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RENEWING THE LEGACY: SOLIDARITY, NATURE, AND ETHICS

A new world presents itself with the new millennium: time is obliterating the limitations of space and the boundaries of community. Globalization is spreading the commodity form to the most remote regions of the world; transnational organizations are dwarfing the nation-state; travel is becoming easier; religions are multiplying; intermarriage is on the rise; new communications and information technologies are rendering the world more transparent. But there is no need to be overly optimistic. Numerous parochial religious, ethnic, and political organizations are arrayed—as they always have been—against the assault on traditionalism. Understandable is their fear of the economic inequality generated by global capitalism, the challenge posed by individual conscience to the dictates of custom, the erosion of organic societies, and the disenchantment of the world. Their anger is real: it grows as these forces of reaction are pushed ever more on the defensive. Dealing with them intelligently—at home and abroad—depends upon renewing the Enlightenment heritage. This calls for refashioning its institutional message, recasting its technological inclinations in the face of a mounting environmental crisis, and defending its view of liberty amid the current explosion of fanaticism. Reconfiguring the Enlightenment to deal with the new context stands in accord with its critical spirit. Some brief summary remarks might therefore be useful in provoking further reflection on its understanding of solidarity, its scientific commitment, and its ethical promise.

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Enlightenment thinkers wished neither to abolish the state nor to bring about some utopian alternative. Seeking to constrain the institutional use of arbitrary power, they sought to protect the free exercise of subjectivity and promote the free pursuit of scientific knowledge. The state became the anchor for that enterprise; it was seen as the best institution for securing civil

liberties and for furthering social justice. That remains the case. Transnational organizations are, to be sure, required in order to contest emerging transnational economic structures. New ways of establishing and expressing the common interest and a more cosmopolitan outlook will also prove necessary not just in the United States or Europe but also in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Solidarity must surely be reconceived to meet new conditions. But this still does not justify simply dismissing the state or fantasizing about its future disappearance. Confronting an increasingly global society is impossible when indulging in a misplaced romantic nostalgia for the traditional, the organic, and the parochial.

The left must overcome its more naïve populist inclinations. This means looking beyond the polis, the town meeting, and even the workers' council.[1] Their partisans actually share much in common with the religious and traditional advocates of the organic community. Both seem blind to the dangers involved in dismissing "mechanical" notions of representative democracy with its mass parties, interest group pluralism, separation of powers, and checks and balances. Neither seems willing to confront practical questions of economic coordination, the disappearance of a homogenous citizenry or proletariat, and the implications of an increasingly complex division of labor. Rarely does either consider how local politics fosters patronage, provincialism, and corruption. Bureaucracy is despised for the routine and hierarchy it generates; the importance of an independent judiciary for the preservation of civil liberties is ignored, and little time is wasted on how to maintain acceptable investment or reproduce the conditions for participation in the modern world.

Much easier then to condemn the Enlightenment for "severing the organic links that bind humans to their social nature," maintain that all communities should be "left alone," and insist that freedom is not the insight into but rather "the rejection of necessity."[2] Arguments of this sort, of course, retreat from engaging the actual conflicts between real movements that continue to shape our world. They are instead content to rest on the belief that "the whole is false," and that the true pursuit of freedom requires an

1. See the debate that began with my article, "Red Dreams and the New Millennium: Remarks on Rosa Luxemburg," in *New Politics* Vol. 8, no. 3 (Summer, 2001), pgs.162–67, and that was carried on in Vol. 8. no. 4 (Winter, 2002), 127–62, Vol. 9, no. 1 (Summer, 2002), 200–35; and Vol. 9, no. 2 (Winter, 2003), 185–88.
2. Cf. Rajani Kannepalli Kanth, *Breaking with the Enlightenment: The Twilight of History and the Rediscovery of Utopia* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1997), 130 and *passim.*

anti-political politics. It is the same with even with more serious radicals who insist that socialism can be conceived only as a utopian "other" in which alienation has been abolished and a world of direct democracy has been achieved.

