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The Structure of Human Societies: The Rise of the State, and Macroparasitism.

Without sovereigns, true sovereigns, temporal and spiritual, I see nothing possible but an anarchy; the hatefulest of things - Thomas Carlyle.

In a rainy country water falls abundantly on the just and the unjust, the poor and the rich, the little fellow and the big one, without discrimination or prejudice. No more than air can it skew the structure of society for it cannot be usefully hoarded in one place by a designing few. It eludes the clutches of the would-be monopolizers, spills over cupped hands onto the fields of the lowliest sharecropper or peasant. There water does not work against democracy, egalitarianism and freedom. That it is readily accessible to all does not guarantee that a people will be free, but it can help. Donald Worster, 1985

In permanent conquest the principle of domination tends to become concealed and almost unconscious; the French who rebelled in 1789 hardly realized, until Camille Desmoulins reminded them, that the aristocracy that had ruled them for a thousand years had come from Germany and subjugated them by force. Time sanctifies everything; even the most arrant theft, in the hands of the robber's grandchildren, becomes sacred and inviolable property. Every State begins in compulsion; but the habits of obedience become the content of conscience, and soon every citizen thrills with loyalty to the flag [Durant 1957, p. 24]

Focus: The structure of a society is the set on institutions that establish the basic domestic and political relationships within which individuals live. The specific nature of these institutions is often thought to derive from the specific biological and psychological needs that define "humanity." In such models "each basic human biological need triggers a cultural response" that functions within the system and its physical surroundings to meet that need [Weiner 1987 p.xxx]. Such an assertion of "bio-psychological functionalism" would appear seriously counter-indicated by the enormous diversity of human structural arrangements both cross- culturally and over time. Yet, great anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski, nevertheless insisted that the structural features of any culture "function" to facilitate the satisfaction of "basic imperatives" as the drive for food, reproduction, health, shelter and protection. Malinowski. While Malinowski particularly eschewed the Freudian analysis of universal drives so popular in the 1920s when he was writing, he nevertheless asserted the existence of such universal drives. He believed Freud's analysis of the Oedipus complex, based as it was on the European patriarchal family to be ethnocentric and of little use in understanding people like the Trobriand Islanders that had matrilineal lineage and non-authoritarian fathers. As admirable as this aspect of Malinowski's theory is, the overall theory is of little use to those who wish to understand cultural differences and social change.

While functionalists, in general, and Malinowski in particular, understood that cultural systems that developed to meet basic human needs differed according to "physical surroundings" they were little concerned with these relationships. First of all, any discussion at all of material circumstances was regarded as "environmental determinism" or even worse, economic determinism with all the "Marxist baggage" that terms carried with it. Second, functionalists were less interested in grand evolutionary theories, but rather, as Malinowski himself put it, "how human culture works. The "scientific field-worker should limit concern to "what exists, how it works, and what it means to the natives" [Malinowski 1939, 1987 p. lxix].

The great variety of cultures and the change over time in cultures, which has sometimes been rather dramatic, requires explanation. Certainly, variations and changes in environment play an important role in any such explanation.

Leslie White, an anthropologist who wrote in the 1940s-60s was an exponent of cultural evolution. The key element in his formulation was technology; the means humans used to extract energy from their environment. White believed there was a teleological process that propelled technical advances and social evolution; as society invented better ways to get energy, populations grew making new cultural adaptations necessary. Contrary, to the theories of Esther Boserup (which came later of course), White insisted that technology was the spontaneous "prime mover" the *Deus ex machina* that drove cultural change.

The problem with White's general theory is that it cannot explain local variations. Why does technology "advance" in some places and not in others? This lacunae is especially problematic given the teleological character of White's theory. Why are some blessed with technical advances and others not? Theories of inherent differences in racial capacities were a not uncommon form of explanation for differences in technological attainments.

Julian Steward insisted that local environments are very important determinants of the choice of technology; that is human cultural adaptations will vary according to that which they have to adapt. To Steward, the postulation any universal evolutionary sequence is so "general" as to be "neither very arguable nor very useful..[in explaining] ..what kinds of social structures arise from the utilization of technologies in specific environments" [quoted in Harris 1968 p. 648].

Cultural ecologists and cultural materialists, first of all eschew reductionist bio-psychological causation as such factors cannot explain variations and change. Second, they seem closer to Steward than to White as they emphasize local environmental conditions. Nevertheless, neither would deny the validity of generalizations if properly stated. Statements of a universalistic nature have an "all of the time" character that makes them difficult to use to explain particular cases. Focus only on particular cases provides no "science of culture," that is the ability to understand the "robust processes" that govern cultural formation and change. What we need, to use Marvin Harris' terminology are "statements of covariance..from which probabalistic predictions and retrodictions about specific cultures can be made" [Harris 1968 p. 650]. For example, consider the so-called "hydraulic theory." In the latter it is hypothesized that the presence of an infrastructure based on large-scale irrigation will be accompanied by a structure characterized by strong central authority, and an often hereditary social hierarchy and, often slavery and extreme deprivation of the masses of peasants. The superstructure will often deify the leaders or place them in special relationships with the Gods. While not as specific and as jargon ridden as an actual statement it give you the idea. The hypothesis is rejected if irrigation agriculture exists but despotism does not. The theory may also be false in the strict "cause-effect sense" to the extent that despotism comes before irrigation. Nevertheless, it may also be true that despotisms are not sustainable without irrigation agriculture. There is, in fact, a high correlation between despotism and irrigation that warrants considering it at least a "robust historical process." The theory cannot explain every case of despotism for surely the latter may arise for other reasons.

Our task in this chapter is to examine "structures" and their relationship to infrastructures. Fundamentally, the structure contains the power relations in the domestic and political sphere. In the political sphere these power relations range from egalitarian to the despotic. In the domestic sphere we observe cultures such as the !Kung where domestic relations are fairly egalitarian to those where male dominance produces a situation where women are the virtual property of men. We will examine structures from the most simple to the very complex. A key question is, "what is the minimum level of social organization that can survive?" How are social structures shaped by the environment? Another concern we will address is "what happens to "freedom" as societies become more complex?" More specifically yet, "what happens to the status of women as societies grow more complex?"

It is important to note that there is one thing that White and Steward did agree on and that is the division of cultural systems into parts and the relationship between the parts. White and Steward used the term "culture core" or "technological systems, to refer to what we call the infrastructure; the term "social systems" to refer to what we call structure; and "philosophies and arts" to refer to what we call superstructure. The pattern of relationships is absolutely unambiguous. White himself in 1959 wrote what has come to be called "White's Law": "social systems are determined by technological systems, and philosophies and the arts express experience as it is defined by technology and refracted by social systems" [White quoted in Harris 1968, p. 637]. The similarity to Marxist theory is so obvious that one hostile commentator referred to Whites "practical toolkit" for anthropology as a "somewhat shopworn hammer and sickle" [Harris 1968 p. 637].

What does it mean to be human? Bio-psychological needs?

When we speak of the "Structure" of a human society we refer specifically to the domestic

and political relationships that link people together. Traditionally, the basic domestic-political units into which humans organize have been observed to range from the most simple, a woman and her children to the most complex States and Empires.

It has been presumed by many observers of the human condition that there is something fundamentally human that requires people to live in societies, both as a means of survival and to meet some inherent bio-psychological human need.

Aristotle avowed that man was, by nature, a political animal, but some would argue not “willingly so.” It has been argued, for example, that people organize in groups for essentially utilitarian reasons i.e. “because isolation endangers,” and “because many things can be done better together than alone” [Durant 1957 p. 21]. Others claim that people form groups because of basic bio-psychological needs for “belonging.” Such a view is fundamental to anarchism and to humanist psychology. As Kurt Vonnegut Jr. once quipped people need to live among their “folk” or “feel lousy all the time.” Whatever the reason, it would appear that, outside of groups, individuals or households would not survive very long.

“Isolation endangers” The Wild Boy of Aveyron

Humans are obsessed with the issue of the essentials of “human nature.” What about us is strictly human and what is the result of our socialization? In this context there is a fascination with feral children, often called “wolf children.” These children “deprived of layers of civilization, appear to stand socially naked, revealing the true nature of our species” [Farb 1978 p. 5]

During the bitter winter of 1799 a feral child, about 12 years old, walked into the French Village of Aveyron seeking “warmth and food.” His arrival immediately provoked intense speculation on just what was the true nature of mankind. For some, he exemplified Rousseau’s noble savage, who “had survived naked in a rigorous climate, enjoyed robust health, and was not subject to the numerous vices of society.” In the eyes of others he was manifest the lowly state humanity would descend toward without social constraints. To the romantics he roused an image of the paradisiacal past where humans lived in harmony with nature. “The object of these speculations turned out to be a disgustingly filthy child, who swayed back and forth like a monkey in a zoo, his body shaken by spasmodic movements, who bit and scratched and showed no affection for those who fed him.. The philosophers soon joined most of the doctors of medicine in concluding that the boy had been left in the woods because he was an idiot.” [Farb 1978 p. 7] One man did try to rehabilitate the boy, but with very limited success. The boy learned to understand French, but not to speak it and to behave in a reasonably civilized way. It became clear that the boy was not retarded, but at the same time had suffered the apparently irreversible effects of isolation and the opportunity to learn from other humans. Dr. Itard, the man who taught Victor, wrote down the conclusion from his “experiment”:

..it is only in the heart of society that man can attain the preeminent position that nature has reserved for him. Without civilization he would be one of the feeblest and least intelligent of animals [quoted in Farb 1978 p. 6].

What we have learned from other cases of feral children is that children isolated from other children are not actually human but only potentially so. Aside from reflexes such as grasping and sucking, children are born with very few specific inherited patterns of behavior. They cannot survive without those patterns obtained simply by being a member of a particular human society.”

[Farb 1978 p. 7-8]. In short, society creates humanity.

"Feeling lousy all the time" - the Ik

The Ik are a "society" it just a slightly higher level of organization than an isolated individual. The Ik tell us something about human nature and about the minimum level of organization required to make humans less "feeble" and more "intelligent" than other animals.

It may be that our observations of humanity have been biased as they have been limited to societies that have survived for sufficiently long to walk into our field of observation; that is, societies that have had adequate resources at their disposal so as to allow them to live like "humans" i.e. political and social animals. We cannot really say how humans might live in degraded environmental conditions. Would mothers love their children and their own mothers if such love threatened their own survival? Would families struggle together and offer mutual-aid? Colin Turnbull's ethnography of the Ik people of Africa has provided some disturbing insight into what it means to be human, or better perhaps what it does not mean. The Ik were involved in an inadvertent "experiment" conducted "as if" to test the limits of humanity.

Colin Turnbull writes in *Mountain People* that he had lived among the Ik for a few months in the early 1960s and came to believe that were a "kind and generous, lighthearted and jolly people." [p.33]. When he returned a few years later he witnessed the complete disintegration of Ik society. Under conditions of famine the Ik revealed to him "how shallow is man's potential for goodness." Had he not arrived at a time of severe famine he:

.. might well have never known that this side of the Ik..existed. The Ik, like the rest of us, are kind and generous and light-hearted and jolly when they can afford to be [P. 33].

Under conditions of environmental stress, the "basic and deep-rooted urge to survive" dominated the behavior of the Ik. From a "humanist" perspective the picture was not pretty.

The beautiful human, like the beautiful body seems to be a myth perpetuated by the game of self-deceit, at which humans are singularly adept. In fact, after a few months with the Ik one is tempted to think that if there is such a thing as a basic human quality, self-deception it is. -Colin Turnbull

The Ik are a people in northern Uganda who live in an sparse environment where they suffer extreme deprivation. The Ik may be the most simple "society" on the planet. While at one time they were typical gatherer-hunters and even did some planting, their environment has suffered such degradation that they have disintegrated from a society of minimal complexity to one that has no complexity. Joseph Tainter has described the Ik as a "morbidly fascinating" human anomaly. Once organized into clans and living in villages, the Ik are now true individuals. Only the shadows of family and community remain. Food and water are so scarce, according to Tainter, there is "no advantage to reciprocity and social sharing." [Tainter P. 17] Put simply, there exists not even the most rudimentary form of social organization i.e. social structure. People, both male and female, young and old, pursue subsistence individually. Individuals may search for weeks on their own for food and water and never share: "Two siblings or other kin can live side by side, one dying of starvation and the other well nourished, without the latter giving the slightest assistance to the other" [Tainter p.17]. Males and females do mate, but members of conjugal pairs forage alone and do not

share food; they cohabit only because one person cannot build a house alone. Homes must be stockaded for protective purposes. Because they must travel far and wide for food spouses are rarely in their fortified homes together. Mothers turn out children at age of three to provide for themselves. Children form "age-sets" (gangs) to protect themselves from adults who would steal their food, but do not share among themselves [Tainter p.18]. It is certain that the Ik live in a degraded state of social disintegration uncharacteristic of human beings. The Ik are surely what Hobbes had in mind when he characterized the "state of nature" as a "war of everyone against everyone." But the Ik, as I said above, are an anomaly, human societies are more complex, more integrated and the people more differentiated, but to widely varying degrees. What happened to the Ik?

The Loveless People

The Ik (Eek) are a small group of gatherer-hunters that lives in the isolated mountains that form the borders of Northern Uganda, Sudan and Kenya in East Africa. Up until WWII, the Ik roamed, gathering and hunting, throughout a vast region in all three countries. Shortly before the war they were "encouraged" to settle in Northern Uganda in an area that used to be a temporary settling place in their normal nomadic cycle. The area is now Kidepo National Park. The valley is full of game year-round, but, as the park serves as a game preserve, the Ik are forbidden to hunt. Instead the Ik were encouraged to take up farming - which they appeared to do. A traveler in the area will see fields planted with crops, and if it rains, the crops will be bountiful. In the final analysis, however, as documented by anthropologist Colin Turnbull, the Ik did not develop the "habits of thought" or behaviors of farmers.

When Colin Turnbull first encountered the Ik he concluded they "were, like the rest of us, kind and generous, light-hearted and jolly." [Turnbull p. 33] However, after two years of drought they became "as unfriendly, uncharitable, inhospitable and generally mean as any people can be" [Turnbull p. 32]. Under the extreme duress of persistent hunger the Ik lost their generosity and good humor. Indeed, beside their personalities, the Ik lost their social and family structures as well. Such were "luxuries" the individual Ik could no longer afford. Turnbull explains that:

those positive [human] qualities we value so highly are no longer functional for the Ik; even more than in our own society they spell ruin and disaster. It seems that far from being basic human qualities, they are superficial luxuries we can afford in times of plenty, or mere mechanisms for survival and security.

But the Ik had been denied their traditional "mode of production" and even worse, now suffered from persistent drought that withered their crops and baked the ground hard. Occasionally, the Ik might do some "poaching," and earn a few shillings as laborers. The Ik also ran a minor "armaments industry;" they produced spears for the Turkana and Dodos tribes. Each of these tribes were pastoralists and were constantly engaged in "raiding." The government of Uganda would regularly confiscate their spears with the hope of stopping the raiding. Some of the Ik were also involved in this raiding. Some of the young women would prostitute themselves to the local police and to the pastoralists who happened to be around. Despite such activities food was scarce and hunger was pervasive and desperate.

Under such conditions, Turnbull claims, "a much more basic man appears, using more basic survival tactics. Turnbull tells us that to be cynical in some cases is realistic:

the much vaunted gap between man and these so-called "lesser animals" suddenly shrinks to nothingness, except that in this case most "lesser" animals come off rather well by comparison, displaying many more of those "human" qualities than the Ik did [Turnbull p.32].

"In the crisis of survival facing the Ik, the family was one of the first institutions to go" [Turnbull p. 133]. The Ik live in village compounds, but have no social life. Their living quarters are surrounded by a palisade, but within the enclosure, each "family" has an enclosed compound; complete with "booby traps" for the unwary who venture to enter. Normally one, might "dare to venture in uninvited," but in the case of the Ik this would be inappropriate as no one is ever invited into a family compound. There was, among the Ik, a virtual absence of any significant family relationship. The Ik:

lack any sense of moral responsibility toward each other [or] any sense of belonging to needing or wanting each other [Turnbull p. 218].

Indeed, the only reason the Ik appear to associate with one another was "the pleasurable prospect of being able to enjoy someone else's misfortune" or to exploit the other in some way [Turnbull p. 240-41]. The Ik are quintessential individualists, driven by self-interest alone, in an environment where "affection and trust" are "dysfunctional" [Turnbull p. 290].

There is no division of labor: men, women and children (above the age of three) forage independently for food and do not share. Men scavenge, hoping to steal and kill from a predator or to find, with the help of circling buzzards, a dead animal. They may also poach. In either case, the food will not be taken home and shared with family. Women gather and set traps for small animals,. But they too cooked and ate their food away from home. The Ik will share if caught in the act of eating, but they go to great lengths to avoid it.

