



■ The Reconstruction of hope

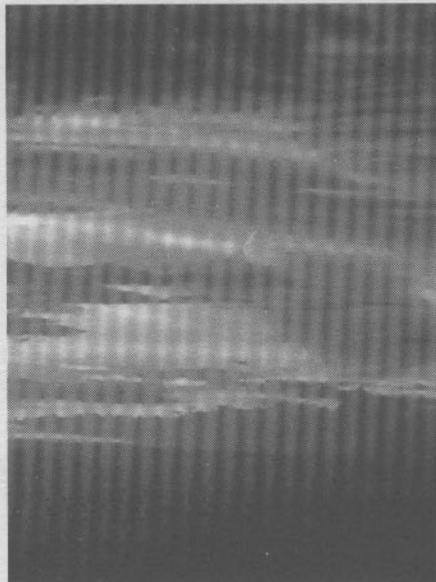
Hope is the thing that gets us out of bed in the morning, and carries us cheerfully and spontaneously through the work of the day. The brain is a feedback reward system: the feeling of hope is the reward for projected emergent features of that system. Sociological research suggests that a measurably hopeful attitude is a better predictor of academic success among students than are SAT scores. This fact might well suggest that it is only the already privileged, who have good grounds for hope, and do not face the burden of prejudice, that will do well academically. But the same statistic shows up in a population of handicapped people, who are confronted not only with real grounds for despair but also social prejudice that would regard the possibility of their success with skepticism. It is not the expectation of prejudice that makes us fail, but a deficiency of the virtue of hope. The hopeful handicapped are more active and successful than the no more handicapped hopeless. In other words, hope does not need to be justified by present circumstances or rational expectations to be effective.

We organize our actions according to a flexible set of stories or myths; and hope is the driving force of every story. This book accepts —on new grounds— the traditional assignment of hope to a place among the three theological virtues: if faith is the affirmation of what was, and love the affirmation of what is, then hope is the affirmation of what is to come.

But it seems to many that hope is dead in our present era. After so many momentous changes— the end of the Cold War, the liberation of Eastern Europe, the economic collapse of world socialism, the replacement of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes all over the

world by democratic capitalist ones, the accelerating change from a matter-and-labor based economy to an information-based economy, the poststructuralist heat-death of the literary, artistic, and critical avant-garde, the extraordinary transformations in our scientific view of the cosmos—after all these, do we even know what to hope for?

Cultural despair is, of course, no new attitude or posture in the history of human thought. But until now despair has largely been the property of conservatives and, later, right-wingers. (*Left and right* are quite recent inventions —see my earlier book *Beauty*). The immemorial despair of conservatives has always been that things have gone from bad to worse ever since the good old days. All we can do is hunker down in some moral bunker and try to preserve some shreds of grace, decency, and clarity amid the rising tide of chaos and wickedness. Believers in this position are part of the dead weight the world carries; they do not help to carry the world, and one of the few virtues of the Left was that at least for a while it denied that comfortable despair.



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Perhaps we can get a comparative sense of our own predicament, and begin to answer the question, what is there to hope for? by asking another: What were the hopes of a clever young person getting out of bed in the sixties?

Interestingly, it is almost as hard to recall them for us who felt those hopes, as it must be for those who were born too late; we have turned some kind of corner in history, and it all seems very dim and odd and remote. But let us try anyway.

We are going to need some analysis. First of all we must distinguish between hope and desire. Desire drives us, hope uplifts us. Hope involves an imaginative estimate of possibility, an intellectual leap into the future. Crudely, we might say that hope is the combination of expectation and desire. And of course there are many kinds of hope: private hopes and public hopes, hopes based on the human organism's desire for comfort, hopes based on the species' drive to reproduce itself, hopes based on socially-constructed desires, hopes based on spiritual aspirations. Let us review the traditional kinds of hope, which constitute the battlefield of ideological struggle as it has been waged until now.

Among our most basic private hopes are those which anticipate the satisfaction of metabolic needs and desires, for food, warmth, pleasure, sex, aggressive contestation, and rest: the desired expectations of a higher mammal.

