

2. The Science of Culture

SIR EDWARD BURNETT TYLOR (1832-1917)

CULTURE OR CIVILIZATION, taken in its wide ethnographic sense, is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. The condition of culture among the various societies of mankind, in so far as it is capable of being investigated on general principles, is a subject apt for the study of laws of human thought and action.¹ On the one hand, the uniformity which so largely pervades civilization may be ascribed, in great measure, to the uniform action of uniform causes; while on the other hand its various grades may be regarded as stages of development or evolution each the outcome of previous history, and about to do its proper part in shaping the history of the future. To the investigation of these two great principles in several departments of ethnography, with especial consideration of the civilization of the lower tribes as related to the civilization of the higher nations, the present volumes are devoted.

Our modern investigators in the sciences of inorganic nature are foremost to recognize, both within and without their special fields of work, unity of nature, the fixity of its laws, the definite sequence of cause and effect through which every fact depends on what has gone before it, and acts upon what is to come after it. They grasp firmly the Pythagorean doctrine of pervading or-

der in the universal Kosmos. They affirm, with Aristotle, that nature is not full of incoherent episodes, like a bad tragedy. They agree with Leibnitz in what he calls "my axiom, that nature never acts by leaps (*La nature n'agit jamais par saut*),"² as well as in his "great principle, commonly little employed, that nothing happens without its sufficient reason." Nor, again, in studying the structure and habits of plants and animals, or in investigating the lower functions even of man, are these leading ideas unacknowledged. But when we come to talk of the higher processes of human feeling and action, of thought and language, knowledge and art, a change appears in the prevalent tone of opinion. The world at large is scarcely prepared to accept the general study of human life as a branch of natural science, and to carry out, in a large sense, the poet's injunction to "Account for moral as for natural things." To many educated minds there seems something presumptuous and repulsive in the view that the history of mankind is part and parcel of the history of nature, that our thoughts, wills, and actions accord with laws as definite as those which govern the motion of waves, the combination of acids and bases, and the growth of plants and animals.

The main reasons of this state of the popular judgment are not far to seek. There are many who would willingly accept a science of history if

From *Primitive Culture* (1871)

¹ Throughout this essay, Tylor reaffirms his faith in the possibility of a science of human society analogous to the physical sciences. In this he is very much like the other thinkers of his era, particularly Herbert Spencer. The opening sentence of this essay is one of the most frequently quoted definitions of culture in anthropology. Despite this, Tylor's understanding of the meaning of culture is clearly very different from that of most modern anthropologists. Whereas most anthropologists today believe that there are a great many different cultures, Tylor believed that "Culture" was, ultimately, a single body of information of

which different human groups had greater or lesser amounts. This understanding was based on his belief in the psychic unity of humankind, here referred to as "the uniform action of uniform causes."

² *La nature n'agit jamais par saut*: a French phrase meaning "nature never acts by leaps." Darwin also used this phrase in an 1858 essay on variation in species (in Latin rather than French) to express the gradualism of his evolutionary theory. Tylor frequently uses foreign phrases in this essay. They almost always repeat the sentence that precedes them.

placed before them with substantial definiteness of principle and evidence, but who not unreasonably reject the systems offered to them, as falling too far short of a scientific standard. Through resistance such as this, real knowledge always sooner or later makes its way, while the habit of opposition to novelty does such excellent service against the invasions of speculative dogmatism, that we may sometimes even wish it were stronger than it is. But other obstacles to the investigation of laws of human nature arise from considerations of metaphysics and theology. The popular notion of free human will involves not only freedom to act in accordance with motive, but also a power of breaking loose from continuity and acting without cause,—a combination which may be roughly illustrated by the simile of a balance sometimes acting in the usual way, but also possessed of the faculty of turning by itself without or against its weights. This view of an anomalous action of the will, which it need hardly be said is incompatible with scientific argument, subsists as an opinion patent or latent in men's minds, and strongly affecting their theoretic views of history, though it is not, as a rule, brought prominently forward in systematic reasoning. Indeed the definition of human will, as strictly according with motive, is the only possible scientific basis in such enquiries. Happily, it is not needful to add here yet another to the list of dissertations on supernatural intervention and natural causation, on liberty, predestination, and accountability. We may hasten to escape from the regions of transcendental philosophy and theology, to start on a more hopeful journey over more practicable ground. None will deny that, as each man knows by the evidence of his own consciousness, definite and natural cause does, to a great extent, determine human action. Then,

keeping aside from considerations of extra-natural interference and causeless spontaneity, let us take this admitted existence of natural cause and effect as our standing ground, and travel on it so far as it will bear us. It is on this same basis that physical science pursues, with ever-increasing success, its quest of laws of nature. Nor need this restriction hamper the scientific study of human life, in which the real difficulties are the practical ones of enormous complexity of evidence, and imperfection of methods of observation.³

Now it appears that this view of human will and conduct, as subject to definite law, is indeed recognized and acted upon by the very people who oppose it when stated in the abstract as a general principle, and who then complain that it annihilates man's free will, destroys his sense of personal responsibility, and degrades him to a soul-less machine. He who will say these things will nevertheless pass much of his own life in studying the motives which lead to human action, seeking to attain his wishes through them, framing in his mind theories of personal character, reckoning what are likely to be the effects of new combinations, and giving to his reasoning the crowning character of true scientific enquiry, by taking it for granted that in so far as his calculation turns out wrong, either his evidence must have been false or incomplete, or his judgment upon it unsound. Such a one will sum up the experience of years spent in complex relations with society, by declaring his persuasion that there is a reason for everything in life, and that where events look unaccountable, the rule is to wait and watch in hope that the key to the problem may some day be found. This man's observation may have been as narrow as his inferences are crude and prejudiced, but nevertheless he has been an inductive philosopher "more than forty years

³ In this passage, Tylor rejects both religious explanations of social phenomena and objections to social science based on the supposition of human free will. Tylor was stridently anticlerical. He saw human history as proceeding toward increasing rationality. His own religious background is significant in this context. Tylor was from a Quaker family and was highly influenced by Quaker theology. Quakers (members of the Society of Friends) do

not believe in the clergy; instead, they believe that God speaks through each individual. This background had important implications for Tylor's work. Since Quakers believed in the essential unity of humankind, they emphasized a degree of tolerance and humanitarianism frequently absent in this era. The Quaker belief in a single spiritual destiny of humankind is reflected in Tylor's understanding of human social evolution.

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without knowing it." He has practically acknowledged definite laws of human thought and action, and has simply thrown out of account in his own studies of life the whole fabric of motiveless will and uncaused spontaneity.⁴ It is assumed here that they should be just so thrown out of account in wider studies, and that the true philosophy of history lies in extending and improving the methods of the plain people who form their judgments upon facts, and check them upon new facts.⁵ Whether the doctrine be wholly or but partly true, it accepts the very condition under which we search for new knowledge in the lessons of experience, and in a word the whole course of our rational life is based upon it.

"One event is always the son of another, and we must never forget the parentage," was a remark made by a Bechuana chief to Casalis the African missionary. Thus at all times historians, so far as they have aimed at being more than mere chroniclers, have done their best to show not merely succession, but connection, among the events upon their record. Moreover, they have striven to elicit general principles of human action, and by these to explain particular events, stating expressly or taking tacitly for granted the existence of a philosophy of history.⁶ Should any one deny the possibility of thus establishing historical laws the answer is ready with which Boswell in such a case turned on Johnson:⁷ "Then, sir, you would reduce all history to no better than almanack." That nevertheless the labors of so many eminent thinkers should have

as yet brought history only to the threshold of science need cause no wonder to those who consider the bewildering complexity of the problems which come before the general historian. The evidence from which he is to draw his conclusions is at once so multifarious and so doubtful that a full and distinct view of its bearing on a particular question is hardly to be attained, and thus the temptation becomes all but irresistible to garble it in support of some rough and ready theory of the course of events. The philosophy of history at large, explaining the past and predicting the future phenomena of man's life in the world by reference to general laws, is in fact a subject with which, in the present state of knowledge, even genius aided by wide research seems but hardly able to cope. Yet there are departments of it which, though difficult enough, seem comparatively accessible. If the field of inquiry be narrowed from History as a whole to that branch of it which is here called Culture, the history, not of tribes or nations, but of the condition of knowledge, religion, art, custom, and the like among them, the task of investigation proves to lie within far more moderate compass. We suffer still from the same kind of difficulties which beset the wider argument, but they are much diminished. The evidence is no longer so wildly heterogeneous, but may be more simply classified and compared, while the power of getting rid of extraneous matter, and treating each issue on its own proper set of facts, makes close reasoning on the whole more available than in general

⁴ In this passage Tylor continues his attack on those he considers the enemies of the application of scientific method to social science. His key method is really a call for introspection, which has some roots in the Quaker call to introspective prayer.

⁵ Notice that Tylor here refers to his work as creating a philosophy of history. Tylor's anthropology involved re-creation the history of humankind's evolution to civilization. Many later anthropologists rejected such historical re-creation as unscientific or impossible.

⁶ In this passage Tylor argues that the success of a philosophy of history depends on restricting the subject matter: by focusing on culture, the historian may ignore specific events in favor of general developmental trends. Because

Tylor understood culture as a unitary phenomenon that characterized peoples to one degree or another, the project was practical. For Tylor, describing culture as an evolutionary phenomenon implied tracing the history of its development. Simple societies could be understood as living history or living fossils. In this century, American followers of Franz Boas, reacting to the evolutionary perspective, also understood the study of culture as the study of history, but for different reasons.

⁷ Dr. Samuel Johnson (1709–1784), considered by many to be the greatest eighteenth-century English author, is mentioned several times in this essay. James Boswell (1740–1795) was his biographer and frequent companion.

history. This may appear from a brief preliminary examination of the problem, how the phenomena of Culture may be classified and arranged, stage by stage, in a probable order of evolution.

Surveyed in a broad view, the character and habit of mankind at once display that similarity and consistency of phenomena which led the Italian proverb-maker to declare that "all the world is one country" "tutto il mondo e paese." To general likeness in human nature on the one hand, and to general likeness in the circumstances of life on the other, this similarity and consistency may no doubt be traced, and they may be studied with especial fitness in comparing races near the same grade of civilization. Little respect need be had in such comparisons for date in history or for place on the map; the ancient Swiss lake-dweller may be set beside the medieval Aztec, and the Ojibwa of North America beside the Zulu of South Africa. As Dr. Johnson contemptuously said when he had read about Patagonians and South Sea Islanders in Hawkesworth's *Voyages*, "one set of savages is like another." How true a generalization this really is, any Ethnological Museum may show. Examine for instance the edged and pointed instruments in such a collection; the inventory

includes hatchet, adze, chisel, knife, saw, scraper, awl, needle, spear and arrow-head, and of these most or all belong with only differences of detail to races the most various.⁸ So it is with savage occupations; the wood-chopping, fishing with net and line, shooting and spearing game, fire-making, cooking, twisting cord and plaiting baskets, repeat themselves with wonderful uniformity in the museum shelves which illustrate the life of the lower races from Kamchatka to Tierra del Fuego, and from Dahome to Hawaii. Even when it comes to comparing barbarous hordes with civilized nations, the consideration thrusts itself upon our minds, how far item after item of the life of the lower races passes into analogous proceedings of the higher, in forms not too far changed to be recognized, and sometimes hardly changed at all. Look at the modern European peasant using his hatchet and his hoe, see his food boiling or roasting over the log-fire, observe the exact place which beer holds in his calculation of happiness, hear his tale of the ghost in the nearest haunted house, and of the farmer's niece who was bewitched with knots in her inside till she fell into fits and died. If we choose out in this way things which have altered little in a long course of centuries, we may draw a picture where

⁸ When Tylor speaks here about "comparing races near the same grade of civilization" and placing ethnographic materials next to each other on display, he is probably thinking about actual museum displays. In 1816, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen (1788-1865) became curator of the Museum of Northern Antiquities in Copenhagen (later the National Museum of Denmark). Over the next 20 years, he arranged the museum's collection of artifacts chronologically based on the material and style of their construction. In so doing, he established the sequence of stone to bronze to iron. Thomsen's "Three Age System" became extremely influential in European archaeology and the display of museum collections worldwide. One example of this was the Crystal Palace exhibition of 1851. The Great Exhibition of 1851, held in London in the summer of that year, brought together some 14,000 international exhibitors. It not only showed the latest technology, but archaeological and current artifacts from around the world. Both ancient and modern artifacts were displayed together in order of their presumed technical sophistication. More than six million people attended the exhibition

and it had a profound influence on both the general public and scholars of the era. Tylor even had a close personal connection to the exhibition. His friend and mentor the Quaker ethnologist and archaeologist Henry Christy was a juror for the Crystal Palace.

The method of display developed by Thomsen and used in the Crystal Palace showed similarities between ancient European artifacts and current-day items from foraging and tribal societies. It seemed to demonstrate the argument Tylor makes in this passage, that societies could be placed in evolutionary sequence with "Little respect . . . for date in history or place on the map." This idea became a cornerstone of the comparative method in anthropology. Based on the archaeological and ethnographic information available to them, anthropologists of Tylor's day believed that a chronology of human social development could be created by comparing societies around the world. This doctrine drives both Tylor's argument in *Primitive Culture* and the model of cultural evolution L. H. Morgan presented in *Ancient Society* (see essay 3).

there shall be scarce a hand's breadth difference between an English ploughman and a negro of Central Africa. These pages will be so crowded with evidence of such correspondence among mankind, that there is no need to dwell upon its details here, but it may be used at once to override a problem which would complicate the argument, namely, the question of race. For the present purpose it appears both possible and desirable to eliminate considerations of hereditary varieties or races of man, and to treat mankind as homogeneous in nature, though placed in different grades of civilization.⁹ The details of the enquiry will, I think, prove that stages of culture may be compared without taking into account how far tribes who use the same implement, follow the same custom, or believe the same myth may differ in their bodily configuration and the color of their skin and hair.

A first step in the study of civilization is to dissect it into details, and to classify these in their proper groups. Thus, in examining weapons, they are to be classed under spear, club, sling, bow and arrow, and so forth; among textile arts are to be ranged matting, netting, and several grades of making and weaving threads; myths are divided under such headings as myths of sunrise and sunset, eclipse-myths, earthquake-myths, local myths which account for the names of places by some fanciful tale, eponymic myths which account for the parentage of a tribe by turning its name into the name of an imaginary ancestor; under rites and ceremonies occur such practices as the various kinds of sacrifice to the ghosts of the dead and to other spiritual beings, the turn-

ing to the east to worship, the purification of ceremonial or moral uncleanness by means of water or fire. Such are a few miscellaneous examples from a list of hundreds, and the ethnographer's business is to classify such details with a view to making out their distribution in geography and history, and the relations which exist among them. What this task is like may be almost perfectly illustrated by comparing these details of culture with the species of plants and animals as studied by the naturalist. To the ethnographer, the bow and arrow is a species, the habit of flattening children's skulls is a species, the practice of reckoning numbers by tens is a species. The geographical distribution of these things, and their transmission from region to region, have to be studied as the naturalist studies the geography of his botanical and zoological species. Just as certain plants and animals are peculiar to certain districts, so it is with such instruments as the Australian boomerang, the Polynesian stick-and-groove for firemaking, the tiny bow and arrow used as a lancet or phlebotomy by tribes about the Isthmus of Panama, and in like manner with many an art, myth, or custom found isolated in a particular field. Just as the catalogue of all the species of plants and animals of a district represents its Flora and Fauna, so the list of all the items of the general life of a people represents that whole which we call its culture. And just as distant regions so often produce vegetables and animals which are analogous, though by no means identical, so it is with the details of the civilization of their inhabitants.¹⁰ How good a working analogy there really is between the

⁹ Tylor here appears to reject racist explanations of cultural differences. Tylor's Quaker theology committed him to the notion of monogenesis—the belief that all human races belonged to the same species and shared the same evolutionary origins. He wrote: "the facts collected seem to favor the view that the wide differences in the civilization and mental state of the various races of mankind are rather differences of development than of origin, rather of degree than kind" (quoted in Stocking 1987:159). This notion was contested by the Americans Samuel G. Morton (1799–1851) and Louis Agassiz (1807–1873), key promoters of a theory called polygenesis. This theory argued that human races

represented different and unequal species and was used as a "scientific" justification for slavery. Although to modern readers some of Tylor's writing has a decidedly racist cast, he was a liberal by the standards of his day.