Such radicals look to Marx, but not the Marx of *The Communist Manifesto*, who lauded the bourgeoisie for bringing about greater economic and scientific progress in but three hundred years than all the ruling classes in all the preceding millennia taken together. They are inspired instead by the younger Marx who rejected the liberal "political" in the name of "human" emancipation." This Marx was uninterested in "iron laws," institutional constraints, or even the rudimentary organizational forms of class action. Works like "On the Jewish Question" (1843), *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844,* and *The German Ideology* (1845–46) clearly evidence a romantic streak that points beyond the Enlightenment. They call for the abolition of the state, the division of labor, and religion. By the same token, they envision the creation of a new man—or, better, the fulfillment of humanity's "species being"—inspired by a new sense of subjectivity, un-alienated, aware of his powers, who—without the intrusion of external material interests that might warp his judgment—will finally stop history from working behind the back of humanity and subdue what Hegel called "the cunning of reason." Anticipated here is not a revolution in which a new class introduces a new mode of production, a new political system, and a new ideological worldview, but rather an apocalyptic transformation so complete that alienation will be eliminated. The issue here is less whether such ideas crept into Marx's later work, than whether revolution can abolish every trace of oppression and solve every existential doubt. Such "anti-political" utopianism, indeed, has little to do with the Enlightenment; it reaches back instead to Thomas Muenzer over Novalis and the romantic idea of the apocalypse.[3]

Voltaire and his comrades were more skeptical and more realistic than the young Marx. They were interested less in the anthropological transformation of human nature than in institutional issues still salient today: separating church from state, fostering social reform, denouncing prejudice, decrying superstition, furthering civil liberties, and generally limiting the power of the church. Furthering such aims was possible during the Enlightenment only because the philosophes were willing not merely to build

3. Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Muenzer als Theologe der Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972 ed.); Georg Lukacs, "Zur romantischen Lebensphilosophie" in *Die Seele und die Formen* (Berlin: Luchterhand, 1971 ed.), 64ff.

public opinion outside governmental channels, but also to work through the monarchical or, when possible, constitutional state. This requirement was even more striking for imaginative state civil servants in nations like Germany, where no vibrant bourgeoisie existed; many of them were among the most intelligent supporters of 1776 and 1789. Their concern with expanding individual autonomy and constraining arbitrary power was paramount. That is why they no less than most philosophes championed the cosmopolitan *Rechtsstaat*, with its emphasis upon the liberal rule of law and the moral autonomy of the individual, rather than the traditional and provincial *Volksstaat.*

The radical left has never formulated an adequate substitute for the liberal republic in theory and it has certainly never offered any sustainable institutional alternative in practice. Some still speak about a "socialist democracy" or long for what is usually a romantic image of the Paris Commune and the workers' council. But the idea of a "socialist republic" generated by the Revolutions of 1848 was still to have been predicated on liberal principles rather than their abolition. With the failure of these revolutions, moreover, the great majority of the European working class came to believe that the liberal republic must serve as the precondition for socialism, and not the other way around. As for the Paris Commune, whose understanding of "revolutionary" justice was often as arbitrary as that of the "popular tribunals," which arose in France and Italy in the immediate aftermath of World War II, it had already become anachronistic by 1921 with the passing of "the heroic years" of the Russian Revolution.

Workers' councils and other "secondary associations," which might foster democratic participation, surely have a place in modern political life. But supplanting the state with them is simply not a feasible option. Tensions are unavoidable between the imperatives of bureaucracy and public demands for accountability, centralization and decentralization, representation and participation. They cannot be resolved—once and for all—as the radical followers of Rousseau and the young Marx would care to think. The concern with direct democracy stood at the fringes of Enlightenment politics for the same reason that the "workers' council" remained at the fringes of proletarian politics. Both perspectives believe in the repressed desire of everyone to participate all the time and neither provides a trace of what institutional arrangements should be implemented when "the masses" become exhausted and leave the barricades. The philosophes thought about politics in a different way: they generally understood government as

less an end unto itself than as a means for securing liberty and making society less miserable.

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Liberalism remains the focal point of the Enlightenment legacy. Its emphasis upon institutional accountability; its commitment to civil liberties, its belief in toleration, and its universal view of citizenship remain the cornerstones for dealing with the politics of reaction. Increasingly, however, it has become necessary to challenge the inequities of a capitalist system with which liberalism was entangled at birth. It thus becomes a matter of either freezing the Enlightenment, embracing its prejudices concerning the "watchman state" and "*laissez-faire*," or contesting certain of its claims in the light of new events. To put it another way: it is a matter of either preserving the original as a system of beliefs associated with the Enlightenment or employing the critical implications of its unfinished understanding of freedom.