Children, one informer notes, learned how to find food "from the baboons:" children apparently eat pieces of fig left by baboons [Turnbull p. 82]. Turnbull notes, that aside from breast-feeding, in three years, "I never once saw a parent feed a child" [Turnbull p.114]. Children are breast fed for three years, if they survive that long. Mothers carry nursing children in a sling. When they stop to gather, the children are let down "to the ground none to slowly." The children are allowed to wander untended, "almost hoping that some predator will come along and carry it off" [Turnbull p. 136]. Turnbull observed such an episode where the mother "was delighted" to see her baby carried off by a leopard. The leopard was subsequently easily caught as it was lethargic from digesting the whole child. The leopard was roasted and eaten- child and all [Turnbull p. 136]. Turnbull recounts another episode that reveals the Ik's attitudes toward children.

Sitting [around a fire] men would watch a child with eager anticipation as it crawled toward the fire, then burst into gay and happy laughter as it plunged its skinny hand into the coals. Such were the few times when parental affection showed itself; a mother would glow with pleasure to hear such joy occasioned by her offspring, and pull it tenderly out of the fire [Turnbull p.112]

Children who survive to three are turned out to live in gangs who must now fend for themselves. Generally, among the Ik, one who cannot fend for him or herself is considered "dead." While hunger is pervasive among the Ik, starvation was observed only among the aged. The Ik

consider food and water given to an infirm or aged person to be "wasted." Turnbull recalls the opinion of the Ik when a colleague established a hospital to care for the aged and to dispense them food:

Openly critical of this waste of effort and food and medicine, the Ik said what we were doing was wrong. Food and medicine were for the living, not the dead [Turnbull p. 227]

Children will take food right out of the mouth of an aged parent and eat it themselves. The aged can not even die with dignity. Turnbull recounts the death of Lo' ono:

She too had been abandoned, and had tried to make her way down the mountainside. But she was totally blind and had tripped and rolled to the bottom of [a slope] and there she lay on her back., her arms and legs thrashing feebly, while a little crowd standing on the edge above looked down at her and laughed at the spectacle.

Turnbull and his colleague rescued her, fed and watered her, and offered to allow her to live in their shelter. She refused saying she wished to return to her son. They gave her food, knowing her son would steal it, and sent her on her way:

and suddenly she cried. Thinking she was afraid or wanted us to go with her, I asked, and she said no; she was crying, she said, because all of a sudden we had reminded her that there had been a time when people had helped each other, when people had been kind and good [Turnbull p. 227].

Love and care of children, care and respect of elders, mutual aid and concern for others are distinctly missing among the Ik. Indeed:

the Ik appear to have dispensed of virtually all the qualities that we normally consider are just those qualities that differentiate us from other primates [Turnbull p. 234].

The Ik have been forced to dispose of any "beliefs that might conflict with behavior necessary for survival." [Turnbull p.35]. Love, we learn from the Ik, rather than being necessary for personal survival, is, under some circumstances in conflict with it. After all, "love in human relationships implies mutuality, a willingness to sacrifice the self." But, under the regime of severe deprivation experienced by the Ik, sacrifice for another might mean death to the individual. Thus, the Ik, perhaps like any other humans, "do not value emotion over survival, and [consequently] they are without love" [Turnbull p. 237]. The Ik were "simply alone, and seemingly content to be alone"[Turnbull p. 238]. Granting the humanity of the Ik, Turnbull concluded that "it meant for all humanity love is not a necessity at all, but a luxury or illusion, [and clearly] mankind can lose it." [Turnbull p. 238]. The Ik have "replaced human society with a mere survival system that does not take human emotion into account" [Turnbull p. 290]. The scrapping of "human society" is the cost of living well" under conditions of severe environmental degradation.

The Ik kind of "society" has never been observed before, most probably because under such extreme deprivation such "societies" do not survive. The Ik will almost certainly disappear from the face of the earth.

Humans have been endowed by evolution with many capacities the manifestation of which

we would rather not acknowledge. We have seen some evidence of human behavior such as infanticide, aggression, and cruelty that we find distasteful. The lesson here is that if we wish to avoid confrontation with these aspects of humanity we need to avoid putting humans into contexts that elicit them.

The Domestic Mode of Production

Man is not willingly a political animal...he is at heart and unphilosophical anarchist- Will Durant 1957

We have seen that feral children, due to their separation from society, fail to realize their human potential. Similarly the Ik, who have virtually gone feral, are doomed. The Ik may be the only recorded case of a "society" without a structure - a society where there exists no structured relationships between individuals; each is an autonomous entity. As we have seen the Ik are probably doomed to becoming a "dead end" on the time line of social evolution. What we learn from the Ik is that social systems and the behavior of the humans within them are contingent on environmental factors. The Ik were forced into a new environment, one where resources were far too scarce to sustain their traditional way of life and their society simply disintegrated. There are no people that would choose to live the way the Ik lived. The Ik system was a symptom of the decline of the group, imposed by coercion by others, rather than a novel cultural adaptation that did not work.

This raises the question of what are the cultural characteristics [structures and superstructures] that proved adaptive? How organized must a society be if it is to survive? Robert Bellah insists that "we live in society and cannot exist outside it," but the term "society" is a broad one [Robert Bellah, *Academe*, Jan-Feb 99 p. 17]. Humans live in many different types of societies each differing in structure and superstructure according to variations in infrastructure and historical contingency. While far from determined, these patterns of culture are the outcome of some reasonably "robust processes." While the feral child and the Ik represent the most basic form of human (dis)organization, these forms cannot survive. Even systems with higher levels of organization are poor contenders for selection in the pool of surviving cultures.

Don't ever take sides against the family - Don Michael Corleone

The most basic, structured human group is organized around the household where people are related through ties of kinship usually reckoned through the females [matriliny]. It is a, if not the, most basic structure, but is probably unable to survive. Marshall Sahlins uses the concept of the "domestic mode of production" to describe the economic activity of primitive gatherer-hunters and agricultural economies organized around *individual households*. The concept is an abstraction he uses to analyze human society at a very fundamental level of complexity, but still more complex than Ik society. His goal is to illustrate why the DMP had to evolve more integrative institutions if the families were going to survive.

The DMP is the level toward which human nature drives us, Sahlins claims, even if at the expense of our social existence. According to Sahlins the DMP is "anti-society," a "species of anarchy" where the "social economy is fragmented into a thousand petty existences, each organized to proceed independently of the others and each dedicated to the honored principle of looking out for itself" [1972, p. 95]. Whatever psychic benefits such household autonomy may produce,

economically the DMP does not "give a brilliant a brilliant performance" [1972, p.99]. Indeed, Sahlins warns unless "the economic defects of the DMP are overcome,..society is overcome." [1972, p.101]

Sahlins maintains that the DMP operates on an "intrinsically anti-surplus principle;" that is, the individual units produce only what is sufficient for their needs [Sahlins 1972 p. 83]. Sahlins' research and that of other anthropologists reveals a consistent tendency to underutilize labor, especially that of young people, and to produce at levels far below what is possible. The production goal is "concrete and limited" to what is necessary for the "livelihood of the producers" [1972, p.69].

Regarding the underemployment of labor, Sahlins notes the operation of Chayanov's Rule: the greater the working capacity of the household the less its members work. Given the limited production goals, the behavior captured in Chayanov's rule is entirely logical.

The problem with the DMP is that individual families often fail, due to "sickness, inefficiency or misfortune" to produce enough for their own subsistence. Due to variation over time in family size and age composition, variation in land quality, and other chance factors just about any family in the village will at some time fail to provide itself with sufficient food [1972, p.74].

There are, however, more serious defects in the DMP:

And while the household is thus periodically failing to provision itself, it makes no provision (surplus) either for a public economy: for the support of social institutions beyond the family or of collective activities such as warfare, ceremony, or the constitution of large technical apparatus - perhaps as urgent for survival as the daily food supply. Besides, the inherent underproduction and under-population posed by the DMP can easily condemn the community to the role of victim in the political arena. The economic defects of the DMP are overcome, or else the society is overcome....The political economy cannot survive on that restrained use of resources which for the domestic economy is a satisfactory existence [Sahlins 1972, p. 101, 135].

It is in this context that we understand the importance of integrative institutions, i.e. social structures, such as kinship relationships and reciprocal exchange which might sustain families which have failed. It is also the context for understanding the evolution of social institutions such as "big men" and "redistributor chiefs" which not only redistribute production, but are also directed toward intensifying production; i.e getting people to work harder:

For although the primitive headman or chief may be himself driven by personal ambition, he incarnates the collective finalities; he personifies a public economic principle in opposition to the private ends and petty self-concerns of the household economy. Tribal powers that be and would be powers encroach on the domestic system to undermine its autonomy. curb its anarchy, and unleash its productivity [Sahlins, 1972 p. 130]

Big Men

The institution of the "big man," which is observed in New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and other locales in the South Pacific is one version of the headman-serving- as -production- intensifier model. In its essence it captures the behavior of those capitalists and others in our own society who seek wealth accumulation for the sake of the prestige it produces. There is, of course, one major

difference: the big man must give away the wealth he generates, the capitalist has the right to keep his wealth, but does receive great prestige when he gives it away. Sometimes the prestige produced by philanthropy can erase the sometimes bloody facts as to how the wealth was produced in the first place. For example, do Brown students really care that the fortune that endowed their University had its origins in the slave trade. Has the Rockefeller family been forgiven for the Ludlow massacre or Carnegie for the slaughter at the Homestead Steel Strike?

Among the Kaoko-speaking people of the Solomon Islands, the status hungry individual begins his career by making his wife and children plant larger yam gardens. ..[he then gets] his kinsmen to help him fish. Later he begs sows from his friends and increases the size of his pig herd. As the litters are born he boards additional animals among his neighbors. Soon his relatives and friends feel the young man is going to be a success. They see his large gardens and his big pig herd and they redouble their own efforts to make the forthcoming feast a memorable one. When he becomes a big man they want the young candidate to remember that they helped him. Finally, they all get together and build and extra-

It is said of a Melanesian "Big Man" that "his hands are never free from earth, and his forehead continually drips with sweat" [Sahlins 1972, p. 135]. This is so because he has to work harder than anyone else to produce large stocks of food so he may give great feasts. This he does for honor and prestige, a small price for a society to pay for the surplus of food he produces. But, the Big Man does not limit himself to "autoexploitation," he manages, one way or another, through gifts, kinship obligations, promises of material and status rewards [to bask in the glow as it were], to place others in his debt and to work harder than they normally would. But, the bottom line is that a Big Man can give orders only because he has promised something to his entourage.

Similarly tribal chiefs may appear to be affluent by virtue of the substantial "quantity of surplus foods, tools, weapons and ornaments" he collects until one realizes that the Chief is obliged by the rule of generosity to give away everything he might have should some one need it; generosity is "an essential attribute of power" [Sahlins 1972, p. 132]. Thus, the institution of a Chieftom requires people work harder (produce a surplus) to make their "gifts" to the Chief, but generosity requires he give them back. Thus, the surplus produced by one house redounds to the benefit of others in need. The Chief "creates a collective good beyond the conception and the capacity of society's domestic groups taken separately. He institutes a public economy greater than the sum of its household parts" [Sahlins 1972, p. 140].

At the banquet table of Nature, there are no reserved seats. You get what you can take. You keep what you can hold. A. Philip Randolph

Violence is part, an all to significant part, of human existence. At some point in human history warfare became endemic probably because violence often pays. Warfare, typically involves the burden of great costs of injuries, lives, resources and emotions. With such great costs to bear, it would be irrational for a society to go to war were there not “a compelling material rationale” [Ferguson 1995 p. 11]. Whatever reasons a people might give for pursuing warfare, however, they might try to justify it morally, the etic behavioral reality is that people go to war to advance their material interests [Ferguson 1995 p. 12]. “It is one of the depressing constants in human history that those setting off for war believe they are morally justified in their actions.” Through a process where the leaders use their oratorical skills to vilify the enemy “material interests go through a conversion into moral idioms” [Ferguson 1995 p. 12]. The so-called megapolitical reality is that the only protection against violence is superior force [Davidson & Rees-Mogg p. 53]. The stand-alone household of the DMP will not survive for long in the megapolitical real world.

Big Men and Chiefs organize men to fight for them as well as work for them. There is little formal difference between organizing workers to produce food with promises to share the bounty of nature and to organize warriors with promises of a share the booty of war [Harris 1978 p. 107]. But,

A Chieftom arises most often in environments where plentiful food supplies and raw materials can be obtained from a wide variety of sources such as the oceans, rivers, the littoral and forests. A foraging band would exploit these resources in nomadic fashion, e.g., fishing the river, moving into the forest to pick berries and then moving to higher elevations to hunt game. A Chieftom will exploit these resources more efficiently because the people do not have to move around. Instead of moving the people remains in one place and specialize in exploiting the local resource. One group will live near the river and fish, another will hunt and a third will gather. The goods are delivered to the central authority who in turn redistributes them. Economists call such an arrangement the “division of labor” on the principle of “comparative advantage.” By reducing the need for movement time is saved. Moreover, by specializing in a single task each group raises their productive efficiency by becoming especially skilled at it.

The Chief was basically the group’s economist. His responsibility was to set aside sufficient supplies of food and raw materials and to distribute them as needed. The Chief had no formal political power and no way to back up his decisions. His control over his people existed only because of the prestige of his position and the force of his own personality. Modern Americans assume that the political decisions made by their government will be enforced by “specialists” having legally-sanctioned police powers. The Chief lacked any such powers.

Chieftoms arise out of the need to intensify production, that is to increase the yield of the natural ecosystem. This “technological advance” in turn was required by an expanding population density. Chieftoms arose in two areas of the New World where the environment permitted such intensified exploitation: the Northwest Coast and the Circum-Caribbean area (southeastern US, Central America south of Guatemala, the larger Islands of the West Indies, and Venezuela). Chieftoms are also abundant in the Polynesian Islands, Micronesia, Melanesia and among the Steppe nomads of Central Asia (the Turkic and Mongol hordes). The

as usual the Big Man gained little more than prestige for himself. For example, a Melanesian *Mumi*, was obliged to feed his warriors, supply them with women, indemnify their families should they be killed and to supply a pig for their funeral feast [Harris 1978 p. 107-108]. Chiefs, it appears "were only tolerated in times of war [Durant p. 22]. Once the immediate need for chiefly authority had passed so did that authority.

It would appear that, in the case of Big Men and Redistributor Chiefs, societies allowed the expression of ambition, which had previously been contained, to gain the benefit of intensification of production and to even out fluctuations in output over the region where there might be several different microenvironments. Left to their own devices, households would produce no more than was required for their immediate needs. Thus, the prestige and boasting were tolerated as the cost of getting more food and trade goods, social insurance, and leadership in war. In societies like these the people were parasites on the "Big Men," taking all they offered and returning prestige, which exacted a small price in terms of effort *and resources*.

The "big man" system is one that corrects the deficiencies in the DMP. It "serves the practical function of preventing the labor force from falling back to levels of productivity that offer no margin of safety in crises such as was or crop failure" [Harris 1978 p. 118]. Furthermore, in the absence of formal political institutions to link villages together, competitive feasting "has the effect of pooling the productive effort of larger populations" to smooth out "annual fluctuations in productivity among villages that occupy different microenvironments- seacoast, lagoon or upland habitats- to transfer food and other valuables from centers of high productivity to less fortunate villages." [Harris, 1978 p. 118-119]

Eventually, in some places, but surely not all, the infrastructure would mutate into more complex forms of agriculture and States would emerge. The "Big Men" would continue to organize production, redistribution and warfare, but the price to the people would be much higher. Big Men would mutate into ruling elites, macroparasites, who would rule not by winning the confidence of the people with their great oratorical skills and charisma, but through the simple application of power based on force. The new version of the "Big Man" would extract more than "a pound of flesh" from the people they ruled.

The key to the amount of stratification that emerged was the amount of energy and materials flowing through the economy. You will recall the case study of the Polynesian Islands presented earlier which showed a considerable variance in the natural abundance among the Islands. Marshall Sahlins has shown that the degree of stratification that emerged on these Islands was directly correlated the carrying capacity of the Island environment. On small Islands with poor soils and lack of access to good fishing energy capture was low and "redistributive activities were confined to small networks of kin." On the larger Islands, such as Tahiti, Tonga and Hawaii, that were favored with good soil and good fishing, "complex networks involving production quotas and taxation concentrated huge amount of food and materials into the hands of a powerful, full-time governing class" [Harris 1975 p. 376]. The most powerful chiefs claimed the status of deities and were so holy that their only woman suitable to be a wife was their own sister [Harris 1975 p. 376].