¹⁰ Tylor, like Spencer, draws an analogy between cultural and biological evolution. In Tylor's view, the ethnographer's job is to catalog all the practices of humankind and then arrange them into evolutionary and hierarchical order, producing something analogous to the Linnaean classification of plants and animals. We will see this analogy again in other theories found in this book.

diffusion of plants and animals and the diffusion of civilization comes well into view when we notice how far the same causes have produced both at once. In district after district, the same causes which have introduced the cultivated plants and domesticated animals of civilization, have brought in with them a corresponding art and knowledge. The course of events which carried horses and wheat to America carried with them the use of the gun and the iron hatchet, while in return the old world received not only maize, potatoes, and turkeys, but the habit of smoking and the sailor's hammock.¹¹

It is a matter worthy of consideration that the accounts of similar phenomena of culture, recurring in different parts of the world, actually supply incidental proof of their own authenticity.¹² Some years since, a question which brings out this point was put to me by a great historian, "How can a statement as to customs, myths, beliefs, &c., of a savage tribe be treated as evidence where it depends on the testimony of some traveller or missionary, who may be a superficial observer, more or less ignorant of the native language, a careless retailer of unsifted talk, a man prejudiced or even wilfully deceitful?" This question is, indeed, one which every ethnographer ought to keep clearly and constantly before his mind. Of course he is bound to use his best judgment as to the trustworthiness of all authors he quotes, and if possible to obtain several accounts to certify each point in each locality. But it is over and above these measures of precaution that the test of recurrence comes in. If two independent visitors to different countries, say a medieval Mohammedan in Tartary and a modern Englishman in Dahome, or a Jesuit missionary in Brazil

and a Wesleyan in the Fiji Islands, agree in describing some analogous art or rite or myth among the people they have visited, it becomes difficult or impossible to set down such correspondence to accident or willful fraud. A story by a bushranger in Australia may, perhaps, be objected to as a mistake or an invention, but did a Methodist minister in Guinea conspire with him to cheat the public by telling the same story there? The possibility of intentional or unintentional mystification is often barred by such a state of things as that a similar statement is made in two remote lands, by two witnesses, of whom A lived a century before B, and B appears never to have heard of A. How distant are the countries, how wide apart the dates, how different the creeds and characters of the observers, in the catalogue of facts of civilization, needs no farther showing to any one who will even glance at the foot-notes of the present work. And the more odd the statement, the less likely that several people in several places should have made it wrongly. This being so, it seems reasonable to judge that the statements are in the main truly given, and that their close and regular coincidence is due to the cropping up of similar facts in various districts of culture. Now the most important facts of ethnography are vouched for in this way. Experience leads the student after a while to expect and find that the phenomena of culture, as resulting from widely-acting similar causes, should recur again and again in the world. He even mistrusts isolated statements to which he knows of no parallel elsewhere, and waits for their genuineness to be shown by corresponding accounts from the other side of the earth, or the other end of history. So strong, indeed, is this means of authentication

¹¹ Unlike modern anthropologists, who tend to see field research as inseparable from the practice of anthropology, Tylor did not believe that it was necessary for anthropologists to be involved in data collection. It was their primary job to compile, organize, and classify data. Despite this view, Tylor did have some field experience. During a year he spent in North America in 1856, he traveled for four months by horseback in Mexico with his friend Christi. He published an account of this trip (*Anahuac: Or Mexico and the Mexicans, Ancient and Modern*) in 1861.

¹² The argument here is tautological. Above, Tylor maintains that the repeated occurrence of cultural traits in widely disparate locations is evidence of the psychic unity of mankind. Here he contends that he can verify or refute claims about the existence of cultural traits by reference to the theory of psychic unity. If a traveler asserted that he found traits different from others around the world, then his claims must be false. The use of this sort of reasoning was one factor that led Franz Boas and his followers to attack the work of Tylor and other evolutionists as unscientific.

that the ethnographer in his library may sometimes presume to decide, not only whether a particular explorer is a shrewd and honest observer, but also whether what he reports is conformable to the general rules of civilization. "Non quis, sed quid."¹³

To turn from the distribution of culture in different countries, to its diffusion within these countries. The quality of mankind which tends most to make the systematic study of civilization possible is that remarkable tacit consensus or agreement which so far induces whole populations to unite in the use of the same language, to follow the same religion and customary law, to settle down to the same general level of art and knowledge. It is this state of things which makes it so far possible to ignore exceptional facts and to describe nations by a sort of general average. It is this state of things which makes it so far possible to represent immense masses of details by a few typical facts, while, these once settled, new cases recorded by new observers simply fall into their places to prove the soundness of the classification. There is found to be such regularity in the composition of societies of men that we can drop individual differences out of sight, and thus can generalize on the arts and opinions of whole nations, just as, when looking down upon an army from a hill, we forget the individual soldier, whom, in fact, we can scarce distinguish in the mass, while we see each regiment as an organized body, spreading or concentrating, moving in advance or in retreat. In some branches of the study of social laws it is now possible to call in the aid of statistics, and to set apart special actions of large mixed communities of men by means of tax-gatherers' schedules, or the tables of the insurance-office. Among modern arguments on the laws of human action, none have had a

deeper effect than generalizations such as those of M. Quetelet,¹⁴ on the regularity, not only of such matters as average stature and the annual rates of birth and death, but the recurrence, year after year, of such obscure and seemingly incalculable products of national life as the numbers of murders and suicides, and the proportion of the very weapons of crime. Other striking cases are the annual regularity of persons killed accidentally in the London streets, and of undirected letters dropped into post-office letterboxes. But in examining the culture of the lower races, far from having at command the measured arithmetical facts of modern statistics, we may have to judge of the condition of tribes from the imperfect accounts supplied by travellers or missionaries, or even to reason upon relics of prehistoric races of whose very names and languages we are hopelessly ignorant. Now these may seem at the first glance sadly indefinite and unpromising materials for a scientific enquiry. But in fact they are neither indefinite nor unpromising, but give evidence that is good and definite, so far as it goes. They are data which, for the distinct way in which they severally denote the condition of the tribe they belong to, will actually bear comparison with the statistician's returns. The fact is that a stone arrow-head, a carved club, an idol, a grave-mound where slaves and property have been buried for the use of the dead, an account of a sorcerer's rites in making rain, a table of numerals, the conjugation of a verb, are things which each express the state of a people as to one particular point of culture, as truly as the tabulated numbers of deaths by poison, and of chests of tea imported, express in a different way other partial results of the general life of a whole community.

That a whole nation should have a special dress, special tools and weapons, special laws of

¹³ *Non quis, sed quid*: a Latin phrase meaning "not who, but what." It is not who made the report that is important, but rather what they reported.

¹⁴ Adolphe J. Quetelet (1796-1874) was a mathematician who showed that the behavior of large groups of people could be predicted through the analysis of statistics. Quetelet called his theory "social physics," implying that he had created a science of society similar to physics. In Tylor's

time, statistics was a relatively recent and influential discovery. By providing a way to match numbers with social phenomena, statistics seemed to be a method by which natural laws determining human behavior could be ascertained. Here, Tylor tries to show that ethnographic data are comparable to demographic data and can be considered equally valid. This proposition, if accepted, would provide further evidence that a valid science of culture was possible.

marriage and property, special moral and religious doctrines is a remarkable fact, which we notice so little because we have lived all our lives in the midst of it. It is with such general qualities of organized bodies of men that ethnography has especially to deal. Yet, while generalizing on the culture of a tribe or nation, and setting aside the peculiarities of the individuals composing it as unimportant to the main result, we must be careful not to forget what makes up this main result. There are people so intent on the separate life of individuals that they cannot grasp a notion of the action of a community as a whole—such an observer, incapable of a wide view of society, is aptly described in the saying that he “cannot see the forest for the trees.” But, on the other hand, the philosopher may be so intent upon his general laws of society as to neglect the individual actors of whom that society is made up, and of him it may be said that he cannot see the trees for the forest. We know how arts, customs, and ideas are shaped among ourselves by the combined actions of many individuals, of which actions both motive and effect often come quite distinctly within our view. The history of an invention, an opinion, a ceremony, is a history of suggestion and modification, encouragement and opposition, personal gain and party prejudice, and the individuals concerned act each according to his own motives, as determined by his character and circumstances. Thus sometimes we watch individuals acting for their own ends with little thought of their effect on society at large, and sometimes we have to study movements of national life as a whole, where the individuals cooperating in them are utterly beyond our observation. But seeing that collective social action is the mere resultant of many individual actions, it is clear that these two methods of enquiry, if rightly followed, must be absolutely consistent.

In studying both the recurrence of special habits or ideas in several districts and their preva-

lence within each district, there come before us ever reiterated proofs of regular causation producing the phenomena of human life, and of laws of maintenance and diffusion according to which these phenomena settle into permanent standard conditions of society, at definite stages of culture.¹⁵ But, while giving full importance to the evidence bearing on these standard conditions of society, let us be careful to avoid a pitfall which may entrap the unwary student. Of course the opinions and habits belonging in common to masses of mankind are to a great extent the results of sound judgment and practical wisdom. But to a great extent it is not so. That many numerous societies of men should have believed in the influence of the evil eye and the existence of a firmament, should have sacrificed slaves and goods to the ghosts of the departed, should have handed down traditions of giants slaying monsters and men turning into beasts—all this is ground for holding that such ideas were indeed produced in men's minds by efficient causes, but it is not ground for holding that the rites in question are profitable, the beliefs sound, and the history authentic. This may seem at the first glance a truism, but, in fact, it is the denial of a fallacy which deeply affects the minds of all but a small critical minority of mankind. Popularly, what everybody says must be true, what everybody does must be right—“Quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est, hoc est vere proprièque Catholicum”—and so forth. There are various topics, especially in history, law, philosophy, and theology, where even the educated people we live among can hardly be brought to see that the cause why men do hold an opinion, or practice a custom, is by no means necessarily a reason why they ought to do so. Now collections of ethnographic evidence, bringing so prominently into view the agreement of immense multitudes of men as to certain traditions, beliefs, and usages, are peculiarly liable to

¹⁵ Tylor's goal in *Primitive Culture* was to scientifically examine the development of religion and expose laws underlying its evolution. He aimed to show that the history of religion is characterized by increasing rationality. The path of his argument led him to explain the rational-

ity of many “primitive” practices. Here he distinguishes between explaining such practices and defending them; it was important to him that his work was perceived as an explanation of religion rather than a defense of particular beliefs.

be thus improperly used in direct defence of these institutions themselves, even old barbaric nations being polled to maintain their opinions against what are called modern ideas. As it has more than once happened to myself to find my collections of traditions and beliefs thus set up to prove their own objective truth, without proper examination of the grounds on which they were actually received, I take this occasion of remarking that the same line of argument will serve equally well to demonstrate, by the strong and wide consent of nations, that the earth is flat, and nightmare the visit of a demon.

It being shown that the details of Culture are capable of being classified in a great number of ethnographic groups of arts, beliefs, customs, and the rest, the consideration comes next how far the facts arranged in these groups are produced by evolution from one another.¹⁶ It need hardly be pointed out that the groups in question, though held together each by a common character, are by no means accurately defined. To take up again the natural history illustration, it may be said that they are species which tend to run widely into varieties. And when it comes to the question what relations some of these groups bear to others, it is plain that the student of the habits of mankind has a great advantage over the student of the species of plants and animals. Among naturalists it is an open question whether a theory of development from species to species is a record of transitions which actually took place or a mere ideal scheme serviceable in the classification of species whose origin was really independent. But among ethnographers there is no such question as to the possibility of species

of implements or habits or beliefs being developed one out of another, for development in culture is recognized by our most familiar knowledge. Mechanical invention supplies apt examples of the kind of development which affects civilization at large. In the history of fire-arms, the clumsy wheellock, in which a notched steel wheel was turned by a handle against the flint till a spark caught the priming, led to the invention of the more serviceable flintlock, of which a few still hang in the kitchens of our farm-houses, for the boys to shoot small birds with at Christmas; the flintlock in time passed by an obvious modification into the percussion-lock, which is just now changing its old-fashioned arrangement to be adapted from muzzle-loading to breechloading. The medieval astrolabe passed into the quadrant, now discarded in its turn by the seaman, who uses the more delicate sextant, and so it is through the history of one art and instrument after another. Such examples of progression are known to us as direct history, but so thoroughly is this notion of development at home in our minds, that by means of it we reconstruct lost history without scruple, trusting to general knowledge of the principles of human thought and action as a guide in putting the facts in their proper order. Whether chronicle speaks or is silent on the point, no one comparing a longbow and a cross-bow would doubt that the cross-bow was a development arising from the simpler instrument. So among the fire-drills for igniting by friction, it seems clear on the face of the matter that the drill worked by a cord or bow is a later improvement on the clumsier primitive instrument twirled between the hands. That instructive class

¹⁶ Tylor was evolutionary and progressivist. He refers in the opening of this passage to the debate between biological evolutionists and creationists, still raging in 1871 when this piece was first published. For Tylor, the proposition that societies evolved from the most simple to most complex was self-evident. He wrote, "the educated world of Europe and America practically settles a standard by simply placing its own nations at one end of the social series and savage tribes at the other, arranging the rest of mankind between these limits according as they correspond more closely to savage or cultured life" (quoted in Stocking

1987:162). For Tylor, the force driving this evolution was the natural development of increasingly rational thinking. Although Tylor's thinking is evolutionary, he downplayed the importance of Darwinian evolution. In the preface to the 1873 edition of *Primitive Culture*, he explained the absence of references to Darwin and Spencer in the work by claiming that his work came "scarcely into contact of detail with the previous works of these eminent philosophers." However, the close connection between the work of Darwin and that of Tylor is shown by Darwin's extensive referencing of Tylor in *The Descent of Man* (1871).

of specimens which antiquaries sometimes discover, bronze celts modelled on the heavy type of the stone hatchet, are scarcely explicable except as first steps in the transition from the Stone Age to the Bronze Age, to be followed soon by the next stage of progress, in which it is discovered that the new material is suited to a handier and less wasteful pattern. And thus, in the other branches of our history, there will come again and again into view series of facts which may be consistently arranged as having followed one another in a particular order of development, but which will hardly bear being turned round and made to follow in reversed order.¹⁷ Such for instance are the facts I have here brought forward in a chapter on the Art of Counting, which tend to prove that as to this point of culture at least, savage tribes reached their position by learning and not unlearning, by elevation from a lower rather than by degradation from a higher state.

Among evidence aiding us to trace the courses which the civilization of the world has actually followed, is that great class of facts to denote which I have found it convenient to introduce the term "survivals."¹⁸ These are processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved. Thus, I know an old Somersetshire woman whose handloom dates from the time before the introduction of the "flying shuttle," which new-fangled appliance

she has never even learnt to use, and I have seen her throw her shuttle from hand to hand in true classic fashion; this old woman is not a century behind her times, but she is a case of survival.¹⁹ Such examples often lead us back to the habits of hundreds and even thousands of years ago. The ordeal of the Key and Bible, still in use, is a survival; the Midsummer bonfire is a survival; the Breton peasants' All Souls' supper for the spirits of the dead is a survival. The simple keeping up of ancient habits is only one part of the transition from old into new and changing times. The serious business of ancient society may be seen to sink into the sport of later generations, and its serious belief to linger on in nursery folk-lore, while superseded habits of old-world life may be modified into new-world forms still powerful for good and evil. Sometimes old thoughts and practices will burst out afresh, to the amazement of a world that thought them long since dead or dying; here survival passes into revival, as has lately happened in so remarkable a way in the history of modern spiritualism, a subject full of instruction from the ethnographer's point of view.²⁰ The study of the principles of survival has, indeed, no small practical importance, for most of what we call superstition is included within survival, and in this way lies open to the attack of its deadliest enemy, a reasonable explanation. Insignificant, moreover, as multitudes of the facts of survival are in themselves, their study is so effective for tracing the course of the historical development through which alone it is possible to understand their meaning, that it becomes a vital point of

¹⁷ A popular theory in Tylor's time held that some peoples were primitive because they had degenerated from an earlier state. Tylor rejected this idea and discusses it further on in this essay.

