

NEW LOGICS OF PROGRESS*

A primary image suggests itself to anyone who wishes to assert that every society exfoliates in several ways, such as in technics, organization, the sacred, the recreational, the beautiful, etc. all in one movement which is simultaneously both differentiated and integral. This image is of a fan, whose stems diverge from a center and are linked in the one unfolding; but another assertion immediately intervenes, claiming that this picture is over-optimistic: it is the assertion of the disparities between these ways, or domains, which disrupt the pattern of the whole by modifying its aspect and which can alter its meaning. If one wishes, one may call these the contradictions.

FROM THE FAN SCHEMA TO THE CALDER MOBILE

Long pivoted upon industrial growth, Western societies all seem to restructure themselves around this pivot. At the very least, technology here occupies a position which only recently many tricontinental societies were far from granting it. There are other goals, other dimensions to which these latter gave priority both in their concrete reality and their ideas of them. As for the rest, with whatever types of societies we are dealing—and the plural

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* This work refers back to, and, if so wished, can be taken as a continuation of the short essay appearing here previously: "Plural Logics of Progress," *Diogenes*, July-Sept. 1972, No. 79, pp. 3-26.

was never more appropriate—it is the very manner in which an internal multivalency is organized (or disorganized) that constitutes the special character of each, both in its own right and in comparison with the others.

Throughout the world, however, the scientific and technological revolution affects the lives of every group ever more closely and cumulatively, but also ever more conflictingly, gives them its methods, imposes upon them its goals, its languages, and unilaterally transforms them according to the model or practice of its dominant economies. Indeed, it conveys not only social relationships but also mental equations, and moral attitudes: the whole is sanctioned by power and effectiveness. Yet it is still not enough for it to be able to influence and activate. Just as in the psychologies of individuals, so within societies and cultures, and in their reciprocal relations, it explicates, orders, and qualifies; its hierarchies are without appeal, for it arrogates to itself the privilege of defining everything we call modern. Henceforth, the shape that imposes itself on our analysis will no longer be that of a fan with equal branches, but that of an asymmetrically projected star with the strongest point thrusting out furthest along a single axis, that of technology, while the others fall short unevenly.

It is true that both these figures share the fault of flatness. They seem to suggest that the various forms of social intercourse all possess a certain homogeneity, and that one can give an account of their differences in terms of straight lines of varying thickness and length; whereas it is also a question of distinctions of quality, as well as intensity and direction, and of an equally complex pluralism, such that however we may venture to schematize it, it could only be sketched out in a multi-dimensional space. What comes to mind is no longer the image of the fan, no matter how whimsically indented, but that of the Calder mobile: resembling an exfoliating combination of straights and curves on several axes, of which one turns eccentrically to the system, because that is the direction in which the wind is blowing. A useful reminder of contingency!

THE INDUSTRIAL AGE AND THE ASCENDENT DIALECTIC

Certainly, even among the sections of the Calder mobile subject to the accident of wind, or hinged to the rest by the freest of

pendants, one would look in vain for one that was completely independent. In the same way, despite every qualification, every denial of fact that has to be applied to Laplace's assumption of determinism, one cannot dismiss the interaction of the social sectors with one another, whether sequentially, inductively, or by echoes more subtle than any causality. If positivism really seems to have failed to deduce from one of these present dimensions, that is to say technology—the commonplace in economics, and risen to the status of predominant factor—the movement of the others, and to designate it as branch or superstructure, one cannot thereby dismiss their interrelation. Let us go further. To the driving function of ordering and producing, which is generally insisted upon, (not unreasonable, since Nature is herself in turn transformed by it, although this is not altogether adequate, since this transformation does not explain everything) we will add another no less decisive role of technology, and especially industrial technology: that of depicting the conspectus of social activities within an optimistic perspective which has, since the middle of the Eighteenth Century, become more or less synonymous with rationalism.