In the tradition of the "big man" prestige was the prize. At the feast, the "big man" kept for himself on the "stale cakes and bones." [Harris 1975 p. 381]. The high chiefs took from the peasants, but kept much for himself to support his extensive retinues from cooks to body guards to concubines. What he gave away went not back to the producers but to his relatives .

Macroparasitism

Looked at from the point of view of other organisms, humankind..resembles an acute epidemic disease...William Mc Neil

The structure of human groups varies across groups and over time (synchronic and diachronic) according to the confirmation and path of the infrastructure. The superstructure in turn follows the path blazed by the Structure and Infrastructure. We are going to use the term macroparasitism, its presence and specific nature or its absence, to define the relationships of the Structure. Macroparasitism was absent from the structure of traditional societies, that is, within any group there were none, including Chiefs, who were able to live off the labor of others, there was no basis for the exercise of such power. But, as we have seen each group surely engaged in macroparasitic activities in the form of warfare. Groups suffering from material deprivation would simply attempt to take what others had.

Parasitism is a basic fact of nature. When speaking of parasitism it is usually understood that humans are victims of parasites, but never parasites themselves. But, Arlo Karen reminds us:

there is probably no species of organisms which has not at some time been either host to a parasite or a parasite itself. Many have filled both roles [Karlen p. 14].

The term "parasitism" suggests "infection" and "exploitation" as one organism lives off the energy of another. Symbiotic relationships, which means only that many life forms "live together" can take on three

Some people seem to hunger for approval as others hunger for meat. The puzzling thing is not that people hunger for approval, but that occasionally their craving seems to become so powerful that they begin to compete for prestige as others compete for land or protein or sex. ...the United States is a nation of competitive status seekers. Many Americans seem to spend their lives trying to climb further up the social pyramid simply in order to impress each other...It is amazing how much effort people are willing to spend to obtain what Thorstein Veblen described as the vicarious thrill of being mistaken for members of a class that doesn't have to work. [Veblen called this practice] conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste.

Early in the present century, anthropologists were surprised to discover that certain primitive tribes engaged in conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste to a degree unmatched by even the most wasteful modern consumer economies. Ambitious, status-hungry men were found competing with each other for approval by giving huge feasts. The rival feast givers judged each other by the amount of food they provided, and a feast was a success only if the guests could eat until they were stupified.....

..among the American Indians [known as the Kwakiutl there was discovered] a maniacal form of conspicuous consumption and waste known as Potlatch. The object of the potlatch was to give away or destroy more wealth [food, clothing and money] than one's rival.

According to Ruth Benedict [the anthropologist who first described the Potlatch] potlatching was caused by the obsessive status hunger of the Kwakiutl Chiefs, [by their] "unabashed megalomania." [In Benedict's] opinion the whole aboriginal economic system of the Pacific Northwest was "bent to the service of this obsession."

I [Marvin Harris] think Benedict was mistaken. The economic system of the Kwakiutl was not bent to the service of status

forms. First, there is the commensal¹ relationship where a species may live on or within another,² but does it no harm. For example, the *Entamoeba coli* live in the lumen of the intestine feeding on the bacteria of the gut, but do the host no significant harm [Markell, John, Krotoski p. 7]. Symbiotic relationships can also be parasitic or mutualist. For example, bacteria on the roots of legumes "fix" atmospheric hydrogen in the soil so plants can use it making for a mutually beneficial relationship. There are about 500 different species of bacteria, numbering about 100 trillion, that live in the human colon. These anaerobic bacteria break down food that could not be digested by the enzymes in the small intestine, thus making more vitamins, proteins and energy available to their human hosts. While these bacteria can be quite harmful should they breach the colon and get into the peritoneum or the blood stream, they are harmless and indeed beneficial in the colon. Cows, Elephants and termites would not be able to digest their high cellulose diets without the bacteria in their stomachs [Karlen p.17]. On the other hand, endoparasites like the hookworm (*Ancylostoma duodenale* and *Necator americanus*) can produce harm in the host. Hookworm can produce seriously debilitating anemia in its human hosts as it drains iron from human blood [Markell, John, Krotoski p.285].

Sustainable Macroparasitism

The white man, when well roasted tastes like a ripe banana - a Tahitian cannibal [Durant 1957 p. 10]

The term "macroparasitism" does not exist in the biological literature. Our use of it here is strictly metaphorical and derives from its use by the historian William Mc Neil. McNeil imagines macroparasitism in terms of physical size. Specifically he spoke of "large bodied predators," that ate humans "chief among which have been other humans." [McNeil 1976 p.5]. McNeil observes that for a long time after humans reached the top of the food chain, that is, were no longer viable prey for other macroparasites, "cannibalism almost certainly remained a significant aspect of the interaction of adjacent human communities" [*ibid.* P. 6].

Microparasites, on the other hand are "tiny organisms - viruses, bacteria, or multi-celled creatures that find a source of food in human tissue" [*ibid* p. 5] One can imagine macroparasites in "trophic terms" as the "consumers" who live off the "producers." As McNeil puts it:

..when food production became a way of life for some human communities, a modulated macroparasitism became possible. A conqueror could seize food from those who produced it, and by consuming it himself become a parasite of a new sort on those who did the work [*ibid* p. 6]

The parallel to class exploitation, where elites live off the labor of workers is obvious. In an ecologically sensitive framework, however, we want to expand the simple Marxist concept to

¹ This term comes from the Latin word for "eating at the same table." [Markell, John, Krotoski p. 7]

² Endoparasites live within the host. Ectoparasites live on the surface of the body of the host [Markell, John, Krotoski p.7]

include human parasitism of nature. By “macro” parasitism we shall mean the parasitism of simple organisms by more complex organisms and “cannibalism” whether literal or figurative, among more complex organisms. Humans literally eat plants, animals and each other. Humans also virtually “eat each other” when one group takes energy³ resources from another. By analogy this would include the exploitation of simple societies by complex societies as well as the destruction of rainforest ecosystems by humans to suit their needs.

For any type of parasitism to be sustainable there must be sufficient energy exaction to sustain the parasite population and enough energy left to sustain the host population. Humans are parasites on many plants and animals. In some cases, humans act like vampire bats as when a mongol horseman opens a vein in the neck of his horse to drink its blood - a practice that is sustainable within limits. This practice is also common among East African pastoralists who mix the blood, extracted via the jugular vein, and the milk of their cattle. Pleistocene hunters ate horses. This practice is sustainable if the annual "harvest" is limited to annual population growth of horses. Obviously, the amount of blood taken must be limited. Similarly, if hunters kill too many horses the herd will eventually disappear. Humans surely discovered this principle many times as they hunted many Pleistocene animals into extinction, yet the lesson has “sunk-in.” Judging from the rate that humans have continued to drive animals and other species into extinction there is little evidence that they have learned anything. At present humans are over fishing at such a rate that many fish stocks have been depleted to the point of extinction. The world fish catch peaked in 1989 and has been falling since. Humans are catching fish faster than they can reproduce which is clearly not sustainable.

Humans have proved to be voracious parasites on other species. They have consumed, and continue to consume at a prodigious rate, the forests, soil, and water that sustain the plants and animals humans feed on and which provide other essential ecological services. When the plants and the animals were gone humans, sometimes, have fed on each other. In the film, *Rapa Nui*, one character, noting the rapid depletion of food supplies quips that, “soon we have nothing to eat but each other.”

Symbiotic mutualism

The human body is system that includes bacteria, viruses and other presumably foreign bodies. If the bacterium *E coli* is ingested into the stomach it will cause dysentery.⁴ Indeed, the dehydration caused by dysentery is the number one killer of children in the world. However, in humans the bacterium *E coli*, if located in the colon, aids bowel function, thus depriving potentially

³We use the term “energy” in its most broad form. We mean resources to produce or gather food that provides humans with energy. Theft of energy resources would include taking of land or the produce of that land.

⁴ *E coli* are found in the human colon and therefore in human excrement. When excrement finds its way into water supplies as a result of careless sewage disposal, as it does throughout the world, but especially in poor countries where rivers are used for sewers and water supplies, it is ingested and causes dysentery. The *E coli* bacterium while symbiotic in the colon, is not adapted to the human stomach [Karlen p.17]

harmful organisms a place in the body [Karlen p. 17]. Microbiologists are now proposing that such cooperation or mutualism is the driving force behind evolution. The mitochondria, for example, are the organelles in human cells that break down glucose to provide humans with energy. "Mitochondria have their own DNA; they grow and divide on their own timetable, distinct from that of the nucleus" of the cell. It is the opinion of a growing number of biologists that mitochondria began as "primitive bacterial invaders that avoided being digested and were integrated by their hosts" [Karlen p. 15]. Biologist, Lynn Margulis claims that, "every organelle..started as an infection, and each human cell is a community of one time invaders" [Karlen p.15].

It seems clear that the apparently macroparasitic Chieftaindom entailed a mutualist rather than an exploitive relationship. The Chief's took, but gave back just as much. In turn the Chief's activities overcame some of the inherent contradictions of the DMP. The Chief intensified production, insured against domestic economic failure, provided for defense and war, public works, ceremonies and rituals, all of which were essential to the group welfare. What the individual household gave up in autonomy it gained in terms of economic and political security. This idyllic situation persisted into modern times in many remote parts of the world as many ethnographies produced by Anthropologists testify. It persisted in many parts of the New World until contact, and persists in some to this day. But in the Near East, China, Europe, India, Mesoamerica, and Peru, economics and politics would take a different course; away from freedom and toward slavery.

Agriculture and Macroparasitism -The Surplus

Before agriculture, and during the early stages of the neolithic, human productivity was too low to permit production of a surplus. Macroparasitism in this case, would have killed the hosts, by denying them basic subsistence. Even if coercive mechanisms existed to force Gatherer-hunters to intensify production, the ecosystem would soon be degraded and all would starve. Agriculture greatly enhanced human productivity, in part, because *humans now spent a great deal more time at work than when they were gatherers* and hunters, and in part because new technologies such as plowing, fertilizing and irrigation vastly increased the productivity of the land. Using the new technology land could be exploited more intensively without causing degradation.

With the advent of the surplus we discover new human relationships that turn on the axis of class - some people (superordinates) have power over others (subordinates). A class is defined as a group that "exerts similar control (superordinates), or lack of control (subordinates), over basic resources, tools, techniques of production and the flow of energy." [Harris 1975 p.396].

At first the superordinates were probably priests then, later on, they ruled jointly with warriors, but in the end the warriors came to dominate. Now, in addition to the energy privations suffered from the infestation of his body by microparasites, the producer now had to suffer the macroparasites as well. Macroparasitism would take many forms over the millennia; taxes paid to the temples, rent paid to feudal landlords, interest to moneylenders, the loss of grain stores to a raider or invader, conscription to military service or to labor on roads, fortifications, canals or other public works. The historian William McNeill defines macroparasitism as "exploitative relations among groups and classes..*only occasionally was there any palpable return to the tax or rent payer.*" McNeill sarcastically notes however, "on the other hand, protection from more ruthless, less experienced, alternative exploiters often did constitute an intangible though real *quid pro quo.*"

Hence we encounter the "human problem" of the inequality of wealth and power which is most often manifest in the observation of extreme deprivation on the one hand and conspicuous

waste through the display of wealth on the other. We see Emperors living in elegant grandeur supported by thousands of starving, overworked slaves living in squalor. The Bible, perhaps correctly, says "the poor will always be with us," but the poor have not always been with us. Poverty and "genuine slavery" emerged concurrently with civilization.

The key to power was the control of economic resources by the macroparasites. If a man cannot gain access to land or water without consent of a priest, a king or a landlord, he is powerless to sustain himself. Hence, for a good part of Eurasian post-neolithic history, human to human macroparasitism, at some level, has been nearly, if not, universal. Macroparasitism was a relatively recent development in Mesoamerica, Africa and South America.

Agriculture radically changed human ecological relationships with microparasites to the detriment of humans. Agriculture also changed the nature of social relationships and created a new form of human parasitism - macroparasitism. Whether this form of parasitism is truly parasitic or mutualist depends on the particular case.

Human cultural evolution has proceeded through a number of stages. At the first stage we have the egalitarian societies the simplest form of which is the gatherer-hunter "band." The band is made of families or groups of related families. In these groups "leadership is informal and ephemeral" [Flannery 1972 p. 399].

Another form of egalitarian society is the tribe. A tribe is an organization of kinship related groups such as clans or lineages. Tribes are larger than bands, but are still egalitarian. Tribes are based on attachments to the land and are thus common to primitive agriculture. Tribes may be ruled by Chiefs, but generally the Chiefs are relatively powerless "redistributors." The clan or lineage serves as a device to hold title to certain parcels of land. At some point the clans may come to acquire "ranks" probably according to the quality of the land or other critical resources the clan controls [Flannery 1972 p. 402]. At this point a macroparasitic form of the Chieftdom may emerge.

It is in this form of the Chieftdom that we first observe hereditary inequality; a fragmentation of society into "nobles" and "commoners". Macroparasitic Chieftdoms go to great lengths to create "elaborate genealogies" to ensure that only truly noble individuals inherit the Chieftdom. Chiefs are usually considered to have a special relationship with the Gods that is denied to commoners. The people of Rapa Nui called it *manna*, the sociologist Weber called it "Charisma."

Chief's usual function is as a redistributor. That is, commoners are required to supply the Chief with goods which the Chief, in turn, required to give away to the commoners. Redistribution served as a mechanism to insure that every family and village got enough to eat. Chiefs also organized warfare, but again had to share the booty. However, over time, under certain conditions, some of the surplus goods and war booty found their way into the Chief's possession. As Chiefs became more powerful some of the Chief's "tax" on the redistributive flow became manifest in "sumptuary goods," and large retinues of "followers and assistants" (often relatives) all of which demonstrated the high status of the Chief to the commoners and reinforced their belief in his special powers [Flannery 1972 p.403]. Sahlins writes of Hawaiian Chiefs who "lacking a monopoly on [real] force" intimidated the people with an "awesome display of conspicuous consumption" [Sahlins 1972 p. 145]. Eventually the Chief with his accumulated wealth may establish his own army and lay claim to the productive resources previously considered to belong to the group.

The final and most complex stage of socio-political evolution is the State. A State is a powerful, highly centralized and bureaucratic government, with a professional ruling class, and professional army. The ruling class is, for the most part, alienated from the kinship structure that

dominates simpler forms of government structure. Instead of "sumptuary goods" the State constructs public works, monuments to itself, usually of a religious nature, occupied by full-time specialists who practice the State religion. The States also produce an official ideology and an "official art style" to portray and to glorify the State, the Religion and the secular leaders [Flannery p.404]. The State also maintains a monopoly on force so the state can conscript labor and soldiers, levy taxes, and demand tribute [Flannery p. 404]. At the level of the State we see fully realized the "political and economic means of tyranny" [Sahlins 1972 p. 83].

With the emergence agriculture we encounter what social scientists call social stratification or what we prefer to call macroparasitism - where one human lives off the energy of another. In its most literal form, macroparasitism would involve one human eating another - cannibalism. While not a major form of macroparasitism, cannibalism provides for some interesting case studies. More broadly, the concept means to appropriate the energy produced by another; when one human eats the food produced by another or to take energy resources from another. Just as a fungus eats a potato or a tapeworm drains all the nutrition from the food ingested by a human being, a human macroparasite eats it before the human that produced it can eat it. Humans confiscate the chemical energy plants have produced from sunlight. Humans also confiscate the energy produced by other humans. There is little real difference in the two cases. Nor does is there any difference if one human orders another to labor for him rather than labor to produce food for himself and his family, or his demanding any produced food as tribute. Finally, if a macroparasite denies access to land or other resources to people so that he may use that land for his purposes, it is no different than if he were to confiscate the food.

To be sustainable macroparasitism must leave energy to its human hosts that is sufficient to allow them to parasitize plants and animals. If the macroparasite drains too much energy from its human host it will either die or not be an effective parasite on plants and animals, that is an effective farmer or pastoralist- dead or enervated humans produce little in the way of surplus energy for the macroparasite to extract. Plants and animals are parasites on the soil and the chemicals and water in it. Thus, ultimately human macroparasites are parasites on the soil and water.. Pressures on the human hosts to produce more energy must ultimately drain the soil of nutrients and water. Human parasitism can be sustained only if more fresh soil and water is added to the system or if the soil is replenished with fertilizer of some sort. The saying, "where humans go deserts follow" suggests humans have failed, more often than they have succeeded, to develop sustainable parasitism.