¹⁸ Although other thinkers such as Henry Sumner Maine (see footnote 26) also used the idea of survivals, it is considered one of Tylor's key contributions to anthropology. To him, almost any practice that seemed illogical or smacked of superstition was an example of the survival of the traits and beliefs of an earlier social form. Studying survivals was crucial, since through them—and with the theory of psychic unity—a researcher could trace the course of cultural evolution.

¹⁹ Notice Tylor's frequent references to the customs of English peasantry in this passage. For Tylor and other evolutionists, European peasantry represented a crucial intermediate step between civilization and savagery.

²⁰ Tylor wrote in an era when the occult was becoming a popular middle-class pastime. He himself had seen and written on psychic phenomena. Although he did not believe in them, he did admit to being very impressed by the demonstrations he witnessed and unable to offer rational explanations of them (Stocking 1987:191).

ethnographic research to gain the clearest possible insight into their nature. This importance must justify the detail here devoted to an examination of survival, on the evidence of such games, popular sayings, customs, superstitions, and the like, as may serve well to bring into view the manner of its operation.

Progress, degradation, survival, revival, modification are all modes of the connexion that binds together the complex network of civilization.²¹ It needs but a glance into the trivial details of our own daily life to set us thinking how far we are really its originators, and how far but the transmitters and modifiers of the results of long past ages. Looking round the rooms we live in, we may try here how far he who only knows his own time can be capable of rightly comprehending even that. Here is the "honeysuckle" of Assyria, there the fleur-de-lis of Anjou, a cornice with a Greek border runs round the ceiling, the style of Louis XIV and its parent the Renaissance share the looking-glass between them. Transformed, shifted, or mutilated, such elements of art still carry their history plainly stamped upon them; and if the history yet farther behind is less easy to read, we are not to say that because we cannot clearly discern it there is therefore no history there. It is thus even with the fashion of the clothes men wear. The ridiculous little tails of the German postilion's²² coat show themselves how they came to dwindle to such absurd rudiments; but the English clergyman's bands no longer so convey their history to the eye, and look unaccountable enough till one has seen the intermediate stages through which they came down from

the more serviceable wide collars, such as Milton wears in his portrait, and which gave their name to the "band-box" they used to be kept in. In fact, the books of costume, showing how one garment grew or shrank by gradual stages and passed into another, illustrate with much force and clearness the nature of the change and growth, revival and decay, which go on from year to year in more important matters of life. In books, again, we see each writer not for and by himself, but occupying his proper place in history; we look through each philosopher, mathematician, chemist, poet, into the background of his education—through Leibnitz into Descartes, through Dalton into Priestley, through Milton into Homer. The study of language has, perhaps, done more than any other in removing from our view of human thought and action the ideas of chance and arbitrary invention, and in substituting for them a theory of development by the co-operation of individual men, through processes ever reasonable and intelligible where the facts are fully known.²³ Rudimentary as the science of culture still is, the symptoms are becoming very strong that even what seem its most spontaneous and motiveless phenomena will, nevertheless, be shown to come within the range of distinct cause and effect as certainly as the facts of mechanics. What would be popularly thought more indefinite and uncontrolled than the products of the imagination in myths and fables? Yet any systematic investigation of mythology, on the basis of a wide collection of evidence, will show plainly enough in such efforts of fancy at once a development from stage to stage, and a production of

²¹ Here Tylor gives numerous examples of survivals. Tylor's great strength is his ability as a cultural historian; he was a master of the many details of cultural life. This passage also affirms his faith that laws of culture, similar in nature to the cause-and-effect principles of Newtonian physics, could be found. Virtually every paragraph of this essay stresses the ability of rational thinking men to divine cause-and-effect relationships.

²² *Postilion*: a person who rides the horse on the left of the leading pair when four or more horses are used to draw a carriage, or simply the horse on the left when only one pair is used.

²³ Tylor had an early interest in linguistics and was particularly influenced by Friedrich Max Müller (1823–1900), who used the study of Sanskrit writings to discover the histories of Indo-European languages. Müller identified speakers of Indo-European languages as descendants of an ancient Aryan race. He is generally remembered as a humanist and, late in life, clearly opposed those who used the term *Aryan* as a racial category, but Stocking (1987:59) notes that "many of his more rhapsodic passages are . . . resonant of Aryanist racial ideology," and some of his work was later used in Nazi Germany to construct an intellectual pedigree for that regime's racist philosophy.

uniformity of result from uniformity of cause. Here, as elsewhere, causeless spontaneity is seen to recede farther and farther into shelter within the dark precincts of ignorance; like chance, that still holds its place among the vulgar as a real cause of events otherwise unaccountable, while to educated men it has long consciously meant nothing but this ignorance itself. It is only when men fail to see the line of connexion in events that they are prone to fall upon the notions of arbitrary impulses, causeless freaks, chance and nonsense, and indefinite unaccountability. If childish games, purposeless customs, absurd superstitions are set down as spontaneous because no one can say exactly how they came to be, the assertion may remind us of the like effect that the eccentric habits of the wild rice-plant had on the philosophy of a Red Indian tribe, otherwise disposed to see in the harmony of nature the effects of one controlling personal will. The Great Spirit, said these Sioux theologians, made all things except the wild rice; but the wild rice came by chance.

"Man," said Wilhelm von Humboldt,²⁴ "ever connects on from what lies at hand (der Mensch Knüpft immer an Vorhandenes an)." The notion of the continuity of civilization contained in this maxim is no barren philosophic principle, but is at once made practical by the consideration that they who wish to understand their own lives ought to know the stages through which their opinions and habits have become what they are. Auguste Comte²⁵ scarcely overstated the necessity of this study of development, when he declared at the beginning of his "Positive Philosophy" that "no conception can be under-

stood except through its history" and his phrase will bear extension to culture at large. To expect to look modern life in the face and comprehend it by mere inspection is a philosophy whose weakness can easily be tested. Imagine any one explaining the trivial saying, "a little bird told me" without knowing of the old belief in the language of birds and beasts, to which Dr. Dasent, in the introduction to the Norse Tales, so reasonably traces its origin. To ingenious attempts at explaining by the light of reason things which want the light of history to show their meaning, much of the learned nonsense of the world has indeed been due. Sir H. S. Maine,²⁶ in his "Ancient Law," gives a perfect instance. In all the literature which enshrines the pretended philosophy of law, he remarks, there is nothing more curious than the pages of elaborate sophistry in which Blackstone attempts to explain and justify that extraordinary rule of English law, only recently repealed, which prohibited sons of the same father by different mothers from succeeding to one another's land. To Sir H. S. Maine, knowing the facts of the case, it was easy to explain its real origin from the "Customs of Normandy" where according to the system of agnation, or kinship on the male side, brothers by the same mother but by different fathers were of course no relations at all to one another. But when this rule "was transplanted to England, the English judges, who had no clue to its principle, interpreted it as a general prohibition against the succession of the half-blood, and extended it to consanguineous brothers, that is to sons of the same

²⁴ Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) was a German diplomat, a humanist, and the founder of the University of Berlin. Humboldt's enduring legacy was his work in language. His appreciation of linguistic differences foreshadowed the work of Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and Benjamin L. Whorf (1897-1941) in this century. In 1820 he wrote: "The differences between languages are not those of sounds and signs but those of differing world view" (1963:246).

²⁵ Auguste Comte (1798-1857) was one of the architects of the philosophical school of positivism. Comte and other positivists denied the possibility of metaphysical knowl-

edge, asserting that social phenomena were subject to general laws that could be discovered using the scientific method. He proposed a science of society and is often considered a founder of sociology. Comte had a profound influence on the social scientists of Tylor's generation and was a particularly powerful influence on Émile Durkheim and his followers in the early years of this century.

²⁶ Sir Henry Sumner Maine (1822-1888) was a legal historian and cultural evolutionist whose *Ancient Law* (1863) informed many of the anthropological discussions of Tylor's day. This passage shows an example of Maine's use of survivals.

father by different wives." Then, ages after, Blackstone sought in this blunder the perfection of reason, and found it in the argument that kinship through both parents ought to prevail over even a nearer degree of kinship through but one parent.²⁷ Such are the risks that philosophers run in detaching any phenomenon of civilization from its hold on past events, and treating it as an isolated fact, to be simply disposed of by a guess at some plausible explanation.

In carrying on the great task of rational ethnography, the investigation of the causes which have produced the phenomena of culture, and the laws to which they are subordinate, it is desirable to work out as systematically as possible a scheme of evolution of this culture along its many lines.²⁷ In the following chapter [of *Primitive Culture*], on the Development of Culture, an attempt is made to sketch a theoretical course of civilization among mankind, such as appears on the whole most accordant with the evidence. By comparing the various stages of civilization among races known to history, with the aid of archaeological inference from the remains of prehistoric tribes, it seems possible to judge in a rough way of an early general condition of man, which from our point of view is to be regarded as a primitive condition, whatever yet earlier state may in reality have lain behind it. This hypothetical primitive condition corresponds in a considerable degree to that of modern savage tribes, who, in spite of their difference and distance, have in common certain elements of civilization, which seem remains of an early state of the human race at large. If this hypothesis be true, then, notwithstanding the continual interference of degeneration, the main tendency of culture from primeval up to modern times has been from savagery towards civilization.²⁸ On the problem of this relation of

savage to civilized life, almost every one of the thousands of facts discussed in the succeeding chapters has its direct bearing. Survival in Culture, placing all along the course of advancing civilization way-marks full of meaning to those who can decipher their signs, even now sets up in our midst primeval monuments of barbaric thought and life. Its investigation tells strongly in favor of the view that the European may find among the Greenlanders or Maoris many a trait for reconstructing the picture of his own primitive ancestors. Next comes the problem of the Origin of Language. Obscure as many parts of this problem still remain, its clearer positions lie open to the investigation whether speech took its origin among mankind in the savage state, and the result of the enquiry is that, consistently with all known evidence, this may have been the case. From examination of the Art of Counting a far more definite consequence is shown. It may be confidently asserted that not only is this important art found in a rudimentary state among savage tribes, but that satisfactory evidence proves numeration to have been developed by a rational invention from this low stage up to that in which we ourselves possess it. The examination of Mythology contained in the first volume is for the most part made from a special point of view, on evidence collected for a special purpose, that of tracing the relation between the myths of savage tribes and their analogues among more civilized nations. The issue of such enquiry goes far to prove that the earliest myth-maker arose and flourished among savage hordes, setting on foot an art which his more cultured successors would carry on, till its results came to be fossilized in superstition, mistaken for history, shaped and draped in poetry, or cast aside as lying folly.

²⁷ These passages contain numerous examples of the use of the comparative method, which is held together, of course, by the belief in the psychic unity of humankind. If the presumption of psychic unity was incorrect, there would be no reason for societies to have followed the same stages of cultural evolution.

²⁸ Degenerationism was a popular idea of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that is explained on page 5. Tylor felt that degeneration of particular societies was possible, but he held that the general path of human society was progress, not degeneration.

Nowhere, perhaps, are broad views of historical development more needed than in the study of religion.²⁹ Notwithstanding all that has been written to make the world acquainted with the lower theologies, the popular ideas of their place in history and their relation to the faiths of higher nations are still of the mediæval type. It is wonderful to contrast some missionary journals with Max Muller's Essays, and to set the unappreciating hatred and ridicule that is lavished by narrow hostile zeal on Brahmanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrism, beside the catholic sympathy with which deep and wide knowledge can survey those ancient and noble phases of man's religious consciousness; nor, because the religions of savage tribes may be rude and primitive compared with the great Asiatic systems, do they lie too low for interest and even for respect. The question really lies between understanding and misunderstanding them. Few who will give their minds to master the general principles of savage religion will ever again think it ridiculous, or the knowledge of it superfluous to the rest of mankind. Far from its beliefs and practices being a rubbish-heap of miscellaneous folly, they are consistent and logical in so high a degree as to begin, as soon as even roughly classified, to display the principles of their formation and development; and these principles prove to be essentially rational, though working in a mental condition of intense and inveterate ignorance. It is with a sense of attempting an investigation which bears very closely on

the current theology of our own day, that I have set myself to examine systematically, among the lower races, the development of Animism; that is to say, the doctrine of souls and other spiritual beings in general. More than half of the present work is occupied with a mass of evidence from all regions of the world, displaying the nature and meaning of this great element of the Philosophy of Religion, and tracing its transmission, expansion, restriction, modification, along the course of history into the midst of our own modern thought. Nor are the questions of small practical moment which have to be raised in a similar attempt to trace the development of certain prominent Rites and Ceremonies—customs so full of instruction as to the inmost powers of religion, whose outward expression and practical result they are.

In these investigations, however, made rather from an ethnographic than a theological point of view, there has seemed little need of entering into direct controversial argument, which indeed I have taken pains to avoid as far as possible.³⁰ The connexion which runs through religion, from its rudest forms up to the status of an enlightened Christianity, may be conveniently treated of with little recourse to dogmatic theology. The rites of sacrifice and purification may be studied in their stages of development without entering into questions of their authority and value, nor does an examination of the successive phases of the world's belief in a future life demand a discussion of the arguments adduced for or against the

²⁹ This and the following paragraphs introduce much of the rest of *Primitive Culture*, which is devoted to an analysis of religion. Many of Tylor's contemporaries suggested that since primitive religion was illogical and irrational, it did not lend itself to scientific study. These included Lewis Henry Morgan, who, though he did write on Iroquois beliefs, considered all primitive religion "to some extent unintelligible" (see essay 3). Tylor, on the other hand, asserted that, properly understood, primitive religious beliefs had rational bases. He further insisted that the development of religion, like most everything else, followed progressive, evolutionary laws. In much of the book that follows, Tylor traced what he believed was the evolution of religion from animism (a term he coined) to "enlightened Christianity."

³⁰ Tylor is careful to distinguish his ethnographic work from a theological defense of or attack on particular beliefs. However, notice the passage here about his evidence taking its legitimate place. Tylor believed that rational, scientific knowledge had historically displaced religious belief. Although Tylor was certainly no atheist, he implies that many of the religious practices of his own day are survivals of early humans' misunderstanding of the world. Note the anticlerical undercurrents in these passages. Tylor obliquely implies that Christianity itself was a survival and would not survive rational examination.

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doctrine itself. The ethnographic results may then be left as materials for professed theologians, and it will not perhaps be long before evidence so fraught with meaning shall take its legitimate place. To fall back once again on the analogy of natural history, the time may soon come when it will be thought as unreasonable for a scientific student of theology not to have a competent acquaintance with the principles of the religions of the lower races, as for a physiologist to look with the contempt of fifty years ago on evidence derived from the lower forms of life, deeming the structure of mere invertebrate creatures matter unworthy of his philosophic study.

Not merely as a matter of curious research, but as an important practical guide to the understanding of the present and the shaping of the future, the investigation into the origin and early development of civilization must be pushed on zealously. Every possible avenue of knowledge must be explored, every door tried to see if it is open. No kind of evidence need be left untouched on the score of remoteness or complexity, of minuteness or triviality. The tendency of modern enquiry is more and more toward the conclusion that if law is anywhere, it is everywhere. To despair of what a conscientious collection and study of facts may lead to, and to declare any problem insoluble because difficult and far off, is distinctly to be on the wrong side in science; and he who will choose a hopeless task may set himself to discover the limits of discovery. One remembers Comte starting in his account of astronomy with a

remark on the necessary limitation of our knowledge of the stars: we conceive, he tells us, the possibility of determining their form, distance, size, and movement, whilst we should never by any method be able to study their chemical composition, their mineralogical structure, &c. Had the philosopher lived to see the application of spectrum analysis to this very problem his proclamation of the dispiriting doctrine of necessary ignorance would perhaps have been recanted in favor of a more hopeful view. And it seems to be with the philosophy of remote human life somewhat as with the study of the nature of the celestial bodies. The processes to be made out in the early stages of our mental evolution lie distant from us in time as the stars lie distant from us in space, but the laws of the universe are not limited with the direct observation of our senses. There is vast material to be used in our enquiry; many workers are now busied in bringing this material into shape, though little may have yet been done in proportion to what remains to do; and already it seems not too much to say that the vague outlines of a philosophy of *primaeva* history are beginning to come within our view.³¹

NOTE

^aBlackstone, "Commentaries," "As every man's own blood is compounded of the bloods of his respective ancestors, he only is properly of the whole or entire blood with another, who hath (so far as the distance of degrees will permit), all the same ingredients in the composition of his blood that the other hath," etc.

