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The War on Anti-Racism: The Mainstreaming of Social Movements, and the Emerging Backlash

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The murder of George Floyd was a major catalyst event for the Black Lives Matter movement, motivating large numbers of Americans to take to the streets to spotlight structural racism in American policing. Subsequent polling found that as many as 10 percent of Americans reported attending protests for racial justice in the summer of 2020, totaling an estimated 26 million people.[1] This mass turnout led *The New York Times* to conclude that "Black Lives Matter may be the largest movement in U.S. history."[2]

Such a historic turnout presented social scientists with an incredible opportunity to study the role of social movements in the empowerment of the masses in enhancing American democracy, beyond the confines of political institutions that social scientists find to be biased in plutocratic ways in favor of upper-class and business interests.[3] There were plenty of opportunities to study rising public participation in social movements throughout the late 2000s, the 2010s, and into the 2020s, with mass uprisings becoming a regular phenomenon in the U.S. As I argue in my book, *Rebellion in America*, protest in the U.S. has been mainstreamed in the modern era, via a second wave of mass movements that parallels the last wave of popular activism from the 1950s through the 1970s, including the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement, the women's movement, and the environmental movement, among other forms of citizen activism.

In the 2010s, protest was inextricably linked to American politics. By 2018 57 percent of Americans indicated that they had become "upset" enough about some issue that they were willing to protest as a result.[4] On the American right, the Tea Party, Trumpism, the "alt-right," the "Reopen" protests during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the January 6 insurrectionists demonstrated the rising popularity of protest movements as a form of political participation. On the left, many movements emerged to challenge corporate power and social injustice, including the 2011 Madison protests of Governor Scott Walker's attack on unions and collective bargaining, Occupy Wall Street, the Fight for $15, Black Lives Matter (BLM), #MeToo, Antifa, the anti-Trump protests, and the renewed environmental movement. Of all these movements, BLM has demonstrated the most staying power, with protests that began in 2014 following the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson and continuing with countless other killings and successive waves of protest throughout the 2010s, up through George Floyd's murder in the summer of 2020 and the latest wave of demonstrations.

Despite mass mobilizations seeking to combat the systemic practices of racial profiling and police brutality against people of color, powerful societal forces have mobilized against BLM, seeking to blunt this popular force for change. These include rightwing political actors and their supporters, and center and "left" intellectuals and academic professionals who seek to deter public attention toward progressive social movements. I devote the rest of this essay to documenting this multi-front effort at suppressing BLM's anti-racist political cause.

On the American right, the effort to defang BLM has been the most transparently pronounced. States have led the charge to eliminate any discussion of structural-institutional racism within the United States from elementary, secondary, or college course curricula, and to suppress these important discussions entirely. In Iowa, House Bill 802 represents an Orwellian Big Brother-style effort to censor educators seeking to identify and discuss the ways that American social, political, and economic institutions operate to discriminate against people of color. The law officially prohibits public school teachers and college professors from raising discussions or assigning works that analyze or address in any way how "the United States of America and the state of Iowa are fundamentally or systematically racist or sexist" in their design and orientation.[5]

In Tennessee, the state passed Senate Act 493, which prevents any "public charter school" or "LEA" (Local Education Agency) public school "teachers" or "employees" from promoting "concepts as part of a course of instruction or in a curriculum or instructional program" that offer the position that "this state or the United States is fundamentally or irredeemably racist or sexist"; that "an individual, by virtue of the individual's race or sex, is inherently privileged, racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or subconsciously"; or that "[promotes] division between, or resentment of, a race, sex, religion, creed, nonviolent political affiliation, social class, or class of people."[6] Simply summarized, Tennessee has outlawed any discussions of white and male privilege, structural or institutional racism, and any other potentially divisive content related to race, sex, and religion – however "divisive" is interpreted by state and local officials doing the censoring.

In Idaho, officials are equally Orwellian in establishing that the legislature, not teachers, will be responsible for deciding what can and cannot be taught in the classroom. Through Idaho's House Bill 377 and "the intent of the legislature," the state has officially deemed that the "tenets" of "critical race theory" (CRT) are such that they "exacerbate and inflame divisions on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion, color, national origin, or other criteria in ways contrary to the unity of the nation and the well-being of the state of Idaho and its citizens."[7] The law dictates that "no public institution of higher education, school district, or public school," and "no course of instruction or unit of study" will compel students "to personally affirm, adopt or adhere to any of the tenets" of CRT. With CRT representing a broad and loose set of principles that vary significantly across the scholars and teachers utilizing them, the Idaho law opened many possibilities for abuse by way of an expansive application of a statute that was thin on details in defining CRT but pronounced it its condemnation.

State efforts to ban CRT stem from former President Donald Trump's initial efforts to discredit

BLM and efforts to combat systemic racial inequality. Trump sought in full authoritarian flair, and in vain, to mobilize the military to suppress BLM protesters in American cities.[8] He railed against "left-wing indoctrination" in schools against teachers who highlighted the problem of racism in America, instead demanding "patriotic education" and a "pro-American curriculum that celebrates the truth about our nation's great history," which he sought to impose through executive order and the creation of his "1776 Commission." The commission, which had no basis in American historical scholarship and was widely recognized as a propaganda effort of the right to promote nationalistic indoctrination, never really got off the ground,[9] as it was terminated by the incoming Biden administration. But between the establishment of the commission and Trump's announcement that he was denying federal funds to racial sensitivity training for federal contract workers,[10] it was enough alongside Trump's attacks on BLM to send a signal to the Republican base and Republican officials that it was time to push back against America's rising anti-racist movement.

Seeking to capitalize on state efforts to ban CRT, Trump published his own op-ed in *Real Clear Politics* outlining his dystopian vision for the future of "education" straight out of the pages of Orwell's *1984*, elevating discussions of systemic or institutional racism to the level of thought crime. Trump envisioned a comprehensive effort to ban CRT, writing: "every state legislature should pass a ban on taxpayer dollars going to any school district or workplace that teaches critical race theory…and Congress should seek to institute a federal ban through legislation as well." Such bans, of course, would require a Herculean enforcement and mass surveillance effort, involving the recruitment of countless children and parents across the nation, which was precisely what Trump had in mind to report on and scare teachers into line, and coerce them into silence and complicity:

> *Parents have a right to know exactly what is being taught to their children. Last year, many parents had the chance to routinely listen in on classes for the first time because of remote learning. As students return to the classroom, states need to pass laws requiring that all lesson plans have to be made available to parents — every handout, article, and reading should be posted on an online portal that allows parents to see what their kids are being taught. Furthermore, in many places, there are rules preventing students from recording what teachers say in class. States and school boards should establish a 'Right of Record.'*

For those teachers and professors who challenged the CRT bans, Trump also had an answer: termination. As he demanded in the op-ed: "States need to break the tenure monopoly in public K-12 schools…Educators who are alienating children from their own country should not be protected with lifelong tenure; they should be liberated to pursue a career as a political activist."

To sell his nationwide ban on CRT, Trump relied on his own dystopian rhetoric depicting a pervasive and all-encompassing threat from teachers and a "left" boogieman set on destroying

America. This rising danger was positively existential, according to the former President:

> *Make no mistake: The motive behind all of this left-wing lunacy is to discredit and eliminate the greatest obstacles to the fundamental transformation of America. To succeed with their extreme agenda, radicals know they must abolish our attachment to the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and most of all, Americans' very identity as a free, proud, and self-governing people. The left knows that if they can dissolve our national memory and identity, they can gain the total political control they crave.*

This sort of rhetoric extends well beyond traditional conservatism, the latter celebrating American heritage, traditions, and customs for their own sake and (alleged) value, without framing those with which one disagrees as a threat that needs to be stomped out. Trump's language draws on fascistic and eliminationist style ideology that envisions his political "enemies" as a fundamental and foundational threat to the nation that needs to be uprooted and burned away. In this case, the eliminationist politics he is calling for don't involve concentration camps and gas chambers, but instead a youth and parental coordinated Big Brother mass surveillance state that will destroy freedom of critical thought, inquiry, and expression.

It would be easy to end this essay by lamenting the right's assault on free inquiry, but the reality of the matter is that they are only the most prominent and vicious front in the war on academic freedom of thought and speech. A more subtle threat to free inquiry also exists in the form of moderate and liberal intellectuals who discovered long ago that the easiest and most effective way to destroy critical thinking is simply to indoctrinate the professional scholarly class into dismissing social justice concerns. To put it bluntly, there is little concern in the social sciences, broadly speaking, in democratic and leftist mass social movements that seek to empower disadvantaged groups. Such forces have seldom figured into the calculations of prominent scholars when determining their research agendas. I document this problem in detail in my book, *Rebellion in America*. Although I make the case in the book that progressive-left social movements – not elections, officials, or political parties – are *the* most important force to democratically empower disadvantaged groups of Americans, there is little interest in putting them at the center of scholarly analyses in the social sciences.

In my chief areas of inquiry – Political Science and Sociology – the attention to contemporary social movements has been meager at best to non-existent at worst. In the decade from early 2008 through mid-2018, the three flagship journals in American Political Science – *American Political Science Review*, *American Journal of Political Science*, and *Journal of Politics*, didn't devote a single research article between them to any of the social movements or populist political uprisings of the 2000s, including the Tea Party, the 2011 Madison protests, Occupy Wall Street, BLM, Fight for $15, Bernie Sanders's populist electoral campaign, or Trump's populism.[11] These journals' most common focus was elections and voting, followed by

secondary foci on political parties and legislatures, and to an even lesser extent emphases on federalism, intergovernmental relations, constitutionalism, executive politics, judicial and legal politics, and the news media. Virtually no attention was paid to social movements, or to intersectionality as a form of analysis that relates to racial, gender, and class-based identities, which as I show in *Rebellion in America* are vital to understanding modern social movements.

The trend doesn't appear to be all that different in Sociology, although the discipline is better known for emphasizing social movements than Political Science. A closer look at recent evidence shows that establishment Sociology journals have not focused on contemporary movements. As I document in *Rebellion in America*, from early 2008 to mid-2018, the *American Sociological Review* devoted just one research article to Occupy Wall Street, the 2011 Madison protests, and BLM. The *American Journal of Sociology* devoted not a single research article to BLM, Fight for $15, the Madison protests, or Occupy Wall Street during this same period.[12]

The above method of self-censoring is obviously nowhere near as heavy handed or authoritarian as a means of limiting pedagogical inquiry in suppressing critical examinations of social movements. Nonetheless, inculcation and indoctrination via acceptance of elitist "professional" norms of scholarship within the academy has proven a brutally effective method for cutting the guts out of any serious effort to open up the social sciences to serious explorations of how to promote anti-racism and social justice. Milquetoast "liberal" academics voluntarily abdicate their responsibility for studying and understanding social movements and their vital import to democracy. They're also acting as censors and deterring important national discussions about how to grow progressive and democratic social movements in an era of rising inequality and rampant racial profiling and police brutality. Be it the more totalitarian-style methods of suppression preferred by Orwellian Republican censors, or the voluntary "free" version preferred by "liberal" intellectuals, both represent serious threats to critical inquiry at a time when protest movements are being rapidly mainstreamed in American politics. Contempt for protest movements suggests a rapid divergence between politics, the academy, and the masses, as officials and academics work in their own unique ways to marginalize the existence of modern social movements – particularly those geared toward promoting racial justice – while protests in the streets continue to grow. Intellectuals continue to ignore, and officials move to marginalize these movements, at the risk of destroying one of the few bright rays of democratic light in the plutocratic era.

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The Algorithm of AntiRacism

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Hegemonic Algorithms

An algorithm can be as simple as a brownie or kombucha recipe. As a list of instructions it permits the completion of a task. Yet, what if the task—social justice—requires rewriting the algorithms we have inherited in our struggles against US racism?

In its June 19, 2020, "CALLING ON FACEBOOK CORPORATE ADVERTISERS TO PAUSE ADS FOR JULY 2020," https://colorofchange.org/stop-hate-for-profit/ Color of Change argues for the multi-billionaire corporation: "to do the right thing and make their platform safer for the millions of Black people that use it." Color of Change argues that from their "monetization of hate speech to discrimination in their algorithms to the proliferation of voter suppression to the silencing of Black voices, Facebook has refused to take responsibility for hate, bias, and discrimination growing on their platforms." Corporate investment allowed the platform to accumulate "$70B of revenue from corporations every year," according to Color of Change which argues that given that these investors could have "their businesses featured on Facebook's platforms side-by-side with racist attacks on Black people" —an incendiary association following the public's growing awareness of police/vigilante murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor —a boycott to demand Facebook to monitor and remove hate speech was reasonable. The demand to dismantle Facebook as a monopoly that violated public interest and (antiquated) anti-trust legislation was not made. (In July 2020, Congress held hearings on the tech titans Facebook, Google, Apple, and Amazon with conservatives decrying "censorship" and liberals seeking to reinvigorate anti-trust laws.)

The important call to hold Facebook accountable—as a platform that boosts revenues by promoting social/political violence—threatens to "shame" Facebook into progressive neutrality by diminishing its stock value. Just as Facebook has an algorithm of racism, an algorithm of anti-racism is deployed to correct it. However, the progressive algorithm of *antiracism* aligns with rather than disrupts the reactionary algorithm of Facebook's racism. Both are structured to the same metric or metaparadigm. Both monetize their endeavors, amplify influential platforms to please funders, and reassure the general public of a stable (democratic) structure that can accommodate the "common good" without the need for revolutionary struggle. It is not just the corporate ethos or deference to capitalism that structures the two antagonists. It is the selective memory of the history of antiracism that joins the two to define the parameters of popularized anti-racist struggle.

The dominant algorithm for antiracism and contemporary abolitionism are traceable to 18th-century abolitionism. In *Tacky's Revolt: The Story of an Atlantic Slave War*, historian Vincent Brown notes:

Slaveholders cited black militancy as a justification for their brutality. In response, late-eighteenth-century abolitionists would rally around the image of a kneeling supplicant begging to be recognized as a man and a brother; as if the condemnation of evil required the meek innocence of its victims. That icon of abjection has shaped the prevailing understanding of bondage and race to this day.

Some 200,000 Black Americans fought in the civil war. The dominant algorithm rejects analyses of slavery-as- actual War (not a metaphor for War.) Analyses of white supremacy and captivity as War extend to postbellum lynching, convict prison lease system, sharecropping, Cointelpro, and mass incarceration. Terror is a technique of warfare and functions within asymmetrical War (e.g., US-funded contras https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2019/05/who-was-naive-about-bernie-sanders-meeting-the-sandinistas/). The dominant algorithm of antiracism airbrushes war; thus rebellions become "protests" that can be resolved in the dominate algorithm rather than revolutionary struggles that require the rewriting of the Algorithm of AntiRacism.

Glitches in the Algorithm

The popularized algorithm elevates passive black suffering over black militancy and resistance and thus has stymied the development of an algorithm of community-defense from violence of civilians or police. Prominent abolitionists lived among and fought with the black working class and laboring poor—those most vulnerable to poverty, captivity and violent death. Today, the wealth of black elites and concept of black success under capitalism as "Black Power" skew solidarity struggles as liberal hegemony and investment portfolios shape anti-racist politics and policies. Archie Mafege's "White Liberals and Black Nationalists: Strange Bedfellows"[1] argues that general hegemony is "opposed to any real change in *power relations*" because in Southern Africa powerful progressives are "prepared to be ruled by" others yet "reserve the right to *reign*." Derrick Bell's "interest convergence" theory likewise argues that US civil rights gains progressed when compatible to the needs of elites. The ban on the ANC was lifted in 1990, the year that Nelson Mandela was formally released from prison. In 1993, General Secretary of the South African Communist Party—and chief of staff of ANC uMkhonto we Sizwe (founded by Nelson Mandela) Chris Hani was assassinated in his driveway. His popularity equaled that of Mandela's among the black electorate. Six months after Hani's death, Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem De Klerk shared the Nobel Peace Prize (President Obama received his Nobel Peace Prize in 2009). If most Americans will remember 1993 as the year that Toni Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, the symbol of black success as a victory in antiracism likely overshadows Hani's murder which preceded the lack of redistribution of land/resources to the South African masses.

The dominant algorithm minimizes wars against dissidents and their disappearances.

Cointelpro's historical deployment under FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and its current deployment under AG William Barr is under-emphasized in the algorithm of anti-Racism. The proliferation of conservative/reactionary prosecutors and Attorneys General and judges (POTUS 45 has appointed over 200 to the bench) that protect police violence, tools designated for horizontal or communal/family violence—education and therapeutic intervention—do not seem effective. Pro Publica use of declassified NYPD substantiated abuses reveal predatory behavior rewarded with promotions and pay increases. The rise in gun violence and civilian homicides in NYC is accompanied by the NYPD's 68% decrease in arrests in black/brown neighborhoods, those most afflicted by civilian and cop violence. The FBI's "IRON FIST" (a titular reference to the Iron Cross?) program conducts surveillance and persecution of dissidents, focusing on its fabricated "black identity extremists." https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/leaked-fbi-documents-raise-concerns-about-targeting-black-people-under-black-identi-1.

The casualties from trauma and stress of waging a social justice battle for one's loved ones slain by police is also noteworthy. Activist Erica Garner created a brilliant campaign ad against police violence for Bernie Sanders—following the 2014 Staten Island police homicide of her father, Eric Garner. The young mother and activist challenged President Obama, Governor Cuomo, and Mayor de Blasio whose performative politics of reform were compatible with the Algorithm of Anti-Racism. Ms. Garner transitioned in 2017 from poor health and exhaustion exacerbated by the stress of seeking justice for her father and lack of quality care (like so many expendable "essential workers" during the pandemic). The repeal of 50-a, the law that shields a police officer's record of abuse(s), according to NYPD Commissioner Dermot Shea, is the only substantive reform that followed 2020 civil unrest over police brutality. Shea has described the passage and signing of the "Eric Garner Anti-Chokehold Act" as having no impact on the status quo given conduct codes already on the books; NYPD union attorneys currently challenge the release of police misconduct files to the public.

Although the radical Erica Garner is rarely mentioned in dominant platforms concerning BLM and black women's leadership, the algorithm of anti-racism asserts black feminist leadership as heir of past political rebellions. The algorithm's mandate for "Black feminist leadership" under-scrutinizes ideology as a vector in the intersectionality it promotes. Bush NSA and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice deceived the public about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq under the Bush Administration, and advocated for Brett Kavanaugh to have a seat on the Supreme Court during the Trump Administration https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2rbuW69n9A. Obama Ambassador to the UN and NSA Susan Rice hindered UN peacekeepers from intervening in the Rwandan genocide https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/04/16/genocide-under-our-watch-rwanda-susan-rice-richard-clarke/. More recently, black women mayors rejected substantive police reforms or divestment. Lori Lightfoot, Chicago's first black lesbian mayor, informed the press that she refused to engage in "racial bias" by cutting CPD ranks—historically known for excessive violence (including a Jon Burge black op torture site) and murders of civilians; Lightfoot argued that disproportionately younger black and brown officers would be laid off and lose their opportunity to become middle class. NYS AG Letitia James appealed the release of a black

panther political prisoner incarcerated for 49 years (sentencing guidelines were 25-to-life) after a superior judge ordered his release so that he would not contact covid-19. Her appeal prevailed. The panther veteran contracted covid-19. The appeal set a precedent for *not* releasing elderly incarcerated people threatened by the pandemic (Judges without documentation accepted DOCCS arguments that it could prevent the spread of covid-19 among the 40,000 people incarcerated in NY).

Conclusion

Brood parasites nest in the Algorithm of AntiRacism. Brood parasites are birds who lay their eggs in other birds' nests, disguising them as the progeny of those who labor to incubate and hatch an alien product. The bright yellow lettering of "Black Lives Matter" painted by DC and NYC mayors on their respective roads to the White House and Manhattan's Trump Tower function more as a campaign or PR slogan and photo op for politicians who refuse to reign in their violent police forces (that the DC mayor is a liberal black feminist and that the NYC mayor is married to a black feminist provides a visual that supposes brood parasitism is unlikely. However, given that "BLM" is a slogan and has not been repurposed to stand for "Black Liberation Movements" suggests that politicians and corporations are comfortable with the Algorithm of AntiRacism that stabilizes and promotes their interests.

In the 21st century, we remain tethered to an 18th century algorithm, one not designed for revolutionary struggle or even black freedom. Chattel slavery is now replaced by penal slavery given that the 13th amendment legalizes slave labor for those duly convicted of a crime. A remedy to address crass accumulation through immorality, terror, and racial-sexual war? A recipe to stabilize political-economic order and moral-social conduct sans rapacious wars against the indigenous and Africans/blacks? Our current hegemonic algorithms do not function to meet our collective needs. "#Defund the Police" (or divesting and diverting resources to social services—also a policing apparatus) is an imperative. Yet, if the demand reflects the reforms advocated for Facebook—leave the behemoth intact, better regulated, but outside of the control of disenfranchised communities—what we are hatching is alien to our needs.

We can labor and battle to rewrite the Algorithm of AntiRacism to create sanctuary for all children. Our ambition would rework all codes. Our recipes would provide sanctuaries to children— especially those without legal status. Address the needs of dispossessed Haitians: over 40% of those detained by ICE are from Haiti. Confront predatory violence in US foreign and domestic policies to allow families to live without trauma. At the Karnes ICE center, in San Antonio, TX, 40% of the captive women and children are Haitians. The average age of Haitian children caged there is four years; policies force mothers to "choose" between signing their children into custodial (foster) care with strangers or keeping them indefinitely imprisoned during a pandemic. Who can safely return to a Haiti freed by rebellion yet taxed and looted by France (and forced to pay torturers/rapists for "lost property." https://theconversation.com/when-france-extorted-haiti-the-greatest-heist-in-history-137949); and dispossessed by US occupations and policies; and NGOs that create white collar jobs and managerial elites and profiteers in an impoverished nation that struggles with a pandemic

without a medical infrastructure yet was the first successful rebellion against slavery. https://nacla.org/news/2020/06/09/behind-covid-numbers-haiti. Local, national, global sanctuaries: an excellent impetus and vision to jettison old algorithms and create new ones for this century and its children.

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Israel's Road to Apartheid and the Fate of International Law

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Part I—The Historical Background

The first half of the 20th century was a catastrophe for most of the human race. Within the span of 50 years the world experienced World War I (1914 to 1918) and the death of roughly 20 million people. Then came the Great Depression (1929 to 1939) which all but destroyed most Western economies—ultimately, only revived by the production demands of the next disaster: World War II (1939 to 1945), which caused the deaths of some 75 million people, many of them the victims of genocide.[1]

By the end of World War II, many of the world's leaders had been chastened. There was much concern about how the horrors of the last fifty years could be avoided in the future. In theory, the steps taken proved to be in the right direction, but in practice were, as we will see, not sustained.

An initial step was to set up a successor organization to the defunct League of Nations. This was the United Nations, a still extant institution that, thanks to a built-in veto given to the victors of World War II, is also an all but impotent organization when it comes to enforcing international law.[2]

The next steps came in the form of international law and commitments to uphold human rights. The reasoning went like this: one of the standing pillars of civilized society is that citizens live under the rule of law. The destruction of two world wars, which attacked the very foundations of civilization, demonstrated that the rule of law should be extended to nation states—hence the drive to create international laws and regulations that would protect humanity from the abuse of state power. As Robert Jackson, the lead American prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials put it, the crimes committed during World War II were "so malignant, and so devastating that civilization cannot tolerate their being ignored, because it cannot survive their being repeated."[3]

This led to the promulgation of international law describing crimes against humanity, including government-initiated or assisted policies or practices resulting in massacre, dehumanization, unjust imprisonment, extrajudicial punishments, torture, racial/ethnic persecution, and other such acts. Human rights were formalized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights2[4] set forth by the United Nations in December, 1948. The fourth Geneva Convention[5], adopted in 1950, specified the rights of civilians in wartime and under occupation. And, finally, in

reference to crimes of racial/ethnic persecution, in 1976 the United Nations General Assembly declared the systematic persecution of one racial group by another (for instance, the practice of apartheid) to be a crime against humanity.[6]

Again, all of this was done in the aftermath of the genocidal behavior that went unchecked in World War II. It is important to keep in mind that this behavior was widespread. It occurred in China, in Russia, and, of course, in Europe proper in the form of the Holocaust and other criminal actions. It might be added that these 20th century crimes followed earlier similar crimes that took place sporadically during the period of European imperial expansion running from the 16th through the 19th century.

Part II—Israel Undermines International Law and Human Rights

In theory, human rights and related international laws are a major achievement. In practice, they have run up against very

short historical memories. This historical myopia has allowed for the erosion of this category of law by claims of exceptionalism on the part of the great powers and their allies, the persistence of nation state sovereignty, and ubiquitous racism. Thus, it should come as no shock that today some countries are consciously attempting to weaken, or perhaps just do away with, international law that seeks to restrain traditional sovereignty. What should come as a shock is that a leader in this endeavor is Israel, supported by the United States.[7]

The fact that Israel is among those states, perhaps the main state, attempting to do away with the laws protecting us all from crimes against humanity seems historically illogical. How can a state that loudly proclaims that its reason for being is the protection of all Jews, seek to undermine laws that were, in good part, promulgated in response to the brutal persecution of Jews? Part of the answer comes from the fact that those who established the Jewish state of Israel did not believe that law in any form could make the Jews safe from persecution—from anti-Semitism. Instead, they staked their future on the founding of a Jewish state that had sovereignty—the right of a state to control its own territory.

One can understand why the founders of Israel chose this path. The prevailing German laws, as they existed under the Weimar Republic, were easily brushed aside once the Nazis came to power in 1932. And no international dedication to human rights led to the rescue of Europe's Jewry or other persecuted groups. So, a sovereign Jewish nation state was, at the time, the logical choice.

That sentiment pointed to an inevitable problem as international law evolved to bring nation states under the rule of law. To do so, such law had to attack the inbred flaws of the sovereign state: the prevalent group intolerances of their populations and the claim that such states have inviolable authority over its own internal affairs even to the point of tolerating apartheid and genocide.

Zionism, the theory behind the Jewish state of Israel, envisioned just such a classical state—one

as Jewish as England is English. However, the Zionists, now allied with England, selected Palestine—a land full of non Jews—to lay down their sovereign claim. Once the Jewish state was established (1948), their leaders were confronted with the inevitable problem: just how to create a state for one group alone in a land where that favored group was a distinct minority? All their various options would lead to the violation of the evolving international laws.

The Zionists had three main options: (1) devising a method to get the Arab majority to move out of the country. (2) creating an unequal political and economic system that marginalized the majority, rendering them politically and economically irrelevant. (3) committing genocide.

Both methods 1 and 2 were employed. The first led to the Nakba, the catastrophic removal of some 700,000 Palestinians, during the 1948 war that led to the creation of the State of Israel.[8] Some of these people fled the fighting, but many were forced out at gunpoint by Zionist forces. In truth, the Nakba never really came to an end as ongoing home demolitions and evictions show.[9] The attempted evictions of Palestinian families from the East Jerusalem area of Sheikh Jarrah was one of the causes of the recent uprising that saw protests in the West Bank and many segregated Arab sections of Israeli cities, as well as rocket fire from Gaza.

The second method followed in two stages for those Palestinians who would still find themselves under direct Israeli rule: (A) The so-called Palestinian Israelis, today numbering close to 2 million people or roughly 21% of the population of pre-1967 Israel. These Arabs have been given Israeli citizenship—actually second class citizenship.[10] They are segregated from Jewish Israelis by a host of discriminatory practices, among which are inferior housing, schools, and job opportunities. (B) The Palestinians who fell under Israeli control in 1967 and remain so today. These are the residents of the West Bank, Golan Heights and also the Gaza Strip, numbering roughly 5 million people. Most of these Palestinians have been denied Israeli citizenship.[11] They are under the rule of Israeli military authorities or an allied Palestinian authority under Israeli supervision. Internal travel is made difficult for them, their ability to improve or expand their infrastructure is restricted. They are encroached upon by Israeli settlements that are in fact illegal under international law and harassed by Israeli settlers. Attempts at self-defense or counterattack are seen by the Israelis as terrorist acts.

For all intents and purposes, international law and declarations of human rights were replaced by the discriminatory policies which have now been recognized as apartheid—a form of state racism that is itself recognized under international law as a crime against humanity.

Part III—The Israeli Apartheid State

There is little doubt that Israel is in fact an apartheid state and, as we will see, it is equally obvious that the United States is Israel's biggest supporter and protector. Many investigations by the United Nations, human rights groups, reports and others have confirmed Israel's nature. Here are some of the most recent: The HRW document was preceded by 16 March 2017 report submitted by *UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia* demonstrating Israel's apartheid nature.[12] Though the report was accurate, the UN Secretary General disavowed it

under pressure from the United States and Israel. In May of 2018, a thorough examination appeared entitled Apartheid Israel, by the journalist Jonathan Cook. This was published by *Americans for Middle East Understanding* in their journal, *The Link* (April/May 2018).[13] More recently, a 21 January 2021 report by *B'Tselem*, Israel's own premier human rights organization, entitled "A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid,"[14] proved particularly revealing. One should also take a look at the Israeli Apartheid Factsheet, published 12 January 2021 online, by *War On Want*.[15]

These allegations of apartheid have now been shown to be conclusively true by the detailed, 213 page investigatory report of Human Rights Watch (HRW)—a report that is laid out like a legal brief.[16] Here is how the report describes the apartheid nature of Israeli rule:

"Across these areas and in most aspects of life, Israeli authorities methodically privilege Jewish Israelis and discriminate against Palestinians. Laws, policies, and statements by leading Israeli officials make plain that the objective of maintaining Jewish Israeli control over demographics, political power, and land has long guided government policy. In pursuit of this goal, authorities have dispossessed, confined, forcibly separated, and subjugated Palestinians by virtue of their identity to varying degrees of intensity. In certain areas, as described in this report, these deprivations are so severe that they amount to the crimes against humanity of apartheid and persecution."

This makes Israeli leaders subject to prosecution by the International Criminal Court for "institutionalized discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnicity." And they would long ago have had to face that circumstance if it wasn't for the protection of the United States.

Part IV—U.S. Complicity

A combination of the strong economic and political position of American Jews, the backing of millions of Christian fundamentalists, and the amorphous but real phenomenon of "Holocaust guilt" led to the consistent American support for the founding of Israel starting immediately after World War II. That support has never faltered. Even the negative, racist core of Zionism found resonance in the pervasive practice of racism that tainted U.S. history, both past and present. The relationship with Israel required that the U.S., the self-proclaimed leader of the "Free World," protect its ally from international law and the conventions on human rights.[17]

For most of the past seventy odd years this service was performed by the Democratic Party. It is testimony to the hypocrisy of which Democrats were capable—the maintenance of a willful ignorance of Israel's true nature— that they carried on with this charade for decades, only slipping now and then under Jimmy Carter and Barak Obama.

However, as soon as Donald Trump was elected president (2016), the Israeli government under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu, initiated a shift of support among the major American Jewish organizations from the Democratic Party to the Republicans. This was not only motivated by the fact that Trump promised to be the most reliably pro-Israel the U.S. has yet

known. It was also based on the fact that Trump and Netanyahu had a lot in common.[18] For instance, if there was any loyalty in each man, it was not to their nations so much as to a core support group of citizens who reciprocate that loyalty with uncritical devotion. Indeed, both men, in their own way, are in the process of transforming their core of supporters into early stage fascist movements. This aim tells us that both men have little concern for the rule of law—be it domestic or international law.

We can speculate that Netanyahu recognized this character match and realized that Trump, unlike Barak Obama, would fall right in with the need to destroy international law (for instance, the law against apartheid) in order for Israel to achieve its goals of (1) a greater Israel through conquest and (2) reserving first class citizenship for Jews only. An added bonus was that Trump quickly agreed to go along with Israel's desire to destroy Iran.

In one four year period of rule in Washington, Donald Trump arbitrarily pulled out of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCOPA) with Iran, one of the major diplomatic achievements of our day; moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, putting another nail in the coffin of a two state solution; and, domestically, promoted racism and bigotry thus undermining much of the progress made by the American political system since 1967. This last process actually began to realize the often made claim that the U.S. and Israel share the same values—not democratic ones, but racist values.

It would seem that egocentric personalities such as Netanyahu and Trump do not think about the long-term. Their lives are lived in the seemingly manipulatable here and now. Thus, having committed Zionist Jewry to a Republican prototype fascist, President Trump promptly lost the 2020 election to a Democrat, Joe Biden. For Netanyahu this could have represented the ultimate bad political mistake of supporting the wrong man. But it didn't turn out that way. Biden was an old school supporter of Israel, a self-proclaimed Zionist.[19] He told us all that he would leave the U.S. embassy in Jerusalem and support Israel in its "defensive" war against Palestinian "terrorism." The consequences can be seen in the rubble that is Gaza city after the most recent Palestinian uprising.

Part V—Conclusion

We can surmise that the last five years have revealed the potential of both the United States and Israel to transform themselves into fascist states. Both have produced fascist-style leaders and put them, at least temporarily, in power—leaders that recognized each other and worked together toward destroying international law and human rights.

The average U.S. citizen is either ignorant of or misinformed about the growing danger to both the nation and an aspect of international law that protects us all. One suspects that the the majority of Israeli Jewish citizens just do not care. And that is too bad, because it is the average citizen who will always suffer the most from the commission of crimes against humanity.

Beyond the dangers of ignorance and misinformation, there is the ongoing problem of nationalism. The laws allowing for the prosecution of those who commit crimes against

humanity were instituted at a time when most nations were so mindful of the barbarism of World War II that their leaders were willing to let go of a bit of their national sovereignty to create potentially meaningful international law. Short memories and inherent group solidarity has reversed this process.

While the "left" in Israel is so weak and Zionist racism so strong, no progressive change can be envisioned even if Netanyahu were to fall from power.[20] However, there are signs of hope in the United States. In the U.S. the Republican Party has been reduced to a bastardized cult of personality—a rump element of the original organization.[21] It may do a lot of damage in the near future but it has generated a real sense of urgency among both moderates and progressive Democrats and disillusioned Republicans. Collectively they far out number the Trump devotees.

Also, in the U.S., a new alliance is evolving between the Palestinians and "left" organizations of non-Zionist Jews, African Americans, and pro-peace campaigns of all stripes. In a demonstration for Black Lives Matter, one can readily spot signs supporting Palestinian rights.[22] While Netanyahu has all but destroyed the longstanding ploy of a truly democratic Israel, human rights for Palestinians has been merged with ongoing efforts to make the U.S. ever more democratic. As those efforts go, so may go the future of international law and human rights.

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The Road Not (Yet) Taken II: From Culture Wars to a New History

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

— Every ending must be followed by the new beginning….(This) cultural ice-age….inevitably produced new definitions….(and) a kind of interiorization that a period of outward expansion had largely ignored….When would the new beginning appear? Where…?

— Van Wyck Brooks

— What we are living through and experiencing now is not the failure of change but the nature of change.

Once the Reaction, as described in Part I, realized that material scarcity could not be enforced as a means to contain post-liberal aspirations because of the system's dependence on – and growing popular enthusiasm for – rising consumption, the strategic issue emerged: to generate and enforce deprivation under conditions of material abundance.

To marginalize non-acquisitive priorities directed to new levels of self-realization and social collaboration, deprivation would have to be anchored in a psychological framework of unattainable satisfaction and personal deficiency that vitiated the impact of expanding production and consumption.

In the end, its goal was to delegitimize challenges to the liberal foundation in the myth of consent. If individuals with greater economic options could find alternative forms of self-actualization, they could refuse acquiescence to the conformist pursuit of economic and social status as the basis of identity. Recognizing that they had never ceded – nor would they proffer – consent voluntarily, they could demand back the power to shape a system reflecting their own priorities and values. On the other hand, if expanding self-development were debased as the futile and antisocial pursuit of narcissistic self-aggrandizement, compliant dependence on systemic validation and self-sacrifice could again be demanded.