Early neolithic villages were probably free of social stratification i.e. macroparasites. Early neolithic villages were just beginning to develop specialists. The disposition of skeletons at Abu Hureyra, a neolithic village settled about 10,000 years ago reveals the sex division of labor was well established. Women were buried under the floor of the home and men outside, indicating that the home was the woman's domain. Patterns of wear on female skeletons indicate they spent the bulk of their time grinding grain.. Peculiar patterns of wear on the front teeth indicate some individuals specialized in basket making. Other patterns of wear suggest weaving as a specialization. Moreover, all the bones with evidence of craft practice we located in the same area of the settlement suggesting a craft area [Mollenson p. 74].

There is, however, no evidence, in the burial practices,⁵ that any kind of social hierarchy

⁵In stratified societies the grave of the elites are usually filled with treasure and the bodies of servants.

existed. Thus, although it was structured i.e. had a division of labor and "specialists," Abu Hureyra appears to have been egalitarian. Abu Hureyra was abandoned 7000 years ago as were many other near east neolithic sites. Disease, famine, climate change have been suggested as causes, but no one knows the answer [Molleson p. 74].

Civilization, for every advantage she imparts holds a hundred evils in reserve. Herman Melville

When Mark Twain was asked what he thought about western civilization he replied that "it would be a good idea." In the minds of far too many people civilization is viewed as something that was unambiguously good. This prevarication has been promoted primarily by its principal beneficiaries - macroparasitic elites.

Generally, when people speak of "civilization" they actually mean state level societies. In the minds of the great historians, a society had to meet certain criteria to qualify as civilized; it needed urban settlements, a written language, a state religion and monumental public buildings, social stratification and craft specialization to mention just a few [Tringham p. 474]. The Aztec empire would certainly qualify on all counts, as would the Mayan, the Mesopotamian, Greek, Roman, and other societies of antiquity. Gatherer-hunter societies, pastoralists and tribal people in general, since they are not urban, literate, or stratified would not count among the civilized. "Civilized" people called the gatherer-hunters and pastoralists "savages" and "barbarians" and "wildmen." But, the dichotomy "civilized-noncivilized" is more than mere taxonomy. The designation "civilized" carries an implicit normative loading. Civilized societies are believed to be more than merely *different* from the others, they were presumed to be better.

Deeply imbued with the spirit and the evidence of evolution, historians recounted the move toward more complex societies as progress in the same sense that a complex human organism constitutes progress compared to a tree shrew. Thus, the adjectives, "barbarian" and "savage," not only denoted different, they also connoted inferiority. The idea of progress being manifest in "civilization" or more recently "modernization" is "one of the most important ideas by which modern men live, not least because most hold it unconsciously and therefore unquestioningly" [Tringham p. 471].

There have been exceptions to the reflexive tendency to view modernization as progress and savages as inferior. Jean Jacques Rousseau, decried civilization as "degeneration," as the source of a multitude of evils. He also extolled the virtues of the *noble savage*. Rousseau believed that man was naturally good, but became evil only through his involvement in social institutions that corrupt him. These institutions were private property and the State established to protect it and its privileges: "The privileged few gorge themselves with superfluities while the starving multitude lack the bare necessities of life" [quoted in Durant R&R p. 30]:

The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying, *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes, might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes...and crying to his fellows, "Beware of listening to this impostor, you are undone once you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all and the Earth itself to nobody [Rousseau quoted in Durant R&R p. 30]

Rousseau did not believe men could return to the "state of nature" where the "friendly and flowing" savages were innocent and equal, but he did advocate leaving the cities to live in rural content [Durant R&R p. 30].

The 19th century romantic movement in music, art and literature was nothing else than a reaction, by the more sensitive artistic souls, to the chasm that modernization had opened between man and nature. In the U.S., men like Henry David Thoreau complained of man's distance from, and destruction of nature. Walt Whitman complained on the "hollowness of heart" he observed among Americans who seemed dedicated only to "money-making" [Garraty p.147] Frederick Engels echoed the sentiments of the romantics when he wrote:

Civilization achieved things which gentile [barbaric] society was not even remotely capable. But it achieved them by setting in motion the lowest instincts and passions in man a developing them at the expense of all his other abilities. From its first day to this, sheer greed was the driving spirit of civilization; wealth, and again wealth and once more wealth, wealth not of society but of the single scurvy individual-here was its one final aim. If at the same time the progressive development of science and a repeated flowering of supreme art dropped into its lap, it was only because without them modern wealth could not have completely realized its achievements [Quoted in Tringham p. 473]

One would have little difficulty convincing Rousseau, Thoreau, and Engels of the pertinence of the concept of macroparasitism. Indeed, civilization seems to be designed to facilitate it and is indeed defined by it.

Elites and the Environment.

How we have come to define "civilization" and its accomplishments may be the greatest irony in the entire human experience. We mark great civilizations by their monuments, their arts, their literature and their philosophies. It is ironic that these "monuments" actually represent the human political institutions we generally find repugnant e.g. slavery; social institutions we find vile, e.g., status distinctions which the imply natural superiority of "aristocrats;" and economies that were very destructive of the environment. We marvel at the pyramid of Cheops and the wealth of Tutankhamen when we in fact should be repulsed. What is represented here is a massive, 1500 year exploitation of the peoples of ancient Egypt by a small elite that lived a parasitic life of leisure and decadence, and that through the use of propaganda, had convinced the people that building pyramids for the Pharaoh would improve their chances of gaining an afterlife.⁶ *Just like the Moai cult on Easter Island, the Pyramid cult insured that there would never be enough: enough riches and slaves to bury with the Pharaoh and enough food for the people.* It was a mechanism that guaranteed the

⁶Egypt may be the exception that proves the rule. The Nile replenished its soils and cleansed them of salts each year so as far as we know the Egyptians never had an ecological crisis like that which destroyed Mesopotamia and Rapa Nui. The Egyptian elites eventually succumbed to their own decadence and complacency which left them defenseless against the invading Hittite.

perpetual intensification of production and escalating demands on the environment.

The emergence of elites and private property changed a fundamental aspect of the relationship of humans with the environment. For all of the preceding time humans exploited the environment in order to produce food in sufficient quantities to feed their numbers. Humans were content with maintaining a flow of production that was self-limiting as there was little point to producing surpluses beyond those required for insurance and redistribution. The human impact on the environment increased only as the numbers of humans increased. While this impact was far from inconsequential, and was indeed destructive, it was minor compared to what would follow with the emergence of macroparasitic elites. Macroparasitic elites would impose demands on resources that were oriented toward accumulation of wealth and power; goals which know no natural limit. Thus, an increasingly large population was necessary to supply the elites with large "retinues" to give them personal service, armies to protect them and to subdue others, specialists in crafts to produce the luxury items the elites needed to sustain the "conspicuous consumption" that marked their status, for traders to convert their tribute payments (usually food items) into luxury items, for workers to build monuments to glorify them, for scribes to record their lineage (often fraudulent) and exploits (often exaggerated) for propaganda purposes, and for their armies of concubines. This extra population was no less than the number of slaves "owned" by the elites and usually a great deal more.

The intense competition among elites for status and power is like an escalating arms race that no one can win. The desire for luxury and power are, like weapons, not absolutes; their value depends on what others have. The problem is only exacerbated when the masses try to emulate the elites. The Aztec, Maya and other elites prohibited the commoners from wearing articles of clothing reserved for elites. But, in the contemporary United States the emulation of elites is a disease - macroparasitism is every bit as destructive as microparasitism. The environmental diseases caused by the relentless demands of macroparasitic nations like the United States is wreaking ecological havoc all over the world.

More recently the more radical romantic derivatives (anarchists and deep ecologists) of the "green movement" have rejected modernism, and some even civilization as we know it, and have become advocates of "back to the land" and "living on the earth." Moreover, similar movements have been directed at protecting and preserving stone age, tribal, i.e. "savage" societies, such as the Yanomami of the Amazon, from the rapacity of gold miners, cattlemen and lumbermen intent on harvesting the "resources" that constitute the habitat of these people. These groups are motivated by a recognition that different is not inferior. Indeed, they believe civilization as we know it, has to go!

Before and after

The emergence of States is considered by anthropologists to be the "great divide in history" [Tainter p. 29]. Many consider the State to have been a necessary condition for the emergence of "civilization" and human freedom. Looking at things from a slightly different perspective, one could assert that what distinguished state level, civilized societies from the others was macroparasitism; they were stratified, that is, a group or group of "specialists" be they religious or military leaders stood above the people and between them and the natural resources they needed to produce their subsistence. The macroparasites required food producers to feed these specialists and

the retinues needed to perform specialists functions. People were, thus, subject to corveé⁷ and Slavery. Such compulsion and exploitation was absent from traditional societies.

We have seen that when population growth forced foragers and pastoralists into settled, "civilized" life their workload increased. There was also a considerable decline in the autonomy of individuals and many, became actual or virtual slaves. Thus, even in western terms of understanding freedom, people became less free. But the real loss of freedom came from the severing of people from their traditional rights to access the resources they needed to survive. As part of traditional social structures each household had rights of access to communally owned land, had rights in redistribution networks that protected it from want. Under the regime of the State the only right to life a person has was that which came from the interests of the macroparasites to keep him alive for ongoing exploitation.

The experienced loss of freedom, i.e. collective economic security, depended on the particular environment in which the State was formed. The most despotic states were formed in the great river valleys of the Middle East, China and India and in the central valley of Mexico. Karl Marx called states such as these Oriental Despotisms or the Asiatic Mode of Production. Marx had to set these systems into a special category because they did not fit into his model of progressive historical change.

Marx clearly did not comprehend the nature of freedom in traditional societies. Like his contemporaries, Marx shared the notion that life among the primitives was "solitary, nasty, brutish and short." In his mind "primitive" people were unfree because their technology was so inadequate they could no squeeze from nature the basic necessities of life. For Marx history was a process of change where society proceeded through stages as humans evolved toward "human freedom." For Marx, Freedom was *not* the bourgeois conception of the absence of constraint on individual action, that some have called negative freedom. For Marx human freedom involved two elements; 1/ the ability to consciously master nature and 2/ the ability to consciously establish the social conditions of existence. For Marx freedom is proactive; freedom is the ability of men to consciously determine what they are and what they become, to fully realize their potential in material and intellectual activities [Howard & King Pol Ec Marx p.2].

At each stage of social development, in each particular social form, there are, Marx avers, certain contradictions that prevent the realization of perfect freedom, the resolution of which produces a new stage. For example, Marx shared the conventional 19th century view that Foragers were "savages" trapped in a low material standard of living by their lack of ability to control nature. For Marx, it is man's ceaseless quest to enhance his control over nature, that is, to advance the development of the productive force, that propels economic change, and diminishes the constraints of nature on human freedom.

Unfortunately, humanity had a long painful journey to realize freedom as Marx saw it. When "savages" became civilized they were trapped in a new social form [Structure], or what Marx called social relations of production, called slavery. Slavery was an important source of labor in the empires of Greece and Rome. Slavery is an effective form of labor organization only for very simple tasks, requires close supervision, and cannot be used where valuable machinery and tools are required as slaves have a tendency to break them and, of course, slaves are always rebelling or running away. All of these factors tend to reduce productivity. Slavery then, Marx claimed, driven by the force of these internal contradictions, would evolve into Feudalism which would eventually

⁷ Forced labor.

evolve in to Capitalism which would evolve into Socialism then Communism. Each stage enhances the power of the productive force and by furthering man's domination of nature, elevates the freedom of individuals. The ultimate realization of Communism takes us full circle: The social conditions of equality in the primitive commune are restored, but man now has full mastery over nature. He is free.

Knowing more as we do now about the actual living conditions of traditional peoples it is evident that Marx had missed the point. Traditional peoples were very much the masters their environments and lived well, with minimal work and maximum dignity in integrated communities. If Marx had had access to modern anthropological knowledge, he may have become an advocate of returning to the simpler life of gathering and hunting or simple neolithic agriculture. Many radical environmentalists offer this prescription today. The "Red Greens," the contemporary eco-socialists, however, stick to their Marxists guns, and insist that industrial socialism is the only way to restore human freedom.

For Marx, social evolution mimicked biological evolution. Marx was a great admirer of Darwin.⁸ Indeed, he offered to dedicate a volume of *Das Kapital* to Darwin. Darwin, who surely did not want to add political heresy to his scientific and religious heresies, politely declined the honor. Marx's admiration was surely in some part a reflection of the fact that he believed Darwin had provided the scientific validation of Marx's social theories. Just as man had moved from ape to human he will move from human savage to human communist with all the teleological grace he could muster.

Modern biology has removed the teleological element from evolution and now understands evolution simply in terms of adaptation with one adaptation being no better than another. It happens to be true that life has become increasing more complex, but there is no necessity to this. Indeed, it is far from clear that the adaptation from Ape to large brained, bipedal mammal, however more complex, will succeed. In the vast time scales of evolution this particular mutation has yet to be fully tested. Humans have shown great ingenuity solving big problems with their complex brains and creating even larger ones in the process. Cockroaches and alligators, while endowed with much smaller brains have been around much longer. In any case, in the 19th century mind, evolution meant progress: fish to amphibian to reptile to mammal to ape to human. Marx manifested a similar progressive social teleology: Savagery (primitive communism) to (industrial) Communism, by way of Slavery, Feudalism, Capitalism and Socialism. Marx believed, or at least asserted, that social evolution, like biological evolution was a universal process that suffered no exceptions. Only in Star Trek scripts do humans evolve into reptiles.

Need macroparasitism be always malignant?

Like microparasitism it is possible for macroparasitism to be benign, that is, mutual. Beginning with the, the magician-artist who drew animals on cave walls, specialists did provide some sort of valued function for the community. Priests and astronomers, likewise provided valuable functions for agricultural communities that needed to know when to plant and when to harvest crops. The bureaucrats that supervised the planning, construction and maintenance of the irrigation systems in the hydraulic empires surely made a contribution to the commonwealth. Are

⁸ Of course, this admiration was not without some reservations. Both Marx and Engels thought Darwin uncomfortably close to Malthus' social doctrines which they abhorred. We shall return to this issue later on.

ruling classes simply the *E coli* of the social gut where they do humans digestive service or are they like *E coli* in the stomach where it causes dysentery? There is a long standing debate between two schools of thought on the matter of macroparasitism. The functionalists or integrationists see the State and the elites that control it as serving a social purpose and thus postulates its emergence as "volunteeristic" The conflict or Marxist school, on the other hand, sees the State and the elites as inherently exploitative. Marx and Engels viewed history as ultimately progressive, but at each stage there were "contradictions." For Marx, Engels the evolution of the State was an essential step toward the ultimate communist utopia, but one that reduced the masses to virtual slavery - temporarily.

The liberal integration or functionalist school holds that State is a "managerial hierarchy" that emerged to meet a social need; to coordinate public works such as irrigation projects, or to manage trade, to redistribute a surplus or for protection from aggression or the waging war. In short, the State is positive response to environmental, social or political stresses and serves population-wide needs. If society should become vertically stratified due to differential awards accruing to high status administrators that is the cost that must be borne to realize the benefits of centralization [Tainter, p. 34]. The early social contract theories of Hobbes, Hume and Rousseau are based on such a model. More recently, John Rawls used contract theory as the basis of his *Theory of Justice* [Tainter p.33]. Joseph Tainter, although personally inclined toward the integrationist perspective, nevertheless considers its unqualified version a "Panglossian view" [Tainter p. 36].

Integration-volunteerist theories see income and wealth differentials as compensation for performance of socially important functions, but it is no exaggeration to assert that compensation of elites does not always match their contributions to society.⁹ Moreover, "coercion and authoritarian, exploitative regimes, are undeniable facts of history." [Tainter, p. 36]

The conflict school consists of theorists like Lewis Henry Morgan, Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V. G. Childe, and Morton Fried, [Tainter p. 33]. In this perspective, the State emerged not out of public needs, but out of the needs and desires of individuals and factions. Not common interests, but divided interests, not cooperation, but domination and subordination, not consensus, but coercion and power struggles shaped the formation of the State. State institutions originated to settle internal conflicts resulting from the macroparasitism attendant on vertical differentiation so as to sustain elite privileges which result in the appropriation of the surplus by non-producers [Tainter p. 33]. For example, Engels in the *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, claims that it was differential acquisition of wealth that led to a hereditary nobility, monarchy, slavery and wars for booty. The State was promoted and instituted by selfish and ambitious elites to protect their new wealth against older, egalitarian traditions which demanded sharing [Tainter p. 33]. This particular train of thought leads Marxists into a logical contradiction.

Conflict theorists (Marxists) insist that human material life is mediated by culture. It is social institutions, the "structural and superstructural elements" of a society that specify the uses to be made of the environment, population densities to be maintained and hence reject integrationist theories that emphasize "objective forces" such as population pressure and subsistence stress that made instituting the State necessary [Tainter p.34]. Instead, conflict theories lapse into

⁹This issue is still with us. For example, many wonder if a corporation CEO such as the CEO of AT&T is worth 16 million dollars per year. Recently, people were outraged when a Disney executive received a "severance" package of 90 million dollars.