³¹ Tylor had an important influence on both his generation and future generations of anthropologists, but his attempt to establish anthropology as a university discipline was largely frustrated. Backed by wealthy and influential friends, he held university positions at Oxford from 1884 until his death and received a knighthood in 1912, but a permanent position in anthropology was not established

at Oxford during his lifetime. Many American anthropologists, particularly Boas and his students, rejected Tylor's work. However, some, including Leslie White and his students, looked to Tylor for inspiration. Notice the similarity between this paragraph and the last paragraph of White's "Energy and the Evolution of Culture" (essay 18), written more than seventy years later.

3. Ethnical Periods

LEWIS HENRY MORGAN (1818-1881)

THE LATEST INVESTIGATIONS respecting the early condition of the human race are tending to the conclusion that mankind commenced their career at the bottom of the scale and worked their way up from savagery to civilization through the slow accumulations of experimental knowledge.¹

As it is undeniable that portions of the human family have existed in a state of savagery, other portions in a state of barbarism, and still other portions in a state of civilization, it seems equally so that these three distinct conditions are connected with each other in a natural as well as necessary sequence of progress. Moreover, that this sequence has been historically true of the entire human family, up to the status attained by each branch respectively, is rendered probable by the conditions under which all progress occurs, and by the known advancement of several branches of the family through two or more of these conditions.

An attempt will be made in the following pages to bring forward additional evidence of the rudeness of the early condition of mankind, of the gradual evolution of their mental and moral powers through experience, and of their protracted struggle with opposing obstacles while winning their way to civilization. It will be drawn, in part, from the great sequence of inventions

and discoveries which stretches along the entire pathway of human progress; but chiefly from domestic institutions, which express the growth of certain ideas and passions.²

As we re-ascend along the several lines of progress toward the primitive ages of mankind, and eliminate one after the other, in the order in which they appeared, inventions and discoveries on the one hand, and institutions on the other, we are enabled to perceive that the former stand to each other in progressive, and the latter in unfolding relations. While the former class have had a connection, more or less direct, the latter have been developed from a few primary germs of thought. Modern institutions plant their roots in the period of barbarism, into which their germs were transmitted from the previous period of savagery. They have had a lineal descent through the ages, with the streams of the blood, as well as a logical development.³

Two independent lines of investigations thus invite our attention. The one leads through inventions and discoveries, and the other through primary institutions. With the knowledge gained therefrom, we may hope to indicate the principal stages of human development. The proofs to be adduced will be drawn chiefly from domestic

From *Ancient Society* (1877)

¹ In this first paragraph, Morgan shows that he, like other nineteenth-century anthropologists, viewed cultural evolution as progressive. His statement that humans worked their way up "to civilization through the slow accumulations of experimental knowledge" sounds very much as though he had Charles Darwin's theory of evolution by natural selection on his mind when he wrote this chapter.

² A common belief among social scientists of Morgan's day was that cultural evolution referred not only to technological progress but also to moral development. Notice that Morgan speaks of "winning" civilization. The influence of Darwin's concept of evolution as a battle for survival is evident in Morgan's characterization of cultural evolution as a "protracted struggle."

³ Morgan's comment on the lineal descent of institutions through the ages refers to two different aspects of his thought. Morgan was well acquainted with *The Geological Evidence for the Antiquity of Man* by Sir Charles Lyell (1797-1875) (Tooker 1992). Thus, he was versed in the latest geological evidence demonstrating that the earth and human beings were ancient far beyond biblical projections, and he was able to incorporate this time scale in his evolutionary theory. Second, Morgan's reference to "germs of thought" refers to his belief that there were universal ideas, which, like seeds, would germinate and blossom in the proper environment. Because Morgan, like Tylor, accepted this concept of the psychic unity of humankind, he believed that unilineal evolution was "natural and necessary."

institutions; the references to achievements more strictly intellectual being general as well as subordinate.⁴

The facts indicate the gradual formation and subsequent development of certain ideas, passions, and aspirations. Those which hold the most prominent positions may be generalized as growths of the particular ideas with which they severally stand connected. Apart from inventions and discoveries they are the following:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| I. Subsistence, | V. Religion, |
| II. Government, | VI. House Life and |
| III. Language, | Architecture, |
| IV. The Family, | VII. Property. |

First. Subsistence has been increased and perfected by a series of successive arts, introduced at long intervals of time, and connected more or less directly with inventions and discoveries.⁵

Second. The germ of government must be sought in the organization into gentes⁶ in the Status of savagery; and followed down, through the advancing forms of this institution, to the establishment of political society.

Third. Human speech seems to have been developed from the rudest and simplest forms of expression. Gesture or sign language, as intimated by Lucretius,⁷ must have preceded articulate language, as thought preceded speech. The monosyllabical preceded the syllabical, as the latter did that of concrete words. Human intelligence, unconscious of design, evolved articulate language by utilizing the vocal sounds. This great subject, a department of knowledge by itself, does not fall within the scope of the present investigation.⁷

Fourth. With respect to the family, the stages of its growth are embodied in systems of consanguinity and affinity, and in usages relating to marriage, by means of which, collectively, the family can be definitely traced through several successive forms.

Fifth. The growth of religious ideas is environed with such intrinsic difficulties that it may never receive a perfectly satisfactory exposition. Religion deals so largely with the imaginative and emotional nature, and consequently with such uncertain elements of knowledge, that all primitive religions are grotesque and to some extent

⁴ Morgan was interested in the evolution of culture as a pan-human event but divides the evidence used in his analysis. He proposed to trace the development of "inventions and discoveries" but considered them subordinate to the development of "primary institutions," such as subsistence, government, language, and property, that were transmitted by germs of thought. Morgan believed that inventions and discoveries were correlated with stages of cultural evolution but developed by different processes. He wrote that inventions and discoveries had a direct, progressive relationship and were connected to developments in subsistence. However, the primary institutions have "unfolding relations." They were seeded as germs of thought in the period of Savagery, germinated in the period of Barbarism, and flowered in Civilization. Although Morgan lists seven of these institutions, the one on which he placed the greatest importance was subsistence. In Morgan's view, it was developments in subsistence that lay behind evolutionary progress.

⁵ The keys to cultural evolution, according to Morgan, were techniques of food production, which distinguished humans from other animals. As a result, he devoted a chapter of *Ancient Society* to outlining the development of different types of subsistence and their role in cultural evolution. Morgan speculated that human beings first

subsisted by gathering wild vegetable foods, which meant that people were originally found in tropical climates. His conjecture is surprisingly accurate: modern paleontological research indicates that early human ancestors were foragers on the savannas of Africa. The primary place of subsistence in Morgan's work was adopted later by cultural ecological thinkers such as Julian Steward (essay 19), as well as many contemporary materialists.

⁶ *Gentes*: Latin for a patrilineal clan.

⁷ As indicated by his reference to the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius (96?–55 B.C.E.), Morgan subscribed to the popular idea that evolution proceeded from simple to more complex forms. This idea is expressed here in the comment that gestural forms of communication are more primitive than speech. Morgan believed that forms of communication could be ranked and that primitive people spoke primitive languages. This notion survives today in ideas about the linguistic poverty of the poor or the inferiority of nonstandard forms of English. In fact, forms of communication such as American Sign Language are just as complex and expressive as spoken language. Edward Sapir, a student of Boas, attacked the idea of simple and complex languages when he developed the notion of linguistic relativism. For Boasians, all languages were equally evolved.

unintelligible. This subject also falls without the plan of this work excepting as it may prompt incidental suggestions.⁸

Sixth. House architecture, which connects itself with the form of the family and the plan of domestic life, affords a tolerably complete illustration of progress from savagery to civilization. Its growth can be traced from the hut of the savage, through the communal houses of the barbarians, to the house of the single family of civilized nations, with all the successive links by which one extreme is connected with the other. This subject will be noticed incidentally.

Lastly. The idea of property was slowly formed in the human mind, remaining nascent and feeble through immense periods of time. Springing into life in savagery, it required all the experience of this period of barbarism to develop the germ, and to prepare the human brain for the acceptance of its controlling influence. Its dominance as a passion over all other passions marks the commencement of civilization. It not only led mankind to overcome the obstacles which delayed civilization, but to establish political society on the basis of territory and of property. A critical knowledge of the evolution of the idea of property would embody, in some respects, the most remarkable portion of the mental history of mankind.⁹

It will be my object to present some evidence of human progress along these several lines, and

through successive ethnical periods, as it is revealed by inventions and discoveries, and by the growth of the ideas of government, of the family, and of property.

It may be here premised that all forms of government are reducible to two general plans, using the word plan in its scientific sense. In their bases the two are fundamentally distinct. The first, in the order of time, is founded upon persons, and upon relations purely personal, and may be distinguished as a society (*societas*). The gens is the unit of this organization; giving as the successive stages of integration, in the archaic period, the gens, the phratry, the tribe, and the confederacy of tribes, which constituted a people or nation (*populus*).¹⁰ At a later period a coalescence of tribes in the same area into a nation took the place of a confederacy of tribes occupying independent areas. Such, through prolonged ages, after the gens appeared, was the substantially universal organization of ancient society; and it remained among the Greeks and Romans after civilization supervened. The second is founded upon territory and upon property, and may be distinguished as a state (*civitas*). The township or ward, circumscribed by metes and bounds, with the property it contains, is the basis or unit of the latter, and political society is the result. Political society is organized upon territorial areas, and deals with property as well as

⁸ The idea that religion was not fit for scientific study because it was "imaginative and emotional" was common among nineteenth-century anthropologists. However, it was specifically rejected by E. B. Tylor, who attempted to trace the evolutionary history of religion in his book *Primitive Culture* (see essay 2).

⁹ Morgan's assertion that the concept of property led to the beginning of civilization as well as the establishment of political organizations may have had its origin in the work of John Locke, but it dovetails nicely with Marxist concerns. One can see why Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were so interested in Morgan's work. Marx read and extensively annotated *Ancient Society* but died before he was able to publish anything about it. Thus, it was Engels who had the task of integrating Morgan into Marxist theory. Engels believed that, in *Ancient Society*, Morgan had developed a materialist conception of history. Further, Engels claimed that Morgan's comparisons of different societies had led him to the same conclusions as Marx

(Resek 1960:161). In 1884, Engels, working from Marx's annotations, published *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which he subtitled *In the Light of the Researches of Lewis Henry Morgan*. There, he claimed Morgan had proven Marx's theory by demonstrating that private property and the state were only passing phases in the continuing evolution of human society. Although Engels believed *Ancient Society* confirmed the truth of Marxist analysis, Morgan was not a Marxist. His ideas of psychic unity and unilineal evolution are very different from Marx's notions that human nature is contingent and created through labor (see pages 57-58).

¹⁰ *Gens* and *gentes* are synonymous terms for patrilineal clans. A *phratry* is a unilineal descent group composed of related clans. Morgan postulated that there were two basic forms of government: those based on kinship and those based on property. He believed that the modern state was founded upon notions of territory and property rather than kinship.

with persons through territorial relations. The successive stages of integration are the township or ward, which is the unit of organization; the county or province, which is an aggregation of townships or wards; and the national domain or territory, which is an aggregation of counties or provinces; the people of each of which are organized into a body politic. It taxed the Greeks and Romans to the extent of their capacities, after they had gained civilization, to invent the deme or township and the city ward; and thus inaugurate the second great plan of government, which remains among civilized nations to the present hour. In ancient society this territorial plan was unknown. When it came in it fixed the boundary line between ancient and modern society, as the distinction will be recognized in these pages.

It may be further observed that the domestic institutions of the barbarous, and even of the savage ancestors of mankind, are still exemplified in portions of the human family with such completeness that, with the exception of the strictly primitive period, the several stages of this progress are tolerably well preserved. They are seen in the organization of society upon the basis of sex, then upon the basis of kin, and finally upon the basis

of territory;¹¹ through the successive forms of marriage and of the family, with the systems of consanguinity thereby created; through house life and architecture; and through progress in usages with respect to the ownership and inheritance of property.¹²

The theory of human degradation to explain the existence of savages and of barbarians is no longer tenable. It came in as a corollary from the Mosaic cosmogony, and was acquiesced in from a supposed necessity which no longer exists. As a theory, it is not only incapable of explaining the existence of savages, but it is without support in the facts of human experience.¹³

The remote ancestors of the Aryan nations presumptively passed through an experience similar to that of existing barbarous and savage tribes. Though the experience of these nations embodies all the information necessary to illustrate the periods of civilization, both ancient and modern, together with a part of that in the Later period of barbarism, their anterior experience must be deduced, in the main, from the traceable connection between the elements of their existing institutions and inventions, and similar elements still preserved in those of savage and barbarous tribes.¹⁴

¹¹ When Morgan mentions the preservation of earlier stages that can be seen in the organization of society on the basis of sex, then kin, he is referring to the work of Johann J. Bachofen. Bachofen (1815–1887) was a lawyer and a scholar in classical mythology. He and Morgan were intimately familiar with each other's work. Morgan's descriptions of the matrilineal Iroquois in his book *The League of the Iroquois* (1851) provided Bachofen with ethnographic data to support the theory he outlined in his major work *Das Mutterrecht, or Mother Right* (1861). In *Mother Right* (1861) Bachofen proposed that in its earliest state, society was organized and controlled by women. Only later did men assert themselves to form patriarchal, patrilineal societies. Following Bachofen's scheme, Morgan assumed that matrilineal societies such as the Iroquois were representative of an earlier stage of political evolution.

¹² Morgan considered primitive societies to be living fossils and assumed that they resembled earlier stages in the development of Western society. Because simple societies, such as foraging bands, are structured by kinship

ties, Morgan assumed that similar structures characterized the earliest stages of political evolution in the "archaic" (pre-savagery) period.

¹³ The "theory of degradation," or degenerationism, was based on the Old Testament book of Genesis (Morgan's "Mosaic cosmogony"). The theory is explained on page 5. A leading degenerationist, W. Cooke Taylor outlined this view in *Natural History of Society* (1840). He "insisted upon a literal sequence of fall, flood, Babel, and diaspora. Some groups thereafter degenerated in savagery, but others, aided by God, progressed towards new heights of civilization" (Harris 1968:58). The "supposed necessity" Morgan mentions here refers to the view that there had been a relatively brief period of time since creation. He is saying that Lyell's work in geology has discredited degenerationism, making a biblical explanation of civilization unnecessary.

¹⁴ Although he does not make it explicit, Morgan is referring in this paragraph to E. B. Tylor's concept of survivals. For more on survivals, refer to essay 2.

It may be remarked finally that the experience of mankind has run in nearly uniform channels; that human necessities in similar conditions have been substantially the same; and that the operations of the mental principle have been uniform in virtue of the specific identity of the brain of all the races of mankind. This, however, is but a part of the explanation of uniformity in results. The germs of the principal institutions and arts of life were developed while man was still a savage. To a very great extent the experience of the subsequent periods of barbarism and of civilization have been expended in the further development of these original conceptions. Wherever a connection can be traced on different continents between a present institution and a common germ, the derivation of the people themselves from a common original stock is implied.¹⁵

The discussion of these several classes of facts will be facilitated by the establishment of a certain number of Ethnical Periods; each representing a distinct condition of society, and distinguishable by a mode of life peculiar to itself. The terms "Age of Stone," "of Bronze," and "of Iron," introduced by Danish archaeologists, have been extremely useful for certain purposes, and will remain so for the classification of objects of ancient art; but the progress of knowledge has

rendered other and different subdivisions necessary. Stone implements were not entirely laid aside with the introduction of tools of iron, nor of those of bronze. The invention of the process of smelting iron ore created an ethnical epoch, yet we could scarcely date another from the production of bronze. Moreover, since the period of stone implements overlaps those of bronze and of iron, and since that of bronze also overlaps that of iron, they are not capable of a circumscription that would leave each independent and distinct.¹⁶

It is probable that the successive arts of subsistence which arose at long intervals will ultimately, from the great influence they must have exercised upon the condition of mankind, afford the most satisfactory bases for these divisions. But investigation has not been carried far enough in this direction to yield the necessary information. With our present knowledge the main result can be attained by selecting such other inventions or discoveries as will afford sufficient tests of progress to characterize the commencement of successive ethnical periods. Even though accepted as provisional, these periods will be found convenient and useful. Each of those about to be proposed will be found to cover a distinct culture, and to represent a particular mode of life.¹⁷

¹⁵ The "uniform mental principle" Morgan mentions here reflects his belief in the psychic unity of humankind. Like Tylor before him, Morgan argued that unilineal evolution occurred because human thinking follows a universal course of development. But as the second half of this paragraph shows, Morgan was aware that cross-cultural similarities may imply that people share a common origin or that ideas can spread through diffusion. The concept of diffusion was popularized, at the turn of this century, by the German anthropogeographer Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) and his student Leo Frobenius (1873–1938). It was carried to an extreme in the first decades of the twentieth century by such radical diffusionists as the Englishmen Grafton Elliot Smith (1871–1937) and W. J. Perry (1887–1949), who proposed that all world culture had begun in Egypt and diffused from that source (Smith 1928). Additionally, when Morgan wrote that "human necessities in similar conditions have been substantially the same," he anticipated the concept of cul-

tural types outlined in Julian Steward's theory of multilinear evolution sixty years later (see essay 19).