Less self-centered, but nevertheless based upon a biological drive, is our hope for progeny, for the survival of our offspring, and its social expression in the establishment and continuity of a lineage. These are the desired



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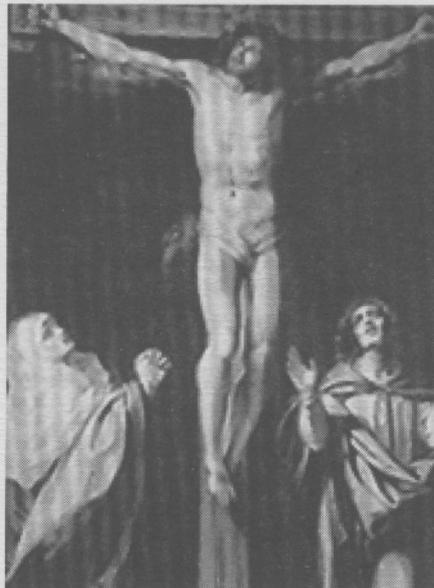
expectations of a member of a biological species.

Then there are the private hopes we nourish that require a social world to satisfy them, our hopes for property and possessions, for security, status, fame, power, the esteem of others: the desired expectations of private gain in terms of socially-constructed prizes.

The most attractive of our private hopes, though not always the most powerful, are those that constitute much of our spiritual world: our hopes for the welfare of those we love, for the satisfaction of personal honor, for the achievement of tasks we have set ourselves, for the peace of a good conscience, for the discovery of truth, for the creation of beauty. These are the desired expectations of a human soul.

Our public hopes fall into two great categories. The first is that of social hope, the major wrestling-floor of politics: hopes for peace and harmony among nations and communities; for freedom, justice, equality; for the democratic distribution of power; for universal enlightenment—our desired expectations for society. The second is religious hope: for the salvation of souls, the salvation of the world, and the fulfillment of cosmic purpose—our desired expectations for the divine economy.

Obviously many of these hopes not only contain internal contradictions—satiety is both the goal and the extinction of our metabolic desires, the freedom of others awkwardly infringes on our own—but are often deeply at odds with each other. Any parent knows the contradiction between progeny and pleasure; any political scientist, the contradiction between equality and liberty. Sex is often at war with



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security, foraging with rest, love with peace, truth with status, aggression with property, salvation with the esteem of others, the divine economy in some ways with any individual or even social aspiration.

Different political and cultural worldviews have different constellations of hope, by which those contradictions are negated, mitigated, accepted, hypostatized, or resolved; in each worldview, different categories of hope are permitted, recommended, condemned or reduced to invisibility. To a large extent, a worldview identifies itself by its struggle to represent certain hopes more genuinely than its rivals, by its attempts to valorize its own preferred brands of hope, and by its contestation of the legitimacy, and even existence, of others.

For instance, the traditional conservative way of dealing with the contradictions can be roughly described as follows: our metabolic hopes, for pleasure, sex, and so on, are accepted as a reality—the Flesh—but as an enemy to be fought. A genial hypocrisy permits but does not excuse

them. Their internal and mutual contradictions are taken as the sign of their fallen distortedness. Through the institution of chivalry the aggressive drive is domesticated to the service of the community; through the institution of *fine amour*, sex is tamed to the service of love.

Private hopes for public gain—the World—are also accepted as a reality, but as a necessary evil: to be resisted for the many but permitted to a trained and morally excellent few, the aristocrats and mandarins, who have the discernment to resolve the contradictions harmoniously. The hopes of progeny and lineage become the foundation of society. Social hopes, for political and legal improvement, for the extension of rights and liberties, are denied, condemned, and suppressed, and reduced morally to the status of private hopes for public gain. Society aspires to a reconciliation of personal spiritual hopes with public religious hopes, within the framework of an ideological orthodoxy that resolves their internal contradictions.

Though this system worked admirably for long periods of time, its inadequacies were to destroy it. The hypocritical abuses of aristocratic privilege became too glaring to justify the continuation of a systematic monopoly of social goods in private hands. Technological and economic advance, ensured by the very stability created by the *ancien regime*, led to social hopes that could no longer be suppressed, for liberty and the Rights of Man (and later, Woman).