"psychological reductionism" whence it is asserted that the emergence of the State is "tied to wishes, intentions, needs and or desires of small privileged segment of society" [Tainter p. 37]. From where comes these selfish, greedy "desires?" Is selfishness and greed universal human tendency? If so how does one explain why States have not emerged everywhere? Why was 99% of human history spent in simple societies? Conflict theorists respond that a surplus was necessary for the universal tendency to become operative. But, if the economy is under the control of structure and superstructure i.e. it is culturally mediated, the surpluses "could be concocted when ever desired" [Tainter p.35]. The forces behind the emergence of the surplus was never articulated by Marx or Engels.

If selfishness, greed and ambition is universal, but is suppressed in some cultures one must explain why this variance exists. If it is not universal where does it come from? [Tainter p. 35]. We know some cultures discourage ambition and we know the reasons why. The Marxist have to explain why some cultures began to allow ambition to actualize, but they have not done so - they certainly will not accept the notion that society began to allow ambition because it benefitted everyone.

Integration of both views is possible. Even some Marxist theorists recognize that classes may have evolved legitimately [Tainter p.37]. If we also allow that beyond propaganda, legitimizing activities must include provision of real goods and services to the masses. How else can we explain the "bread and circuses" welfare system provided at great expense by the Roman Emperors? It seems a reasonable compromise to hold that while the State insured the basic necessities to the masses, but at the same time the surplus may have been completely usurped by elites [Tainter p. 37]. Indeed, to be sustainable macroparasitism must take care of the basic needs of the people. When States failed to provide basic necessities they often collapsed. Macroparasitism is not sustainable unless the host masses are kept alive and in working condition. Thus, while "self-aggrandizement cannot account for the origin of states, it certainly does help in understanding subsequent history. Recall the adage, "power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely." While centralization of authority may confer basic benefits to the masses, once established it can become a problem [Tainter p. 37] and humans are now faced with another "cost of living well" - exploitation and oppression.

Its all in your mind

There are some who argue that no objective definition of exploitation is possible. For example do you believe that the followers of Rev. Sung Young Moon are exploited? They give all their wealth to him, and work in his industries for no wages. The Reverend live like a King. What about the millions of Christians who mail in billions to TV evangelists to use for God only knows what purposes:

A true believer who gladly gives one tenth of his income to his church does not feel exploited. He approves of his religion, his church, and the service he gets from both. For an outside observer who disapproves of religion to call the true believer "exploited" is merely to register a prejudice [George Dalton quoted in Harris 1975 p. 402]

What about the Negro slave who thanked God everyday that he had a "master" to care for him and his family. The slave, so schooled in dependence and submission, and in the dictates of the New Testament, "slaves obey your masters," that he has come to accept his place and to believe in his

own inherent inferiority probably will not feel "exploited." If the slaves do not think they are exploited should we then define slavery as nonexploitive?

More objectively one might argue that if all classes seem to gain as a result of the rewards given or taken by the ruling class, "it would seem improper to speak of the people responsible for the improvement as exploiters."

Anthropologist Marvin Harris insists that exploitation is an etic as opposed to emic matter. What exists in the heads of the people (emic) is not as important to their survival as the etic reality.

Clearly in emic terms, exploitation does not follow from the mere existence of a ruling class. Economist Kenneth Boulding, in his book, *The Economy of Love and Fear*, defines exploitation in objective, or etic, terms as having four components:

1/ the subordinate class experiences deprivation in basic necessities such as food, water, housing, leisure, medical care.

2/ the ruling class enjoys an abundance of luxuries.

3/ the luxuries of the ruling class depend on the labor of the subordinate class.

4/ the deprivations of the subordinate class are the result of an allocation of resources by the ruling class toward luxuries and away from necessities [summarized in Harris 1975 p. 402].

While this definition may be useful in many cases e.g. where the masses of people are obviously deprived of material necessities, it is not helpful in cases where exploitation may simply involve disproportionate rewards (e.g. the current controversy over CEO salaries) or the inability to achieve non-material goals (e.g. the current controversy over the ability of two earner families to adequately raise their children or avoid divorce). More broadly there is the "alienation" that seems to pervade industrial societies which is in good part related to the structure of work imposed by elites. This type of exploitation does not effect what people think, but how they feel. The live in what in what, by any definition is material abundance, but yet feel deprived and unhappy. This malaise is, at least in historical terms, fairly recent. Until only the mid-twentieth century, most people have been far too preoccupied with getting enough to eat to worry about how they feel. This situation is still all too common. The World Bank estimates that about 1/5 of the world's population lives in acute poverty meaning they lack access to an adequate diet, decent housing, clean water, education and basic medical care. Three billion people (60% of the world population) have an average per capital income of \$580 per year, compared to \$10,000 per year in the World's twenty richest nations. Some 200 million children, some as young as age 4, work as virtual slave labor making carpets, jewelry, ceramics and in the sex business. In the poorest countries the life expectancy at birth is 49 years compared to 77 years in the rich countries [Cunningham and Saigo pp. 10-16].

In a recent book called *Women in the Material World*, a poor third-world woman was asked if she was "happy." The woman stared somewhat incredulously at the interviewer and it was clear that she did not know what the interviewer meant as she had never asked herself such a question. All that she could reply was that "her crops were good."

But, the poor can still suffer psychologically from their materially deprived situation. Rigoberta Menchu, a Mayan Indian woman and recent winner of the Nobel Peace Prize writes vividly of the psychic situation of her people in Guatemala:

The poor are considered lazy, people who do not work, who only sleep and have no enjoyment in life. If a *ladino* gets on a bus, that's normal. If an Indian gets on, everyone is disgusted. They think we are dirty, worse than an animal or a filthy cat...we feel this

rejection deeply.

But, Menchu “saw that the root of our problems lay in the ownership of the land. All our country’s riches are in the hands of the few” [Menchu, p. 166-168]. “For me now, she writes, “the landowner was a big enemy. And so were all the rich. We began using the term ‘enemies’ because we didn’t have the notion of enemy in our culture, until those people arrived to exploit us, oppress us and discriminate against us [Menchu p. 122-23].

Historian William McNeill characterizes the historical situation of "the majority of the human race" over time as being ground between the mill stones of microparasitism and macroparasitism. The constant grinding between these kept the "peasant majority of civilized populations close to bare subsistence by systematically withdrawing resources from their control" [McNeill, *The Global Condition* p. 74].

Indeed, in too many cases the peasant mass in "civilized societies" has been driven below the subsistence level by expropriations of macroparasites, and has been devastated by micro parasites, very often because of the malnutrition caused by predation by the macroparasites.

Agriculture and the Rise of the State

The emergence of agriculture, by which we mean plant and animal domestication as opposed to hunting wild animals and harvesting wild grains, occurred at about 10,000 B.C. in the fertile crescent. Why this technological revolution occurred has been a matter of some controversy in the archaeological literature. Basically, three perspectives have been enunciated.

First, it was argued that humans invented agriculture to overcome chronic food shortages that were believed, following Malthusian reasoning, to be the factor limiting the growth of human populations. Agriculture, though always needed, was invented when it was because it was only at that point in time that culture had evolved to the point where it was "ready to achieve it" [Binford p. 33]. It is thus asserted that "cultivation is the expected, natural outcome of a long, directional evolutionary trend" driven by human's natural capacity to experiment and develop new ideas to meet its needs and to be "receptive" to them [Binford p. 32]. Critics found this theory scientifically unacceptable; it was teleological and untestable. Lewis Binford writes:

Trends which are observed in cultural evolution require explanation; they are certainly not explained by postulating emergent human traits which are said to account for the trends...this theory is based on a kind of vitalism and a postulation of causal factors which are incapable of being tested [Binford p. 33].

Such "orthogenic" explanations rely on unobservable human traits which are presumed to be evolving in a progressive direction according to an agenda that is independent of external forces [Binford p. 32]. Moreover such theories are based on the presumption that "life was hard in the Paleolithic" and there was always a "sense of impending doom" with the specter of starvation..stalking the stalker" despite the "continuous work" of the "technically incompetent" gatherer-hunter [Sahlins quoted in Binford p. 39]. Once anthropologists left their armchairs and their ethnocentric attitudes behind and "objectively" studied the life of gatherer-hunters it was seen that none of these presumptions are valid.

A second theory, put forward by V. Gordon Childe, postulated that climate change, a general desiccation, diminished the number of grass-eating animals and forced the remainder, and humans, to congregate around a "diminishing number of springs and streams - Oases" [Childe p. 15]. Humans protected and even fed these animals. These practices ultimately brought about the domestication of animals, the use of dung as fertilizer, the harnessing of animals to the plow, the burning of trees and scrub and the beginnings of irrigation to create pasture for cattle [Childe p. 17]. Eventually farmers had to move their herds seasonally to find fresh grass and thus began nomadic pastoralism.

Childe's theory, was at least testable. Unfortunately, this theory has failed to survive a confrontation with the evidence. Archaeological studies of the climate in the region and time period under question found that "environmental change was minor or absent" [Binford p. 31].

A third theory is based on the presumed rise in sedentism following the change to the "broad-spectrum" subsistence strategy. The rise in sedentism was the result of people settling down near the sources of water fowl, fish, snails and shellfish. Sedentism disturbed the homeostatic mechanism that had traditionally balanced the numbers of nomadic gatherer-hunters with the carrying capacity of the environment. Recall it was the necessary mobility of gatherer-hunters that provided the impetus for abortion, senicide and infanticide. As long as these techniques keep population under control "there is no necessary adaptive pressure continually favoring means of increasing food supply" [Binford p. 39]. In the regime of sedentism population might begin to grow creating a pressure of population against resources [Binford p. 47]. The theoretical core of this theory is the presumption that humans and mammals tend to limit population to that level compatible with the ability of the environment to sustain them. When such equilibria are disturbed new cultural practices which raise food productivity "may bring about a selective advantage" [Binford p. 40]

The population did increase. Hole and Flannery estimated that the population densities in southwestern-Iran rose from about one person per square kilometer in the late paleolithic to 2 persons per sq. kilometer under dry farming. Following the introduction of irrigation the population density rose to six persons per sq. kilometer - an increase of about 60 fold over a 6000 year period [Flannery p.75].

The change in "economy" to dry farming had dramatic "political" and "social" and "ecological" implications. As Gatherer-hunters, people had the use of about 35% of Iran's land area, the remaining 65% was completely uninhabitable deserts. When the infrastructure changed to agriculture, and then to irrigation, "the picture changes." [Flannery p. 77] Only about 10% of the land surface is arable and only one percent is irrigated. Thus, the area where the most productive agricultural techniques can be applied is "minuscule" [Flannery p. 77]. Historically, this highly productive 1% land is owned by a small segment, say 1% of the population:

This kind of differential access to strategic resources including the means of production, is at the heart of "ranked" or "stratified" society. It is not a result of agricultural success, or "surplus" but a product of the widening gap between the size of the population and the size of the critical land surface on which it was most dependent. It is probably no accident that highly stratified societies followed this adaptive era in the alluvial lowlands of the Near East [Flannery p. 78]

Similar developments characterized Mesoamerica, India and China. The change to agriculture also changed the entire ecological system of the near east and the other regions as well. Had people wanted to return to gathering and hunting it would have been impossible to do so [Flannery p. 78]:

...early Near Eastern agriculture represents yet another example of the "second cybernetics." Starting with a relatively stable configuration of plant and animal species at 10,000 B.C., early cultivation took two genera of cereal grasses and two genera of small ungulates out of the habitat and artificially increased their numbers...at this point the ecosystem was no longer cybernating or stable; all the former rules which kept species in check were off [Flannery p.79].

By the time irrigation was introduced many species of animals were extinct and new weeds and pests that followed the crops were the "predominant biota." The only evidence we see today of the original ecosystem of the near east "is in the pollen record and paleolithic bone debris" [Flannery p. 79].

Hydraulic Despotisms-The Chicken and the Egg

The first neolithic communities were small, communal and peaceful and organized around kinship groups. They practiced their dry-farming agriculture and stock raising in rain-watered and forested areas in the valleys of mountains and on the sides of mountains. These farmers raised wheat, barley, sheep, goats, cattle and pigs [Gimbutas 1973 p.2]. These communities first emerged in the areas we would now call Iran, Palestine and Syria [Ponting p.43] beginning around 7000 B.C.[Gimbutas 1973 p. 2]. As population grew beyond the optimal size of such communities they split-off, duplicated and reduplicated.

Small towns such as Jericho and Catal Huyuk flourished by 7000 B.C.. By 4000 B.C. agriculture was well established around the entire Mediterranean and in central Europe in the Rhine/Danube and Vistula/Dnestr regions [Ponting 47]. Gimbutas [1973] has defined the cultural complex that evolved in southeastern Europe [The Balkans: Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Albania plus the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary] between 7000 B.C. and 3500 B.C. "Old Europe." Cultural evolution in Old Europe would take a path far different from that of the cultures of the fertile crescent. Both areas were agricultural. Both areas developed a script and craft specialization. Each had an active religious and ceremonial life conducted in temples and shrines [Gimbutas 1973 p.9]. But there were critical differences in the social and political organizations of each cultural complex. In Old Europe, communities were egalitarian, lived in peaceful co-existence with one another (as indicated by lack of fortifications) and were "probably" ¹⁰ matrilineal and matrilocal, worshiped the Goddess and were nonpatriarchal [Gimbutas 1977 p. 281, Eisler p. 14].

On the other hand, cultural evolution in the fertile crescent went in the direction of totalitarian, class societies, constantly embroiled in warfare. The cultures of Sumer and Egypt once worshiped female deities, but these practices eventually ceased. The late Sumerians were patriarchal and worshiped armed male Gods [Eisler p. 65-70].

The explanation of these different trajectories is ecological; in Old Europe water was delivered in the form of rainfall. In the fertile crescent, rainfall was insufficient for agriculture. One theory directed toward an explanation of the development of despotism in the fertile crescent is based on the need, in this area, for irrigation. It is called the hydraulic theory of despotism and was first proposed by Karl Wittfogel in 1926. The theory explained more than just the despotism in the

¹⁰ There is a great deal of controversy on this question and very little evidence.

Fertile Crescent, it is consistent with the despotisms observed in China, India and Peru.

The conquest of nature, which began with progressive control of the soil and its products, and passed to the minerals, is now extending to the waters on, above and beneath the surface. The conquest will not be complete until these are brought under complete control - W.J. McGee 1909

He flood the desert with the mountain stream, And lo! It leaps transformed to paradise - 19th century Mormon hymn

Based on his studies of China, Wittfogel came to believe that societies that developed around irrigation were "structurally" different from those based on rainfall agriculture [Wittfogel p. 559]. Indeed, he used the terms "hydraulic society" and "oriental society," a term first coined by J.S. Mill, interchangeably and also accepted the term "oriental despotism" [Wittfogel p. 560]. The distinguishing characteristics of the oriental despotisms are "a monopoly of political and economic power by the state, with absolute control over the supporting population, a monopoly that prevents the formation of rival power-controlling institutions." [Saunders et al 1979 p. 366]. These states tend to be monarchial and have weak mercantile and feudal classes. The source of the state power is control over water which is implemented through large state bureaucracy [Saunders et al 1979 p. 366].

Robert Canreio has characterized the systems of oriental despotism as "volunteeristic" systems, that is people accept the costs of despotism, the loss of freedom, in order to get the benefit, the reduction in risk provided by irrigation systems. Others see the process as more complex and redolent with competition and warfare both within and between evolving communities that required the intervention of a superordinate power to maintain peace. [Saunders et al 1979 p. 368]

Some 4000 miles, deserts, high mountains and hordes of bellicose barbarians separated China from the classical hydraulic civilizations of the middle east, so China's development was highly indigenous [McNeill 1963 p.217-18]. Yet, similar environmental conditions in the river valley of the Yellow and Yangtze produced a hydraulic empire similar to those that developed in and Mesopotamia. There were some significant differences, for example the Chinese did not use plows, probably because the soft soil deposited by the river was easily worked with a hoe [McNeill 1963 p. 219].

In China agriculture was based on a "national system of dikes, dams, canals, artificial lakes and reservoirs that controlled the floods of the Yellow and Yangtze rivers and supplied water to millions of peasant farmers." The entire construction and maintenance enterprise was managed by the imperial bureaucracy. It is said that the imperial rule was so despotic that slavery was not necessary in China. There were slaves, and millions of women were involuntary concubines, but the peasant was the primary host of the imperial macroparasites.