¹⁶ The terms *Stone Age*, *Bronze Age*, and *Iron Age* were introduced by the first curator of the Danish National Museum, Christian J. Thomsen, in order to chronologically rank European artifacts in an 1807 exhibit. This "three-age system," as it came to be known, was soon widely used throughout Europe (Fagan 1989:34).

¹⁷ Morgan's goal was to outline the stages of cultural evolution. He proposed that the transition between stages could be marked by the acquisition of certain kin patterns and modes of subsistence and the development of certain technological innovations. Half a century later, this insight would be essential in the work of the neoevolutionists Leslie White and Julian Steward, who examined cultural evolution in relation to subsistence and technology (essays 18 and 19). In the next several paragraphs Morgan outlines his design for separating one stage of cultural evolution from another.

The period of savagery, of the early part of which very little is known, may be divided, provisionally, into three subperiods. These may be named respectively the *Older*, the *Middle*, and the *Later* period of savagery; and the condition of society in each, respectively, may be distinguished as the *Lower*, the *Middle*, and the *Upper Status* of savagery.

In like manner, the period of barbarism divides naturally into three sub-periods, which will be called, respectively, the *Older*, the *Middle*, and the *Later* period of barbarism; and the condition of society in each, respectively, will be distinguished as the *Lower*, the *Middle*, and the *Upper Status* of barbarism.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to find such tests of progress to mark the commencement of these several periods as will be found absolute in their application, and without exceptions upon all the continents. Neither is it necessary, for the purpose in hand, that exceptions should not exist. It will be sufficient if the principal tribes of mankind can be classified, according to the degree of their relative progress, into conditions which can be recognized as distinct.

I. LOWER STATUS OF SAVAGERY¹⁸

This period commenced with the infancy of the human race, and may be said to have ended with the acquisition of a fish subsistence and of a knowledge of the use of fire. Mankind were then living in their original restricted habitat, and subsisting upon fruits and nuts. The commencement of articulate speech belongs to this period. No exemplification of tribes of mankind in this condition remained to the historical period.

¹⁸ Here Morgan begins to outline the factors upon which he distinguishes the stages of cultural evolution. Much of the criticism of his theory was based on the fact that Morgan's system created illogical groupings, lumping

II. MIDDLE STATUS OF SAVAGERY

It commenced with the acquisition of a fish subsistence and a knowledge of the use of fire, and ended with the invention of the bow and arrow. Mankind, while in this condition, spread from their original habitat over the greater portion of the earth's surface. Among tribes still existing it will leave in the Middle Status of savagery, for example, the Australians and the greater part of the Polynesians when discovered. It will be sufficient to give one or more exemplifications of each status.

III. UPPER STATUS OF SAVAGERY

It commenced with the invention of the bow and arrow, and ended with the invention of the art of pottery. It leaves in the Upper Status of Savagery the Athapaskan tribes of the Hudson's Bay Territory, the tribes of the valley of the Columbia, and certain coast tribes of North and South America; but with relation to the time of their discovery. This closes the period of Savagery.

IV. LOWER STATUS OF BARBARISM

The invention or practice of the art of pottery, all things considered, is probably the most effective and conclusive test that can be selected to fix a boundary line, necessarily arbitrary, between savagery and barbarism. The distinctness of the two conditions has long been recognized, but no criterion of progress out of the former into the latter has hitherto been brought forward. All such tribes, then, as never attained to the art of pottery will be classed as savages, and those possessing this art but who never attained a phonetic alphabet and the use of writing will be classed as barbarians.

together societies that we now consider to have vastly different levels of social organization. This critique was first pointed out by Franz Boas in the early part of this century (see footnote 21).

The first sub-period of barbarism commenced with the manufacture of pottery, whether by original invention or adoption. In finding its termination, and the commencement of the Middle Status, a difficulty is encountered in the unequal endowments of the two hemispheres, which began to be influential upon human affairs after the period of savagery had passed. It may be met, however, by the adoption of equivalents. In the Eastern hemisphere, the domestication of animals, and the Western, the cultivation of maize and plants by irrigation, together with the use of adobe-brick and stone in house building have been selected as sufficient evidence of progress to work a transition out of the Lower and into the Middle Status of barbarism. It leaves, for example, in the Lower Status, the Indian tribes of the United States east of the Missouri River, and such tribes of Europe and Asia as practiced the art of pottery, but were without domestic animals.

V. MIDDLE STATUS OF BARBARISM

It commenced with the domestication of animals in the Eastern hemisphere, and in the Western with cultivation by irrigation and with the use of adobe-brick and stone in architecture, as shown. Its termination may be fixed with the invention of the process of smelting iron ore. This places in the Middle Status, for example, the Village Indians of New Mexico, Mexico, Central America and Peru, and such tribes in the Eastern hemisphere as possessed domestic animals but were without a knowledge of iron. The ancient Britons, although familiar with the use of iron, fairly belong in this connection. The vicinity of more advanced continental tribes had advanced the arts of life among them far beyond the state of development of their domestic institutions.¹⁹

¹⁹ A society's evolutionary stage was gauged by its technology, subsistence pattern, and kin and family structure together. Consequently, although groups such as the ancient Britons had acquired technological achievements

VI. UPPER STATUS OF BARBARISM

It commenced with the manufacture of iron, and ended with the invention of a phonetic alphabet, and the use of writing in literary composition. Here civilization begins. This leaves in the Upper Status, for example, the Grecian tribes of the Homeric age, the Italian tribes shortly before the founding of Rome, and the Germanic tribes of the time of Caesar.

VII. STATUS OF CIVILIZATION

It commenced, as stated, with the use of a phonetic alphabet and the production of literary records, and divides into *Ancient* and *Modern*. As an equivalent, hieroglyphical writing upon stone may be admitted.

RECAPITULATION

Periods.	Conditions.
I. <i>Older Period of Savagery,</i>	I. <i>Lower Status of Savagery,</i>
II. <i>Middle Period of Savagery,</i>	II. <i>Middle Status of Savagery,</i>
III. <i>Later Period of Savagery,</i>	III. <i>Upper Status of Savagery,</i>
IV. <i>Older Period of Barbarism,</i>	IV. <i>Lower Status of Barbarism,</i>
V. <i>Middle Period of Barbarism,</i>	V. <i>Middle Status of Barbarism,</i>
VI. <i>Later Period of Barbarism,</i>	VI. <i>Upper Status of Barbarism,</i>

of more advanced societies, such as the use of iron (diagnostic of Upper Barbarism), Morgan believes that the development of their domestic institutions places them squarely in the stage of Middle Barbarism.

VII. Status of Civilization.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| I. Lower Status of Savagery, | <i>From the Infancy of the Human Race to the commencement of the next Period.</i> |
| II. Middle Status of Savagery, | <i>From the acquisition of a fish subsistence and a knowledge of the use of fire, to etc.</i> |
| III. Upper Status of Savagery, | <i>From the Invention of the Bow and Arrow, to etc.</i> |
| IV. Lower Status of Barbarism, | <i>From the Invention of the Art of Pottery, to etc.</i> |
| V. Middle Status of Barbarism, | <i>From the Domestication of animals on the Eastern hemisphere, and in the Western from the cultivation of maize and plants by Irrigation, with the use of adobe-brick and stone, to etc.</i> |
| VI. Upper Status of Barbarism, | <i>From the Invention of the process of Smelting Iron Ore, with the use of iron tools, to etc.</i> |
| VII. Status of Civilization, | <i>From the Invention of a Phonetic Alphabet, with the use of writing, to the present time.</i> |

Each of these periods has a distinct culture and exhibits a mode of life more or less special and peculiar to itself. This specialization of ethnical periods renders it possible to treat a particular society according to its condition of relative advancement, and to make it a subject of independent study and discussion. It does not affect the main result that different tribes and nations on the same continent, and even of the same linguistic family, are in different conditions at the same time, since for our purpose the *condition* of each is the material fact, the *time* being immaterial.

Since the use of pottery is less significant than that of domestic animals, of iron, or of a phonetic alphabet, employed to mark the commencement of subsequent ethnical periods, the reasons for its adoption should be stated. The manufacture of pottery presupposes village life, and considerable progress in the simple arts.^b Flint and stone implements are older than pottery, remains of the former having been found in ancient repositories in numerous instances unaccompanied by the latter. A succession of inventions of greater need and adapted to a lower condition must have occurred before the want of pottery would be felt. The commencement of village life, with some degree of control over subsistence, wooden vessels and utensils, finger weaving with filaments of bark, basket making, and the bow and arrow make their appearance before the art of pottery. The Village Indians who were in the Middle Status of barbarism, such as the Zuñians, the Aztecs and the Cholutans, manufactured pottery in large quantities and in many forms of considerable excellence; the partially Village Indians of the United States, who were in the Lower Status of barbarism, such as the Iroquois, the Choc-tas, and the Cherokees, made it in smaller quantities and in a limited number of forms; but the non-horticultural Indians, who were in the Status of savagery, such as the Athapascans, the tribes of California and of the valley of the Columbia, were ignorant of its use.^c In Lubbock's *Pre-Historic Times*, in Tylor's *Early History of Mankind*, and in Peschel's *Races of Man*, the particulars respecting this art, and the extent of its distribution, have been collected with remarkable breadth of research. It was unknown in Polynesia (with the exception of the Islands of the Tongans and Fijians), in Australia, in California, and in the Hudson's Bay Territory. Mr. Tylor remarks that "the art of weaving was unknown in most of the Islands away from Asia," and that "in most of the South Sea Islands there was no knowledge of pottery."^d The Rev. Lorimer Fison, an English missionary residing in Australia, informed the author in answer to inquiries, that "the Australians had no woven fabrics, no pottery, and

were ignorant of the bow and arrow."²⁰ This last fact was also true in general of the Polynesians.²¹ The introduction of the ceramic art produced a new epoch in human progress in the direction of an improved living and increased domestic conveniences. While flint and stone implements—which came in earlier and required long periods of time to develop all their uses—gave the canoe, wooden vessels and utensils, and ultimately timber and plank in house architecture,^e pottery gave a durable vessel for boiling food, which before that had been rudely accomplished in baskets coated with clay, and in ground cavities lined with skin, the boiling being effected with heated stones.^f

Whether the pottery of the aborigines was hardened by fire or cured by the simple process of drying, has been made a question. Prof E. T. Cox, of Indianapolis, has shown by comparing the analyses of ancient pottery and hydraulic cements, "that so far as chemical constituents are concerned it (the pottery) agrees very well with the composition of hydraulic stones." He remarks further, that "all the pottery belonging to the mound-builders' age, which I have seen, is composed of alluvial clay and sand, or a mixture of the former with pulverized freshwater shells. A paste made of such a mixture possesses in a high degree the properties of hydraulic Puzzuolani and Portland cement, so that vessels formed of it

hardened without being burned, as is customary with modern pottery. The fragments of shells served the purpose of gravel or fragments of stone as at present used in connection with hydraulic lime for the manufacture of artificial stone."^g The composition of Indian pottery in analogy with that of hydraulic cement suggests the difficulties in the way of inventing the art, and tends also to explain the lateness of its introduction in the course of human experience. Notwithstanding the ingenious suggestion of Prof. Cox, it is probable that pottery was hardened by artificial heat. In some cases the fact is directly attested. Thus Adair, speaking of the Gulf Tribes, remarks that "they make earthen pots of very different sizes, so as to contain from two to ten gallons, large pitchers to carry water, bowls, dishes, platters, basins, and a prodigious number of other vessels of such antiquated forms as would be tedious to describe, and impossible to name. Their method of glazing them is, they place them over a large fire of smoky pitch-pine, which makes them smooth, black and firm."^h

Another advantage of fixing definite ethnical periods is the direction of special investigation to those tribes and nations which afford the best exemplification of each status, with the view of making each both standard and illustrative. Some tribes and families have been left in geographical isolation to work out the problems of

²⁰ Morgan cites Lubbock and Fison, whose work was an important influence on his own. John Lubbock (1834–1913), also known as Lord Avebury, was an amateur ethnologist and natural historian. A prosperous banker and liberal member of Parliament, Lubbock also served as president of the Royal Anthropological Institute and Ethnological Society of London. His boyhood home was near that of Darwin, and Lubbock became close friends with Darwin and a staunch defender of the *Origin of Species*. Lubbock developed an evolutionary theory of human society based on his study of European and North American archaeology. He proposed a natural progression of social evolution from the primitive to the civilized, and he coined the terms *paleolithic* and *neolithic*. He published his ideas in *Prehistoric Times* (1865) and *The Origin of Civilization* (1870).

Lorimer Fison (1832–1907) was a missionary, journalist, and anthropologist. Morgan's studies of kinship were based on extensive questionnaires sent to European travel-

ers and missionaries throughout the world. While in Fiji in 1869, Fison received one of these questionnaires. It drew his interest to anthropology and he became an ardent follower of Morgan, with whom he corresponded extensively. Fison's research into Australian aboriginal kinship systems, based on interviews with European settlers, provided important data for E. B. Tylor, J. G. Frazer, and Émile Durkheim as well as Morgan.

²¹ Morgan's critics cited his placement of the Polynesians in Middle Savagery together with Australian Aborigines as an example of an illogical grouping created by his theory. Aboriginal society was organized by family-based foraging bands. Polynesian society, though without pottery or the technological innovations Morgan mentions here, was composed of highly stratified chiefdoms and was far more complex.

progress by original mental effort; and have, consequently, retained their arts and institutions pure and homogeneous; while those of other tribes and nations have been adulterated through external influence. Thus, while Africa was and is an ethnical chaos of savagery and barbarism, Australia and Polynesia were in savagery, pure and simple, with the arts and institutions belonging to that condition.²² In like manner, the Indian family of America, unlike any other existing family, exemplified the condition of mankind in three successive ethnical periods. In the undisturbed possession of a great continent, of common descent, and with homogeneous institutions, they illustrated, when discovered, each of these conditions, and especially those of the Lower and of the Middle Status of barbarism, more elaborately and completely than any other portion of mankind. The far northern Indians and some of the coast tribes of North and South America were in the Upper Status of savagery, the partially Village Indians east of the Mississippi were in the Lower Status of barbarism, and the Village Indians of North and South America were in the Middle Status. Such an opportunity to recover full and minute information of the course of human experience and progress in developing their arts and institutions through these successive conditions has not been offered within the historical period. It must be added that it has been indifferently improved. Our greatest deficiencies relate to the last period named.²³

Differences in the culture of the same period in the Eastern and Western hemispheres undoubtedly existed in consequence of the unequal endowments of the continents; but the condition

of society in the corresponding status must have been, in the main, substantially similar.

The ancestors of the Grecian, Roman, and German tribes passed through the stages we have indicated, in the midst of the last of which the light of history fell upon them. Their differentiation from the undistinguishable mass of barbarians did not occur, probably, earlier than the commencement of the Middle Period of barbarism. The experience of these tribes has been lost, with the exception of so much as is represented by the institutions, inventions and discoveries which they had brought with them, and possessed when they first came under historical observation. The Grecian and Latin tribes of the Homeric and Romulan periods afford the highest exemplification of the Upper Status of barbarism.²⁴ Their institutions were likewise pure and homogeneous, and their experience stands directly connected with the final achievement of civilization.