This choice has become particularly pressing in the current political context. Insofar as the best of progressive movements actually sought to realize certain "unfinished" aims of the Enlightenment, which are connected with economic justice and social reform, the stage became set for an alliance between "classical liberals" willing to defend the "free market" and neoconservatives intent upon turning back the clock on the entire range of issues inherited from the 1960s. Many differences exist between these two camps. There is the matter of style and temperament. Classical liberals may, for example, endorse the free pursuit of knowledge while neoconservatives fear the erosion of religion. But the interests of these two groups have, since the middle of the 1970s, converged in attacking those concerned with altering the existing imbalance of economic power and expanding the possibilities of individual experience.

Elites flourish within the liberal state and they benefit from greater control over resources, better possibilities for coordination, and more access to governmental decision-makers. Too much emphasis is placed, however, on the connection between Enlightenment thinking and laissez-faire economics. This criticism has lost its salience. "Laissez-faire" never seems applicable when it comes to the military or the police, the federal reserve, state sponsored defense contracts for business, and "appropriate" forms of scientific research: it is only relevant when dealing with governmental "waste" and welfare programs To understand modern political conflicts in terms of old

economic categories is then to miss the boat. The real battle today is no longer between "laissez-faire" and state intervention but instead over which institutions, organizations, and policies deserve state support as against which do not. This creates the need for a perspective on democratic solidarity different than the existential form currently in fashion among dogmatic advocates of identity politics.

Many crucial cultural gains have been made since the decline of the Civil Rights and the Anti-War movements: racism, sexism, homophobia are no longer treated as they once were either legally or in everyday life. At the same time, however, the economic and political power of working people has radically declined. The last decades have witnessed a devastating rollback of redistributive policies and an equally devastating assault on the ideology of the welfare state: one percent of the American population now garners more after-tax dollars than the lowest forty percent, for example, and it has become common to hear that poor people don't pay enough in taxes because they don't work hard enough. One of the reasons for the success of these attacks on the welfare state, though it is perhaps less important than the ferocity with which newly allied "classical liberals" and neoconservatives went on the attack, is the rise of doctrinaire forms of identity politics and their ideological justifications for fragmentation that have generally been accepted by the left in the name of promoting "difference."

Renewing the Enlightenment will assuredly involve radicals in looking beyond the "simple souls" of Rousseau or the proletariat of Marx. It will call for recognizing the legitimate claims of less traditional clienteles discriminated against under liberal regimes whose voices were not recognized by the populist and class politics of the past. The reforms achieved by the new social movements were real. It is absurd simply to suggest that they have been "absorbed" by an abstract "system" when, in fact, the cultural character of the "system" concerning the expression of difference has obviously been transformed. Different identity movements, indeed, have provided different possibilities for belonging and for expressing the particular interests of women, gays, the disabled, or people of color.

Support for a liberal constitutional state, especially when its welfare programs are under attack, does not deny the need to support diverse movements from below when the possibility exists for more radical reformist efforts. A flexible strategy of this sort only makes sense. Movements organized around rigid understandings of identity, however, have been blind to the striving of their trans-class interest groups for autonomy and also to the class divisions within their own organizations. This is all the more serious

since the power that capital exerts still depends upon the degree of ideological and organizational disunity among working people. So, if the political aim is to contest capital, categories and ways of thinking must be developed capable of identifying what is common to working people within each of the new social movements without privileging any movement in particular. Thus, it is important to consider the *class ideal*.[4]

This category has nothing to do with some preconstituted "revolutionary" subject or a vanguard organization whose interests are "objectively" identical with those of the proletariat. It also has nothing to do with attempts to squash cultural differences or movements that raise particular grievances and fight unique forms of social oppression, discrimination or exclusion. The class ideal recognizes the need for reciprocity both among citizens and among working people. It is profoundly informed by democratic universalism. But the class ideal speaks to tempering the whip of the market, which requires linking liberal universal principles with particular class interests. There should be no mistake: the class ideal cannot be imposed on working people from the outside. Nothing is more arrogant than stating from behind a desk that everyone should surrender their particularity and be unified under a "trans-class" or "color-blind" rubric. The class ideal gains life only insofar as concrete proposals emerge for furthering unity by those actually involved in the new social movements and progressive organizations of civil society.