According to Wittfogel the irrigation farmer:

employed the same work tools (hoe, shovel, basket) and the same work materials (soil, stone, wood) as did the rainfall farmers. But by specific organizational means (large-scale cooperation, rigid subordination and centralized leadership) they established societies that differed structurally from societies based on rainfall farming ...[in particular] the urban revolution that followed the hydraulic revolution differed in its socio-political content from the urban revolution that occurred in the non-hydraulic world [Wittfogel p. 559].

What makes a hydraulic society an "oriental despotism" is the fact that the "state is stronger" than all other forces of society" [Wittfogel p. 560] The source of state power was the control of water which was essential to agriculture:

In Inca society, ancient Egypt, and Mesopotamia the greater part of all arable land seems to have depended on irrigation water provided by government-controlled installations. Hydraulic agriculture prevailed absolutely; and the density of the bureaucratic-managerial apparatus was extreme¹¹ [Wittfogel p. 563].

The powerful hydraulic states, Wittfogel claims became "acquisitive." They were able to compel labor (corvee) and were able to dispose of the fruits of the compelled labor. For the most part clan, private and communal lands came under the control of the state [Wittfogel p.566]. Either the workers worked on state lands or on private plots subject to taxes in-kind or cash and the burden tended to be "heavy" nor was the government above "acts of ruthless confiscation" [Wittfogel p. 562]

Hydraulic despotisms easily translated the organizational skills needed for the planning, construction and operation of irrigation systems into the "maintenance of coordinated centrally directed armies...which provide the means for aggressive warfare and for regional and super-regional expansion" [Wittfogel p.561]. Unfortunately these hydraulic despotisms suffered regular retrogressions when rulers "paid less attention to maintaining the agro-managerial standards than to invoking new methods of fiscal exploitation" and pursuing imperial expansions [Wittfogel p. 568]. The powers that be could not resist the lure of macroparasitism, but they eventually paid dearly for their cupidity:

...the bureaucracy tended to fatten itself at the expense of peasant welfare. Corruption tended to increase geometrically with the number of years a dynasty remained in power. Soon public works were neglected, the dikes began to leak, the canals filled up with silt and production declined...a reigning dynasty would find that it was no longer capable of protecting or providing for the peasant masses. Torn by dissension, it would become vulnerable to the "barbarians" outside the walls, to the armies of neighboring empires, or to its own rebellious people. The dynasty would then collapse. This happened again and again in the history of Egypt, Mesopotamia, India and China [Harris 1978 p. 239]

By the year 5000 B.C. all of the areas suitable to dry farming in the fertile crescent were occupied. People were then forced to move down onto the plains of the great river valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates where in Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, they created the Sumerian Empire with its great city of Ur. By the year 3000 B.C., Sumer contained eight great cities and was, perhaps, the first literate society in the world [Ponting p.71]. Unfortunately, the Sumerian economic system proved to be an ecological disaster [salinization]. Consequently, Sumer grew weaker and between 2370 and 1800 B.C. was conquered several times and finally became an "underpopulated, impoverished backwater" of the Babylonian Empire centered in Northern Mesopotamia [Ponting p. 72].

¹¹ Societies like those on the Mexican Plateau (Aztec, Toltec etc.), India which were not totally dependent on irrigation were labeled "loose hydraulic societies" [Wittfogel p. 563].

In the river valleys of the Tigris and Euphrates fish and water fowl were abundant and the alluvial soil was soft, even and free of stumps so was easy to plow. It is probable that the plow was not invented until man began to work these alluvial soils; swiddeners simply would have not been able to use it on rocky, uneven, root-laden hillside soils [McNeill, 1963 p. 30 n. 3] As the people migrated southward into the desert toward what would become the city of Ur, the rainfall became less reliable. The only source of water was the annual flood. To avoid the blistering summer heat crops had to be planted in October, but the annual meltwater floods did not reach the plains until April or May. Unfortunately, the flood did not leave behind enough water for planting [Adams p.578]. To survive, these migrant agriculturalists would have to learn to artificially water their crops.

At first it was easy. The annual deposition of the flood raised the river over the surrounding desert plains. All that was necessary was to cut into the river bank until the water flowed into the areas below it along the natural gradient. The valley was so flat that water would easily flow several miles from the river powered only by its natural momentum [Mc Niell p. 31]. As population grew, more distant fields had to be watered, canals had to be dug. Of course the river was hard to tame. If the flood was below average not all fields would get water. If it was above average it would wash away canals and dikes. As the system expanded it required more labor for new construction and maintenance. The peasants who farmed the irrigated areas were existentially at the mercy of the natural flows of water and politically at the mercy of whoever controlled it.

The canals required constant maintenance to prevent them from "silting-up." The perpetual maintenance and the repairs necessitated by floods and changes in channels had to be managed by a "strong central authority" [Adams p. 578]. In addition to the need to "mobilize labor from many communities" to rebuild and maintain irrigation canals, central power is needed to provide for "equitable division of the available water" and to "adjudicate disputes...of many competing communities" [Adams p. 602]. On the hillsides villages could replicate without coming into contact with each other. But, "in the narrow riches of the river valley...a comparatively dense population compelled adjustment of diverging interests and outlook among fishers, herdsman, and cultivators, all of whom had to live cheek by jowl with one other [McNeill 1963 p. 30]. A social unit larger than the Neolithic village was required to adjudicate the recurrent frictions that arose among divergent interest groups. Kinship, the oldest basis of social organization, was supplanted by administrative authority based not on blood, but physical "propinquity" [Mc Neill 1963 p. 30] Out of this need came a class of managers with the authority to manage conflict resolution which was supported by the surplus produced by the rich alluvial soil of the Tigris-Euphrates Valley [Mc Neill 1963 p. 30].

Being so dependent on the capricious flows of the river the Sumerians naturally invested a great deal of authority in the priests who interceded with the Gods to placate their anger over some human transgression by means of a ritual or a sacrifice. The priests were also responsible for the maintenance and planning of the waterworks. Fortunately, the extreme fecundity of the soil allowed a sufficient agricultural surplus to fill the holy granaries which fed the priests, their retainers and those who worked on public works, temples and other constructions. In Sumerian theology

There was never a strong social cleavage in Mesopotamia as there between the free and the unfree in Classical Greece and Rome, or between the different castes in the Indic system. In the economic sense, we may very distinguish not three, but two classes, the master class and the rest of the population. The latter could include all the dependent labor, composed of not only serfs and slaves, but also the so-called free peasantry and craftsmen, who, while theoretically free and independent, sooner or later became dependent on the large landowners for water, draft animals, plows, seed grain and other means of production - I.J. Gelb, quoted in Patterson, 1991 p. 34]

people were "slaves for the Gods", created only for the purpose of freeing the Gods from the necessity of working [McNeill 1963 p.34]. There was no practical difference between the life of a poor "free" person and that of a slave. Indeed, the slave in many cases may have been better off. The slaves who sought to be free wanted to be so as a means to improve their material position, not for the value of "freedom" *per se* [Patterson 1991, p.35].

The Sumerians produced an impressive array of technical advances: irrigation, wheeled-vehicles, sailing ships, metallurgy (bronze), oven-baked and wheel-turned pottery. These inventions by the urban, craft, specialist were surely made by the existence of a surplus of food produced by the rural peasantry. Much of what the craftsmen produced was oriented toward warfare (metal helmets, spearheads, chariots), but much was also directed toward trade.

The river valley lacked materials such as stone, timber and metals which were vital for construction and warfare. The people of the valley had either to find these materials for themselves or trade for them with food surpluses or craft goods.

Eventually, as population density increased the exactions on the peasants increased. As cities grew larger and more prosperous, intercity warfare and attacks of pastoral barbarians seeking to plunder city riches increased. Now a cast of military specialists had to be fed, craftsmen to make their weapons and chariots had to be fed, the laborers who worked on the massive city walls (the walls of Ur were six miles in circumference and fifteen feet thick) had to be fed. Also a surplus had to be produced for purposes of trade. The flood plain was devoid of trees for timber and metals for floodgates and weapons so these had to be gained from trade with the mountainous regions surrounding the plain. The military leaders jostled with the priests for control and eventually established kingship.

The pattern of "macroparasitism" was firmly in place in Mesopotamia by 3000 BC [McNeill 1976 p.6, Ponting p. 38]. The Sumerian military, however, proved ineffective against the Akkadians in 2370 BC primarily because the Sumerian economy could no longer support military specialists. The reason for this was ecological.

Food production was falling as salinization produced by irrigation reduced yields of wheat. Irrigation agriculture on poorly drained soil often leads to salinization as capillary action brings salt to the surface of land that was previously not saline [Flannery p. 73]. Wheat cannot tolerate salt so the Mesopotamians gradually moved toward the more salt tolerant barley [Flannery p. 73].

In 3500 B.C. wheat constituted about 50% of Sumer's agricultural product. However, by 2100 B.C. the proportion of wheat had fallen to two percent. All over the valley rising levels of salt in the soil made it either difficult or even impossible to grow food. In the years between 2700 and 1700 B.C. crop yields fell 65%, so the surplus available to feed the military and other macroparasites declined [Ponting p.71-72]. A similar fate befell central Mesopotamia between 1300-900 B.C. and Baghdad in 700-800 A.D. [Ponting 73].

The saying that where ever man goes he creates deserts is certainly valid in Mesopotamia. The combination of an artificial mode of agriculture and pressure for increased output that was "relentless" doomed the great civilization of Mesopotamia [Ponting 72-73].

Similar patterns of intensification and depletion were followed in China in the Yellow River Valley, in the Punjab in the valley of the Indus, in Mesoamerica in the valley of Mexico (Aztecs) and the lowlands (Maya), along the Ganges in India, and all around the Mediterranean. In each case a "State" emerged and as Marvin Harris puts it people learned how to "bow, kneel and kow-tow." In addition, to the loss of freedom the effects of macroparasitism included endless work, deteriorated nutrition, disease, and shorter life expectancy.

Karl Wittfogel, Marx, Critical Theory

The term "Oriental Despotism" and the "hydraulic society" thesis which has proved very influential within the circle of cultural ecologists and cultural materialists [Worster 1985, p.23] was coined by Karl Wittfogel, a 20th century student of Chinese history. Wittfogel's personal life gave him good reason to distrust centralized political power. Wittfogel attacked German Fascism. As he was trying to flee Germany he was captured and was thrown into a concentration camp by Hitler in 1933. After his release several months later he migrated to the US.

Early in his scholarly life he was a student of Karl Marx, and he joined communist party in Weimar Germany in 1920. But, he was also influenced by Weber's studies of the hydraulic-bureaucratic state in China & India]. He was also attracted to and the Frankfurt school's themes of power and domination including the domination of the earth which was seen as derivative of modern technology. In 1925, he joined the Institute for Social Research, the think tank that founded the Frankfurt School. By 1966 he was an anti-communist and as opposed to the USSR as he was to German Fascism [Worster p.24].

For Wittfogel the "specter of domination facing the planet" came not from the capitalists, but from the "bureaucrat and his state apparatus." He was especially critical of those bearing the label "communist." Naturally, since the USSR was precisely such a communist centralized state he came into conflict with Marxism and with Stalinism. His antagonism toward the USSR was exacerbated when Stalin signed pact with Hitler in 1939 [Worster p.28]. Wittfogel tried to explain (demonize) 20th century communism totalitarianism with his theory that the Soviet Government was merely "an Asian restoration." But the application of his hydraulic theory to the case of the USSR proved futile as irrigation played no significant role in the development of totalitarianism in the USSR. In despair, Wittfogel rejected his hydraulic theory on the ground that despotism had evolved in "areas lacking hydraulic agriculture." such as the USSR. This was, of course, completely illogical. Hydraulic agriculture may not be the only cause of despotism. If there were hydraulic societies that did not become despotic, Wittfogel's hydraulic hypothesis would indeed be falsified. But, the development of despotism in the absence of hydraulic agriculture does not falsify the hypothesis that hydraulic agriculture produces despotism.

Wittfogel found Marx's treatment of nature unsatisfactory. In Marx's materialism the mode of production is a complex of ecological factors, technology and social relations within which all social wealth comes from the gift of nature (soil water forests coal etc) and human labor" [Worster p.26]. For Marx the natural world was "passive" that is, "nature as a real, intrinsically significant, autonomous entity gets obliterated, by owners and workers alike, in Marx's march toward progress" [Worster p.26]. As Marx wrote in the Grundrisse:

"nature becomes purely an object for mankind, purely a matter of utility; ceases to be recognized as a power for itself, and the theoretical discovery of its autonomous laws appears merely as a ruse so as to subjugate it under human needs, whether as an object of consumption or as a means of production" [Marx, Grundrisse quoted in Worster p. 26].

Wittfogel, departing from Marx, restored nature to a pivotal role in historical materialism, he emphasized that when people attempt to control nature they must also adapt to nature; "As societies try to remake nature, they remake themselves"[quoted in Worster p. 27]:

"Man and his work on one side, nature and its material on the other- this is the fundamental relation, the eternal natural condition of human life upon which every form of this life, and above all its social form, is dependent [Wittfogel 1928 quoted in Worster p. 27].

Where Marx had man dominating nature, Wittfogel, following the line of the critical theorists at Frankfurt, insisted that the relationship between nature and culture was an "unending dialectic" with the "two intertwined in an ongoing spiral of challenge and response-challenge, where neither humanity or nature ever achieves sovereign authority, but both continue to make and remake each other" [Worster p.22] "Nothing is ever finished in the dialectic between history and natural history. Nothing can be abstracted altogether from its context or be said to have made itself in splendid isolation "[Worster p.22].

After coming to America Wittfogel realized that large-scale irrigation was an ancient American as well as Asian phenomenon so in 1957 he substituted the term "hydraulic society" for Oriental Despotism [Worster p. 27] "Wherever it was found, its outcome was always a repressive use of power and the defeat of all change. Crises, whether brought on by overexpansion or by invasion might come and go in such systems, but so long as irrigation continued, no real movement, no revolution could occur in the social system" [Worster p.28]

The Frankfurt School of Critical theory

What we call Man's power over nature turns out to be a power exercised by some men over men with Nature as its instrument. C. S. Lewis

The more devices we invent for dominating nature, the more we must serve them if we are to survive.
- Max Horkheimer

The basic theme of critical theory is that rather than the freedom promised by progress boosters, the lot of 20th century humans is domination [Worster p.53]. The root of human domination comes from the incessant modern drive use technology to remake nature. The technology intended to dominate nature also dominates humans in general and provides the basis of the domination of some humans by others.

At first, the ISR followed an orthodox Marxist paradigm. But under the leadership of Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer a fundamental humanist idealism was introduced. According to Erich Fromm, a prominent psychologist and ISR member, "the revival of humanism was a reaction to the fear that man might become the slave of things, a prisoner of circumstances he himself has created" [Fromm p. viii]. Marx, who had focused on the material misery of the working class, and who saw technology as a boon to humanity, had to be modernized. The major problem facing the now materially well-off working class was the affluent alienation produced by the modern "ethic of consumption." As long as the productive forces were poorly developed merely working to keep alive was enough to gave meaning to life. In the context of capitalist affluence "the meaning of life and man's goal in living emerged again as questions of primary importance" [Fromm p. x]. To cope with man's new "spiritual problem" the emphasis of analysis had to return to the superstructure and to the fundamental humanist presumption that through use of his rational powers alone man can perfect his situation.

Under the influence of Horkheimer and Adorno the analytical emphasis shifted to the superstructure - the realm of ideas, ideologies and philosophies as decisive historical forces in their

own right. Moreover, they rejected positivism, that is, the study of the world the way it is, and why, what they called "sterile economic materialism," in favor of idealism, or the way the world ought to be. The ISR rejected instrumental reason which is focused on means rather than ends, that is, "positivistic, mindless utilitarianism" [Worster p.57] in favor of the use of higher reason in the pursuit of "ultimate matters; "it should define the greatest good, search out the values that inhere in things, contemplate human destiny, and sort out moral truths" [Worster p. 55].

The Frankfurt School favored the young Marx, the romantic idealist of the Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844; a humanist and a rebel that did not repress the individual spirit, who opposed positivism, bureaucracies, mass culture and all the forces that created "the administered life"[Worster p. 54]. This trend toward idealism disturbed Wittfogel. He wanted a science of society not a philosophy of values. Wittfogel wanted to develop an explanation of "what is." He did not want to wallow in pointless philosophical speculations of what ought to be. He had seen in his personal experience with Fascism what happened to truth when ideologues pursued a social agenda. Furthermore, he had witnessed how Lenin and Stalin were "prepared to corrupt scientific standards in order to prove by practice what their theories predicted." [Harris 1968 p. 221]. In ideological forums "partisanship" always, he believed, takes precedence over objectivity. Indeed, he wrote that ideologues "scorn objectivity" when it stands in the way of their political agenda [Harris 1968 p. 221].