This far-reaching distinction between compensatory self-inflation and genuine selfhood had surfaced with affluence as early as the 1920s. The tragedy of tailoring one's identity to societal expectations from deep internal insecurities was already the overriding challenge for such literary characters as Jay Gatsby and George Babbitt. These iconic social climbers had recognized the price of giving up on their capacity to chart a life by their own lights: the failure to achieve personal identity and an independent set of priorities sharpened the need for continual external self-bolstering and regret over their complicit conformity that would haunt

them thereafter.

This entrapment in a web of conventional markers of self-definition, crystallized as the psychosocial dynamic of other-directedness in David Riesman's later classic *The Lonely Crowd*, had by the 1950s become the classic model of late liberal adaptation. Today, as the systemic pressures for self-sacrifice and compensatory distraction have once again replaced the quest for self-realization, the choice sharpens: an untethered and dangerous drive to avenge the loss of one's humanity and power to realize personal and collective well-being; or reconnection with the inner development of a valid and evolving self able to surmount the Wall of Reaction obstructing the future.

VI. The Age of Narcissism I: The Reactionary Lure

In peeling back to its inception the numerous subsequent layers shrouding the reactionary project (Part I), its explicit determination becomes clear to depress the life-enhancing aspirations for vibrant freedom and sustainable communities. Yet liberal capitalism in order to foster an expanding consumer society had already dismantled its cultivation of the regulative limits to inner indulgence, the "inner, subjective experience" of willing obedience to the constraining demands and sanctions of authority.[1] As a result, authoritative interdictions now "proved helpless to maintain the constraints integral" to even "right and proper demands."[2] At the same time, substituting a demand for limitations on gratification because of unavoidable productive shortfalls was utterly implausible, and would only fuel contravention.

To sustain the project of retrenchment, appetite would paradoxically have to be accommodated rather than abrogated, but in ways that produced not liberation but unavoidable impediments and frustrations. Ostensibly shifting gears, the reactionary project – secular and surprisingly also religious – would abandon its ethic of legitimate constraint for neoliberal indulgence. Packaging its project of containment in, of all things, the wrappings of limitlessness, it turned to immediate gratifications and salvation on demand, the fetish of ever bigger and better, a politics of dominance and suppression, national omnipotence and unapologetic personal license. It would arouse and exploit the vulnerable cravings – anxieties, deficiencies, longings, dissatisfactions – misshaping release to frame a reactionary cultural politics of excess.

This reframing was not the strategy at the start. For the early neoconservative moralists, joining this cultural tidal wave represented abject surrender to the enemies of moral rectitude and civilization itself. Moreover, this seemed a most foolhardy way to reinstate the popular commitment to limits. As one of the first reactionary analysts to recognize the narcissistic turn in American society, Christopher Lasch, a one-time progressive, in his 1977 essay "The Narcissistic Personality of Our Time" and his influential book *The Culture of Narcissism* (1978) condemned the eruption of hedonism and instinctual excess as the onset of an age of narcissistic abandon. Bell had already warned of "*discretionary social behavior*" featuring instinctual release unconstrained by norms or traditions infusing contemporary lifestyles and attitudes. But he had censured this "undermin[ing]" of the "motivational and psychic-reward system" of liberal character utilizing an unwieldy array of literary and religious terms such as

Dionysian, hubristic, and self-divinization.[3]

Lasch's important contribution was to apply more precise psychodynamic categories. Utilizing these, he identified the erosion of specific internal structures and processes from the deluge of unrepressed infantile impulses. And yet paradoxically, his feverish condemnation of the widespread abandonment of the internalized discipline and self-repression of impulse life at the core of Western liberalism boomeranged. His nightmare scenario of uncontainable impulses proved so irreversible that it redirected the reactionary agenda: those excesses however vilified as depravity and self-degradation could no longer be excised or stifled but at best deflected.

Bell's influential assertion most fully shared by Lasch and the subsequent psychopolitics of reaction was the bald rejection of any deeper self or personal capacity for creating meaning that transformative thinkers hoped to uncover beneath the internalized structures of containment and channeling. The pre-socialized and pre-internalized individual Bell defined as one "emptied of all content," all capacity for self-mastery and rationality, all forms of complex understanding and moral commitment and capacities for growth and development, for belief and spiritual connection, all structures providing inner order and meaning. Absent comprehensive external shaping, the individual would immerse itself in "shock and sensation," uncontrollable excesses of immediate – apocalyptic and self-glorying – feeling, absurdity and nihilism, violence and cruelty, perversion and orgiastic release, in a word, "*madness*."[4]

For Lasch, the catastrophic inner liberation could be traced to modern shifts in primary socialization that claimed to enable the young through "permissive styles of childrearing" and more democratic family structures to generate their own values and commitments. From his psychodynamic perspective, this vitiated the child's traditional identification with adult socializers ensuring the early internalization of adult priorities and practices. By in effect dismantling adult authority, the child was left disordered and without capacity to master or control the raging primitive "pre-Oedipal" impulses. The result was an individual "insatiable in his appetites," at the mercy of his "neurotic need" for "oral gratification" and "oral-sadistic impulses," of "destructive impulses" and the fear of "annihilati[on]" and "sexuality," of depression and self-obsession, above all of the "narcissistic…preoccupation with its own immediate interests" and "unfulfilled desires." At the center of the inner life of this "modern Narcissus,"[5] of its "state of restless, perpetually unsatisfied desire" for "immediate gratification," stir "intensify[ing] narcissistic dreams of fame and glory" as futile compensation for the "void within," its "inner emptiness." As a fantasized "grandiose self" that can never be filled is relentlessly fed rather than suppressed, its primitive, "archaic," arrested infantile fantasies are left free to run wild.[6]

Consumed by endless unsatisfiable appetites, including the primary demand that the world reflect its imagined self, scarcity is not simply the subject's relative psychosocial deprivation but the absolute condition of psychological craving. The societal result is an anarchic condition of universal privation, the desperate "survival[ism]" of Hobbes' "war of all against all."[7] On the personal level, the relentless pursuit of compensation for core self-insufficiency accounts

for the addictive behavior, obsessive self-referentiality, defensive withdrawal, mental health breakdowns, superficial self-care, family and relational failures, celebrity idolatry, religious cults, political aggrandizement, public manipulability, and other social and moral disorders of the age.

Lasch foresaw the result as a "dead end," a "collapsing civilization" that "cannot face the future."[8] Yet other psychological conservatives reframed internal emptiness as an opportunity for reestablishing social order on the basis of acute unrelenting needs. Being unfulfillable, such needs could be mobilized to render individuals dependent on repetitive allotments to quiet the longings, producing predictable appetitive loops of hunger and palliation. For Richard Sennett, the lure was "authorities to guide and reassure" driven by a "basic…need for authority." And yet, because this now "idealistic" and "imaginative demand" for Sennett cannot be satisfied, for to "believe" in our time it "can be consummated is truly an illusion," the search will always continue "for solidity and security in the strength of others."[9] Philip Rieff hoped the "ethics of self-deprivation" could be revived from a "tragic sense of a world that will not yield to the[] wishes" of "unsatisfiable Man," wishes incessant but subjected to continued failure.[10]

For Jackson Lears, the presumed "autonomous selfhood" of liberalism now in decline was in fact a devious assumption promoted by liberal society to obscure the many "constraints that unconscious or inherited drives placed on individual choice." Now exposed as a socialization strategy to impose collective control on "inner emptiness" through regulated channels of acquisition and consumption, a "new and subtler set of controls on human behavior" was necessary. Since traditional "scarcity therapy" manipulating "anxieties" about self-deprivation had become less enticing, new seductions involving "abundance therapy" would link orderly channels of behavior to promises of fulfilling "aspirations." These emerging "longings for reintegrated selfhood" would direct "anxious self-absorption" into the "pseudo-religion of health" and the promise of "ever more radiant, wholesome living." Though Lears worried that these new chimeras of possibility would stir dangerously unrealistic expectations, they would need if stoked as with the old to be predictably "filled and refilled" continuously.[11] Lured onto the treadmill to race for compensatory substitutes promising unlimited fulfillment, individuals now trapped by their own enflamed impulses would be too tantalized by the next hit to assess the dynamic of their confinement or to challenge the order of consumption on which it rested.

VII. Toward a New History

What only became apparent with the emerging concept of more evolved individual capacities and potentialities was the grounding of liberalism in psychological arrest through the mechanisms of compensation and substitution. Arising at the advent of modern individualism, its early theorists had to reconcile the emerging importance of individual priorities and life choices with collective economic expansion and social cohesion. The solution was crafted by founding theorists John Locke and Adam Smith, and reaffirmed by the most important American liberal thinker John Dewey: children from early in life were to be directed toward

socially instrumental priorities and socially designated satisfactions identified by adult authority as the child's own rational and optimal choice. Thus Locke writes: "The first thing" children "should learn" is "that they were not to have any thing, because it pleased them, but because it was thought fit for them" as "suitable to their Wants" in compliance with the "Will of their Parents."[12]

Smith understood this substitution process providing continual compensations for the sacrifice of genuine satisfactions as the engine of capitalist productivity: "the numberless artificial and elegant contrivances for promoting [one's] ease or pleasure" involve a "foolish[] sacrifice[] for what, when he has got it, can afford him no real satisfaction." For "if we consider the real satisfaction" gained from "power and riches," it will "always appear in the highest degree contemptible and trifling." Yet, he concludes, this is the very "deception which rouses and keeps in continual motion the industry of mankind."[13] For Dewey, early "threats" and "fear" through "direct disapproval" and "shaming, ridicule, disfavor, rebuke, and punishment" have a determinative "educative" effect – "enlisting" the child's "persisting direction" for "participating" in approved activities for "his own good." Thus the child will sacrifice his now censured "troublesome line of behavior," choosing to "fit" in to gain continued "approbation."[14]

These forms of self-deferral, however crucial to modern economic expansion, were becoming as Erich Fromm explained increasingly debilitating in the more highly developed societies of the twentieth century: once instrumental motivations, incentives and goals, skills and capacities, roles and forms of identity, the "money, prestige, and power," no longer served one's evolving "self-interest." These earlier social priorities were now exposed as "illusion[s]" that "actually serve[] everything else *but* the interests of his real self," sacrifices of one's emerging "powers" and "potentialities," one's "individuality" and capacity to "become oneself." Molding oneself as an "interchangeab[le]….commodity[]" with "no core" beside one's economic "role," now shaped to play a "part" in the "opinion of others," only serves the "economic machine," leaving one "unfulfilled," "empty and frustrated," needing to "compensate for his failure to care for his real self." To resist self "anesthetiz[ation]" and abandoning full development, one has to recognize and surmount the sacrifice of one's true "self-interest" and "genuine self-love" by realizing and pursuing genuine meaning and priorities.[15]

These massive late industrial and post-industrial shifts in available and optimal priorities required, in the words of David Riesman, a more compelling vision of viable opportunities, calling upon us to "write a new history."[16] The initial response came with the experimental and innovative thrust of the sixties. Rejecting the reductive liberal model of the deprived compensatory individual, it embraced the challenge of creating new forms of selfhood and community. In a seminal 1969 essay, sociologist Kenneth Keniston framed the cultural and social ferment of the 1960s as a "second revolution." The first revolution, the "liberal industrial" transformation beginning in the late eighteenth century, focused on the broad popular struggle for "inclusion, citizenship" and universal access to "freedoms, goods, and privileges" once accorded only to elites. The new revolution, built upon the stunning liberal achievement of "material" and "social security," political rights and access, and broad

economic distribution, was shifting the emphasis with emerging post-industrial productivity, mass education, and social liberalization to a new set of concerns.[17]

In seeking a world "beyond materialism…careerism and vocationalism," younger generations were asking "What lies beyond affluence?," what "new fulfillment" beyond competition and consumption? Its new priorities were "psychological liberation" freed from the "subtle oppressions of psychological repression, group pressures, and social expectation," autonomy rather than conformity, and empowerment more substantial than the conventional citizen rituals enshrined as "political freedom." The goal was also to transcend formal social justice and equality through vibrant and caring and inclusive communities. For Keniston, the project of this emerging post-industrial ferment was "a new vision, a new set of values" through "goals" focusing on "the quality of life."[18]

As the transformed picture of individual and collective goals began to fill out, it seems hard to imagine objections to lives less tethered to the productive mechanism. But as this socio-historical shift increasingly challenged the dysfunctional forms of liberal social organization and social practice, its scope broadened to include a developmental reframing of selfhood, of incentives and capacities, of empowerment and self-worth. For many individuals called to imagine lives freed from the struggle for survival and basic well being, however, the task of forging new models of self-development, relatedness, and community to replace the timeless patterns of deprivation and scarcity was overwhelming. Qualms mounted that the limits hindering the cultivation of psychological and emotional development and personal meaning now lay not in problems of production but primarily from barriers *within one's own internal deprivations*.

Locating and revitalizing one's authentic wishes, priorities, and forms of pleasure, in turn facilitating the creation of a life narrative of meaning, commitment, and connection, is a complex undertaking. Obscured by the instrumental substitutes imposed from early in life as adaptational demands, new possibilities are not simply waiting fully developed to be uncovered through a self-inventory or shift in personal practices. To the contrary, that social dynamic directing unconditional integration into the productive and acquisitive system continues to function. Unraveling these introjects and reshaping internal motivations, capacities, and practices of a post-compensatory self involve cultivating previously neglected potentialities without benefit of a detailed flow chart or specified outcome. Given these hurdles, the fact that such a ground-breaking developmental project, including a more nurturing socialization of early selfhood, has become ever clearer in our time should be cause for great assurance, particularly as the crumbling systems of self and society reopen the future to human initiative.

VIII. The Age of Narcissism II: A New Model of Selfhood

The framework for a post-compensatory self had until the post-war period been the episodic undertaking of thinkers committed to advancing social evolution beyond the psychosocial ceilings and compromises of the liberal age. The predominant theorist was the great originative thinker Rousseau. In his major work, *Emile*, he presciently laid forth a post-scarcity model of

selfhood whose socialization would sequentially nurture genuine needs and desires at each stage of the developmental process. This would enable the growing subject to integrate its love of self, its individuality, and its capacities, and to utilize these emerging capacities to realize its aspirations and ideals in the world. At the same time, Rousseau explained how the core commitment to authenticity would prepare a young person to recognize and resist the prevalent forms of compensatory self-posturing arising from early deprivation and endemic frustration of one's potential. Inspiring many who followed including Emerson, Whitman, Bourne, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and Henry Miller in the U.S. and D.H. Lawrence and A.S. Neill in England, these aspirations percolated at the margins of cultural experimentation through mid-century.

Two novel factors brought this project from imaginative, even millennial, wish-fulfillment to a feasible option for societal reconstruction. The first, post-industrial productivity, was made apparent when as Herbert Marcuse noted the "utopian possibilities" of fulfillment, once regarded as "unreal" and without "any place in the historical universe," are now "inherent in the technical and technological forces of advanced capitalism and socialism."[19] The second was the emergence of a developmental discourse among post-Freudian psychoanalysts offering an alternative model to Freud's pessimistic view of human selfhood. Reframing the dynamic of early psychological formation, several thinkers including notably Fromm and Heinz Kohut identified how an early cultivation of healthy self-formation would provide the child with inner capacities for integrating its authentic desires, enabling it to fulfill its own aspirations by achieving the self-mastery to shape its narrative of meaning, purpose, and commitment. As this new psychodynamic approach drew upon earlier post-liberal envisionings, the components of a new age congealed.

With authoritarian forces and attitudes proliferating in the late thirties, Fromm, a political exile from Germany to the U.S., turned his psychoanalytic training and research on modern character structure with the groundbreaking Frankfurt School to the frailty of democracy. In *Escape from Freedom* (1941), Fromm advanced the startling argument that the U.S. was "faced with the same phenomenon" as Europe, the equally "grave[] danger" of being "fertile soil for the rise of Fascism." Americans believed that, by releasing the "individual from all external restraints," they had achieved "democracy" and "true individualism." But this great step was insufficient for creating genuine selfhood: "*The right to express our thoughts*," Fromm explained, "*means something only if we are able to have thoughts of our own*." Without a socialization that will "further the inner independence and individuality of the child, its growth and integrity," individuals will always be impressionable from feelings of "insignificance and powerlessness."[20]

Fromm's focus was on the deep-seated sense of inadequacy and incapacity in modern society that compels subjects for psychic survival to "escape" an unmanageable personal responsibility. The modern form, paralleling traditional authoritarian submission, is "compulsive conforming." In this case, the individual, while "consciously conceiv[ing] of himself as free and subject only to himself" as the cultural mythos insists, has in fact internalized collective attitudes and expectations, becoming from childhood "exactly as all others are and as

they expect him to be." Performing a charade of individuality, a fabricated repertoire of what Fromm calls "pseudo thinking," "pseudo feeling," and "pseudo acts" of willing, the subject evades without realizing it genuine experience, constructing an arrested "pseudo self" as "replacement of the original self." Continual compensation and validation through the "approval and recognition of others"[21] and hiding by "act[ing] according to their expectations" are employed to keep underlying feelings of emptiness and impotence at bay.[22]

Turning to the broader psychosocial challenges and possibilities of post-industrialism in *Man for Himself* (1947), Fromm expanded his analytic frame in two ways: identifying the underlying dynamic of self-arrest; and proposing a model of healthy selfhood whose nurturance would facilitate full development of its latent possibilities. Regarding the first, the liberal focus on successful systemic functioning in place of genuine self-worth and self-love leaves the individual falsely deceived that its socially defined "*self-interest*" designates what is "best for him," when the actual result is an unrecognizable condition of "self-denial" and self-deprivation. Lacking a core sense of identity, this preshaped self-interest futilely directs the subject to assuage its emptiness through conventional practices under the guise of affirming one's true priorities.[23]

Given that the supposedly self-interested liberal individual trapped in self-deferral "does not love himself too much but too little; in fact he hates himself," the basis of healthy individuality must be regrounded in genuine "care for his real self." Aided by an "education" driven no longer by "manipulation" but "helping a child realize his potentialities," the child learns to trust its own unmanaged and unprogrammed thoughts, feelings, actions. This flourishing utilizes the growing capacity to distinguish genuine pleasures arising from a psychological sense of "abundance" that seek joy in play and "sensual and emotional productiveness" from those satisfactions that merely provide temporary relief from " psychological scarcity" and "deficiency."[24]

Developing the inner strength, clarity, conviction, resilience, and ultimately mastery over his powers and capacities – resulting in the "power to" self-actualize rooted in self-love – will enable the individual to undertake "*productive*" activity reflecting his interests, aspirations, and values in the world. The result would be a life of meaningful achievement and happiness, collaborative relations, engaged commitments and empowered citizenship, and faith in human advancement. Striving to fulfill the highest "task in life," to generate meaning and fulfillment rather than to compensate for deficiencies, one is able to "give birth to himself, to become what he potentially is," and help to create a society that "takes care of the full human development of all."[25]

IX. Kohut: A New Developmental Model

Among Fromm's contributions was identifying the psychosocial distinction between the healthy narcissism of a self-loving and self-investing and generative subject and the deficient narcissism emerging from undeveloped self-investment and unrealized capacities. Fromm's work – building on Nietzsche, Wilhelm Reich, and Marcuse among others – represents a

watershed, identifying the path of genuine self-love to healthy self-consolidation. Furthermore, the systemic self-arrest characterizing the liberal model of individuality is now identified as a developmental failing that inflicts core narcissistic injury on the emerging self.

This new horizon in the project of self-constitution radically recasts the liberal age and its model of the individual as a transitional and essentially incomplete stage in the developmental project. A full psychodevelopmental model of healthy selfhood building on Fromm is the contribution of psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, founder of the emerging field of self psychology. In Kohut's evolving theoretical work, narcissistic wishes are recognized as developmental "demands" for self-actualization beginning in early life. Provided novel external "acceptance" rather than traditional rejection by the adult world, the emerging subject can for the first time through the "integration" rather than repression of these wishes generate expansive aspirations and pursue their fulfillment within the "web of his realistic potentialities."[26]

This shift in psychodynamic emphasis is revolutionary. In the past, the expansive, typically quite unrealistic, wishes of the young would be sanctioned as dangerous and unrealistic for violating the limits imposed by societal hierarchies and economic realities. In more recent times, their expression has provoked suppression by an adult world that had tabled its early dreams to achieve social acceptance. Investigating the early emergence of these fantasies, Kohut recognized them as expressing nascent forms of expansive self-unfolding that through experimentation could well generate new developmental possibilities. In an age of affluence and individualism, these were not to be constrained by what may seem – or may simply once have been – infeasible.

Supplementing Fromm's more philosophical treatment with a detailed developmental analysis, Kohut's objective was to identify how individuals from their early years utilize primary nurturing relationships to develop the psychological and relational tools to shape emotionally grounded and imaginatively expansive lives. The result is a new conception of childhood: one learning to trust and actualize one's own feelings, perceptions, ideas, sense of meaning, playfulness and creativity, connectedness. Able to take themselves seriously and confident in being taken seriously by others (or understanding others as lacking in empathy and care), the young could employ the multiple dimensions of their emerging self-capacity with ever greater conviction to shape values and practices in the world.

In order for the young child to experience, experiment with, and integrate – without boundaries regarding what is possible – its broad range of wishes and potentialities, to learn where pleasure in activity and meaning in achievement and contribution lie, what reaches of actualization are achievable, coalescing a sense of self-mastery and self-authorship and self-framing, the child must be assisted by adult nurturers invested in the child's flourishing and maturation. Enabled to connect with its fullest wishes as they emerge from within as narcissistic fantasies for itself, this process will establish within "the self" an "uninterrupted flow of the narcissistic strivings" as they "proceed toward creative expression."[27]

Kohut cautions that enabling this flow to solidify the child's internal self-connection is critical

for psychological growth. Despite adult reservations regarding the young about how "limited the social impact of the achievements of the personality may be and however insignificant the individual's creative activity may appear to others," the child must be protected from inappropriately premature and critical personal or social judgments. Lacking understanding of how much early developmental work is taking place in the child's own experimentation with itself, these judgments interrupt the internal growth process and deflate the child's self-connection.

Similarly, what may appear to be over-involvement with its own processes and productions, its expression of "central pattern[s] of exhibitionism and grandiose ambitions" and insistence on measuring oneself by one's own "set of firmly internalized ideals of perfection," are crucial for generating more evolved "talents and skills." Through "optimal…empathetic responses" taking seriously these early self-ventures, the facilitative adult serves as "joyful mirror to a child's healthy assertiveness" as it consolidates its sense of "self-esteem" and "self-cohesion." In this way, as the child becomes a vigorous and "reliable initiator and performer of joyfully undertaken activities," the "organizing center of the skills and talents of the personality" culminates through increasingly "successful exercise" in the "adult's mature self."[28]

Through this new conception of psychological health, the "narcissistic injury" upon an "unresponded-to" core self from classic neglect of self-development – no longer normal and inevitable – can be better understood. As the young reveal strengths at ages previously unimaginable, adults psychologically and emotionally unable to integrate their own aspirations will because of their developmental shortfalls enforce generational control to censure these initiatives, reproducing psychological injuries and deficits in developing subjects. Leaving the child unequipped for the task of childhood, to "transform its archaic grandiosity" into "realistic ambitions" and "attainable ideals," will deprive the individual of "narcissistic sustenance" to shape internally evolved ideals and goals and sustain continuing self-actualization.[29]

Such "narcissistic vulnerability"[30] can readily precipitate an "abandonment of the core of the self," leading as Kohut understood to a compensatory obsession with psychic "survival and social dominance," along with acute feelings of futility and "destructive rage" triggered by the severe developmental shortcomings in the self. The behavior manifested by a deeply injured subject in other words is *reactive*, its destructiveness deriving not from a "primary instinct" of evil intent which "strives toward its goals and searches for an outlet" but as the response to unjustly administered trauma and deprivation.[31] In order to address the "narcissistic injuries" arising from failures by socializing adults and other deficits in developmental nurturance, Kohut supported the training and preparation of analysts skilled at facilitating continued internal development.

X. The Pandemic of Narcissistic Injury

Many Americans are appalled by the contagion of wanton destruction, cruelty, scapegoating, and derision roiling society, a psychic forest fire threatening to unravel even our deeply flawed systems of justice and collective well-being. The issue of how the American Dream – by

reducing success and self-worth to matters of winning and losing – pits us against each other and diminishes us all has never been adequately confronted. Because the relentless competition and sorting process imposes narrow measures of achievement and forecloses most avenues of self-actualization, it undercuts the possibility of fulfillment across the political spectrum and turns us all into adversaries unable together to pursue the larger public good.

As the anticipated era of developmental advance gave way to dramatically diminished aspirations, a product of both the long time horizon of psychosocial change and the increasingly aggressive reaction, individuals were forced to confront their inability to forge qualitatively new lives. Left absent any larger understanding to attribute their difficulties to matters of personal failing, the initial promise of post-industrial transformation was recast as the experience of *narcissistic injury*, *foundering dreams*, *self-loss*, *and a failure to thrive*. To understand the deeper impact of this dramatic collapse and return to a system that had repudiated transformation, we can utilize Kohut's penetrating analysis of the dynamic of early narcissistic injury. Never before had a society dared to tempt its members with the possibility and even audacious promise of uncompromised self-realization.

Brought up for centuries now to believe in magical tales of personal ascendancy and achievement, most Americans – like Bradley Cooper in *Limitless* – clutch such early stories of ultimate success. To be sure, a great number of Americans respond to these cultural temptations by working to reframe and integrate their early aspirations with the life they will have. But in elevating such early dreams of a life personally shaped for actualization while systematically refusing in socialization and education to nurture and facilitate their realization, Americans are faced with enduring patterns of arrested development and unrealized life stories. Given their different social locations and differential outcomes in this predatory process, quite distinct patterns of injury and strategies of alleviation characterize the more successful as opposed to those less so. This has led in turn to the retreat of both conservatives/reactionaries and progressives/liberals from their governing values and objectives into a largely defensive posture that ironically brings each ever closer to the traditional orientation of their opposition.

For the conservative and extreme rightward proponents of the Reaction, an increased opportunity for further self-development or social renewal was never anticipated. At the same time, primed by the American Dream and the affluent society, they felt increasingly entitled to the promise of fulfillment being widely celebrated. Moreover, as countercultural release exposed the collapsing limits on desire, they quickly assumed that all was permitted and threw off the chains of traditionally repressive socialization in the name of instinctual release and expression. The rude awakening came quickly, however, that they were ill prepared for lives of greater freedom and self-empowerment, less prepared than many over whom they had long presumed precedence. The result was less the nourishing of new dreams than a demand for greater license and expanded privilege.

Possessing for the most part less education and social capital and facing with growing equality pervasive challenges to its remaining claim of being an entitled elect, this cohort turned to

fantasies of vindication. It has in turn sought refuge for its loss of status in a sense of betrayal and attacks on those presumably advancing in power and privilege at its expense: the disenfranchised, immigrants, women, youth, those identified by Trump in a Laura Ingraham interview as “thugs” in “dark uniforms” and others supporting violent anarchists on the streets and mobilizing to destroy the suburbs, as well as snobbish coastal elites. From all sides, its claims of injury and demands for restored privilege and precedence were ridiculed, reinforcing the sense of dispossession.[32]

As the rise of meritocratic society has yet further enflamed the sense of being permanently bypassed, the objectives no longer involve traditional conservatism. For those multitudes shunted aside to endure the pain of unreachable futures and the psychological injury of having few apparent prospects, unable to address their sense of deficiency and defeat, the nation’s promise lingers only in the dying embers of childhood exhortations to the American Dream, there to be fanned by myths of shared supremacy in revivalist frenzy. Refusing to trust offers of assistance from privileged meritocrats presumed eager to maintain their own advantage, they wrap themselves in rhetoric of conspiratorial evil and dehumanized others. Seeking vengeance on their own system for reneging on its expansive and seductive promises to its patriots, they no longer imagine any alternative to dehumanized compensations, even though opting for craven leaders and untenable policy claims wreaks ever greater injury on themselves.

What makes this time so perilous, however, are not merely the developmental difficulties (and systemic neglect) of this population, its endemic pattern of social and cultural lag in the face of economic and societal modernization beginning with urbanization and industrialization long before McCarthyism, Goldwater, and Nixon. While this vast cohort has clearly exercised a powerful drag on the creation of a just post-industrial society, the gaping cleavages rendering American society so vulnerable to insurmountable reaction reflect the long retreat of once more progressive and liberal sectors from their traditional allies and constituencies among the disenfranchised.

For liberals and one-time progressives, while distressed about the emerging plutocracy, the switch was made some decades ago from demanding change to reluctant support. Their dramatic turn from expanding societal inclusion and opportunity, non-token diversity and social justice, genuine autonomy and relaxed economic pressures represents as Thomas Frank explains an escalating preoccupation with their own meritocratic success. Having acceded as the price of climbing the meritocratic ladder to the sacrifice of one’s own dreams for routinized roles and standardized returns, they are now the foremost protectors of the system against its one time defenders even as it dissolves. Trapped in an increasingly grueling competition in order to maintain their supply of external material and psychological rewards, the consolations of wealth and status and taste, they flaunt markers of achievement and self-worth hoping to convince themselves of their enthusiasm for the trade-offs.

Asserting their claim to elite privilege along with hoarding opportunities for their children, they have become complicit in the nation’s growing conservatism, global interventionism, mushrooming economic disparities along with meaningless and onerous work, manic

consumption, and environmental neglect, pushing the vast percentage of society without organizational and bureaucratic leverage further into powerlessness and marginalization. What is never addressed by this new would-be caste, however (though moving it closer to the Reaction), is the underlying impulse carefully veiled as organizational liberal striving: the deep impact of narcissistic injury on their lives.

It is hard to imagine these sectors achieving meritocratic status and power as suffering from acute narcissistic injury. And, to be sure, they have quite successfully deflected recognition of the personal and social costs of their retreat into privilege and status. Yet, as a significant cohort turned in the sixties from imperatives of economic production and material advancement fueled by the dynamic of deprivation, the cultural priorities shifted toward fuller self-development and non-repressive relations and communities. But this challenging and unprecedented transition had barely – and quite unevenly – begun when the Reaction surged. The new cultural and personal aspirations had attracted many in varying degrees. Yet, with mounting frustration at the pace of change and few immediate pathways or psychological resources emerging clearly, many of the individuals most drawn to transformation retreated from hopeful exuberance to feelings of inadequacy, vulnerability, and disorientation.

While more likely possessing significant social capital and being well educated, furthermore believing themselves socially and morally enlightened, they have been in crucial ways more impacted by the revolt against liberal barriers to social transition and transformation than the right. Awakened early to internal change, they did for a time turn to self-exploration and experimentation with new priorities in the quest for post-compensatory selfhood and purpose. They experienced the developmental costs of liberal constraints on self-actualization, parental assumptions of privilege, material and status preoccupations, a rigorous competitive socialization insensitive to genuine relations and authentic purpose, and class isolation from the socially marginalized not at a distance from its impact on their lives.

Unprepared however to move beyond a society radically constricting options and new ways of being, unwilling to jeopardize their own career and status trajectories and resentful of younger generations in their own families and communities demanding moral accountability, they accommodated to the increasingly rightward competitive orientation. This is the sector most able to take advantage of the draconian achievement ethic and compensatory reward ethos. Having been turned – and well-turned – on the lathe of external validation and value, they internalized the fusion of identity with functional role, self with organizational position, individual merit with systemic status, personal purpose with operational achievement, narcissistic injury with systemic incentive, self-worth with socially valued rewards. There are of course many progressives (by absolute numbers if not percentages) who have found reserves of inner strength and resolution to continue the struggle for new forms of selfhood and relatedness, social justice and democratic participation. At the same time, most – except for increasing numbers of the young – are reformers hoping to renew the structures of liberal society, believing that serious dislocations of self and society attending deeper transformation can be avoided.

Letting go of those internalized measures and honed capacities central to success presents a terrifying prospect for all would-be proponents of change: discerning the power to discover, author, self-validate, and actualize internal value and meaning without clear outcomes requires the recovery of internal guidance markers long since identified as vague and unusable impediments to success. At the same time, the tireless pursuit of system returns as substitutes for sustained meaning and individual actualization has obscured – while it has not expunged – the pain of self-betrayal. Unwilling to identify their genuine ideals and aspirations or address how to achieve the renewal of American society, having foregone attending to their injuries to self-realization and self-affirmation, they find it hard to call upon on that part of the self capable of principled opposition or significant personal and collective change.

Ever more dependent on disproportionate rewards through fabricated consumer product and status distinctions between haves and have-nots to insulate them from the frustrations of paralysis and self-deception, there is diminished willingness to support redistribution and full inclusion for the less fortunate, or to even imagine lives less dominated by organizational imperatives. Unwilling to face this sacrifice of one's inner dreams to Fromm's pseudo-self, the final torment is depression at lives of empty compensation, propping up the system not out of moral conviction but merely from calculations of personal interest.

XI. The Continuing Legacy of Injury

Having replaced larger possibilities with a narrowing horizon, neither those who have settled for greater rewards nor those trapped without significant benefits believe the system any longer offers more than a repository from which to extract compensation. Despite important differences, these two dominant cohorts sharing a sense of arrested development in turn find overlap in their resistance to cultural and psychological change. Whether quietly equivocal from shame at betraying one's own potential, or aggressively reactive to the presumed betrayal by others, the common assumption is that narcissistic injury is unavoidable. Refusal to challenge the compensatory dynamic is in turn widely rationalized in academic and literary circles by marginalizing the self as a romantic construct without a basis in psychological experience. Deriving from "today's skepticism toward personal transformation" from doubts about the value or success of "self-liberation"[33] is the counsel to endure the compensatory narcissistic nightmare as a triumph of realism. Exploring new pathways to authentic meaning is in turn rendered as a clear sign of adjustment failure.[34]

The most serious and troubling long-term damage emanating from this reactionary convergence is the resolve to depress the aspirations and possibilities for self-actualization in younger generations. Systematic pressure to abort the development of autonomy and democratic citizenship has become since Reagan the staple of American socialization: to assert generational control by driving the young to compete relentlessly for external validation and markers of success, narrow skill mastery, extramural performance achievement, and social popularity. With both parties accelerating high-stakes competition such as "No Child Left Behind" and "Race to the Top," a core sense of narcissistic injury, of deficiency and inadequacy, is instilled as the marker of membership, referred to by Yale professor William

Deresiewicz as a culture of “excellent sheep.”[35]

From an early age, American children are relentlessly culled and sorted. This sorting process is in turn exacerbated through division of the nation into center and periphery, cosmopolitan regions of meritocratic privilege and global culture as opposed to those of dead-end economies and cultural stagnation. As in *The Hunger Games*, those young pushed and outfitted by anxious and striving parents intent on competitive advancement in tandem with a highly stratified schooling system are channeled to higher and higher levels of externally defined competence. For the vast numbers left behind by fierce meritocratic selectivity, there is only abandonment to lowered expectations and the sting of failure and insufficiency.

What that movie would reveal if we were listening is that all of the young lose. Trivializing internal measures or experiences of personal meaning, worth, or direction, defunding avenues of personal expression and non-competitive capacity building, and addressing performance or adjustment difficulties or resistance with mood altering drugs has amounted to a 40-year war on American youth. This generational repression, triggered initially by the 1960s revolt of youth for full citizenship thus results, despite differential access to structural opportunities, in the end only in self-sacrifice on the altar of standardized components and cynical discipline wrapped by a fragile and cowed adult culture in systemic posturing about moral imperatives.