Technological improvements created better communications and better weapons, which in turn put whole societies into close and hostile contact with each other. Conflict between different theological orthodoxies produced catastrophic disruptions, like the Crusades, the



French religious wars, the German Thirty Years' War, and the English Civil War, that threatened to tear the human world apart. A contemporary analogy is the present religious conflict in the Middle East. Church must be safely separated from state; but as soon as this was accomplished, religion lost the power to control the many contradictions within and among all other kinds of hope. Some Far Eastern traditional cultures were able to resist technological progress into the nineteenth century, and to find ways to reconcile different

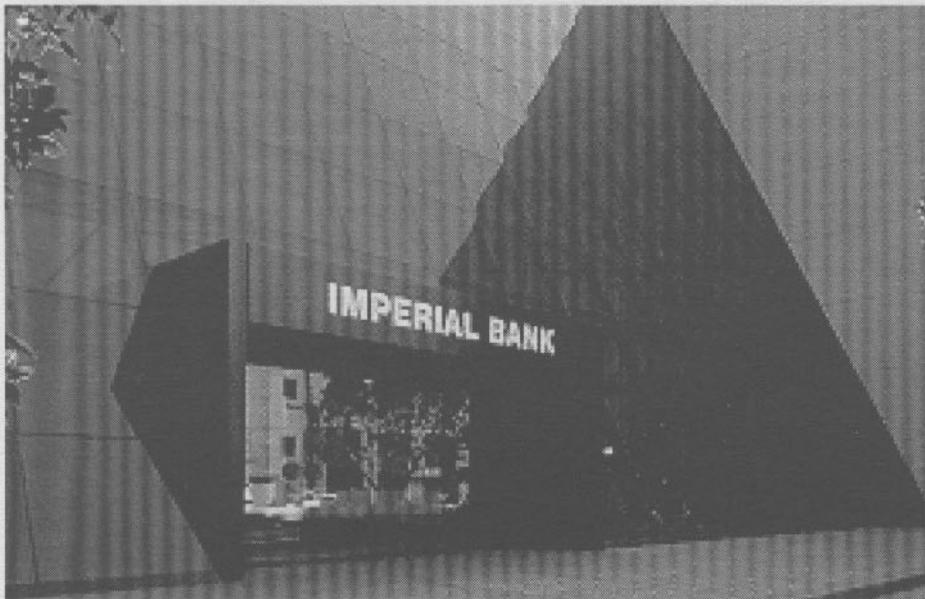
which, in a well-designed system, can be harnessed for the public good and act as an Invisible Hand to ensure prosperity and progress.

Personal spiritual hopes are encouraged to flourish, but in a pluralistic milieu, without reference to an approved divine economy, and subject to the levelling demands of the marketplace. Dynastic hopes are discouraged, and the bonds of kinship either ignored or condemned as nepotism. Religious hopes are permitted without comment, but

which still occur are resolved by the market, where conflicting hopes and values are reduced to money prices and haggled to a mutually agreeable reconciliation in those terms.

This constellation has not yet totally failed, and is still a viable compromise; it has produced a world of political moderation and economic wealth. But its systemic problems are potentially as deep as those of the *ancien regime*. Among these are the domination of the marketplace, and the consequent levering of higher aspirations; the instabilities produced by rapid economic and technological change; and the unsolved contradiction between equality and freedom in a market-dominated polity, which produces painful contrasts between wealth and poverty.

For a young person waking up in the morning there seems nothing in this regime to inspire the fierce loyalties and high aspirations which the young feel so ready for: it appears to be a base and ignoble system, compelling the young aspirant to years of work, rewarding the money-grubber and discouraging the hero. Though in comparison with other extant systems there is usually greater opportunity for all, the necessary fictions of capitalist democracy, that all persons are equal in all respects, and that freedom does not depend on discipline, make for persistent agonizing discontent. Weakened by democratic pluralism, the old social and religious hopes are insufficient to control and redirect our metabolic and selfish hopes, and reconcile their contradictions; and without the support of society at large the hope for the continuity of lineage has become detached from our hope for progeny, the hope for progeny itself has been repressed, and the family, the vital link between biology and culture, is in a state of collapse.