Whatever one might think of the notion, promulgated by the ISR, that ideas are "decisive historical forces in their own right" [Worster p. 54] the ISR offered a compelling critique of modernism and its dependence on technology and technocrats and bureaucrats and its meaning for individual freedom. Environmental historian Donald Worster, provides a neat summary of ISR doctrine:

accepting the authority of engineers scientists, economists and bureaucrats along with the power of capital, the common people become a herd - "docile masses governed by clocks" More of their needs are attended to by others, even their leisure is organized for them. Someone decides what they should want, what will keep them amused and uncomplaining, and what they must accept as reality. Instead of maturing into autonomous, rational individuals capable of deciding ultimate issues..they instead become lifelong wards of the corporation and the state..*they have absorbed and internalized the ruling ideas, so completely have they lost the capacity for critical thought.*..The private interior is invaded by hucksters and planners. Material life flourishes, and for the manipulated mass man that seems to be enough: an iron cage with all the amenities will do nicely in the absence of other possibilities. Even though the individual disappears before the apparatus which he serves, that apparatus provides for him as never before [Worster p. 58, quotes is of Horkheimer, emphasis added].

The problem with critical theory is that it offers only prescriptions for changing the way we think.

On the other hand.....

Wittfogel's theory is an example of what Robert Carneiro has called "voluntaristic" theories

of the rise of the State¹². Such theories emerge out of the "social contract theory" in the thought of Hobbes and Rousseau. According to these theories people voluntarily give up their sovereignty to a higher power out of recognition of the fact that, as individuals or small villages, they are unable to provide certain essential goods for themselves, most notably protection and irrigation water.

In *Leviathan*, Hobbes rhetorically wonders why humans cannot seem to live "sociably one with another" like Ants and Bees. Hobbes give several reasons why peaceful cooperation seems unattainable by humans. First, he argues that competition among men produces, "envy and hatred." Second, where among Bees and Ants "the common good differeth not from the private," men gain joy only by being "eminent," that is by raising himself above others through the exhaustive pursuit of his self-interest in the marketplace. In politics such men use words to "make evil good and good evil" to make others discontent and to promote civil war. Lastly, Hobbes emphasizes that while Ants and Bees are communal by instinct, any agreement made by men is "artificial." What is needed to keep any human "agreement constant and lasting," in the face of human self-interest, is a "common power, to keep them in awe and to direct their actions to the common benefit" [Hobbes, *Leviathan* p. 150-151]:

The only way to erect such a common power, as may be able to defend them from invasion of foreigners and the injuries of one another, and thereby to secure them in such sort as that, by their own industry, and by the fruits of the earth, they may nourish themselves and live contentedly; is to confer all their power and strength upon one man, or upon one assembly of men, that may reduce all their wills, by plurality of voices, unto one will [Hobbes, *Leviathan* p. 151]

In the absence of this centralized power humanity will live in chaos in a "war of everyone against everyone" [Hobbes *Leviathan* p. 146].

In Wittfogel's scheme the benefits of irrigation water in the arid and semiarid river valleys of the world induced men to rationally aggregate into larger political units we call States and handing over the power to control water to "one man, or an assembly of men" to be administered to their "common benefit." But Wittfogel's theory has not done well when confronted with empirical scrutiny. In at least three cases, Mexico, Mesopotamia and China the State level of political organization had been reached before the advent of large-scale irrigation [Carneiro p. 734, Adams p. 602]. It is very important to note two things, however. First, the evidence is far from conclusive.. Robert Adams, the challenger of the Wittfogel hypothesis, admits his evidence is "still inadequate" and some very cogent objections to his assertions have been raised [Adams p. 603, Saunders et al 1979 p. 366]¹³. Second, whatever the cause and effect pattern, it is clear that governments of the

¹²These fall into the category : functionalist or integrationist mentioned earlier.

¹³ Sanders et al find Adam's study to be "incomprehensible." One the one hand he claims he claims that the water works of Bronze Age Sumeria did not reach the standard of large-scale hydraulic agriculture. On the other he claims the socio-political system had not evolved to the level of despotism. Sanders et al then wonder what he expected to find as neither variable fit into Wittfogel's model. If anything the Sumerian data confirm Wittfogel's model [Sanders et al p. 366]. Sander's et al are convinced that the Willfogel model fits the data well when the basic theory is not "misunderstood" and appropriate research methods are used [Ibid p. 365-66].

"oriental despotic type remain closely associated with maximum hydraulic dependency" [Harris 1968 p. 687]. There is a quite evident pattern showing the decay of dynastic power when problems developed with irrigation systems. Thus, even though states may have emerged independently of large-scale irrigation, *the factual record indicates that despotic states cannot be sustained without it.*

Robert Carneiro avows that the State emerged not out of rational, voluntary actions of individuals, but out of coercion through the agency of war. Independent individuals and communities were brought under the control of a central state by conquest. But, Carneiro warns, that while warfare may be a necessary condition for state formation it is not sufficient. Where one finds a state one finds warfare, but it does not follow that wherever there is war that states will emerge, there are other factors involved.

The key factor in determining whether a State will emerge from warfare is ecological. If there is "environmental circumscription" of agricultural land warfare will produce a State. If land is "extensive and unlimited" neither intensive agriculture or a State will emerge [Carneiro p. 735].

In the Amazon rainforest thousands of groups practice swidden agriculture on an extensive basis. But because the population is sparse and the villages quite distant from each other (10-15 miles) "subsistence pressure on the land was slight"[p. 735]. Warfare among these villages was frequent, but it was directed toward the stealing of women, revenge for the stealing of women or the settlement of personal gripes. Defeated groups were not exterminated, nor were people driven from the land, and no tribute was exacted. Given the ecological conditions of the rainforest, with land so plentiful no group that could vanish into a vast rainforest could be subjugated. Indeed, this is what vanquished groups often did; they moved away not to avoid paying tribute, but to avoid being attacked again. Thus, rather than produce the dense population agglomerations characteristic of States, rainforest warfare dispersed the population extensively into a large number of *autonomous* groups [Carneiro p. 735]. Things changed, however, when "the major incentive for war changed from a desire for revenge to a need to acquire land" [p. 735].

Contrast the vast Amazon rainforest with the 78 narrow valleys of the Peruvian coast that ultimately were welded together into the Inca Empire. Each of these valleys is "backed by mountains, fronted by the sea, and flanked on either side by desert as dry as any in the world" [p. 735]. Carneiro speculates that the number of villages multiplied over time, as population grew by a process of splintering. New groups simply moved to another location using exactly the same technology used in all other locations. At some point, however, all the arable land in the valley was being farmed. From then on population growth required intensification of agriculture including the use of terracing and irrigation to bring previously sterile land into production. As population grew it was inevitable that villages were fighting over now scarce agricultural land. Unfortunately, unlike the Amazonians who could fold into the forest and find new land, when a Peruvian village lost a war the prospects were "grim;" they had nowhere to go. The usual result was political subjugation and the payment of tribute to the victor. The defeated village now had to work harder or eat less; sometimes it did both.

The group successful at warfare became a "Chieftdom" which then became a rival to other Chieftdoms. As one Chieftdom absorbed others the centralization of power grew until each valley was controlled by one chief and then all the valleys controlled by one "super chief" the Inca [p. 736].

Once the political integration was accomplished by coercion, the new state could administer what was previously an assortment of autonomous villages as one unit, or as Hobbes would put it, force them to suspend their "envy and hatred" and work together for the "common benefit" and to

work harder.

As we noted earlier one way to deal with scarcity is to produce more on the land one has. Another option is to take the land from others by force - macroparasitism. Carneiro holds that people seem to prefer conducting warfare to get other's land to intensifying production to get "fullest possible use of their own;" i.e. they prefer war to working harder. Once subjugated, however, they were forced to work harder to pay taxes which in turn supported the ruler, his warriors and other members of his retinue such as priests, flunkies, craftspeople, and people born to high to work producing food. Part of the new work load was surely work on massive irrigation systems.

Exit v Voice; but what if you have neither?

There are two ways people can realize their objections to their lot. They can voice their objections or they can leave. Despots generally do not appreciate dissent and have the means to suppress it. So why not exit? Despite the rigid control established by the Communists hundreds of thousands of people escaped to the West. The example of Cubans and Haitians escaping to the US is also instructive. Certainly people in Mesopotamia and China valued their freedom no less, why did they not escape? There are two theories, or I should say one theory and one interesting speculation.

William McNeill speculates that the peasantry did not have the energy either to rebel or leave because of microparasitism. People in hydraulic systems were infected with a parasite causing a syndrome called schistosomiasis. The parasite is transmitted to humans from snails that prosper in irrigated fields. McNeill claims that Schistosomiasis produced a

"debilitated peasantry handicapped both for sustained work in the fields and digging irrigation channels, and for the no less muscularly demanding tasks of resisting military attack or throwing off alien political domination and economic exploitation." [pp 39-40].

The symbiotic relationship between micro and macro parasitism may have proved insurmountable. By 500 BC irrigation farming was over 3000 years old and surely there was sufficient communication among Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Punjab to permit "homogeneity" in the distribution of parasitic organisms. [McNeill PP p.40]. There is little doubt that the hot and humid climates of the Ganges River Valley provided a rich array of debilitating parasites and Malaria, Cholera, and Dengue Fever to boot. The micro and macro parasitic burdens carried by the Indian peasantry was also very heavy indeed. Add to parasitic infestation and debilitating disease the chronic malnutrition caused by macroparasitism suffered by these populations and one has a population barely capable of the day to day chores of life with little energy left for either exit or voice. Little wonder they were drawn to the miserific transcendental philosophies of Buddha [McNeill. p.84].

The second theory, originally put forward by Marxist anthropologist Gordon Childe, argues that for people to be free to exit there must be somewhere better to go. As Childe put it "young men cannot escape the restraint of their elders by founding fresh villages when all beyond the oasis is waterless desert" [quoted in Harris 1968 p. 682]. The Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, Yellow and Indus River valleys recall were surrounded by very inhospitable, treeless, arid environments inhabited by "wildmen." Unlike Cubans, Haitians and East Germans, the overburdened river valley peasants really had nowhere better to go. Of course disease and ecological impaction are not mutually

exclusive. In the case of China, aridity and disease may actually have been complementary sources of impaction. The areas south of the Yellow river along the Yangtze was actually more propitious for agriculture than that of the Yellow River Valley itself. The climate was milder (about the difference between New England and Florida) permitting longer growing seasons and rainfall more regular removing the threat of drought. More important compared to the Yellow, which frequently changed course, the Yangtze was tame. However, the warmer climate in the South allowed a much broader range of parasites to prosper. Migrants to the south from the north faced a "steep disease gradient." [McNeill, 1976 p. 76]. It is impossible to know the exact nature of the diseases that afflicted people then, but schistosomiasis, malaria and dengue fever remain, to this day, significant problems in the south of China.

Loria's Law: voluntary and involuntary servitude in the U.S.

Alcide Loria was an Italian, Marxist economist who studied the impact of the availability of free land on the willingness of people to sell their labor for wages. Stated as Loria's Law he asserted that people who have alternatives to wage labor, for example the opportunity to set up an independent farm or some other access to the means of producing a livelihood, will not become "proletarians." Frederick Jackson Turner, the American historian who glorified the impact of the frontier on American history was influenced by Loria. In Turner's mind the existence of the frontier was tantamount to a tonic that produced the love of freedom and democracy in the American character and also provided the means to achieve it. It was the rigors and the independence of the frontier that shaped the American character. The frontier also provided a safety valve that relieved the pressures of social conflict such as those that built up in Europe and occasionally exploded in labor troubles. In the United States disgruntled individuals sought the solace and self-sufficiency of the frontier rather than labor and other types of political organizations such as the Anarchist movements that plagued Europe.

Ironically, it was the ample opportunity to establish oneself independently on the frontier that propelled the early colonial settlements in Virginia toward the enslavement of Africans. The first workers imported into Virginia, including many Africans, were indentured servants. Indentured servants were obliged to work for a planter for a specified period to pay back the cost of passage from England. In too many cases the lure of the open frontier led to the vanishing of these servants long before their terms expired. The planters tried to enslave the aboriginal population, but those who did not run into the woods and disappear simply died. As a last resort the planters had to begin importing Africans within the boundaries of the institution of slavery. As slaves the Africans did not have the nominal freedom accorded to indentured servants so it was more difficult for them to run away. Over the years many Africans did escape to establish communities in the woods, often intermingling with native Americans. These people were called "maroons" and were a constant thorn in the side of the planters. Indeed, a significant number of people classified as "black" or "native American" in the U.S. system of race classification have native American ancestry and African ancestry.

The Grapes of Wrath - Steinbeck's Agrarian Utopia

In the Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck paints a vivid portrait of the exploitation of migrant farm workers, by the land owners of California's Imperial Valley. Steinbeck's analysis of the basis

of this exploitation is, however, fundamentally deficient because he failed to comprehend the true nature of California's hydraulic society. Steinbeck appreciated the bounty that irrigation produced in California, but he did not understand how hydraulic agriculture produced political oligarchy. Steinbeck's analysis cast concentrated land ownership as the villain and, in most cases, such an assertion is correct e.g., Guatemala. But in a hydraulic society despotism is produced by control of the water not the land. The Joads, Steinbeck's "Oakie" migrant family became "members of a permanent underclass of stoop and pick laborers, an underclass that had access neither to the land nor the water needed to make it flourish....there was no simple democratic alternative to this undemocratic outcome, not so long as the West wanted or needed a hydraulic system...Some form of power elite, whether possessing capital, or expertise, or both would be required to carry out that ambition [Worster 1992 p. 31].

Marx's "sin against science"

Marx and Engels understood the relationship between control over water and the hydraulic despotism of the far east. Marx wrote:

There have been in Asia, generally, from immemorial times, but three departments of government: that of Finance, or the plunder of the interior; that of war, or the plunder of the exterior; and finally, the department of public works. In Egypt and India, Mesopotamia, Persia, etc. advantage is taken of a high level¹⁴ for feeding irrigation canals. This prime necessity of an economical and common use of water...necessitated, in the Orient, where civilization was too low and territorial extent too vast to call into life voluntary associations, the interference of the centralizing powers of Government [quoted in Harris 1978 p. 240]

But, Marx and Engels found the whole question of the Asiatic Mode production so threatening to their political program that they chose to ignore it. In their prominent writings, Marx and Engels depicted the first exploitation as that of the ownership of people by the first ruling-class slave owners rather than which occurred when bureaucrats dominated water-dependent peasants.

Just exactly what Marx and Engels mean by the Asiatic mode is sometimes not clear. For Marx the Asiatic mode was the first stage of human social development. It was followed by the ancient (slavery -Greece Rome), feudal then capitalism. Marx, however, characterized the Asiatic mode as agriculture carried out on communally owned land. The Asiatic mode also had handicraft production and stock raising. While this characterized Asia it was not certainly the first stage of social life. Engels, borrowing from Morgan's study of the Iroquois, defines a series of stages that includes what we call gathering and hunting - he called it savagery.

In *Origin of the Family*.. Engels divides history into a series of stages. Beginning in basic savagery where man was little more than an animal. In Engels' mind it was the production, rather than the gathering of food that separated man from animals. Man emerged out of basic savagery into middle-savagery when he learned to control fire and to fish. Indeed, Engels considered the mastery of fire as the greatest human invention ever, "a gigantic and liberating revolution":

¹⁴ By this he means the "high level" of the river relative to the land to be irrigated so the water could flow by gravity.

all past history can be characterized as the history of the epoch from the practical discovery of the transformation of mechanical motion into heat [i.e. fire] up to that of the transformation of heat into mechanical motion [quoted in Bober p. 11].

High savagery is marked by the bow and arrow. The three stages of barbarism are marked by the invention of pottery, agriculture, and iron. With the possible exception of the potato, Engels claims, iron by virtue of providing men with good tools, was the most important of all raw products to play a revolutionary role in history [quoted in Bober p. 48].

Through all of these stages men lived in communal harmony, that is without macroparasites. It was not until the ancient mode emerged, as manifest Athenian Greece and Rome that macroparasitism emerged. Engels' nevertheless considered this era to have been progressive, he wrote:

Without slavery, no Greek state; no Greek art and science; without slavery, no Roman Empire...no modern Europe...no modern socialism [quoted in Bober p. 50].

