproductive activity than the abstract exercise of human powers we denote as “labor” or “work.” Like a medium that encompassed both “producer” and “materials,” the labor process flowed between the two and annealed them into a common result in which neither the craftsperson nor the materials preempted the other. Labor-time, much less “abstract labor,” would have been conceptually unformulatable. Time, like Bergson’s durée, was physiological and could not be anchored in notions of linearity. Labor, now wedded to the specificity of its activity and the concreteness of its “product,” had no meaning beyond its concreteness as a sensuous activity — hence the vast world of phenomena, like land, which were “priceless” (to use our limping terminology) and beyond the equations of exchange.

Accordingly, it would have been meaningless to use the word “product” in its modern sense when, instead of a result existing apart from craftsperson and material, organic society actually meant a new fusion of human and natural powers. Aristotle’s notions of “material cause,” “private
tion," and "formal cause" — actually, a causal pattern that involves the participation of the material itself in an immanent striving to achieve its potentiality for a specific form — are redolent with the characteristics of this earlier organic epistemology of production. In effect, the labor process was not a form of production but rather of reproduction, not an act of fabrication but rather of procreation.

How much this orientation toward the labor process permeated the sensuous outlook of preliterate communities is fully revealed by anthropological and mythological data. No less than agriculture, other productive activities (most notably metallurgy, which yields the most dramatic transformation of materials) were viewed as sacrosanct activities that involved a highly sexualized activity between the human workers and a feminine earth. As Mircea Eliade observes:

> Very early we are confronted with the notion that ores "grow" in the belly of the earth after the manner of embryos. Metallurgy thus takes on the character of obstetrics. Miner and metal-worker intervene in the unfolding of subterranean embryology: they accelerate the rhythm of the growth of ores, they collaborate in the work of Nature and assist it to give birth more rapidly. In a word, man, with his various techniques, gradually takes the place of Time: his labours replace the work of Time.

Eliade’s emphasis on "time," here, is grossly misplaced. In fact, as he himself notes, what is really at issue in this imagery of embryonic ores is a notion of "matter" that is held "to be alive and sacred . . . ." In effect, "matter" is active. It strives to realize itself, its latent potentialities, through a nisus that finds fulfillment in wholeness. To use a more organic terminology, the self-realization of matter finds its very exact analogy in the processes of gestation and birth.

To speak, as Marx does, of the worker’s "appropriation" of "Nature’s productions in a form adapted to his own wants" is to assume that there is no developmental synchronicity between human "wants" and natural "wants." A sharp disjunction is thereby created between society, humanity, and "needs" on the one side, and nature, the nonhuman living world, and ecological ends on the other. By contrast, organic society contains the conceptual means for functionally distinguishing the differences between society and nature without polarizing them. Insofar as production is also reproduction, insofar as creation is also gestation and the product is the child of this entire process rather than an "appropriated" thing, a "marriage" does indeed exist between nature and humanity that does not dissolve the identity of the partners into a universal, ethereal "Oneness."

Labor fully participates in this development by pursuing "the transformation of matter, its perfection and its transmutation," to use Eliade’s formulation. It would be as if labor were a causal principle inherent in gestating matter, not a "force" external to it. Accordingly, labor is more than a "midwife" of "Nature’s productions": it is one of "Nature’s productions" in its own right and coterminous with nature’s fecundity. If society flows out of nature with the result that it, like mind, has its own natural history, so labor flows out of nature and also has its own natural history.

Accordingly, labor’s destiny is irrevocably tied to the primordial vision of the earth as a living being. Nonhuman life labors together with humanity just as bears are believed to cooperate with hunters; hence both are drawn into a magic sphere of cooperation that daily nourishes primordial mores of usufruct and complementarity. In organic society, it would seem that no one could fully "possess" a material bounty that had been bestowed as much as created. Thus,
nature itself was the grand "leveller" that provided the compensatory rationale for adjusting the equality of unequals in the material world, like "natural law" and "natural man" were to be for adjusting the inequality of equals in the juridical and political worlds. A providing nature was one whose "labor" was manifestly expressed in the rich variety of phenomena that clothed the natural landscape.

So strongly did this animistic sensibility fasten itself upon the human mind that, as late as the fifth century B.C., at the high tide of classical Hellenic philosophy, Anaxagoras could seriously reject the "four-element" and atomic theories of nature on the ground that hair could not "come from what is not hair" nor "flesh from what is not flesh." In this theory of homeomeries, as Aristotle tells us,

Anaxagoras says the opposite to Empedocles [theory of four elements], for he calls the homeomeries elements (I mean flesh and bone and each of these things), and air and fire he calls mixtures of these and of all other "seeds"; for each of these things is made of the invisible homeomeries all heaped together.

The homeomeries, in fact, comprise a philosophical sophistication of a more primordial view that the substance of the earth is the earth itself with all its variegated minerals, flora, and fauna.

Concrete labor thus confronted concrete substance, and labor merely participated in fashioning a reality that was either present or latent in natural phenomena. Both labor and the materials on which it "worked" were coequally creative, innovative, and most assuredly artistic. The notion that labor "appropriates" nature in any way whatever — a notion intrinsic to both Locke's and Marx's conceptual framework — would have been utterly alien to the technical imagination of organic society and inconsistent with its compensatory and distributive principles. So crucial was the coequality of substance with labor, in any understanding of this early technical imagination, that work was distinguished by its capacity to discover the "voice" of substance, not simply to fashion an inert "natural resource" into desired objects. Among the old Anvilik Eskimo, ivory carvers "rarely tried to impose a pattern on nature, or their own personalities on matter," observes Rene Dubas. Holding the "raw ivory" in his hand, the craftsman turned it gently this way and that way, whispering to it, "Who are you? Who hides in you?" The carver rarely set out consciously to shape a particular form. Instead of compelling the fragment of ivory to become a man, a child, a wolf, a seal, a baby walrus, or some other preconceived object, he tried subconsciously to discover the structural characteristics and patterns inherent in the material itself. He continuously let his hand be guided by the inner structure of the ivory as it revealed itself to the knife. The form of the human being or animal did not have to be created; it was there from the beginning and only had to be released.

Work was thus revelation as well as realization, a synchronicity of subject and object. Only later was it to bifurcate into a tyranny of subject over object — initially, by reducing human beings to objects themselves. Absorbed within the totality of organic society, the tool was part of the "Way" of the craftsperson, not a frozen instrumental component of a vocational "tool-kit." The term "Way," universal to the language of all early communities, united ethos, ritual, sensibility, duty, and lifestyle with cosmogony and with the substances that made up the world. To set one apart from the other was simply incomprehensible to the extraordinary sensibility of that remote era. Work, in turn, had an almost choral quality: it was incantative and evocative, and it soothed and coaxed the substance that the tool had organically cojoined with the craftsperson.

Rarely, to this day, do preliterate people work silently. They whisper, hum, sing, or quietly chant; they nurse and nurture the material by gently rocking and undulating their bodies, by
stroking it as though it were a child. The imagery of the mother with a nursing child is perhaps more evocative of the true process of early crafthood than is the smith striking the glowing iron between hammer and anvil. Even later, at the village level, food cultivators were buoyed by choral songs and festivities, however arduous may have been their labor in sowing and harvesting grain. The "work song," a genre that still lived a century ago in nearly all preindustrial occupations, is the historic echo of the primal chant, itself a technics, that elicited spirit from substance and inspired the artisans and their tools.

We know quite well that ores do not reproduce themselves in exhausted mines, that ivory does not conceal an animate being, and that animals do not obligingly respond to hunting ceremonies. But these fancies may serve to inculcate a human respect for nature and cause people to cherish its bounty as more than exploitable "natural resources." Ceremony and myth may enhance that respect and foster a rich sensitivity for the artistic and functional integrity of a crafted object. Group ceremonies, in fact, deepen group solidarity and make a community more effective in the pursuit of its ends. But the modern mind is unlikely to believe that mythopoeic notions of hunting and crafting are solidly rooted in natural phenomena. Function should not be mistaken for fact. And however effective mythopoeic functions may be in achieving certain practical, often aesthetic ends, their success does not validate their claims to intrinsic truth.

But experience has thoroughly deflated scientistic images of matter as a merely passive substrate of reality, technics as strictly "technical," and abstract labor as a social desideratum. The fact that the natural world is orderly (at least on a scale that renders modern science and engineering possible) has long suggested the intellectually captivating possibility that there is a logic — a rationality if you will — to reality that may well be latent with meaning. For some three centuries now, a scientific vision of reality has been solidly structured around the presupposition that we can interpret reality's orderliness in the form of a scientific logic, rigorously answerable to such rationally demanding systems as mathematics. But no assumption or even suggestion has been made that logic and reason inheres in the world itself. Science, in effect, has been permitted to live a lie. It has presupposed, with astonishing success, that nature is orderly, and that this order lends itself to rational interpretation by the human mind, but that reason is exclusively the subjective attribute of the human observer, not of the phenomena observed. Ultimately, science has lived this lie primarily to avoid the most unavoidable "pitfalls" of metaphysics — that an orderly world that is also rational may be regarded as a meaningful world.

The term meaning, of course, is redolent with animism. It is suggestive of purpose, consciousness, intentionality, subjectivity — in short, the qualities we impart to humanity as distinguished from nature, not to humanity as an expression of nature whose mind is deeply rooted in natural history. The logical consequences of the very logic of scientism threaten to subvert the distance science has carefully created between itself and the wealth of phenomena it subjects to its analytic strategies. Science, in effect, has become a temple built on the foundation of seemingly animistic and metaphysical "ruins," without which it would sink into the watery morass of its own contradictions.

Science's defense against this kind of critique is that order may imply a rational arrangement of phenomena that lends itself to rational comprehension, but that none of this implies subjectivity, the capacity to comprehend a rational arrangement. To all appearances, nature is mute, unthinking, and blind, however orderly it may be; hence it exhibits neither subjectivity nor rationality in the human sense of self-directive and self-expressive phenomena. It may be sufficiently orderly to be thinkable, but it does not think. Nevertheless, subjectivity, even in its human sense,
is not a newly born result, a terminally given condition. Subjectivity can be traced back through a natural history of its own to its most rudimentary forms as mere sensitivity in all animate beings and, in the view of philosophers such as Diderot, in the very reactivity (sensibilité) of the inorganic world itself. Although the human mind may be the expression of subjectivity in its most complex and articulate form, it has been increasingly approximated in graded forms throughout the course of organic evolution in organisms that were able to deal on very active terms with highly demanding environments. What we today call "mind" in all its human uniqueness, self-possession, and imaginative possibilities is coterminous with a long evolution of mind. Subjectivity has not always been absent from the course of organic and inorganic development until the emergence of humanity. To the contrary, it has always been present, in varying degrees, throughout natural history, but as increasingly close approximations of the human mind as we know it today. To deny the existence of subjectivity in nonhuman nature is to deny that it can exist either in its given human form or in any form at all.

Moreover, human subjectivity itself can be defined as the very history of natural subjectivity, not merely as its product — in much the same sense that Hegel defined philosophy as its own history. Every layer of the human brain, every phase in the evolution of the human nervous system, every organ, cell, and even mineral component of the human body "speaks," as it were, from its given level of organization and in the graded subjectivity of its development, to the external habitat in organic evolution from whence it came and to the internal habitat into which it has been integrated. The "wisdom of the body," like the wisdom of the mind, speaks in a variety of languages. We may never adequately decipher these languages, but we know they exist in the varied pulsations of our bodies, in the beat of our hearts, in the radiant energy of our musculatures, in the electrical impulses emitted by our brains, and in the emotional responses generated by complexes of nerve and hormonal interactions. A veritable "music of the spheres" resonates within each living form and between it and other living forms.

We are also haunted by the possibility that a different order of subjectivity permeates our own. This subjectivity inheres in the wholeness of phenomena and their interrelationships. Is it far-fetched to ask whether an organic subjectivity that stems from the fullness, complexity, and self-regulating relationships of ecosystems exhibits a "mentality" in nature similar in principle to the cerebral subjectivity of human beings? When we speak of the "wisdom of the body" — or, for that matter, the "fecundity of life" and the "revenge of nature" — we speak a language that often goes beyond strictly metaphoric terms. We enter into a realm of "knowingness" from which our strictly cerebral processes have deliberately exiled themselves. In any case, to bring together the natural history of mind with the history of natural mind is to raise a host of questions that can probably be answered only by presuppositions. Here, we stand at a juncture in the long career of knowledge itself. We may choose to confine mentality strictly to the human cerebrum as a Galileo and Descartes would have done, in which case we have committed mentality completely to the vaults of our skulls. Or we may choose to include the natural history of mind and expand our vision of mind to include nature in its wholeness, a tradition that includes the era of philosophic speculation from the Hellenic to the early Renaissance. But let us not deceive ourselves that science has chosen its way on the basis of presuppositions that are stronger or more certain than those of other ways of knowing.

Unless human mentality validates its claim to "superiority" by acquiring a better sense of meaning than it has today, like it or not, we are little more than crickets in a field, chirping to one another. Certainly, our words have no sense of coherence and destiny other than a preening claim
to "superiority" that totally ignores our responsibilities to other human beings, to society, and to nature. Potentially, as Hans Jonas has beautifully put it, we may well make up in depth and insight what we lack in cosmic scope and the finality of achievement. But just as function must not be mistaken for fact, neither must potentiality be mistaken for actuality. The great bulk of humanity is not even remotely near an understanding of its potentialities, much less an intuitive grasp of the elements and forms of their realization. A humanity unfulfilled is not a humanity at all except in the narrowest biosocial sense of the term. Indeed, in this condition, a humanity unfulfilled is more fearsome than any living being, for it has enough of that mentality called mere "intelligence" to assemble all the conditions for the destruction of life on the planet.

Hence, it is not in the innocent metaphors, the magical techniques, the myths, and the ceremonies they generate that the animistic imagination has earned the right to a more rational review than it has received up to now. Rather, it is its hints of a more complete logic — a logic possibly complementary to that of science, but certainly a more organic logic — that render the animistic imagination invaluable to the modern mind. Anvilik Eskimos who believe that ivory conceals a vocal subject are in error, just as are Plains Indians if they believe that they can engage in a verbal dialogue with a horse. But both the Eskimo and Indian, by assuming subjectivity in the ivory and horse, establish contact with a truth about reality that mythic behavior obscures but does not negate. They correctly assume that there is a "Way" about ivory and horses, which they must try to understand and to whose claims they must respond with insight and awareness. They assume that this "Way" is an ensemble of qualitative features — indeed, as Pythagoras was to see, of form that every object uniquely possesses. Lastly, they assume that this form and these qualities comprise a "Way" that exists in a larger constellation of interrelationships — one that a strictly cerebral mentalism commonly overlooks. Perhaps most essentially, the Anvilik Eskimo and Plains Indian place themselves in an order of phenomena, an organized organic habitat, that never merely "falls" together as an accumulation of "objects," but always — perhaps even by definition — forms an organism or an organic totality that derives from the nisus of "matter." Whether God plays dice with the world or not, to use Einstein's pithy phrase, the world never "hangs loose." This intuition is priceless even when we consider the least of things. Ivory does have its "grain," its internal structure and form; good craftspeople must know where to carve and to shape if they are to bring a material to the height of its aesthetic perfection. Any result that is less and less perfect than it could be is a violation of that "grain" and an insult to its integrity. A horse, too, has its "grain" or its "Way" — its prickly nerves, its need for attention, its capacity to fear, its delight in play. Behind its verbal muteness lies a wealth of sensibility that the rider must explore if the horse is to achieve its own capacity for perfection — if its potentialities are to be realized.

Humanity's habitat is thus latent with phenomena that "are," others that are "becoming," and still others that "will be." Our imagery of technics cannot evade the highly fluid nature of the world in which we live and the highly fluid nature of humanity itself. The design imagination of our times must be capable of encompassing this flow, this dialectic (to use a grossly abused term), not to cut across it with wanton arrogance and dogmatic self-confidence. To subserve our already fragile environment only to what humanity alone "can be" — and definitely still is not! — is to immerse the world in a darkness that is largely of our own making, to taint the clarity that its own age-old evolution of wisdom has produced. We are still a curse on natural evolution, not its fulfillment. Until we become what we should be in the constellation of life, we would do well to live with a fear of what we can be.
From order to reason to meaning; from the graded natural history of mind to the emergence of human mind; from the organic subjectivity of the whole to the cerebral subjectivity of some of its parts; from the mythic "Way" to the knowledgeable "Way" — all these developments, with their various presuppositions about knowledge and their insights into reality, do not negate the presuppositions and insights of conventional science. They simply question science's claims to universality.[48]

Greek thought too had its visions of knowledge and truth. Moira, the so-called goddess of destiny, who antedated the Olympian deities, combined Necessity and Right. She was the meaning that mere explanation lacked, the ethical point toward which a seemingly blind causality converged. There is nothing "primitive" or merely mythopoeic about this vision of causality. On the contrary, it may be too sophisticated and demanding for the mechanically oriented mind to comprehend.