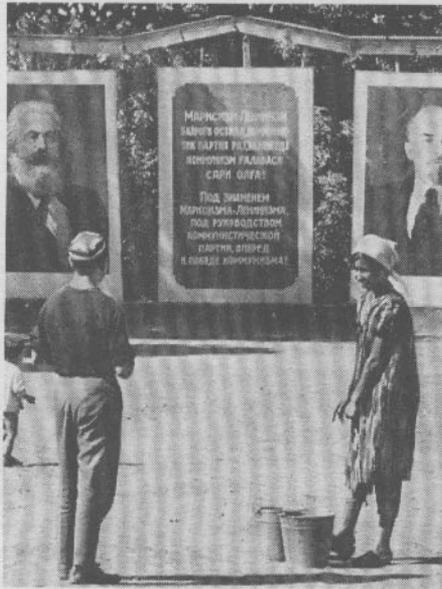
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religious traditions, as Buddhism and Shinto in Tokugawa Japan, or Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism in Ch'ing China. But they were only postponing the collapse of the old system.

The liberal capitalist democratic way of handling the contradictions—what Marx called the bourgeois state—was very different. Our metabolic hopes for food, sex, and agonistic contestation, and our private hopes for social advantage, are accepted as a natural selfishness

society is protected by legal means from them and from the conflicts they engender. Social hopes—equality, justice—are highly valorized and cultivated, but only when consistent with the individual's hopes for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and with religious freedom.

Wide margins, by which contradictory hopes are spaced out and thus need not encounter each other, are provided by an overarching ideology of pluralism, relativism, and commonsense; and the contradictions



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The weaknesses of democratic capitalism seemed glaring, and its apparent hypocrisies disgusting. The intelligentsia, the young, and the discontented sought a replacement. The result was the system of leftist modernism.

Why did it arise in the first place? Partly because of the manifest flaws of the *ancien regime* on one hand, and liberal democratic capitalism on the other. Partly, too, because the expanded and enfranchised populations of newly-educated young people in the industrialized countries had not encountered, and tended to deny, the contradictions within and between human hopes. They had not seen the damage and suffering caused by those contradictions, nor had they realized the labor and ingenuity by which the existing constellations of political hope had mitigated—however clumsily and incompletely—that damage and suffering. They thought they could do better. The left-wing modernist constellation was the result. How did it arrange its hopes? What did we aspire to, getting up in 1968?

First of all, our worldview not only accepted our biologically-based personal hopes—for sex, pleasure, leisure, and so on—but elevated them, via a naturalist or existentialist philosophy, to the status which had previously been held by the spiritual personal hopes. There was one exception: the aggressive drive, which was thought to be the result of imperialistic social conditioning, and was repressed in the individual (while encouraged, under the name of class struggle, in the service of the Revolution). Any suggestion that our metabolic desires might themselves infringe upon the freedom and dignity of the person was furiously denied. (Hence, for instance, the extraordinary claim by some contemporary feminists that there is nothing sexual about rape: since it is axiomatic that sexual desire cannot be wrong, and equally axiomatic that aggression, as an evil, cannot be a natural drive, the only logical recourse must be that rape is result of a politically-indoctrinated conspiracy to oppress women).

The leftist-modernist worldview recognized, but condemned as absolutely evil, all individual hopes for socially-constructed prizes, all desires for personal gain through public means. This was the sphere of alienation and commodity fetishism (Marx), the mirror stage (Lacan), voyeuristic sadism and the panopticon (Foucault), mimetic desire (Girard). The bourgeois individual was the hideously inauthentic result of these social forces, and his very thought-process was hopelessly contaminated with them.

The clever young person woke up in doubt of the very existence of personal spiritual hopes—of doing one's duty, of personal royalty, of objective scientific discovery, of making something beautiful, of saving one's soul. These values were

dangerously implicated in bourgeois false consciousness and existential bad faith, and could not be trusted. Nevertheless the emotional tone of these hopes did survive, transferred to the realm of social idealism.

Likewise, the universal religious hopes were also denied, as remnants of superstition and obscurantism, or worse, as the justificatory mystifications of hegemonic socioeconomic power.

Social hopes, then, were promoted to the position formerly held by religious hopes. Liberty, equality, fraternity, the end of class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the withering away of the state, social and economic justice, the abolition of all inequalities of race, sex, economic background, and education—these were the idealistic hopes that got us out of bed. Equality, not freedom, became the dominant social goal; or rather, freedom was redefined as equality.





A clever young Western person woke up in the sixties to essentially the same constellation of hopes that might be found throughout Europe ever since the French Revolution and perhaps earlier: Rousseau is one of its originators. The leftist hopes of the sixties were not radically different from those of the nineteen-thirties, the eighteen-seventies, even the seventeen-nineties, though not much before that; certainly those hopes have in different parts of the world waxed in revolutionary periods and waned in times like high Victorianism or the conservative 1950s, but they have remained much the same.