Enlightenment thinkers embraced a form of pragmatic idealism. They understood politics as a learning process. Especially in the United States, however, the idealist element has been largely ignored when dealing with organizational responses to reform. Single-issue coalitions have certainly shown their usefulness and—especially in a bureaucratically fragmented nation, built on interest groups rather than political parties[5]— this kind of strategy cannot simply be discarded. In the wake of the American civil rights movement, the East European Revolutions of 1989, and the anti-imperialist struggles of the former colonized world, new coalitions—sometimes even with religious organizations—will need to be forged. Coalitions based on a mere convergence of material interests, however, fall apart once the issue is decided. Each partic-

4. Stephen Eric Bronner, *Socialism Unbound* 2nd Edition (Westview: Boulder, 2001), 164–67.
5. Stephen Eric Bronner, "Transforming the State: Reflections on the Structure of Capitalist Democracy" in *Imagining the Possible: Radical Politics for Conservative Times* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 145–60.

ipant is concerned only with its particular clientele and, thereby, becomes susceptible to what might be termed the moral economy of the separate deal.

But there is no reason why the left should find itself constantly reinventing the wheel with every new problem that arises. It should not simply accept the suspicions and distrust between groups, or ignore the need to *build* new forms of solidarity. These might build upon the Poor Peoples' Movement, more than a mechanical coalition of interests groups and less than a party, which was the last great American movement capable of pressuring government with respect to a general program. Its general aim—common in a class sense—would involve contesting the ways in which capitalism treats working people as little more than a "cost of production." Such is the concrete meaning of "reification" and fighting it requires a new *political* perspective on class informed by Enlightenment values with constraining the arbitrary exercise of—in this case —*economic* power. Thus, the class ideal projects the mixture of liberalism with socialism.

Renewing the Enlightenment requires more than a fashionable metaphysical emphasis on the "non-identity" between subject and object. It requires instead strengthening the radical legacy of liberal republicanism and reinventing socialism as an ongoing—if ultimately asymptotic—struggle against reification. The Enlightenment should not be debated as an abstract body of thought resting on supposedly inflexible philosophical assumptions. Its "unfinished" character, using the phrase of Jurgen Habermas, is actually little more than the "unfinished" struggle for those reforms associated with a cosmopolitan and democratic socialism. This project may not be philosophically dramatic but its concrete implications surely are.

The Enlightenment has always been—historically and politically—a force for securing liberty and fostering resistance against material oppression. These concerns reach back to the age of democratic revolution; they inspired the Revolutions of 1848, the First International, the socialist movement during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the best among the communist revolutionaries of 1917, no less than the mass of anti-communist revolutionaries in 1989. Liberty and resistance against arbitrary authority fueled the struggle for the abolition of slavery, for suffrage, and for the progressive policies undertaken by labor governments in the ill-fated, if remarkably progressive, republics of Europe during the 1920s. These same ideals influenced the New Deal and the Popular Front. They became manifest in the attempt to transform the civil rights into a "poor people's" movement and, even now, in the cosmopolitan sensibility of anti-war movements with their concern for international law and human rights.

Enlightenment ideals contested the practices of the class that they originally inspired. They fueled the critique of capitalist inequities and injustices. The terrible tale of capitalist development in the West is now being replayed in even more unspeakable forms in the previously colonized territories of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Retreating into traditionalism, however, will not help matters any more than relying on old notions of planning inherited from communist authoritarianism. Enlightenment thinking remains the best foundation for any genuinely progressive politics not simply in the West but in those states that suffered most at its hands.

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Solidarity with the outcast and the dissident, with those whose voices are denied, is the most radical product of Enlightenment politics. Its joy in experimentation and its emphasis on expanding the range of individual choices provided liberty with content. Reason in its two prime variants was employed to this critical end: scientific rationality contested traditional prejudices and religious claims to truth while speculative rationality crystallized the purposive ends that science might serve. Insisting upon the need for "absolute" foundations in order to avoid relativism and "chaos," or embracing relativism and chaos due to the lack of an absolute, has nothing to do with the Enlightenment: it cannot escape from the religious universe. Such thinking indeed ignores the practical element within knowledge.