Commencing, then, with the Australians and Polynesians, following with the American Indian tribes, and concluding with the Roman and Grecian who afford the highest exemplifications respectively of the six great stages of human progress, the sum of their united experiences may be supposed fairly to represent that of the human family from the Middle Status of savagery to the end of ancient civilization. Consequently, the Aryan nations will find the type of the condition of their remote ancestors, when in savagery, in that of the Australians and Polynesians; when in the Lower Status of barbarism in that of the partially Village Indians of America; and when in the Middle Status in that of the Village Indians, with which their own experience in

²² Morgan believed that diffusion confused the evolutionary process. Although he believed all groups evolved along the same path, he did not claim all people were equal. Morgan contended that different races evolved at different speeds. Thus, he talks about "ethnical chaos" because, in his view, diffusion meant that some groups were exposed to other cultures that were far beyond the simpler group's evolutionary development or capabilities.

²³ Morgan had a lifelong interest in Native American culture. He studied the linguistics and kinship systems

of Native Americans and as a lawyer was active in the defense of Native American land rights. The recording of Native American culture concerned Morgan, who raises the issue in this paragraph. The fear that these cultures were disappearing motivated Franz Boas and his students to work in Native American societies in the early years of the twentieth century.

²⁴ The Homeric and Romulan periods refers to the times of Homer, the Greek poet of the eighth century B.C.E., and Romulus, mythological founder of Rome in 753 B.C.E.

the Upper Status directly connects. So essentially identical are the arts, institutions and mode of life in the same status upon all the continents, that the archaic form of the principal domestic institutions of the Greeks and Romans must even now be sought in the corresponding institution of the American aborigines, as will be shown in the course of this volume. This fact forms a part of the accumulating evidence tending to show that the principal institutions of mankind have been developed from a few primary germs of thought; and that the course and manner of their development was predetermined, as well as restricted within narrow limits

of divergence, by the natural logic of the human mind and the necessary limitations of its powers.²⁵ Progress has been found to be substantially the same in kind in tribes and nations inhabiting different and even disconnected continents, while in the same status, with deviations from uniformity in particular instances produced by special causes. The argument when extended tends to establish the unity of origin of mankind.²⁶

In studying the condition of tribes and nations in these several ethnical periods we are dealing, substantially, with the ancient history and condition of our own remote ancestors.

²⁵ One consequence of Morgan's belief that human thought was restricted along certain paths is his contention that all humans had the potential to be equal, even though this equality had not been achieved by all groups. This may explain Morgan's interest in the Iroquois and his relatively enlightened attitude toward Native Americans. Do not mistake this attitude for a belief in racial equality, however. Morgan, like most social scientists of his day, believed Caucasians were superior to other ethnic groups. Despite his respect for Native Americans, he did not consider them equal to people of northern European descent (those he calls "Aryans"). You will note that he consistently identifies the Greek, Roman, and Aryan peoples as evolving first and fastest, consigning the great African and Mesoamerican civilizations to earlier stages in his evolutionary scheme. This notion of Aryan superiority was popularized and given a "scientific" veneer by the German biologist Ernst Heinrich Haeckel, most famous for his statement of recapitulation theory, which found political expression during Adolph Hitler's rise to power in Nazi Germany. Applying the theory to ethnic groups, Haeckel argued that the "lower races" were like Caucasians during infancy. This idea is also reflected in Freud and his followers' views of people in primitive societies.

In another section of *Ancient Society* Morgan speaks of the inferior brain size of Native Americans and the "pre-eminent endowment" of the Aryan and Semitic families. This statement is racist, but Morgan was reflecting the scientific opinion of his time, which held that brain size was related to intelligence. Morgan must have been aware of the work of Dr. Samuel G. Morton, who measured the interior capacity of skull samples from different ethnic groups. In his most famous works—*Crania Americana* (1839) and *Crania Aegyptica* (1844)—Morton claimed that whites had bigger brains than any other group, from

which he concluded that they were intellectually and morally superior to those other groups. Morton's data (although not his conclusions) stood unquestioned until 1981 when Harvard biologist Stephen Jay Gould published an analysis of that data. Gould discovered that Morton had committed gross errors in sampling when he chose his selection of skulls for measurement and had incorrectly analyzed his own data. When the sampling errors were corrected and the data reanalyzed, Gould found no significant differences between the skull volumes of different ethnic groups in Morton's collection.

²⁶ Here Morgan outlines his grand vision of cultural evolution; Australians and Polynesians in savagery, various Native American groups in different stages of barbarism depending on their types of subsistence, and the Greeks and Romans as the first examples of civilization. He supported his theory through the use of the nineteenth-century doctrine of the comparative method and psychic unity. The comparative method proposed that contemporary primitive societies were like living fossils; for example, see Morgan's assertion that the principal institutions of the Greeks and Romans can be seen in archaic form in Native American societies. A clear expression of psychic unity is also found in this paragraph. Morgan states that human development is predetermined by the "natural logic of the human mind," which was based on universal "germs of thought." This doctrine of psychic unity justified the uncritical use of the comparative method, which formed the basis for the belief in unilineal theories of cultural evolution. The logic used in this argument is thus circular: Why are there universals of cultural evolution? Because of the psychic unity of humankind. How do we know psychic unity is a valid concept? Because we see common patterns of cultural development.

NOTES

^aEt pueros commendarunt mulierbreque saeculum
Vocibus, et gestu, cum balbe significarent,
Imbecillorum esse aequum miserier omnium.

—*De Rerum Natura*, lib. v, 1020.

^bMr. Edwin B. Tylor observes that Goquet "first propounded, in the last century, the notion that the way in which pottery came to be made, was that people daubed such combustible vessels as these with clay to protect them from fire, till they found that clay alone would answer the purpose, and thus the art of pottery came into the world."—*Early History of Mankind*, p. 237. Goquet relates of Capt. Gonville who visited the southeast coast of South America in 1503, that he found "their household utensils of wood, even their boiling pots, but plastered with a kind of clay, a good finger thick, which prevented the fire from burning them."—*Ib.* 273.

^cPottery has been found in aboriginal mounds in Oregon within a few years past.—Foster's *Pre-Historic Races of the United States*, I, 152. The first vessels of pottery among the Aborigines of the United States seem to have been made in baskets of rushes or willows used as moulds which were burned off after the vessel hardened.—Jones's *Antiquities of Southern Indians*, p. 461. Prof. Rau's article on *Pottery*. *Smithsonian Report*, 1866, p. 352.

^d*Early History of Mankind*, p. 181; *Pre-Historic Times*, pp. 437, 441, 462, 477, 533, 542.

^eLewis and Clarke (1805) found plank in use in houses among the tribes of the Columbia River.—*Travels*, Longman's Ed., 1814, p. 503. Mr. John Keast Lord found "cedar plank chipped from the solid tree with chisels and hatchets made of stone," in Indian houses on Vancouver's Island.—*Naturalist in British Columbia*, I, 169.

^fTylor's *Early History of Mankind*, p. 265, *et seq.*

^g*Geological Survey of Indiana*, 1873, p. 119. He gives the following analysis:

Ancient Pottery, "Bone Bank," Posey Co., Indiana.

Moisture at		Alumina,	5.00
212°F.,	1.00	Peroxide of iron,	5.50
Silica,	36.00	Sulphuric acid,	.20
Carbonate of		Organic matter	
lime,	25.50	(alkalies and	
Carbonate of		loess),	23.60
magnesia,	3.02		100.00

^h*History of the American Indians*, Lond. ed., 1775, p. 424. The Iroquois affirm that in ancient times their forefathers cured their pottery before a fire.

4. Feuerbach: Opposition of the Materialist and Idealist Outlook

KARL MARX (1818–1883) AND FRIEDRICH ENGELS (1820–1895)

THE ILLUSIONS OF GERMAN IDEOLOGY

As we hear from German ideologists, Germany has in the last few years gone through an unparalleled revolution.¹ The decomposition of the

Hegelian philosophy, which began with Strauss, has developed into a universal ferment into which all the "powers of the past" are swept. In the general chaos mighty empires have arisen only to meet with immediate doom, heroes have emerged momentarily only to be hurled back into obscurity

From *The German Ideology* (1845–1846)

¹ Marx and Engels, living in exile in Belgium, collaborated on *The German Ideology* in 1845 and 1846. They sent the manuscript to Germany for publication, but political crises prevented it from appearing. Marx later remarked that it had been abandoned to "the gnawing criticism of the mice." At the time *The German Ideology* was written, Marx and Engels were developing a thoroughly materialist worldview, which separated them from other German philosophers. This work

is the first relatively complete statement of this worldview, although the materialist position it presents is foreshadowed in works like "On the Jewish Question" (1863, orig. 1844) and "The Holy Family" (1875, orig. 1845). The complete version of *The German Ideology* was not available until the 1930s. Thus, while European and American theorists of the early twentieth century were profoundly affected by Marx, they did not have this particular work.

by bolder and stronger rivals. It was a revolution beside which the French Revolution was child's play, a world struggle beside which the struggles of the Diadochi [successors of Alexander the Great] appear insignificant. Principles ousted one another, heroes of the mind overthrew each other with unheard-of rapidity, and in the three years 1842-45 more of the past was swept away in Germany than at other times in three centuries.

All this is supposed to have taken place in the realm of pure thought.

Certainly it is an interesting event we are dealing with: the putrescence of the absolute spirit. When the last spark of its life had failed, the various components of this *caput mortuum*² began to decompose, entered into new combinations and formed new substances. The industrialists of philosophy, who till then had lived on the exploitation of the absolute spirit, now seized upon the new combinations. Each with all possible zeal set about retailing his apportioned share. This naturally gave rise to competition, which, to start with, was carried on in moderately staid bourgeois fashion. Later when the German market was glutted, and the commodity in spite of all efforts found no response in the world market, the business was spoiled in the usual German manner by fabricated and fictitious production, deterioration in quality, adulteration of the raw materials, falsification of labels, fictitious purchases, bill-jobbing and a credit system devoid of any real basis. The competition turned into a bitter struggle, which is now being extolled and interpreted to us as a revolution of world significance, the begetter of the most prodigious results and achievements.

If we wish to rate at its true value this philosophic charlatanry, which awakens even in the

breast of the honest German citizen a glow of national pride, if we wish to bring out clearly the pettiness, the parochial narrowness of this whole Young-Hegelian movement and in particular the tragicomic contrast between the illusions of these heroes about their achievements and the actual achievements themselves, we must look at the whole spectacle from a standpoint beyond the frontiers of Germany.

German criticism has, right up to its latest efforts, never quitted the realm of philosophy. Far from examining its general philosophic premises, the whole body of its inquiries has actually sprung from the soil of a definite philosophical system, that of Hegel.³ Not only in their answers but in their very questions there was a mystification. This dependence on Hegel is the reason why not one of these modern critics has even attempted a comprehensive criticism of the Hegelian system, however much each professes to have advanced beyond Hegel. Their polemics against Hegel and against one another are confined to this—each extracts one side of the Hegelian system and turns this against the whole system as well as against the sides extracted by the others. To begin with they extracted pure unfalsified Hegelian categories such as "substance" and "self-consciousness," later they desecrated these categories with more secular names such as "species," "the Unique," "Man," etc.

The entire body of German philosophical criticism from Strauss to Stirner is confined to criticism of *religious* conceptions. The critics started from real religion and actual theology. What religious consciousness and a religious conception really meant was determined variously as they went along. Their advance consisted in subsuming the allegedly dominant

² *Caput mortuum*: Latin for the head of death.

³ Marx, like all German philosophers of the nineteenth century, was profoundly influenced by the work of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Hegel was, among other things, concerned with the relationship of individuals to the state. He saw this as a spiritual process of historical development, fueled by dialectical contradiction and culminating in absolute freedom. He believed this freedom was possible under the Prussian monarchy (which, incidentally,

employed him). After Hegel's death, his followers split into two camps: the Right Hegelians and the Young Hegelians. The Right Hegelians stayed very close to Hegel's teaching. The Young Hegelians, with whom Marx associated as a young man, held on to Hegel's ideas of historical progress through contradiction but rejected the notion that freedom was possible under existing forms of the state. They supported political programs varying from liberal democracy to anarchism.

metaphysical, political, juridical, moral and other conceptions under the class of religious or theological conceptions; and similarly in pronouncing political, juridical, moral consciousness as religious or theological, and the political, juridical, moral man—"man" in the last resort—as religious. The dominance of religion was taken for granted. Gradually every dominant relationship was pronounced a religious relationship and transformed into a cult, a cult of law, a cult of the State, etc. On all sides it was only a question of dogmas and belief in dogmas. The world sanctified to an ever-increasing extent till at last our venerable Saint Max was able to canonize it *en bloc* and thus dispose of it once for all.⁴

The Old Hegelians had *comprehended* everything as soon as it was reduced to an Hegelian category. The Young Hegelians *criticized* everything by attributing to it religious conceptions or by pronouncing it a theological matter. The Young Hegelians are in agreement with the Old Hegelians in their belief in the rule of religion, of concepts, of a universal principle in the existing world. Only, the one party attacks this dominion as usurpation, while the other extols it as legitimate.

Since the Young Hegelians consider conceptions, thoughts, ideas, in fact all the products of consciousness, to which they attribute an independent existence, as the real chains of men (just as the Old Hegelians declared them the true bonds of human society) it is evident that the Young Hegelians have to fight only against

these illusions of consciousness.⁵ Since, according to their fantasy, the relationships of men, all their doings, their chains and their limitations are products of their consciousness, the Young Hegelians logically put to men the moral postulate of exchanging their present consciousness for human, critical or egoistic consciousness, and thus of removing their limitations. This demand to change consciousness amounts to a demand to interpret reality in another way, i.e. to recognize it by means of another interpretation. The Young-Hegelian ideologists, in spite of their allegedly "world-shattering" statements, are the staunchest conservatives. The most recent of them have found the correct expression for their activity when they declare they are only fighting against "*phrases*." They forget, however, that to these phrases they themselves are only opposing other phrases, and that they are in no way combating the real existing world when they are merely combating the phrases of this world. The only results which this philosophic criticism could achieve were a few (and at that thoroughly one-sided) elucidations of Christianity from the point of view of religious history;—all the rest of their assertions are only further embellishments of their claim to have furnished, in these unimportant elucidations, discoveries of universal importance.

It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection of German philosophy with German reality, the relation of their criticism to their own material surroundings.

⁴ Much of *The German Ideology* is a critique of the Young Hegelians from the left. Marx and Engels open with a biting attack on them. David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874) was an early Young Hegelian. His *Life of Jesus* (1892) held that the gospels were not literally true, but myths about early Christians. The anarchist Max Stirner (1806–1856, born Kaspar Schmidt), ridiculed here as Saint Max, bears the brunt of Marx and Engels' attack. Stirner's influential book, *The Ego and Its Own* (1918), had been published in 1844. In it, Stirner attacks Marx and Engels and calls for a thoroughly idealistic approach to changing the state—he argues that we can change society by changing our ideas about it. For Stirner, oppression and alienation are created through ideas that people accept as holy or sacred (hence

Marx and Engels' epithets "holy" and "Saint"); freedom, on the other hand, originates through the ego's creation of its own ideas. Thus people can think their way into a new society, freeing themselves from the oppressive state. For Marx and Engels, this was anathema. They believed that freedom from oppression could only be achieved through changes in the material bases of society.

⁵ Much of the controversy over Hegelian philosophy concerned the place of religion within it, but religion was largely a surrogate for discussing politics and the state, taboo subjects for debate within Germany. Marx and Engels were living in Belgium at this time and so could speak a bit more openly about German politics.

FIRST PREMISES OF MATERIALIST METHOD

The premises from which we begin are not arbitrary ones, not dogmas, but real premises from which abstraction can only be made in the imagination.⁶ They are the real individuals, their activity and the material conditions under which they live, both those which they find already existing and those produced by their activity. These premises can thus be verified in a purely empirical way.

The first premise of all human history is, of course, the existence of living human individuals. Thus the first fact to be established is the physical organization of these individuals and their consequent relation to the rest of nature. Of course, we cannot here go either into the actual physical nature of man, or into the natural conditions in which man finds himself—geological, oreohydrographical, climatic and so on. The writing of history must always set out from these natural bases and their modification in the course of history through the action of men.

Men can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to *produce* their means of subsistence, a step which is conditioned by their physical organization. By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life.⁷

The way in which men produce their means of subsistence depends first of all on the nature of the actual means of subsistence they find in

existence and have to reproduce. This mode of production must not be considered simply as being the production of the physical existence of the individuals. Rather it is a definite form of activity of these individuals, a definite form of expressing their life, a definite *mode of life* on their part. As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.⁸

This production only makes its appearance with the *increase of population*. In its turn this presupposes the *intercourse* of individuals with one another. The form of this intercourse is again determined by production.