Trapped in a compensatory cycle of narcissistic deficit that engenders failure and inadequacy, younger generations – deprived of cultivation of a self – are chained to negative-sum systemic striving and the relentless merchandizing of addictive substitutes marketed as miracle cures. The underlying injury, as Jia Tolentino has written in *Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion* (2019), is the unaddressed hunger for a lost identity. Deflected to cultivating the skills of “packaging and broadcasting your image” for a “constant, unseen audience,” one is forced into continually “reaffirming [one’s] status as an interesting subject, a worthy object, a self-generating spectacle with a viewership attached.” Focusing on the “lessons” defined by “whatever the market demands,” one is pressured to mobilize the “skills in self-presentation and self-surveillance” to project a carefully manufactured ideal persona so “preemptively controlled” as to “afford the impression of spontaneity.”[36] External scripts disguised as one’s own thoughts and feelings are implanted to create an illusion of autonomy, and the system, insulated through consensual self-repression from intrusions by the real, has preempted the capacity for development and transformation.

XII. The Nature of Change

What we now face is not the failure of change but the nature of change. The liberal self, engendered to pursue unrelenting competition and unquestioned compensation, is unable to avert the descent into ever more toxic forms of heedless self-aggrandizement and moral nihilism. The predatory agenda of an increasingly dominant and runious elite with political and economic leverage leaves an impoverished society with fewer and fewer, largely foreordained winners and dimming prospects for social justice. In this survival of the fittest, the call in many quarters to abrogate remaining protections provided by Constitutional balance, legality,

international comity, economic safety nets, and formal representative government takes on a sense of inevitability. The liberal dream, effective in mobilizing early modern populations to the task of nation building and unprecedented wealth creation, is powerless to address its dark side as the neoliberal war of all against all. Refashioning the system at will, the Reaction has declared its ascendancy.

Now what? There is no spin that can promise a way out while ignoring the exhaustion of the liberal framework for meeting the challenges we face. Yet social analysts and political commentators in this time of peril curtail our recognition of the stakes and the dangers. Daily commentators lurch between terrifying admonitions such as Paul Krugman's reference to the U.S. as a possible "failed state," meant to scare us back into our right minds (without revealing what that right mind is), and banal recommendations that we need to start telling the truth again or shamefully confess our civic neglect.[37] So-called students of the longer term like Jill Lepore, Sean Wilentz, and Mark Lilla do look beyond the latest election cycle, but only to find in place of eroding conventional clichés new clichés: the devious influence of social media, William Barr's misunderstanding of executive prerogative under the Constitution, or even the illegibility of present trends. These failures to fix and assess responsibility all neatly succeed in rendering ourselves blameless.

While those refusing to confront the great post-industrial shifts provide support to a Reaction determined to repel change, the waning of the liberal world opens before us as crisis and opportunity. Can we embrace our growing and evolving capacity to live beyond narcissistic injury and self-arrest? It rests on us to evaluate our entrapment in obsolete assumptions about psychological limits and the impossibility of moral collectives to together create a more just and deeply self-actualizing future. Looming over these initiatives will be the responsibility we have forsaken: to nurture fuller human possibilities emerging from early life aspirations for us all. Young people grow up with dreams beyond conventional boundaries, and cultivating these as the foundation of our identities and source of collective progress was to be our nation's distinctive contribution. Only rededication to the flourishing of our young – and to our own – will surmount the squandering of our innate potential and devastating social cleavages generated by late liberalism and allow us to join together to create what is ours to imagine.

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A new history begins with recognizing potential openings as a spur, an inspiration, to richer and fuller forms of selfhood with new forms of productivity, care, creativity, connection, meaning, value, expression, contribution. It means acknowledging in the words of Marilyn Robinson that in the "richest country in history" we refuse to be told "we cannot have benefits our grandparents enjoyed," that we are "too poor to welcome immigrants." A repressive "psychology" and "coercive atmosphere of scarcity" cannot be allowed to mandate that the nation "dismantle its own institutions" and provision of public goods, leaving us with only a life-denying "struggle" for left-overs.[38]

The challenge is to recover our developmental initiative and the liberation and cultivation of

our capacities for self-actualization and new forms of meaning beyond the compensatory age of deficient and misshapen liberal personhood. In this sense, the historical initiative rests paradoxically with those who are seeking to rise to the authentic and engaged lives now within reach in the post-industrial era. Joining together to collaboratively discover and advance the promise in the words of political and moral visionary Randolph Bourne of a "regenerated social order" is a crucial dimension of transformative change. It allows for the "heightening of all the powers of the personality" and the opportunity through "socially productive" activity to in the present "live[] in that sort of world which he desires."[39]

Everyday political activism and opposition is necessary,[40] but to what extent can a failing system that forecloses change insist on being rescued by its victims when vast changes are afoot? Liberals and most progressives as loyal opposition to this misnamed democracy have never grasped that liberal legitimacy as claimed through a ritual social contract was always an appropriation and depreciation of the human capacity to covenant and to share authority and responsibility for shaping the world. The fallout from the rejection of this imperial appropriation may well be, as Richard Kreitner writes in his current book *Break It Up*, the cessation of the United States as a common project. The spread of new genuinely democratic communities manifestly exercising this new capacity and nurturing lives of authentic meaning and commitment may be a further result.

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[35] See William Deresiewicz, *Excellent Sheep: The Mideducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life* (New York, 2015).

[36] Jia Tolentino, *Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion* (London, 2019), 63-4.

[37] Paul Krugman, "Is America Becoming a Failed State?," *New York Times* (November 5, 2020), A18.

[38] Marilyn Robinson, "What Kind of Country Do We Want?," *New York Review of Books* (June 11, 2020), 44.

[39] Randolph Bourne, "For Radicals," in *Youth and Life*, 291, 304, 306, 307.

[40] For the insistence that there is no shame-free alternative to committed reform activity, see Eitan Hersh, *Politics is for Power: How to Move Beyond Political Hobbyism, Take Action, and Make Real Change* (New York, 2020).

High Court of Literary Correctness

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

The following is a riposte to an editorial published in the New York Times by Ruth Franklin which can be read here.

Prosecuting Judge, Ruth Franklin

Opening Statement

This court has had a busy season, and the next few weeks promise to be even busier.

Last week we dealt with the case of the biographer of Philip Roth, and by extension Mr. Roth himself. Several allegations have been made that his biographer, Blake Bailey, maltreated, perhaps raped women. While these are only allegations, this court has confirmed that Mr. Bailey approved of Mr. Roth's plan to date an actress (Ali McGraw). This is troubling. Why should a novelist date an actress? And why should a biographer approve of such an action? Bailey's assent already puts into question his objectivity. Moreover, Mr. Roth's ex-wife has detailed various of his transgressions. With their compromising personal histories, neither Mr. Bailey nor Mr. Roth can be objective when discussing women. This shows in Bailey and Roth's uncomplimentary description of a woman's genitalia. Mr. Roth, of course, can describe male genitalia. This court, however, will not accept his negative pronouncements on female genitalia and other topics about which he is not qualified.

The court has ruled that Mr. Bailey's biography should be withdrawn from public circulation, and that Mr. Roth's books should only be available to readers who successfully pass a certified sexual sensitivity course. In this decision, the court has been consistent. Last week we considered several books of Theodore Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss). He also wrote in an uncomplimentary mode on subjects about which he was not qualified. (Dr. Seuss, in fact, was

not a doctor.) His 1947 McElligot's Pool maligned indigenous people, the Inuits, as well as creatures with which we share the earth—fish—by depicting so-called Eskimo-fish. Mr. Geisel neither visited the Intuits nor possessed knowledge of fish they ate. The late writer Oliver Sax, this court could note, was a real doctor who cherished fish—in his case gefilte fish—and would never countenance aquatic insults. We ruled that McElligot's Pool should no longer be available.

The court has not yet decided on the case of the American Poultry Association v. Mr. Geisel. The Association has charged that Green Eggs and Ham harms poultry-growers and their families and should also be withdrawn. A farmer's daughter stopped attending school after

bullied about her father's allegedly yukky green eggs. A University of Oklahoma poultry expert testified that green eggs do not exist. A biographer noted Mr. Geisel did not like eggs, which may explain his ridicule of them. A decision will be forthcoming.

It is hardly news to observe that these authors—Mr. Bailey, Roth and Geisel—are white males and do not reflect the demographics of the world, even the United States in which white males are a minority. Studies have shown that 71.7 % of biographies are written by white men and 87% are about white men. This is an obvious injustice. Most people are not white men. Therefore, most books should be written by non-white people about non-white subjects. Ideally authors and their subjects should quantitatively correspond to their presence in the society. Indeed, it is possible to go further. Books are written by people, but most creatures are not people. While humans dominate the globe, numerically they constitute only .08 % of sensate beings. For homo sapiens to 100% monopolize book-writing compounds ecological injustice. Instead of humans, usually men, presuming to write about animals, publishers should support the reverse. In a more equitable world a man such as Jack London would not write a book about a dog (White Fang), but a dog would write a book about a man.

Biography like all writing benefits from a multiplicity of perspectives. While the court does not want to essentialize, backgrounds essentially determine how we see the world. Mr. Roth's controversial attitudes towards race and women are rooted in his own life growing up in Newark New Jersey. To obtain less disrespectful attitudes publishers should encourage a diversity of perspectives and heed the identity of writers, who could speak positively on subjects they know. An Inuit from Nome Alaska, a Black farmer from Boonville Arkansas or a Jewish woman from Baltimore Maryland would bring to the table less offensive perspectives on fish, eggs or female genitalia.

These are just introductory comments for today's proceedings, the case of Franz Kafka. Next week we take up Henrik Ibsen, Gustav Flaubert, and Jonathan Swift. The charges against Mr. Kafka parallel other charges this court have recently considered. They can be quickly summarized. Mr. Kafka in his writings presents a negative perspective on human relations that is rooted in his unsuccessful life in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He worked unhappily in an insurance office, regularly visited brothels, and never managed an on-going relationship. His last partner was half his age. His plan to open a caf came to naught. His doleful writings ill affect readers, especially vulnerable adolescents. His stories testify to a lack of diversity in his approach to life. His biographers are male and cannot be objective. Plaintiffs demand that the writings of Kafka and his biographers should be withdrawn or restricted. The court will take testimony after a fifteen-minute recess.

From Pandemic to Solidarity, Mutual Aid from Plague Days to Autonomous Zones

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

Epidemics expose a great deal about who we are. They always have. Old orders die. New ideas take shape. “There is something deep here connected to what is the real truth about who we really are, not what we are told about ourselves,” says social movement scholar Marina Sitrin. “Yes, we are afraid. Yes, we feel pain and vulnerability, and what we do with that, again and again, throughout history and now more than ever, is to reach out to one another and find ways to care for each other.”

In March 2020 the world went into quarantine. One night in the midst of it, I found myself watching Akira Kurosawa’s *Seven Samurai*, his 1954 film about war-torn 16th-century Japan. Its real subject, of course, is modern anxieties about old ways of living in flux. “This is the nature of war,” says one of the samurai. “By protecting others, you save yourself. If you only think of yourself, you’ll only destroy yourself.” While our president might not understand the point, many others do seem to know that we benefit by extending care, a safety net catching people, helping us see that we need each other. Our health depends on it. Yet, protecting others is never simple. Built of personal narrative, theory, interviews, and observations, this ethnography considers the mutual aid of the days of COVID in New York City.

The days since the COVID-19 pandemic began witnessed countless forms of mutual support, as activists and neighbors, healthcare workers and service providers connecting and breaking isolation. Wave after wave of people, including high school kids, preachers, bikers, queers, rise and resisters, and homeless folks sharing resources, cheering and screaming. As we march, each of us share stories, offering more supplies, our destinies entwined, our liberation tied to each other’s survival. Greeting those on the way back from City Hall, across the Brooklyn Bridge, marching, solidarity expands as we walk together, New Yorkers in a Critical Mass against racism and inequality. It is hard to separate protests over Black Lives, the pandemic, and the marches for the dead. They all overlap, each intersecting with the next.

Veterans of the AIDS crisis see resemblances in the non-response approaches to COVID and AIDS, looking at the patterns of a global pandemic and the social responses. AIDS activist Cleve Jones reminds us:

“AIDS came they said don’t worry it only kills gays.

30 million heterosexuals and their children died.

But don’t worry Covid-19 only kills old people.”

We’d have to take care of each other or die, many of us thought, recognizing the old lines from the poem “September 1, 1939” by Auden.

Over time the struggle shifts from a global health pandemic to a struggle for lives, particularly Black and brown lives disproportionately impacted by COVID (CDC, 2020). The map of COVID in New York mirrors maps of poverty in the city. “Many of the neighborhoods with the highest number of cases per capita were areas with the lowest median incomes and largest average household size,” notes *The New York Times*. The actual impact moves in divergent directions, revealing a stark reality as the pandemic flows into existing lines of inequality.

As long as some are sick, everyone is vulnerable. Our destinies are intertwined into a single garment of history, as MLK used to say. Some even carry the slogan on signs at Black Lives Matter actions. In countless circles, people start looking out for each other. Without support from the federal government, many see a need for mutual aid. Mutual aid, as anarchists have noted for over a century, manifests as intertwined survival and development across species. Based on notions of reciprocity, not social services, mutual aid is “participatory rather than expert-led,” says Dean Spade; this approach emphasizes engagement by regular people instead of “experts”; it avoids “the use of eligibility criteria that cuts out more stigmatized people.” As a relational tendency it offers a solution and a practice in building interconnections ripe with the potential for expansion. Mutual aid also offers us a lens through which we can address questions about interdependence that Martin Buber recognized, seeing others as neighbors, as people to understand.

On Mutual Aid

Social movements overlap, with common themes between reactions to lack of government help tackling COVID-19 and other contemporary protest movements against systematic racism and similar forms of bigotry. We see the co-occurrence and evolution of movements that are derived from seemingly distinct tragedies and social ills. Such a patterned manifestation *could* be coincidental, but there are some common threads which indicate that there is a deeper relation and/or that the responses are rooted in a common ethos (ethos here as in an ethical system). That ethos? Mutual aid. What comes to bear is a yearning for solidarity, an impulse toward cooperation and support. Certainly, one could propose mutual aid is response to a fragmentary , dislocated global economic system, or anomie.

“[T]he great majority of people in ordinary disasters behave in ways that are anything but selfish,” posits Rebecca Solnit, looking back on her experience with Common Ground Collective after Hurricane Katrina. Quite often, she says, what we witness is “a lot of creative and generous altruism and brilliant grassroots organizing. With the global pandemic, these empathic urges and actions are wider and deeper and more consequential than ever.” To put it simply, people want to support each other. Take the infusion of cycling and environmental activists into the Black Lives Matter movement. “This is your fight too,” Street Riders chant on

their weekly rides in support of the Black Lives Matter protests, imploring people from across the five boroughs of New York City to respond to their call for human rights, for people across ethnicities to look out for each other. "See others as yourself," declares a sign on another bike. The response is striking, with thousands joining the weekly rides. Between COVID-19 and the subsequent waves of Black Lives Matter protests, doctors and nurses applaud anti-racist activists; a flourishing of donations for protective equipment changes hands; community projects take shape; a free food refrigerator is placed down the street from my house; and harm reductionists journey throughout the city on outreach. These are just a few of any number of practical forms of support as regular people reach out to each other in reciprocal exchange.

"A dozen years ago, the term 'mutual aid' was, as far as I can tell, used mostly by anarchists and scholars," says Solnit. The concept has long been a part of social movements. First developed and explored by the anarchist prince Kropotkin, he suggests: "[T]here is in Nature the law of Mutual Aid, which, for the success of the struggle for life, and especially for the progressive evolution of the species, is far more important than the law of mutual contest." For Eric Laursen, the work challenged a "dog-eat-dog morality that capitalism had embraced through a misreading of Darwin's theory of evolution." David Graeber and Andrej Grubacic suggest: "Such interventions … reveal aspects of reality that had been largely invisible but, once revealed, seem so entirely obvious that they can never be unseen." This is one of the great ideas of the anti-authoritarian social movements. "[I]n the midst of the pandemic, it is everywhere," says Solnit, signs on street corners, people tabling, giving away food.

Mutual aid within the context of the COVID-19 crisis builds on the dynamics of the moment, as one crisis leads to the next, from financial to ecological to public health to environmental to questions about inequality. "In the midst of a global crisis, we must listen, learn, and build with people from around the world," notes Astra Taylor. "A crisis is a turning point." Such times can lead to economic disrepair, shock doctrine, and fascism, or possibility for something more abundant. Stories about mutual aid "teach us a great deal."

Mutual Aid and Loss

The COVID cases we learned of first were from our students at City University of New York, the largest urban university system in the United States, where a majority of students are people of color. And then friends of friends, a teacher, a housing advocate for people with HIV/AIDS, a high school classmate, a social worker who provided shelter for the homeless who got sick herself, a nurse who took her own life. The Centers for Disease Control confirms: "**Long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put some members of racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting COVID-19 or experiencing severe illness, regardless of age.** Among some racial and ethnic minority groups, including non-Hispanic black persons, Hispanics and Latinos, and American Indians/Alaska Natives, evidence points to higher rates of hospitalization or death from COVID-19 than among non-Hispanic white persons." The health disparities revealed by COVID-19 are anything but new. Neither are the losses.

Mid-April social worker Spence Halperin receives a message from work, his CEO

reporting “that 53 clients have passed away and that in our staff, one subcontractor and two home health aides have passed away due to the Coronavirus.”

My friend Mark Milano writes an equally personal account. “To those who think COVID-19 is just another flu: my fellow long-term survivor Ed Shaw just succumbed to it. After beating AIDS for 32 years, this damn virus took him. Rest in Power, Ed.” I’d known Ed for decades. Person after person we knew, dead, week after week.

“I can’t believe my government is not helping everyone out,” says one of my students.

At first the city dragged its feet about closing schools, continuing business as usual, with basketball games in the gym at my daughter’s school in early March. That was until a group of parents informed the city of plans to pull their kids, regardless of official policy. Labor unions support their efforts. L.A. Kauffman, one of the organizers, who helped push the issue, and I talk about the moment. For years now, we’ve supported each other in our activism. The last we’d seen each other in the real world, I had “just gotten out of D.C. jail yet again, after another direct action, this time one calling for 45’s removal from office,” writes Kauffman, who was there to offer moral support and aid after the arrest. “The challenges of collective action in the age of social distancing,” are many says Kauffman.

In lieu of a coordinated government response, mutual aid flourishes. People are offering recipes and food recommendations, movie picks, book chats over Zoom, food delivery, support for rent strikes, and other forms of solidarity. In Brooklyn, anti-gentrification group Equality for Flatbush begins a campaign called the Brooklyn-shows-love-mutual-aid-project: “Since March 25th, we have delivered over 191 community kits of non-perishable food items and household supplies to community members living in the neighborhoods of Bed-Stuy, Brownsville, Bushwick, Canarsie, Coney Island, Crown Heights, East Flatbush, East New York, Flatbush, Fort Greene, Kensington, Marine Park, and Mill Basin…grocery/supply deliveries, medication pick-up/drop-offs, tenant/rent-strike organizing support, and other forms of material aid.”

Countless community groups step in. Housing Works creates services and housing for homeless kids in a shelter for people with COVID. Volunteers such as New York writer Tim Murphy work to get kids in these shelters food and supplies, as well as get medical workers protective equipment.

Watching all this take place, the good we see from people and the neglect from the government, one of my students posts a comment from Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Master and Margarita* in a reaction blog about the pandemic. “Yes, man is mortal, but that would be only half the trouble. The worst of it is that he’s sometimes unexpectedly mortal—there’s the trick!” Sometimes we surprise ourselves. We are wonderfully horribly made, fragile and resilient, ugly and beautiful at the same time. Over and over, students talk about patience and silver linings, the yin and yang of how we support each other. We cheer for healthcare workers at 7 PM every

night, roars going up all over Brooklyn, neighbors greeting each other. People make the best of it, despite the insanity. Efforts to help can be seen in countless ways, a cat sanctuary down the street, where people feed the strays by the canal. Our city of friends expands and contracts, some hiding away, the losses pile up; the ones we adore get sick. A drag performer from my wife's high school in Staten Island dies on the couch. His boyfriend was on the way home. We toast to him. But sometimes it is too much.

Each day, I bike through the city, glad to be in the metropolis instead of the country, where many have retreated, happy to be in town during the crisis. Glynnis MacNicol observes: "It is, of course, not a holiday, nor is the city nearing the end of a long night. The witchy New York hour between yesterday and today is now the New York of all day, every day. A nightmarish bizarro world set to the soundtrack of sirens. Everything is still here, but off… Now food delivery people are on the front lines, risking their health to keep us fed." We see a lot here. When I get a flat tire on the Brooklyn Bridge, a man stops to help. Sitting on our stoop, Ed offers us PPE and a story. We give him greens from the garden, mutual aid expanding by the day.

More notices of people getting sick, my work colleague Victor Ayala writes: "Those who know me understand my silence and distance… today I want to share a very emotional and touching moment. My friend and colleague of 30 plus years called me from her ICU bed to say goodbye. In between breaths we expressed our love for one another and encouraged Hope and Prayers. She reminded me to hold on to our memories and love we shared while traveling to conferences and the many lunches and profound discussions about religion and higher education. Call ended with I love you…I will continue to hope and pray for her and yes hold onto our memories, love and respect for one another….."

For many in the AIDS world, this is nothing new. "We are fighting for our lives once again," notes Greg Gonzalves. "Activism was a response to mourning, but also a way to obscure grief," he follows. "We need to take care of each other, ourselves as we continue the fight." And take care of each other we do.

My friend Michel Coconis is one of many involved. "My mutual aid activities have included (or so I believe)" volunteering, dropping "off food and diapers, putting masks together with our local Emergency Management, driving folks to the store or shopping for them, and reading .. newspapers and magazines to ppl who cannot get them from the library…" Still, Coconis cautions, "I'm actually not sure which of these is technically mutual aid … I have been to one drive-by rally on releasing ppl from Ohio's prisons and jails." There is a fine line between mutual aid and charity, with which many are still grappling. The definitional demarcation between charity and mutual aid is important. Other cases are positive and meet needs, but may not be mutual aid.

Jessica Rosenberg of Long Island University notes, "I am thinking about my daughter-in-law, a medical social worker in a Staten Island Hospital. Each day, she helps grieving families who have loved ones dying of covid – 19. She provides the missing link between the hospital

structure and loved ones who are desperate for information. She consoles and comforts. She helps patients get ready to leave the hospital … She fights for patients being prematurely discharged and who are not ready to leave the hospital. She is an advocate. Because of the dangers of her work environment, she contracted coronavirus." The degree of risk is real.

Nancy Kusmaul says: "The University of Iowa School of Social Work and Mercedes Bern-Klug … are running bi-weekly support groups for practicing nursing home social workers."

"My partners and I created a 'Bergen County COVID Support Group' on Facebook and conducted live talks on multiple issues to help our community get through these difficult times," adds Suzanne Badawi, of Ramapo College of New Jersey.

Others look to those left behind. Throughout April and May, I take part in #FreeThemAllFridays car and bike caravans. "As COVID-19 spreads across the country, immigrants continue to be locked up in ICE detention without adequate medical or sanitary facilities. The undocumented community is shut out of state relief even as they provide the essential labor that keeps New York running." Cyclists join "to say ENOUGH IS ENOUGH. We demand that Governor Cuomo use his emergency powers to order the release of all ICE detainees locked up in NY State to safeguard human life and public health. We also stand in solidarity with all prisoners and call for their freedom amid COVID-19."

Increasingly, we turn to movement work, addressing the gaps in the safety net, the inequality exposed by the crisis, via policy advocacy, helping to fight unemployment, supporting co-workers, running clinical trials, housing homeless people in hotels through community fundraising, looking at health disparities, bridging the gap from direct action and direct services, trying to be creative problem solvers.

New Alternatives

New Alternatives is a Manhattan-based group providing services for LGBT homeless youth, a group that disproportionately experience homelessness. Queer youth make up nearly 40 percent of the city's homeless youth but only seven percent of the youth population. New Alternatives helps them to transition out of the shelter system with education, life skills training, meals, groups, and case management. Like many organizations, they shut their doors with the New York Pause, ending Sunday meals. Over time, the group's director, Kate Barnhart, grew more and more concerned about those with compromised immune systems, who faced increased health risks. Darrell Wimbush, a security guard at their space inside a midtown church located on West 40th Street, started to have the same concerns, hearing more and more clients worry about the coronavirus and their own isolation. In response, he worked with Barnhart to create a drop-off program for those unable to take the trains to come pick up meals. Countless volunteers, including myself, joined the effort. Every day we connect we feel better. Each of us gains a sense of community building, supporting the city, doing our parts.

My 17-year-old daughter and I volunteer to drop off food and bring supplies one afternoon a week from April through June. Some weeks we take food to the Bronx, others to the Lower East

Side, often both. Sometimes, we drop off in the Far Rockaways, witnessing the ways the city has changed. “I’d rather be taking food out than sitting at home,” says the 17-year-old, helping navigate the pickups, coordinating with the clients. The drop-offs reveal something extraordinary about our city—the sprawling gaps in needs and experience, passing homeless people on the street, new street murals, candles, chalk, photos and makeshift memorials outside of buildings for the dead. “‘Those are his kids,’ says an onlooker, chatting on the sidewalk as we leave, referring to the memorial, many more bearing witness, or helping those who remain.

Jewdi Clech of the NYC Disorder of Sisters describes getting involved with coordinating the meal drop-offs. “When COVID hit NYC, I got sick the first week and thought, ‘Gee, I wish there was some way I could help people even though we are all home.’ Then I got the call…” Clench would spend the next three months “diligently calling, texting and communicating with the LGBTQ youth folx through New Alternatives to check in with them and help arrange food delivery.” For many, providing material support actually supports their mental health. Completing those three months, he felt compelled to thank Darnell, Kate, drivers such as myself, and the other volunteers. “I know it wasn’t easy…we cannot thank you enough for the opportunity, it made me happy to be a part of the community and find a way to participate… Thank you to all of the drivers who tolerated my last minute messages, spreadsheets, complicated instructions, calls, check-ins, last minute requests, and bullying behavior to see if you’d yet again be willing to venture out, but braved COVID and curfews to get food to people who needed it. Roughly 350 meals per week, for the past twelve weeks have been distributed—that’s more than 4000 meals!”

Certainly, we were not the only group out providing aid during the peak weeks of the pandemic. Tamara Oyola Santiago, Alexis Del Rio, and Nelson Gonzalez brought survival supplies to drug users in upper Manhattan and the Bronx via their organization Bronx Móvil. Santiago recalls: “One late night, we were doing outreach outside a shelter on 182nd Street, and a participant looked at us and said, ‘Harm reduction on the streets—love is love.’ That made our night. Also, we started getting boxes of beautiful cloth masks sewn by hand—we have no idea who’s sending them.” Another night, a man got out of his car and approached them. Santiago said, “Do you use drugs? Because I have syringes.” The man replied, “Why do you have to do that?” One of the participants in the program jumped in adding, “This stuff saves lives and prevents HIV and hepatitis C.” Santiago did not have to say a word. “The mutual-aid networks that have arisen are beautiful. The Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Herald Square gave us an average of 100 meal bags every time we went out.”

The last Tuesday in May, we make our way from Brooklyn to Times Square, up to 99th Street, down to the Lower East Side, and out to Rockaway Beach. Homeless people wait outside at West 40th Street, many in the street. People are hungry. Seemingly invisible, many more have no place to stay or get away from the virus. On our way up to Times Square, a man is asleep in the street by a corner. People step over, ignoring him on their way. All over the city, homeless people have little to nowhere to shelter themselves from COVID. Homeless people can’t shelter in place, they can’t “stay home.” It’s a message activists repeat again and again.

The next day, the last Wednesday in May, I attend a rally at City Hall organized by the #HomelessCantStayHome campaign. Walking there, the first person I see is Kate Barnhart of New Alternatives. “85 deaths in NY shelters is unacceptable…” says Barnhart, wearing a mask on her first time out in weeks. “They are directly a result of the negligence of de Blasio. It is essential the homeless population be given a chance to shelter in hotels rather than crowded shelters with higher rates of infection.”

At City Hall, homeless New Yorkers and advocates set up symbolic “body bags” and gravestones before the mayor’s press briefing. Holding signs that read “COVID + DHS = DEATH,” and “Mayor de Blasio: there is blood on your hands,” protestors gather to mourn the lives of New Yorkers who have died as a result of the mayor’s failure to guarantee homeless people the right to safely socially distance in hotel rooms and permanent housing.

“Stop the sweeps, give homeless people a place to sleep,” says Lynn Lewis of Picture the Homeless. For years now, her organization has pushed the city to count the number of housing units that exist in New York, challenging the scarcity narrative driving real estate speculation.

“We need housing not empty luxury buildings for speculation,” reads a sign held by Fran, of the Stop Shopping Choir.

“Homeless people are dying,” says Donald, of Families for Freedom.

The action is also in memoriam and honor of Nikita Price, a Picture the Homeless member since 2006 and organizer for more than a decade. Nikita tragically passed away shortly before the action. Until his final days, Nikita was organizing for the safety and survival of homeless people in New York City and against police violence.

Standing in front of a row of dozens of body bags in front of City Hall, police behind him, Christoph explains, “I’m here for all the voices, all the people who cannot be here, cannot be heard. How many lives will be lost over the cost of a hotel room? We’re lives that matter. We count. We matter.” In the weeks to come, this point become more and more prophetic.

A Wound from One Pandemic to the Next

The next day, May 28, I attend a funeral for Larry Kramer, the founder of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power. All week, the world swirled with action. Word about a policeman in Minneapolis, who kneeled on unarmed George Floyd’s neck for 8 minutes and 46 seconds as he begged for life, was making national news. Watching the video of Floyd, face on the concrete, saying “I can’t breathe” before dying, tears pour down my face, a flood of images of everyone who had died lately, mostly from communities of color. And then the sense of shame, frustration, déjà vu. Here we are again, Rodney King and Eric Garner, whose last words were “I can’t breathe” in Staten Island. And then Larry Kramer, a white man who started ACT UP and GMHC. He sounded the alarm that this would impact everyone. Kramer reminded us that there was a place for anger. We could channel that anger. The feelings about the horror could be translated into action. This wasn’t the stuff of adolescent misbehavior. We could ACT UP.

We could and should disobey, especially in the face of the horror, when Black people are killed by cops, when Abner is tortured, when Patrick is shot, when George is killed, when your friends are getting sick and no one is doing anything about it.

It's all the same thing, homophobia and racism, says Jay Walker, of Rise and Resist, at Kramer's memorial. Over the next few months, he takes part in subsequent street actions calling for the city to defund the police. I'd run into him almost daily at protests, activists responding to the deaths of Black and brown people. Walker writes, "First, the inaction in response to Ahmaud Arbery's murder, then the police execution of Breonna Taylor, then a white woman calling the police on birdwatcher Chris Cooper in the Central Park Ramble, and the one-two gut punches of the death of legendary activist Larry Kramer, less than a year after he had delivered an impassioned speech after our inaugural 2019 Queer Liberation March, and the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Our members and organizers took to the streets in protest."

We all know the 400 years of horror that never seems to recede. Day after day rallies for Black Lives, moving from one borough to the next, marches, rallies, speak outs, over bridges, across highways, through traffic, across town. People support each other, share food, supplies, and aid.

All summer, thousands join the weekly Justice Rides, reclaiming public space in a world where Black people, immigrant bodies, women, those who look different are suspect and subject to scrutiny and quite often violence. Standing in the shadow of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, Orlando, one of the organizers, speaks before a ride. "Thank you!!!!" he screams. "There is no place in the world I'd rather be than riding with you. I am doing this for my friend Peter who was killed by the police. Each ride gives me strength. Thank you for coming down here. Just know it's not unnoticed. We're all in it together. Let's keep it going. It ain't going to stop."

City Hall Autonomous Zone

During drop off days for New Alternatives, we make our way past the rallies in the Rockaways on the beach in Queens, across Manhattan, and at City Hall. There activists began an occupation, dubbed Occupy City Hall or City Hall Autonomous Zone, in late June, calling for the city to reduce the police budget by one billion dollars and reinvest that money in the needs of communities of color. Food and supplies pour in from. When there is more than needed, they send it to New Alternatives. Social movements such as the Black Panthers and Occupy have long looked to models of food exchange as a form of movement building. The practice became ever more important as people faced food insecurity, job losses, with deepening poverty. With tables for food, communications and art, the City Hall occupation is a huge experiment in mutual aid.

The City Hall Autonomous Zone builds on the model from Seattle. Bridgette Read describes the scene: "On June 9, an area of around six blocks in downtown Seattle became known as CHAZ, the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone." CHAZ came to be after clashes between police and

protesters before the police recognized the area as a makeshift temporary autonomous zone for the movement. Without law enforcement, community stepped in; people provided support, dubbing it the Capitol Hill Organized Protest. The police announced a “decreasing footprint” around the East Precinct “as an exercise in trust and de escalation.” Community members organized protests, arts, and community events.

Each day I drop by New York’s autonomous zone. Committees form around composting, sanitation, a library, food donations, supplies, clothing. I run into different friends taking part. Strolling, my friend Stacy tells me about Seattle and the ways both spaces are experimenting with mutual aid in their own ways, with more gardens, art, and a medical center in Seattle, a lot more organization in New York, giant Black Lives Matter murals, images of beauty in both.

A central call of Occupy City Hall was to defund the police. As activists sleep outside, the #HomelessCantStayHome coalition makes significant breakthroughs in budget negotiations. The inside and the outside work in tandem. Craig Hughes, of the Urban Justice Center points out that while most council members side with police and supported the council speaker’s sham police-centered budget there were some unexpected wins based off of years of organizing and efforts to reshape the policing narrative put forth by successive administrations, much of which was led by homeless folks themselves and all of which was grounded in the perspective that cops are never the answer to homelessness. For example, the Subway Diversion program is formally ended. Not only had non-profits like Human NYC organized against it effectively, but it is actually the testimonies of people who experienced it that provided its most damning and effective indictments. In fact, the sole city council hearing on the matter was interrupted by people who have experience with homelessness making clear what a farce it was through a skit that saw these activists removed by council security. The NYPD’s “Homeless Outreach Unit” is disbanded, which is a significant win in creating distance from homeless people and the cops and decentering policing from “homeless outreach.” The NYPD is removed from overseeing security operations at shelters. These were some tangibly useful outcomes. The question of how to harness power to meet need is ever present in mutual aid, including in distinctions between “charity” and “solidarity,” between “reform” and “transformation” or “revolution.”

Queer Liberation March and Jail Support

As negotiations continue inside and activists sleep outside City Hall, New Yorkers celebrate pride weekend. The official pride parades were canceled as a result of COVID, yet local parades continue. Bikes zip and to and fro around the zone the night of the yearly Drag March. After a month of protests, no uptick in COVID cases had emerged among the groups of activists in attendance, almost universally wearing masks and staying in public.

Little did anyone expect it to be another example of the need for police reform, yet that is exactly what happened. That last Sunday in June, activists in the occupation join the Queer Liberation March for Black Lives and against Police Brutality, solidarity expanding. From Foley Square to Washington Square, some fifty thousand people peaceably march together,

converging at Washington Square Park. There, Jay Walker, Bill Cashman, and others see police "indiscriminately throwing innocent, non-violent Pride March attendees to the ground."

Alexis Danzig and Jamie Bauer, of Rise and Resist, try to de-escalate the scene and provide jail support for those who were arrested. The two activists describe the ways jail support functions as a form of mutual aid: "I learned everything I know about jail support during ACT UP," says Alexis Danzig. "Jail support matters because the through-line of direct action is solidarity to build skilled, resistant community. We plan actions together, in person; we listen carefully and democratically to each other to create strong, engaging, disruptive protest; we take care of each other during arrests and while in jail; and we ensure that there is on-site community—jail support—for each person arrested at an action we plan, as they are released. People are tired and sometimes disoriented after being arrested and processed; jail support is there to receive people and attend to their immediate needs, feed them and help them get home or to medical attention. Jail support connects people to the community of legal support—and solidarity continues through any court appearances. Sunday night after QLM the jail support community that's been active took over from us. They kept in touch with Reclaim Pride until everyone was released. It's a pleasure to work with responsible people from different communities, we share many similar ethics."