To put the issue quite directly, the "how" of things is inadequate unless it can be illuminated by the "why." Events that lack the coherence of ethical meaning are merely random. They are alien not only to science but also to nature, for even more than the proverbial "vacuum," nature abhors the incoherence of disorganization, the lack of meaning that comes with disorder. And it is hardly demeaning for science, in reconsidering its metaphysical presuppositions, to make room for other metaphysical presuppositions that can illuminate areas of subjectivity to which a strictly scientistic outlook has proven to be blind.

These remarks are no more than a guidepost to a larger project — a philosophy of nature — that can hope to resolve the issues I have raised. Taken together, however, their bearing on technology is immense. To be sure, the industrial machine seems to have taken off on its own without the driver (to rephrase Horkheimer), but this metaphor tends to be an excuse to impute too much autonomy to the machine. The driver is still there. Even more than nature, we who have created this machine must be awakened from our own slumber. Before we fully developed the machine, we began to organize our sensibilities, relationships, values, and goals around a cosmic enterprise to mechanize the world. What we forgot in the process is that we too occupy the very world we have sought to mechanize.
10. The Social Matrix of Technology

Just as serious as the extent to which we have mechanized the world is the fact that we cannot distinguish what is social in our lives from what is technical. In our inability to distinguish the two, we are losing the ability to determine which is meant to subserve the other. Herein lies the core of our difficulties in controlling the machine. We lack a sense of the social matrix in which all technics should be embedded — of the social meaning in which technology should be clothed. Instead, we encounter the Hellenic conception of techné in the form of a grotesque caricature of itself: a techné that is no longer governed by a sense of limit. Our own, thoroughly market-generated conception of techné has become so limitless, so unbounded, and so broadly defined that we use its vocabulary ("input," "output," "feedback," ad nauseam) to explain our deepest interrelationships — which consequently are rendered shallow and trite. In its massive tendency to colonize the entire terrain of human experience, technics now raises the apocalyptic need to arrest its advance, to redefine its goals, to reorganize its forms, to rescale its dimensions — above all, to reabsorb it back into organic forms of social life and organic forms of human subjectivity.

The historic problem of technics lies not in its size or scale, its "softness" or "hardness," much less the productivity or efficiency that earned it the naive reverence of earlier generations; the problem lies in how we can contain (that is, absorb) technics within an emancipatory society. In itself, "small" is neither beautiful nor ugly; it is merely small. Some of the most dehumanizing and centralized social systems were fashioned out of very "small" technologies; but bureaucracies, monarchies, and military forces turned these systems into brutalizing cudgels to subdue humankind and, later, to try to subdue nature. To be sure, a large-scale technics will foster the development of an oppressively large-scale society; but every warped society follows the dialectic of its own pathology of domination, irrespective of the scale of its technics. It can organize the "small" into the repellent as surely as it can imprint an arrogant sneer on the faces of the elites who administer it. Terms like "large," "small," or "intermediate," and "hard," "soft," or "mellow" are simply externals — the attributes of phenomena or things rather than their essentials. They may help us determine their dimensions and weights, but they do not explain the immanent qualities of technics, particularly as they relate to society.

Unfortunately, a preoccupation with technical size, scale, and even artistry deflects our attention away from the most significant problems of technics — notably, its ties with the ideals and social structures of freedom. The choice between a libertarian and an authoritarian technics was posed by Fourier and Kropotkin generations ago, long before Mumford denatured the word libertarian into the more socially respectable and amorphous term, democratic.[49] But this choice is not peculiar to our times; it has a long, highly complex pedigree. The exquisitely designed pottery of a vanishing artisan world, the beautifully crafted furnishings, the colorful and subtly intricate patterns of textiles, the carefully wrought ornaments, the beautifully sculpted tools and weapons — all attest to a wealth of skills, to a care for product, to a desire for self-expression, and to a creative concern for detail and uniqueness that has faded almost completely from the productive activity of our day. Our admiration for these artisan works unconsciously extends into a sense of
inferiority or loss of the artisan world in which they were formed — a world that is all the more impressive because we recognize the high degree of subjectivity expressed by the objects. We feel that identifiable human beings imprinted their personalities on these goods; that they possessed a highly attuned sensitivity to the materials they handled, the tools they used, and to the age-old artistic norms their culture established over countless generations. Ultimately, what arouses us emotionally is the fact that these objects attest to a fecund human spirit, a creative subjectivity that articulated its cultural heritage and its wealth in materials that might otherwise seem pedestrian and beyond artistic merit in our own society. Here, the surreal halo around everyday things — the reconquest of everyday life by a pulsating integration of hands, tools, mind, and materials — was actually achieved not merely as part of the metaphysical program of European intellectuals but also by the common folk who lived that life.

But in our preoccupation with the skill, care, and sensibilities of traditional artisans, we all too easily forget the nature of the culture that produced the craftsperson and the craft. Here, I refer not to its human scale, its sensitivity of values, and its humanistic thrust, but to the more solid facts of the social structure and its rich forms. That Eskimos crafted their equipment with considerable care because they had a high sense of care for each other is obvious enough, and that the animate quality of their crafts revealed an internal sense of animation and subjectivity need hardly be emphasized. But in the last analysis, all these desiderata flowed from the libertarian structure of the Eskimo community. Nor was this any less the case in the late Paleolithic and early Neolithic communities (or of organic society generally), whose artifacts still enchant us and whose traditions later formed the communal and aesthetic base of the "high civilizations" of antiquity. To the degree that its social traditions retain their vitality, even in a vestigial form, its skills, tools, and artifacts retain the all-important imprint of the artisan conceived as a self-creative being, a self-productive subject.

Initially, a libertarian is distinguished from an authoritarian technics by more than just the scale of production, the kind or size of implements, or even the way in which labor is organized, important as those may be. Perhaps the most crucial reason for what produces this distinction is the emergence of an institutional technics: the priestly corporation; the slowly emerging bureaucracies that surround it; later the monarchies and the military forces that preempt it; indeed, the very belief systems that validate the entire hierarchical structure and provide the authoritarian core of an authoritarian technics. Lavish material surpluses did not produce hierarchies and ruling classes; rather, hierarchies and ruling classes produced lavish material surpluses. Mumford may be perfectly correct in observing that one of the earliest machines to appear in history was not an inanimate ensemble of technical components but a highly animate "megamachine" of massed human beings whose large-scale, coordinated labor reared the huge public works and mortuaries of early "civilizations." But the growing religious and secular bureaucracies were even more technically authoritarian. Indeed, they were the earliest "machines" that eventually made the "megamachine" possible — that mobilized it and directed its energies toward authoritarian ends.

However, these bureaucracies' most signal achievement was not the coordination and rationalization of this newly developed human machine; it was the effectiveness with which they reduced their animate subjects, their vast armies of peasants and slaves, to utterly inanimate objects. The "megamachine" could be disbanded as easily as it could be mobilized; its human components lived out the greater part of their lives in the organic matrix of a village society. More important than the "megamachine" was the extent to which institutional technologies objectified the labor
it generated and, above all, the laborers who formed it. Labor and the laborer suffered not merely under the whip of material exploitation but even more under the whip of spiritual degradation. As I have already noted, early hierarchies and ruling classes staked out their claims to sovereignty not only by a process of elevation but also by a process of debasement. The vast armies of corvée labor that dragged huge stone blocks along the banks of the Nile to build pyramids provided an image not just of an oppressed humanity, but of dehumanized beasts — ultimately, of inanimate objects upon whom their foremen and rulers could exercise their sense of power.[50] Their sweat formed the balm of rule; the stench from their bodies, an incense to tyranny; their corpses, a throne for mortal men to live by the heady norms of deities. For the many to become less was to make the few become more.

It is difficult for us to understand that political structures can be no less technical than tools and machines. In part, this difficulty arises because our minds have been imprinted by a dualistic metaphysics of "structures" and "superstructures." To dissect social experience into the economic and political, technical and cultural, has become a matter of second nature that resists any melding of one with the other. But this tendency is also partly due to an opportunistic political prudence that is wary of confronting the stark realities of power in a period of social accommodation. Better and safer to deal with technics as tools, machines, labor, and design than as coercive political institutions that organize the very implements, work, and imagination involved in the modern technical ensemble. Better to deal with how these means achieve certain destructive or constructive forms on the natural landscape than to explore the deformations they produce within subjectivity itself.

A liberatory technology presupposes liberatory institutions; a liberatory sensibility requires a liberatory society. By the same token, artistic crafts are difficult to conceive without an artistically crafted society, and the "inversion of tools" is impossible without a radical inversion of all social and productive relationships. To speak of "appropriate technologies," "convivial tools," and "voluntary simplicity" without radically challenging the political "technologies," the media "tools," and the bureaucratic "complexities" that have turned these concepts into elitist "art forms" is to completely betray their revolutionary promise as a challenge to the existing social structure. What renders Buckminster Fuller’s "spaceship" mentality and the design mentality of the "how-to-do-it" catalogues, periodicals, and impressarios of the "appropriate technology movement" particularly unsavory is their readiness to make "pragmatic" compromises with the political technologies of governmental and quasigovernmental agencies that nourish the very technologies they profess to oppose.

Once we grant that the term "technics" must also include political, managerial, and bureaucratic institutions, we are obliged to seek the nontechnical spheres — the social spheres — that have resisted the technical control of social life. More precisely, how can the social sphere absorb the machines that foster the mechanization of society? I have already noted that the great majority of humankind often resisted technical development. Historically, Europeans stood almost alone in their willingness to accept and foster technical innovation uncritically. And even this proclivity occurred fairly late, with the emergence of modern capitalism. The historical puzzle of what renders some cultures more amenable to technical developments than others can only be resolved concretely — by exploring various cultures internally and revealing, if possible, the nature of their development.

The most important feature of technics in a preindustrial societal complex is the extent to which it ordinarily is adaptive rather than innovative. Where a culture is rich in social struc-
ture, where it enjoys a wealth of human relationships, communal responsibilities, and a shared body of mutual concerns, it tends to elaborate a new technical ensemble rather than "develop" it. Controlled by the constraints of usufruct, complementarity, the irreducible minimum, and dis-accumulation, early societies tended to elaborate technics with considerable prudence and with a keen sensitivity for the extent to which it could be integrated into existing social institutions. Ordinarily, the ability of technics to alter a societal structure significantly was the exception. Technical innovation occurred in response to major climatic changes or to violent invasions that often transformed the invader as much as the invaded. Even when the "superstructure" of a society changed considerably or acquired a highly dynamic character, the "structure" of the society changed little or not at all. The "riddle of the unchangeability of Asian societies," as Marx was to call it, is in fact the solution to the entire puzzle of the interaction of society with technics. Where technics — bureaucratic, priestly, and dynastic as well as tools, machines, and new forms of labor — encroached upon the social life of tribes and villages, the latter tended to bifurcate from the former and stolidly develop a life and dynamic of its own. The real powers of the Asian village to resist technical invasions or to assimilate them to their social forms lay not in a fixed "systematic division of labor," as Marx believed. Its powers of resistance lay in the intensity of Indian family life, in the high degree of care, mutualism, courtesy, and human amenities that villagers shared as cultural norms, in the rituals that surrounded personal and social life, in the profound sense of rootedness in a communal group, and in the deep sense of meaning these cultural elaborations imparted to the community.

It is surprising to learn how technical innovation left vast aspects of social life untouched and often contributed very little to an explanation of major historical developments. Despite the extraordinary technical ensemble it created, the Neolithic Revolution changed relatively little in the societies that fostered it or adopted its technics. Within the same community, hunting coexisted with newly developed systems of horticulture up to the threshold of "civilization," and often well into antiquity in many areas. Village settlements, often highly mobile in Central Europe, retained strong tribalistic features in the Near East. James Mellaart's work on Çatal Hüyük, a Neolithic city in central Turkey, presents a very sizable community of thousands — well-equipped with a fairly sophisticated technology — that apparently was distinguished for its matricentricity, its egalitarian character, and its pacific qualities. As recently as 350 A.D., Indians of the Nazca culture in the coastal regions of Peru provided "the general picture [of] a sedentary democratic people without marked class distinctions or authoritarianism, possibly without an established religion," observes J. Alden Mason. Unlike the nearby Moche culture of the same period, the Nazca culture exhibits less difference in the "richness" or poverty of the graves, and women seem to be on an equality with men in this respect. The apparent absence of great public works, of extensive engineering features, and of temple pyramids implies a lack of authoritarian leadership. Instead, the leisure time of the people seems to have been spent in individual production, especially in the making of perfect, exquisite textiles and pottery vessels.

By no means is it clear that such Neolithic techniques as pottery, weaving, metallurgy, food cultivation, and new means of transportation altered in any qualitative sense the values of usufruct, complementarity, and the irreducible minimum that prevailed in hunting-gathering societies. In many cases, they may have reinforced them. At a time when the words "Neolithic Revolution" are meant to convey sweeping societal changes that technical innovations are believed to have induced, it may be wise to restore some balance by emphasizing the continuity in values, outlook, and community responsibilities the new villages preserved and possibly enhanced.
New World prehistory is a mine of data, provocative issues, and imaginative possibilities so heavily biased by neo-Marxist interpretations that its cultures seem to be mere reactions to climatic and technical factors. Yet after we have categorized Indian communities according to inventories of their "tool kits" and environmental surroundings, we are often surprised to find how markedly they resemble one another attitudinally, in their basic cultural substance, even ceremonially. Among bands, tribes, chiefdoms, and states we find an extraordinary commonality of outlook, basic human conventions, communal solidarity, and mutual care that tends to override their different economic activities as food gatherers, hunters, food cultivators, and the various combinations thereof. These similarities are strongest on the community level of the society, not its political or quasipolitical summits.

Technics, in the narrow, instrumental meaning of the term, does not fully or even adequately account for the institutional differences between a fairly democratic federation such as the Iroquois and a highly despotic empire such as the Inca. From a strictly instrumental viewpoint, the two structures were supported by almost identical "tool kits." Both engaged in horticultural practices that were organized around primitive implements and wooden hoes. Their weaving and metalworking techniques were very similar; their containers were equally functional. Like all New World societies, they both lacked large domestic animals for agricultural purposes, plows, wheeled vehicles, pottery wheels, mechanical spinning and weaving machines, a knowledge of smelting, bellows, and modestly advanced carpentry tools — in short, virtually all the techniques that mark the most significant advances of the Neolithic. When we look at the Iroquois and Inca "tool kits," we seem closer to the late Paleolithic than to the high Neolithic. Nor do we find marked differences between them in their orientation toward sharing, communal aid, and internal solidarity. At the community level of social life, Iroquois and Inca populations were immensely similar — and richly articulated in their social and cultural qualities.

Yet at the political level of social life, a democratic confederal structure of five woodland Indian tribes obviously differs decisively from a centralized, despotic structure of mountain Indian chiefdoms. The former, a highly libertarian confederation, was cemented by elected but recallable chiefs (in some cases chosen by women), popular assemblies, a consensual decision-making procedure in the united tribal council in matters of war, the prevalence of matrilineal descent, and a considerable degree of personal freedom. The latter, a massively authoritarian state, was centered around the person of a deified "emperor" with theoretically unlimited power; it was marked by a far-flung bureaucratic infrastructure, by patrilineal descent and by a totally subservient peasantry. Communal management of resources and produce among the Iroquois tribes occurred at the clan level. By contrast, Inca resources were largely state-owned, and much of the empire's produce was simply confiscation of food and textile materials and their redistribution from central and local storehouses. The Iroquois worked together freely, more by inclination than by compulsion; the Inca peasantry provided corvee labor to a patently exploitive priesthood and state apparatus under a nearly industrial system of management.

Doubtless, climatic and geographic factors helped sculpt the structure developed by the two systems of association. A highly forested area would tend to yield looser political units than would fairly open geographic areas, where visibility between communities was high. The variegated physiography of the Andes, from the lush Amazon valley to the virtually barren Pacific slopes, would have placed a high premium on mobilized labor, a pooling of resources from different ecosystems, and a more secure and diversified redistribution of goods. But the very mountainous terrain that fostered decentralization among the Greek poleis did not seem to inhibit
centralization among the Inca, and the temperate forest land that fostered a hierarchical society in medieval Europe did not obstruct the superb elaboration of an egalitarian democracy in pre-Columbian America.

Hindsight and a highly selective choice of "tool kits" may help us describe how a band developed into a tribe, a tribe into a chiefdom, and a chiefdom into a state, but they do not explain why these developments occurred. From time immemorial, hierarchies and classes have used shifts in emphasis to reverse social relations from systems of freedom to those of rule, without dropping a single term from the vocabulary of organic society. Ironically, this cunning on the part of the rulers indicates the extent to which the community valued its egalitarian and complementarian traditions.