The relations of different nations among themselves depend upon the extent to which each has developed its productive forces, the division of labour and internal intercourse. This statement is generally recognized. But not only the relation of one nation to others, but also the whole internal structure of the nation itself depends on the stage of development reached by its production and its internal and external intercourse. How far the productive forces of a nation are developed is shown most manifestly by the degree to which the division of labour has been carried. Each new productive force, insofar as it is not merely a quantitative extension of productive forces already known (for instance the bringing into cultivation of fresh land), causes a further development of the division of labour.⁹

⁶ For Hegel, and most of the Right and Young Hegelians, the world was conditioned by ideas, and history was about the progress of the human spirit. For Marx, human society was based in particular material conditions, and history was driven by conflicts at the core of society. This is the root of Marx and Engels' disagreements with Hegelians. Here and in following paragraphs they lay out a materialist understanding of the world, beginning with real people and the conditions under which they live.

⁷ The argument in this paragraph is basic to the Marx-Engels view: the thing that fundamentally distinguishes humans from animals is the manner in which they produce their livelihood, that is, labor. Other characteristics unique to humans are derived from labor.

⁸ Here Marx and Engels pursue the importance of labor further: production is more than simply feeding oneself; through labor people create their society. Since human nature is determined by the social conditions under which people live, humans, through labor, create their own nature.

⁹ Like the Hegelians, Marx and Engels believed that history had a beginning and an end. It followed a specific, scientifically knowable path. For Marx, this path was tied to modes of production and the necessary forms of property associated with each of them. These follow each other in a historically specific order. Changes in human consciousness are part of this historical progression. There can be no experience of transcendental human nature before the end of history and the emergence of a communist society.

The division of labour inside a nation leads at first to the separation of industrial and commercial from agricultural labour, and hence to the separation of *town* and *country* and to the conflict of their interests.¹⁰ Its further development leads to the separation of commercial from industrial labour. At the same time through the division of labour inside these various branches there develop various divisions among the individuals co-operating in definite kinds of labour. The relative position of these individual groups is determined by the methods employed in agriculture, industry and commerce (patriarchalism, slavery, estates, classes). These same conditions are to be seen (given a more developed intercourse) in the relations of different nations to one another.

The various stages of development in the division of labour are just so many different forms of ownership, i.e. the existing stage in the division of labour determines also the relations of individuals to one another with reference to the material, instrument, and product of labour.¹¹

The first form of ownership is tribal ownership. It corresponds to the undeveloped stage of production, at which a people lives by hunting and fishing, by the rearing of beasts or, in the highest stage, agriculture. In the latter case it presupposes a great mass of uncultivated stretches of land. The division of labour is at this stage still very elementary and is confined to a further extension of the natural division of labour existing in the family. The social structure is, therefore,

limited to an extension of the family; patriarchal family chieftains, below them the members of the tribe, finally slaves. The slavery latent in the family only develops gradually with the increase of population, the growth of wants, and with the extension of external relations, both of war and of barter.¹²

The second form is the ancient communal and State ownership which proceeds especially from the union of several tribes into a *city* by agreement or by conquest, and which is still accompanied by slavery. Beside communal ownership we already find movable, and later also immovable, private property developing, but as an abnormal form subordinate to communal ownership. The citizens hold power over their labouring slaves only in their community, and on this account alone, therefore, they are bound to the form of communal ownership. It is the communal private property which compels the active citizens to remain in this spontaneously derived form of association over against their slaves. For this reason the whole structure of society based on this communal ownership, and with it the power of the people, decays in the same measure as, in particular, immovable private property evolves. The division of labour is already more developed. We already find the antagonism of town and country; later the antagonism between those states which represent town interests and those which represent country interests, and inside the towns themselves the antagonism between industry and maritime commerce. The

¹⁰ This is a critical passage. The developments Marx and Engels outline here are reminiscent of both Adam Smith's work on the division of labor and Herbert Spencer's ideas about the organic growth of societies, but with a key difference. Smith and Spencer saw the division of labor as leading to the achievement of the greatest good for the greatest number. Marx and Engels focus instead on the conflicts and oppression it generates. For them, these conflicts are critical to social development.

¹¹ The interplay between technology and the social relationships through which technology is put to work is central to Marx and Engels' theory. The idea of ownership is key to this. In these paragraphs, the authors describe history as a progression of different forms of ownership and, hence, different modes of production.

¹² Marx and Engels have stated that humans produce their own nature through labor. However, in this passage they ground their analysis in a claim about the "natural division of labour existing in the family." These assertions seem to contradict each other. Note that Marx and Engels envision the "natural" family as consisting of a patriarch who controls the members of his tribe. Although a powerful male head of the household was a feature of European society of their time, it is hardly a universal aspect of primitive societies. Additionally, Marx and Engels cite no evidence to support their understanding of the family. They were aware of this problem, but almost thirty years would pass before the publication of Morgan's *Ancient Society* in 1877, which they believed resolved this issue.

class relation between citizens and slaves is now completely developed.¹³

With the development of private property, we find here for the first time the same conditions which we shall find again, only on a more extensive scale, with modern private property. On the one hand, the concentration of private property, which began very early in Rome (as the Licinian agrarian law¹⁴ proves) and proceeded very rapidly from the time of the civil wars and especially under the Emperors; on the other hand, coupled with this, the transformation of the plebeian small peasantry into a proletariat, which, however, owing to its intermediate position between propertied citizens and slaves, never achieved an independent development.

The third form of ownership is feudal or estate property. If antiquity started out from the *town* and its little territory, the Middle Ages started out from the *country*. This different starting-point was determined by the sparseness of the population at that time, which was scattered over a large area and which received no large increase from the conquerors. In contrast to Greece and Rome, feudal development at the outset, therefore, extends over a much wider territory, prepared by the Roman conquests and the spread of agriculture at first associated with it. The last centuries of the declining Roman Empire and its conquest by the barbarians destroyed a number of productive forces; agriculture had declined, industry had decayed for want of a market, trade had died out or been violently suspended, the rural and urban population had decreased. From these conditions and the mode of organization of the conquest determined by them, feudal property

developed under the influence of the Germanic military constitution. Like tribal and communal ownership, it is based again on a community; but the directly producing class standing over against it is not, as in the case of the ancient community, the slaves, but the enserfed small peasantry. As soon as feudalism is fully developed, there also arises antagonism to the towns. The hierarchical structure of landownership, and the armed bodies of retainers associated with it, gave the nobility power over the serfs. This feudal organization was, just as much as the ancient communal ownership, an association against a subjected producing class; but the form of association and the relation to the direct producers were different because of the different conditions of production.¹⁵

This feudal system of landownership had its counterpart in the *towns* in the shape of corporative property, the feudal organization of trades. Here property consisted chiefly in the labour of each individual person. The necessity for association against the organized robber nobility, the need for communal covered markets in an age when the industrialist was at the same time a merchant, the growing competition of the escaped serfs swarming into the rising towns, the feudal structure of the whole country: these combined to bring about the *guilds*. The gradually accumulated small capital of individual craftsmen and their stable numbers, as against the growing population, evolved the relation of journeyman and apprentice, which brought into being in the towns a hierarchy similar to that in the country.¹⁶

Thus the chief form of property during the feudal epoch consisted on the one hand of

¹³ One of Marx and Engels' critical ideas is that history is driven by dialectical conflict. Notice the emphasis on conflict and antagonism in this outline of history. This paragraph describes the conflict between the communal action required to control slaves and private ownership of immovable property such as land.

¹⁴ The Licinian law (367 B.C.E.) limited the amount of common land a Roman citizen could hold to about 300 acres.

¹⁵ In Marx and Engels' view, feudal ownership derived from the material conditions of the end of the Roman empire, in particular the collapse of the Roman economy.

Both feudalism and the ancient society that preceded it involved the oppression of those who produced. The differences between these societies resulted from their use of different types of production technology. Once again social form is vitally influenced by production.

¹⁶ Guilds are created as a result of purely material processes. They recapitulate, in the town, the social organization of the countryside. Notice that Marx and Engels understood property as including both material goods and labor. The idea of labor as a commodity that can be bought and sold is crucial to their later analysis of capitalism.

landed property with serf labour chained to it, and on the other of the labour of the individual with small capital commanding the labour of journeymen. The organization of both was determined by the restricted conditions of production—the small-scale and primitive cultivation of the land, and the craft type of industry.¹⁷ There was little division of labour in the heyday of feudalism. Each country bore in itself the antithesis of town and country; the division into estates was certainly strongly marked; but apart from the differentiation of princes, nobility, clergy and peasants in the country, and masters, journeymen, apprentices and soon also the rabble of casual labourers in the towns, no division of importance took place. In agriculture it was rendered difficult by the strip-system, beside which the cottage industry of the peasants themselves emerged. In industry there was no division of labour at all in the individual trades themselves, and very little between them. The separation of industry and commerce was found already in existence in older towns; in the newer it only developed later, when the towns entered into mutual relations.

The grouping of larger territories into feudal kingdoms was a necessity for the landed nobility as for the towns. The organization of the ruling class, the nobility, had, therefore, everywhere a monarch at its head.

The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations.¹⁸ Empirical observation must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without

any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but of individuals, not as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination, but as they *really* are; i.e. as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc. of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real, active men, as they are conditioned by a definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process. If in all ideology men and their circumstances appear upside-down as in a *camera obscura*, this phenomenon arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process.¹⁹

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we

¹⁷ Marx and Engels give priority to the conditions of production in determining society. It is, however, important to distinguish this stance from ecological determinism. The processes that Marx and Engels list as restricting production are all created by human agency rather than ecological necessity. Production is a human activity.

¹⁸ The next several paragraphs contain a very direct statement of Marx's materialist philosophy. The emphasis is on observable relations and processes. Notice that Marx and Engels make no effort here to document the relationships among social and political structure and production.

Much of Marx's later work was devoted to this task of documentation, particularly *Das Kapital*, the first volume of which appeared in 1867.

¹⁹ To Marx and Engels, ideas, the currency of the Young Hegelians, cannot by themselves have explanatory value. They claim that human thinking is conditioned by the social relations under which people live, which can only be understood with reference to material processes. For example, the fact that ideas in nineteenth-century Germany seemed to have power of their own cannot be understood apart from the social relations of that era.

ascend from earth to heaven.²⁰ That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process. The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. They have no history, no development; but men, developing their material production and their material intercourse, alter, along with this their real existence, their thinking and the products of their thinking. Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life. In the first method of approach the starting-point is consciousness taken as the living individual; in the second method, which conforms to real life, it is the real living individuals themselves, and consciousness is considered solely as *their* consciousness.

This method of approach is not devoid of premises.²¹ It starts out from the real premises and does not abandon them for a moment. Its premises are men, not in any fantastic isolation and rigidity, but in their actual, empirically perceptible process of development under definite conditions. As soon as this active life-process is described, history ceases to be a

collection of dead facts as it is with the empiricists (themselves still abstract), or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealists.

Where speculation ends—in real life—there real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the practical process of development of men.²² Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of knowledge loses its medium of existence. At the best its place can only be taken by a summing-up of the most general results, abstractions which arise from the observation of the historical development of men. Viewed apart from real history, these abstractions have in themselves no value whatsoever. They can only serve to facilitate the arrangement of historical material, to indicate the sequence of its separate strata. But they by no means afford a recipe or schema, as does philosophy, for neatly trimming the epochs of history. On the contrary, our difficulties begin only when we set about the observation and the arrangement—the real depiction—of our historical material, whether of a past epoch or of the present. The removal of these difficulties is governed by premises which it is quite impossible to state here, but which only the study of the actual life-process and the activity of the individuals of each epoch will make evident. We shall select here some of these abstractions, which we use in contradistinction to the ideologists, and shall illustrate them by historical example.

²⁰ In this critical passage, Marx and Engels explain their reversal of Hegelian philosophy. Where Hegelian philosophy gave the driving force of history to the realm of pure thought, Marx and Engels assigned it to the material processes of production. In his critical 1974 article, "Marxism, Structuralism, and Vulgar Materialism," Jonathan Friedman stresses the importance of understanding this passage. He points out that Marx and Engels are not promoting simple materialist determinism (which, following Marx, he calls vulgar materialism) but dialectical materialism, a process of change driven by opposition and contradiction.

²¹ One such premise is outlined here: humans, by altering the material conditions of their lives, alter their consciousness.

²² Notice the emphasis throughout this portion of the text on empiricism and science. Marx and Engels considered their theory to be scientific in the same sense as the physical sciences. They believed that philosophy, in the future, would be replaced by science. Marx devoted much of his later life to writing *Das Kapital*, in which he attempted to use his materialist perspective to explain specific historical developments.

HISTORY: FUNDAMENTAL CONDITIONS

Since we are dealing with the Germans, who are devoid of premises, we must begin by stating the first premise of all human existence and, therefore, of all history, the premise, namely, that men must be in a position to live in order to be able to "make history." But life involves before everything else eating and drinking, a habitation, clothing and many other things. The first historical act is thus the production of the means to satisfy these needs, the production of material life itself. And indeed this is an historical act, a fundamental condition of all history, which today, as thousands of years ago, must daily and hourly be fulfilled merely in order to sustain human life. Even when the sensuous world is reduced to a minimum, to a stick as with Saint Bruno, it presupposes the action of producing the stick.²³ Therefore in any interpretation of history one has first of all to observe this fundamental fact in all its significance and all its implications and to accord it its due importance. It is well known that the Germans have never done this, and they have never, therefore, had an *earthly* basis for history and consequently never an historian. The French and the English, even if they have conceived the relation of this fact with so-called history only in an extremely one-sided fashion, particularly as long as they remained in the toils of political ideology, have nevertheless made the first attempts to give the writing of history a materialistic basis by being the first to write histories of civil society, of commerce and industry.²⁴

The second point is that the satisfaction of the first need (the action of satisfying, and the instrument of satisfaction which has been acquired) leads to new needs; and this production of new needs is the first historical act. Here we recognize immediately the spiritual ancestry of the great historical wisdom of the Germans who, when they run out of positive material and when they can serve up neither theological nor political nor literary rubbish, assert that this is not history at all, but the "prehistoric era." They do not, however, enlighten us as to how we proceed from this nonsensical "prehistory" to history proper; although, on the other hand, in their historical speculation they seize upon this "prehistory" with especial eagerness because they imagine themselves safe there from interference on the part of "crude facts," and, at the same time, because there they can give full rein to their speculative impulse and set up and knock down hypotheses by the thousand.

The third circumstance which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that men, who daily remake their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the *family*.²⁵ The family, which to begin with is the only social relationship, becomes later, when increased needs create new social relations and the increased population new needs, a subordinate one (excepting Germany), and must then be treated and analyzed according to the existing empirical data, not according to "the concept of the family," as is the custom in Germany.^a These three aspects of social activity

²³ Marx and Engels open this section with yet another satirical attack on the Young Hegelians, particularly Bruno Bauer (their "Saint Bruno"). Bauer, one of Marx's colleagues in Berlin in the early 1840s, wrote the three-volume *Critique of the Evangelical Gospels* (1841–1842). Marx and Engels' style is important. Their mixture of name-calling, satirical intellectual humor, polemic, and hyperbole set the tone for much of later writing by Marxists. Their indulgence in these tactics marginalized Marxists within academic discourse. This hyperbole may have been useful for political propaganda, but it made their work easy for others to dismiss.

²⁴ Marx and Engels claim Germans never had historians because they have relied on spiritual rather than material explanations. History is created by people producing the material goods of subsistence and (in the next paragraph) by the social production of new needs.

²⁵ Here Marx and Engels turn from production to the reproduction of society. They understood reproduction as including both the biological process of human reproduction and the reproduction of social forms through time. Just as people must produce to live, societies must reproduce themselves to survive.

are not of course to be taken as three different stages, but just as three aspects or, to make it clear to the Germans, three "moments," which have existed simultaneously since the dawn of history and the first men, and which still assert themselves in history today.