The Asiatic mode of production and the corresponding despotism was problematic; it did not seem to "come unstuck" and evolve into a higher social form. Despotisms in India and China had existed for thousands of years and showed no signs of changing, that is, moving in a progressive direction. In Marx's eyes, like one of Newton's inert particles of matter, these societies lacked the intrinsic vitality to produce change; they would not budge unless moved by an external force. And move they must. When Marx addressed the issue of the Asiatic Mode he used pre-colonial India as the prototype. India consisted of a multitude of small villages suffering under the macroparasitism of a totalitarian state. The villages, Marx believed, were independent communities that were virtually self-sufficient. The reliance on internal handicrafts production meant there was no dependence on commerce with urban centers and no commodity production (production of goods for sale outside the village). Socially these communities were internally regulated by the caste system. There was no feudal or capitalist class between the producers and the state, thereby no basis for struggle, indeed the villages "took no interest whatsoever in the affairs of state." [Howard & King 239]. The villages simply paid their tribute and went on with their daily life.

In the Communist Manifesto Marx and Engels assert that:

"[t]he history of all past society has consisted in the development of class antagonisms, antagonisms that assumed different forms at different epochs.

But, whatever form class struggles may have taken, one fact is common to all ages, *viz* the exploitation of one part of society by the other [Harris 1979 p. 30].

Thus, Marx can write that since India has no class antagonisms, "Indian society has no history at all, at least no known history. What we call its history, is but a history of successive intruders who founded their empires on the passive basis of that unresisting and unchanging society." India has no classes therefore no class antagonism and therefore no history. The contradiction is that India did have "exploitation of one group by another" but given its peculiar village structure there would be no struggle and no change. Marx, saw the vital force to liberate Asia to be the penetration of India and Asia by western imperialists, with all its catastrophic consequences, as the only way that this region could be brought into the modern world [King &

Howard 243]. To be free the Indian people, the traditional society of India had to be destroyed out of “historical necessity.” For Marx, however, the giving over of Asia to the imperialists was not a great loss:

We must not forget that these idyllic village communities, inoffensive as they may appear, had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism... We must not forget that these little communities were contaminated by distinctions of caste and slavery, that they subjugated man to external circumstances, that they transformed a self-developing social state into a never changing natural destiny, *and thus brought about a brutalizing worship of nature, exhibiting its degradation in the fact that man, the sovereign of nature, fell down on his knees in adoration of Hanuman, the monkey and Sabbala, the Cow* [Howard and King 242 emphasis added].

Of course, to the western mind the Indian caste system was an abomination, but very few Indians would have agreed. While the caste system limited social mobility, it also guaranteed a livelihood.. Indians viewed the system as protecting their economic security by granting the caste a monopoly on certain occupations.

In Volume III of *Das Kapital*, Marx deplores the resistance, in India, to British commerce, of the "mode of production..formed by the unity of small-scale agriculture and home industry..in village communities built upon the common ownership of land." But British power could not be resisted. These communities were torn apart, their spinning and weaving industries destroyed. This is all to the good, however, because "mankind [cannot] fulfill its destiny without a fundamental revolution in the social state of Asia." Asia must be brought into the fold of the bourgeoisie so it may then evolve into socialism [Howard and King 243]. Marx then comments that disintegration in India goes on only "gradually" and "still more slowly" in China, and in Russia not at all [Capital III 333-34].

Paul Samuelson once categorized Marx as a minor Post- Ricardian. I would like to argue that Marx was actually a major pre-Schumpeterian. Schumpeter made the argument that capitalist technology advanced through waves of “creative destruction.” Every new technology started a new business that in turn destroyed others. For example, the automobile made blacksmiths, stables, buggy whips, wagons and many other goods and service obsolete. Marx viewed history the same way. He called the destruction of inefficient social formations “historically necessary.”

Marx was irritated by the reluctance of India, which seemed to be trapped in the Asiatic Mode, to advance to the next stage and then on to socialism. He saw as progressive what he called the "swinish" behavior of British Imperialists in India. By destroying India's communal institutions and establishing private property the British managed to complete "the only social revolution ever heard of in Asia" [quoted in Wittfogel p. 570].

Marx and Engels, as they were proposing a state controlled Utopia, were quite naturally reluctant to recognize the state controlled exploitation of the masses in Asia:

Obviously the concept of oriental despotism contained elements that paralyzed Marx's search for the truth. As a member of a group that intended to establish a total managerial and dictatorial state...Marx could scarcely help recognizing some disturbing similarities between oriental despotism and the state of his program [Karl Wittfogel quoted in Harris 1980 p. 163].

Karl Wittfogel published his paper on Oriental Despotisms in 1926 (in a Marxist Journal) it was not well received by Stalinists because it clashed with official dogma. The despotism in the Asian countries was so complete as to rule out any chance of class struggle. If the Asiatic Mode would not evolve into feudalism then there could be no capitalism and therefore no communism in these nations.

Do humans need to be Free?

While humans may not have idealized it at the time, all of human prehistory was lived under conditions of total freedom. Humanity spent most of prehistory living in egalitarian societies where no institutions of centralized domination existed. But, since historical times humanity has lived in stratified societies in many cases structured into castes which allowed no vertical social mobility whatsoever and with virtually no freedom. Formal “status” positions replaced “familial and solidarity type institutions and equality was replaced by domination. While such domination was most visibly manifest in differential access to “nonutilitarian” luxury items and titles, the domination was essentially based on inequities of access to the “goods that are basic to the energetics of the ecological system, in most pre-industrial societies meaning access to agricultural land” [Sanders et al p. 298-99]. All pre-industrial societies have “at the base of the [social] pyramid a large and socioeconomically deprived class of food producers, who are terminologically referred to as peasants. Peasants are the host of macroparasites who either extract their meager surplus with taxes, if the peasant owns the land, or in the form of rents if he does not. Given that it came at such a high cost, the emergence of stratification and domination warrants an explanation. First, what are the forces that produce stratification in the first place? Does stratification emerge naturally or was it imposed? Did peasants cede power to elites in exchange for some service? Or did elites seize power with violence? If the latter, then under what conditions do dominated groups come to share interpretations of the world that legitimize the existing stratified social order? For example, it is often the case that elites performed many religious or ritual services which they and the people believed were essential to the survival of all. For example, the Mayan nobility regularly shed their blood in rituals intended to sustain the world. Thus, perhaps as Godelier claims “classes could only have grown up in classless societies legitimately - as an exchange of services:

“To my way of thinking, *the monopoly of the means of reproduction of the universe and life* must have preceded the monopoly of the visible means of production i.e. those means which everyone could and had to produce in order to reproduce, given their relative simplicity. In the balance, those services rendered by the dominant group appeared to be all the more fundamental inasmuch as they touched on the invisible part of the world (invisible realities and forces”); the more material and visible the tasks performed by the dominated groups, the more their services were regarded as trivial [P. 747, emphasis added].

Godlier’s position is one that is followed by those who explicitly or implicitly imagine social “evolution” as progressive. While the overall improvement in well-being may not be shared equally, it is presumed that all do gain something. In short, even those at the base of the social pyramid are *voluntarily* willing to accept what Sanders et al call “ a certain amount of negative reciprocity”[Sanders et al, 1979 p. 361] because they perceive it as being somehow in their interests.

Just exactly how stratification and the centralized power of an elite dominated State came

to replace the egalitarian structure of most human societies¹⁵ is a matter of great controversy. How one comprehends this issue would certainly shape one's current political perspective. What would you guess would be the perspective on the centralized State of members of the militia movement or of green anarchists or of libertarians? In the minds such individuals the rise of the state, "negative reciprocity," and the decline of freedom go hand in hand. The change was costly in terms of economic benefits and in terms of personal political autonomy. People accepted the domination, not because they come to share the legitimating ideology of the elites, but because they have no options - in short the process is a *coercive* one [Saunders et al p. 361]. The latter view seems to be the dominant one in the more contemporary anthropological literature, its leading advocates are Robert Carnerio and Marvin Harris:

Under the tutelage of the State, human beings learned for the first time how to bow, grovel, kneel and kow-tow. In many ways the rise of the State was the descent of the world from freedom to slavery - [Marvin Harris, 1978].

Patterson's point is a valid one that shows good dialectical logic. One cannot define freedom without its opposite - slavery. Yet, while our prehistoric ancestors may never have idealized freedom, they surely experienced it as did Native Americans and as do some of the remaining stone age peoples in the world.¹⁶

Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose. From the song Me and Bobby McGee by Kris Kristoferson

Freedom, like love and beauty, is one of those values better experienced than defined. [Orlando Patterson, 1991 p. 1]

The origins of western culture and its most cherished ideal, freedom, were founded..not upon a rock of human virtue but upon the degraded time full of man's vilest inhumanity to man - Orlando Patterson, 1991, p. 48

The meaning of freedom, at least to westerners, seems so self-evident as to make explicit definition unnecessary. Personal freedom, as commonly understood in the West, gives one the right to do as one pleases as far as that is consistent with the rights of others to do so. As a Supreme Court Justice one put it, A's right to swing his fist is limited by the proximity of B's chin. Thus, A is not coerced, his freedom of action not constrained by any more than is necessary to protect the rights of B. Thus, freedom has a positive and a negative aspect: lack of coercion and a free, if not totally unlimited domain of action. Such freedom is qualitatively different from "sovereign freedom" which is "simply the power to do as one pleases" [Patterson 1991 p. 3]. Such freedom, as it would include the right, the extreme, to enslave another, is considered by western philosophers to be

¹⁵Sometimes known as "bands and tribes" some of these groups these were not entirely egalitarian. Women were in many cases subject to male domination to varying degrees and in some cases some males had unequal access to females.

¹⁶As we shall see later on Karl Marx would have violently disagreed with this assertion.

“illogical and immoral” but, “it is a socio-historical fact that humans have always sought to do just that, and have frequently succeeded in doing so [Patterson 1991 p. 4].

Thirdly, civic freedom is the right of adults to participate in the governing of the polity [Patterson 1992 p. 4]. In the Athenian “Democracy” Greek women and slaves were not free in this respect. In Republican Rome only male aristocrats had this privilege. In centralized states run by hereditary elites, this right is denied everyone.

Freedom is an instituted norm or value, part of the social superstructure. In the western democracies, the norm is so thoroughly inculcated it is taken to be an axiom. But, as Patterson reminds us:

..there is nothing at all self-evident in the idea or, more properly, the high esteem in which we in the west hold freedom. For most of human history, and for nearly all of the non-Western world prior to Western contact, freedom was, and for many, still remains, anything but an obvious or desirable goal. Other values and ideals were and are of far greater importance to them - values such as the pursuit of glory, honor, and power for one’s family and clan, nationalism and imperial grandeur, militarism and valor in warfare, filial piety, the harmony between heaven and earth, the spreading of the “true faith,” nirvana, hedonism, altruism, justice, equality, material progress - the list is endless. But, almost never, outside the context of western culture and its influence, has it included freedom [Patterson 1991 p. x]

When first confronted with the idea of “freedom” the Japanese and Chinese could find no words in their vocabulary to represent it. The closest they could come were words that translated as “licentiousness” or “license” both of which have pejorative connotations. In the consciousness of these cultures, the freedom to do as one pleased could lead to no good [Patterson 1991 p. x]. In China and Japan, it is expected that children will obey their parents and parents respect their leaders and employers and the leaders respect their ancestors. Obedience, not freedom, is what is valued.

The Navajo have a saying, that a person who is behaving badly is “acting as if he had no relatives.” The implication is that one’s personal behavior should be modeled not on one’s own personal impulses and desires but on the expectations and needs of the group. What one wants as an individual simply does not matter. This is not to suggest that there is a constant war of wills going on between individuals and the restrictive social rules to which they must adhere. To the contrary, people in such groups never think of themselves as individuals; it is not part of their consciousness. And if they should imagine themselves as “free,” the feeling evoked is not one of pleasure, but rather one of absolute terror. To understand this, let us explore how slavery has promoted and inculcated the notion of group identity and solidarity.

Historian Orlando Patterson in his 1991 book on slavery contends that neither the idea or experience of freedom existed before the institution of slavery. Freedom, he contends:

was generated from the experience of slavery. People came to value freedom, to construct it as a powerful shared vision of life, as a result of their experience of, and response to, slavery, or its recombinant form, serfdom, in their roles as masters, slaves, and non slaves.[Orlando Patterson 1991].

Slaves were the first to feel the value of freedom as a “desperate yearning” to “negate what, for him or her, and non-slaves, was a particularly inhuman condition.”

Slavery is the permanent, violent, and personal domination of natively alienated and generally dishonored persons [Patterson 1991 p.9]. It is, first, a form of personal domination. One individual is under the direct power of another or his agent... Second, the slave is always an excommunicated person. He, more often, she does not belong to the legitimate social or moral community; he has no independent social existence; he exists only through, and for, the master; he is, in other words, natively alienated...Third, the slave is in a perpetual condition of dishonor. What is more, the master, and... his group parasitically gain honor in degrading the slave.

In all societies the three constitutive features of the slave condition add up to a generalized conception of slavery as a state of social death [Patterson 1991 p. 10].

It has been conventional to assume that since slaves were of no economic use to traditional people, slaves were not kept, but this is not entirely true. A small, but significant number of traditional peoples did keep small numbers of slaves [Patterson 1991 p. 12].

The experience of freedom among traditional peoples

Traditional people live within a tightly woven and complex web of rights and obligations instituted around the reality of kinship. An individual's place in the kinship tapestry is what secures for him/her access to resources, protection from aggression, and a spouse. The individual is so completely identified with the group the idea of personal freedom surely never occurs. This is, of course, difficult for modern, individualistic westerners to understand. But, to the traditional person, to be isolated from the group is to be “socially dead;” an “outsider”...”without any rights, even the right to live,” and whose “very humanness” was doubtful [Patterson 1991 p. 12, 25]. For a traditional person, the wish to experience personal freedom is tantamount to a death-wish. Such a wish would in effect be to sever oneself from “a wide network of affiliation of persons on whom one can depend” to avenge injustices, borrow wealth, offer solace, or arranging for a spouse. As the group was seen as “vital to their lives..., everyone lived subordinated to the collective needs of his or her lineage.”[Patterson 1991 p. 24]. The importance of group identity and the subordination of one's “self” to the group can be seen in the treatment of slaves by traditional people.

In traditional societies, slaves were war captives who became the “enemy within” the tribe. They were treated well physically, but were held in contempt and were the object of the “insults and abuse” of non-slaves [Patterson 1991 p. 14]. Slaves were required to show respect for their masters and so enhanced the latter's the honor, dignity and status. After some period of time, usually counted by the number of beads on the slave's necklace, the slave went through an elaborate ritual, was sacrificed and then eaten. The slave served another more important function, however. As the representative of the despised “other” the slave engendered a sense of group identity and communal solidarity [Patterson 1991 p. 15]. The slave became symbolic of what happens to a person who is severed from their group; of the fate of the independent, free person and thus provided a powerful integrative force for the group.

Personal freedom, as understood in the West, was dysfunctional in traditional societies. The slave, of course, wanted to be “free” from his oppressors. But, what the slave really wanted was to be socially “born again,” not to be free and independent but to be an “insider” once more, “to belong

to a kin group which was the fundamental social,..political and ritual protective unit.”[Patterson 1991 p. 23]. He wanted to be “bonded” to a social unit with all the restrictions that implied. The slave understood, as did the non-slave, that personal freedom, to be an autonomous individual, “amounted to social suicide, and, very likely, physical death [Patterson 1991 p. 23]. *The condition of belonging, of participating, of being protected by the community, constituted the ideal non-slave condition...in nearly all traditional societies*” [Patterson 1991 p. 23]. Two cases where people are not so fortunate as to belong, however encumbered with responsibility to others, so the true meaning of social death.

Traditional peoples never articulated a conception of civic freedom for two essential reasons. First, there was a lack of intellectual self-consciousness. Second, there were no organized polities i.e. a politically centralized community in which to participate. Thus, while sensing the importance of belonging to the community there was no formal community structure. The concept of freedom in traditional societies was a “historical dead end;” its full realization, its “reinvention as a social value” were, and articulation would have to await the development of more complex agricultural societies [Patterson 1991, p. 18-19].

If freedom was socially constructed out of slavery, and if slavery was a “nearly universal institution, then why did not freedom emerge everywhere? According to Patterson, the resistance to the promotion of freedom was as natural to most societies as was the resistance to the concentration of power for most of the human history lived in traditional societies [Patterson 1991 p. 20]. It is the ancient west that proved the exception to the rule and that is what needs to be explained.

The central problem of the slave holder is how to elicit services from the slave, that is the problem of incentive or motivation. Patterson contends that the eventuality of manumission was the such an incentive. But manumission meant turning a “socially dead” person, an “other” in to the community that had no place for them. In these societies “it was just as preposterous that a slave could be made free as that, for example, a woman could be declared a man; it would have brought about a disturbance of nature”[Patterson 1991 p. 31]. The emergence of the idea of “freedom” was the consequence of the solution to this problem.

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