Quite apart from New World prehistory, a vast social development began much earlier in the Near East, from which it radiated outward over the entire Eurasian continent. The "Neolithic Revolution" of the Old World was technically more dramatic and more ancient than that of the New. But technics, in a strictly instrumental sense, explains surprisingly little about the sweeping developments that carried society into semi-industrialized — indeed, relatively mechanized — systems of agriculture, pottery, metallurgy, weaving, and above all a highly coordinated system of mobilizing labor.

None of the great empires of antiquity developed substantially beyond a late Neolithic or early Iron Age technics. From a strictly instrumental viewpoint, their technical ensemble was notable for its smallness of scale. As Henry Hodges observes in his broad assessment of classical technics:

The ancient world under the domination of Rome had in fact reached a kind of climax in the technological field. By the end of the Roman period many technologies had advanced as far as possible with the equipment then available, and for further progress to be made, a bigger or more complex plant was required. Despite the fact that the Romans were quite capable of indulging in gigantic undertakings, their technolo-

gies remained at the small-equipment level. Thus, for example, if it was required to increase the output of iron the number of furnaces was multiplied, but the furnaces themselves remained the same size. Whatever the cause, the idea of building a larger furnace and devising machinery to work it seems to have been beyond the Roman mind. As a result, the last few centuries of Roman domination produced very little that was technologically new. No new raw materials were discovered, no new processes invented, and one can indeed say that long before Rome fell all technological innovation had ceased.

But innovation there surely was — not in the instruments of production but in the instruments of administration. In terms of its far-reaching bureaucracy, legal system, military forces, mobilization of labor, and centralization of power, the Roman Empire at its peak was the heir, if not the equal, of the authoritarian apparatus of preceding empires.

Probably no imperial system in the Old World ever achieved the totalitarian attributes of Egypt or the brutality of Assyria. Corvee labor gave the Near East its public buildings, temples, mortuaries, megalithic sculptures and symbols, and its highly coordinated irrigation works. Egypt and Mesopotamia led the way by enlisting hundreds of thousands to raise the structures that still monumentalize their existence. But the early commandeering of labor by the Near Eastern despotisms established no distinctions of class or status: artisans as well as peasants, city folk
as well as rural folk, wealthy as well as poor, scribes as well as laborers, even Egyptian priests as well as their congregations — all were subject to the labor demands of the State. Later this "democracy" of toil was to be honored in only the breach, until it gave way to a visibly onerous burden on the agrarian and urban poor.

In regions with small farmers, it was difficult to establish totalitarian states. Where their position was weakened, or where large labor surpluses were readily available, centralized states were much more possible and often developed. Carthage and Rome cultivated the latifundia system: a plantation economy worked by gang (largely slave) labor. Sparta introduced a communistic warrior-elite system in which each citizen at birth was given a small, state-owned landed competence, worked by serf-like helots, that reverted to the polis after his death. In contrast, Athens and Hebrew Palestine developed a yeoman farming class that worked the land with family labor and often with two or three slaves.

But apart from a few states that were based on the individual farmer, the authentic hallmark of early "civilizations" was an extensive system of mobilized labor — either partly or wholly devoted to food cultivation and monumental works. Where elaborate irrigation systems were necessary, the underclass of riverine societies indubitably gained greater material security from these totalitarian systems of labor organization and redistribution than they would have enjoyed on their own. Egyptian mortuary records celebrate the success with which the Pharaohs alleviated local famines. But what the peasantry acquired in the form of buffers to nature's uncertainties they may have more than lost in the onerous toil that was exacted from them for often frivolous monumental works. Nor can we be very sure, unlike archaeologists of a generation ago, that the highly centralized regimes of the Old World (and New) greatly enhanced the coordination and effectiveness of alluvial irrigation systems. A carefully tended network of trenches, canals, and pools had appeared in arid areas long before the "high civilizations" of antiquity surfaced. That the "hydraulic" communities of the predynastic world were sorely afflicted by conflicts over water and land rights was clearly a serious problem, but centralization often served merely to escalate the level of conflict to an even more destructive one between kingdoms and empires.

From the New World to the Old, the stupendous elaboration of centralized states and the proliferation of courts, nobles, priesthoods, and military elites was supported by a highly parasitic institutional technology of domination composed of armies, bureaucrats, tax farmers, juridical agencies and a septic, often brutal belief system based on sacrifice and self-abnegation. Without this political technology, the mobilization of labor, the collection of vast material surpluses, and the deployment of a surprisingly simple "tool-kit" for monumental technical tasks would have been inconceivable. Beyond the responsibility of massing huge numbers of human beings into regimented tasks, this system had three essential goals: to intensify the labor process, to abstract it, and to objectify it. A carefully planned effort was undertaken to piece work together so that the State could extract every bit of labor from the "masses," reduce labor to undifferentiated labor-time, and transmute human beings into mere instruments of production. Historically, this unholy trinity of intensification, abstraction, and objectification weighed more heavily on humanity as a malignant verdict of social development than did theology's myth of original sin. No "revolution" in tools and machines was needed to produce this affliction. It stemmed primarily from the elaboration of hierarchy into crystallized warrior elites, and from the genesis of an institutional technics of administration largely embodied in the State, particularly in the bureaucracy that managed the economy. Later, this technics of administration was to acquire a highly industrial character and find its most striking expression in the modern factory system.
The manorial economy of the Middle Ages, like the guild system of its towns, never came to social terms with ancient concepts of labor and technics. Infused by Roman concepts of justice, Germanic tribalistic traditions existed for centuries in unresolved tension with the centralistic claims of materially weak monarchies and an ideologically suspect Papacy. Forced back from its inland sea, Europe was buried in its huge forests, bogs, and mountains—a victim of its own accursed invaders from the north and the east. Here, the manor became the social interregnum that cleared the ground for a new historic point of departure. From the eleventh century onward, technics bolted forward with an energy that had not been seen since the Neolithic Revolution. In successive order, the use of windmills was followed by the horse-collar (which made it possible to pull heavy plows and transport inland goods cheaply), striking advances in metallurgy and metallic tools, an imposing system of highly developed agriculture, a complex machine technics based largely on wooden components, and a sophisticated version of the ancient water-wheel that would have surprised the most informed Roman engineers.

Yet none of these technical innovations produced any decisive changes in medieval social relations. Except for the Greek polis, the medieval towns were usually more democratic than the urban centers of antiquity, the agrarian system less mobilized and rationalized, the craft occupations more individualistic and democratically structured. We cannot account for this favorable constellation of sociotechnical circumstances without noting that the State and its bureaucracies had reached a nadir in the history of political centralization and bureaucratization. Until the emergence of nation-states in England, France, and Spain between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, Europe was comparatively free of the despotisms and bureaucracies that coated the social life of North Africa, the Near East, and Asia.

The one class to benefit most from the rising nation-state was the European bourgeoisie. Increasingly centralized monarchies and their growing bureaucratic minions imposed the king's peace on the inland trade routes of Europe, the king's courts on local arbitrary systems of justice, the king's mint on the erratic metallic currency distributed by financial robber barons, the king's navy on nests of maritime pirates, and the king's armies on newly colonized markets. This structure, even more than any appreciable "advances" in instrumental technics, provided the basis for the next great system of labor mobilization: the factory. The modern origins of abstract labor are found not only in the market economy and its clearly defined monetary system of exchange ratios, but also in the English countryside. There, the "factors" who carted raw materials and semifinished fabrics to cottage workers eventually brought them together under a single roof (a "factory") to rationalize and intensify a fairly traditional body of technics under the watchful eye of foremen and the icy stare of mean-spirited, heartless, and cunning industrial entrepreneurs.

The early factory introduced no sweeping technical dispensation other than the abstraction, rationalization, and objectification of labor—and its embodiment in human beings. Spinning, weaving, and dyeing were still performed with all the machines that cottagers had used in their own homes for generations. No engines or prime movers were added to this old ensemble until the machinery for spinning, weaving, and dyeing yarn were invented a century or so later. But a new technics had supplanted the old: the technics of supervision, with its heartless intensification of the labor-process, its conscienceless introduction of fear and insecurity, and its debasing forms of supervisory behavior. Where the "factors" had bought products, not people, the factory bought people, not products. This reduction of labor from its embodiment in products into a capacity of people was decisive; it turned fairly autonomous individuals into totally administered products and gave products an autonomy that made them seem like people. The animate quality that things
acquired — qualities which Marx aptly called the "fetishism of commodities" — was purchased at the expense of the animate qualities of people. An underclass was being produced that was almost as inorganic as the factory in which it worked and the tools it used — a transubstantiation of humanity itself that was to have profound consequences for the legacy of domination and the future of human freedom.

Leaving aside the stupendous array of devices and prime movers that the factory was to commandeer in its service, its most important technical achievement has occurred in the technics of administration. No less important than its evolving technical armamentarium was the evolution of the joint-stock company into the multinational corporation, and of the feisty, muscular foreman into the suave, multilingual corporate executive. Nor was the State to be spared its own change from a royal court, with circuit judges and ink-sputtered scribes, into a stupendous bureaucratic population that, together with its military strong-arm, formed a nation-state in its own right within the confines of the nation. The bureaucratic apparatus that underpinned overtly totalitarian monarchies such as the Incas of Peru and Pharaohs of Egypt is dwarfed by the managerial civil, and corporate bureaucracies of a single American, European, or Japanese commercial city.

But no mere description of this development can pass for an explanation. Bureaucracy, conceived as an institutionalized technics in its own right, may well have its origins in the primordial world. I refer not merely to the internal dialectic of hierarchy that yields a legacy of domination in the forms of gerontocracies, priestly corporations, patriarchy, and warrior chieftains. I am equally concerned with the civil sphere of the male, who produces rationalized ceremonial and military systems as compensatory mechanisms for his own ambivalent status in organic society. He is necessarily less fulfilled in a domestic society, where woman forms the core of authentic social activity, than in a civil society — but one that he must elaborate into a fully articulated and structured sphere of life. His very identity is at stake in a world where production and reproduction are centered around woman, where the "magic" of life inheres in her own personal life-processes, where the rearing of the young, the organization of the home, and the fecundity of nature seem to be functions of her sexuality and personality. Whether he "envies" matricentricity or not is irrelevant; he must evolve an identity of his own which may reach its most warped expression in warfare, arrogance, and subjugation.

The male's identity does not have to find fulfillment in an orbit of domination, but where this does occur on a significant scale, it is fatal to the entire social environment. Not only is the community itself transformed by the elaboration of this civil sphere into a political, often militaristic, one; the surrounding communities must also respond — either protectively or aggressively — to the rot developing within the social ecosystem. An apparently democratic, egalitarian, possibly matricentric culture such as the Andean Nazca would have been obliged to react aggressively to an authoritarian, hierarchical, patricentric — and militaristic — culture such as the nearby Moche. Sooner or later, both would have had to confront each other as tyrannical chiefdoms, or the Nazca would have been compelled to defer to the Moche. Given sufficient exposure to external forces, a process of negative selection on the level of political life has always been at work to favor the expansion of ruthless cultures at the expense of the more equable ones. What is surprising about social development is not the emergence of New and Old World despotisms, but their absence in large areas of the world generally. It is testimony to the benign power inherent in organic society that so many cultures did not follow the social route to Statehood, mobilized labor, class distinctions, and professional warfare — indeed, that they often retreated into remoter areas to spare themselves this destiny.
Perhaps the most important ideological factor to foster the development of capitalism in European society was Christianity, with its strong emphasis on individuation, its high regard for the redemptive role of labor, its elevation of an abstract Supernature over a concrete nature, and its denial of the importance of community as distinguished from the universal Papal congregation. That individual initiative, even more than a high sense of individuality, promoted human will and inventiveness hardly requires elaboration. The Thomas Edisons and Henry Fords of the world are not great individuals, but they are surely grasping egos — vulgar caricatures of the Biblical "angry men." The transformation of Yahweh's Will into man's will is too obvious a temptation to be evaded. Even the Church's ecclesiastics and missionaries, driven by their zealous fanaticism, are more transparently bourgeois men than mere Homeric heroes who lived by the canons of a shame culture.

This emphasis on the personal ego, with its voyaging sense of enterprise, was reinforced by Christianity's obsession with labor. Historically, the Church placed its highest stakes on faith rather than works, on contemplation rather than labor. But in practice, the medieval Christian orders were mundane working establishments which left a heavy imprint on the technologically undeveloped peasantry around them. Monasteries played a major role in innovating technics and in rationalizing labor; indeed, they pioneered as missions, not only in the dissemination of faith but in the dissemination of technical knowledge and planned, orderly systems of work. Here, they found a welcome response, for there was no need to preach a gospel of work to highly impoverished agrarian communities that desperately needed the technical wisdom of knowledgeable and disciplined monastic orders.

The work ethic, despite its ill-repute today as a Calvinist trick, was not invented by the bourgeoisie or, for that matter, by preindustrial ruling classes. Ironically, it can be traced back to the socially underprivileged themselves. The work ethic appears for the first time in Hesiod's Works and Days, a peasant Iliad of the seventh century before Christ, whose antiheroic workaday title and tenor reflect the tribute the poor man pays to his poor life. For the first time in a written legacy, work — in contrast to valor — appears as an attribute of personal nobility and responsibility. The virtuous man who bends his neck to the yoke of toil occupies the center of the poetic stage and enviously elbows out the aristocrat who lives off his labor. Thus do poor men assemble their virtues as the attributes of toil, renunciation, and husbandry, all the more to affirm their superiority over the privileged who enjoy lives of ease, gratification, and pleasure. Later, the ruling classes will recognize how rich an ideological treasure trove the Hesiods have bestowed upon them. They too will extol the virtues of poverty for the meek, who will find treasure in heaven while the arrogant will pay in hell for their sinful "heaven" on earth.

Hence, toil has its rewards for the Christian congregation, just as contemplation has its rewards for the Christian elect. These rewards, to be sure, remain rather vague: an ethereal, everlasting life that may well be more boring than the earthly one, an unceasing reverence for God, a world abstracted of the luscious concretes that render Cokaygne so superior to Paradise. In its abstract Supernature, Christianity already begins to spawn the vagaries of abstract matter and abstract labor. Yahweh is a nameless God, nature is merely the epiphenomenon of his Word, and even good works are in themselves less virtuous than the activity of working.

The dissociation of working from works — of the abstract process of laboring from the concrete use-values work produces — is savagely dystopian. The lingering concrete use-values of things in a world that has largely reduced them to exchange-values is the hidden romance buried within the warped life of the commodity. To deny them is to deny humanity’s claim to the satisfactions
and pleasures they are meant to bestow. An overly ascetic and rationalistic outlook is the counterpart of an overly hedonistic and instinctive one. But this denial is precisely the function of a theology that places the Word before the deed, Supernature before nature, and working before works.

As to broad ideological matters, Christianity had fewer differences with Galileo than either of them realized. The Galilean universe of lifeless matter and perpetual motion differs very little in principle from the Christian view of nature as inherently meaningless without the illumination of a heavenly Supernature. By Newton’s time, one could read (even write) the Principia without feeling any sense of conflict between the Church and the Royal Society. It was naiveté and distrust that separated for so long such kindred outlooks as the Christian and the scientific. The true smoke of peace between them was finally inhaled not from the bowls of ritual Indian pipes but from the belching smokestacks of modern industry.

Finally, no religion assailed more earnestly the authenticity, intensity, and meaningfulness of community affiliation than Christianity. The Stoic plea for a recognition of a universal humanitas entailed not a denial of one’s loyalty to the community but merely the individual’s recognition of mystical affinity to the “city of Man.” The Christian plea for a universal humanitas was actually more cunning. It shrewdly acknowledged the claims of the State but tried to replace the community’s claims with those of the “city of God,” notably the Church. The Church’s jealousy toward the Christian’s community loyalties was lethal; the religion demanded strict obedience to its clerical infrastructure. The notion of Congregation implied that the clergy had priority over all communal claims upon persons — indeed, over all relationships among persons other than those ordained by God — and over all codes of solidarity other than the laws of Deuteronomy and Christ’s strictures to his disciples. Thus the Church lived in covert hostility with the community — just as the State could find no peace with the blood oath, even in its patriarchal form. Here, industrial capitalism, like science before it, found a perfect fit between the bourgeois concept of citizenship and the Christian. The free-floating ego, divested of all community roots, became its ideal of individuality and personality. The “masterless men” that all previous societies had feared so intensely became the new image of the untrammeled, self-reliant entrepreneur — and his counterpart in the uprooted, propertyless proletariat.

We must recognize what this attempt to divest technics of its community matrix imparted to the spirit of technical innovation. If the true meaning of techné includes an ethical emphasis on limit, then this emphasis was valid only if there was a social agency to nourish and enforce the conception. To the extent that techné was thrown into opposition to community, the word began to lose its original ethical connotations and become strictly instrumental. Once societal constraints based on ethics and communal institutions were demolished ideologically and physically, technics could be released to follow no dictates other than private self-interest, profit, accumulation, and the needs of a predatory market economy. The time-honored limits that had contained technics in a societal matrix disappeared, and for the first time in history technics was free to follow its own development without any goals except those dictated by the market.