Those hopes were given body and immediacy by the licence they endorsed, for any kind of sexual adventure or sensual indulgence; and they entailed a triumphant justification for any kind of hatred, self-esteem, and violation of social rules. Such terms as *rip off* or *liberate* for stealing, *confrontation* for violent rudeness, *doing your own thing* for selfishness, and *honesty* for the heedless pursuit of one's own desires and interests, give something of the flavor of this worldview, in its worst excesses. But it also helped bring about the abolition of slavery, improvements in the conditions of workers in capitalist countries, racial integration, noble reforms in sexual and gender roles, and valuable revisions in our attitudes toward the natural environment.

The young intellectual awoke to a delicious condition: that of being the illuminated one in a country of fools, the sighted among the blind, the ethically superior among the *pigs*; he was the prince in exile, the pure among the polluted, the spy licenced to kill, the liberated one whose every action and desire was justified by a higher purpose. The ordinary rules of ethical behavior did not apply to a

revolutionary in a capitalist society; they were put on hold until the revolution came. There was a special, exquisite feeling of liberation in this.

And yet we were not totally isolated; an underground community could be recognized by certain secret signs. Within that community sex was free, unhampered by the musty old conventions of family, but sharpened and ennobled by the aura of the Resistance, by the improvisations of hiding, by the pathos of two doomed people thrown together by the vicissitudes of war. We might not survive at all; nuclear holocaust, fascist oppression, and birth control alike relieved us of any concern for our children or for our dynastic future. The enormous popularity of such films as *Casablanca*, *Bonnie and Clyde*, *Easy Rider*, and *M.A.S.H.* is due in part, I believe, to these deep cultural currents. Their most extreme manifestations include the Symbionese Liberation Army, the Weather Underground, the Baader-Meinhof gang, and even, in a strange religious extension, the community of Jimmy Jones. An automatic

consensus of cynical distrust, contempt, and pitiless malevolence towards the *bourgeois*, the businessman, the ruling class, cemented, as do all ritual scapegoatings, the solidarity and brotherhood of the elect.

It is this constellation of hopes that has in the last few years definitively, radically, and irreversibly failed. We are finally coming to see the wisdom and courage of such works as Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, and James' *The Princess Casamassima*, which examined with marvellous insight the appeal of the position and warned against its moral dangers. When its program came to power it resulted in the most horrible evils the human race has yet known, describes allegorically in Orwell's *1984* and *Animal Farm*, and in actuality in Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*. Hitler's Germany was just another version of the same system, a fact to which the Left has always been strangely and catastrophically blind.





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The efficiencies of Nazism were that it concentrated the normal leftist hatred against the bourgeois, the businessman, and the ruling class into the war against the Jews, that its socialism was also a national socialism, and that it resurrected the powerful energies of the dynastic drive to reproduce the species, within the social-hope context of the Master Race.

But it has not been until the fall of the Berlin wall that the full failure of left-wing hope has become finally evident. Its social hopes could not reproduce themselves, even by the most rigorous educational propaganda, into another generation. If the hated ruling class *are* the former revolutionaries, the engine of the scapegoat reflex turns its force against the Left itself, the Left becomes the Right, it is the Stalinists who are the conservatives. If the secret agents are in charge, the only way to recapture the thrill of the Resistance is to be "reactionary" and collect icons, or, like Czeslaw Milosz, to deconstruct the grand narrative of social progress altogether.

Worse still, state socialism and state communism failed in their own chosen arena of technological and economic progress. What became clear through their great and tragic experiment was that progress and economic health are dependent upon one central human activity: exchange. Whether the medium of exchange is gifts, as in some preindustrial cultures, or corporate stock, as in the stock exchange, or goods, services, and money, as in a market economy, or ideas, as in the free press and free academy, or even genes, as in sexual reproduction within a gene pool, exchange drives the life of the world. The Marxist slogan "To each according to his need; from each according to his capacity" was an explicit attempt to replace exchange with social justice.