Jamie Bauer follows, "There are two different forms of support—one for organized civil disobedience with an expectation of arrests—and one for a situation where the police arrest without warning and all of a sudden there are unexpected arrests of people. Alexis and I are more used to the first situation. There is a great structure that's been set up for the second. The first keeps track of who's arrested, who needs to be contacted, medical concerns, etc. We keep track of who got out, charges, etc. It's a little easier because we know who we are looking for. Sunday was different because there was a lot of conflicting information and we didn't know who, and why. But either way, the NYPD knows we are out there waiting for people and we believe that helps make sure they don't get roughed up again or lost in the system."

Alexis recalls a new chant. "'Who keeps us safe(r)? We keep us safe(r)!' This is the sweet-spot where ACT UP generation really overlap with the new kids. I love that chant."

Amnesia and Mutual Aid in an Enchanted City

The crisis has exposed the best and the worst of our city. A doctor who works down the street tells us he's lost half his patients with COVID-19, sometimes fifty a day. It is nothing to be proud of he says during the nightly cheers for healthcare workers. "[T]his crisis has laid bare the routine processes of structural violence" the poor endure, notes social worker Jesse Bernstein. "The politics of disposability—the triage of who must be prioritized for survival and whose survival is up for debate or relegation—are in full display."

There's an adage in New Orleans, people care for each other when storms hit. It's a feeling of magic. Those are the times when we remember what is most important, that we are all in it together. We need each other. Unfortunately, such moments pass and we separate. It's better

to stick together. Yet that fellow feeling dims as people get back to business. AIDS activists saw the same sentiment take place with AIDS treatment. Peter Staley writes: “I know many are saying COVID will change things forever, creating a new normal. But I’m reminded of the post-plague years in the U.S. (starting in 1996), when the LGBT community pivoted away from AIDS before you could blink, almost as if it had never happened. The collective pain can create its own kind of backlash, where a ‘return to normal’ floods in quickly to help everyone forget (for a while). Sadly, I’m pretty sure a year after we get a vaccine, we’ll go right back to burning up the planet.”

Sixty thousand Americans died in the Vietnam War in some twenty years, while some 260,000 died of COVID-19 in the first year in the US, 1.41 million worldwide. And people are fighting about what it means. The amnesia express wants us to forget. But reminders are everywhere.

“Be good to everyone, LOVE” declares a mural painted on a boarded-up shop window in the Bowery in Lower Manhattan. The boarded-up walls of downtown are full of such displays. The streets look like art galleries, thanks to the creative flourishing of regular people. The implicit message: we should remember what it means to offer support. Each day, the papers carry more and more obits, stories of police abuse, and ever spiralizing crises. We still catch glimpses, the feeling of magic when people connect, providing food and care. It’s a place where colors fly off spray-paint cans; poetry grows of chance encounters among strangers conjuring an alchemy of ideas, approaches to care, support, and even joy. This is a place where we play in the rain or imagine other worlds; rituals invoke spirits, the dead dance with the living, and the faeries lead us into a blurry world in between. Here pieces of green find inspiration in the cracks in the sidewalk, crawling up from unknown worlds, eternal returns of the repressed. Cycling through these streets, one occasionally stumbles into a rally or a march, or garden, someone offering a hand, or occupied space, disappearing and reappearing in a critical mass. We find the homeless sleeping and more people marching, in deep appreciation of our collective humanity. All the while Thanatos, who lurks nearby leaving bodies in his wake, is held at bay, survivors consoled by mutual aid. Exploring these gestures of care, one witnesses a secret history of a distinct urban practice led by regular people, organizers and dreamers, faerie magic and a creative clash between a new colossus and Moloch. A sustainable urbanism requires mutual aid. At a time of plague, when the poor are left to make due, layoffs are rising, and a cavalcade of bodies are marching for something better, gestures of mutual aid are a reminder: we can reimagine the city.

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Toward Species Being

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The human species has reached a critical tipping point which poses an existential choice. If the species is not to be a victim of its own technological success and destroy itself in nuclear war or due to the effects of climate change, it is faced with the collective task of accomplishing a qualitative leap in evolution. This qualitative leap entails becoming not only a species-in-itself but a species-for-itself. The idea of a species-for-itself, it will be argued, is entailed by Marx's concept of species being.

To become a species-for-itself would be to become a species being. This would be the qualitative emergence of a new being, a new thing in the world that is (in a Durkheimian sense) a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Species being would be the reconciliation of individual and species, in the following way. The human being is a social being. The human being is a species being in so far as the human being is a social being. It is human *socialness,* as termed and elucidated by the sociologist of knowledge Harry M. Collins, that makes the human being a species being. This is because it is in their socialness that individuals transcend themselves as individual beings. Socialness is what constitutes the universalism of the human individual. Socialness is the fact of the individual's existence in, and as part of, a cultural world. Socialness is what makes the human individual a historical being, in the sense of a being that embodies their temporal existence, not only at a particular point in natural history, but at a particular point in the cultural (including technological) development of human societies and, as will be argued, of the human species. Species being is the reconciliation of individual and species because it is the reconciliation of society and species.

Species being exists, i.e., is realized, when human society is equal to (in other words, encompasses) the entire human species. This means that species being is global human society. But this entails a qualitative transformation of society, in the sense that society now becomes equal to the totality of biological being of the human species. So society as abstract collectivity becomes society as concrete biological entity (biological species). So society is realized as a real living material *being*. So the contradiction between social consciousness and social being is dissolved. This is the overcoming of the contradiction between idealism and materialism in the sense that human activity *qua* the activity of the biological species homo sapiens now becomes conscious activity, in the sense that the species consciously plans and regulates its species life. The way in which dialectical materialism overcomes the contradiction between mechanical materialism and Hegelian idealism is realized in the way in which species being overcomes the contradiction between human culture and human biology by creating a universal human culture, but also by making the species a cultural being in the sense that the

species, *qua* species, is capable of conscious thought and becomes self-conscious as such, in other words becomes a being for-itself. This is the reconciliation of the individual and species in the sense that the individual's socialness is now the constitution of the individual not only by society but by species-society. The social being of the individual becomes the species being of the individual. Socialness becomes *speciesness*. The individual will truly embody the species and therefore realize the universality of species being. Species-as-being entails the overcoming of the contradiction between individual (as conscious being) and species as abstract collective object. Individual being is constituted by species being as the species itself becomes a consciously-active, self-conscious, and self-directing, being. As social things becomes species things, society becomes species, species becomes a being and the individual truly becomes a *fully* social being by becoming a species being.

Species being is always, as Nick Dyer-Witheford puts it, *species becoming*.[1] This is in the sense that the human species is characterized by its self-making. Species being is therefore realized when species *becoming* is a self-conscious activity. The emergence of this qualitatively new entity, the global human species-for-itself, is necessary given that the objective existence of the human species in-itself has moved from being an abstract categorization to being a concrete reality in the sense that the human species has now emerged as an ecological force in its totality, i.e. now on a global scale rather than on local scales. This is the Athropocene. The human species is now objectively real in its totality in the way in which its metabolism with nature as a species now takes the form of a global process and a globally interconnected and interdependent process.[2] The human species now metabolizes nature *as a species* at a global level in an integrated way. The human species as global species must become a species being. To do so would be to realize human *species becoming*. Not to do so is to risk extinction. Therefore, the very existence of the human species is dependent on the expression and realization of the quality of the human being as species being.[3]

Paradoxically, however, the human species cannot make this choice *as a species to* become a species-for-itself, precisely because it is not *yet* a species for-itself. The human being *is* a species being, but the human species cannot *become* a species being because it does not exist as a being conscious of itself as such and capable of guiding and regulating itself as such. The human being is and is not a species being. And because the human being is not a species being it cannot *qua* human being, or *qua* human species, or *qua* humanity, make a decision to constitute itself as such. Humanity exists today only as an abstraction. In its concrete existence it appears not to exist *as humanity*, but only as humanity divided into classes, between nations, by ethnic and religious hatreds. Its biological division between sexes remains distorted by unequal power. As Marx said in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, man's natural relationship with woman, and therefore the natural relation of the species with itself, has yet to become a human relation. It remains an antagonistic symbiosis, a contradictory unity.[4]

The human species is a unity beset with contradictions. It is a divided unity. Divided, it has no unitary consciousness and only a divided (and therefore fetishistic) consciousness of itself. It is said that the photograph of the Earth rising above from the surface of the moon, viewing Earth as an external object, represented and created a new consciousness of the objective reality of

the Earth as global habitat and of the human species as a global entity. However, this was still global humanity conscious of itself as object, rather than as subject. For global humanity to constitute itself as subject, i.e. for-itself, would mean constituting itself as a *polis,* i.e. as a political entity, a collective entity capable of consciously steering and therefore regulating and giving direction to itself and its own action as a collective entity. This goal cannot be achieved on the basis of a politics of humanism, precisely because humanity is not a political entity. There is no such thing as humanity (as a political entity, as polis) to which humanism can appeal politically.

Species being, as the human species for-itself, is communism. Communism is a future state to be striven for as the "actual realization for man of man's essence."[5] This is why Marx wrote in *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, "Communism is the riddle of history solved, and it knows itself to be this solution."[6] This is why communism can be nothing less than a global society. Communism is the human species consciously directing its own self-development as a species. It is in the sense that communism is the global social self-organization of the species, and that it therefore represents the expansion of the social bond to the level of the species itself, that communism is "the complete return of man to himself as a *social* (i.e., human) being."[7] Communism, as species being, is the realization of the social nature of the species in the form of a species-level society.

Understanding species being as communism makes clear why this self-realization of the species cannot be achieved by appeals to the species itself. While communism is humanism, communism cannot be achieved on the basis of humanism. In class society, there is no human society, i.e. no collective existence of the human species as such. The human is, at this time, only an abstract concept. Humanism, as philosophy, appeals to this abstract human. It appeals to the idea of humanity because humanity currently is only an idea. What enables the achievement of communism, and therefore the concretization of humanism, is the concrete existence of human beings who are *only* human. The proletarian is the human being *reduced to* being human. Therefore, the proletariat can only liberate itself by realizing itself as human and therefore by bringing humanity into concrete existence. For that reason, the proletariat has, as Marx put it, "radical chains": its emancipation requires the emancipation and self-realization of the species. The proletariat carries with it the destiny of the species. The realization of species being, in other words the coming into being of the species as a species-subject, is an existential question, to be or not to be. If the human species does not become a subject, then it may cease to exist even as object.

Species Being from Feuerbach to Marx and Engels to Durkheim… and forward again to Marx and Engels

"There is no other road for you to *truth* and *freedom* except that leading *through* the stream of fire (the *Feuer-bach*)," Marx wrote in an 1842 challenge to the Young Hegelians.[8] The importance of Marx's own journey through the fiery brook is attested by the place of the concept of species being in the 1844 Paris Manuscripts and the homology between Marx's critique of alienation under capitalism (from the 1844 Manuscripts through to the critique of

commodity fetishism in Capital) and Feuerbach's critique of religious alienation.

Species being is Feuerbach's conceptualization of what is distinctive to the human. Only the human being, and no other species, is a species being. The concept of species being refers to the universality of the human being, or the fact that the individual human is always something greater than an individual. For Feuerbach, the distinguishing feature of humanity, in relation to the animal is consciousness, which Feuerbach equated with self-consciousness and with knowledge. The knowing subject, for Feuerbach, is a subject that knows itself. The concept of species being is integral to Feuerbach's critique of religion because it is species being that is the human essence alienated in and through human beings' projection of their essence into God. Zawar Hanfi writes, "Feuerbach's philosophy… proclaimed… man as a being of plenitude capable of pouring himself into the infinite richness of religion, art, and philosophy. The *Essence of Christianity* showed that the plenitude of God is the plenitude of man."[9] Feuerbach argues in the following way: human beings know God through knowing the predicates of God, in other words what are God's qualities, characteristics, attributes, or determinations. In relativist anthropological terms, Feuerbach argues that each society's God or Gods are images reflecting what the people of that society regard and treat their own essential qualities as a people. Feuerbach writes:

You cannot take away a Greek from the quality of being a Greek without taking away his existence. Hence, it is of course true that for a particular religion—that is, relatively—the certainty of the existence of God is immediate; for just as arbitrarily or necessarily the Greek was Greek, so necessarily were his gods Greek beings, so necessarily were they really existing beings. In view of its understanding of the world and man, religion is identical with the essence of man.[10]

Every human society recognizes its essential humanity in its image of the divine. These images or pantheons only reflect what each particular society, arbitrarily and relatively, considers to be necessarily human.

What all the predicates attached to gods have in common is that they are human predicates, in other words they are qualities or characteristics of human beings. In knowing their Gods, human beings are knowing themselves. Human beings are social beings, that exist within particular societies and so their self-knowledge, alienated in its projection into God, is their knowledge of themselves as members of a particular society e.g. Greek. Therefore what they recognize in their God is not their essential humanness but only what is, arbitrarily and particularly, essential to their particular social existence, for example their Greekness.

Feuerbach abstracts from all these particular qualities and therefore particular social modes of self-knowledge of particular concrete human beings in particular societies in particular times and places. He says that what all these particular Gods, pantheons, and religions have in common is that they are ways in which human beings have known themselves. So what all these human beings, with their different characteristics, values, self-conceptions and, therefore, different religions, have in common is that they are knowing themselves. What is

essential to humanity, therefore, is self-knowledge or consciousness. What Descartes arrived at in his *cogito*, his own existence as thinking subject, is mirrored at the level of species in Feuerbach's reflection on religion. It is consciousness itself that is the common characteristic and essential truth of all religion. This essential truth is that the human being, the creator of religion, is essentially a conscious being, a being that knows itself. Only the human being, Feuerbach argued, possessed knowledge as such and only the human being is a self-conscious being.[11] According to Feuerbach, it is in their consciousness that the human individual transcends their individual existence and is a species being.

Consciousness is infinite, therefore the human being as a conscious being is an infinite being. This is in the sense that, since the human being is not tied to a particular niche within nature, the human being can cognize all of nature. This also means that consciousness can transcend the finite in the sense that the human being is conscious of the infinite as an idea. Religion in this consciousness of infinity. But whereas Descartes said that the consciousness of infinity was proof of the existence of a transcendent infinite being, God, Feuerbach argues that it is precisely the Cartesian thinking subject, the human being, that is infinite, by virtue of their very self-consciousness. It is due to the fact that the human lifeworld has no natural limits that there exists the anthropological diversity of human essences that different people(s) have projected into their gods. The diversity of human societies manifests the infinity of the human being. This very diversity, and the inherent openness of existence that it represents, is the key to the human essence. Infinitude of being is itself the human essence.[12] The human being is an infinite being by virtue of the infinite multiplicity of ways being human, i.e. infinite predicates of humanness. This is manifested in the diversity of predicates attached to God and therefore the diversity of characteristics in which human beings recognize themselves. In other words, there is a potentially infinite variety of ways of being human. All of these ways of being human, involve, require, and are reflected in, self-consciousness. Therefore, there is a potentially infinite variety of images of self, or self-consciousnesses, and therefore consciousness is infinite. Hence in art, "Human form cannot be regarded as limited and finite, because even if it were so the artistic-creative sprit could easily remove the limits and conjure up a higher form from it."[13]

Consciousness has no limits in the further sense that it is not limited in its object. Feuerbach writes, "The being of man is no longer a particular, and subjective, but a universal being, for man has the whole universe as the object of his drive for knowledge."[14] The universality of knowledge, in the sense of its unlimited expanse of its object, constitutes science. According to Hanfi, Feuerbach's statement that "Science is the consciousness of species" refers to this ability of the human being, as self-knowing being or species being, to be "an other knowing being. Because of this span, knowledge has the character of science."[15]

There is an inherent difficulty, Hanfi points out, in the relationship between Feuerbach's anthropological materialism and his philosophy of consciousness. Feuerbach's concretization of consciousness in matter, in the biological human being, is necessary for his break with Hegelian idealism which was the very source of attraction of his new philosophy described by Engels: "The spell was broken; the 'system' was exploded and cast aside… One must have

experienced the liberating effect of this book to get an idea of it. Enthusiasm was general; we all became at once Feuerbachians."[16] But as Hanfi says, the notion that religion reveals consciousness and that this is the human essence is in tension with Feuerbach's materialism:

After what we have learned of Feuerbach's anti-idealist stance, this ascertainment comes as an anti-climax. It may be argued in defense of Feuerbach that he is not hypostatizing consciousness as a metaphysical entity in its own right, but referring to human consciousness… Be that as it may, there is an innate difficulty in the materialist philosophy of Feuerbach which keeps him imprisoned in the realm of self-consciousness, his criticism of Hegel notwithstanding. Marx's later rejection of Feuerbach is motivated precisely by the necessity to abandon the realm of consiousness, should the reality of man and his world be salvaged from its mystifying explanations.[17]

Feuerbach argues that the essence of religion is self-consciousness and that this is the projected or alienated essence of man, the concrete biological and anthropological human being. But how do these two directions of Feuerbach's argument meet? How does consciousness attach to the self of the material human being? Like Descartes, whose *cogito* his reasoning mirrors, Feuerbach remains trapped in dualism.

It is this dualism that Marx overcomes dialectically through conceiving of human knowledge and consciousness as active rather than contemplative and as social rather than individual. Feuerbach, Marx argues the first of the *Theses on Feuerbach*, posits a contemplative subject that sensuously knows the world but the essence of which is not sensuous but consciousness abstracted and removed from the sensuous world of nature which is the object of this consciousness: "The chief defect of all previous materialism (including Feuerbach) is that the object, actuality, sensuousness is conceived only in the form of the object or perception [*Anschauung*], not subjectively…. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects actually different from thought objects: but he does not comprehend human activity itself as *objective*."[18] In other words the dualistic divide between consciousness and nature is dissolved by recognition of the fact that the human being develops consciousness in material practical activity within nature, coming to know nature by actively transforming it.

Marx specifically takes up the question of scientific knowledge, in response to the central position that science occupies in Feuerbach's conceptualization of the universality of consciousness. Marx pinpoints the weakness in Feuerbach's discussion of science as being the individualist conception of the subject. Feuerbach's anthropological transformation of Hegel returns consciousness to the human, showing that the universality of mind is that of the human being, a material, biological being, thinking "with the help of a brain" as Lenin later made the case.[19] But in so doing, Feuerbach shrinks the subject from the Absolute to the human individual, the privatized subject of bourgeois society.

Feuerbach treats thought as a fundamentally private affair. "No one else can think for me," he (somewhat, but not entirely) reasonably points out.[20] But this also means that, as something fundamentally private, the process of thinking is mysterious. Feuerbach's discussion of science

tortuously attempts to reconcile this individual and privatist conception of the subject with the universality of consciousness to which he connects this private subject. A dimension of the universality of consciousness is the collective nature of science, which suggests the supra-individual character of knowledge in general. Science, as knowledge that is written, formalized, and institutionalized, could be taken to locate knowledge in collective forms apart from and above the individual. But Feuerbach is not prepared to make this (later Durkheimian) move away from the Enlightenment individual subject. His solution is to split the difference by way of a distinction between knowledge and demonstration. While knowledge is private, demonstration is public. In speaking of demonstration, Feuerbach acknowledges the social character of science, the fact that knowledge is communicated, so that "demonstrating is not just a relationship of the thinker to himself or of a thought that is imprisoned within itself to itself, but the relationship of the thinker to others."[21]

In his discussion of demonstration, Feuerbach comes extremely close to a conception of knowledge as essentially social rather than individual. Indeed, he seems exactly to propose the sociality of knowledge while he is in the process of denying it. Feuerbach writes:

It is of course true that man can be self-sufficient because he knows himself to be a whole, because he distinguishes himself from himself, and because he can be the other to himself; man speaks to and converses with himself, and because he knows that his thought would not be his own if it were also not—at least as a possibility—the thought of others.[22]

Feuerbach here describes the universality of the human individual, in the sense that the human being can regard themselves as an object, thereby taking the perspective of a universal subject, the species, which as such is indifferent to the individual. Therefore, it is by taking the perspective of the species that the individual is able to dispassionately or objectively cognize themselves.[23] It is by taking this objective view of himself that man knows that his thoughts could also be held by others. This, one wishes to say, is exactly the universality of species being, in that the individual's thoughts are not private, because the individual is aware that they could be held, I.e. shared, by others. Indeed, the thought necessarily has the potential to be shared. The thought could not be had by the individual if it were not potentially had by others. But Feuerbach does not explain how it is, other than coincidence, that the thought is shared. This is a problem precisely because for Feuerbach, the thought is in principle private.

It is, nevertheless, is a strange defense of solipsism to argue that the individual can be "self-sufficient," in the sense of being indifferent to the thoughts of others, because he is aware of the *lack* of uniqueness of his most "inner" thoughts. There are probably others who think what I'm thinking, so I don't need to tell anyone what I'm thinking. Feuerbach acknowledges that this is an unlikely position, for "In reality, we are not indifferent; the urge to communicate is a fundamental urge—the urge for truth. We become conscious and certain of truth only through the other, even if not through this or that accidental other. That which is true belongs neither to me nor exclusively to you, but is common to all."[24] Again, Feuerbach seems to suggest the necessarily shared and social character of knowledge, but in fact errs on the side of individualism. Demonstration, he insists, is only communication not the constitution of

knowledge. The knowledge that is communicated exists pre-communicated as "the *forms of reason* as such; i.e. forms of an inner act of thought and cognition."[25] Reason as such is a property of the individual, who is able to cognize what is communicated and this cognition is an internal process of the individual, "our inner act of cognition."[26] It is the universality of abstract reason, manifested and operative in the understanding of individuals, that brings individual minds into convergence with one another.

It is reason itself that compels agreement on the truth. According to Feuerbach, it is the truth of a statement that produces agreement. Truth is the precondition not the result of agreement. Truth produces agreement by the action of reason. Paradoxically, therefore, Feuerbach's materialist concretization of the Hegelian Subject in the human individual, establishes nevertheless the transcendent form of reason over and above any individual. How this transcendent reason is articulated with the individual mind is mysterious. Feuerbach takes the position that the teacher is dependent upon the student's innate ability to understand. Understanding is an ineffable and mysterious process:

Plato is meaningless and non-existent for someone who lacks understanding; he is a blank sheet to one who cannot link ideas that correspond with his words…. To bestow understanding does not lie in the power of philosophy, for understanding is presupposed by it.[27]

So Feuerbach's philosopher faces the very same infinite regress that Lewis Carroll illustrated with his dialogue between the Tortoise and Achilles, in which Carroll shows that a formal logical proof cannot convince unless there is a pre-existing agreement or willingness to submit to the compulsion of logic. No formal argument can compel acceptance without there being prior acceptance of the principle according to which it should compel acceptance.[28] Feuerbach falls back on the idea of understanding as an innate capacity of the individual, arising from "the development, as it were, of a spiritual matter lying within me that is as yet indeterminate but, nevertheless, capable of assuming all determinations."[29] This spiritual matter, the carrier of impersonal reason, is capable of understanding, capable therefore of knowing, and the shared knowledge only gives a particular "form" to this spiritual substance. So the philosopher is able to communicate and achieve understanding in the other because they are working with this pre-existing spiritual matter. But what this paradoxically dualistic "spiritual matter" is remains mysterious.

Feuerbach resolves the human essence into consciousness. What gives individual consciousness its universality is reason. The pineal gland, so to speak, that connects universal immaterial reason with the particular material human being, and therefore makes possible understanding, is for Feuerbach "spiritual matter" that inheres in the individual. It would seem to be this "spiritual matter" to which Marx refers when he writes, in Thesis 6, "But the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual."[30] Feuerbach's human essence, consciousness, constantly threatens to overspill the boundaries of the individual cranium that maintain its privacy. This is most significant in his acknowledgement, within his discussion of demonstration, of the necessity of language for knowledge. Here, Feuerbach states:

"To demonstrate is to show that what I am saying is true, is to lead expressed thought back to its source," in other words to lead thought from the understanding of one individual to the understanding of another and thereby back to its source in thought. "[P]hilosophy," he asserts "does not speak in order to speak… but in order *not* to speak, that is in order to *think*." Thinking, says Feuerbach, is private, whereas speaking is public. So language is, for Feuerbach, only the medium of thought not its essence.

Yet, Feuerbach also says,

Language is nothing other than the *realization of the species*; i.e. the "I" is mediated with the "You" in order, by eliminating their individual separateness, to manifest the unity of the species.[31]

The notion of language as the "realization of the species" would seem to entail the involvement of language in the human essence, in other words the unity of language and consciousness. But Feuerbach specifically rejects this. While truth can be communicated with language, each individual can only recognize the truth for themselves, through their own innate power of reason. Rather than a social process by which language mediates the thoughts of individuals and unifies them, Feuerbach regards communication and demonstration as connecting each individual with a truth and reason that is impersonal and in that way the property of the species itself. He writes:

We become conscious and certain of truth only through the other, even if not through this or that accidental other. That which is true belongs neither to me nor exclusively to you, but is common to all. The thought in which "I" and "You" are united is a true thought. This unification is the confirmation, sign, and affirmation of truth only because it is itself already the truth. That which unites is true and good.[32]

So, paradoxically, Feuerbach, the materialist who returns Hegelian universal reason to the concrete, embodied, sensuous, material individual, at the same time hypostatizes truth and reason as impersonal and abstract and existing above any concrete individuals. Reason only unites individuals in an abstract way with the species which now appears as an abstract not concrete or merely "accidental" other. So in separating language from thought, Feuerbach constructs a new separation of the individual from the species, rendering asunder the unity of species being.

It is the remaining abstractness both of species and of individual that Marx struggles against. In thesis 6, Marx observes that Feuerbach posits an "abstract—isolated—human individual" and posits "species" as "the inner, dumb generality." Marx writes in thesis 7 that "Feuerbach does not see… that the abstract individual he analyzes belongs to a particular form of society." The abstractness of Feuerbach's individual and species is overcome by Marx through an understanding of the individual as an inherently social being and the relationship between the individual and the universal as being mediated by the social. In thesis 10: "The standpoint of the old materialism is civil society" i.e. the merely abstract unity of atomized bourgeois

individuals in market relations. Whereas "the standpoint of the new is human society or socialized humanity."[33] Marx's concept of species being advances beyond Feuerbach by conceptualizing species being as *social* being, and doing so not abstractly but in the concrete sense of the historical development of real human societies *toward* universality[34]

The ability of the human individual to be more than an individual is not due to their contemplation of transcendent truth or due to some ineffable "spiritual matter" within them, but, rather, arises from their practical social activity in nature, through which human beings, collectively, transform the world and transform themselves in the process. Hence, as Marx states in thesis 5, thought and perception of the world arise in "*practical*, human-sensuous activity," and in thesis 8, "All social life is essentially practical.[35] The human being is a practical, world-changing and self-changing being. This is so because the human being is a social being. Marx writes that "the individual is the social being. His life… is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life."[36] Being social necessarily consists in practical activity.

This practical social activity is labor. It is widely understood that labor is intrinsic to Marx's conception of species being and therefore to his understanding of human nature. This has been misunderstood to mean that Marx puts forward a conception of *homo faber* and therefore to support a view of Marxism as, to use Anthony Giddens' term, "productivist."[37] In other words, it is claimed that Marxism is a doctrine that one-sidedly equates human flourishing with production and technology. Lewis Mumford, treating Marx's conception of human nature as a version of *homo faber*, argued that Marx followed the pattern of modernity in succumbing to the "myth of the machine," whereby human progress is equated with technological development and the objective manifestations of culture are valued over and above the subjective, imaginative, and aesthetic.[38] This misreading of Marx, with its implication that Marxism is an anti-ecological doctrine and its implicit equation of Marxism with Stalinism, has been comprehensively debunked, in particular by John Bellamy Foster's retrieval of the ecological dimensions of Marx and Engels' writings.[39] The equation of Marx's conception of human nature with "productivism" and therefore with a one-sided objectivism which denigrates subjectivity, depends on a non-dialectical reading of Marx's writings on human nature. It neglects the fundamental dialectal interconnectedness between the objective and subjective aspects of labor, between nature and humanity, between the human transformation of nature and self-transformation, and between objective knowledge of the world and reflexive self-consciousness of human beings as individuals, societies, and species.

Labor, Marx writes in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, is the expression of human life. It is "*productive life* itself."[40] The human being is like any other animal in that they live on "inorganic nature," that is, nature external to their own organism i.e. their own body. It is true of any animal that the plants and other animals that they consume constitute their "inorganic body" in the sense that their physical existence depends on the energy that they take in from their environment. Hence Marx writes that "man (like the animal) lives on inorganic nature." The crucial difference is that, in comparison with other species, human beings are less fixed in what parts of nature they live on. Marx writes that "the more universal man is compared with

an animal, the more universal is the sphere of inorganic nature on which he lives." This could be understood simply in relation to the omnivorous nature of human beings, in comparison with, say, a koala bear, which eats only eucalyptus leaves, or a panda bear, which eats only bamboo shoots. Human beings likewise depends on the "products of nature whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling etc." But in contrast with a koala or panda bear, "The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes *all* nature his inorganicbody."[41] The human interchange with nature is more variegated, flexible, and all-encompassing than that of other species. This universal quality of the way in which the human takes in and lives on inorganic nature arises from labor, the ability of humans to transform the natural world and to do so consciously.

Marx's discussion clearly echoes Feuerbach's conception of man as "a cosmopolitan being," able to "have the cosmos as its object."[42] Like Feuerbach, Marx emphasizes science and art as expressions of this universality. Marx writes:

> *plants, animals, stones, air, light, etc., constitute theoretically a part of human consciousness, partly as objects of natural science, partly as objects of art—his spiritual inorganic nature, spiritual nourishment which he must first prepare to make palatable and digestible.*[43]

But Marx here shows how this spiritual appreciation of nature itself depends on practice, the practice whereby raw nature is made "palatable and digestible," or transformed in such a way that it can be understood, appreciated, and represented in science and art. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels make the point even more directly and forcefully in relation to science (establishing the basis for a distinctively Marxist materialist history of science):

> *Feuerbach speaks in particular of the viewpoint of natural science. He mentions secrets disclosed only to the eye of the physicist and chemist. But where would natural science be without industry and commerce? Even this "pure" natural science receives its aim, like its material, only through commerce and industry, through the sensuous activity of men.*[44]

The dependence of science on the development of the forces of production, as well as its reciprocal contribution to this development, makes clear Marx's broader point that the human cognition of the world is not merely contemplative and not even only sensuous, but is consciously and actively sensuous, in other words practical. Human beings come to know the world in the process of transforming it. So the cosmopolitan nature of the human being arises not only from the potential universality of human knowledge but also from the potential universality of human practical activity in nature.

Like Feuerbach, Marx uses species being to designate what is distinctively human. All species

possess what Marx calls a “species character.” “The whole character of a species,” he writes,” “—its species character—is contained in the character of its life activity.”[45] Species being is Marx’s term for the distinctive species character of homo sapiens. What distinguishes human life activity from that of other animals is reflexivity. This reflexivity of human life activity consists in self-consciousness but not only that; it also consists in self-conscious *activity,* activity guided by knowledge. The human being is inherently split in its being, in the sense that it is not one with and existing within its life activity, but is able to reflect on itself and its own activity as if from without. Marx writes,

> *The animal is immediately one with its life activity. It does not distinguish itself from it. It is its life activity. Man makes his life activity itself the object of his will and of his consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity.*[46]

The human being does not merge with their activity.[47] This splitness is what Erich Fromm would later delineate in terms of the inherent problem of separateness that confronts the human being in and through their self-awareness and freedom, making the human being “the freak of nature,” and “the only being for whom it is possible to feel apart while being a part.”[48] This is also what Giddens calls the “existential dilemma” that characterizes humanity, the very existence of a question “how should I live?,” entailing reflexive awareness.[49] Indeed the very possibility of a question entails such awareness. This is also the source of the problem of comprehending one’s place in the universe and the condition in which it becomes possible to know, and to fear, that one will die. It is the awareness that is the source of, and is therefore accompanied by, dread. This is at the root of religion.[50]

This reflexivity in human action and thought is what constitutes species being and at the same time it arises from species being. Hence Marx writes, “Conscious life activity distinguishes man immediately from animal life activity. It is just because of this that he is a species being. Or rather, it is only because he is a species being that he is a conscious being, i.e., that his own life is an object for him.”[51] Species being gives birth to itself. This is comprehensible, firstly, and I will argue most significantly, in terms of Marx’s notion that human activity is social activity and historical activity and, secondly, in the sense that the transformation of nature is a reflexive process in the course of which the human becomes aware of themselves.

How it is that species being is the cause of conscious being should be understood in terms of Marx’s statement in thesis 6 that “the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relations.”[52] The essence of the human being is reflexivity, in other words, the split between the individual consciousness and the immediate flow of their life activity such that it is possible for the individual to reflect on their activity. This recursiveness or reflexivity is, however, not merely an individual process. It is a process in which individuals cooperate with one another, deliberate and plan. It is a process

which involves the formation of shared standards against which activities may be judged. The sociality of practice is inherently bound up with language. Hence Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology*, "Language is as old as consciousness. It is practical consciousness which exists also for other men and hence exists for me personally as well."[53] This seems to suggest the inseparability of language and consciousness. Timothy Crippen writes that in Marx, "The origin of consciousness is, therefore, identified with an emergent collective awareness of a biosocial environment and is roughly equivalent to the origin of language."[54] In language, consciousness exists for both self and other. If language is practice and consciousness arises in this *social* practice, since language is necessarily a relation beyond the self, then consciousness arises within and from social practice. Marx and Engels write:

> *Language, like consciousness, only arises from the need and necessity of relationships with other men. ((My relationship to my surroundings is my consciousness.)) Where a relationship exists, it exists for me. The animal has no "relations" with anything, no relations at all. Its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is thus from the very beginning a social product and will remain so as long as men exist.*[55]

Consciousness is not private and solipsistic but always arises from the human relationship with what is external to them – "inorganic nature" and other human beings. The relationship of human beings with inorganic nature is always socially organized and mediated. So consciousness, as reflexivity, arises from the social relations of the individual and these social relations are necessarily mediated and constituted through language. It is in this way, Marx gives new meaning and significance to Feuerbach's statement that "language is the realization of the species." It is in and through language that the human being is a social being and it is as a social being that the human is a species being.

Marx's argument regarding the human ability to separate themselves from their life activity could be understood as anticipating George Herbert Mead's distinction between "the I" and "the Me" as phases of action and consciousness. Similarly, Marx's statements that in language consciousness exists "for other men and hence exists for me personally as well" and that "Consciousness is thus from the very beginning a social product" may be understood as aligning with Mead's conception of how self-consciousness arises in social interaction by taking the view of the other. It is precisely the social interaction with the other that enables the individual to cognize themselves as if from the other and therefore to achieve self-consciousness.[56] It is, in Mead's argument, through the comprehension of "the generalized other," or society as a Durkheimian social thing that transcends all individuals that the individual is able to conceive of themselves in an impersonal, objective way, achieving that dispassionate perspective on the self to which Feuerbach referred when he wrote:

> *The species is is indifferent to the individual. The reflecting individual carries the*

> *consciousness of the species within himself, which means that he can transcend his "now-being," regard it as of no consequence, and anticipate by imagination a "not-being" in opposition to his "now-being."*[57]

Mead's concept of the generalized other provides a sociological understanding of Feuerbach's notion of "the consciousness of the species within himself," and hence the universality of the human individual. This sociological understanding of how the individual transcends themselves in turn sheds light on Marx's thesis that "the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relations." To say that the human essence is "the ensemble of social relations" is to say that the ability of the individual to be reflexive about their own action, and therefore not to "merge" with their life-activity, arises from the individual's reflection of the "ensemble of social relations" in their own mind and activity. It is, further, to say that the individual realizes themselves as human in their social existence, i.e. in their contribution to the production of a social world, the very social world that gives meaning and purpose to their individual action and that makes this action distinct from the behavior of animals. The language that an individual speaks, which is essential to their consciousness, is not their creation but exists as a feature and product of "the ensemble of social relations."