The Romans replicated their small iron furnaces instead of enlarging them not because they were technologically obtuse but largely because the communities from which the Roman imperium was formed held its instrumental and institutional technics in check. To say that the Roman mind could not conceive of larger furnaces is simply to reveal that its technical imagination was formed by an artisan conception of the world, however grandiose its political imagination. This bifurcation of State and society, of the central political power and the community, is crucial
to an understanding of the nature of a libertarian technology and the relationship of technology to freedom.

Organic society, while institutionally warped and tainted by preindustrial "civilizations," retained a high degree of vitality in the everyday lives of so-called ordinary people. The extended family still functioned as an attenuated form of the traditional clan and often provided a highly viable substitute for it. Elders still enjoyed considerable social prestige even after their political standing had diminished, and kinship ties were still fairly strong, if not decisive, in defining many strategic human relationships. Communal labor formed a conspicuous part of village enterprise, particularly in agriculture, where it was cemented by the need to share tools and cattle, to pool resources in periods of difficulty, and to foster a technical reciprocity without which many communities could not have survived major crises. One does not have to look for, as Marx put it, "the possession of land in common" or an "unalterable division of labor" that served as "a fixed plan and basis for action" in India's villages in order to know that under the tightly woven political carpet of the State was an active, subterranean social world based on consensus, ideological agreement, shared customs, and a commonality of religious beliefs.

These traits are found even where political despotisms tend to be highly invasive. And they often are highly marked by peasant attitudes toward labor. Their most striking feature is the extent to which any kind of communal toil, however onerous, can be transformed by the workers themselves into festive occasions that serve to reinforce community ties. In a hypothetical account of the work habits of Inca peasants, Mason surmises that:

Like all cooperative labour, it must have been a jovial and not an onerous occasion, with plenty of chicha beer, singing, and bantering. The songs, perhaps in honor of the gods when working the church lands, or in praise of the emperor while engaged in the state fields, were appropriate to the occasion. As soon as the fields of the gods were finished, the work was repeated on the government lands, and then the people were free to cultivate their own fields. There was a communal spirit of helpfulness, and if a man was called away on state business such as military service his neighbours quietly attended to his agricultural needs.

To the extent that recent archeological discoveries and research into current Andean labor customs throw any light on their work habits, Mason's account seems reasonably accurate. Beneath the massive structure of a highly despotic State that closely supervised its underclasses, the peasantry lived a distinctly separate and socially organic life of its own. Indeed, the Inca State implicitly acknowledged this covert immunity to its controls by punishing the community as a whole if its individual members were guilty of certain infractions of State regulations. This practice is so universal and ancient that it recurs repeatedly throughout history.

One of the most vivid accounts of how communal labor traditions and forms linger on into modern times, often transforming grueling toil into festive work, appears in Tolstoy's Anna Karenina. Levin (Tolstoy's typical fictional counterpart) observes peasants haying on his sister's estate. Sitting transfixed on a haycock, he is "fascinated" while teeming peasants in the meadow buoyantly cut the hay, stack it, and pitch it with hayforks on wooden carts.

Before him in the bend of the river behind the marsh, moved a gaily colored line of peasant women, chattering loudly and merrily, while the scattered hay was rapidly rising into gray, zigzag ridges on the pale-green stubble.
The men follow the women with their hayforks until the haying is almost complete. The dialogue that ensues is inimitable:

"Make hay while the sun shines and the hay you'll get will be lovely," said the old beekeeper, squatting down beside Levin. "What lovely hay, sir! Tea, not hay. Look, sir, at the way they pick 'em up! Like scattering grain to the ducks," he added, pointing to the growing haycocks.

The work, in fact, is nearly done and the beekeeper calls out to his son, who responds:

"The last one, Dad!" shouted the young man, reining in the horse and, smiling, looked around at a cheerful, rosy-cheeked peasant woman, who was driving by, standing on the front part of a cart, flicking the ends of his hempen reins.[51]

It is tempting to focus our descriptions of technology and our accounts of technological innovation on the large-scale works of mobilized labor favored by early states and ruling elites. The achievements of power — its temples, mortuaries, and palaces — evoke our ingrained awe of power. The hydraulic systems of great alluvial empires like the Egyptian, Mesopotamian, and Asian, and the cities, roads, and megalithic structures of pre-Columbian America cast a long shadow over history. Tragically, this shadow has largely obscured the technics of peasants and artisans at the "base" of society: their widespread networks of villages and small towns, their patchwork farms and household gardens; their small enterprises; their markets organized around barter; their highly mutualistic work systems; their keen sense of sociality; and their delightfully individuated crafts, mixed gardens, and local resources that provided the real sustenance and artwork of ordinary people. A complete history of technology, food cultivation, and art has yet to be written from the standpoint of the so-called commoners, just as has a complete history of women, ethnic minorities, and the oppressed generally.

In some cases, as we now know, even large political empires like the Hittite Empire were based overwhelmingly on small farms. Typically, these were worked by five or six people, using perhaps two oxen, and the cultivable land was divided into mixed croplands, vineyards, orchards, and pastures that rarely supported more than small flocks of goats and sheep. In imperial Roman times, yeoman farms that had lingered on from the early republican era coexisted with immense latifundia worked by thousands of slaves. The beautifully terraced slopes that marked agricultural belts from Indonesia to Peru were worked not merely for the State but (often segregated from State-owned lands) for the needs of the extended family and local community. If Chinese corvee labor in the Sui dynasty (c. 600 A.D.) may have exceeded five million commoners (who were under a guard of 50,000 troops), the great majority of the peasantry continued to work its own plots, cultivating mixed crops and orchards, and raising domestic animals. Even Aztec agriculture, despite the highly despotic militaristic state that governed central Mexico, was organized primarily around clan-type horticulture, notably the lovely floating or chinampa gardens that lined and infiltrated the shallows of the Lake of Mexico.

Viewed at its agrarian "base," medieval Europe may well represent the apotheosis of the small, agriculturally mixed farm within the social framework of a class society. The famous "open field system," with its rotation of fallow and cultivated crop lands, was organized around individually farmed narrow strips. But strip farming necessarily involved such close coordination of planting and harvesting between cultivators of adjacent strips that the peasantry normally shared
its plows, draft animals, and implements. Not uncommonly, periodic redistributions of the strips were made to meet the material needs of larger families. Carried to the village level, these farming techniques fostered free peasant assemblies, a lively sense of reciprocity, and the reinforcement of archaic communal traditions such as the use of uncultivable land for "commons" to pasture animals and collect wood for fuel and construction materials. The manorial economy of the territorial lords by no means dominated this increasingly libertarian village society; rather, it retained only a loosening hold over the artisan and commercial towns nearby. In later years, the villages and towns in many areas of Europe, thoroughly schooled in the practice of self-management, gained supremacy over the local barons and ecclesiastics. Particularly in Switzerland and the Lowlands, but to a very great extent throughout western Europe, villages and towns established fairly powerful, often long-lived peasant federal republics and strong urban confederations.

The new, comparatively libertarian "institutional technics" spawned by this fascinating world yielded, in turn, an equally remarkable elaboration of a human-scale, comparatively libertarian instrumental technics. Aside from the watermills already in abundance throughout Europe (William the Conqueror's Domesday Book lists some 5,500 in about 3,000 English villages in 1086 A.D.), there were also windmills. Apparently derived from the ritual Tibetan prayerwheels, they had become so numerous by the thirteenth century that the Belgian town of Ypres alone could celebrate the fact that it had reared 120 windmills in its environs. Even more striking is the extraordinary, unprecedented variety of uses to which European waterwheels and windmills were put. This multipurpose character of medieval prime movers stunningly illustrates the extent to which unity in diversity is a correlate of ecological technics. Watermills, known as early as Greek times, had been used almost exclusively to mill grain; windmills, already in use in Persia as early as the eighth century, had probably been confined to the same limited uses. By contrast, the lively, alert, and increasingly individuated town and country people of the high and late Middle Ages deployed these new prime movers not only for restricted agricultural purposes but also to raise and trip ensembles of heavy hammers in forges, to operate lathes, to work bellows in blast furnaces, and to turn grindstones for polishing metals as well as grinding grains. The new interest in machinery, as yet small in scale and fairly simple in design, led to a highly variegated use of cams, cranks, and pumps, and of an ingenious combination of gears, levers, and pulleys. It also fostered the triumphal invention of the mechanical clock, which lessened the need for arduous toil and greatly increased the effectiveness of craft production.

What is highly attractive about the new vitality that appeared in medieval technics is not simply the sense of innovation characterizing its development; rather, it is the sense of elaboration that marked the adaptation of the new to the social conditions of the old. Contrary to popular images that read our own values back into the medieval world, the technical "utopians" of that time were far removed in spirit and outlook from the technocratic "utopians" or futurists of the present era. Roger Bacon, the thirteenth-century Franciscan, predicted large, highly powered ships steered by a single operator, flying machines, and wagons that would travel at considerable speed by their own motive power. Figures like Bacon were not prescient engineers of an era to come; they were primarily theologians rather than technicians, alchemists rather than scientists, and scholastics rather than craftsmen. They bore witness more to supernatural powers than to human ingenuity. Some three centuries were to pass before authentic inventors like Leonardo da Vinci secretly sketched their cryptic designs and wrote their notes in a script that could only be read by using a mirror.
Technics in Bacon’s time was deeply embedded in (and its development constrained by) a richly communal social matrix that fostered an organic epistemology of design, an aesthetic use of materials, an elaboration of an adaptive technics, a deep respect for diversity, and a strong emphasis on quality, skill, and artfulness. These instrumental norms reflected the social norms of the time. Town and country were much too close to each other to render socially and intellectually acceptable the geometric temples, the urban gigantism, the inorganic social relations, and the deadening images of a mechanical world. However much the Church emphasized heavenly Supernature over earthly nature, the world of nature came increasingly to be seen as gift of a heavenly dispensation — a sensibility that found its theological voice in the ideas of Saint Francis. Work and the high premium placed on skills were much too individuated to make large masses of peasants and "masterless men" amenable to the mobilized labor systems of earlier eras. To the extent that we can think in terms of sizable masses of people, we must think more in terms of ideological crusades rather than of highly controlled labor forces. Owing to its decentralized character and its Christian sense of individual worth, medieval society was simply not capable of utilizing, much less mobilizing, huge numbers of "commoners" to monumentalize itself in public works. For all the abuses of feudal society, corvee labor was confined to the maintenance of public roads and tenant-type systems of food cultivation for the manorial lords, to defensive structures that were needed by the community as well as the barons, and to miscellaneous "gifts" of labor to the nobility and Church.

Technics itself tended to follow an age-old tradition of nestling closely into a local ecosystem, of adapting itself sensitively to local resources and their unique capacity to sustain life. Accordingly, it functioned as a highly specific catalyst between the people of an area and their environment. The rich knowledge of habitat — of region, local flora and fauna, soil conditions, even geology — that enabled people like the Bushmen or San to provision themselves in (as it seemed to Victorian Europe) an utter desert wasteland survived well beyond primordial times into the European Middle Ages. This high sense of the hidden natural wealth of a habitat — a knowledge that has been so completely lost to modern humanity — kept the latent exploitative powers of technics well within the institutional, moral, and mutualistic boundaries of the local community. People did more than just live within the biotic potentialities of their ecosystem and remake it with an extraordinary sensitivity that fostered ecological diversity and fecundity. They also (often artistically) absorbed technically unique devices into this broad biosocial matrix and brought them into the service of their locality.

Only modern capitalism could seriously subvert this ancient sensibility and system of technical integration. And it did so not simply by replacing one instrumental ensemble by another. We gravely mistake capitalism’s historically destructive role if we fail to see that it subverted a more fundamental dimension of the traditional social ensemble: the integrity of the human community. Once the market relationship — and its reduction of individual relationships to those of buyers and sellers — replaced the extended family, the guild, and its highly mutualistic network of consociation; once home and the place of production became separate, even antagonistic, arenas, dividing agriculture against craft and craft against factory; finally once town and country were thrown into harsh opposition to each other; then every organic and humanistic refuge from a highly mechanized and rationalized world became colonized by a monadic, impersonal, and alienated nexus of relationships. Community as such began to disappear. Capitalism invaded and undermined areas of social life that none of the great empires of the past could ever penetrate or even hope to absorb. Not only was the technical imagination savagely dismembered but
also the human imagination. The cry "Imagination to Power!" became a plea not only for a free-
play of fancy but also for a rediscovery of the very power to fantasize. Whether its advocates
recognized it or not, the urge to bring imagination to power implied a restoration of the power
of imagination itself.

The recent emphasis on "limits to growth" and "appropriate technology" is riddled by the same
ambiguities that have imparted a conflicting sense of promise and fear to "high technology." I
have said enough about the danger of dissociating instrumental technics, "soft" or "hard," from
institutional technics; I leave the elaboration of their integration to the closing, more reconstruc-
tive chapter of this book, where I shall explore the possible structures of freedom, of human
relationships, and of personal subjectivity that delineate an "appropriate" social matrix for a lib-
ertarian technics. For the present, however, I must emphasize again that terms like "small," "soft,"
"intermediate," "convivial," and "appropriate" remain utterly vacuous adjectives unless they are
radically integrated with emancipatory social structures and communitarian goals. Technology
and freedom do not "coexist" with each other as two separate "realms" of life. Either technics is
used to reinforce the larger social tendencies that render human consolation technocratic and
authoritarian, or else a libertarian society must be created that can absorb technics into a con-
stellation of emancipatory human and ecological relationships. A "small," "soft," "intermediate,"
"convivial," or "appropriate" technical design will no more transform an authoritarian society
into an ecological one than will a reduction in the "realm of necessity," of the "working week,"
hance or enlarge the "realm of freedom."

In addition to subverting the integrity of the human community, capitalism has tainted the
classical notion of "living well" by fostering an irrational dread of material scarcity. By estab-
lishing quantitative criteria for the "good life," it has dissolved the ethical implications of "limit." This ethical lacuna raises a specifically technical problematic for our time. In equating "living
well" with living affluenty, capitalism has made it extremely difficult to demonstrate that free-
don is more closely identified with personal autonomy than with afluench, with empowerment
over life than with empowerment over things, with the emotional security that derives from a
nourishing community life than with a material security that derives from the myth of a nature
dominated by an all-mastering technology.

A radical social ecology cannot close its eyes to this new technological problematic. Over
the past two centuries, almost every serious movement for social change has been confronted
with the need to demonstrate that technics, "hard" or "soft," can more than meet the material
needs of humanity without placing arbitrary limits upon a modestly sensible consumption of
goods. The terms of the "black redistribution" have been historically altered: we are faced with
problems not of disaccumulation but of rational systems of production. Post-scarcity, as I have
emphasized in earlier works, does not mean mindless afluench; rather, it means a sufficiency
of technical development that leaves individuals free to select their needs autonomously and to
obtain the means to satisfy them. The existing technics of the western world — in principle, a
technics that can be applied to the world at large — can render more than a sufficiency of goods
to meet everyone's reasonable needs. Fortunately, an ample literature has already appeared to
demonstrate that no one need be denied adequate food, clothing, shelter, and all the amenities
of life.[52] The astringent arguments for "limits to growth" and the "life-boat ethic" so prevalent
today have been reared largely on specious data and a cunning adaptation of resource problems
to the "institutional technics" of an increasingly authoritarian State.
It is social ecology's crucial responsibility to demystify the tradition of a "stingy nature," as well as the more recent image of "high" technology as an unrelieved evil. Even more emphatically, social ecology must demonstrate that modern systems of production, distribution, and promotion of goods and needs are grossly irrational as well as antiecological. Whosoever sidesteps the conflicting alternatives between a potentially bountiful nature and an exploitive use of technics serves merely as an apologist for the prevailing irrationality. Certainly, no ethical argument in itself will ever persuade the denied and underprivileged that they must abdicate any claim to the relative affluence of capitalism. What must be demonstrated — and not merely on theoretical or statistical grounds alone — is that this affluence can ultimately be made available to all — but should be desirable to none. It is a betrayal of the entire message of social ecology to ask the world's poor to deny themselves access to the necessities of life on grounds that involve long-range problems of ecological dislocation, the shortcomings of "high" technology, and very specious claims of natural shortages in materials, while saying nothing at all about the artificial scarcity engineered by corporate capitalism.

Anything that is not renewable is exhaustible — this is a philistine truism. But confronted by such truisms, one may reasonably ask: When will it be exhausted? How? By whom? And for what reason? For the present there can be no serious claim that any major, irreplaceable resource will be exhausted until humanity can choose new alternatives — "new" referring not simply to material or technical alternatives but above all to institutional and social ones. The task of advancing humanity's right to choose from among alternatives, particularly institutional ones, that may yet offer us a rational, humanistic, and ecological trajectory has not yet been fulfilled by "high" or by "low" technology. In sum, "high" technology must be used by serious social ecologists to demonstrate that, on rational grounds, it is less desirable than ecological technologies. "High" technology must be permitted to exhaust its specious claims as the token of social "progress" and human well-being — all the more to render the development of ecological alternatives a matter of choice rather than the product of a cynical "necessity."