But social justice is essentially sterile; in its context, as King Lear puts it, "nothing can come of nothing". In that great play one of the mysteries for the left wing critic is that it is Cordelia, the good and loving daughter, who says "I love you according to my bond", who

insists on the contract, on the exchange of goods and services. She is the capitalist, whereas Regan and Goneril, the evil daughters, claim to love him in ways that go beyond base considerations of social and economic exchange, and are the ones who deal with Lear according to his need and reduce his superfluity to nothing. "O reason not the need", groans Lear as he goes mad. And it is the evil Edmund who argues for social justice. The compassion for the poor that Lear discovers in himself after he has learned his terrible lesson is not a matter of social justice, but of mercy, of love, of a supererogatory recognition of value that can only, paradoxically, exist in a world of true exchange, bonds, and contracts. Shakespeare uncannily foresaw the central error of the Left.

Another of Marx's errors was to envisage money in terms of ownership, when in fact it makes sense only in terms of debt and obligation, the moral foundations of exchange. The "possession" of a large amount of money ideally means nothing more than that many people are obligated or indebted to the "possessor". Even if the obligation is only in being allowed to postpone the cancellation of the obligation by a benefit in return (as in the case of the payment of interest), the obligation is real. Certainly money does not always work ideally as a measure of obligation, especially when my obligation to a "rich" person is indirect, and concealed by the fact that I am obligated to other people who are in turn obligated to him. Even when the direct flow of obligation is obscured by this turning of corners, it must exist if the currency remains stable; if money did not accurately measure obligation, it would soon lose its objective value. But it is human nature to hate our creditors; it was largely for this reason that people hated the Jews



José Manuel Jiménez Zapata

is their faith in us, a faith not unlike what one must have in one's God. That faith, whose pressure we feel, reminds us of our abjectness, our unworthiness. We would be rid of our believers. And perhaps the same sense of indebtedness for the faith in us that others demonstrate is at the root of anti-Semitism (for the Jews have given the world so much, and trusted it so innocently to repay) and of many other deep prejudices, such as those of the third world against the developed countries, and those of the developed countries against the third world. Each part of the world feels but represses its sense of debt; neither, since the debt is repressed, is capable of translating, and thus cancelling out, those debts in terms of each other. The fact that these ancient and sacrificial feelings are now symbolized by money and financial instruments, and concealed by the math of economics and the smokescreens of Marxist ideology, does not remove the sting of them.

Critics may rightly point out that the role of money as an index of genuine obligation holds only in a truly free market, and that special interests such as cartels, monopolies, export-dumping national governments, trades unions, consumer lobbyists, malpractice lawyers, and various groups with social agendas, as well as the natural tendency of a democracy to vote itself more money than it has earned, must skew the market process. Of course, many of these pressures balance each other out; but there may still be an aggregate pressure that transforms the healthy profit-appetite into an *eating disorder*, and money into a form of ownership. Luckily we have a pretty exact measure of how much an economy is distorted by such an aggregate pressure: the state of its currency. If a currency does not reflect the actual flow of real obligations, goods and services in an

economy, it will become debased at a speed exactly calibrated to the extent of the distortion. In capitalist societies that speed is at present about 3-10% per annum; in socialist societies the percentage ranges from about 10% up into the thousands, except where the currency is protected, in which case people tend to use "hard" capitalist currencies instead.

The economic collapse of the Soviet Bloc is the direct consequence of the gigantic mistake of trying to repair the deficiencies of human exchange by abolishing it. What we have found is that, haphazard though they are, the compassionate love that exists in the interstices of the market economy and the fundamental trust and fellowship implicit in all trade are more reliable than any state program of distributive justice in promoting the actual welfare of people. They are more reliable precisely because they take creative risks and teach the world to grow; and because it is in the long-term interest of business to satisfy the wishes of its workers, to create wealthy consumers, and to produce the cheapest and best-quality goods with the minimum waste and cost. Business can only compete if it creates its own corrective forces, that is, workers and consumers with collective forces, that is, workers and consumers with collective or individual bargaining power.

We were all wrong about social progress; we thought that the same process by which we removed legal barriers against trades unions, minorities, women, and the poor—a process which made human exchange more efficient by bringing all kinds of interest into the market—could be used to legislate and routinize the intangible and weightless values of compassion and mercy that emanate from human exchange. As the shock-wave of new

between the wars, hated the U.S.A. after the Second World War, and hate the Japanese now. We are willing to imagine any evil on the part of someone to whom we are indebted, and to redefine and rationalize our debt according to any principle that would seem to relieve us of its burden.