Language, as quintessential social practice, is key to unlocking the mystery of understanding that Feuerbach formulated in terms of "spiritual matter." Marx writes in thesis 8 that "All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of this practice." This is true of the mystery of understanding that leads Feuerbach into the mysticism of "spiritual matter." The mystery of understanding arises from the fact that I can't think for someone, the privacy of mind. However, the privacy of mind is belied by the shared nature of language. Understanding is not more mysterious, or any less, than learning to ride a bicycle. It is practice. The riddle of the Tortoise and Achilles has its solution in practice, as Peter Winch argues. He writes, "Learning to infer is not just a matter of being taught about explicit logical relations between propositions; it is learning *to do* something."[58] The ability to grasp an idea, the ability to follow certain patterns of inference (rather than others), the ability to follow a set of instructions or rules (to act according to those rules) is a practice, and as such is necessarily a *social* practice, a practice embedded in what Winch, following Wittgenstein, calls "a form of life." Collins puts the idea as follows:

> *[A]s a member of the Azande you can divine a witch but you cannot take out a mortgage, whereas, as a British person you can take out a mortgage but you cannot divine a witch; divining witches is constitutive of being a member of the Azande but not of being British, and taking out a mortgage is constitutive of being British but not of being an Azande… According to Winch, what it is to belong to a form of life is to share the concepts and engage in the actions that define that collectivity.*[59]

What enables a person either to divine a witch or take out a mortgage is their ability to belong

to a form of life. The ability to belong to a form of life (in this sense of the life of a social collectivity) is a distinctively human quality or capacity, which Collins calls "socialness."[60]

Socialness is the ability to *be* Azande or to *be* British. Collins locates the concept of socialness at the heart of sociology. He writes: "The lasting heart of sociology as a unique discipline with its own identity is the idea of the social. The starting point is Durkheim, along with the sociology of knowledge: humans are constituted by societies." Sociology, along these lines "instead of treating humans as the elements that constitute social collectivities, it treats humans as made out of collectivities—as made up of things that are larger than themselves rather than smaller."[61] Durkheim expresses this very idea, in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, as follows: "For that which makes a man is the totality of the intellectual property which constitutes civilization, and civilization is the work of society."[62] The most basic form of this intellectual property of a society is language itself. Durkheim repeatedly characterized language as "a social thing in the highest degree."[63] Indeed, Durkheim argues, that language, and therefore the organized social group, "civilization," is essential to humanness, so that a "human being is only a human being to the degree that the person is civilized."[64] In this way, Durkheim clearly locates the human essence, what makes a human being human, as deriving from outside the individual. The notion that it is the "totality" of the "work of society" that makes "a man," a human individual, holds the key to the mystery of understanding posited by Feuerbach and to the difference, as a result, between human beings and other entities like computers. Human social action is not merely "mimeomorphic," in the sense of replicating a set pattern of behavior. Collins and Martin Kusch argue that it is "polimorphic," in the sense that it is formed by and within a *polis*, in the sense of a collectivity, a totality of society, a culture, so the meaning of the action is sensitive to social context of the action.[65]

Collins and Kusch's conception of human action as polymorphic corresponds with Marx's conception of the human being as "in the most literal sense a *zoon politicon*, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society."[66] This is key, in turn, to understanding Marx's claim that "the essence of man is no abstraction inhering in each single individual. In its actuality it is the ensemble of social relations" and therefore for elucidating the concept of species being. "Socialness," Collins argues, "is a property of species located in most but not all individuals of a specie" It is a human capacity that distinguishes the human species, although it is lacking in some human individuals, for example, the severely autistic or feral children. It is a capacity, which depends on having a certain kind of brain function or developing skills as a result of early childhood socialization and lived experience of interaction embedded within a group. It does inhere in individuals in that sense, quintessentially as the cognitive capacity of an individual to learn and use a language fluently. This capacity has to do, in part, with the structure of the brain. But even in this, the structure of the brain is the product of millennia of evolution exceeding the lifetime of any particular human brain. But also, the content of socialness and social fluency, does not "inhere" in the individual. Collins writes: "The content of a social fluency – a culture – is located in a society and varies from society to society and from time to time Thus, no individual can be said to be the location of a culture, merely the participant in it."[67] It is in this sense that

a culture transcends the individual and exists outside the individual that society, as Durkheim said, is an objective thing that transcends the individual. It is in the sense that the individual is capable of consciousness only due to their embeddedness in a form of life that, as Marx said, the human "essence… is the ensemble of social relations."

The individual self cannot exist, i.e. there cannot be self-consciousness, without the existence of the individual within a web of social interactions (social relations, their embeddedness in society and therefore their embeddedness within a cultural world of meanings). This depends on the generalized other, which is not only the representation, but the outcome, of "the ensemble of social relations." However, there is more and more of a gap between the reality of the ensemble of social relations and their representation in the form of generalized other. The dominant collective representation of society as totality remains that of the nation culturally and of the nation-state politically, in the sense that the locus of social belonging and of membership in a political community is the nation-state. Indeed, Durkheim's sociology was part of the modern process of constituting society as the nation-state and replacing religious self-identification with a secular nationalist civic religion. The collective self-representation of society as nation-state is, however, increasingly at odds with the reality of the "ensemble of social relations."

As a result of globalization, the ensemble of social relations increasingly overspills the boundaries of the nation-state. The nation-state is a fetter on these global social relations. This is not to say that the nation was ever natural. Its boundaries were constructed through coercion and exclusion and subordination of regions, ethnic groups, etc., or what Zygmunt Bauman calls the active "gardening" of society, trimming social relations within its borders.[68] But the nation-state for a certain period of time corresponded, for example, with the direction of the construction of national markets. The emergence of the nation-state, taking place within and propelled by, the development of modern capitalism, always was in contradiction with the inherently globalizing tendency of capitalism as.a world system. Imperialism is capitalism's solution to the contradiction between nation-state and global economy, achieved through the domination of the world by the most powerful capitalist nation-states.[69] Since the unleashing of the inter-imperialist maelstrom of World War One, and especially with the development and use of atomic weapons in World War Two, this imperialist solution to the contradiction between nation-state and global economy has threatened the very future of the world. But the tension arising from this contradiction has been ratcheted up further with the current period of globalization since the 1970s, which has gone beyond the globalization of commerce, trade and finance, and produced the globalization of production.[70] Information and communication technologies have not only facilitated the coordination of globally distanciated supply chains and networks of production but have also woven together a global media and cosmopolitan consumer culture, while migration has increasingly produced cultural cosmopolitanism that renders the myths of national identity increasingly at odds with the realities of cultural complexity. The upsurge of a virulent nationalism in recent years is a reactionary backlash against forces that are inexorably battering the 'Chinese walls' of nation-states.[71] What Collins calls the "fractal" of collectivities that make up the individual less and less correspond with or sit inside the cultural boundaries of national identity.[72] The real forms of life are at odds with

their collective representation in the nation. Whereas Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology* said of the philosophers that "The phantoms of their imagination have gotten too big for them," we might now say of the available collective representations of bourgeois society that these phantoms of imagination are *too small*.[73]

This contradiction between real forms of life and their ideational (and institutional) collective representations has at its root the contradiction between the forces and relations of production and, deriving from this, the contradiction between economic base and political superstructure. This points to the difference between the Marxist and the Durkheimian conceptions of social being, and the basic philosophical division between materialism and idealism. This is the fundamental statement in *The German Ideology* that "It is not consciousness that determines life, but life that determines consciousness."[74] Practice is a unity between thought and embodied material action, but this is a dialectical, contradictory unity. It is possible for thought to misrepresent and be out of step with action. Hence, as history is human practice, prevailing forms of consciousness at a certain time can come into contradiction with, and therefore misrepresent, the real relations of human life (and these misrepresentations can be systematically produced from the contradictory character of practical human life, for example the contradiction manifested in the class division of life).

The human being is a reflexive being. This reflexivity consists in the lack of merger between the human being and their activity, the human ability to cognitively remove themselves from their activity, so as to be aware of themselves and their own life-activity. This self-consciousness arises, as I have argued, in and from human socialness, i.e. from the fact that the human essence consists in "the ensemble of social relations." But the ensemble of social relations consists of practice, i.e. both thought and action combined, and this means action in the material world of nature. The practice that constitutes and produces social relations is labor (as a unity of thought and action, but also a contradictory unity under class society due to the division between intellectual and manual labor).

Labor is the conscious transformation of matter. Marx writes:

> *Man is directly a natural being… as a natural, corporeal, sensuous, objective being he is a suffering, conditioned and limited creature, like animals and plants. That is to say, the objects of his instincts exist outside him, as objects independent of him; yet these objects are objects that he needs – essential objects, indispensable to the manifestation and confirmation of his essential powers. To say that man is a corporeal, living, real, sensuous objective being full of natural vigor is to say that he has real, sensuous objects as the objects of his being or of his life, or that he can only express his life in real, sensuous objects. To be objective, natural and sensuous, and at the same time to have object, nature and sense outside oneself, or oneself to be object, nature and sense for a third party, is one and the same thing. Hunger is natural need; it therefore needs a nature outside itself, an object outside itself, in order to satisfy itself, to be stilled. Hunger is an acknowledged need of my body for*

an object outside it.[75]

The active striving for the external object, feeling hunger and need, is suffering in the lack of the object and a passion to attain the object: "Man as an objective, sensuous being is therefore a suffering being –and because he feels what he suffers, a passionate being. Passion is the essential force of man energetically bent on its object."[76] Marx describes human passion as "the sensuous outburst of my life activity… which thus becomes the activity of my being."[77] Rejecting a one-sided idealist view of human being merely as an abstract mind, Marx set out from the reality of the human individual as embodied. He based his outlook on an understanding of the human individual as sensuous, desiring, and actively engaged in the real world of nature in order to sustain their material, corporeal being.

Hence it is not only in consciousness that the human being is distinct from the animal as a species being, but in material practice. Marx and Engels write in *The German Ideology*,

> *Man… begins to distinguish himself from the animal the moment he begins to produce his means of subsistence, a step required by his physical organization. By producing food, man indirectly produces his material life as well.*[78]

This very point regarding food, and its implications for historical materialism, was developed later by Engels in a more concrete post-Darwinian anthropogeny in the chapter of his *Dialectics of Nature* titled "The Part Played by Labor in the Transition from Ape to Man." Here, Engels writes that "Labour… is the primary basic condition for all human existence, and this to such an extent that, in a sense, we have to say that labour created man himself."[79] This means that the human being gives birth to themselves through their own conscious life-activity (which is labor). Engels writes:

The labour process begins with the making of tools…. They are hunting and fishing instruments, the former at the same time serving as weapons. But hunting and fishing presuppose the transition from an exclusively vegetable diet to the concomitant use of meat, and this is an important step in the transition to man. A meat diet contains in almost ready state the most essential ingredients required by the organism for its metabolism. It shortened the time required, not only for digestion but also for the other vegetative bodily processes corresponding to those of plant life, and thus gained further time, material, and energy for the active manifestation of animal life in the proper sense of the word… The most essential effect, however, of a meat diet was no the brain, which now received a far richer flow of the materials necessary for its nourishment and development, and which therefore could become more rapidly and perfectly developed from generation to generation.

A meat diet led to two new advances of decisive importance: to the mastery of fire and the taming of animals. The first still further shortened the digestive process, as it provided the mouth with food already as it were semi-digested; the second made meat more copious by

opening up a new, more regular source of supply… Thus, both these advances become directly new means of emancipation of man.[80]

Therefore the splitness that is human consciousness, the reflexive separation of thought from being, that gives rise to the possibility of the conscious shaping of being, arises from the separation of the human organism from the determinations of nature by the active transformation of nature, through labor. Therefore, when it is said that species being consists in free, conscious life activity, that freedom is the "emancipation" from the immediacy of nature, through labor, of which Engels writes above.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels observe that language, the medium of consciousness, is itself material: "From the start the 'spirit' bears the curse of being 'burdened' with matter which makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, in the form of language."[81] The materiality of language implies the dependence of human linguistic capacity on the material constitution of the human body and human brain. Just as the development of the human brain was dependent on the labor of producing the energy to compose, grow, and power this organ, so also the material, and at first organic, means of communication evolved materially with the evolution of the practice of speaking. Engels writes in *Dialectics of Nature*,

[T]he development of labour necessarily helped to bring the members of society closer together by multiplying cases of mutual support, joint activity, and by making clear the advantage of this joint activity to each individual. In short, men in the making arrived at the point where *they had something to say* to one another. The need led to the creation of its organ; the undeveloped larynx of the ape was slowly but surely transformed by means of gradually increased modulation, and the organs of the mouth gradually learned to pronounce one articulate letter after another.

Comparison with animals proves that this explanation of the origin of language from and in the process of labour is the only correct one.

The emergence and development of consciousness and socialness are woven into and arise from labor as embodied, material practice. The human species is always in the process of making itself: this is what Marx calls "man's establishment of himself by practical activity."[82] The human being is labor (free, conscious life activity) and labor makes the human being. Labor gives birth to itself. The human being gives birth to themselves.

Marx explains the difference between human labor and the life-activity of other animals as follows:

> *[A]nimals … build themselves nests, dwellings, like the bees, beavers, ants, etc. But an animal only produces what it immediately needs for itself and its young. It produces one-sidedly whilst man produces universally.… [M]an produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom.… An*

> *animals' product belongs immediately to its physical body, whilst man freely confronts his product.*[83]

Human labor is not aimed merely at satisfying an immediate need. The way in which human beings reshape the world is not only instrumental (a means to a material goal). For example, "Man… also forms things in accordance with the laws of beauty."[84] Human beings reshape the natural world in such a way that they can recognize themselves in the material world around them, recognizing human nature in nature. So, as free, conscious activity, the human engagement with, and transformation of the natural world is an expression of human species being. Marx writes that, "in his work upon inorganic nature, man proves himself a conscious species being."[85] Human skill, artistry, creativity, or productiveness cannot be not fully realized in thought alone, but must also be in engagement with the external world, i.e. with nature.

To say that the human being is a species being means that the individual's activity always transcends the finiteness of the individual themselves: individual activity is not only individual but also a manifestation of human activity, owing to the historical development of human thought, skill, and capacity and also contributing to this broader development of humankind.[86] Humanity makes itself by making history. There is therefore no distinction between cultural, political, economic history and natural history: "History itself is a real part of natural history."[87] The human being is a historical being, in their interwoven biological and cultural development. The human senses, for example, are not given biologically, but develop socially and change form historically. The 'ear' for music or the 'eye' for beauty can only develop with the development of music and artistic activity. In this way, "The forming of the five senses is a labor of the entire history of the world down to the present."[88] Human nature develops and unfolds in a historical process of which human beings are the subjects: "The nature which develops in human history – the genesis of human society – is man's *real* nature" and therefore "History is the true natural history of man." [89] Marx suggests that history is the continuous process by which the human species gives birth to itself and comes to understand itself: "The entire movement of history is, therefore, both its *actual* act of genesis (the birth act of its empirical existence) and also for its thinking consciousness the *comprehended* and *known* process of its *becoming*."[90] As humanity gives birth to itself, it gains self-consciousness, coming to understand itself and its potentialities as a species.[91] This human self-making in the process of making history is an accomplishment of human life-activity, i.e. of labor: "the entire so-called human history is nothing but the creation of man through human labor"[92] Hence, Marx and Engels insist on the materiality of the process by which human beings come to social self-consciousness: "The object of labor, is therefore, the objectification of man's species life: for he duplicates himself not only, as in consciousness, intellectually, but also actively, in reality, and therefore contemplates himself in a world that he has created."[93] Therefore, human reflexivity arises from the ability not just to be aware of external "inorganic nature" and not just to transform that inorganic nature, but to transform that inorganic nature in such a way that in cognizing it, one cognizes oneself. This is possible because one has put oneself creatively and consciously into that inorganic nature. Hence Marx returns in *Capital Volume 1*

to this difference between the conscious human transformation of nature and the unconscious animal transformation of nature:

Labour is, in the first place, a process in which both man and Nature participate, and in which man of his own accord starts, regulates, and controls the material re-actions between himself and Nature. He opposes himself 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. He develops his slumbering powers and compels them to act in obedience to his sway. We are not now dealing with those primitive instinctive forms of labour that remind us of the mere animal. An immeasurable interval of time separates the state of things in which a man brings his labour-power to market for sale as a commodity, from that state in which human labour was still in its first instinctive stage. We pre-suppose labour in a form that stamps it as exclusively human. A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But 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.[94]

What Marx describes in the architect is a dialectical movement between idea and its actualization, and this is true of all labor.

Human beings are different from other animals in that human beings make themselves through conscious, free, creative activity. But while human beings make themselves through conscious activity, they have not made themselves consciously. In other words, they have not been aware of the processes by which they make themselves. Their own powers of self-making have been hidden from them by various forms of fetishism, from religion to the commodity. The self-development of the human being therefore involves a spiral of reflexivity in which human beings become conscious of their consciousness, and this spiral is bound up with the emergence of higher forms of social organization. The differentiation of the modern individual is an aspect of this process. Marx comments in the *Grundrisse* on the relationship between the division of labor, exchange, and individualization, in some ways anticipating Durkheim's distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity. Hence, he notes the difference between human being as zoon politicon and 'social' animals: "It does not happen elsewhere – that elephants produce for tigers, or animals for other animals. For example. A hive of bees comprises at bottom only one bee, and they all produce the same thing."[95] So the complexity of the social division of labor distinguishes human production from animal production, and from this complexity also emerges the individual as political animal. The individual emerges out of identity with the group and sameness with other members of the group into an increasingly individuated existence: "But human beings become individuals only in through the process of history. He appears originally as a species-being, clan being, herd animal — although in no way whatever as a zoon politicon, in the political sense."[96] Marx suggests that greater individual differentiation corresponds also to growing universality, in the sense of interdependence, as a species. The separate private individual is a real social product (but at the same time one that masks the very sociality that makes this individuation possible):

> *Only in the eighteenth century, in 'civil society', do the various forms of social connectedness confront the individual as a mere means towards his private purposes, as external necessity. But the epic which produces this standpoint, that of the isolated individual, is also precisely that of the hitherto most developed social (from this standpoint, general) relations.*[97]

The development of the complexity and far-reaching character of human society and of the economic-technological transformation of nature produces self-conscious reflexivity as an individual, while also producing more complex forms of sociality and collective being. The individual is made of the collectivity not only in the sense of language and culture, but also in the sense of the both cultural and material skills that they embody: "a civilized person" is one "in whom the social forces are already dynamically present."[98]

The increasing complexity and scope of the division of labor is both the result, and in turn produces, the increasingly socialization of production, greater interdependency among, and integration of the human species. Marx writes:

> *The fact that this need on the part of one can be satisfied by the product of the other, and vice versa, and that the one is capable of producing the object of the need of the other, and that each confronts the other as owner of the object of the other's need, this proves that each of them reaches beyond his own particular need etc., as a human being, and that they relate to one another as human beings; that their common species-being is acknowledged by all.*[99]

It is through the increasing complexity and scope of the division of labor, and thereby the increasing socialization of production, that the human being emerges as a *zoon politicon*. In other words, the human species being propels itself forward from "herd" to polity. However, in the world today there is a mismatch between the ensemble of social relations that constitute globally interconnected socialized production and the political organization of human beings into nation-states. This produces a fundamental blockage of human self-consciousness or reflexivity.

Conclusion

Labor is conscious activity through which human beings transform the world and transform themselves in the process. However, the human species does not, as a species, produce consciously. Consciousness is occluded by the very workings of the market, which make conscious planning for the satisfaction of human need impossible. Christopher Caudwell argued that the market subjects production and social relations to the "ravages of bourgeois unconsciousness."[100] In *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy,* Engels observes how the sum of individual wills form unintended consequences that confront the individual as objective compulsion analogous to natural forces: "Thus the conflict of

innumerable individual wills and individual actions in the domain of history produces a state of affairs entirely analogous to that in the realm of unconscious nature."[101] The realization of species being, communism, entails the overcoming of this unconsciousness. It entails the realization of human reflexivity in the ability to reflexively direct human activity at the global level of the species, as a species.

Species being *qua* communism means a qualitative transformation in the character of species being. Just as there is a qualitative transformation from animal awareness of the world to human self-conscious awareness and there is a corresponding qualitative transformation from herd life to human societies with language and cultural systems, globalization is producing a qualitative transformation in the character of human societies and the human species to a single, unified entity. In other words, the social fractal that makes individuals is increasingly no longer regional, or national, but global in its outer limit and form. This means that what form individuals take is also transformed. While the cosmopolitanism of production is occluded by the market, there emerges a global cosmopolitan consumer individual, a social identity that exceeds the boundaries of bourgeois national citizenship.[102] The globalization of production for example is now, for example, accompanied by the growth of global media and online culture. It is no longer the case that globalized culture is 'western' culture. Species being is undergoing a process of transformation. A qualitatively new global form of species being is emerging.

However, this higher form is blocked by the organization of the species as *zoon politicon* into nation-states, an organization supported ideologically and politically by the bourgeoisie, even while it is undermined by the reality of the global ensemble of social relations. The leap cannot be made by humanist appeal to abstract humanity, for it is precisely the nature of the problem that humanity remains an abstraction. [103]

What has concretely emerged with the globalization of production is a global proletariat. This is a global class of human beings objectively unified by the common fact that they are nothing but human. They possess nothing but their species being. And this is not their individual possession at all, but their participation in something that transcends them. They do not possess their transcendent species being, in the sense that they are alienated from it. The radicalness of their chains is that not only do they possess nothing but their labor, but they do not even posses that, because it is alienated to the capitalist – it is the alienated general intellect and collective physical activity of the human species. Possessing nothing, the proletariat cannot live as the bourgeois individual, the citizen. The proletariat cannot sustain the bourgeois myth of autonomy. The proletariat only exists as a class, and as a global class. The proletarian can only appropriate their being at the level of the species. The proletariat is sustained only by their participation in the global network of production. The proletarian's labor, while they do it for themselves, is at the same time for the entire world, and it cannot be theirs without their being united with the entire world.

Marx and Engels wrote in *The German Ideology* that alienation can only be abolished when it has become "an intolerable power" by its "having made the great mass of humanity 'propertyless' and this at the same time in contradiction to an existing world of wealth and

culture." The growth of a global proletariat is the product of "universal development of productive forces" that both produces and is produced by "universal commerce among men," which in turn "replaces local individuals with *world-historical* empirically universal individuals." This consciously world-historical individual is the communist individual. It is at the same time, the proletariat under capitalism, which can only exist world-historically because it has nothing as individual. The full (communist) world-historical individual can be produced only by the emptied (proletarian) world-historical individual (reduced to "time's carcass"). Hence the world proletariat, which can realize itself only as a species being, through world revolution, presupposes by its very existence "the universal development of productive power and worldwide interaction."[104] The class that has only their humanness, and that cannot produce for themselves without producing for the entire human species, carries with it the existence of humanity. This is both in the sense of giving rise to global species being and in the sense of securing the continued physical existence of humanity as a species, which is imperiled by capitalism.

Communism integrates the global species and the individual, such that the species is the outer layer of the fractal that makes up the individual and as the species becomes polis, social being or *zoon politicon*, is reconciled with species being. Species being is able to throw off the "ravages of bourgeois unconsciousness" and take control, as a species, of its own self-making. Communism means a society that does not have to occlude reality in order to maintain itself. This is so since consciousness, as reflexivity, as humanness, as the human species, will be active in reality *as such*. In other words, the consciousness that will be active will be the *conscience collective*, the collective consciousness, of the human species *as a* species being. *The* species being, the objective reality of the species, conscious of itself as a species, and regulating its metabolic relationship with inorganic nature, in other words, with the rest of nature (industry and agriculture), as well as maintaining its own organic nature (through natural and social science, now one culture and not separate from 'society,' through medicine, and through its operation and regulation of industry and agriculture). Indeed the division between regulation and operation would cease to exist with the withering away of the state, and through its provision for the needs (in all senses) of the individuals that compose it. Species being would then be real in the sense of Durkheimian thingness or objectivity. But it would not require sacredness because it would not need to shield itself from reality. It would no longer need opium.

The human being is a species being because the human species is a process of socially awakening to being a species. In other words, the human being is a process of becoming a species being. What is human is consciousness and freedom, the power not just to consciously be (contemplation) but to consciously become (change). Spiritual matter is matter that is conscious of itself because it is not only alive as the individual organism but social and therefore alive as something more than the individual. Language is material, as Marx said. Therefore language is matter communicating with itself, through itself. Through language, the human being becomes spiritual matter. But this medium, language, is not *in* the individual. It is not some "dumb" generality. On the contrary, it is a generality that speaks and that exists outside the individual. It is society. It is socialness. It is social practice. It is social practice of

matter (biological homo sapiens). It is material practice. It depends on the maintenance of the biological organism of the human being (organic nature), which is a metabolism with the natural environment (inorganic nature), which is a mode of production. It develops socially through the development of means of communication, which depend on the development of the productive forces, which is a work of labor power, which is human life itself. This human capacity for conscious change (labor, the conscious transformation of matter, the human capacity for self-making) becomes a capacity of the human species. The liberation of labor is the liberation of the human being is the creation of the human species. Species being is species becoming. To exist is to exist now. To be is to be in the present. Being is the present. "In bourgeois society," Marx and Engels wrote, "The past dominates the present; in Communist society, the present dominates the past."[105] The liberation of species being is the liberation of the present of the species from the past, the liberation of life, the living human being, from what is dead, the products of the past. This is the liberation of agency from structure, the liberation of freedom itself from necessity, the liberation of necessity (matter) from itself, the reconciliation of freedom and necessity.

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[1] Nick Dyer-Witheford, "Digital Labor, Species-Becoming, and the Global Worker," *Ephemera: Theory & Politics in Organization* 10 (3/4): 484-503.

[2] John Bellamy Foster, Richard York and Brett Clark, *The Ecological Rift: Capitalism's War on the Earth* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2010).

[3] Dyer-Witheford, "Digital Labor, Species Becoming, and the Global Worker," 490-491, 495-496, 499-500.

[4] Karl Marx, *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, ed. Dirk J. Struik (New York: International Publishers, 1964),

[insert p. number]

[5] Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 165, 182.

[6] Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 135.

[7] Insert ref.

[8] Karl Marx, "Luther as Arbiter between Strauss and Feuerbach," in idem, *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed and trans by Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 19), 93-95, on 95.

[9] Hanfi, "Introduction," 20.

[10] Ludwig Feuerbach, “Introduction to the Essence of Christianity,” in idem, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 97-133, on 117.

[11] Zawar Hanfi, “Introduction,” in idem ed. And trans., *Ludwig Feuerbach: The Fiery Brook. Selected Writings* (London: Verso), 1-50, on 20-21.

[12] Hanfi, “Introduction,” 21.

[13] Ludgwig Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy,” in idem, *Ludwig Feuerbach*, 53-96, on 93.

[14] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 93.

[15] Hanfi, “Introduction,” 21.

[16] Engels, quoted in Hanfi, “Introduction,” 20.

[17] Hanfi, “Introduction,” 21.

[18] Karl Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” in idem, *Writings of the Young Marx*, 400-402, on 400.

[19] V. I. Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* [insert full ref]

[20] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 62.

[21] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 65.

[22] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 65.

[23] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 65, 92.

[24] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 65.

[25] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy,” 65.

[26] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 62.

[27] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 63

[28] Lewis Carroll, ”What the Tortoise Said to Achilles”. *Mind*. 104 (416) (1895): 691–693; Harry M. Collins, “What the Tortoise Said to Achilles: Review of Donald Mackenzie, Mechanizing Proof: Computing, Risk, and Trust,” *The British Journal for the History of Science* 35 (4) (December, 2002), 469-474.

[29] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 63.

[30] Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” 402.

[31] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 63.

[32] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 65.

[33] Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” 402; cf. Sean Sayers, “Individual and Society in Marx and Hegel: Beyond the Communitarian Critique of Liberalism,” *Science & Society* 71 (1) (January 2007): 84-102.

[34] Paul Santilli argues that Marx intended “species being” and “social being” to designate “two aspects of the same thing”: “Marx on Species Being and Social Essence,” *Studies in Soviet Thought* 13 (1/2) (June 1973): 76-88, on 77.

[35] Marx, “Theses on Feuerbach,” 401-402.

[36] Marx, *EPM*, 138.

[37] Insert Giddens ref; Foster, “Metabolic Rift” AJS.

[38] Lewis Mumford, Myth of the Machine, Volume 1: Technics and Human Development (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1971) — CHECK PUBL DETAILS

[39] Giddens…. ; John Bellamy Foster, Marx’s Ecology; John Bellamy Foster, “Marx’s Theory of the Metabolic Rift… “ John Bellamy Foster and Paul Burkett, Marx and the Earth: An Anti-Critique (Leiden: Brill, 2016).

[40] Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 113.

[41] Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 112. Emphasis inserted. In original the word “inorganic” is italicized.

[42] Feuerbach, “Towards a Critique,” 93.

[43] Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 112.

[44] Karl Marx, “The German Ideology” (extract), in idem, *Writings of the Young Marx*, 403-495, on 418. Cf. Don Ihde, “The Historical and Ontological Priority of Technology over Science,” in idem, Existential Technics…

[45] Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 113.

[46] Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts, 113.

[47] It is likely that this is why when we can merge with our activity, we experience this sense of “flow” as pleasurable, precisely because it takes us out of the discomfort of reflexive

separateness. See Czientmihaly, Flow…

[48] Insert Fromm ref.

[49] Insert ref.

[50] Refs to Fromm and Giddens ; Ernst Becker.. Cf. AJit Varki and Danny Brower, Denial: Self-Deception, False Belief and the Origins of Human Mind. Terror Management Theory. See Erich Fromm, Man for Himself: An Inquiry in to the Psychology of Ethics (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1947), 28-32.

[51] Marx, Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts," 113.

[52] Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," 402. See also P. Walton, A. Gamble and J. Coulter, "Image of Man in Marx," *Social Theory and Practice* 1 (20) (Fall 1970): 69-84.

[53] Marx, "The German Ideology," 421.

[54] Timothy Crippen, "The Sources and Evolution of Social Consciousness: Reconciling the Contributions of Marx, Durkheim, and Mead," *Revue européenne des sciences sociales* 25 (4) (1987): 27-53. See also Henri Lefebvre, The Sociology of Karl Marx.…

[55] Marx, "The German Ideology," 421.

[56] George Herbert Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society*.…. Cf. Mary Ellen Batiuk and Howard L. Sacks, "George Herbert Mead and Karl Marx: Exploring Consciousness and Community," *Symbolic Interaction* 4 (2) (Fall 1981): 207-223; William M. O'Meara, "The Social Nature of Self and Morality for Husserl, Schutz, Marx, and Mead," *Philosophy Research Archives* 12 (1986/1987): 329-355; Crippen, "The Sources and Evolution of Social Consciousness." For a Marxist critique of pragmatism, see George Novack, *Pragmatism versus Marxism: An Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1975).

[57] Feuerbach, "Towards a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy," 92.

[58] Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relation to Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1958), 53; Collins, "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles."

[59] Harry Collins, *Forms of Life: The Method and Meaning of Sociology* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2019), 6-7.

[60] H. M. Collins, "Socialness and the Undersocialized Conception of Society," *Science, Technology, & Human Values* 23 (4) (Autumn, 1998): 494-516.

[61] Collins, *Forms of Life*, 1-2, 6.

[62] Emile Durkheim, “The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,” (extract) in Michael S. Kimmel, *Classical Sociological Theory*, Second Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 268-286, on 270. Cf. Peter Knapp, “Hegel’s Universal in Marx, Durkheim and Weber: The Role of Hegelian Ideas in the Origin of Sociology,” *Sociological Forum* 1 (4) (1986): 586-609.

[63] Durkheim, quoted in Mitsuhiro Tada, “Language and imagined Gesellschaft: Émile Durkheim’s civil-linguistic nationalism and the consequences of universal human ideals,” *Theory & Society* 49 (2020): 597-630, on 602, 603.

[64] Durkheim, quoted in Tada, “Language and imagined Gesellschaft,” 612.

[65] Harry Collins and Martin Kusch, The Shape of Action: What Humans and Machines Can Do (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998); Harry Collins, Artifictional Intelligence: Against Humanity’s Surrender to Computers (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018); Harry Collins, *Forms of Life*, 168 note 6.

[66] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. Martin Nicolaus (Hardmondsworth: Pelican, 1973), 84.

[67] Collins, “Socialness,” 504-505.

[68] Zygmunt Bauman, Modernity and Ambivalence.

[69] Lenin, Imperialism; Emanuele Saccarelli and Latha Varadarajan, *Imperialism: Past and Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press…).

[70] Nick Beams, “The Significance and Implications of Globalization: A Marxist Perspective,” *World Socialist Web Site* (1998),…

[71] Wendy Brown, walls.

[72] Collins, *Forms of Life*, 7.

[73] Marx and Engels, “The German Ideology,” 404.

[74] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), 42.

[75] Marx, *EPM*, 181.

[76] Marx, *EPM*, 182. On Marx’s theory of passion, and the way in which human passions are socially and historically shaped, see Erich Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Company, 1966), 24-26.

[77] Marx, *EPM*, 144.

[78] Marx and Engels, “The German Ideology,” 409.

[79] Frederick Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, trans Clemens Dutt (New York: International Publishers, 1940), 279.

[80] Engels, *Dialectics of Nature*, 287-288. Cf. Richard Wratham, *Catching Fire: How Cooking Made us Human* (New York: Basic Books, 2010); Justin Rowlatt and Lawrence Knight, “The Real Reason Humans are the Dominant Species,” BBC News, March 28, 2021, https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-56544239

[81] Marx and Engels, “The German Ideology,” 421.

[82] Marx, *EPM*, 165.

[83] Marx, *EPM*, 113-114.

[84] Marx, *EPM*, 114.

[85] Marx, *EPM*, 114.

[86] Marx argued that under capitalism and the bourgeois state, the individual is split so that in the market relations of civil society they are a selfish individual, and they only transcend that egoism in an abstract way as a citizen. In this way, “man leads a double life, a heavenly and earthly existence.” But this transcendence of individualism in bourgeois citizenship is an illusory form of species being precisely because it involves abstraction and fragmentation: “In the state where he counts as a species-being… he is an imaginary member of an imagined sovereignty, divested of his individual life and endowed with an unactual universality”: Karl Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, ed. and trans. Lloyd D. Easton and Kurt Guddat (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1967), 216-248, quoting 225-226.

[87] Marx, *EPM*, 141.

[88] Marx, *EPM*, 141. See also Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man*, 32.

[89] Marx, *EPM*, 143, 182. See also Fromm, *Marx’s Concept of Man*, 24-26.

[90] Marx, *EPM*, 135. Emphasis in original.

[91] Marx, *EPM*, 135.

[92] Marx, *EPM*, 145.

[93] Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, 114.

[94] https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch07.htm

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[96] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 496.

[97] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 84.

[98] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 84.

[99] Marx, *Grundrisse*, 243.

[100] Christopher Caudwell, *The Concept of Freedom* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1965), 101; Charles Thorpe and Brynna Jacobson, "Abstract Life, Abstract Labor, Abstract Mind," in Brett Clark and Tamar Diana Wilson, *The Capitalist Commodification of Animals*, *Research in Political Economy* 35 (Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2021) 69.

[101] Frederick Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1941), 49.

[102] Anthony Giddens, Modernity and Self-Identity; Zygmunt Bauman, Liquid Life ; Lauren Langman, "From Subject to Citizen to Consumer: ….. " …..