Still another issue that may well be regarded as a new technological problematic is the association of the "realm of freedom" with "free time," the political counterpart of Marx's "abstract labor" or "labor time." Here, too, we encounter a tyrannical abstraction: the notion that freedom itself is a res temporalis, a temporal thing. The res temporalis of free time, like the res extensa of irreducible matter, is dead — the "dead time" from which the Parisian students of May-June, 1968 sought freedom by translating time itself into the process of being free. Viewed from this standpoint, "free time" is very concrete time — indeed, a very active, socially articulated form of time. It entails not only freedom from the constraints of labor-time, from the time-clock imposed by abstract labor on the "realm of necessity" (or what we so felicitously call "mindless production"); it also entails the use of time to be free.

If only in reaction to the deadening time-constraints of abstract labor, the ideal of "free time" is still tainted by a wayward utopianism that exaggerates the power of use-values over the tyranny of exchange-values. Free time is still seen as inactivity on the one hand and material plenitude on the other. Hence, "freedom" is still conceived as freedom from labor, not freedom for work. Here we encounter the aimless interests of the isolated ego, the rootless "libertarian" monad who wanders waywardly through life as the counterpart of the wayward, rootless bourgeois monad. The workers in À Nous la Liberté, Rene Clair's playful French "utopia" of the early 1930s, achieve their freedom in a highly industrialized land of Cokaygne: their functions are taken over completely by machines while they do nothing but frolic in nearby fields and fish en masse along
river banks that have an uncanny resemblance to their assembly lines. This is characteristically very moderne. Clair’s hoboes, the principal characters of the motion picture, leave the tramp’s version of freedom imprinted on the conclusion of the cinematic “utopia.” They are the “masterless men” of the twentieth century who have yet to be formed into citizens of a community, like the rootless, wandering radicals of the New Left who carried their “community” in their knapsacks or under the roofs of their trucks. The “utopia” is charming but aimless, spontaneous but unformed, easy-going but structureless, poetic but irresponsible. One may live long in such a “utopia” but not “live well.”

The Hellenic ideal of freedom — an ideal confined to the citizen — was different. Freedom existed for activity, not from activity. It was not a realm but a practice — the practice of being free by participating in free institutions, by daily recreating, elaborating, and fostering the activity of being free. One was not merely “free” in the passive sense of freedom from constraint, but in the active sense of “freeing,” both of oneself and one’s fellow citizens. An authentic community is not merely a structural constellation of human beings but rather the practice of communizing. Hence, freedom in the polis was a constellation of relationships that was continually in the process of reproduction. According to Fustel de Coulange,

We are astonished . . . at the amount of labor which this democracy required of men. It was a very laborious government. See how the life of an Athenian is passed. One day he is called to the assembly of his deme, and has to deliberate on the religious and political interests of this little association. Another day he must go to the assembly of his tribe; a religious festival is to be arranged, or expenses are to be examined, or decrees passed, or chiefs and judges named. Three times a month, regularly, he takes part in the general assembly of the people; and he is not permitted to be absent. The session is long. He does not go there simply to vote; having arrived in the morning, he must remain till a late hour, and listen to the orators. He cannot vote unless he has been present from the opening of the session, and has heard all the speeches. For him this vote is one of the most serious affairs. At one time political and military chiefs are to be elected — that is to say, those to whom his interests and his life are to be confided for a year; at another a tax is to be imposed, or a law to be changed. Again, he has to vote on questions of war, knowing well that, in case of war, he must give his own blood or that of a son. Individual interests are inseparably united with those of the state [read polis]. A man cannot be indifferent or inconsiderate. If he is mistaken, he knows that he shall soon suffer for it, and that in each vote he pledges his fortune and his life.[53]

To recover the substantive, richly articulated attributes of “freedom for” rather than merely “freedom from,” I am obliged to speculate about the attributes of a new society that would transmute “busyness” into the process of reproducing freedom on an ever enlarging scale. Yet we may reasonably ask whether technics as a form of social metabolism has certain formal attributes (its social matrix aside, for the present) that can nourish social freedom as a daily activity. How can the design imagination foster a revitalization of human relationships and humanity’s relationship with nature? How can it help lift the “muteness” of nature — a problematical concept that we, in fact, have imposed on ourselves — by opening our own ears to its voice? How can it add a sense of haunting symbiosis to the common productive activity of human and natural beings, a sense of participation in the archetypal animateness of nature?

We share a common organic ancestry with all that lives on this planet. It infiltrates those levels of our bodies that somehow make contact with the existing primordial forms from which we may originally have derived. Beyond any structural considerations, we are faced with the need to give
an ecological meaning to these buried sensibilities. In the case of our design strategies, we may well want to enhance natural diversity, integration, and function, if only to reach more deeply into a world that has been systematically educated out of our bodies and innate experiences. Today, even in alternate technology, our design imagination is often utilitarian, economistic, and blind to a vast area of experience that surrounds us. A solar house that symbolizes a designer’s ability to diminish energy costs may be a monument to financial cunning, but it is as blind and deadened ecologically as cheap plumbing. It may be a sound investment, even an environmental desideratum because of its capacity to use “renewable resources,” but it still deals with nature merely as natural resources and exhibits the sensitivity of a concerned engineer — not an ecologically sensitive individual. An attractive organic garden may well be a wise nutritional “investment” over the quality of food obtainable in a shopping mall. But insofar as the food cultivator is preoccupied only with the nutritional value of food on the dinner table, organic gardening becomes a mere technical strategem for “foodwise” consumption, not a testament to a once-hallowed intercourse with nature. All too often, we are flippantly prepared to use hydroponic trays as substitutes for actual gardens and gravel for soil. Since the object is to fill the domestic larder with vegetation, it often seems to make no difference whether our gardening techniques produce soil or not.

Such commonplace attitudes are very revealing. They indicate that we have forgotten how to be organisms — and that we have lost any sense of belonging to the natural community around us, however much it has been modified by society. In the modern design imagination, this loss is revealed in the fact that we tend to design “sculptures” instead of ensembles — an isolated solar house here, a windmill there, an organic garden elsewhere. The boundaries between the “organic” world we have contrived and the real one that may exist beyond them are strict and precise. If our works tend to define our identity, as Marx claimed, perhaps the first step in acquiring an ecological identity would be to design our “sculptures” as part of ensembles — as technical ecosystems that interpenetrate with the natural ones in which they are located, not merely as agglomerations of “small,” “soft,” “intermediate,” or “convivial” gadgets. The principal message of an ecological technics is that it is integrated to create a highly interactive, animate and inanimate constellation in which every component forms a supportive part of the whole. The fish tanks, “sun tubes,” and ponds that use fish wastes to nourish the plant nutriment on which they live are merely the simplest examples of a wide-ranging ecological system composed of a large variety of biota — from the simplest plants to sizable mammals — that have been sensitively integrated into a biotechnical ecosystem. To this system, humanity owes not only its labor, imagination, and tools but its wastes as well.

No less important than the ensemble is the technical imagination that assembles it. To think ecologically for design purposes is to think of technics as an ecosystem, not merely as cost effective devices based on “renewable resources.” Indeed, to think ecologically is to include nature’s “labor” in the technical process, not only humanity’s. The use of organic systems to replace machines wherever possible — say, in producing fertilizer, filtering out sewage, heating greenhouses, providing shade, recycling wastes, and the like — is a desideratum in itself. But their economic wisdom aside, these systems also sensitize the mind and spirit to nature’s own powers of generation. We become aware that nature, too, has its own complex “economy” and its own thrust toward ever-greater diversity and complexity. We regain a new sense of communication with an entire biotic world that inorganic machines have blocked from our vision. As production itself has often been compared with a drama, we should remember that nature’s role is more than that
of a mere chorus. Nature is one of its principal players and at times, perhaps, the greater part of the cast.

Hence, an ecologically oriented technical imagination must seek to discover the "Way" of things as ensembles, to sense the subjectivity of what we so icily call "natural resources," to respect the attunement that should exist between the human community and the ecosystem in which it is rooted. This imagination must seek not merely a means for resolving the contradictions between town and country, a machine and its materials, or the functional utility of a device and its impact on its natural environment. It must try to achieve their artistic, richly colored, and highly articulated integration. Labor, perhaps even more than technics, must recover its own creative voice. Its abstract form, its deployment in the framework of linear time as a res temporalis, its cruel objectification as mere, homogeneous energy, must yield to the concreteness of skill, to the festiveness of communal activity, to a recognition of its own subjectivity. In this broad revitalization of the natural environment, of work, and of technics, it would be impossible for the technical imagination to confine itself to the traditional imagery of a lifeless, irreducible, and passive material substrate. We must close the disjunction between an orderly world that lends itself to rational interpretation and the subjectivity that is needed to give it meaning. The technical imagination must see matter not as a passive substance in random motion but as an active substance that is forever developing — a striving "substrate" (to use an unsatisfactory word) that repeatedly interacts with itself and its more complex forms to yield variegated, "sensitive," and meaningful patterns.

Only when our technical imagination begins to take this appropriate form will we even begin to attain the rudiments of a more "appropriate" — or better, a liberatory — technology. The best designs of solar collectors, windmills and watermills, gardens, greenhouses, bioshelters, "biological" machines, tree culture, and "solar villages" will be little more than new designs rather than new meanings, however well-intentioned their designers. They will be admirable artifacts rather than artistic works. Like framed portraits, they will be set off from the rest of the world — indeed, set off from the very bodies from which they have been beheaded. Nor will they challenge in any significant way the systems of hierarchy and domination that originally reared the mythology of a nature "dominated" by one of its own creations. Like flowers in a dreary wasteland, they will provide the colors and scents that obscure a clear and honest vision of the ugliness around us, the putrescent regression to an increasingly elemental and inorganic world that will no longer be habitable for complex forms of life and ecological ensembles.
11. The Ambiguities of Freedom

The technics and the technical imagination that can nourish the development of a free, ecological society are beset by ambiguities. Tools and machines can be used either to foster a totally domineering attitude toward nature or to promote natural variety and nonhierarchical social relationships. Although what is "big" in technics may be very ugly, what is "small" is not necessarily beautiful. Great despotsisms have been based on a technology that is Neolithic in scale and form. The criticism of "industrial society" and "technological man" which erupted in the 1970s is testimony to popular disenchantment with the hopes of earlier generations for growing technological development and the freedom it was expected to yield — a freedom based on material plenty and the absence of debasing toil.

Perhaps less obviously, the same ambiguities also becloud our attitudes toward reason and science. To Enlightenment thinkers two centuries ago, reason and science (as embodied in mathematics and Newtonian physics) were latent with the hope of a human mind freed of superstition and of a nature freed of scholastic metaphysics. Voltaire’s famous cry against the Church, "Ecrasez l’infame!," was evidence of the Enlightenment’s belief in the triumph of human mind as much as it was an attack upon clerical dogmatism; Alexander Pope’s luminescent panegyric to Newton was as much evidence of a new belief in the intellectual clarity that science would impart to humanity’s understanding of the cosmos as it was a tribute to the genius of Newton himself.

These three great pathways or "tools" (to use the language of modern instrumentalism) for achieving human freedom — reason, science, and technics — that seemed so assured merely a generation ago no longer enjoy their high status. Since the middle of the twentieth century, we have seen reason become rationalism, a cold logic for the sophisticated manipulation of human beings and nature; science become scientism, an ideology for viewing the world as an ethically neutral, essentially mechanical body to be manipulated; and technics become modern technology, an armamentarium of vastly powerful instruments for asserting the authority of a technically trained, largely bureaucratic elite. These "means" for rescuing freedom from the clutches of a clerical and mystified world have revealed a dark side that now threatens to impede freedom — indeed, to eliminate the very prospects that reason, science, and technics once advanced for a free society and for free human minds.

The ambiguity created by this Janus-faced development of reason, science, and technics leads to an all-pervasive sense that this triune is meaningless as such unless the three are reevaluated and restructured so that each one’s latent liberatory side is rescued and its oppressive side clearly revealed. To return to irrationality, superstition, and material primitivism is no more desirable than to defer to the value-free and elitist rationalism, scientism, and technocratic sensibilities that prevail today. The need to rescue reason as an ethically charged logos of the world does not conflict with its use as a logic for dealing with that world. The need to rescue science as a systematic interpretation of that logos does not conflict with a recognition of the need for analytic techniques and empirical evidence. Finally, the need to rescue technics as a means of mediating our relationship with nature — including human nature — does not conflict with humanity’s own
right to intervene in the natural world, to do even better than "blind" nature in fostering variety and natural fecundity. All these seemingly contradictory, ambiguous pathways for attaining freedom are essential to our very definition of freedom. Our ability to resolve these ambiguities of freedom depends as much on how we define reason, science, and technics as it does on how we use them.

Ultimately, the paradoxes we encounter in defining reason, science and technics cannot be resolved by a mystical formula that merely vaporizes the issues they raise. Their resolution depends upon a supreme act of human consciousness. We need to surmount the evil that lies in every good, to redeem the gain that inheres in every loss — be it the sociality latent in the solidarity of kinship, the rationality in primal innocence, the ideals in social conflict, the willfulness in patriarchy, the personality in individualism, the sense of humanity in the parochial tribal community, the ecological sensibility in nature idolatry, or the technics in shamanistic manipulation. To redeem these desiderata without completely shedding certain features of the context that gave them viability — solidarity, innocence, tradition, community, and nature — will require all the wisdom and artfulness we possess. Nor can they be The Ambiguities of Freedom 269 adequately redeemed within the present social order. Rather, we need a new kind of imagination — a new sense of social fantasy — to transmute these often oppressive archaic contexts into emancipatory ones.[54]

In dealing with the ambiguities of freedom, I shall begin with reason, for reason has always formed the secular hallmark of every specifically human achievement. Presumably, it is by virtue of our rationality that we are unique in the "mute" world around us and can achieve our "mastery" over it. The Enlightenment's generous commitment to reason — its vast faith in the human enterprise as the outcome of thought and education — has never been lost even on its most severe critics, nearly all of whom have deployed reason in the very act of denigrating it. William Blake's assault on the "meddling intellect" is a brilliantly conceived intellectual tour de force, as was Rousseau's a generation or so earlier. My own arguments in defense of reason's integrity are not meant to be ad hominem; like a mocking incubus, "linear thought" abides within the most mystical experiences and the most inspired forms of "illumination." The role assigned to reason and the destiny imparted to it — whether as blessing or as curse — depends crucially on how we define it in the various lives or "stages" of society. Its role also depends on what, in our sensitivity to the world that surrounds and infuses us, reason is permitted to displace.

Every serious critique of reason has focused on its historic instrumentalization into technics — its deployment as a tool or formal device for classification, analysis, and manipulation. In this sense, formal reason has never really been absent from the human enterprise. To anyone who has even an elementary familiarity with the tribal world, formal reason was simply a subdued presence in a larger sensibility justly called subjectivity. But subjectivity is not congruent with consciousness; it speaks to a wider and deeper level of interaction with the world than to the mere capacity to classify, analyze, manipulate, or even develop an awareness of self that is distinguishable from that of "otherness."

Critics of "irrationality" do not clarify these distinctions by wantonly banishing every subjective experience other than "linear thought" to the realm of the "irrational" or "antirational." Fantasy, art, imagination, illumination, intuition, and inspiration — all are realities in their own right that may well involve bodily responses at levels that have been meticulously closed off to human sensibility by formal canons of thought. This blindness to large areas of experience is not merely the product of formal education; it is the result of an unrelenting training that begins
at infancy and carries through the entire length of a lifetime. To polarize one area of sensibility against another may well be evidence of a repressive "irrationality" that is masked by reason, just as "linear thought" appears in the mystical literature under the mask of "irrationality." Freud, in his ineptness in dealing with these issues from his bastion of Victorian biases, is perhaps the most obvious example of a long line of self-appointed inquisitors whose rigid notions of subjectivity reveal a hatred of sensibility as such. This has long ceased to be a light matter. If the Freuds of the late nineteenth century threatened to destroy our dreams, the Kahns, Tofflers, and similar corporate "rationalists" threaten to destroy our futures.

The most incisive critiques of reason — I think particularly of Horkheimer and Adorno's Dialectic of Enlightenment and Horkheimer's Eclipse of Reason — may well have foundered on their failure to keep such distinctions in mind. Both thinkers clearly recognized a crucial ambiguity in reason, and they were unerring in their interpretation of the problems it raised. To speak of reason today is to address a process that has two entirely different orientations. One involves high ideals, binding values, and lofty goals for humanity as a whole that derive from supraindividual, almost transcendental, canons of right and wrong, of virtue and evil. Reason, in this sense, is not a matter of personal opinion or taste. It seems to inhere in objective reality itself — in a sturdy belief in a rational and meaningful universe that is independent of our needs and proclivities as individuals. This mode of reason — which Horkheimer called "objective reason" — expresses the logos of the world and retains its integrity and validity apart from the interplay of human volition and interests.