The production of life, both of one's own in labour and of fresh life in procreation, now appears as a double relationship: on the one hand as a natural, on the other as a social relationship.²⁶ By social we understand the co-operation of several individuals, no matter under what conditions, in what manner and to what end. It follows from this that a certain mode of production, or industrial stage, is always combined with a certain mode of co-operation, or social stage, and this mode of co-operation is itself a "productive force." Further, that the multitude of productive forces accessible to men determines the nature of society, hence, that the "history of humanity" must always be studied and treated in relation to the history of industry and exchange. But it is also clear how in Germany it is impossible to write this sort of history, because the Germans lack not only the necessary power of comprehension and the material but also the "evidence of their senses," for across the Rhine you cannot have any experience of these things since history has stopped happening.²⁷ Thus it is quite obvious from the start that there exists a materialistic connection of men with one another, which is determined by their needs and their mode of production, and which is as old as men themselves. This connection is ever taking on new forms, and thus presents a "history" independently of the

existence of any political or religious nonsense which in addition may hold men together.²⁸

Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the primary historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses "consciousness," but, even so, not inherent, not "pure" consciousness. From the start the "spirit" is afflicted with the curse of being "burdened" with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men. Where there exists a relationship, it exists for me: the animal does not enter into "relations" with anything, it does not enter into any relation at all. For the animal, its relation to others does not exist as a relation. Consciousness is, therefore, from the very beginning a social product, and remains so as long as men exist at all.²⁹ Consciousness is at first, of course, merely consciousness concerning the *immediate* sensuous environment and consciousness of the limited connection with other persons and things outside the individual who is growing self-conscious. At the same time it is consciousness of nature, which first appears to men as a completely alien, all-powerful and unassailable force, with which men's relations are purely animal and by which they are overawed like beasts; it is thus a purely animal consciousness of nature (natural religion) just because nature is

²⁶ Social forms are created by the interaction of the way in which people produce and the way in which they arrange themselves to reproduce their society. Of these, however, production is more important.

²⁷ In the "across the Rhine" passage, Marx and Engels attack the Hegelians, who believed that history had achieved its culmination with the Prussian monarchy.

²⁸ A key Marxist doctrine—one later adopted by structural anthropologists—is that the real forces that drive society are hidden from view. For Marxists, specific forms of religion or politics are merely the surface appearances of the

deeper forces of production and reproduction. These forces are visible only through Marxist analysis.

²⁹ Most other nineteenth-century anthropological writers, perhaps taking their cue from Locke, think of the human mind as evolving through some universal unfolding of natural law. Marx, on the other hand, saw the mind as conditioned by social institutions and claimed there was no such thing as human thought apart from the institutions within which humans do their thinking. However, he did not extend this idea to his own work, maintaining his belief in the truth-generating capacities of science.

as yet hardly modified historically. (We see here immediately: this natural religion or this particular relation of men to nature is determined by the form of society and vice versa. Here, as everywhere, the identity of nature and man appears in such a way that the restricted relation of men to nature determines their restricted relation to one another, and their restricted relation to one another determines men's restricted relation to nature.) On the other hand, man's consciousness of the necessity of associating with the individuals around him is the beginning of the consciousness that he is living in society at all.³⁰ This beginning is as animal as social life itself at this stage. It is mere herd-consciousness, and at this point man is only distinguished from sheep by the fact that with him consciousness takes the place of instinct or that his instinct is a conscious one. This sheep-like or tribal consciousness receives its further development and extension through increased productivity, the increase of needs, and, what is fundamental to both of these, the increase of population. With these there develops the division of labour, which was originally nothing but the division of labour in the sexual act, then that division of labour which develops spontaneously or "naturally" by virtue of natural predisposition (e.g. physical strength), needs, accidents, etc. etc. Division of labour only becomes truly such from the moment when a division of material and mental labour appears. (The first form of ideologists, *priests*, is concurrent.) From this moment onwards consciousness *can* really flatter itself that it is something other than consciousness of existing practice, that it *really* represents something without representing something real; from now on consciousness is in a position to emancipate itself from the world and to proceed to the formation of "pure" theory, theology, philosophy,

ethics, etc. But even if this theory, theology, philosophy, ethics, etc. comes into contradiction with the existing relations, this can only occur because existing social relations have come into contradiction with existing forces of production; this, moreover, can also occur in a particular national sphere of relations through the appearance of the contradiction, not within the national orbit, but between this national consciousness and the practice of other nations, i.e. between the national and the general consciousness of a nation (as we see it now in Germany).

Moreover, it is quite immaterial what consciousness starts to do on its own: out of all such muck we get only the one inference that these three moments, the forces of production, the state of society, and consciousness, can and must come into contradiction with one another, because the *division of labour* implies the possibility, nay the fact that intellectual and material activity—enjoyment and labour, production and consumption—devolve on different individuals, and that the only possibility of their not coming into contradiction lies in the negation in its turn of the division of labour.³¹ It is self-evident, moreover, that "specters," "bonds," "the higher being," "concept," "scruple," are merely the idealistic, spiritual expression, the conception apparently of the isolated individual, the image of very empirical fetters and limitations, within which the mode of production of life and the form of intercourse coupled with it move.

PRIVATE PROPERTY AND COMMUNISM

With the division of labour, in which all these contradictions are implicit, and which in its turn is based on the natural division of labour

³⁰ Particular forms of consciousness arise from specific social arrangements, not vice versa. Cultural ecologists and cultural materialists of the mid and late twentieth century will use this key insight (see essays 18 to 23). According to Marx and Engels, the development of consciousness that is distinctly human is dependent on increased population and division of labor. The implica-

tion is that the most "primitive" human groups have consciousness that is virtually indistinguishable from that of animals.

³¹ With the appearance of human society and division of labor comes dialectical conflict. For Marx and Engels, this is the fundamental driving force of history.

in the family and the separation of society into individual families opposed to one another, is given simultaneously the *distribution*, and indeed the *unequal* distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property: the nucleus, the first form, of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband.³² This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first property, but even at this early stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists who call it the power of disposing of the labour-power of others. Division of labour and private property are, moreover, identical expressions: in the one the same thing is affirmed with reference to activity as is affirmed in the other with reference to the product of the activity.

Further, the division of labour implies the contradiction between the interest of the separate individual or the individual family and the communal interest of all individuals who have intercourse with one another. And indeed, this communal interest does not exist merely in the imagination, as the "general interest," but first of all in reality, as the mutual interdependence of the individuals among whom the labour is divided. And finally, the division of labour offers us the first example of how, as long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as a cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally, divided, man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by

him.³³ For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, or a critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in historical development up till now.³⁴

(And out of this very contradiction between the interest of the individual and that of the community the latter takes an independent form as the *State*, divorced from the real interests of individual and community, and at the same time as an illusory communal life, always based, however, on the real ties existing in every family and tribal conglomeration—such as flesh and blood, language, division of labour on a larger scale, and other interests—and especially, as we shall enlarge upon later, on the classes, already determined by the division of labour, which in every such mass of men separate out, and of which one

³² Notice the concern with gender and the subjugation of women and children present in this paragraph. Because it was a good tool for analyzing relations of inequality between genders, Marxism proved appealing to many feminist scholars. See Eleanor Leacock's essay (33) in this volume for an example of Marxist-feminist scholarship.

³³ Division of labor makes society possible, but it also destroys freedom and creates alienation. Alienation or estrangement, a key Marxist concept, refers to the separation of the individual from either the preconditions or the products of labor, or, in this case, from life's necessities. Alienation was understood by Marx and Engels as

antithetical to freedom. Specialization in one activity creates alienation in all others. They believed utopian communist society would end contradiction between the individual and the forces of production and, hence, end alienation.

³⁴ Marx and Engels claim that alienation is rooted in specialization and here envision a society in which people do not specialize in a single job. But can one be an engineer one day and a doctor the next? Marx and Engels' view of a society without alienation is utopian, but if specialization is an inevitable part of industrial society, their vision cannot be achieved.

dominates all the others.³⁵ It follows from this that all struggles within the State, the struggle between democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy, the struggle for the franchise, etc. etc. are merely the illusory forms in which the real struggles of the different classes are fought out among one another. Of this the German theoreticians have not the faintest inkling, although they have received a sufficient introduction to the subject in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* and *Die Heilige Familie*.³⁶ Further, it follows that every class which is struggling for mastery, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, postulates the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of domination itself, must first conquer for itself political power in order to represent its interest in turn as the general interest, which immediately it is forced to do. Just because individuals seek *only* their particular interest, which for them does not coincide with their communal interest, the latter will be imposed on them as an interest "alien" to them, and "independent" of them, as in its turn a particular, peculiar "general" interest; or they themselves must remain within this discord, as in democracy. On the other hand, too, the *practical* struggle of these particular interests, which constantly *really* run counter to the communal and illusory communal interests, makes *practical* intervention and control necessary through the illusory "general" interest in the form of the State.)

The social power, i.e. the multiplied productive force, which arises through the co-operation

of different individuals as it is determined by the division of labour, appears to these individuals, since their cooperation is not voluntary but has come about naturally, not as their own united power, but as an alien force existing outside them, of the origin and goal of which they are ignorant, which they thus cannot control, which on the contrary passes through a peculiar series of phases and stages independent of the will and the action of man, nay even being the prime governor of these.³⁷

How otherwise could for instance property have had a history at all, have taken on different forms, and landed property, for example, according to the different premises given, have proceeded in France from parcellation to centralization in the hands of a few, in England from centralization in the hands of a few to parcellation, as is actually the case today?³⁸ Or how does it happen that trade, which after all is nothing more than the exchange of products of various individuals and countries, rules the whole world through the relation of supply and demand—a relation which, as an English economist³⁹ says, hovers over the earth like the fate of the ancients, and with invisible hand allots fortune and misfortune to men, sets up empires and overthrows empires, causes nations to rise and to disappear—while with the abolition of the basis of private property, with the communistic regulation of production (and, implicit in this, the destruction of the alien relation between men and what they themselves produce), the power of the relation of supply and

³⁵ This paragraph is a marginal note to the paragraph above it in the original manuscript. Several important Marxist principles are laid out in it. First, all of history is ultimately the history of class struggle (the famous opening of the *Manifesto*, written two years later). Second, this class struggle is the hidden, underlying dynamic driving political and economic history. Third, the state is an instrument of control and oppression. However, seizing control of the state is a necessary step in changing society.

³⁶ *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* (The German-French Annals, 1844) was a radical periodical edited by Marx and his friend Arnold Ruge. Only one issue of it appeared. *Die Heilige Familie* (The Holy Family, 1845) was Marx and Engels' first collaboration. It was a mocking attack on Bruno Bauer and other Young Hegelians.

³⁷ Marx and Engels argue here that even though people compose society, they are alienated from it. It seems to be something external to them, when in fact, through their production, they create it. Communism will allow the people to break through this form of otherness.

³⁸ Marx and Engels are very Hegelian in their approach to alienation. Hegel's philosophy dealt with the spirit's alienation from the world, and he viewed history as the process of dissolving this alienation. Marx and Engels here see a human structure—trade and the division of labor—as creating alienation, and communism as providing a way to break through the otherness thus engendered.

³⁹ Adam Smith.

demand is dissolved into nothing, and men get exchange, production, the mode of their mutual relation, under their own control again?

In history up to the present it is certainly an empirical fact that separate individuals have, with the broadening of their activity into world-historical activity, become more and more enslaved under a power alien to them (a pressure which they have conceived of as a dirty trick on the part of the so-called universal spirit, etc.), a power which has become more and more enormous and, in the last instance, turns out to be the *world market*. But it is just as empirically established that, by the overthrow of the existing state of society by the communist revolution (of which more below) and the abolition of private property which is identical with it, this power, which so baffles the German theoreticians, will be dissolved; and that then the liberation of each single individual will be accomplished in the measure in which history becomes transformed into world history. From the above it is clear that the real intellectual wealth of the individual depends entirely on the wealth of his real connections. Only then will the separate individuals be liberated from the various national and local barriers, be brought into practical connection with the material and intellectual production of the whole world and be put in a position to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creations of man). *All-round* dependence, this natural form of the *world-historical* co-operation of individuals, will be transformed by this communist revolution into the control and conscious mastery of these powers, which, born of the action of men on one

another, have till now overawed and governed men as powers completely alien to them. Now this view can be expressed again in speculative-idealistic, i.e. fantastic, terms as "self-generation of the species" ("society as the subject"), and thereby the consecutive series of interrelated individuals connected with each other can be conceived as a single individual, which accomplishes the mystery of generating itself. It is clear here that individuals certainly make *one another*, physically and mentally, but do not make themselves.⁴⁰

This "alienation" (to use a term which will be comprehensible to the philosophers) can, of course, only be abolished given two *practical* premises. For it to become an "intolerable" power, i.e. a power against which men make a revolution, it must necessarily have rendered the great mass of humanity "propertyless," and produced, at the same time, the contradiction of an existing world of wealth and culture, both of which conditions presuppose a great increase in productive power, a high degree of its development. And, on the other hand, this development of productive forces (which itself implies the actual empirical existence of men in their *world-historical*, instead of local, being) is an absolutely necessary practical premise because without it *want* is merely made general, and with *destitution* the struggle for necessities and all the old filthy business would necessarily be reproduced; and furthermore, because only with this universal development of productive forces is a *universal* intercourse between men established, which produces in all nations simultaneously the phenomenon of the "propertyless" mass (universal

⁴⁰ As Hegelians, Marx and Engels saw world history as following an inevitable path. Individual societies may have their own histories, but the destiny of the world was fixed, with communism the ultimate end of this path. Marx and Engels believed that communist revolution must be a worldwide event and that it must happen first in highly industrialized societies. Anything that increased worldwide productivity and industrialization would favor its appearance, hence their seemingly contradictory embrace of British colonialism.

At the time of *The German Ideology*, the authors believed that the preconditions for revolution had been met,

and a communist society was imminent. They altered this belief after the failure of the European revolutions of 1848-1849, which convinced them that the changes they were witness to in Europe were the birth pangs of capitalism rather than its death throes. Although they still believed that dialectical contradictions led history inevitably toward communist society, they now saw this society as still distant. Much greater industrialization and internationalization of the economy would be needed. (This assumption set a conundrum for Marxists after the Russian Revolution: How could the communist revolution have occurred in one of Europe's most technologically backward societies?)

competition), makes each nation dependent on the revolutions of the others, and finally has put *world-historical*, empirically universal individuals in place of local ones. Without this, (1) communism could only exist as a local event; (2) the *forces* of intercourse themselves could not have developed as *universal*, hence intolerable powers: they would have remained home-bred conditions surrounded by superstition; and (3) each extension of intercourse would abolish local communism. Empirically, communism is only possible as the act of the dominant peoples "all at once" and simultaneously, which presupposes the universal development of productive forces and the world intercourse bound up with communism. Moreover, the mass of *propertyless* workers—the utterly precarious position of labour-power on a mass scale cut off from capital or from even a limited satisfaction and, therefore, no longer merely temporarily deprived of work itself as a secure source of life—presupposes the *world market* through competition. The proletariat can thus only exist *world-historically*, just as communism, its activity, can only have a "world-historical" existence. World historical existence of individuals means, existence of individuals which is directly linked up with world history.

Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism

the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things. The conditions of this movement result from the premises now in existence.⁴¹

NOTE

^aThe building of houses. With savages each family has as a matter of course its own cave or hut like the separate family tent of the nomads. This separate domestic economy is made only the more necessary by the further development of private property. With the agricultural peoples a communal domestic economy is just as impossible as a communal cultivation of the soil. A great advance was the building of towns. In all previous periods, however, the abolition of individual economy, which is inseparable from the abolition of private property, was impossible for the simple reason that the material conditions governing it were not present. The setting-up of a communal domestic economy presupposes the development of machinery, of the use of natural forces and of many other productive forces—e.g., of water-supplies, of gas-lighting, steam-heating, etc., the removal [of the antagonism] of town and country. Without these conditions a communal economy would not in itself form a new productive force; lacking any material basis and resting on a purely theoretical foundation, it would be a mere freak and would end in nothing more than a monastic economy—What was possible can be seen in the towns brought about by condensation and the erection of communal buildings for various definite purposes (prisons, barracks, etc.). That the abolition of individual economy is inseparable from the abolition of the family is self-evident.

⁴¹ Although Marx and Engels believed that the communist revolution would be distant, they also believed that people could speed its arrival. Humans, through production, created their own society. Therefore, they and their

followers hoped to use their understanding of the links between material production and the production of consciousness to take actions that would hasten the course of history.