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[104] Marx and Engels, "The German Ideology," 427.

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Stockholm Syndrome and The Trial of the Chicago 7

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

Stockholm syndrome is the term for desperate captives who, in extreme cases, begin to or really do identify with the culprits endangering them. Call it perversity squared but the syndrome is understandable in extended survival quests. One cannot imagine a better explanation as to why many movement veterans lavished grateful praise on the insidious Yuppified travesty that is Netflix' Chicago 7 (started out as 8) Trial movie.

No doubt director/writer Aaron Sorkin's vaunted liberal track record and his slick wordsmithing skills have a lot to do with it, inveigling unwary viewers with glib but reductive portraits of show trial defendants trapped inside that dark delirious circus.

Viewers may like to imagine Sorkin is on the side of the countercultural angels when he is only applying a cynical post-Reaganite chic vision to a motley band of rebels who disdained almost everything Sorkin stands for. Martin Luther King had some penetrating things to say about fair-weather liberals, but now exactly those folks get to be the ordained interpreters of what dissenters did at the tumultuous time, and why. Even some of the savviest audience members, starved for any scrap of a semblance to truth, may succumb because this "balanced" tale is the best we can expect of depictions of the Sixties from the corporate media apparatus. All is forgiven too because mass media writers obviously (?) must adhere to rigid rules of drama no matter how much distortion they entail.

If a scruffy defendant desired to convey the rambunctious moral essence of what transpired at the 1968 Chicago Democratic convention, and afterward during a five month carnivalesque rigged trial, he might not pick a fellow who was just a child during all the festivities to plead their case. Liberals, contrary to Sorkins's film, and despite Ramsay Clark's honorable exception, were not on the side of the Chicago 7 miscreants at the time any more so than were Nixon's crew cut disciples. Hubert Humphrey's response to convention protesters – but not the cops or Mayor Daley Sr. and his minions – was "fuck 'em, fuck 'em. fuck 'em." Blame the protesters for Humphrey's election loss later but what about Daley for denying park permits and thereby guaranteeing what the Walker Report called a police riot, or Lyndon Johnson for nixing the compromise Vietnam peace plan Humphrey hoped to bring to the convention, or Nixon for treasonously preventing a Vietnam peace deal before the election.

Here is where oodles of 'talent' does a clueless writer little good, just as a more talented reactionary in Republican ranks would not necessarily have been a better President than Trump. Sorkin gets away with taking liberties with the record because he seems so well-

meaning, but the film is ultimately centrist revenge on often envied folks who took risks by stepping outside the system. Like people who insist on blaming Nader (not Gore's poor campaign) for Bush's victory, or the Russians or the Green Party for Trump's victory, what Tariq Ali nicely terms centrist extremists are incapable of detecting their own fingerprints on the blunt instruments they decry. Noam Chomsky also had rather relevant things to say about the role of the liberal intelligentsia during the Vietnam war, as did David Halberstam in the *The Best and the Brightest*, and many others of whom the flick seems blithely unaware.

Creative license has a lot more than usual to answer for. An array of gratuitously misleading characterizations, the play-dough refashioning of key events, and the unsubtle promotion of centrist narratives suffuse this doubtless meticulously constructed script. What are the rules of mass media drama when applied to real events? Contrive internal tensions even where there were none, create character arcs from conflict to reconciliation even among characters who were mutually respectful allies all along, flush out, or failing that, concoct flaws for all the protagonists so as to 'humanize" them, depict the foes as no worse really than the defendants, bring all motives down to the lowest possible level, pitch every action at a person-to-person level so that the systems they operate within (or resist) never come into question, and wrap it all up in a false unifying moment. It's all in the service of attracting viewers.

Powerful and telling moments abound because chronicles can't always be evaded, but these moments are strategically sacrificed and undercut by much of what follows. (Why omit or underplay that Bobby Seale at the trial had to be introduced to several of his alleged co-conspirators?) So we are treated to the supreme fictions of Dellinger slugging a bailiff, Jerry Rubin falling lovesick for a blonde undercover operative (whose manner and attire advertised 'agent!'), Tom Hayden behaving like an uptight Eagle Scout with his beady eye on career prospects, Rennie Davis presented as a meek inexperienced wimp, Bill Kunstler acting initially like an irritable schoolmaster who had no clue about or affinity for who his clients are, and sidekick attorney Len Weinglass all but vanishing while Fred Hampton appears where he never was. Kunstler, for example, bid adieu to the jury for its deliberations, saying:

> *I don't want you to leave for your deliberations without knowing that agitator has an honest good connotation whether it be Jesus Leaving Nazareth, or Debs leaving Terra Haute, or Susan Anthony, or Dr. King, or George Washington or Mohandas Gandhi or Harriet Tubman – they all are outside agitators, all in the interest of social change.*

Any resemblance to the Kunstler in the film is purely coincidental. We're supposed to be shocked that Abbie Hoffman read the Port Huron Statement, or could read anything serious at all. On the other side of the aisle, a fictitious chance meeting in a park enables Sorkin to depict co-prosecuting attorney Richard Schultz – where is the utterly vile Tom Foran in all this? – as something other than the win-at-any cost apparatchik he really was. Would we really have been bored viewing the real people with their corroborated actions? Have a look at Jerome Kagan's

Conspiracy: The Trial of the Chicago 8 (1987) free on YouTube and, ahem, judge for yourselves.

The unwelcome question is, did one need to distort the record for entertainment value, and was anything gained thereby? Were the actual people, if faithfully portrayed as well as documents and memories allow, so dull, colorless, remote and alien as to need sprucing up? Alien they certainly were to Sorkin, who can't imagine why the defendants, their lawyers and supporters behaved so boldly and bravely except out of motives that makes a crude sense to very "straight" people who can't comprehend anyone acting for other than self-interest, as a market economy demands. What is especially conscientious about the scripted account is that every outrageous act by the authorities must be paired with a dumb provocative move by protesters, even if they never occurred.

One revealing if throwaway remark in the courtroom occurs when, beholding a parade of undercover cops and informants, one defendant whispers to another that he wonders if all the people they led in August were government agents. David Farber found in his research that likely 1 person in 6 in the streets were employed by agencies ranging from the Chicago Police Red Squad to the FBI to military intelligence agencies – not to mention rightwing paramilitary groups. There of course are plain idiots who attach themselves to any public gathering, but the people braying for mindless action and violence almost always turned out to be provocateurs. The scene of the "We are Watching You" threat that several sympathetic jurors allegedly got via the mail was a particularly piquant instance since I and many associates at the time used to receive messages in our mailboxes emblazoned with exactly those words, plus a graphic of a skinny figure inside a bulls-eye – only it was signed by The Minutemen, an ultra-right cult with many law enforcement officials as ardent members. The right loves to project their own tactics and feelings on others.

How did the trial come about? The 1968 Tet Offensive demolished giddy visions of victory generated by administration figures who blinded themselves to the realities of a needless expanding war they generated. The public began to turn, for many conflicting reasons, against it. A point that the right likes to trumpet is that the "silent majority" public detested those long-haired protesters, seeing them as agents of chaos, just as Nixon preached. True enough, but the public (and secretly even Mayor Daley) also detested the same war the protesters arrayed themselves against, with no better answers as to how to end it. In retrospect, it took every kind of action to wind it down.

The film's upshot, though, is that the activists were basically fools who, failing to work through the system, set back the peace movement or at best made no difference. They also were driven less by ethics than by raging egos and untethered emotions, which is as much the liberals' creed as it is the conservatives. What authorities glimpsed here was a merging of worrisome mass protest with what Lewis Lapham terms the "neurotic fear running around loose in the heads of the propertied classes" that everyone wanted to grab what they got, and so crackdowns on democratic expression had to come.

Who wanted the violence? Rubin is shown tutoring eager Yippie acolytes in the construction of

Molotov cocktails simply because Yippies, as everyone knows, were the Special Forces of the antiwar movement. Is there any trace of proof for this scene anywhere? Then in the face of phalanxes of armed cops a hair trigger away from mowing down everyone, Rubin, who reminds one of Sean Penn moseying off the set of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, considers a frontal assault. Ah, but cooler heads (excuse the expression) prevail, ah, but only momentarily. Some other righteous dude cries "Take the Hill!" and off the lemmings go cinematically in the same spirit as Fred Hampton later memorably said of the Weathermen, "Custeristic." In reality, somebody did yell "Take the Hill" – when it was devoid of cops. A planted female cop obligatorily would have urged rash action to justify maximum cop mayhem but she is instead represented as a source of wise adult counsel, because Sorkin sorely needs to portray some cops as reasonable figures. At least the cops in court perjuring themselves profusely were shown as they really were.

Still, amid a slew of jaw-dropping moments, Bobby Seale supposedly accuses Tom Hayden, a veteran of the civil rights movement, the Newark ERAP project and god knows how many encounters with authorities, of doing everything he did in order to say "fuck you to Dad", which Hayden concedes is true. So Sorkin gratuitously invokes the old discrediting device that dissenters are just brats acting out oedipal anxieties. Rennie Davis to the end comes off like a hopeless hayseed who just strayed out of his tiny home town for the first time. Davis, unlike Hayden, fortunately lived long enough to scribble his critical impressions of the film.

Tom Hayden, so far as I could tell, never appears except in name and is replaced by Sorkin who ventriloquizes his own views through this convenient made-up figurine, not least in clashes between Hayden and Abbie Hoffman over electoral versus cultural change, as if these were divisible matters and any sentient being saw them as such at the time. Hayden's/Sorkin's message amounts to, Why can't everyone go on being "Clean for Gene"? I mean, look how well that was working out.

Julius Hoffman remains a riot in himself, but get rid of him and you most likely get assigned a judge who is more adept but just as biased. The era is riddled with court cases in which the government tampered. A fortunate few, like Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo, were acquitted when high jinks came to light. The record is clear enough regarding the illicit gimmicks and deceits that the authorities readily resorted to, as they always do when they feel cornered, and often when not. So it is hardly a breakthrough to depict Daley, the prosecutors, and the cops and their highly instrumental relation to the truth about anything. In the realist world Sorkin inhabits, and indeed in the unwritten rules of contemporary melodrama, no one does anything without a payoff of some sort. The few exceptions dare to do so because they are cracked, barmy, gone bananas. Clearly we can't have role models like these running amok. Unlike the pious final scene of defendants reading a roll of American dead in Vietnam (which handily serves the double function of implying protesters only wanted to save their own skins), in reality, David Dellinger, one of the most extraordinary men I ever met, on more than one occasion prior to court proceedings read out names of the daily death toll in Vietnam. But he scrupulously included Vietnamese names, a more pointedly ambitious list than the film indicated the defendants were undertaking. I've always believed the worst fate than can befall

the departed is to have some hopelessly unattuned fellow write their biography and, boy, this film affirms it.

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Poetry Review Column

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

Here, I will review three recently published books of poetry. These three strike me as among the most exciting of the many volumes of fine verse published during this pandemic year. Comments and suggestions for future books to review are most welcome: bill_nevins@yahoo.com

1. Permanent Volta

Rosie Stockton

NY: Nightboat Books,2021

In poetry a turn of thought or argument is called the “volta”. It is a rhetorical shift, perhaps a dramatic change in emotions or thoughts. Thus, the title of this stunning first collection by Rosie Stockton suggests a constant state of flux, of turning, as in Yeats’s “widening gyre”. In this book-length exploration of how continual change, constant turning, we find a brilliant mind exploring the varied meanings of the elusive concept of “love” in our contemporary world. The underlying subject of these poems is how desire and capitalism are intertwined:

“here/there is a woman/in me waiting/a fantasy/of the factory/fucking on obsolete machines”—“Permanent Volta”

Stockton is a master of poetic forms and a fiercely committed queer visionary. They also display a wicked sense of humor, as in the sly impious, perhaps-religious allusion of this closing couplet from “Ditch Sestina”:

“Smuggled in your crypts, strolling in your Assisi. /I am each knot, each bursting missionary.”

A reader can jump into this stunning collection most anywhere, and swim in a whirling torrent of images, of sharp thought, of beauty. At times, it may all seem too much. Then again, not enough, as in Stockton’s poem “Excess” which seems to comment on the pub- writing of another poet’s intriguing sestina and then ends:

“No pause for the machine, only windy prediction, be careful of that word, of /that order. Excessive sestina, bent over the bar. It is writing, writing thunder and/ care. I sip excess, I sip carefully, my excess. Windy with order, my excess.”

Highly recommended.

- Atomic Paradise

Jules Nyquist

CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform/Jules Poetry Playhouse, 2020

“Atomic Paradise” is Jules Nyquist’s book-length poetic investigation into the “hidden-in-plain-sight” reality of America’s nuclear monster that crouches in the picturesque high desert landscape of her adopted home-state, New Mexico. While many worthy poets– such as Arthur Sze recently in The New Yorker– have justly celebrated this border state’s charms–its Christmastime “Farolitos”, Santa Fe art galleries, spicy cuisine, blazing sunsets, unique fauna and flora, ghost-towns, casinos, indigenous cultures and quaint gunfighter- outlaw chic– this poet turns a cold eye on all that and delves into the stone cold reality–New Mexico is a nuclear weapons testing ground and military encampment camouflaged as a “blue” state with ristras, legal cannabis, a booming film industry and an under-educated, sentimental base population which blithely ignores the horror squatting in the midst of its rounds of fiestas, nature hikes and spiritual questing–THE BOMB (“little boy bombs around the dinner table”). In fact, one poem here is “Decaying Nuclear Bomb Double Sestina” in which each line ends with a variation on the word “bomb”!

Jules Nyquist deserves applause for ripping off the blanket of colorful camouflage and exposing the beast behind the enchantment. A brilliant, searing book–essential reading.

Highly recommended.

- When the Light of the World Was Subdued, Our Songs Came Through

A Norton Anthology of Native Nations Poetry

Joy Harjo, Editor, with LeAnne Howe and Jennifer Elise

WW Norton, 2020.

This is an amazingly rich, wide-ranging, generous and intelligently- conceived anthology, assembled by a stellar editorial team headed up by US Poet Laureate Joy Harjo. Three centuries of poetry (1678–2019) from 161 authors representing more than 90 indigenous nations, organized by geographical region with each region getting its own literary and historical introduction.

This 400- page volume most appropriately offers a sense of community and shared voices singing their “songs”, rather than the individualistic “greatest-hits” focus of so many earlier poetry anthologies. Few poets have more than one poem included, at most three, yet each poem is itself striking. Each poem grabs the reader and pulls us into the dance of poets here on display. The overall effect is of a chorus, a tribal expression– from many diverse tribes and nations– of truthful thought and real emotion, a collective celebration. Multiple languages are included, with English translations where needed.

The scope is vast, from Pacific Northwest and Alaska voices like that of Lincoln Blassi in “Prayer Song Asking for a Whale” and poet/novelist Sherman Alexie and Cathy Tagnak Rexford in “The Ecology of Subsistence” to voices of the American east and south and famed Southwestern USA voices including Luci Tapahonso, Simon Ortiz, N. Scott Momaday, Zitkála-Šá, Leslie Marmon Silko , Louise Erdrich to iconic poets like John Trudell and Joy Harjo herself to vital younger poets like Natalie Diaz, Jake Skeets, Tommy Pico, Sherwin Bitsui, and Layli Long Soldier, dg nanouk okpik, Bojan Louis, Julian Talamantez Brolaski, Orlando White, Laura Da’, Tanaya Winder, and Santee Frazier, among others.

An underlying thread is profound and most justified rage against the colonial oppression visited upon indigenous peoples, and the resultant commitment to resistance and rebirth. This anthology manifests that rebirthing in all its fierce beauty, indeed.

Trying to choose one or a few poems to excerpt as illustrative of this anthology is like choosing one beautiful tree from a magnificent forest—a hopeless endeavor. Yet, I will pick a few lines from one poem that grabbed me: Tanaya Winder’s “Learning to Say I Love You”, in which the young poet addresses a revered elder, and, perhaps, the universe.

“ . . . before I can stomach the sweetness of language. Ours,/I am losing. I am lost lodged somewhere in my throat/between decades of bro ken syl la bles. Teach me/how to reach the ones who are born already running./Teach me how to talk to the ones who need it most./Dear Universe, gift me words/that l i n g e r/softly like dusk.”—Tanaya Winder, from “Learning to Say I Love You”

Most highly recommended.

Review Essay: J. Toby Reiner, Michael Walzer (Polity Press, 2020); Michael Walzer and Astrid von Busekist, Justice is Steady Work: A Conversation on Political Theory (Polity Press, 2020)

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

Poking around a used book store during my third year of college, I came across a copy of Michael Walzer's 1980 essay collection *Radical Principles*. Walzer's name was familiar: I had browsed *Dissent*, the journal he edited, in the college library, and my social theory professor had assigned an essay from that book, a critique of the neo-conservatives entitled "Nervous Liberals."

I still have the book; pencil-marked and rough-cornered, it is an old friend. When I bought it, I was an "activist": a nervous leftist, heady with my first reading of Marx, fluttering from protest to protest, indignant about human rights violations and welfare reform and Newt Gingrich's Contract with America and eager to impress my indignation on everyone I met. I found in Walzer's essays a way of being on the left that was new to me: calm but not complacent, radical but not alienated, democratic in both principle and manner. Walzer, in other words, was the writer who showed me how to think like a social democrat.

Two recent books from Polity Press—one a scholarly monograph surveying his career to date, the other a series of interviews with him—invite their readers to reflect on why Walzer's political thought matters. Where most responses to Walzer's work focus on one or two facets of the writings he has published over the past six decades, these books each aim to take in the whole picture. The Walzer they portray is the same Walzer I found in *Radical Principles*: "the most important social-democratic theorist in the contemporary USA," in J. Toby Reiner's words (3), or as Astrid von Busekist describes him, "a man of conviction" who "reminds [his left-wing readers] of the virtues of moderation and patience" (1, 4). If Walzer were merely another defender of the welfare state or of industrial democracy, he would be a welcome but unremarkable voice in American life. What makes Walzer's writings important, as Reiner and von Busekist both show, is that he works out the moral and intellectual implications of social democracy as few others have done. Where authoritarian socialists look to a vanguard of leaders intellectually removed from the people around them, Walzer proposes that democratic social critics should think and speak as members of communities. Where authoritarian

socialists and anti-political liberals alike look to grand and esoteric theories of society or of justice, Walzer makes modest intellectual claims, relying on “small theories” (as he tells von Busekist, 120). Social democratic politics, as Walzer sees it, entails both an intellectual method, which he has called “connected” or “interpretive” social criticism, and a certain style of writing, what Reiner calls “ecumenical writing” (173) and which von Busekist describes as “pure language, unadorned, appropriate and precise,” in the tradition of essayists like George Orwell (2). Reiner and von Busekist both make clear how urgently the American left today, nervous and impatient as it is, needs Walzer’s voice.

Reiner’s book, the first comprehensive study of Walzer’s work, is a careful and astute exposition of the main lines of his arguments about justice in war, “complex” equality, multiculturalism, global justice, the relationship between religion and politics, and the interpretive method of social criticism. Reiner shows how Walzer’s thinking has developed in response to both friends and critics, noting the influence of *Dissent* founders Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, teachers like Louis Hartz and Samuel Beer, and colleagues like Clifford Geertz. (Another helpful feature of Reiner’s book is that his bibliography, while not purporting to be a comprehensive list of Walzer’s publications or of writings responding to Walzer, comes close to being so anyway. Among the secondary sources he mentions, I should note, is an unpublished paper of mine.)

Reiner has a good eye for the themes and connections within Walzer’s arguments. “Walzer’s importance,” he writes, lies equally in his “social-democratic alternative” to the dominant currents of American political thought and in the “situated approach to political theory” that he derived from his political commitments (165). The order is crucial: the political commitment comes first. From the *Dissent* circle—the journal’s founders were among his undergraduate teachers at Brandeis University in the 1950s, and he wrote regularly for the journal from its third issue onwards, eventually becoming its editor, a position from which he retired in 2013—Walzer absorbed not only an appreciation for intellectual life but also a consistently anti-totalitarian democratic radicalism and a hunger for a sincerely American left-wing politics. Where the *Dissent* founders shared a style, Walzer has developed an intellectual method. Reiner ably disaggregates the pieces of that method, introducing terms like “the meaning-dependent thesis,” “the social-meaning thesis,” and “critical conventionalism.” I have studied Walzer’s works for years, and I learned much from Reiner’s detailed exposition. The core of Walzer’s approach is simple enough to convey, however. Reiner puts Walzer’s premise well: “the societies in which we live are moral worlds that contain the resources necessary for their improvement” (71). This means, Walzer argues, that the proper role of a social critic is not philosophical detachment or cultural alienation or reliance on truths known only to the few but rather what Reiner calls a “marginalized attachment” (148), the stance of a cultural insider somewhat removed from power but immersed in a world of fellow citizens, speaking a common language and appealing to commonly-recognized (if not commonly-upheld) principles. Where standard political theory seems to imitate the voice of a courtier whispering in the ear of the king, Walzer’s political theory imitates the voice of a community organizer starting where the people are.

Everything else distinctive about Walzer's political thought follows from this approach to social criticism, Reiner suggests. Walzer's vision of "complex equality" in which a society prevents inequalities in one sphere of life (say, the market) from breaking into other spheres (say, access to healthcare or political office); his critique of the rarified conversations imagined by theorists of deliberative democracy; his insistence that a society professing to be democratic should make its workplaces democratic; his notion of a "reiterative universalism" in which each society's internal critics push it toward justice in the name of its own values: all these arguments stem from Walzer's effort to think in a political way, which is to say in a way that is local or situated. Walzer is sometimes classed as a "communitarian" political thinker, but this is at best half right: the pluralism on which he insists leaves him wary of any unitary civic or cultural loyalty. Likewise, his localism and pluralism lead him to be a social democrat of a particular kind, dissenting from Fabian and progressive visions of the benevolent administrative state: he calls for a "decentralized democratic socialism" in which the welfare state is "run, in part at least, by local and amateur officials" and in which "workers' control of companies" is one element of a participatory "politics of parties, movements, meetings, and public debate" (quoted in Reiner, 80).

However keen Reiner's sense of Walzer's arguments may be, he devotes less attention to the mood and tone of Walzer's writings. This leads to some oddly off-key moments. Reiner quotes Walzer's remark that the city Walt Whitman depicts in his poem "Song of the Broad-Axe" is "easy in its democratic faith, untouched by the terrors of the twentieth century," telling his readers that Whitman's city is, simply, Walzer's vision of what "the good society looks like" (81). Yet Walzer's reference to Whitman is poignant, not simple: what he actually writes is not that Whitman's city is "easy" but that it is "too easy" in its democratic faith. Easy faith is precisely what Walzer thinks our political thinking cannot assume.

Thus Reiner mostly ignores what may be the most puzzling tension within Walzer's work. Walzer is unmistakably a member of the ethical socialist tradition, the tradition of non-Marxist democratic egalitarians like Howe, Orwell, R.H. Tawney, Karl Polanyi, and Ignazio Silone. Theirs is in large part a defensive or conservative politics, in the sense that it aims to conserve something good that already exists. (Think here of Polanyi's definition of socialism as the "self-protection of society" against the overbearing market economy, a formulation about which Walzer, to my knowledge, has never written, but one in keeping with his argument about the "spheres of justice.") It is a modern tradition ill at ease with modernity. Reiner misses the opportunity to sort out Walzer's place in that tradition. He notes but scarcely comments on the departures from modernism that recur in Walzer's works, like his claim that "the deep principles of the Left…have their origins in the pre-liberated world" (quoted on 81), his revival of the pre-revolutionary idea of "resistance" as a mode of political action (86), or his nods to the Scholastic style of "casuistic" argument (18). From the earlier ethical socialists, Walzer conveys the possibility of a socialist politics that does not worship progress and innovation; this may be among his best (and least appreciated) contributions to the American left.

Yet while seeking to conserve the social world and its shared moral traditions, Walzer seems uninterested in understanding the core of that which he wants to conserve. Reiner attributes to

Walzer the idea that “people create their own versions of goodness” (99), but this isn’t quite right. What Reiner calls Walzer’s “social-meaning thesis” and “meaning-dependent thesis” imply a definition of the human, the kind of premise that philosophers call an anthropology. Minimally, Walzer’s arguments suggest that humans, everywhere, are meaning-seeking creatures. But there seems to be a thicker conception of personhood just offstage: if the goods a society distributes to its members ought to be distributed to those members in a way true to the meanings society’s members have imputed to them, then the meaningfulness of human life-in-society is the premise of all socially-constructed values, and cannot itself be simply a social construction. Painstaking in exploring what the principle of equality entails, Walzer remains averse to spelling out why egalitarian community matters in the first place. In *Spheres of Justice*, for example, after asking “by virtue of what characteristic” human persons deserve to be equal to one another, he answers: “I don’t know.” Walzer has political reasons for this aversion to fundamental questions. Connected social critics, he has written, need to think “inside the cave.” An appeal to truths outside the shared moral world of the critic’s own society ruptures the critic’s connection with his or her fellows, and Walzer worries that too clear an answer to such fundamental questions takes the critic outside the cave. I am not sure that this is correct. I will have something more to say about that, but for now I want simply to point out the tension: Walzer’s politics are premised on equality, yet Walzer doesn’t want to speak about the premises of equality.

As though it might distract from his efforts to demonstrate the unity of Walzer’s thought, Reiner downplays this tension, making only passing mention of Walzer’s aversion to “Grand Theory…in the traditional philosophical style” (164). To get a feel for the relationship between Walzer’s ethical socialism and his disinclination to write about ethical foundations, it is helpful to read von Busekist’s interviews. Von Busekist asks superb questions, drawing Walzer out on questions about which he has not written, especially regarding his intellectual biography. She begins with a cogent and elegant account of what makes Walzer’s political thought “unique and vital” (2), emphasizing the connection between his commitment to democratic politics and his conviction that the interpretive social critic “does not feel the need to have the final say” (7), and suggesting that Jewish themes are among the “threads that [tie] Walzer’s work together” (1). Reading the interviews, it is not hard to see how Walzer came to develop such an acute sense of what it is like to have a marginalized attachment, to stand “a little to the side,” as he says a social critic should. Having grown up in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, in a Jewish community big enough to be noticeable but too small to be a world of its own, a member of the generation that bridged the Old and New Lefts, shaped by dual (and, it seems, not always harmonious) educations in the *Dissent* tradition of social criticism and in academic political theory, Walzer presents himself as a pluralist (almost) all the way down: “I think of myself as engaged, committed, but maybe not fully engaged anywhere” (except, he adds, with his grandchildren) (37).

If these interviews give us a sense of Walzer’s ambivalent memberships, that only deepens the significance of the moments when Walzer speaks to von Busekist about his enduring commitments. “I often thought that I was boringly consistent,” he remarks; “I started as a social democrat, I will end as a social democrat” (133). The consistency is admirable; the gulf

between Walzer's sensibility and that of his mentor Howe, who called socialism "the best problem to which a political intellectual can attach himself," is striking. One never gets the sense that Walzer finds his social democracy problematic, that it is something that he wrestles with or needs to explain to himself.

Even more telling is Walzer's response to a question from von Busekist about "defensible" forms of belonging: "Why do I love the Jewish people in exactly the way Hannah Arendt said she couldn't? The explanation is difficult for modern, secular, emancipated men and women. It has something to do with the fact that my grandparents lived in a certain way, with memories, celebrations, rituals, and moral commitments that are still part of my life and that I want to be part of my grandchildren's life. And all this I share with other people, who have similar grandparents and similar hopes for their grandchildren. And these people, across the generations, share my obsessions and laugh at my jokes" (111-112). This is a lovely statement, as good an account as any I know of what it is like to be loyal to a religious community for the sake of the community itself. Walzer's statement is also notable for what it doesn't say. A "modern, secular, emancipated" reader might recoil from Walzer's appreciation for the non-emancipated life, for being ensconced in a multi-generation community defined by memory and commitment. But from what Walzer says here, that reader might not notice that the celebrations and rituals he refers to are anything but modern and secular.

The point is not only that Walzer talks about religious community without emphasizing its religious character. Consider a moment in von Busekist's interviews when she asks whether Walzer agrees that there is "an ethical foundation, a deep system of morality" in his writings. He responds: "Yes,…but I have never tried to write about the foundations of ethics. And it's not because I believe there are no arguments that could be made…The metaphor I have always used is: we are living in a house. We assume the house has a foundation, but I've never gone down there. I am trying to describe the living space, the shape of the rooms—and to suggest better ways of furnishing the house" (117-118). Reading this passage alongside the one about belonging, we might say that with regard to religious community or to political community, Walzer enjoys the house enough that he feels no need to visit the foundations. The living spaces of the house, the experience of membership itself, he suggests, can engage one's full affections and one's full intellectual attention.

There is considerable wisdom here. The history of the left is full of people who love humanity but act horribly toward human beings. Walzer, appreciating the experience of shared "living space," offers a welcome alternative to that shallow universalism. But at the same time, I want to say: this won't do. Aren't there times when advocates of equality need to be able to account for their egalitarianism, either to orient themselves or so that they can find one another? Aren't there times when the foundations of the house require repair?

There is a theme that runs through even the most sympathetic criticisms of Walzer's work. Walzer is "too polite," writes George Scialabba; his writing exhibits an "emotional flatness," says Mark Krupnick. The quiet and measured voice of his writings, the same voice we hear in his interviews with von Busekist, is part of what makes Walzer a helpful thinker. But something

is missing. I want to suggest that these two problems in Walzer's writings, his unexplored moral foundations and his unfailing good manners, may be one. At the rare moments when Walzer reveals something about the foundations of his egalitarian commitments, he invites trouble; saying more about those foundations would invite still more trouble.

Walzer's strongest and most direct case for equality—in these books or, I think, anywhere in his writings—comes in a coda to the von Busekist book: "Perhaps the oldest argument against inequality is the assertion by the writers of the Hebrew bible that all human beings are created in the image of God. This simple sentence resonated in medieval peasant revolts, among radical Protestant reformers, in the American Declaration of Independence, and in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. It still a line that calls upon Americans to live up to what we say we believe. We should keep repeating it, even if some of us have to revise the biblical sentence: all human beings are created in the image of God, *whether or not God exists*" (169). The passage reflects Walzer's interest in "reiterative" commonalities: whether or not Genesis 1 is a text with universal meaning, it is a text in which many groups of people have discovered comparable meanings. Walzer's statement also raises a problem. One wonders how each of the groups he mentions, from medieval peasant rebels to civil rights workers, learned to know the same text and to see it as having some bearing on their social circumstances. There must have been in each case some process, likely quite different processes, of religious education or cultural formation. The question of why equality matters turns out to contain (at least) two questions: On what basis do we commit to the principle of equality? and How do we come to know that basis for egalitarian commitment?

Walzer writes rarely and cautiously about the first question; even this remark about creation in the image of God is at most a sketch of an answer. About the second question, he has become persistently and openly concerned. In a number of interviews over the past several years, he has expressed a worry about the "cultural reproduction of the left," and he has suggested that his writings about the Bible and about Jewish intellectual traditions are a response to that worry. (Similarly, he tells von Busekist that he hopes for a Jewish "cultural revival" [161].) Perhaps a purely secular left could find sufficient moral resources to sustain egalitarian politics. Walzer seems to say: why gamble on that possibility? If the story that Jews (and Christians) have told about the creation of humanity impels its listeners toward seeing the image of God in every person, then cultivating the communities that tell that story can be a way to keep egalitarian politics alive.

Retrieving the intellectual legacies of religious those communities may be helpful too, and not only for those communities themselves. As both Reiner and von Busekist note, in addition to his own writings on the Bible (two books, a book chapter, and various articles), for nearly forty years Walzer has been collaborating with other scholars on a four-volume anthology of and commentary on the Jewish tradition of political thought, three volumes of which have so far been published. Following thinkers like Hannah Arendt, Leo Strauss, and Sheldon Wolin, academic political theory has often seen the ancient Greeks as the political thinkers par excellence. Walzer dissents: "To me, it's a kind of idolatry," he tells von Busekist, "to think that when the Athenians met in assembly and voted on whether to invade Sicily, they were citizens

and free political actors in a way that we moderns can only dream about (no matter that they made the wrong decision)" (126-127). If reading the Bible and the tradition of Jewish commentary on it is not for Walzer a replacement for reading Thucydides, Plato, and Aristotle, it is at least a necessary corrective. The Jewish tradition is for Walzer an alternative paradigm, albeit a knowingly incomplete one, a tradition of thought about the proper ordering of community life within a community whose members have often not held the power that the Greeks called "rule," and thus a political tradition that thinks beyond the state.

It is also, from Genesis onward, a tradition that pushes toward social equality. Walzer again approaches the moral foundations that make him a "consistent social democrat" when he tells von Busekist: "Although I [have] tried not to read social democracy into the biblical text, I do believe that there are statements in the prophets, perhaps especially in Amos, that could inspire contemporary social democrats" (149). Invoking the Hebrew prophets, Walzer stands on dangerous ground. He is surely right that the prophets were connected social critics. It is worth noting that the community with which they were connected was constituted by memories and hopes that pointed—to use Plato's phrase—beyond the cave. When one is connected to such a community, a refusal to ask about truths outside the cave can be itself a kind of disconnection. Connected criticism may at times require going down to the foundations of the moral world.

This is not the only kind of trouble Walzer's Biblical turns invite. Amos, evidently his favorite among the prophets, begins his message by declaring: "The Lord roars from Zion" (1:2). Walzer has recognized that a shared moral world may need cultivation, even rebuilding. But Amos's God seems as likely to shatter as to build. If the God who is the ground of equality roars—whether or not that God "exists"—then to seek the roots of a commitment to equality may turn out to be an unsettling experience. Biblical religion is a resource for egalitarian politics. It is also a challenge to politics as we know it; it threatens to disrupt our customary notions of political efficacy, of the boundaries of the political, even of selfhood and otherness. To make a deeply compelling case for why equality matters and to remain within the bounds of secular propriety may be incompatible objectives.

Considering Walzer's political thought as a whole, as Reiner and von Busekist help us to do, one cannot miss the integrating element in Walzer's many writings. Walzer has described, as well as anyone, how social democracy can be a coherent and independent political stance—neither quite liberal nor quite communitarian, thoroughly democratic, fundamentally egalitarian. It also seems to me that he has also opened up a project that extends beyond his own work. The democratic left needs to attend to its own "cultural reproduction," and in our time that means some tending of formative communities and some kind of intellectual *ressourcement*. Walzer has begun to offer examples of what these can look like; appreciative of reiteration as he is, I expect that he would welcome others. What I want to add, what I think Walzer shows but does not say, is that encountering what Irving Howe called the "moral basis of socialism" may shake our thinking and habits more than we know in advance. Social democracy can be a radical tradition, a deep-rooted tradition, only at some risk, if not to its "conviction" and "patience" then at least to its modern manners.

Review Essay: Leo Panitch & Colin Leys, Searching for Socialism: The Project of the Labour New Left from Benn to Corbyn (London: Verso: 2020)

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This is a dispiriting book. How could it not be, arriving as it did—upon a scene already deeply etched by “economic, political, and cultural and not least ecological ” (p. 255)—amidst a pandemic of unfathomable personal, social, and economic consequences in the face of which the political leaderships of some of the world’s most vainglorious countries, the United Kingdom definitely included, have proved themselves to be utterly incompetent, devoted adherents of ideologies which are both murderous and suicidal.

Might it have been otherwise? Is there another political leadership waiting in the wings which might rescue deeply troubled, desperate people from their viral fate? These and more are the questions being asked in many places besides Britain and from the same fundamental concern for personal and societal survival. They are not, it must be emphasized, questions this book directly sets out to answer, for although it was written in the face of many deeply troubling predicaments, it was in press before the pandemic struck. But now, at this moment of immediate existential crisis—a crisis which is highlighting the systemic inadequacy of the attempts made thus far to address the less speedy existential crises with which the book is explicitly concerned, crises crowding in upon us and already straining the political capacities of so many of the world’s seemingly strongest countries—these are now the questions one has no option but to pose to all those political systems purporting to offer some insight into our seemingly intractable political ills, systems which regularly promise leadership to guide us to safer places.