In fact, whatever breaks there may have been in it because of pauses or regressions, the temporal sequence of the growth of the modes of production, from the discovery of thermal energy to that of nuclear fission, everywhere gives credence to the idea of man being endowed with indefinitely increasable powers. And this even if, like Condorcet, we no longer believe that this growth favors that of distributive justice, still less that of happiness. The fact that between the production of powers and the deterioration of the relations of production, for example, a contradiction became apparent, was formulated and strengthened, and that this contradiction offers to the privation and resentment of the masses a singularly powerful schema, even though reductionist, this in no way hindered Marx and the majority of his followers up to the present time from transposing the industrial optimist of Faustian man, from taking up again on their own account the perfectionism of the Encyclopedists, the evolutionism of the positivists, and from transcribing Hegel's metaphysics into the terms of a concrete progression. On its side, although bereft of philosophical but-tressing, and incapable of any inspiring critique, bourgeois praxis manifested in its actions the same manufacturer's optimism. In

recent years the competition in interplanetary exploration has illustrated the same penchant for performance amid the champions of diametrically opposed social ethics.

In the 1930's it was certainly possible to speak of a crisis of progress. Now we speak of our disillusionment with it. Idealism and nihilism have not disarmed any more than had the inconsolable aestheticism of would-be golden ages. Not unreasonably, the triteness of the so-called "ascendent" dialectic, and the suspect naivety of a consolatory myth, have been challenged. More recently, on the strength of only too well founded observations, the voices of pessimism have risen up, denouncing the dangers of exponential growth on the counts of overpopulation, pollution, etc. This concerns no less than the whole world, not only the developed nations but the others too, and these latter, ever more enthusiastically than the former, cling to the aims of the scientific and technological revolution which, it seems, foists itself upon its critics as the sole source of argument and method.

A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE GUAJIROS

Will we allow a researcher, who devotes the bulk of his life of learning to the Orient, to let himself be challenged by a South-American culture, by chance of a short stay there? But is this a case of chance, or only of mutual recognition? Should not all historical anthropology be transported from its own home at every opportunity? I have come to seek this transculturation here, for myself. I had done the same in black Africa, among the Four and the Diola. Now here it meets with an opportune complicity.

I am leafing through the book of Ramon Paz, the Guajiro researcher who anxiously explored his people's heritage. The Wayuu-s, called Guajiros in Spanish, comprise a group of about one hundred thousand souls, highly individual and with a lively energy, whose habitat by some historical irony borders on the Maracaibo oilfields. Despite their dynamism, their physical beauty, and their spirit of resistance, they are prey to acculturation. They are becoming marginal. But one part of their identity clings to a dualistic mythology which, through both word and thought, animates the elements, animals and plants. "And as if this were not sufficient to explain the origins of life, its vision penetrates

the metereological, terrestrial, and cosmological phenomena from which spring all the vicissitudes of man." Then this man, surviving the domination of old and new alike, proudly cries out to himself: "You cannot deny being what you are. Even if you wished to change your face, and however much you might wish to obscure the most obscure, you are always a Guajiro."

But I ask him: how long will this rebellion on the part of your individuality survive proletarianization and suburban life? There can be no doubt that it would be able to do so only at the cost of a violent effort to transpose itself into the terms of, and the domain of, industrial progress. What sense of your identity will remain then? If your identity is contained in neither image nor moral, but is rooted in some hidden framework which is likely to persist at the price of the untiring renewal of all that by which it is manifested, who then will give you the feeling of continuity, you who would outlive yourself in this way?

This phenomenological rupture between the living and its enciphering is a terrible thing. Terrible, but not fatal, it is true, since a certain number of peoples succeed in crossing this Styx.