By contrast, what we commonly regard as reason — more properly, as "reasonable" — is a strictly functional mentality guided by operational standards of logical consistency and pragmatic success. We formulate "reasonable" strategies for enhancing our well-being and chances of survival. Reason, in this sense, is merely a technique for advancing our personal opinions and interests. It is an instrument to efficiently achieve our individual ends, not to define them in the broader light of ethics and the social good. This instrumental reason — or, to use Horkheimer's terms, "subjective reason" (in my view, a very unhappy selection of words) — is validated exclusively by its effectiveness in satisfying the ego's pursuits and responsibilities. It makes no appeal to values, ideals, and goals that are larger than the requirements for effective adaptation to conditions as they exist. Carried beyond the individual to the social realm, instrumental reason "Serves any particular endeavor, good or bad," Horkheimer observes. "It is the tool of all actions of society, but it must not try to set the patterns of social and individual life," which are really established or discarded by the mere preferences of society and the individual. In short, instrumental reason pays tribute not to the speculative mind but merely to pragmatic technique.

If reason is now faced with a crisis that challenges its credibility and validity, this challenge no longer stems from the traditional assaults of irrationality and mysticism from which the Enlightenment tried to defend it. That battleground has been dissolved by history. Indeed, what today passes for irrationality and mysticism has become a fragile refuge from the assaults of instrumentalism and the crisis it has produced in reason. The contradictions besetting reason have their origins in the historic reduction of objective reason to instrumental reason — in the disquieting devolution of rationality as an inherent feature of reality to a "reasonableness" that is merely an unthinking efficient technique. If we mistrust reason today, it is because reason has enhanced our technical powers to alter the world drastically without providing us with the goals and values that give these powers direction and meaning. Like Captain Ahab in Melville's Moby Dick, we can cry out forlornly: "All my means are sane; my motives and objects mad."
To the most astute critics of instrumental reason, this devolution of objective reason into a logic of manipulation is viewed as a dialectic of rationality itself, an inversion of ends into means. According to these critics, the high ideals formulated by objective reason that were meant to sophisticate rationality as a technique have betrayed themselves to the very instrumentalism that was meant to be in their service. Thus the ethical goals of the "good," viewed existentially as social freedom and individual autonomy, are presumed to have presuppositions of their own. Freedom entails not only the social structure of freedom, we are told, but also a sufficiency in the means of life to practice freedom. Individual autonomy, in turn, entails not only the untrammeled opportunity for self-expression, but also the self-discipline to restrain the unruly commands of the ego. Freedom and individual autonomy, according to this critique, exact a historic toll: the historic deployment of instrumental reason to fulfill the goals reared by objective reason. Accordingly, to achieve these goals, humanity must attain sufficient control over nature (both external and internal nature) to transmute an ideal into a material and psychological reality. The precondition for freedom is domination — specifically, the domination of the external natural world by man; the precondition for personal autonomy is also domination — the domination of internal psychic nature by a rational apparatus of repression.

This critique of instrumental reason and the crisis of reason thickens further when we are asked to bear in mind that freedom and individual autonomy presuppose not only the rational control of nature but also the reduction of humanity to a well-regulated, efficient means of production. Class society and the State have always been validated — even in certain radical theories — by the role they play in rationalizing labor to a point where material production can ultimately be brought into the service of liberation. The toil of class society in extricating humanity from the domination of nature and myth is inextricably entangled with the toil of humanity in extricating itself from the domination of class society and instrumental reason. Indeed, the instrumentalization of nature as raw materials is thoroughly wedded to the instrumentalization of human beings as means of production. The devolution of reason from an inherent feature of reality into an efficient technique of control yields the dissolution of objective reason itself. The very source of objective reason, notably objective reality itself, is degraded into the mere materials upon which instrumental reason exercises its powers. Science, cojoined with technics, renders the entire cosmos into a devitalized arena for technical colonization and control. In objectifying humanity and nature alike, instrumental reason becomes the object of its own triumph over a reality that was once laden with meaning. Not only do means become ends, but the ends themselves are reduced to machines. Domination and freedom become interchangeable terms in a common project of subjugating nature and humanity — each of which is used as the excuse to validate the control of one by the other. The reasoning involved is strictly circular. The machine has not only run away without the driver, but the driver has become a mere part of the machine.

The entire critique of reason, at least in the form I have elaborated it so far, is itself actually laden with biases that it unknowingly transmutes into a dialectic of rationality. In fact, the Dialectic of Enlightenment is actually no dialectic at all — at least not in its attempt to explain the negation of reason through its own self-development. The entire work assumes that we hold a body of Victorian prejudices — many of them specifically Marxian and Freudian — that identify "progress" with increasing control of external and internal nature. Historical development is cast within an image of an increasingly disciplined humanity that is extricating itself from a brutish, unruly, mute natural history. The image of a humanity that has achieved the degree of productivity and administration that enables it to be free is modeled strictly on an industrial
"paradigm" of mastery and discipline. But looking back from our own time, the critique dissolves into despair. Far from extricating itself from a seemingly brutish natural history, humanity has enmeshed itself in a ubiquitous system of domination that has no parallel in nature. Nowhere has history redeemed its promise of freedom and autonomy. To the contrary, it almost seems that history must begin anew — not as a split between humanity and its natural matrix, but rather as an elaboration of ecological ties by an instrumentalism that remains in the service of objective reason.

Here is the nub of the problem: the Victorian veil (to which Marx and Freud gave a radical dimension) that obscures the function of ecology) as a source of values and ideals. If objective reason has increasingly dissolved into instrumentalism, we must recover the rational dimension of reality that always validated reason itself as an interpretation of the world. As long as the world is conceived scientifically, the preeminence of instrumentalism remains ideologically secure. As a "value-free," presumably ethically "neutral" methodology, science not only fosters instrumentalism but also makes of instrumental reason an ideology whose claims of comprehending reality are as universal as those of science itself. Here, social ecology opens a breach in these claims that potentially, at least, may redeem the function of objective reason to once again define our goals and values.

Neither Horkheimer nor Adorno were prepared to invoke the claims of nature against the failures of society. Like the Victorians of the century before, their attitude toward nature was ambiguous. The story of "civilization" in their eyes, had never ceased to be a struggle by reason and freedom to transcend the trammels of unthinking myth and blind natural law. In the post-revolutionary world of the 1920s and 1930s, myth had atavistically raised its head in the fascist appeal to "blood and soil" — the "naturalism" of the modern despotic State. "Objective reason" rooted in a lawful natural world, had atavistically raised its head in the Stalinist appeal for a dialectics of nature. In both cases, nature had served as the ideological vehicle for regression: the one to place humanity under the tyranny of race and irrationality; the other to place the free play and spontaneity of an emancipated society under the tyranny of "inexorable" natural laws. Not that the latent antinaturalism of Marxism had not cast a dark shadow over nature's role in humanity's project of emancipation. Horner's island of the Lotus-eaters is a denial of memory, history, culture, and "progress" that forever haunts Europe's emphasis on human activity with the image of an atavistically immobilized and pacified dream world. But even as their Marxism subsided, Horkheimer and Adorno revealed an unforgiving hatred of the warped history that fascism and Stalinism had inflicted on the human enterprise.

The current ecological crisis, however, reminds us that the preemptive claims of instrumental reason are failures on their own terms. Instrumentalism, particularly in its scientific form, has not only failed to live up to its historic claim of emancipating humanity, but it has even failed to approximate its more traditional claim of illuminating mind. Science, immersed in its impersonal gadgetry and its imperious quest for innovation, has lost all contact with the culture of its time. Worse yet, its quest for innovation threatens to tear down the planet itself. Far more than any moral or ideological verdict, these failures are tangible features of everyday life. They are verified by the foul air and water, the rising cancer rates, the automotive accidents, and the chemical wastelands that assault the entire world of a scientistic "civilization." By reducing ethics to little more than matters of opinion and taste, instrumentalism has dissolved every moral and ethical constraint over the impending catastrophe that seems to await humanity. Judgments no longer are formed in terms of their intrinsic merits; they are merely matters of public consensus.
that fluctuate with changing particularistic interests and needs. Having divested the world of its ethical objectivity and reduced reality to an inventory of industrial objects, instrumentalism threatens to keep us from formulating a critical stance toward its own role in the problems it has created. If Odin paid for wisdom with the loss of one eye, we have paid for our powers of control with the loss of both eyes.

But we can no more divest ourselves of instrumental reason than we can divest ourselves of technics. Both are indispensable to expanded notions of freedom; indeed, their emancipatory role long antedates the emergence of capitalism with its images of a "stingy" nature and "unlimited" needs. Humanity does not live by ethics alone; herein lies one of freedom's most crucial ambiguities. In the face of an increasingly technocratic society and sensibility, on what grounds can we speak of an objective world that provides the needed constraints to instrumentalism? From what source can we derive the values and goals that will subserve instrumentalism to an objective ethics?

To evoke nature as the source for an objectively grounded ethics, as I propose to do, requires careful qualification. A nature conceived as the matrix of "blood and soil," or as the domain of a blind "dialectical" lawfulness that imbues tyranny with the suprahuman qualities of inexorable destiny, would justly be regarded as atavistic. The racial ethos of fascism and the scientific "dialectics" of Stalinism, both based on very particularistic images of nature, have claimed a toll in life and suffering that beggars the most barbarous eras of human history. We no longer need a "nature" (that is, an authoritarian sociobiology) that advances an ideological rationale for ethnic arrogance and concentration camps under the aegis of "inevitability" or "blind law." But nature is not a homogeneous fabric that is woven from a single thread. The nature to which we can now address ourselves is neither bloody nor blind; it provides no ideological refuge for a mythos of irrationality, race, or, like Marxism, a contrived mechanism that passes itself off as a "social science" concealed under the shroud of Hegel.

The matrix from which objective reason may yet derive its ethics for a balanced and harmonized world is the nature conceived by a radical social ecology — a nature that is interpreted nonhierarchically, in terms of unity in diversity and spontaneity. Here, nature is conceived not merely as a constellation of ecosystems but also as a meaningful natural history, a developing, creative, and fecund nature that yields an increasing complexity of forms and interrelationships. And what makes this complexity so significant is not just the stability it fosters (an obvious desideratum in its own right, needed for both the biotic and social worlds). Nature's evolution toward ever more complex forms is uniquely important in that it enters into the history of subjectivity itself. From the transition of the inorganic to the organic and through the various phases of evolution that crystallized into human forms of rationality, we witness an increasingly expansive history of molecular interactivity — not only of neurological responses but of an ineffable sensibilité that is a function of increasingly complex patterns of integration. Subjectivity expresses itself in various gradations, not only as the mentalism of reason but also as the interactivity, reactivity, and the growing purposive activity of forms. Hence, subjectivity emphatically does not exclude reason; in part, it is the history of reason — or, more precisely, of a slowly forming mentality that exists on a wider terrain of reality than human cerebral activity. The term subjectivity expresses the fact that substance — at each level of its organization and in all its concrete forms — actively functions to maintain its identity, equilibrium, fecundity, and place in a given constellation of phenomena.
Normally, we think of substance in its various forms as passive objects, as yielding phenomena that are "molded" or "selected" by their "environments." External "forces" seem to determine the "traits" that enable material forms (particularly life-forms) to retain their integrity and "survive." Science's passion for reducing all changes within these forms to mere products of accident — the capacity of these forms to "mutate" by mere chance — fatally denies the high degree of nisus, of self-organization and self-creation, inherent in nonhuman phenomena. Science comes perilously close to the very metaphysics and mysticism it has opposed so militantly since the Enlightenment when it ignores the extent to which phenomena play an active role in their own evolutionary processes. The traditional image of biological evolution as a series of random point mutations that are "selected" in the interests of survival essentially lies in debris. It would be difficult to explain the elegant organization of living beings — indeed of organs like the eye or ear — without viewing their developmental traits as immanently and creatively constituted, as organized ensembles that emerge together in the organism's interaction with the world around it. The jig-saw puzzle's fit, so to speak, involves the parts as well as the whole — not just the player who is the mechanical deus ex machina that seems to be the exclusive "intelligible" factor in the entire puzzle. It is arguable whether the "preference" of carbon atoms to be linked with four other atoms is related by a long evolution of subjectivity to a chimpanzee's use of sticks to probe anthills. But the very strong possibility of such a continuum, gradually mediated by increasingly complex forms of material organization, can no longer be dismissed as mystical. Almost every contemporary vision of nature (apart from the most entrenched bunkers of Victorian science) has increasingly assigned to substance itself more a creative role in the evolution of subjectivity than at any time since the demise of classical philosophy.

Accordingly, whether or not we decide to select reason as the most complex expression of subjectivity, the graded emergence of mind in the natural history of life is part of the larger landscape of subjectivity itself. From the biochemical responses of a plant to its environment to the most willful actions of a scientist in the laboratory, a common bond of primal subjectivity inheres in the very organization of "matter" itself. In this sense, the human mind has never been alone, even in the most inorganic of surroundings. Art has expressed this message more poignantly than science, particularly in those abstract paintings evacuated of virtually all sensory experience beyond color and form; for here we recognize the primal affinity of mind with form itself. Even those pirates of space travel, the astronauts, are awed by the activity of astral masses, of the cosmic dust and objects swirling around them in a world that seems devoid of matter — in a space that generations of scientists once regarded as a virtual vacuum. "Mind" reaches beyond our cerebral mentalism to a concept of subjectivity in these very broad terms, and ceases to be trapped exclusively within the human brain. Instead, it seems to inhere in the human body as a whole and the natural history it embodies.

Which specific ethical imperatives we draw from an ecological interpretation of nature (as distinguished from the abstract, meaningless, de-subjectivized nature that chilled the Victorian mind by its "stinginess" and "brutality") depend ultimately on our exploration of a future ecological society. Here is a problematic whose answers can be supplied only by a society capable of rendering them into a living praxis. An ecological nature — and the objective ethics following from it — can spring to life, as it were, only in a society whose sensibilities and interrelationships have become ecological to their very core. The nature we normally "create" today is highly conditioned by the social imperatives of our time. This nature may be science's highly quantified nature; the Marxian "abstract matter" that is formed by "abstract labor"; the mystic's cosmos
dissolved into an unrelieved, universal "Oneness"; sociobiology's hierarchical nature organized around primal instincts and drives; the Hobbesian-Freudian nature, impudently unruly and invasive; or the vulgarized Darwinian nature, governed by "fang and claw." I have not even alluded to the animistic, Hellenic, Judea-Christian, medieval, and Renaissance images of nature that still ideologically marble those which I have cited above.

None of the modern images of nature offers a compelling vision of a wholeness that is permeated — as a result of its wholeness — by a larger sense of subjectivity, which we normally identify with human rationality. Each illustrates not so much the need to "resurrect" nature as the need to "resurrect" human subjectivity itself. The flaw in Horkheimer and Adorno's works on reason stems from their failure to integrate rationality with subjectivity in order to bring nature within the compass of sensibilité. To do so, they would have had to understand the message of social ecology, a realm that was completely outside their intellectual tradition.

Here, their subdued adherence to Marxism became a major obstacle to what otherwise could have been a superbly comprehensive critique of instrumental reason. They were too afraid to cement their view of nature to subjectivity — a commitment they identified with mythic and classical archaisms. Hence they never provided a meaningful objective matrix for reason. The wish to make this commitment haunts their entire work on reason and enlightenment, but it is a wish they were too prudent to satisfy.

But how can we, who are more familiar with the possibilities of ecology, avoid the invasion of instrumentalism into an ecological approach to ethics? How can we prevent it from turning nature into a mere object for manipulation in the very name of respecting its subjectivity? None of these questions can be answered satisfactorily without recreating our existing sensibilities, technics, and communities along ecological lines. Once this occurred, then an ecological community might well recover its sense of place in its specific ecosystem by allying itself with its natural environment in a creatively reproductive form — a form that spawns a human symbiotic sensibility, a human technics that enriches nature's complexity, and a human rationality that enlarges nature's subjectivity. Here, humanity would neither give nor take; it would actually participate with nature in creating the new levels of diversity and form that are part of a more heightened sense of humanness and naturalness. Our ethical claim to rationality would derive from the participation of human mind in the larger subjectivity of nature, a subjectivity that is a function of form, integration, and complexity. The use of nature as "natural resources" — a usage that seems unavoidable to the "purposive-rational mind" (to use Jürgen Habermas' jargon) would be diminished, indeed eliminated, by an ecological technics that would not only enrich the flow between nature and humanity, but also sensitize humanity to the creativity of nature.