Much has been written about the need for a "new science" no longer defined by instrumental rationality and incapable of reifying the world. But these new undertakings always seem to ignore the need for criteria of verification or falsification; science without such criteria is, however, no science at all. Contempt for "instrumental" scientific rationality, moreover, undermines the possibility of meaningful dialogue between the humanities and the sciences. And that is a matter of crucial importance: popular debates are now taking place on issues ranging from the eco-system to cloning, the assumptions of western medicine to the possibilities of acupuncture, using animals for experiments to state support for space travel.

This shows ethical progress, again perhaps not in the sense that people have become more "moral," but surely in the sense that more questions of everyday life have become open to moral debate. Science has not eroded ethics. The Frankfurt School misjudged the impact of science from the beginning. It is still the case that the science plays a crucial role in subverting religious authority, and fostering political equality by enabling each to judge the veracity of truth claims. There is also nothing exaggerated in the claim

that "the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century was perhaps the single greatest influence on the development of the idea that political resistance is a legitimate act."[6]

Critics of the Enlightenment may have correctly emphasized the price of progress, the costs of alienation and reification, and the dangers posed by technology and scientific expertise for nature and a democratic society. Even so, however, this does not justify romantic attempts to roll back technology. They conflate far too easily with ideological justifications for rolling back the interventionist state and progressive legislation for cleaning up the environment. Such a stance also pits the Enlightenment against environmentalism: technology, instrumental rationality, and progress are often seen as inimical to preserving the planet. Nevertheless, this is to misconstrue the problem.

Technology is crucial for dealing with the ecological devastation brought about by modernity. A redirection of technology will undoubtedly have to take place: but seeking to confront the decay of the environment without it is like using an umbrella to defend against a hurricane. Institutional action informed by instrumental rationality and guided by scientific specialists is unavoidable. Investigations are necessary into the ways government can influence ecologically sound production, provide subsidies or tax-benefits for particular industries, fund particular forms of knowledge creation, and make "risks" a matter of public debate. It is completely correct to note that: "neither controversial social issues nor cultural concerns can be settled simply by scientific fiat, particularly in a world where experts usually disagree and where science can be compromised by institutional sponsors. No laboratory can dictate what industrial practices are tolerable or what degree of industrialization is permissible. These questions transcend the crude categories of technical criteria and slide-rule measurements."[7]

Enlightenment thinking is not intrinsically committed to treating nature as an object for technical manipulation. But, if it were, the need would exist for a philosophical corrective. This would allow nature to be treated as a subject in its own right or, better, with pressing needs that underpin our own as a species. Revising narrow definitions of "evidence" will prove necessary to bring that about and it will prove necessary to revise existing standards of accountability for dealing with conditions in which human inter-

6. Diana M. Judd, "Questioning Authority: Sir Francis Bacon, Political Resistance, and the Birth of the Scientific Method" (PhD Dissertation: Rutgers University, 2003).
7. John Kurt Jacobsen, *Technical Fouls: Democratic Dilemmas and Technological Change* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2000), 160.

action with nature is becoming ever more specialized, bureaucratic, and complex. In theoretical terms, it may even be necessary to move a step further.

Ernst Bloch, for example, sought to counter an unreflective mechanical materialism—empiricism and positivism—by making reference to what he considered the repressed tradition of the "Aristotelian left" that reaches back over Schelling, Spinoza, and Leibniz to Giordano Bruno and then to Avicenna, Averroes, and Plotinus.[8] This philosophical tendency posits the existence of a "life-force" (*natura naturans*) beyond the stratum of nature (*natura naturata*) that vulgar materialists reduce to its constituent parts. With this vital and "living" notion of nature, which suggests that the whole is more than the sum of its empirical parts, the idea of an ecosystem takes on new meaning. Such a stance, in principle, is less a rejection than a logical outgrowth of Enlightenment thought. It is the same when considering cruelty to animals and other sentient beings.

To be sure: Descartes believed that animals had no souls and that they were mere machines ruled by necessity. Though LaMettrie and others satirized this belief, it must have soothed the conscience of many a scientist willing to torture animals in the name of progress or, worse, many an entrepreneur willing to mutilate and slaughter them by the millions not simply for food, but for the perfect scent, a fur coat, or a piece of ivory. Enlightenment pedagogy, in any event, rests on educating the sentiments, while its concern with constraining the exercise of arbitrary power is predicated on compassion for the weak and the mute. No beings are weaker and with less of a voice in resisting arbitrary power than animals: protecting them and their environment therefore, again, does not contradict Enlightenment ethics, but instead becomes its logical extension. Natural law was seen by many of the most important philosophes as linking humans and animals. Thus Alexander Pope could speak about a "vast chain of being," utilitarian could seek animal welfare legislation, Goethe could maintain that "each animal is an end unto itself," while Voltaire could write in his *Treatise on Toleration* (1763)":[9]