Our hatred of our creditors has even deeper, perhaps religious roots, suggested by the derivation of the word *creditor* itself. Our creditor is someone who believes in us, as well as being our benefactor. The more we see around us the remarkable gifts of Japanese labor, intelligence and generosity, the angrier we get. Yet what of *ours* do *they* possess in compensation? Largely, only a *belief* in our good faith, our industriousness, our sense of obligation. That faith and obligation are symbolized and tabulated in the form of money; but what is that money? Pieces of paper with our promises written on them, or worse, intangible patterns of electromagnetic domains signifying the same thing, in computer memories. The guilt of the Japanese



But this book is not just another piece of Left-bashing; its author has too many memories of the nobility of those commitments, too great an intellectual debt to the great leftist thinkers, too much shame at his own participation in those follies. It cannot rejoice in the death of hope. Instead it is a search for a way in which the best elements of all systems of hope, including the Left, can be recuperated and transfigured in a larger and more generous conception. The greatest twentieth-century writer on the nature of hope was the Marxist Ernst Bloch. Jürgen Moltmann's Christian bourgeois/liberal Theology of Hope, which is the only comparable system of thought on the subject, is thin stuff beside the richness and depth of Bloch's vision, even if the latter is filthied and flawed by its routine murderous hatred for the *imperialists*, the *capitalists*, the *bourgeois*, and so on. My response to the challenge of hope is closer to Bloch's than to Moltmann's: it is what we might provisionally call *evolutionary hope*.

In a sense, evolutionary hope has no contemporary rivals. The other postmodern movements, that succeeded or developed out of leftist modernism, are essentially counsels of despair; they have lost Bloch's principle of hope and betrayed, in a sense, the grand old leftist ideals.

Consider the most radical brands of postmodern environmentalism: the general position is that we cannot advance materially and technologically without destroying nature itself, and to live in harmony with nature means abandoning much of what is distinctive about the human species and its more advanced cousins in the natural world: creativity, the desire for novelty, aspiration, consciousness itself.

Radical feminism grapples with a different, though equally hopeless set of contradictions. Biology is not destiny; yet it is women's closeness to the body and to nature, in this view, that makes them better than men. Women should be able to share in the same life experience as men; but male life experience is stunted and impoverished. Males, moreover, given the chance, will appropriate female experience and capitalize on it, and must be prevented from doing so. Or else males are incapable of the superior female experience; but then this means that the worse half of the human race is in control, and being the more aggressive and the less insightful half, is thus unlikely to give up its power. Whatever the outcome, hope is not appropriate.

Or consider contemporary racial and ethnic politics: the successful ethnic groups achieved their success through crime, genocide, prejudice, exploitation, and ecological rape: thus to be good and to refrain from these activities is to be a loser.



José Luis Hernández M.

Or take poststructuralist esthetics and critical theory: either there is no such thing as meaning, or all meanings are systems by which the powerful and evil oppress the weak and good. The related fashion of antifoundationalism maintains that all scientific claims are ideological: the word *true* is an instrument of political control. Of course the question whether this statement is itself true reveals the despair at the heart of this position. In the politics of sexual orientation, sex, which had become the most cherished form of freedom and experience, especially when liberated from patriarchal family structures, has, as the vector of AIDS, become an instrument of horrible death: what hope is there when the foundation of value can kill you?

Even expectation and desire themselves, the essential components of hope, have come under attack. Expectation is translated as linear, predictive thinking or prejudice, which is negative and incorrect; we should live without expectations. Desire is, according to such postmodern thinkers as Lacan, Girard, and Deleuze and Guattari, either desire for what others desire, or at odds with the possession of a moral center or soul altogether. We are either miserable false selves defined by commodity fetishism, or else mere collections of desiring machines.