Lest these good intentions seem like just another case of the simplistic sentimentality so characteristic of nature philosophies as a whole, let me emphasize that an ecological ethics is not patterned on a naive vision of the natural world — either as it exists today or as it might exist in a "pacified" social future. A wolf has no business lying down with a lamb. The imagery is trite and in its own way repellent. The "pacification" of nature does not consist in its domestication. Very much is lost when "wildness" (a stupid word if there ever was one) is removed so completely from nature that it ceases to be a "token of scarcity, suffering, and want," to use Herbert Marcuse's absurd notion of a nature that has not been "recreated by the power of Reason." Marcuse's language, here, is anthropomorphic in its myopia, Marxist in its intent, and preposterous in its claim that "pacification presupposes the mastery of Nature, which is and remains the object opposed to the developing subject." If there are "two kinds of mastery, a repressive and a liberatory one,"
one might also claim with equal absurdity that there are two kinds of nature: an "evil" one and a "virtuous" one.

Leaving this muddled logic aside, there is no "cruelty" in nature, only the predation (and mutualism) around which natural history has evolved its structures for sustaining life and ecological balance. There is no "suffering" in nature, only the unavoidable physical pain that comes with injury. There is no "scarcity" and "want" in nature, only needs that must be satisfied if life itself is to be maintained. Indeed, the material fecundity of nature, prior to history's "negation of Nature" (to use Marcuse's language again), might have completely stunned its earliest hominid offspring, had they even been mindful of "scarcity" as a social category. I cannot emphasize too strongly that nature itself is not an ethics; it is the matrix for an ethics, the source of ethical meaning that can be rooted in objective reality. Hence nature, even as the matrix and source of ethical meaning, does not have to assume such delightfully human attributes as kindness, virtue, goodness and gentleness; nature need merely be fecund and creative — a source rather than a "paradigm."

The function of an ethical philosophy does not entail a mimetic reduction of ethics to its source. Rather, it requires a ground from which to creatively develop ethical ideals. The child is not the parent, but both are united by the objective continuity of genetic ancestry, gestation, birth, and socialization. The two never completely separate; they coexist, and their lives overlap under normal conditions until the child grows to adulthood and becomes a parent. The two may retain a loving relationship or become antagonists, and the child may become more human, or possibly less human, than the parent. In either case, we are obliged to understand why one course of development unfolded, not merely how it occurred — and to give it meaning, coherence, and ethical interpretation. In any case the development is real and we cannot suppress our responsibility to interpret it in ethical terms by claiming that it is merely a series of random events.

To transmute "pacification" into "domestication" is to deal with nature as a model of ethical behavior rather than to accept it for what it really is — a source of ethical meaning that reestablishes our sense of ecological wholeness, the underlying dialectic of unity in diversity. It is this lack of wholeness in our relationship with nature that really explains the unfinished social cosmos in which we live, the sense of incompleteness that exists around us. Not only does a truly "pacified" and domesticated natural world arrogantly model nature on society (rational or not) but it also fails to recognize that human rationality is a phase or aspect of natural subjectivity. It is no accident that Marcuse's "pacified" nature is in fact a "rational" nature. Paul Shepard, in a superb refutation of the self-styled "peacemakers" of nature, observes that:

Each gene in an individual organism acts in the context of many other genes. Hence the genetic changes resulting from domestication may affect the whole creature, its appearance, behavior, and physiology. The temperament and personality of domestic animals are not only more placid than their wild counterparts, but also more flaccid — that is, there is somehow less definition. Of course there is nothing placid about an angry bull or a mean watchdog, but their mothers were tractable, and once an organism has been stripped of its wildness it can be freaked in any direction the breeder wishes. It may be made fierce without being truly wild. The latter implies an ecological niche from which the domesticated animal has been removed. Niches are hard taskmasters. Escape from them is not freedom but loss of direction. Man substitutes controlled breeding for natural selection; animals are selected for special traits
like milk production or passivity, at the expense of over-all fitness and naturewide relationships.

There is an important moral to be drawn from these remarks that applies not just to animals but human beings as well. The freedom of all organisms is a function of direction — of meaningful "niches" in nature and meaningful communities in society. To be sure, the two are not completely congruent, but there is every reason to regard them as derivative: community from "niche," human being from wild animal. In its own way, our loss of community has been a form of domestication — a condition that lacks meaning and direction — as surely as is the wild animal's loss of its niche. Like our cattle, poultry, pets, and even crops, we too have lost our wildness in a "pacified" world that is overly administered and highly rationalized. The private world we created in our prepolitical communities, the "niches" we occupied in the hidden spaces of social life, are quickly disappearing. Like the genetic structure of domesticated animals, the psychic structures of domesticated humans are undergoing perilous degradation. More than ever we must recover the continuum between our "first nature" and our "second nature," our natural world and our social world, our biological being and our rationality. Latent within us are ancestral memories that only an ecological society and sensibility can "resurrect." The history of human reason has not yet reached its culmination, much less its end. Once we can "resurrect" our subjectivity and restore it to its heights of sensibility, then in all likelihood that history will have just begun.

In summary, human rationality must be seen as a form and a derivative of a broader "mentality," or subjectivity, that inheres in nature as a whole — specifically, in the long development of increasingly complex forms of substance over the course of natural history. We must be very clear about what this means. Natural history includes a history of mind as well as of physical structures — a history of mind that develops from the seemingly "passive" interactivity of the inorganic to the highly active cerebral processes of human intellect and volition. This history of what we call "mind" is cumulatively present not only in the human mind but also in our bodies as a whole, which largely recapitulate the expansive development of life-forms at various neuro-physical levels of evolution. What we tragically lack today — primarily because instrumentalism tyrannizes our bodily apparatus — is the ability to sense the wealth of subjectivity inherent in ourselves and in the nonhuman world around us. To some extent, this wealth reaches us through art, fantasy, play, intuition, creativity, sexuality and, early in our lives, in those sensibilities of childhood and youth from which adulthood and the norms of "maturity" wean us in the years that follow.

The landscape of nature — its formal organization, from the astral level of our universe to the least noticeable ecosystems around us — has messages of its own to impart. It too has a voice to which Bruno and Kepler in the Renaissance and a growing number of life scientists today have tried to respond. Indeed, from the time of Pythagoras onward, the classical tradition in philosophy found subjectivity in the evolution of form as such, not only in the morphology of individual beings. Conceived as an active process of ever-growing, interrelated complexity, the "balance of nature" can be viewed as more than just a formal ensemble that life presupposes for its own stability and survival. It can also be viewed as a formal ensemble whose very organization into integrated wholes exhibits varying levels of "mentalism," a subjectivity to which we will respond only if we free our sensorium from its instrumentalist inhibitions and conventions.

Our interpretation of science is not far removed from our interpretation of reason. Viewed as the methodical application of reason to the concrete world, science has acquired the bad name
that instrumentalism and technics have earned over the past few decades. Its overstated claims as a strategy for observation, experimentation, and the generalization of data into "inexorable" natural laws — and its highly vaunted assertions of "objectivity" and intellectual universality — have exposed it to charges of an unfeeling arrogance toward sentiment, ethics, and the growing crisis in the human condition. Once regarded as the herald of enlightenment in all spheres of knowledge, science is now increasingly seen as a strictly instrumental system of control. Its use as a means of social manipulation and its role in restricting human freedom now parallel in every detail its use as a means of natural manipulation. Most of its discoveries in physics, chemistry, and biology are justly viewed with suspicion by its once most fervent adepts, as the controversies over nuclear power and recombinant DNA so vividly reveal. Accordingly, science no longer enjoys a reputation as a means of "knowing," of Wissenschaft (to use the language of the German Enlightenment), but as a means of domination — or what Max Scheler, in a later, more disenchanted time, called Herrschaftswissen. It has become, in effect, a cold, unfeeling, metaphysically grounded technics that has imperialistically expanded beyond its limited realm as a form of "knowing" to claim the entire realm of knowledge as such.

We are thus confronted with the paradox that science, an indispensable tool for human well-being, is now a means for subverting its traditional humanistic function. The ethical neutrality of the nuclear physicist, the food chemist, and the bacteriologist involved in developing lethal pathogens for military purposes is numbing symbol of a "science-run-wild" that compares in even more frightening detail to the image of a "technics-run-wild." The heated controversies over the hazards of nuclear power and recombinant DNA are evidence that science is thoroughly entangled in debates that deal with its claims not just to technical competence but to moral maturity as well.

Like reason and technics, science too has a history and, broadly conceived beyond its instrumentalist definition, it can also be regarded as that history. What we so glibly call "Greek science" was largely a nature philosophy that imparted to speculative reason the capacity to comprehend the natural world. To understand and impart coherence to nature was an activity of the contemplative mind, not merely of experimental technique. Viewed from the standpoint of this rational framework, Plato and Aristotle's considerable corpus of writings on nature were not "wrong" in their accounts of the natural world. Within this large body of nature philosophy, we find insights and a breadth of grasp and scope that the physical and life sciences are now trying to recover.[55] Their varying emphases on substance, form, and development — what normally are depicted as a "qualitative" orientation, as distinguished from modern science's "quantitative" orientation — exhibit a range of thought that may well be regarded as broader, or at least more organic, than science's traditional emphases on matter and motion. The classical tradition stressed activity, organization, and process; the Enlightenment tradition stressed matter's passivity, random features, and mechanical movement. That the Enlightenment tradition has yielded slowly to the classical — a development forced upon it by a growing sense of nature's historicity, contextual qualities, and the importance of form — has not led to a clear understanding of the differences separating them and the way in which they share a historical continuity that could yield their integration without any loss of their specific identities.

To call classical, mechanistic, evolutionary, and relativistic forms of science "complementary" may very well miss a crucial point. They do not simply supplement one another nor are they "stages" in humanity's increasing knowledge of nature, a knowledge that presumably "culminates" in modern science. This kind of thinking about the history of science is still very popular
and often highly presumptuous in its elevation of all things modern and presumably free of speculation and "theology." Actually, these different forms of science encompass different levels of natural development and differ in their avowed scope. They are not simply different "paradigms," as Thomas Kuhn has argued, that radically replace one another. To assume that there is a "science" as such in which the classical tradition is largely "erroneous," in which the Renaissance tradition is partly "correct," and in which the modern tradition is more "true" in its understanding of nature than any of its predecessors is to assume that nature is cut from a single cloth and differs only in its forms of tailoring. Ironically, Kuhn's views have been attacked most harshly not so much by critics who reject the history of science as a displacement of one prevailing scientific "paradigm" by a different one. Rather, he has been most sharply criticized for his tendency to view the logic of "scientific revolutions" as being guided by "techniques of persuasion" rather than by proof, by psychological and social factors rather than by the test of objective studies of reality.

Ignoring Kuhn's later attempt to backtrack upon his more challenging conclusions about the structure of the scientific community itself, what is most striking about his views of the "paradigmatic" revolutions in science is the way in which they have been contrasted with one another. I speak less of Kuhn, here, than of the conventional wisdom of scientism, which tends to focus on the methodological differences between classical nature philosophy and modern science. The common notion that modern science really embarked upon its unique voyage when it consciously adopted Francis Bacon's program of controlled empirical observation and experimental verification is a trite myth that more accurately reflects the intellectual conflicts in Bacon's time than it does the authentic differences between classical and Renaissance notions of nature. Without necessarily articulating it, classical nature philosophers had been working with Bacon's program of observation and experimentation for centuries. Perhaps more appropriately, Bacon, with his "Great Instauration," gave science a function that classical theory had never fully accepted: "man's" recovery of his mastery over the natural world, a view that was pitted against the medieval Schoolman's (actually, Christianity's) contemplative orientation toward nature.

Yet, even here, it is still misleading to assume that the classical tradition, like the medieval, was strictly contemplative and that the modern was overwhelmingly pragmatic. The idea of domination had been an on-going practice in the form of human domination — of a humanity conceived by its rulers as "natural resources" or "means of production" — from the inception of "civilization" itself. Bacon's Great Instauration had been a functioning reality for thousands of years, not merely in class society's attempts to subjugate nature for the purposes of control, but to subjugate humanity itself. Its temple was not Bacon's utopian laboratory, the House of Salomon, but the State, with its bureaucracies, armies, and the knouts of its foremen. We do a grave injustice to the authentic history of "scientific method" when we forget that before science established its laboratory to control nature, the State had established its palaces and barracks to control humanity. The Great Instauration drew its inspiration from the domination of human by human before it made the domination of nature central to its ideals and functions. [53]

The most fundamental difference between classical nature philosophy and modern science lies in their radically different concepts of causality. Here is the real ontological issue — not the turgid chatter about "methodology" — that separates knowledge itself from mere matters of technique, that clarifies the all-important problem of the relationship of means to ends, which is so vital to any critique of instrumental reason and an authoritarian technics. To Aristotle, who never ceased to be a keen observer, a sophisticated generalizer, and committed experimenter
(like Archimedes after him), natural causality was not exhausted by mechanical motion. Cau-
sation involved the very material, the potentiality for form, the formative agent, and the most
advanced form toward which a phenomenon could develop. His concept of causality, in effect,
was entelechial. It assumed that a phenomenon was "drawn" to actualize its full potentiality for
achieving the highest form specific to it — to develop intrinsically and extrinsically toward the
formal self-realization of its potentialities.

Hence, causation to Aristotle is not merely motion that involves change of place — like the
change of place produced by one billiard ball striking another. While it may certainly be mechan-
ica, causation is more meaningfully and significantly developmental. It should be seen more as
a graded process, as an emerging process of self-realization, than as a series of physical displace-
ments. Accordingly, matter, which always has varying degrees of form, is latent with potentiality
— indeed, it is imbued by a nusis to elaborate its potentiality for greater form. Hence it enters into
Aristotle's notion of causation as a "material cause." The form that is latent in matter and strives
toward its full actualization is a "formal cause." The intrinsic and the extrinsic forces that sculpt
the development — here, in the latter case, Aristotle refers to external agents, like the sculptor
who fashions a bronze horse — are the "efficient cause." And lastly, the form that all these aspects
of causality are meant to actualize represents the "final cause."

Aristotelian causality, in effect, is not only developmental but also directive and purposive. It
has also been called "teleological" because the final form toward which substance strives is latent
in the beginning of the development. The term, however, is redolent with notions of a predeter-
mined, inexorable end — a notion that Aristotle takes great pains to eschew. In On Interpretation,
he is careful to point out that

it cannot be said without qualification that all existence and non-existence is the outcome of
necessity. For there is a difference between saying that that which is, when it is, must needs be,
and simply saying that all that is must needs be, and similarly in the case of that which is not. In
the case, also, of two contradictory propositions this holds good. Everything must either be or
not be, whether in the present or in the future, but it is not always possible to distinguish and
state determinately which of these alternatives must necessarily come about.

What characterizes the "teleological dimension" of Aristotelian causality is that it has mean-
ing, not predetermination; causality is oriented toward achieving wholeness, the fulfillment and
completeness of all the potentialities for form latent in substance at different levels of its devel-
opment. This sense of meaning is permeated by ethics: "For in all things, as we affirm, nature
always strives after 'the better.'" Here, the word strive requires emphasis, for Aristotle rarely im-
putes thought, in our cerebral meaning of the term, to nature; rather, nature is an organized oikos,
a good household, and "like every good householder, is not in the habit of throwing away any-
thing from which it is possible to make anything useful." The extent to which this brilliant insight,
so integral to Aristotle's overall philosophy, has been confirmed by ecology and paleontology can
hardly be emphasized too much.

Within the framework of Aristotelian causality, Hegel's concept of dialectic (a grossly abused
term, these days) is virtually congruent with Aristotle's causal orientation. Like Aristotle, Hegel's
entire goal is to comprehend the notion of wholeness, not a specious "synthesis" that is formed.
from the transformation of a thesis into its antithesis. Such a methodological formula for dialectic
not only divests it of all organic content but reduces dialectic to a method — an instrumental
technique in the high tradition of Marxian orthodoxy, rather than an ontological causality. As
Hegel observes in one of his most trenchant accounts of the dialectic,
Because that which is implicit comes into existence, it certainly passes into change, yet it remains one and the same, for the whole process is dominated by it. The plant, for example, does not lose itself in mere indefinite change. From the germ much is produced when at first nothing was to be seen; but the whole of what is brought forth, if not developed, is yet hidden and ideally contained within itself. The principle of this projection into existence is that the germ cannot remain merely implicit, but it is impelled toward development, since it presents the contradiction of being only implicit and yet not desiring so to be. But this coming without itself has an end in view; its completion is fully reached, and its previously determined end is the fruit or produce of the germ, which causes a return to the first condition.

Mind carries this movement further, for Hegel, and rather than "doubling" back to its germinal form goes forth to the full realization of "coming to itself."[55]

What is crucial for both Hegel and Aristotle is their common notion of "final cause," their commitment to wholeness and meaning in phenomena. More than any aspect of Aristotle’s ideas, this one was to become a veritable battleground between science and Schoolman theology; indeed, to the extent that mechanism became the prevalent "paradigm" of Renaissance and Enlightenment science, the notion of "final cause" became the gristmill on which science sharpened its scalpel of "objectivity," scientific "disinterestedness," and the total rejection of values in the scientific organon. To imply a sense of direction in causality — a "why" rather than merely a "how" in nature — was redolent of theology. Medieval scholasticism had so thoroughly Christianized Aristotelian nature philosophy and causality that the Renaissance mechanicians viewed them as little more than a system of Catholic apologetics; even Hobbes’s vision of a "social mechanics" veered sharply into a critique of Aristotle’s final cause. To be sure, this conflict was unavoidable and even freed Aristotle’s own thought from the inquisitorial grip of the Church. But opposition and persecution (Bruno and Servetus were to go to the stake and Galileo to confinement as science’s principal martyrs in this conflict) led to an exaggerated rejection of all organicism — indeed, to an astringent Cartesian dualism between a "soulful" subjectivity exclusively confined to "man" and a strictly mechanical, quantitative view of physical nature.