8. Ernst Bloch, *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 479.ff
9. Correctly, the editor of a fine anthology can note that "the ideas and values of the Enlightenment era altered the educated mind significantly, if not yet all of the public face. The general tenor of views . . . contributed to those early, if far from complete, practical advances—which is neither to ignore nor downplay the fact that many continued to treat other species as mere instruments of human purposes" in *Awe for the Tiger, Love for the Lamb: A Chronicle of Sensibility to Animals*, ed. Rod Preece (New York: Routledge, 2002), 125 and 123–76.

> It seems to me that those who have the audacity to believe animals no more than machines have renounced the light afforded by nature. There is a manifest contradiction in conceiving God to have given animals all the organs of sentience while maintaining that he did not give them sentience. It seems to me equally that they must never have observed animals if they cannot recognize their needs expressed in differing tones, their suffering, joy, fear, love, anger, and all their differing sentiments; it would be very strange if they could express so well what they cannot feel.

Animal rights is still seen by many as romantic and bizarre rather than a genuinely progressive ethical issue with political appeal. Even *The Economist* (February 15, 2003), a magazine not noted for identifying with the helpless, noted a new trend: in various parts of the United States, dogs and cats are being legally defined as "companions" rather than property; Germany now has a constitution that speaks of the right of animals to decent treatment and even more radically, in New Zealand, the Animal Welfare Act of 1999, treats great apes as "non-human hominids" and prevents experimentation on them unless the research will benefit the apes or, ultimately, seek to alleviate their suffering.

Reclaiming the Enlightenment calls for clarifying the aims of an educated sensibility in a disenchanted world. But this requires science. The assault upon its "instrumental" character or its "method" by self-styled radicals trained only in the humanities or social sciences is a self-defeating enterprise. Criticizing "bourgeois" science" is meaningful only with criteria for verification or falsification that are rigorous, demonstrable, and open to public scrutiny. Without such criteria, the critical enterprise turns into a caricature of itself: creationism becomes as "scientific" as evolution, astrology as instructive as astronomy, prayer as legitimate a way of dealing with disease as medicine, and the promise of Krishna to help the righteous a way of justifying the explosion of a nuclear device by India.[10] Striking is how the emphasis on "local knowledge"—a stance in which all science is seen as ethno-science with standards rooted in a particular culture[11] —withdraws objectivity, turns the abdication of judgment into a principle of judgment,

10. Meera Nanda, "Breaking the Spell of Dharma: A Case for Indian Enlightenment," in *Breaking the Spell of Dharma and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Three Essays Press, 2002), 118.
11. Note the critique of this position with an eye on its unfortunate consequences for the economically underdeveloped world by Meera Nanda, *Prophets Facing Backward: Postmodern Critiques of Science and Hindu nationalism in India* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003).

and recalls what was once a right-wing preoccupation with "Jewish physics," "Italian mathematics," and the like.

Forgotten is that those who do physics or biology or mathematics all do it the same way or, better, allow for open scrutiny of their own way of doing it. The validity of science does not rest on its ability to secure an "absolute" philosophical grounding, but rather on its universality and its salience in dealing with practical problems. There is a difference between the immanent method of science and the external context in which it was forged. The sociology of science is a completely legitimate endeavor. It only makes sense to consider, for example, how an emerging capitalist production process with imperialistic aspirations provided the external context in which modern science arose. But it is illegitimate to reduce science to that context or judge its immanent workings from the standpoint of what externally inspired its development.[12]

Too much time has already been wasted on "deconstructing" the scientific method for what Foucault termed its "dogmatic approach" and its supposedly hermetic character. That is the case not simply because the "scientific revolution" was directed against a scholastic view of nature that constrained the possibilities of inquiry but because, in political terms, the issue is not the "method" of science but the type of scientific research that demands funding and, ultimately, the ends to which science is put. Again defined by what they oppose, ironically, those principally concerned with the scientific method reflect the establishmentarian tendency to isolate science from politics. Whatever the connection between this method and metaphysics, or the status of its original commitment to benefit humanity, there is no reason to believe that science in the age of globalization has lost its ability to question previous claims or established authority: neither from the standpoint of science nor ethics is it legitimate to maintain that "the enlightenment has lost any trace of its own self-consciousness."[13]