So far as Britain is concerned, to the questions the deadly virus has thrust suddenly upon us with an intensity the other crises have not the answer this book seemingly provides is no, it could not have been otherwise, and no, there is no alternative political leadership waiting in the wings which might rescue us. This for several nested reasons: the dysfunctionality of the only sizeable, presently plausible source of a possible alternative leadership, namely, the Labour Party; the dysfunctionality of the British parliamentary system; and the dysfunctionality of the British constitutional system. Although the focus of this book is primarily on the first of these dysfunctional entities, the Labour Party, the others are touched on for they are integral, as always, to the predicament faced by all those seeking to employ the established

constitutional arrangements to gain the right to try to solve the country's problems. Yet the current pandemic puts all of them simultaneously in high relief; it shows them all to be facets of a single problem to which there seems to be no ready solution. Perhaps—to go further down a road which is both exhilarating and terrifying—we really are at a moment of extreme human freedom where none of the available systems of thought related to organisation and action which have guided as well as constrained us for so long are any longer of much practical relevance?

But what of the subject of this book, Labour's "new left," as Panitch and Leys refer to such groupings as the Bennites and, more recently, the Corbynites? Might it have shown us the way? Panitch and Leys' answer is again no, for Labour's new left is itself rendered dysfunctional because it is locked into the other overarching dysfunctional parts of the British system even while it seeks to challenge them. It, too, sad to say, is therefore part of the problem. But why is this so?

Those Americans who self-define as Democrats and who also consider themselves progressives are surely fortunate that their political party of choice is somewhat homologous with the political character of the United States itself, a federated structure which still affords some small space for local politics and local politicians, for some political deviation from the wishes and ideas of those who are dominant. Thus, while the constraints that the mainstream leaders of what is largely a mainstream, not very progressive party, can impose on those to their left are considerable, those who occupy that left wing, whether as elected members of one of the many political organizations which compose the Democratic Party or as citizen activists, whether occasional or persistent, are fortunate that these constraints are not comprehensively enforceable. The constraints they face certainly stop far short of the discipline of the sort which can be imposed on the members, including the elected members, of the British Labour Party.

For that Party is composed at all levels of those whose membership and functional role requires the approval of the Party hierarchs, some of whom are elected, some of whom are appointed via the elected Party leader and the elected National Executive Committee to the Party's bureaucracy which is, in turn, managed by an appointed powerful General Secretary. In this the Party functions in a fashion somewhat homologous with Britain's constitutional arrangements, with Britain's parliamentary system of government, a system which, while supposedly democratic, prioritises a considerable degree of centralised, top-down control over the subordinate institutions of the British system and upon its British subjects.

In consequence, it is perfectly—and sometimes deeply unfortunately—possible for the Labour Party to deny individuals and political groupings membership and to expel members as its hierarchs see fit. To be sure, there are mechanisms for accepting and rejecting members and there are mechanisms for determining whether and how to punish members. Yet as the shenanigans of the Corbyn and now the Starmer years make clear, these mechanisms, again under centralised, top-down control, though not necessarily under the control of the leader should he be of the left, as the recent "Leaked Report" on the functioning of the Party's Governance and Legal Unit lays bare, actually function in murky ways: some one will be

informed that they are under investigation for breaching Party rules or for "bringing the Party into disrepute," yet like as not they will not be told precisely what wrong they are supposed to have committed or who precisely has accused them of wrongdoing; further, they are usually forbidden to reveal that they are under investigation, to talk about their case, and others in the Party are prohibited from discussing it. Should anyone think all this is an exaggeration, I invite them to take a look at, for example, what the Jewish Voice for Labour has again and again published between 2015 and the present, where they will see many of those accused of anti-Semitic words and deeds, many of these themselves Jewish members of the Labour Party, revealing that they have been accused and are under investigation and either damning the Party to do its worst or else resigning from the Party in disgust. (I explain some of these items more fully below, in relation to the 2019 British General Election and its aftermaths.)

In short, while it is somewhat possible and definitely necessary to subject the American constitutional and procedural arrangements, including those of its political parties, to democratic critique, it is less possible and more evidently necessary to subject the constitutional and procedural arrangements of the United Kingdom and its political parties to the same sort of thing. And it is difficult to avoid the conclusion in the latter case—I leave the former case to others—that much of what democracy requires is much wanting, including in that Party which has long purported to represent, at least in principle, the great majority of the British people.

The effort by successive 'lefts' within the Party to make the British Labour Party more an expression of the will of its many members has been, as Panitch and Leys intimate, a long standing one, dating back to the Party's earliest days. The aspiration, that the Party function in democratic—or at least more democratic—ways, is not, of course, the sole aspiration of those who join Labour or support Labour with their votes. Within the parliamentary system, the winning of elections is a continuing priority, for only then is there any possibility that the Party's policies can be given effect. But the controversies over how and by whom and for whose benefit its policies are created are never far from sight. It is also a recurrent issue, whether those who become Labour MPs will support which policies and whether they will do so vigorously or not, for it is widely and correctly perceived that these MPs do not all sing from the same hymn book. Further, it is very difficult to "primary" a Labour MP, to challenge their right to stand again and again as the Party's candidate in a General Election, no matter how much they depart from the policy preferences of their constituency party.

It is also the case that the degree of internal Party democracy varies somewhat depending on the nature of the individual leader and on which particular oligarchic group within the Party supports that leader. An added difficulty can be that parts of the Party while favoring more democracy overall may not be eager to have their particular organisations democratised. Hence, the particular problem facing Corbyn and those who supported him within and without Parliament. For, as Panitch and Leys review in their sixth chapter, under "New Labour" and its hierarchs clustered around Tony Blair and Gordon Brown the Party took a considerable turn away from democracy (something some apprehend is again happening under Starmer): a major definition of the Party's purpose since its founding was more or less unilaterally eliminated;

power was more centralised; the role of the annual conference was weakened; policy discussions were set within selected focus groups; the selection of candidates within the constituencies was subjected to much greater central control (with the result that the Parliamentary Labour Party, its local branches, and its bureaucracy all became heavily dominated by "Blairites"); and so on—all this in an effort to make the Labour Party fit for purpose in a Thatcherised Britain and in a globalising, neo-liberal world: no great inclination here to take arms against a sea of troubles—unless, of course, it was to take up arms against troublesome Iraq: the social and political destruction of that country was something else Blair's policy of staying in close alignment with globalisation's superpower required Britain to join in. And many in the Labour Party would never forgive him or new Labour that, especially since the decision to launch that war was rammed through the Party and Parliament in a most authoritarian way. As Panitch and Leys relate, a fair number of those who abandoned the Party for its role in launching the war on Iraq formed part of Corbyn's base of support in 2015. So, too, did many others disenchanted by New Labour's policies or political style.

That some effort to meet the newly emerging realities and the challenges they posed was necessary, goes without saying. But the Blairite approach was not, perhaps, the only possible one; others just weren't given the time of day, for the leader knew best. And yet that effort, to become the party of government within a new and rapidly evolving country and world, eventually proved futile when the great economic collapse of 2008-9 intervened.

What that collapse highlighted was that Britain under New Labour had not overcome the economic difficulties and the social and cultural indignities Labour was supposed at least to diminish (p. 210). Rather, a great many were more exposed than ever to the brutal consequences of the measures taken to deal with the global financial crisis. Despite the fact considerable change had been imposed upon Britain, change which included social mobility of a sort, change which meant that there were "the left behind" in the old industrial areas, and there were those younger people for whom, no matter their academic qualifications (which they now had to acquire from an increasingly corporatised educational system demanding payment), work had become more precarious and not necessarily available in their home area. These were among the factors that led to the extra-Party Uncut movement against austerity and to the British Occupy movements, among others. These were also among the factors which made it so difficult, indeed, impossible, for Labour to settle on a policy respecting Britain's membership of the European Union, although Corbyn did, I think, try to fashion an electoral approach that would transcend the differences between these two groups of potential supporters, an attempt that was frustrated by the rigidity with which people had come to connect on one side or the other with the issue of Brexit.

Panitch and Leys weave all these topics and more, in much greater evidentiary detail, into their book. But it is only appropriate to note that their concern is not just to describe how the Corbyn project was defeated. Following along the path marked out by Ralph Miliband in his *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labour* (1961) and in their own previous book, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism: From New Left to New Labour* (2000), their larger concern is to present the difficulties—difficulties which eventually proved

insurmountable—Corbyn and his many supporters outside Parliament and his few supporters inside Parliament faced in the Parliamentary Labour Party and in thrzxe Labour Party at large as well as within the supposedly neutral Party bureaucracy, as but another round in the conflict inherent in the Labour Party since its founding, a conflict which comes much more out into the open in every period of great economic crisis. For time and time again, in the 1930s, in the 1970s, and the 2010s, as they note, those who sought a socialist solution to these crises manage to get a hearing among the general public because the country's power elite, including those ensconced in the Labour Party, have manifestly demonstrated their incompetence to deal with it, only to have the forces of normality regroup and come down on them like a ton of bricks. (This sort of thing is, too, part of the more encompassing British political tradition, as those who recall the fate of the more radical wing of the parliamentary forces arrayed against the royalists in the 17th C. will recognise. Such is the depth of the problem. And, like the USA's 1789, it is almost never addressed as a problem.)

The most recent drive for democratic socialism, of which Corbyn reluctantly became the leader and the symbol in 2015, was stronger than ever before, driving the forces of normality in his own Party, in Parliament, and in the media into a frenzy of destructive effort. And as the critics of parliamentary socialism would suggest, Corbyn's destruction was almost inevitable, for parliamentary socialism is, certainly within the political field defined and maintained by Britain's present constitutional arrangements and their attendant dominant ideology, a contradiction. That destruction came with the defeat of Corbyn-led Labour in the General Election of December 2019, a defeat which, though substantial, was, as Panitch and Leys claim, much exaggerated by the left's opponents inside and outside the Party (p. 248). [1] Again, however, a most negative perception of the left had to be constructed and disseminated.

That 2019 General Election is the subject of Panitch and Leys' concluding chapter, which they center on the problems the divisive issue of Brexit posed for the entire Labour Party including its left, including for Corbyn himself and his closest colleagues. For the 2016 Referendum result favoring Leave had initiated, not ended, a two-year-long battle between Leavers and Remainers which cross-cut Britain's major partisan divide. On the Tory side, the Leavers eventually coming to power under the leadership of Boris Johnson had summarily dismissed the leading Remainers from their party and proceeded to call a General Election to validate their policy vis-à-vis the European Union. Labour entered this election very much divided on a number of grounds: on Brexit itself; on the significance of anti-Semitism among the Corbynite ranks; on the very fact that the left presently constituted its leadership. In short, on the Labour side the Election was not just a contest against the Tory government it was simultaneously a contest over who would control the Party. And unlike in the United States where the differences within the Democratic Party became somewhat muted during the 2020 election campaign to oust Trump from the Presidency, there was almost no such muting of the differences within British Labour in December 2019.

How Labour was wrong footed by the Tories and how Corbyn was pressed by the exigencies springing from the divided nature of his party to adopt positions on Brexit to his own and his party's detriment, is discussed in some detail in the book under review. As Panitch and Leys

make clear, the internal division has been as much about the nature of the Party, the nature of Britain, and about the nature of the Britain's antiquated constitutional arrangements as it has been about whether or not the UK should leave or remain within the EU. It was also another convenient stick with which to beat Corbyn since he had long been a critic of Britain within a neoliberal Europe. Since the Election, and since Corbyn's replacement by Starmer, a Remainer, the Remainers within the Party have very much muted their opposition to Brexit. That that fundamental dispute of which the Leave-Remain dispute was a part nevertheless continues to have purchase, is indicated by two competing autopsies, if you like, of Labour's electoral defeat—autopsies which postdate the publication of the book under review but which nevertheless fall in line with the argument Panitch and Leys are making in their concluding chapter.

There is, on the one hand, the official Party analysis, formulated and distributed by the post-Corbyn leadership of the Party: "Labour Together". [2] This account, while it acknowledges that social democratic and similar parties have everywhere undergone serious decay almost everywhere, largely contents itself with outlining some longer term demographic shifts among the British public, as if these speak for themselves, as if deindustrialization and its consequences were somehow inevitable. Still more recently, on the other hand, some leading left Leavers in the Party have countered with "No Holding Back". [3] Its authors reiterate that, as Panitch and Leys summarize regarding an earlier moment in the controversy, all the trends—deindustrialization, decay of the trade unions, etc.—"had been reinforced, rather than countered, by New Labour, whose continuing influence was reflected in the inability, or refusal, of so many in the PLP, and even in the shadow cabinet, to hear what Jon Trickett and Ian Lavery were telling them throughout 2018 and 2019—namely, that in many old working-class communities the call for a second referendum was being taken as an expression of profound political disdain" (p. 250). Clearly, the nature of the Party, its composition as well as its structure, is still the subject of much contention, linked as these are to the divergent answers being given to the question, what's the matter with Britain?

With respect to the 2019 election, it is also necessary to discuss the issue of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party. It is now more necessary than ever to do so since their purported anti-Semitism has now been given as the grounds for dismissing from his shadow cabinet the new leader Keir Starmer's principal opponent in the post-election leadership contest, Rebecca Long-Bailey, and for suspending Corbyn himself from the party he so recently led.

Obviously these events fall outside the purview of their book, though Panitch and Leys do discuss the almost ceaseless leveling of charges of anti-Semitism against the left, against Corbyn in particular, during the years he led the Party (pp. 208-211). And they do reference studies, such as that by Greg Philo, which explored and repudiated the effect of these repeated accusations on the general public (pp 292-293, n. 13). [4] They do not, however, in my estimation, attend sufficiently to the effect of these accusations on the outcome of the 2019 General Election—though they are, perhaps, alluding to that, among other things, when they note that "Corbyn could not and would not disown his own anti-imperialist record; but his failure to respond to gross distortions of it cost Labour dearly in the 2019 election" (p. 251).

Yet there were many reports of potential Labour voters voicing their concerns to those canvassing for their vote, revealing their reluctance to support Corbyn, the anti-Semite as they had come to perceive him to be. It is surely commendable that so many among the British electorate saw anti-Semitism as something to be rejected. It is surely not commendable that so many had a quite distorted view of the degree to which anti-Semitism was a peculiarly left-Labour problem in today's Britain.

To be sure, it is unclear how anti-Semitism fits in analytically to the narrative of left-right conflict for control of the Labour Party. But there can be no doubt that it has to be taken seriously since it has in recent times played a most significant role in that conflict and continues to do so. Let me therefore say a little more about it, to bring it up to date.

First, a little organizational detail which helps explain some of what follows: As Panitch and Leys discuss, although Corbyn was elected leader by a considerable majority of the Party members in September 2015 and defeated an attempt to remove him from the leadership by an even greater majority in September 2016, it was not until late 2017 that elections to the Party's National Executive Committee gave Corbyn supporters a majority on that body. Thus it at last became possible to replace a bitter opponent of Corbyn as General Secretary of the Party, the head of the Party's bureaucracy, with a strong supporter of Corbyn (pp. 223-224.) Related changes in the top bureaucratic staff occurred at the same time. Subsequently, after Corbyn stood down as leader, and after Starmer was selected in his stead, the Corbyn-friendly bureaucrats were soon replaced by those opposed to what he and the left stand for.

Now no doubt it is because Corbyn, like many others on the left in Britain and elsewhere, had been a strong supporter of Palestinian rights throughout his long political career, that a number of British-Jewish organizations strongly disapproved of him becoming the leader of a major British political party. It was quite common to see him and his like-thinking colleagues, some of them Jewish, characterized as anti-Semites. And as conflict between the left and the right in the Party escalated, that characterization was "weaponised" by his opponents in the Party and in the media. (The attempts to weaponize it against the American left have been rather less effective. [5].)

To spell out the character of this conflict more fully, to render it a little more comprehensible for those who have not been following it over the last five years: there have been two linked elements to this bitter feud. On the one hand, a conflict among British Jews, some of them Labour Party members, which has, roughly, opposed those who favored a more traditional notion of anti-Semitism to those who espoused the "new anti-Semitism" which has tended to link criticism of Israel more closely with anti-Semitism per se [6]. On the other hand, as I understand it, there have been those Party opponents of Corbyn and more generally of the rise of the left in the Party, some of them Jewish, some not, who saw that the charge of anti-Semitism and of being too lax in dealing with expressions of anti-Semitism in the Party could play a potent part in curbing the left and getting rid of Corbyn. Nevertheless, the remarks of those such as Lynne Segal, a Jewish member of Corbyn's own constituency party and one of his long-standing proponents, deserve attention, as do those of Nira Yuval-Davis, who also

describes herself as an anti-Zionist diasporic Israeli Jew. [7]

So when Britain's Equality and Human Rights Commission indicated that it would investigate anti-Semitism within the Labour Party, the for-the-moment Corbyn-friendly Party bureaucracy composed a lengthy report to be submitted as evidence to that Commission, "The work of the Labour Party's Governance and Legal Unit in relation to anti-Semitism, 2014-2019". [8] But before it could be submitted, the Labour Party was under new management. Starmer had replaced Corbyn as leader in early 2020. And the Party's new leadership chose not to submit that lengthy report. It quickly, for obvious reasons, became the "Leaked Report."

To refer to events germane to the argument of Panitch and Leys: The EHRC made its conclusions public on 29 October 2020. [9] In my view, it is a flawed report in that it does not adequately take into account one fact the very existence of the "Leaked Report" clearly signifies: that two bitterly opposed, politically feuding groups were in charge of the Party's Governance and Legal Unit at different times and that their relationship with the political leadership of the Party was also very different. Hence, to blame the left for the politically motivated foot dragging on the part of the Blairite bureaucrats in dealing with members accused of anti-Semitism during the first half of Corbyn's time as leader is a bit much. Again, these are much discussed matters. What also needs to be discussed is a more general issue, the growing tendency to substitute judicial and semi-judicial action for politics.

What has turned out to be the most significant and most controversial consequence of the EHRC's findings was that while acknowledging and regretting that there was anti-Semitism in the Party and saying even one case would be one too many, Corbyn also offered that "the scale of the problem was also dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside the party, as well as by much of the media"—a conclusion which, given what had gone on during the preceding five years, seems to fall well within the bounds of civil political discourse. [10] Yet that is ostensibly why the Party's new anti-left General Secretary immediately suspended Corbyn from the Party. The role of Starmer in all of this is much debated. Also relevant to the point made about control of discussion within the Party, the perceived suppression of free speech in the Party, especially when it comes to the attack upon a former leader who enjoyed much support and who brought membership in the Party to a new high, has again heightened the conflict between the opposed elements in the Party, nullifying the claims of the new leadership that it is seeking to unify. [11] An NEC panel reinstated Corbyn on 17 November 2020, much to the chagrin of those who have been denouncing him for so long. But almost immediately Starmer, in a move which the semi-official Labourlist described as "lea[ving] all sides feeling more mistrustful of party procedures than before, which is quite some feat," decreed that he would not be allowed to sit in Parliament as a Labour MP. The new left Momentum campaign group then charged that Starmer was "making it up as he goes along," describing the move as "not only farcical and incompetent" and as "a blatant political attack on the left." [12] No end to strife! Worse, from being just one weapon in the left-right struggle, anti-Semitism is being made into a key battleground. This is a troubling development which should give everyone pause.

But I have strayed perhaps too far in substance, though not, I hope in spirit, from Panitch and Leys' discussion. Let me close by returning to their express concern that the predicaments faced by Labour's new left and by Britain as a whole are inextricably linked to "the progressive loss of coherence and workability of the country's so-called unwritten constitution." Rather as in the United States—where constitutional revisions envisioning, for example, the elimination or circumvention of the Electoral College, the restructuring of the Senate to counteract its undemocratic favoring of small states over large populations, the imposition of limits of some sort on the Supreme Court, doing something to block gerrymandering and voter suppression, are beginning to be talked about at least by some—it seems clear that a more democratic Britain will first require a serious politically driven discourse on that unwritten archaic constitution.

Signs that such a discourse is underway amongst some in some places are several. In Wales and most notably in Scotland, the press towards a different set of governing institutions and ideas is part of the neo-nationalist movement for independence. But to this point, unless I'm mistaken, there has been no serious exploration of how to come up with a constitutional framework for an independent Scotland—just being separate from England, whether in or out of the European Union, does not begin to come close to such a framework for governing everyday life.

Another sign, oddly enough, is the unfolding of Brexit, which may be regarded as, in part, an important strand of the exploration within England in particular of its constitutional problems and its constitutional future. (NB. England is just one part, albeit much the largest part of the United Kingdom.) It cannot be doubted that that entire process became dominated by an English nationalistic right wing, on the one hand, and on the other, Euro-cosmopolitanism (the predominant part of Labour's Remain element). But it should not be lost to sight and to history that there were those engaged in the bitter debate over Brexit who were seeking a voice in the governance of their own lives, a voice which Labour, for one, had increasingly denied them. [13]

As already noted, Panitch and Leys discuss in some detail how Brexit, in particular, helped derail the latest Parliament-centered attempt to bring more democracy to Labour and to Britain. But again, the general thrust of their argument is just how much the odds are stacked against parliamentary socialism being able to bring these aspirations to fruition. As they conclude: "In face of the contradictions being generated by twenty-first century capitalism, discovering and developing new political forms adequate to addressing them, and the popular capacities needed to overcome them, will take time. And yet, given the scale of these contradictions—political, economic, cultural, and not least ecological—time is short. This is the central dilemma for democratic socialists, not just in Britain but everywhere" (p. 255). I imagine that as they view the confused mess that is Britain's pandemic politics they would want to repeat even more strongly, that a different, new politics is more necessary than ever. None which would advance a democracy in which "For the Many not the Few" might become a reality is yet coming into sight.

NOTE: *The author of this review wishes to express his deep regret over the death of Leo Panitch on 19 December 2020 from Covid-19 contracted in hospital. He recommends an interview Leo Panitch gave in November 2020 as an amendment to this review: https://theanalysis.news/interviews/why-did-labour-suspend-corbyn-leo-panitch/*

[1] That it was much exaggerated is borne out by other data referring to the percentages of the British electorate, as distinct from the vote, going to Labour in the six successive 21st C. elections: 24.2%, 21.6%, 18.9%, 20.1% 27.5%, and 21.7%, the last two being those Labour fought under Corbyn's leadership in 2017, when Labour's level of support was greater than at any other time in the century, and 2019; clearly, too, although registering a big decline between 2017 and 2019, Labour still did rather better by this measure in 2019 than it did under Tony Blair in 2005, under Gordon Brown in 2010, or under Ed Miliband in 2015. Of course, all these percentages pale in significance when compared with the 40.3 percent of the electorate which was Labour's share in 1951—in those far off days Labour and the Tories together were supported by about 80 % of the electorate, now they struggle to together account for about 50 %, a fact which points up just how much Britain's post WW Two political order has decayed.

[2]https://docs.labourtogether.uk/Labour%20Together%202019%20Election%20Review.pdf).

[3] Discussed by its proponents at https://labourlist.org/2020/11/labour-got-it-wrong-on-a-second-referendum-we-should-say-sorry/ and more extensively at https://morningstaronline.co.uk/article/f/interview-rebuilding-labour-socialism-brexit-and-democracy

[4] For some critical comments on the discussion of this very controversy-generating subject by Panitch and Leys (which he might extend to my additional remarks below?) see the review of their book by Professor Colin Shindler at https://colinshindler.com/searching-for-socialism/. A "Corbyn" search on his site is quite informative.

[5] See, e.g., https://forward.com/opinion/436814/of-course-theyre-calling-bernie-sanders-an-anti-semite-because-he-supports/

[6] See, e.g., the account by Antony Lerman, "The 'new antisemitism'," at https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/new-antisemitism/. See also Brian Klug, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/code-of-conduct-for-antisemitism-tale-of-two-texts/. For a brief account of the corresponding conflict in the contemporary United States see, e.g., Eric Alterman, "The Last Few Years Have Spelled a Resounding End to the 'Jewish Vote': There is no longer just one Jewish community. There are several, and they are increasingly at loggerheads," The Nation December 14/21 2020 issue, https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/american-jewish-vote/. See also the statement of Americans for Peace Now on the IHRA at

https://peacenow.org/entry.php?id=37127#.X8p85thKiUk which mirrors the criticisms directed at the adoption of this particular definition of antisemitism coming from the Labour left.

[7] See https://www.redpepper.org.uk/being-jewish-in-north-islington-labour-party/ . Also Professor Nira Yuval-Davis's "Antisemitism and the labour party: some reflections after the publication of the EHRC report"

[8] https://archive.org/details/200329labourreportfinal_202004/mode/2up

[9] https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/investigation-antisemitism-labour-party).

[10] See, e.g., https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/what-jeremy-corbyn-said-a-reminder/. See also Hilary Wainwright's column in a newspaper otherwise known for its anti-Corbyn stance, https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/03/keir-starmer-party-unity-reinstate-jeremy-corbyn-labour-disciplinary

[11] See https://labourlist.org/2020/11/members-threatened-with-investigation-over-corbyn-suspension-motions/

[12] See https://labourlist.org/2020/11/labour-party-readmits-jeremy-corbyn/

https://labourlist.org/2020/11/starmer-announces-decision-not-to-restore-whip-to-corbyn/https://labourlist.org/2020/11/labour-entangled-in-rulebook-row-over-restoring-party-whip-to-corbyn/ https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/18/jeremy-corbyn-refused-labour-whip-despite-having-suspension-lifted

[13] An amusing, informative, and humane exploration of this and related matters is, Anthony Barnett, "Blimey, it could be Brexit," accessible at https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6iE9UndVXNKSlVfMkZ0RGNuN1k/view

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Review: Christophe Broqua, Action = Vie: A History of AIDS Activism and Gay Politics in France. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020).

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

Movements fly, ascending, descending, ebbing, shifting, with overlapping stories building on each other, ideas crashing across borders. This is what I thought of when I heard about Christophe Broqua's study *Action = Vie: A History of AIDS Activism and Gay Politics in France*, the English translation of his history of ACT UP Paris, by Jean-Yves Bart and Kel Pero. I was immediately intrigued. ACT UP chapters around the world take their own composition, with their own cultures and quarrels. ACT UP Golden Gate split from ACT UP San Francisco when I first joined their actions over a quarter century ago, AIDS denialists moving in one direction, Gay Liberationists and more scientifically grounded AIDS activists in another direction.

The images I know of ACT UP Paris include die-ins on the Champs-Élysées, men kissing men, women kissing women, queer fists in the air, wrapped about each other, usually in public, in grand public gestures of affect, defying social mores in favor of expressions of care, Eros ever dancing with thanatos. The city is a stage set and a work of art, none more majestic than Paris, where Boroqua's story takes place in a grand drama. ACT UP New York, the first chapter of the group, had their fair share of kiss ins and of course borrowed from the cultural legacy of French social movement thinkers, including Michelle Foucault. The group founded to "unleash power." ACT UP reminds us ideas matter, as do bodies in space and time.

By the mid-1990's, Act Up–Paris was perhaps the most high-profile activist group in France. Founded two years after ACT UP New York, it borrowed from aesthetics and activist praxis of the New York model, echoing the controversies, creating a few more. A center of government, culture and commerce, the activist playing field in Paris is distinct and unique. Christophe Broqua's fascinating intellectual, activist history work explores the French group's ideas and through lines linking AIDS and gay activism. Of course, one cannot read about ACT UP now without feeling the echoes of history, plagues shedding light on our flaws, reminding us of our limitations. AIDS is not history, neither are our plagues. Epidemics expose a great deal about who we are. They always have. New ideas are born. Old orders fade. Mirrors shatter. A few words about our current moment inform this history.

"My Friend Roger died of COVID-19 Wednesday night," writes Alan Timothy Lunceford-Stevens, a veteran member of ACT UP, who has been a part of the group for well over three decades and still goes to actions today. For AIDS activists this has been a huge déjà vu.

“Friend, Nathan Kolodner, died 31 years ago last night, at 38 years of age, of AIDS and I let it pass, thinking of friend Stephen Addona, who died this week,” recalls Lunceford-Stevens. “Both left earth at early age. Stephen and were working on helping Long Term Survivors not feel alone. I did tonight, thinking of the two of them and the loss.”

With friends dying of a strange unknown affliction that seems to gravitate to the poor and vulnerable, COVID-19 feels all too familiar to AIDS activists. History takes odd shapes, “*the first time* as *tragedy, the second* as *farce*,” as Marx put it.

But this isn’t quite farce.

“It’s been a colossal management and leadership failure,” says ACT UP veteran Gregg Gonsalves of the Yale School of Medicine. “As somebody who watched the AIDS epidemic unfold in this country, I recognize it as a political crisis first and foremost,” he says.

“1,112 and Counting” wrote Larry Kramer in 1983 as the AIDS crisis began, each week new numbers. “If we don’t act immediately, then we face our approaching doom. By 1987, activism moved from service delivery to direct action, as the body bags piled up and we lost friends. The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power fashioned a distinct brand of activism around batting stigma, connecting the separated, taking a data driven approach, harnessing science for the people, arguing healthcare is a right, healthcare is a right. Like today, a primary front of the activism meant supporting civil liberties. William F Buckley famously proposed tattooing people with HIV/AIDS, and activists beat back the attack.

“First a list, then a tattoo, how would you feel if it happened to you,” we chanted with the City of New York proposed names reporting in 1997. Over the years, AIDS activism involved a distinct form of mutual aid, community support and information exchange. Shortly after the pandemic began, ACT UP members formed the ACT UP – fight covid-19 working group. April 1, Anne-Christine d’Adesky, the author of *The Pox Lover: An Activist’s Decade in New York and Paris***,** reports: “ We are almost at 3300-member mark! Welcome all newcomers! We are Act Up- Fight Covid 19!, a global community united in action to fight the coronavirus pandemic. Many veteran Act Up members are in our ranks…We are about collectively uniting in reflection, action and protest against failures and gaps in the response … we welcome your participation.”

Charles King, a veteran of the ACT UP Housing Committee and founder of Housing Works is organizing a shelter for homeless kids coping with this. “They are the new outcasts,” said King, 65. “This resonated deeply with me because back in the 1980s you had AIDS organizations that were not dealing with the homeless and homeless shelters that were not taking anyone with AIDS.”

Kate Barnhart is organizing volunteers, including myself, getting poor people meals. My friend AlanTimothy Lunceford-Stevens writes, “I was aware of HIV (not the name) in 1980 when my friends were dying of a mysterious illness, in San Francisco and New York. I searched for an answer and did not find it, until a fuck buddy died, and anger surfaced in my GUT, and I found

ACT UP NY, with US government inaction on June 22, 1987. Republican Ronald Reagan did not utter the word – AIDS for seven years. And let thousands of Americans COVID-19, this past year and a half. Deaf ears to AIDS and the White House, other priorities, like teen vaping and the election. Donald Trump allowed thousands of Americans to die of COVID-19. The Republican Party can never escape those two presidents and that they care about nothing but white heterosexual people."

The last lines of my first book about AIDS in San Francisco, *White Nights and Ascending Shadows*: suggest: "The cycles of the life and disease continue. Stories about disease eventually all fall into the same form. Whenever it looks like we are about to pull ourselves out, a new test returns malignant. In the end, they all become retreads of Defoe's *A Journal and a Plague Year* and Camus' *The Plague*."

"From 1348 to 1350, in Paris, there was not enough living to bury the dead." From the Bubonic Plague to HIV/AIDS to COVID 19, the cycles make their way, revealing themselves anew in a strange reverberation. The question is how one lives, how one responds. "The dying of despair continually converts itself into a living," writes Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, the Danish existentialist philosopher. Broqua looks to Kierkegaard's words as a "The Rationale for Public Action" in his study of resistance to our modern plague. This is a story about how we act when we are fighting for our lives. Each chapter in *Action = Vie* builds on this question, how do we respond?

"The AIDS epidemic has definitely exploded. A strange deflagration, shattering the eardrums only of those affected," notes Pasc De Duve, in the opening epigraph of the first chapter. The screams break the silence, reminding the world people need help. Narratives of activists and philosophers trace this story. "I want to die screaming that I want to live, screaming that I need medication, screaming that I'm sick of politicians not doing shit, that maybe society needs to wake up. I want to die screaming," declares Cleews Velley, opening the second chapter.

"Today, the main enemy of gays is their dark corner. And all the tests and articles that have attempted to analyze Act Up's work, not a single one appears to have seen that it is the only group to try to bring them into light," says Didie Lestrade, in *Act Up,: Une histoire*, opening the conclusion. Light expels the darkness. This is a story about ideas, each borrowing from another, creating new narratives, each more abundant.

"It was because Michel Foucault's work gave ammunition to resisting medication power that AIDS activists appropriated it," Broqua quotes sociologist Eric Fassin. "What we are dealing with in this new technology of power is not exactly society," notes Foucault in his 1976 college of France lectures, extrapolating on the workings of "biopower" and "state racism" that would be so informative for ACT UP. "…nor is it the individual-as-body. It is a new body, a multiple body, a body with so many heads that, while they might not be infinite in number, cannot necessarily be counted. Biopolitics deals with the population, with the population as political problem." Certain populations are seen as problems. The job of activists is to remind the world of new ways of viewing them, new ways of defining, of understanding, of seeing these

bodies, queer bodies, immigrant bodies, Black bodies, bodies in jail cells, bodies in a democracy.

Movements overlap, stories building off each other, movements and ideas crashing across borders, through time.

Gay Liberation Front explodes out of Stonewall. Guy Hocquenghem, a veteran of the *front* homosexuel d'action révolutionnaire,a Parisian Gay Liberation Group styled upon Gay Liberation Front, formed in in 1971, ruminates on *Homosexual Desire*: "Rather than being lovers in order to breathe, we are queer in order to escape asphyxia." In *The Screwball Asses*, he asserts that pleasure is an integral component of this social movement: "Leftism dries up whatever it touches." Instead, "we rebuilt the Leftist theater. There, we rebuilt the carnival of stars to assemble the next barricades in evening gowns. Theory for the sake of theory collided with madness for the sake of madness, and they both tried to reconcile themselves in the imperialism of youth and beauty." Gay Liberation would remind the stodgy, often homophobic left, that pleasure matters. In this Gay Liberation built its own abundant lived theory and praxis.

Philosopher Michel Foucault, was of course, a part of the social movements of the period to which Broqua refers. He understood that movements, not laws, change culture. Networks of friends, this is what Foucault talked about in his seminal 1981 interview dubbed "friendship as a way of life." His writings on power informed ACT UP, while this support for groups GIP (Groupe d'Information sur les Prisons) took shape through his advocacy for those in the movement to find their own voices, needs, desires, and give them expression. The point of much of his thinking and activism was to lay out questions rather than directives; power could be found in multiple voices of the body of the group, not from the analysis of one charismatic leader. This disposition was part of how he supported friendship as a way of transforming social relations. Rather than dictate the implications of friendships for queer activism, he asks readers to think about what it means, strengthening their means of resistance.