But this battle was not won without a severe penalty. To free the human mind from the trammels of religion, humanity itself was enslaved to the powers of science. A new organon replaced the old. The Baconian ideal of humanity’s recovery of its mastery over nature did not cleanse it of the taint of "original sin" and restore it to the plentitude of the Garden of Eden. Science joined hands with technics to reinforce the mastery of human over human by enslaving humanity to the same dark, mythic world of domination that it once had ideologically opposed. Science itself had now become a theology. Beginning with the nineteenth century, humanity has become increasingly instrumentalized, objectivized, and economized — even more than the very controlled nature that Bacon’s Great Instauration was intended to create. Rationalization has combined with science to produce a technocracy that now threatens to divest humanity itself — and its natural environment — of the subjectivity by which the Enlightenment had intended to illuminate the world.

Philosophical orientations that replace one "paradigm" by another in the course of intellectual "revolutions" produce a serious breakdown of continuity, integration, and wholeness in the realm of knowledge. They disrupt the ecology and history of knowledge itself — in social theory as much as in scientific theory. We have lost a tremendous wealth of exciting traditions by substituting a Hobbesian project of "social science" for an Aristotelian project of social ethics (not that the Aristotelian provides the "highest" point we could hope to attain in social theory). The all-
pervasive sweep of Christianity over the European world, followed more recently by Marxism, has interred an invaluable body of social ideals and insights. In our own time, one is reminded of the loss of the intensely libertarian hopes fostered by radical groups in the English, American, and French revolutions, all of which have been blanketed by the Leninist "revolutions" of the present century or consigned (to use Trotsky's noxious phrase) to the "dust-bin of history." One is also reminded of the wealth of utopian ideas from which Marx pilfered before replacing them with the myth of a "scientific socialism." Like Christianity before it, socialism has fostered a dogmatic fanaticism that closed off countless new possibilities — not only to human action but also to human thought and imagination. Science, while less demanding in its attacks upon its own heretics, exhibits an equal degree of fanaticism in its intellectual claims. To defy science's metaphysical, often mystical, presuppositions that are rooted in an eerily passive "matter" and a physical concept of motion is to expose oneself to accusations of metaphysics and mysticism, and to an intellectual persecution that science itself once suffered at the hands of its theological inquisitors.

There is a strong tendency within new scientific "paradigms" to view various forms of different "natures" — inorganic and organic, kinetic and developmental, random and meaningful — as inherently antagonistic to one another rather than as different in scope, as levels of development, and as components of a larger whole. Only recently have we begun to escape from a mechanistic reductionism of all natural phenomena to a "paradigm" based on mathematical physics. The widely touted "unity of science" which theorists of the last century advanced during the triumphant heights of the Newtonian cosmic image, was often little more than an intellectual nightmare — a "Oneness," rather than a "unity of science," which theorists of the last century advanced during the most unreconstructed mysticism that western thought had ever achieved. Nothing could be more riddled by metaphysical and mystical notions than a causality reduced almost entirely to a universe based on a kinetics of interacting forces at a distance and of motion that (to explain chemical bonding) yielded mere interlocking arrangements between atoms.

By Laplace's time, nature was seen as a kinetic agglomeration of irreducible "atoms" from which the cosmos was constructed, like a solid Victorian bank. The conception of atoms as the "building blocks" of the universe was taken literally, and even the Deity was seen less as a "Creator" or parent of the world than as an architect. This image designated a passive nature sculpted by intrinsic, often random, forces — which qualified ruling elites could manipulate according to their interests once science had "unlocked" the "secrets" of an enchanted and cryptic nature. Efficient cause, removed from the larger ethical matrix of Aristotelian causality, was now conceived as the sole description for natural phenomena in kinetic interaction. The image of nature as a "construction-site," which even Bloch borrowed, produced its own technological cant. Terms like "building blocks," "mortar," and "cement" that are still commonplace in works on physics replaced classical philosophy's images of "love" and "hate," "justice" and "injustice," "entelechy" and "kinetics" that, for all their anthropomorphic qualities, implied not only an enchanted nature or even an ethical nature but a passionate nature. What remained from the past to "explain" the ultimate Newtonian mystery of action at a distance and the troubling facts of gravitation were the terms "attraction" and "repulsion," terms that still survive in electromagnetism.

It is difficult to explain how much this technological cant and the imagery it reflected served the interests of domination in an industrial market society. For this cant was not merely philosophical but eminently social in its character, just as the language of present-day systems theory — with its extension of terms like "input," "output," and "feedback" into everyday discourse —
reflects the corporatization of daily life, its reduction to a "flow diagram." To conceive of all phenomena as constructed from a homogeneous, lifeless, passive, and malleable "matter" was to place humanity itself within the orbit of all these attributes. Flesh, no less than stone and steel, was merely matter that had been accidentally structured into a more elaborate agglomeration of the same irreducible material. Even thought had lost its high estate, and was instead conceived as a "fluid" that formed an exudate of the brain and the nervous system. Labor, as mere energy, was considered to be rooted not merely in political economy but also in the "economy of nature." This opened a direct tie between the radical critique developed by Marx and accommodative strategies formulated in a later period by Social Darwinism. The Enlightenment ideal of human reeducation according to the canons of reason was interpreted to mean training according to canons of efficient performance.

Science, seen in terms of a history that wantonly discarded its past by a radical succession of "paradigms," stands alone in the world because it has marched through this succession apart from nature. Having divested itself of antecedents that once addressed themselves to the different emerging levels of natural history, science now lacks the continuity that relates these levels intelligibly. It lacks a sense of limit that confirms what is or is not valid in various ways of knowing reality; it lacks an awareness of new forms of reality that linger on the boundaries of "established data." In short, modern science has not developed in relation to nature but in relation to its own "paradigms." The pursuit of the "unity of science" should in no sense be understood as a pursuit of the unity of nature. The former is an intellectual enterprise between scientific contestants and collaborators, not an enterprise that authentically involves the natural world.

The rediscovery of nature is more important at this point in the development of human knowledge than are such trite enterprises as the "reenchantment of the world" (a phrase that tends to dissolve into mere metaphor when it lacks the flesh of social insight and a naturalistic elaboration). If science is to resolve the dilemma of its rationalization in the social world, it must learn to balance the need for self-interpretation with the insights furnished by different levels of natural development. Science must turn to nature itself for nutriment. It must be thoroughly mindful of the presuppositions — the biases — that continually enter into its epistemological structures. The debates between supporters of one "paradigm" and another must be infused with a sense of history — both natural and intellectual — rather than to rest on dynastic ideological successions and exclusions. Science must candidly ask itself questions shaped by natural reality, not by a self-enclosed intellectualism that separates its ideological history from the history of the natural world. Hence science must overcome its ambiguities by recognizing that it is both its own history as a whole — not one or another phase of that history — and natural history as well. In this sense, neither Aristotle nor Galileo were wrong per se, however much the latter detested the former; they observed different aspects of realities imparted to them by nature and by different levels of natural development.

Underlying any project for rediscovering nature is a body of key questions. If there is any unity of nature to be discovered, what message does it have to offer? What is its essential meaning? And if we are to talk of meaning in nature — of the "why" as well as the "how" of natural phenomena — how are we to develop graded forms of causality (whether they are Hellenic or modern, for example, or the phasing of one into the other) so that we do not completely exclude one or the other? And if we grant that meaning does exist, how are we to interpret its direction, its teleology? Must we foreclose the possibility that ends may be latent in beginnings by speaking of "teleology" as if the end must necessarily follow from its beginning as a totally preordained
"final cause"? Can we loosen up our current narrow, ironclad notions of teleology to see it more as a graded, emergent, and creative development rather than an overly deterministic form of causality?

These questions, so crucial for developing an ecological ethics and an ecologically oriented science, cannot stay frozen in the forms used by crude scientistic ideologues for centuries. If nothing else, we must reclaim the right to think freely about ideas and reality without having restrictions imposed upon us by ideologues who merely answer each other's errors with errors of their own. Science, in effect, must cease to be a Church. It must tear down the ecclesiastical barriers that separate it from the free air of nature and from the garden which nourished its intellectual development.

Technics the skills and instruments for humanity's metabolism with nature, formed the crucible in which the modern concepts of reason and science were actually forged. In the sphere of production (in Marx's "realm of necessity") the ambiguities of freedom emerged with unadorned clarity. During the modern industrial era and even earlier, during certain preindustrial periods, reason finally became mere rationalization and science was visibly transmuted from a pursuit of knowledge into mere technique and instrumentalism. Hence it should not seem surprising that technics exhibits the ambiguities of freedom in their most striking form. The notion that technology is intrinsically morally neutral, that the proverbial "knife" cuts either way — as weapon to kill or as tool to cut, depending upon the user or the society in which it is used — was not a widely accepted viewpoint until the rise of industrialism. To be sure knives, like other hand tools, can be viewed in such ethically neutral terms. But in the larger context of technics — notably, tools, machines, skills, forms of labor, and "natural resources" — the means of production rarely were regarded as value-free, nor was their impact contingent merely on individual or social intentions.

Although preindustrial societies may not have explicitly distinguished between libertarian and authoritarian technics (a distinction that probably forced itself upon the modern mind with the massive supremacy of highly centralized industrial technologies over traditional crafts), they apparently were more aware than we of the ecological implications of technique. If Stephan Toulmin and June Goodfield are correct in their appraisal, preindustrial communities distinguished very early in history between "natural arts" and "artificial crafts" — a distinction that expressed ethical outlooks basically different from our own toward technological development. The "natural arts," such as farming, husbandry, and medicine, were patently necessary for human survival, and their place in the preservation of the individual and the community was of central importance. But they were "natural" not just for pragmatic reasons; their very success in satisfying basic human needs required that they be subtly in rhythm with "natural change." The artisan's insight melded human craft and nature together into not only the natural materials required by the Anvilik Eskimos for their soapstone artistry but also the larger natural processes that determined the success of an enterprise.

Toulmin and Goodfield, in effect, refer to a cosmic tableau in which the person engaged in a "natural art" was situated in order to "steer [these natural processes] in a favorable direction" and to utilize "certain natural powers" stronger than those possessed by the individual to remedy the disasters that afflicted agriculture or health. Accordingly, all efforts were valueless if one failed to act at the "correct time" in synchrony with "natural cycles." Ritual became as much a part of production as seasonal changes, climatic variations, drought, and predation, or, in the case of medicine, the periodic onset of certain illnesses. It is fair to say that we are reclaiming these remote, apparently lost sensibilities today with our growing awareness that sound food
cultivation and good health presuppose the attunement of life — and crafts — with biological cycles that foster soil fertility and physical well-being. Both the organic farmer and the serious practitioner of holistic health, for example, have been obliged to cultivate insights that extend far beyond the conventional wisdom of the agronomist and the physician. Certain all-important notions — that nutriment and health are not merely industrial products, artifacts ("magic bullets") that can be engineered into existence; that our modern pharmacopias for agriculture and physical well-being cannot function as substitutes for a wisely "crafted" way of life; that life itself is a "calling," which rests on that rare combination of craft and nature we designate as "art" — have their roots in ancient notions of a sense of craft that is "in step with the ruling cycles of natural change."

By contrast, the "artificial crafts played a much smaller part in men's lives than the natural arts," Toulmin and Goodfield observe. "Given flint tools and weapons, and some pottery, life was supportable at a primitive level without metal, glass or perfume, even in an English winter." These remarks belabor the obvious and render the distinction between "natural arts" and "artificial crafts" merely pragmatic. We must not ignore the essentially metaphysical aspects that distinguish them. Artificial or not, early crafts such as metalworking, glass-making, and dyeing alike had the task of imitating Nature, and of creating products which were indistinguishable from the best natural materials. The earliest glass objects known are certain Egyptian beads which were used as personal ornaments in place of precious stones; even then they were known as "sparklers." Glass-making thus began as the production of artificial jewels, and since gold and jewels were always in short supply men continued to think of the crafts in this light as late as classical times. The metal-workers of Alexandria, for instance, produced silver and copper alloys having the appearance and properties of gold; and they developed for this purpose a whole range of techniques for depositing a durable golden colour on a relatively cheap alloy. There was nothing necessarily fraudulent about these techniques. Men were paying for the appearance, not the "atomic weights," so the craftsmen and customers alike were entitled to be satisfied with the results.

Hence the "natural" rather than the valuable, the useful and beautiful rather than the costly and the rare still retained their primordial hold even on "artificially" crafted products. Use-value, as it were, held its predominant position over exchange-value and the glitter of the utopian held sway over the dross of self-interest.

To the degree that the crafts-person "imitated" nature, he or she had entered into a quasimystical communion that authenticated the natural qualities of human-made products. Skill was permeated by the imagery of a natural endowment, of gifts bestowed upon the crafts-person by natural forces — gifts that, in some sense, had to be reciprocated. The naturalistic "law of return" reflects a distinctly ecological sensibility — indeed, a sense of responsibility that involves compensation for what is withdrawn or even simulated in the natural world. Hence, as Toulmin and Goodfield tell us:

A ritual element can be found also in the artificial crafts of the ancient world, where at first sight the recipes [for producing the product] looked so much more direct. For example, in the Mesopotamian recipes for glass and glazes . . . instructions for the necessary technical procedures are accompanied by other injunctions of a ritual kind. The recipes from the library of Assurbanipal (seventh century B.C.) begin by explaining that the glass-furnace must be built at the auspicious time: a shrine to the

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appropriate Gods must be installed, and care must be taken to keep the good will of the deities in the daily operations of the workshop.

In laying the plans for the glass-furnace, the builder was warned to set a censer of pine incense as an offer to the "embryo-gods," a reference that, as Toulmin and Goodfield observe, has a history. In the earlier set of recipes, dating from 1600 B.C., there is a very obscure passage in which some scholars have seen evidence that actual human embryos — possibly still-born infants — were buried in the furnace. What could have been the point of this? There is little contemporary evidence, but perhaps we may read back into this association beliefs which are quite explicit later on. For, if one contrasts the brilliancy and cohesion of new-poured glass or metal ingots with the dirty and chaotic pile of ore, ash and sand from which they are made, the change is most striking: it is as though one had transformed a dull, lifeless agglomeration into a living unity. The sparkle of gold and glass had something of the vital spark visible in the human eye, so that it was not mere fancy to see, in the artificial production of these materials, the creation of something superior — if not actually alive.

Production, in effect, implied not only reproduction, as Eliade has observed for metallurgy, but also animation — not as "raw materials" bathed in the "fire of labor," but as nature actively imbuing its own substance with a "vital spark." The spiritized nature of technics is reflected in a highly suggestive body of possibilities that only recently have entered into our accounts of the history of technology.

The original "magic" of gold, in fact, may justify a more literal interpretation of the metal than we have previously given. Its original attraction is perhaps less a function of its monetary value and rarity than of the fact that it is untarnishable. The metal seems to present a mystical eternality to the flux and change that afflict more mundane objects. Alchemy may have drawn its inspiration from these attributes; well before gold became coinage or the ornamental evidence of wealth and power, it may have been sacred substance that defied the assault of time and the perishability of things. If these speculations are valid, the division of labor between "natural arts" and "artificial crafts" — indeed, the historic division of labor between food cultivation and crafts that underpins the separation of town and country — is haunted by ideological ghosts: the rearing of temples, the fabrication of sacred objects and altars, the ornamentation of deities, the artistry applied to priestly vestments and artifacts. Only later do artificial crafts begin to apply to personal products that satisfy the appetites of ruling classes.

After all has been said about the classical world’s disdain for labor, I wish to add a qualifying note. In many respects, Hellenic and Roman ideas about work score a profound ethical advance over preliterate and early ancient mystical attitudes toward technics. Claude Mossé reminds us that Odysseus built his own boat, and that Hephaestus, the deity of crafts, spent his life "in the red glow of his forge." The ancient world did not despise work as such. The origins of the Greek ideal of free time derive not only from an ideological disdain for the slave and for enslavement but also from a profound respect for freedom as an activity. Aristotle pointedly observes that "the best ordered poleis will not make an artisan a citizen." Citizenship will "only belong to those who are released from manual occupations" and, in effect, are thereby engaged in the work of managing the polis. It is this latter concept of active citizenship based on individual autonomy and freedom of judgment that is central to the Hellenic notion of citizenship. As Masse correctly observes, "It is not the manual activity of work which makes labour despisè, but the ties of dependence which it creates between the a

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Murray Bookchin
The Ecology of Freedom
The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy
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