Critical theory in the future must, once again, become more modest: it needs to specify the practices to which its categories apply. The difference between history and nature, wrote Vico in *The New Science*, is that humanity has created one and not the other. His famous statement, which looked back to Kant and forward to Lukacs and the beginnings of critical theory, has serious implications. Science cannot be expected to meet either meta-

12. Cf. Sandra Harding, *Is Science Multicultural?* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), 39ff.

13. Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder & Herder, 1972), 4.

physical or politically correct expectations: such concerns bring to mind the communist believers who in the 1920s attacked Einstein for promoting relativism. The point is not to get entangled in the immanent workings of science, which most critical theorists do not even understand, but instead illuminate the institutional complexes with their particular balance of forces wherein "science" receives its direction and its aims.

The Enlightenment notion of science, in the main, mirrored the more general philosophical rejection of closure and absolute knowledge. Bacon and Boyle, with their concern for methodological flexibility and provisional truth, already projected less the obsession with positive certainty than the emphasis upon "falsifiability" advocated by Sir Karl Popper. But it was surely Lessing who best expressed this general trend within Enlightenment thinking when he wrote the famous words: "if God held the truth in his right hand and in his clenched left fist the quest for it, along with all my future errors, and then told me to choose, I should point to the left and humbly say: 'Father give! The pure truth belongs to You alone!' "[14]

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"If God is dead," wrote Dostoyevsky, "then everything is permitted." Perhaps: but enough was certainly permitted throughout the millennia in which He was alive. Looking back at the organic community, imbued with religion and sanctified by tradition, does not make for a pretty sight. As a joke, Voltaire once tried to count the deaths inflicted by the Church: he went above a million, but he probably could not count high enough. Holy Scripture is littered with murder and from the Anabaptists to the pogroms directed against the Jews to the thousands upon thousands of witches and heretics destroyed by the Inquisition to the devastating wars of religion that continue into the present: the life of God is marked by the slaughter of his supposed enemies by his supposed friends.

Everything was permitted in defense of the organic community that allowed for no division between church and state. Its proponents ultimately embraced either an integral nationalism with racialist overtones or a supranationalism predicated on the return to what Novalis called "authentically catholic and authentically Christian times" (*echt-katholischen und echt-christlichen Zeiten*). The combination of the two provides the foundation or, better, the analogue for religious fundamentalism. To be sure: brave dissidents

14. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Eine Duplik," in *Theologische und Philosophische Schriften* (Hildesheim, 1970), 59.

inspired by faith have always existed, religious groups have made common cause with left movements on certain issues in the past, and it is surely the case that alliances will need to be made with such individuals and groups in the future. But the fact remains: the larger mainstream religious organizations have —historically—opposed virtually every scientific advance, every new philosophical movement, and every progressive political development. True believers still view tolerance as undermining the certainty associated with religious faith and, thus, strengthening faith calls upon the faithful to challenge liberal claims. Useful, still, to recall the words of Holbach in *Common Sense*:

> In all parts of our globe, intoxicated fanatics have been seen cutting each other's throats, lighting funeral piles, committing, without scruple and even as a duty, the greatest crimes and shedding torrents of blood. For what? To strengthen, support, or propagate the impertinent conjectures of some enthusiasts, or to give validity to the cheats of some imposters, in the name and on behalf of a being, who exists only in their imagination, and who has made himself known only by the ravages, disputes, and follies, he has caused upon the earth.

Amazing is less the assault directed against *l'infame* by the philosophes than the restraint that they showed. The young Marx and his followers may have taken the position that the Enlightenment was somehow not "radical" enough on the matter of religion. But the implications of his critique are rarely thought through: it remains both metaphysical and politically irresponsible. His argument revolved around understanding religion not merely as the "opium of the masses," but also as a "sigh of the oppressed creature." Abolishing religion is important, according to this view, because it presupposes providing solutions for the earthly problems that generated the need for faith in the first place. Considering religion from a transformative standpoint differentiated the new materialism from empiricism and positivism, imbued it with a utopian purpose, projects the end of "pre-history," and seemingly turned Marxism into the radical heir of the Enlightenment. Humanity would now be freed from its alienated subservience to a nonexistent God and in the future, with respect to religion, it will not simply "wear the chain that is without fantasy or consolation, but . . . will throw it off and pluck the living flower."[15]

15. Karl Marx, "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction," in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, eds. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York: Doubleday, 1969), 250.