Here friendship is delinked from sexuality as well as connected to it. Such friendships shift between one and the other, changing form. With amorphous definition, for Foucault, friendship was a vital element of queer politics. While sex and friendship are not opposed, the ties between can be described in terms of communities of friends. Most certainly friendship finds its way into movements including civil rights and women's rights, yet gay liberation – a movement born of a denial of access to legal forms of social bonds – had a unique claim to this disposition. While marriage is not an option for queers in most of the world, friendship, however imperfect, always has been. Without defining what this friendship could mean, Foucault implies this practice entails the formation of new models of ethics, suggests Tom Roach in *Friendship as a Way of Life: Foucault, AIDS, and the Politics of Shared Estrangement.*

Foucault would not live long after famous interview, succumbing to the virus himself in 1984, one of the early public figures in France subsumed by the virus. The links between *Act Up and*

Michel Foucault's ideas about bio-power, as well as friendships would provide an enduring connection. It would be up to queer activists to explore these new ethics, within the context of a disease that changed the ways people have sex, share bodies, and explore themselves. Our promiscuity would save us, posits ACT UP New York member Douglas Crimp, articulating a queer theory of activism and pleasure.

Across the world, ACT UP would explore these questions, with chapters popping up from San Juan to Paris. Composed of interviews and readings, Broqua's study traces the history of Act Up–Paris and the culture clash that would be the AIDS years, dovetailing through sex wars, debates about condomless sex, queer theory, HIV treatment, and critiques of capitalism, as public consciousness about people with HIV, queers, and sexual outsiders shifts and laws change. The work begins with *Vichy France*, and the criminalization of homosexuality during the 1940's. Movements respond. Flux is constant. In the subsequent years, *"Homophile" and Revolutionary Movements reimagine questions about homosexuality, their competing narratives of queerness seem to echo the tensions between reform vs revolution witnessed between Gay Liberation Front and the Gay Activist Alliance here in New York.*

The church becomes a target. On Easter day, 1950, the Situationists dressed as friars, disrupt mass in Notre Dame Cathedral, declaring god is dead in "The *Declaration* of *Mourre*":

"Today, Easter day of the Holy Year,
Here, under the emblem of Notre-Dame of Paris,
I accuse the universal Catholic Church of the lethal diversion of our living strength toward an empty heaven,
I accuse the Catholic Church of swindling,
I accuse the Catholic Church of infecting the world with its funereal morality,
Of being the running sore on the decomposed body of the West.
Verily I say unto you: God is dead,
We vomit the agonizing insipidity of your prayers,
For your prayers have been the greasy smoke over the battlefields of our Europe.
Go forth then into the tragic and exalting desert of a world where God is dead,
And till this earth anew with your bare hands,
With your PROUD hands,
With your unpraying hands.
Today Easter day of the Holy Year,
Here under the emblem of Notre-Dame of Paris,
We proclaim the death of the Christ-god, so that Man may live at last."

ACT UP New York and Paris would have their own disruptions at St Patrick's in New York and Notre Dame in Paris. **Act Up–Paris** *builds* **on an imported model of AIDS activism in the United States**, informed by a French philosopher, **constructing a collective transnational identity and framework of movement practices. An ever-expanding community takes shape, across marches, gestures of direct action, black boots and kiss ins, shared grief and memory, Eros and loss, p***olitical funerals and competing memories. To understand these*

symbols, Broque looks to French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, who saw such efforts as "symbolic struggles": "The objective of every movement committed to symbolic subversion is to perform a labour of symbolic destruction and construction aimed at imposing new categories of perception and appreciation, so as to construct a group…" And destruct and construct a group ACT UP did, with stories and expressions, activism and sex, gestures of care and internal conflicts, *controversies over unprotected sex, or "barebacking" and "a threatening closeness."* The splits would go on ad infinitum, through a space between normalization and dissidence, AIDS activism and imagination as catharsis. Broqua traces these dialectic schisms through the group's intellectual and activist history, from responses to treatments for HIV infection to debates over normalizing homosexuality. There are countless versions of this story. This one ends in the mid-2000s before HIV/AIDS normalization and marriage equality caused Act Up–Paris to decline.

And, of course, in March of 2020, Larry Kramer died. I attended the funeral for Larry Kramer, the founder of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, many of us did, wearing masks, breaking quarantine, meeting for the first time in public in weeks, cracks opening. All week, the world swirled with action. Word about a policeman in Minneapolis, who kneeled on unarmed George Floyd's neck 8 minutes and 46 seconds as he begged for life, was making national news. Watching the video of Floyd, face on the concrete, saying "I can't Breathe," before dying, tears pour down my face, a flood of images of everyone who had died lately, mostly from communities of color. And then the sense of shame, frustration, déjà vu. Here we are again. Rodney King and Eric Garner, whose last words were, "I Can't Breathe" in Staten Island. And then Larry Kramer, a white man who started ACT UP and GMHC. He sounded the alarm that this would impact everyone. Kramer reminded us that there was a place for anger. We could use that anger. We could channel that anger. The feelings about the horror could be translated into action. This wasn't the stuff of adolescent misbehavior. We could ACT UP. We could and should disobey, especially in the face of the horror. When Black people are killed by cops, when Abner is tortured, when Patrick is shot, when George is killed, when your friends are getting sick and no one is doing anything about it.

It is all the same thing, homophobia and racism, says Jay Walker, of Rise and Resist, speaking at Kramer's memorial. Foucault was right. State power kills. Over the next few months, he takes part in subsequent street actions calling for the city to defund the police. I'd run into him almost daily at protests, activists responding to the deaths of Black and brown people at the hands of the police as well as the pandemic. Walker writes, "First, the inaction in response to Ahmaud Arbery's murder, then the police execution of Breonna Taylor, then a white woman calling the police on birdwatcher Chris Cooper in the Central Park Ramble, and the one-two gut punches of the death of legendary activist Larry Kramer, less than a year after he had delivered an impassioned speech after our inaugural 2019 Queer Liberation March, and the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police. Our members and organizers took to the streets in protest."

Visibly moved, ACT UP veteran Timothy Lunceford-Stevens, was one of the first to speak at Kramer's memorial, recalling being in the hospital with Kramer when they were both sick, a

familiar face in an otherwise horrific situation without an exit in sight. Now Kramer is gone. He found a way out. Still, the dialogue continues, even when bodies decompose. When Lunceford-Stevens returned home from the funeral, he wrote a poem about Kramer and the whirlwind of history.

LARRY – The WORD

By Timothy Lunceford-Stevens

Larry was a whirlwind, a pain in the ass.

Anger, Vinegar!

Saw no one was playing it safe in the 80s!

Time of Reagan, it took that President seven years to utter,

One WORD

AIDS!

It would kill tens of thousands before,

Protease Inhibitors in 1996

Larry Kramer wrote…

AN ARMY OF LOVERS MUST NOT DIE WE ARE NOT CRUMBS, WE MUST NOT ACCEPT CRUMBS,

1112 AND COUNTING, BE VERY AFRAID.

FAGGOTS, A book some could relate to,

While others hated

As much as Larry Kramer

Hated those who did nothing to

End AIDS Now

LARRY KRAMER died May 27, 2020

HIV Positive since 1988

At 84 years old, just a month before his 85th, living with HIV,

A LIVER TRANSPLANT RECIPIENT with HIV

Since 1980, No one from with HIV

Has lived that long.

Larry’s LEGACY, he Co-founded

GMHC, founded ACTUPNY, and inspired thousands of offshoot

Activist organizations that came later…

TREATMENT ACTION GROUP, HEALTHGAP, HOUSING WORKS.

Just to name a few.

Now there’s Protease Inhibitors. PreP, PEP

And new plans for prevention and treatment

Keeping folks

NEGATIVE

Keeping folks

POSITIVE & UNDETECTABLE & UNINFECTABLE

The WORD

RECKONED

A Failure by the system to stop Millions of the Worlds population from

The WORD

AIDS

The WORD

KRAMER

The WORD

LARRY

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Review: Tanya Lavin, Culture Warlords: My Journey into the Dark Web of White Supremacy. New York: Hatchette Books, 2020)

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One of the more annoying products of the four Trump years has been a certain genre of very lamentable journalism in which legacy media platforms seek to understand, and come to terms, and even empathize, with Trump's supporters.

Often appearing in high-end outlets like the *New York Times*, these articles – such as an egregious November 2017 *NYT* portrait of the Ohio neo-Nazi Tony Hovater – exude an ethnographic tone in seeking to unpack the concerns and political motivations of these seemingly exotic Trump voters who are invariably white and working class and usually male (or, at the very least, have "normal" ideas about gender and sexuality). The effect is to normalize Trump and Trumpism, pitching it as the manifestation of the legitimate economic grievances of lower-income rust-belt workers left behind by deindustrialization in the rust-belt, to push aside racist and homophobic hatreds as explanations for Trump's support, and to generally exonerate higher-income voters from any guilt, even with their statistically well-documented support for Trump, his tax cuts and his anti-socialism.

Talia Lavin decidedly does *not* take this approach in her study of the contemporary online far-right. In a recent interview, indeed, she cut into the "moral toddlerism" of American journalism and its inabilities to provide mature analyses of Trump. *Culture Warlords* thus aims to provide a serious journalistic alternative. For about a year, Lavin spent time inhabiting a number of interconnected online ecosystems: white supremacist dating sites, where she posed as a white Iowan waitress called Ashlynn, various militia telegram channels, message boards for incels (men who insist their inability to date is the fault of insidious feminist conspiracies), Christian and neo-pagan extremist websites. A common denominator across all of these online space is a pervasive anti-Semitism; "Jews" function as a kind *deus ex machina* for the contemporary alt-right, explaining everything from the workings of the global economy, media and academia (in their minds, all Jewish-run, of course) to their disappointments in Trump (because he is surrounded, and supposedly diluted, by people like Jared Kushner or Stephen Miller) and even their inability to get laid (Jews peddle feminism as part of a nefarious "white genocide" conspiracy).

Lavin herself is Jewish and underneath the unpacking of online hate cultures, the book also

becomes an exploration of her own Jewishness, at times sensitive and even funny. She begins the book by describing herself as looking like "the matronly figure of a mother in a Philip Roth novel". And she was clearly amused by her own ability to go undercover as "Ashlynn", the white Iowan, or "Tommy", a lonely incel, and then to eavesdrop on some of the most violently antisemitic exchanges imaginable. Nonetheless, she also recounts the unavoidably negative effects that inhabiting this world had on her; the intimate details in which she witnessed fantasies of anti-Jewish violence, sometimes even mentioning her by name, both disturbed her but also re-doubled her anti-fascism.

The book also showcases Lavin's skewering verbal abilities – describing Andy Ngo as a "fascism-adjacent dickwad" or Stephen Miller as an "odious Nosferatu figure" are two memorable moments. In turn, Lavin also provides sharp dissections of the very online culture of the far right and an intimate sense of the atmosphere pertaining there. She identifies the incel community as the closest thing she could find "to an online community organized purely around misogyny". But she also recognizes its unique appeal: "There's something particularly disturbing about incel communities and their rhetoric, at least for me. Perhaps it's because there's a core of relatability in the worldview they describe. Who among us has not felt unworthy of love, obsessed about their appearance, or longed for intimacy and companionship that seemed impossible to attain?"

At another point, Lavin pauses to consider the point of all this: "Sifting through the details, and observing the nonstop, puerile nature of their speech, it can be easy to wonder precisely what the point of decoding all this hate is. Isn't it just hate? Aren't these just losers pontificating and arguing on the internet?" The closing sections of the book represent an answer to this, setting off from the obvious point that a whole slew of mass murderers – "Robert Bowers to Anders Breivik to Brenton Tarrant" – were radicalized via the kind of online communities Lavin examines. But more than that, as Lavin points out, the well-documented far-right sympathies in American police forces makes state-led interventions impractical and even dangerously naïve. The closing chapter is a robust argument in favor of popular anti-fascist activism – including, but certainly not limited to, the kind of revelatory work carried out in this book – as the surest protection against the Right.

The interminable period since November 2016 has seen a series of clear-headed accounts of the so-called Alt-Right: Kathleen Belew's *Bring The War Home*, Alexandra Minna-Stern's *Proud Boys and the White Ethno-State*, David Neiwert's *Alt-America*. Talia Lavin's gonzo-ish methodology adds an ethnographic and indeed microscopic closeness to this literature, a function of her willingness to not just study extremism from afar but to place herself foursquare within its humid confines. Never willing to concede ground to the far-right, the result is a polemical and utilitarian guidebook to some of the worst people in America.

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Patricia Morris, Fetishism, Psychoanalysis, Anthropology (London: Author's Collective Press, 2020).

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Apparent antitheses between Anthropology and Psychoanalysis are not difficult to adduce. Since its 19th Century stirrings, Anthropology has been committed to illuminating the multiplicity encompassed within the category of "the human."

This dedication to difference has typically pivoted on the concept of culture, that universal that is only ever particular. Psychoanalysis, by contrast, treats a farrago of human behaviors, both individual and collective, as symptoms of a common underlying psychological structure, wrought by tensions between conscious motivations and unconscious desires, the shared legacy of the Oedipal Complex and its configuration of id, ego, and superego. The ends of Anthropology and Psychoanalysis diverge accordingly. The former, despite shifting political commitments over its history, has largely claimed a descriptive mandate. The latter is interventionist and teleological—it seeks to cure neuroses, psychoses, and perversions through the sublimations of speech. Whereas Anthropology, especially in recent years, stakes its disciplinary claims on the terrain of ontological plurality, Psychoanalysis posits a broken humanism, based on a universal pathology that it aspires to treat.

Such, at any rate, is a straw figure version of the antinomy between Anthropology and Psychoanalysis. Patricia Morris' recent, pint-sized offering, *Fetishism, Psychoanalysis, Anthropology* (2020), is the latest salvo in this pitched battle, written decidedly from and for the psychoanalytical camp. *Fetishism, Psychoanalysis, Anthropology* has the virtue of reviving a worthy interdisciplinary debate, and the motif of the fetish is a fitting point of contact and contention to spark the conversation. It is a pity, then, that Morris prefers to polemicize against a caricature of Anthropology constructed largely from the structure-functionalists of yore. In doing so, she misses the opportunity to break new ground in the underexplored regions between the disciplines.

Fetishism, Psychoanalysis, Anthropology begins on a promising note: "There are three distinct disciplines that make free with the term 'fetishism'. Since the earliest launch of a geographical voyage of discovery, anthropologically-minded adventurers have fetishized artefacts valued by supposedly primitive peoples. Separately, psychoanalysis codified sexual fetishism as a familiar feature of the so-called perverse psychological structure. Following Marx, political theorists have plied the term commodity fetishism by which they denote the unacknowledged relationship between an exchanged object and the labor that produced it.

Each group uses the word 'fetishism' often and means something different by it. There is one common factor: the fetish refers to a material object that is over-valued" (Ibid.: 7-8).[1] With this, the table is set for a potential feast of conceptual fusion: the syntheses among religion, sexuality, political economy, and the objects that sustain them. Unfortunately, Morris does not have an appetite for such a meal. She summarily relegates the fetish to one of many concepts lost in translation between Psychoanalysis and Anthropology, while largely skirting Marx's notion of commodity fetishism.[2] Morris visits a plethora of intriguing figures and debates as she treads between the disciplines, but her broad conclusion is both foregone and predictable: "The mechanism by which an idiosyncratic signification occurs for the individual is the stuff of psychoanalytic treatment. When it occurs in the wider group…the psychoanalyst perceives it and marks it as culture, not as exception or as pathology" (Ibid.: 93-94). An unbridgeable gulf between two modalities of meaning, then: on one side, individual symptom, pathological exception; on the other, collective meaning, normative community.

The troubles with such a bifurcation between the psychological and the cultural are legion. Morris' insistence on the rift between psyche and society forecloses any inquiry into the circuits between the two. From an anthropological vantage, the "social life of fetishes," to adapt Arjun Appadurai (1986), is a fecund site for mediations between meaning and materiality, desire and discourse. An example from the recent, fascinating Turkish television series *Ethos* (*Bir Başkadır*)—a drama about psychotherapy—comes to mind: Sinan, an affluent young man who is clearly marked as "secular" according to the dominant ideological polarity of contemporary Turkey, obsessively rubs his face with a headscarf left behind by Meryem, his poor, pious housekeeper. With allowances for televisual license, such an image of a Muslim headscarf as taboo fetish for a secular Turkish man is provocative and persuasive. Yet it would be impossible to comprehend without allowing for a feedback loop between individual symptom and collective meaning—the dichotomy that Morris vigilantly polices.

I suspect that Morris would object to this interpretation as another anthropological mishandling of Psychoanalysis, a hollow invocation of "fetishism" that neglects the *mise-en-scène* of the Oedipal drama that conditions fetishistic perversion. As she details at length, Freud theorizes fetishism as a response to the Oedipal threat of castration on the part of the (boy) child who refuses to accept the prohibition on the mother and, instead, "find(s) a substitute for the missing penis" (2020: 82)—that is, the mother's castrated penis that he refuses fully to acknowledge as missing. Crucially, the transposition of sexual desire from mother to fetish object produces a mode of privileged secrecy—as Jacques Lacan notes, "the meaning of the fetish is not known to other people so the fetish is not withheld from him: it is easily accessible and he can readily obtain the sexual satisfaction attached to it" (quoted in Morris 2020: 84). Sexual fetishism establishes a domain of potent, private meaning divorced from public culture.

Such an solipsistic, pathological vision of fetishism is at odds with recent anthropological treatments of fetishism as a social, semiotic process, above all because anthropologists have sought to recuperate the genealogy of fetish as a history of intersubjective innovation. For anthropologists, fetishism is not a problem to be solved or condition to be treated. David

Graeber, for instance theorizes the fetish as “a god under process of construction” (2005: 427), hovering between the poles of magical manipulation and theological abstraction. In the rapidly transforming, frequently violent contexts of early colonial West Africa—the crucible in which the concept of fetish, *fetisso*, was first formed (Pietz 1987)—fetishes served as vehicles of and for the “creation of new social relations” (Graeber 2005: 408). In his analysis of the “unfetish,” Sasha Newell extends this argument further in order “to produce a model for understanding what a sociality of things may look like” (2014: 186). For anthropologists writing in this vein, the fetish offers startling insights into the mediations of materiality, sociality, and subjectivity.

For orthodox Psychoanalysis, by contrast, fetishism is a scandal: a detour[3] from the route to “normal” heterosexual desire that neutralizes the danger inherent to the Oedipal triad by perversely latching onto an external object. This drama is at basis a matter of the nuclear family and the objects that orbit it; society, culture, and their modalities of meaning are external and irrelevant. To maintain this pristine image of the Oedipus Complex, however, one must first naturalize the nuclear family itself. Feminist scholars, as well as anthropologists, have effectively interrogated this psychoanalytical naturalization of the bourgeois nuclear family for decades, but the point bears repeating: If the intimate relationships that saturate a child’s early years are socially mediated, then psychological development and its configuration of sexual desire, the very formation of the subject, is necessarily a matter of social and “cultural” meaning. Yet this is precisely the bone that Morris relentlessly picks with Anthropology: that it “culturalizes” the psychological.

Anthropologists should not ignore this criticism, especially in light of the recent disciplinary obsession with “affect,” a concept that, in William Mazzarella’s words, “implies a way of apprehending social life that does not start with the bounded, intentional subject while at the same time foregrounding embodiment and sensuous life” (2009: 291). One of Psychoanalysis’s major contributions to Anthropology, and the social sciences generally, has been to decenter the “bounded, intentional subject” by emphasizing the constitutive role of desire for cultural reason. That said, Morris’s rearguard attempt to preserve the integrity of Psychoanalysis by erecting a barrier between individual symptom and collective meaning will not stand. Unsurprisingly, *Fetishism, Psychoanalysis, Anthropology* has little to say concerning the most prominent thinkers—none anthropologists—who have applied psychoanalytical concepts productively to political-economic, social and cultural questions: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Slavoj Žižek, Renata Salecl. More surprising is Morris’s lack of interest in Freud’s own fascination with the potential consequences of Psychoanalysis for theories of history, society, and religion, expressed above all in *Totem and Taboo* (1990 [193]) and *Moses and Monotheism* (1955 [1939]). If the founding father himself sought a role for Psychoanalysis as social theory, as well as therapeutic method, surely we might envision a relationship between Anthropology and Psychoanalysis that amounts to more than miscomprehension or antinomy. To insist otherwise would be perverse.

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[1] Note, however, that Morris casts anthropologists as fetishists in their own right, in contrast to psychoanalysts and Marxists, who wield the fetish theoretically. While there are worthy reasons to criticize (aspects of) Anthropology as a fetishism of Otherness, Morris' polemic ignores most conceptual elaborations of fetishism within Anthropology itself, beginning with Edmund Tylor and extending through the work of William Pietz (1985, 1987), Valerio Valeri (2018), Patricia Spyer (1998), David Graeber (2005), and Sasha Newell (2014).

[2] Morris does dwell on commodity fetishism in her discussion of Daniel Miller's anthropological study of consumer culture in Chapter Six. Miller is one of only a few

contemporary anthropologists that merit her consideration, and her conclusion about his work is characteristically dismissive: “Miller’s theory of mass consumption could be applied to the urban subcultures of fetish clubs and erotica communities…However, his theory lies outside the scope of analysis of individuals whose sexual fetishism is psychologically embedded in a psychic structure often characterized by emotional anguish” (2020: 113).

[3] As Morris points out, the Latin origin of perversion means “turned around” or “turned away” (2020: 77).

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Review: Mark Harris, Mike Nichols: A Life. New York: Penguin, 2021.

By | 2021: Vol. 20, no 1

Mark Harris' fine biography of Mike Nichols, upon publication, was getting more media attention than the Trump impeachment hearings – almost. Harris comes well prepared to deliver a detailed, precise, well-formed and innovative study. He does not scrimp on the detail, which can be, I confess, rather exhausting. Indeed as exhausting as the indefatigable Nichols was in his tastes, passions, addictions, liaisons and genius.

Born to a beautiful mother, and physician father, he was the grandson of Gustav Landauer, the radical socialist thinker infamously murdered by an early edition of the Nazi movement, the *Freikorps.* A severe childhood illness left him hairless and his subsequent array of wigs and make-up became an annoying fixed feature all his life, and the cause of immense embarrassment especially in childhood. Such sensitivities rarely fade away. George C. Scott and Nichols had a long and close work history until Scott sent Nichols a nasty note referring to his wig. They never worked together again.

Nichols and a brother fled Berlin with their parents in the late 1930s for the United States. He survived his parent's difficult marriage and his father's early death, which left the family penniless and his mother grimly desperate to keep themselves housed and fed. This entire struggle transpired in the New York he would later come to dominate as a theatrical *wunder*-worker, and legendary filmmaker, who in the process became a multi-millionaire, that is, a full citizen of Manhattan. The key artistic inspirational moment occurred when he attended Elia Kazan's productions of A *Streetcar Named Desire* and *Death of a Salesman*. Nichols was staggered by Marlon Brando's performance in the former, and remarked until the end of his life that he had never seen a completely realistic play done with such lyrical force, a searing blend of the real and the poetic. His other, cinematic, inspiration came through repeated views and study of George Stevens' film *A Place in the Sun*.

Aimless after an indifferent high school career, he applied to the University of Chicago and to his amazement was accepted. There he meets Susan Sontag, immerses himself in the rich Bohemian cum academic culture, and meets the no less legendary (at least within the trade) Paul Sills, who is to inspire him, mentor him, and create a theatrical launch pad for his earliest attempts at performing. His was not an overnight success, however, and he labors long and unsuccessfully as an actor until, following his meeting with Elaine May, who was dating Sills at the time, he begins to form a creative comic-satiric relationship that will change the American theater and make them stars and even moderately wealthy to boot.

Nichols spends some early years studying with Lee Strasberg in New York and comes to realize that all the observational acumen he picked up as Method protocol would provide him with the directorial tools he would require for what became a remarkable cinematic career. The Nichols and May stage success was not instantaneous but despite their nagging doubts that any of it would last, their successes endure and lead Nichols, who had attempted a solo acting career that foundered, to a directorial job which amazes him: “suddenly I knew exactly what I should do.” Everyone should be so lucky.

All the years of intense conversation around a single cup of cafeteria coffee and endless cigarettes somehow culminated in a directorial career that would make him world-renowned. His first two films, Edward Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and *The Graduate* were blockbusters. The latter makes him bankable for decades, and is still the third highest grossing film of all time. He will grow weary in later life of hearing *The Graduate* spoken of reverently by younger studio execs anxious to duplicate that success.

This is a book about phenomenal success: New York penthouses, Arabian horse farms and multimillion dollar film deals. An actor’s ego’s harnessed to Nichol’s will, and drugs and alcohol addictions, Nichols included, run through this saga like a raging river of curdled fun. Nichols proves a shrewd cultivator of his own career, but there are some failures. *Catch-22*, Joseph Heller’s masterful satire of World War Two, proves a dud, despite the millions expended and Orson Welles’ negative critique delivered on set. Not all of the many stage productions click either, but most do and after decades in the Biz he is lionized, loved, fondled, worshipped and an icon.

Nichols acquires a lavish Connecticut estate, builds editing room additions to his homes, stages Arabian horse shows with the skill of a master impresario, and on his vaunted signature projects spiral up and bloom. There are four marriages, the last one to TV presenter Diane Sawyer, a former beauty queen who arguably is better known, with a nightly TV show, than Nichols. She is widely touted as his greatest, and final love.

At some point, midcareer, he becomes neurotically convinced that he has no money, sells a significant painting collection at a loss, and spends nighttime hours calling friends worldwide, asking them to care for the children he will soon be too poor to support. Diagnosed by some drug-savvy friends, he halts the addling medication and within a month returns to sanity.

Harris is good at tracing the sometimes crazed dance at the center of big-time directorial survival; the film sets fraught with ambition and careerist dreams; the producers bent on extracting every penny from the smallest sources; the tales of alcoholism that sink and then destroy not just careers but those depending on the suddenly unemployable breadwinner, a pariah. There is much fascinating detail here. Nichols himself had a phenomenal eye for the moment-to-moment details that made a performance, a play, a film memorable. It was a role he had perfected with May; she with her endless creative drive which he would edit as they shaped their classic routines.

He had more than a passing attraction for crack and he could speak long and well of what it had cost him.

There are a series of high-powered friends: Jackie Onassis Kennedy, Liz Taylor and Richard Burton, Richard Avedon (who he claimed had taught him how to be rich), Meryl Streep, Sontag of course, Jack Nicholson. The list goes on and on and on.

The wit he had honed at the restaurant tables and bars of the U of C would serve him all his life. He was never at a loss for an anecdote, a winning bit of self deprecation, a one line summation that would leave the table gasping for air, and he could laugh uncontrollably and cry at will. While at U of C he had worked at WFMT, where he developed a program, The Midnight Special, which is still on the air in the format he devised.

Nichols was as great a performer of his own life as he was at shaping the scripts and even the careers of his companies. He loved and appreciated actors and they loved him, though he wasn't always Mr. Cuddles and I know of some cruel stories in which he figures that did not make the book. My own wish is that more had been made of his relationship with Paul Sills, who seems to me his polar opposite in career and direction, and yet they remained great friends, and formed an acting school along with a Method director in New York. Nichols could also be a generous friend. He was a life long smoker, did his share of drugs at a time when they were cheap and plentiful, and omnipresent.

There is a short documentary that May directed about Nichols on the Masterpiece Theater series. It's built around a headshot of Nichols. He is seated. He talks wonderfully about his life. He and May, instantly famous, had a brief falling out, and then worked together on and off for the rest of their lives. Neil Simon, another pal, said he was "the smartest man I ever met." My wish was that he had, like Dr. Johnson, found his Boswell and Harris is likely the closest we'll ever get to that. No Boswell could have caught him

. . . he was moving too fast.

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Review: Eben Kirksey, The Mutant Project: Inside the Global Race to Genetically Modify Humans. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2020.

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We cannot choose the life into which we are born. Part of our human trajectory involves coming to terms with our biological and social legacies. It is poignant, then, to witness the efforts of parents risking everything to imbue choice into the genetic lives of their offspring. It is this human desire, this wish for future generations to have a better life, which is the pivot in Eben Kirksey's *The Mutant Project: Inside the Global Race to Genetically Modify Humans*, a sprawling ethnographic case study of the first successful use of CRISPR technology to bring genetically modified human embryos to term.

It is poignant, then, to witness the efforts of parents risking everything to imbue choice into the genetic lives of their offspring. It is this human desire, this wish for future generations to have a better life, which is the pivot in Eben Kirksey's "The Mutant Project: Inside the Global Race to Genetically Modify Humans," a sprawling ethnographic case study of the first successful use of CRISPR technology to bring genetically modified human embryos to term.

I heard about the birth of CRISPR-modified Chinese twin babies in 2018 as many did, in a media report heavy with censure and anxiety. The birth was a scientific milestone quickly buried in the news onslaught of a turbulent time. Kirksey's book begins with the moment the story breaks, as prominent scientists gather for the Second International Summit on Human Genome Editing in Hong Kong. He quickly complicates what appears to be a publicity stunt and foreshadows what the rest of the book reveals: that the events of that night are the culmination of events spinning out of control for the doctor, He Jiankui, who is at the centre of the controversy. The shock of the night is captured in ripples of reaction in the scientific community and public at large, then the event is enlarged, layered, rooted and tentacled in its origins and impact, contextualized, and humanized as Kirksey follows genome-related entrepreneurial, artistic, medical, and activist endeavours across the United States, China, and Indonesia.

The moral stakes in the messy, too-human world of human genetics are where Kirksey plays to his strengths. The book backtracks to look at He Jiankui's early life, we meet his relatives, and we learn about the shadowy nationalist, commercial, and intellectual powerbrokers propelling He to his fraught experiment only to leave him twisting in the wind when outrage erupts. The

book jumps to the parallel and precursor story of HIV activists in the US risking their lives, becoming the world's first genetically modified humans to find a cure for AIDS. Their sacrifices, Kirksey points out, have paved the way for a bio-medical technique for HIV positive adults available only to millionaires (Dr. He's team then applied similar principles to embryos). A thoughtful discussion around the first test tube baby historically setting off a moral panic before achieving its current banality in IVF centres offers further context for Frankenbaby controversy. Gradually, Orientalist notions of the amoral wily Easterner, the Yellow Peril, fade as we understand He Jiankui the man, and see him in the context of fizzling biomedical hype, the 'disruptive innovations' of Silicon Valley, barely regulated 'special medical zones' where experiments are encouraged, and other scientists happy to continue in his wake, without the heat of being first.

In the process, we also shift temporally and in our imaginary from one moment of a renegade's portrayal in the global spotlight, to a detailed description of the team working with him, the months of plodding effort that went into their experiment, the plight of the volunteers they recruit. How did they choose which gene to edit, to which principles of medical ethics did they adhere, and what did their eventual choice of enabling HIV resistance mean in the heavy HIV stigma and often closeted gay culture of China? We confront China's unevenness and contradictions, with skyscrapers and dizzying innovation prioritized over potable drinking water in Shenzhen, the Blade Runner-esque financial, industrial, and technological hub in the south of China. Like a film negative reverse of the US, in China, financial constraints are not the main barrier to HIV treatment: social pressure instead looms large. HIV treatment is free, but stigma from being HIV positive can mean losing one's job. We also see that Dr. He dips into personal funds to support the non-elite volunteers recruited to his clinical trials, unlike the white-privilege-accessible-only HIV experiments in the US. The tension between the profit motive and accessibility of medical innovation is central to Kirksey's perspective.

His project begs a number of questions. The future is here, but are we ready? What will unleashing CRISPR technology on human genetics mean? Kirksey spotlights Indonesian artist Tamara Pertamina, whose provocative CRISPR sperm bank art installation (made out of a borrowed coconut milk dessert cart) spurs conversation on the imagined deracialized designer babies gene editing technology could herald. He also interviews and tracks scientists. Instead of exhibiting Merton-esque disinterestedness, scientists at the cutting edge of genetic experimentation adjudicate sweetheart deals and nationalist fervour. Science is seemingly poised to play God, intent on intrusive needles puncturing human eggs for a laundry list of "unmet medical needs" despite CRISPR technology's disturbing lack of precision – more akin to a drone strike with occasional wedding party collateral damage than its vaunted surgical accuracy[1] – and despite not knowing longterm consequences of shifts in permutation of the nucleotide bases G, A, C, and T. How much of the spur to medical innovation arises from the desire to ease pain and suffering, how much from the calling of fame and fortune?

It is unclear, and perhaps such questions are moot now that genetically modified humans roam the earth. In one chapter we glimpse the cut-throat globalization of medical innovation, where medical tourism could create a plethora of options for the well-heeled and desperate,

subsuming ‘safety first science’ under market forces. In another chapter, a scientist Kirksey interviews argues that our concerns are overwrought: genetically modifying human embryos is invasive and unlikely to be done frivolously, becoming an adjunct option instead in already expensive and risky IVF treatments. And as the concluding chapter with Donna Haraway’s reflections on her call to ‘make kin, not babies’ suggests, perhaps we are better served when we view genetic mutations with a playful and creative eye rather than an anxious one, as a way to enlarge our instinctive, biological, species-based constructions of clan.

Kirksey weaves human stories and their social worlds in ways that suggest different spaces of immovability and opportunity in life conditions across the globe, suggesting a commonality in struggle despite cultural and governmental difference. His humane and empathic writing offers understanding and relationship rather than othering, making his book a satisfying read beyond the intellectual content. As minor notes, I thought it might be useful to acknowledge that the US’ profit-driven healthcare paradigm is an outlier in the developed world. And while many of his readers following US elections would likely know debates over the US healthcare system, I wondered if more could have been said about the Chinese approach to healthcare and if and how China would be likely to instrumentalize the procedures Dr. He used. I was also unsure why he or perhaps his publisher reversed the surname-first name order of Chinese names, and anglicized the pseudonyms of the Chinese volunteers. A final nitpicking comment: Kirksey expressed concern that Dr. He’s volunteer pool were all Han Chinese, but I would have thought that some contextual explanation that China is over 90% ethnically Han, and that only the Han were subject to China’s one-child (now two-child) policy and hence conceivably more desperate for a healthy child would have been appropriate. It seems to me the lack of ethnic diversity in the Chinese experiment is not equivalent to that of the US HIV experiments against which it was contrast. These are minor points, however, in an otherwise engrossing, readable, multi-sited hybrid of ethnography and journalism.

Dr. He’s experiment was shut down before he was able to determine if the twins he ushered into the world were HIV resistant. So we do not, in Kirksey’s account, learn if his project succeeded. What we do discover, however, is that Dr. He’s story has moved from rags to riches to infamy, and with his three year jail term soon to be completed, his trajectory as a young CRISPR specialist is far from over. We also gain a fascinating glimpse into the forming of the genetic mutant entrepreneurial industry and its dreams of enabling escape from the ties that bind mortals to their genetic forebears. These dreams frame the human aspect of the mutant project, where the volunteer couples fearing HIV stigma in Dr. He’s study fight to have modified embryos implanted, at risk to mother and child, in the mother’s womb, and their babies in turn become forever marked, to be observed and chronicled as lone living landmarks in what had been until now a forbidden medico-genetic frontier.

I found I both wanted to know more about the feelings and thoughts of the volunteer parents blown about by the CRISPR controversy (Kirksey hints that their consent may not have been fully informed), and preferred that they live on in peace, with the hard-won joy and heartache of raising precious children. Will their children be allowed to procreate, I wondered, and to pass on their mutant genes? I also found myself thinking that, whatever the creative

possibilities of genetic modification, whatever the medical benefits to future generations, Kirksey's insistence on weighing ethics, access, and profit is justified. As burgeoning overseas surrogacy industries in areas rich in poor women's bodies offer cheap pregnancy labour, it is easy to imagine CRISPR technology being wielded at will at existing baby-making hubs, offsetting the risks of genetic manipulation onto global underclasses and making the dystopian vision of Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale* inch uncomfortably closer. Using his lens, it becomes clear that it is not mutant babies but our continued elision over extreme inequality that is monstrous, making us as complicit as Shenzhen in drywalling over the crooked and inadequate infrastructure of our world.

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[1] This point arose during a guest lecture by Eben Kirksey on March 23, 2020, in an online discussion hosted by Hugh Gusterson, author of *Drone: Remote control warfare* (2016), The MIT Press.