The theme of postmodern culture is fragmentation: fragmentation of and between nature, culture, science, the humanities, the arts, technology, and all other embodiments of hope. Note that these counsels of despair are not fundamentally a problem of the general mass of society, but with the intellectuals and artists whose role was once to be the shepherds of social values. It is not our economy or our form of government or our popular culture that has failed in the matter of



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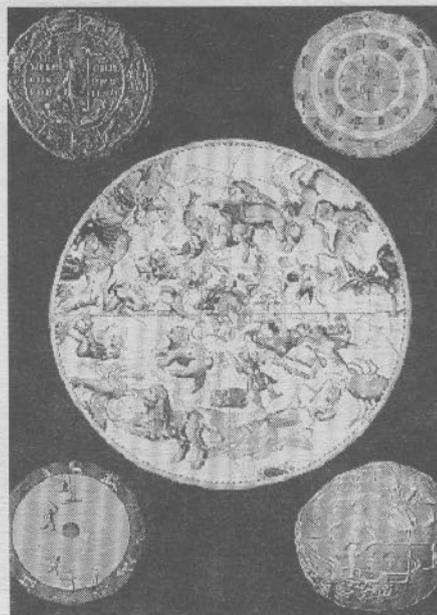
hope, but our intelligentsia, our contrarian literary and art establishment, and our academy in particular. Indeed, I now believe that the greatest problem of contemporary America, the horrifying condition of the underclass, can be laid directly at the feet of my own profession, the academy, and is to a large extent the result of a failure of hope. Perhaps the single greatest act of intellectual liberation that the avant-garde of our culture could perform would be to exonerate the popular commercial culture from the ills of society, and to take the blame to itself. To do so would not be to disavow the crying needs that popular culture has for exacting judges, leaders, examples, and true sacrificial victims, but rather to recognize that those needs have not been properly met. But this self-accusation perhaps requires more courage and clarity than is available.

If hope is to be possible, then, it cannot come from contemporary artistic and intellectual postmodernism. *Evolutionary hope*, which I believe is an emergent idea, shaping itself slowly and inchoately in the experience of many people of goodwill—the ones who won't steal the library book—is proposed as an alternative. What is the shape of evolutionary hope? Can it recuperate the best hopes of previous systems? How does it constellate the various categories of hope that we have already sketched?

In this proposed reintegration, metabolic hopes and bodily desires are accepted and celebrated as a living part of our evolutionary past. In general those metabolic desires which are the basis of our fleshly hopes would be placated by sacrifice, intensified by delay, enjoyed in the controlled contexts where they reach their greatest complexity and richness, and incorporated into the full body of human activities.

Cuisine rather than gobbling; romance rather than copulation. The fundamental biological drives emphatically include aggression, which is to be trained and brought to the surface by sports or martial arts, and so, in the fashion of chivalry, pressed into the service of higher values such as friendship, justice, and self-control. Sex would be reconnected with dynastic and family hopes, not through a renunciation of our new reproductive technology, but through a deep recognition of the indissoluble psychological links that bind them together.

Our personal hopes for social advantage—status, property, power, and so on—would be recognized as being largely derived from our biological nature and evolutionary past. (Recent fascinating work on the feedback connection between social status and ranking in baboons and their hormonal, neurochemical, and immune systems confirms this recognition). Since these hopes are part of our biological condition, and are indissolubly linked with equally biological drives towards altruism,



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bonding, and cooperation, we would no longer seek to suppress them, as in the feudal and leftist systems. Instead they would be harnessed, as in the bourgeois-democratic system, to the general social and economic good. But unlike the tendency of *laissez-faire* capitalism, the regime of evolutionary hope would not reductively boil down all higher motivations to intelligent materialistic selfishness, but would recognize the equal reality of nobler impulses. It would base its educational system on the theory that as the shorter-range and more immediately gratifiable desires are satiated, boredom itself can assist the teacher to arouse the deeper, finer, more intangible, less easily gratifiable thirsts for love, truth, and beauty.

Thus those personal spiritual hopes would also be recognized as having an evolutionary and biological basis. This provenance does not discredit them but, to the contrary, ratifies and confirms them as the most accurate and powerful descriptions of the universe itself, since it was by our following them that we were enabled as a species (and more generally, as a genus, family, order, class, and phylum) to survive and prevail. In our species those hopes, for honorable achievement, for the benefit of a loved one, for the discovery of truth or the creation of beauty, were sharpened and amplified enormously by selective feedback between cultural and biological evolution during the last five million years; they are as organic as metabolism, but at the same time a marvelous artifact of our earliest human cultures. And they are among the driving forces of our future evolution.

In the constellation of evolutionary hope the great public ideals—of peace, justice, equality, freedom, and so on—are accepted as