Everyone cites these beautiful phrases of the young Marx. But few ask about their validity. There is a good reason why Marx never returned to this theme later in his major works and, too often, his followers obediently render the proper citations without any attempt to make them relevant. In fact, no causes for religion are specified by Marx and no proposals—of even the most rudimentary sort—are made for dealing with them. There is, again, a good reason why not: Marx misconstrued the problem. For, in these famous passages, he was actually not dealing with "religion" at all but, rather, with "religiosity" or what Camus called "the longing for God" and Horkheimer termed "the longing for the totally other." The distinction between "religion" and "religiosity" is crucial: it is one thing to constrain the political power of religious institutions and quite another to eliminate religious feeling.

No political movement or policy can eradicate such an elusive phenomenon and more importantly, beyond juvenile metaphysical arguments concerning the existence of a deity, there is no concrete reason why it should. Religiosity—if not religion—is a pseudo-problem for progressive politics. Uncertainty, loneliness, meaninglessness, and death are among the reasons why this longing has remained with humanity for its entire history and why it promises to remain with us far into the foreseeable future. Recourse to the fulfillment of humanity's unrealized potential, its repressed unity, or its "species being," doesn't help matters The anthropological terms in which Marx framed the question of religious alienation—and also the division of labor—prevents anything other than a vague and indeterminate response to it in theory or practice..

Enlightenment thinkers had little use for such discussions. Usually deists rather than atheists, concerned with fostering tolerance rather than embracing any type of dogma, most philosophes considered religious faith nothing more than superstition, but they were content to leave matters of belief to the individual. Hardly any of them were concerned with abolishing religious forms of identification and most implicitly understood the difference between "religiosity" and "religion." Some of the *philosophes* saw religion as a necessary element within society: others as positively beneficial: still others as a felt existential need. All of them, however, feared the bloodshed that would surely have resulted from attempting to abolish religion. Hobbes introduced what soon became the dominant political approach by counseling the sovereign against dictating "opinion" and by treating each religion as a particular interest with its own ambitions. Kant allowed for religion "within the bounds of reason," Rousseau vacillated on the role of religion and the

character of his faith, Mendelssohn understood religion as a form of inner "conviction," and Voltaire believed his tailor needed a church.

Enlightenment thinkers wished to temper the power of religious institutions by privileging the secular state and, for this reason, traditionalists and dogmatic defenders of the faith—all faiths—have criticized them unmercifully ever since. The philosophes understood that conviction and tolerance are not mutually exclusive so long as a secular state is sovereign over the diverse religions, or interpretations of a single religion, in civil society. Such a stance involves recognizing faith as a private conviction. Dealing with religion then is, from the standpoint of liberal politics, actually no different than dealing with any other private interest or ideological standpoint. It becomes a matter of securing the institutional conditions for the pursuit of the one and the right to believe in the other. Faith should not be construed as a political issue. For those committed to the Enlightenment legacy, indeed, religion turns into a problem only when it strays beyond the private sphere and identifies its concerns with those of the public weal. Bringing the principles of a liberal public sphere to bear on issues concerning faith should indeed result less in a repression of "difference" than its liberation.

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The Enlightenment was a movement in which the striving for truth was more important than its acquisition: its major representatives understood reality as an experiment and sought to foster conditions in which the new might glimmer. They never embraced a self-serving ambiguity: they knew what they supported and knew what they were against. Their assumptions were simple enough: they viewed tyranny, ignorance, and misery as the product of natural rather than divine forces; they believed that curing people of their vices begins by curing them of their prejudices; that progress is the enemy of cruelty; and that a fuller life lies more in exploring the rich diversity of the planet than in obsessing over the internal rumblings of the self. That general perspective retains its salience. Enlightenment thinkers assumed that society could be changed and that political engagement was necessary to bring that change about. They spoke for the lowly and the insulted, the exploited and the oppressed, and the constellation of values and attitudes that defined their undertaking are neither irrelevant nor passé. They remain with us, they underpin the struggle of every progressive movement, and —perhaps most important of all—they project the type of world that every decent person wishes to see.