THE MISTRANSPOSITION OF TEMPORALITY

Thus, secure in the simplicities of a unilinear projection, the dynamic of an ascendent age acts upon all the other dimensions of the social system. When the majority of these, in terms of duration, involve a motion unattributable to any linear link, then they must thenceforth obey the summons of the industrial age on pain of archaism and, no doubt, death. Although there are certainly other models, such as that of periodic return, the argument from derivation, or the dismissal of appearances, here we shall apply a pluralistic one, both historical and revolutionary. In Nietzsche's proposal of the myth of palingenesis as an alternative to this Nineteenth Century option, which is really dominated by reformism, (or by the revolution, which is a spasmodic intensification of it), can be seen a striking illustration of an antithesis that dominates not only the Four, the Diola, and the Guajiro, but also myself.

Now this conflict with the industrial age bears upon the other social dimensions not only with the force created by changes of

a material nature, but also through the fact of group attitudes and modes of feeling, acting, and thinking, all influenced by the ever-increasing powers of production. What am I saying? It grows stronger with appeal of democracy! To be democratic: what is that but to assume an ascendent temporality in any society, and to welcome it for those sectors that seem most troublesome, for example: religion, the aesthetic, or public or private morality...

It is true that translated into terms of global expansion this noble appeal paradoxically became transformed into the mouth-piece of imperialism. For a long time, their own advancement has seemed to industrial societies as in turn justifying their own encroachments, which are held to be the preliminaries to something more positive—ever more fraudulently promised, and more blatantly discounted. It is only when democracy is taken further, that is to say when its initial eurocentricity is challenged, that the movement is reversed and becomes a liberating one for the nations of the three Continents. But merely relocating the political fulcrum would be far from sufficient. It is the democratic claim that, in a third stage, the various modes of collective action, in both the so-called liberated societies as well as our own, rid themselves of abuses of practice with an inevitable and global regularity.

The various modes then, homologous but not homogeneous in the industrial age, would only advance each according to its own logic. It is true that after at least a century and a half of belief in “stages of the human mind,” which is in point of fact the length of the industrial age, it is almost impossible, amid the various categories of social functions, to say what is their real duration and what has been imposed upon them as artificial or induced.

The religious dogma, for instance, that speaks of specific revelations, Falls, or Reformations and Messianic returns: is this a case of the real duration upon which we would like to seize? I do not believe so, no more than the genealogy of forms and styles proposed by the art historians, or the *crescendo* of juridical and political systems advanced by other specialists. In fact, these sequences, scissions, and successions are not easily to be deduced from complex tangles, in which content and application are confused with influences taken from a technological context; and in these rhythmic hypotheses (if one may so call them), may be recognized a transposition from the industrial age. The necessary implication of this in historically oriented ideologies (those of

Saint-Simon, Fourier, Marx, and Comte for example), as well as the popularization of evolutionism and transformism, still help to obscure the relationship between the intrinsic duration, logical growth, chronological succession and progress: I mean real progress. Let us be honest: a large part of the received ideas in this field spring from analogical transferences, applied from technology to other social dimensions, and can justifiably be accused of having, in the name of progress, given rise to a myth whose relevance is quite illusory. The corollary of historical Reason? No, but hence all the more sophisticated, and, yet worse: "A scholasticism of tools"!

THE SEARCH FOR ADEQUATE CORRELATIONS

Yet once opted for, the fair critiques that have been induced by progress as a myth must no longer be defined only as a subjectively apprehended sequence, but as an objective historical tendency. It is an objectivity, however, that must emancipate itself from the fallacious claims consequent upon extrapolating from one sequence to another. This amounts to asking the following question. If every society is multidimensional, which is to say pluralistic and integral at the same time, how can one define, evaluate, what may be the exact movement of each dimension? Once we have rejected the simplistic idea that their progress consists of a reflection of the stages of the technological and scientific revolution, or indeed even that they can be resolved into "material" factors which are presumed susceptible to causal entailment and to be of deterministic origin, how do we specify what the morphological, sacral, aesthetic, ludic, etc, "response" may be, when the industrial age summons? Now, this response is fundamental. Any society that neglects to find and heed it in a number of such areas, which are among the most crucial, risks hindering or being left out of the global trend.

This summary declaration, its consequent imperative, and the justified fear of not obeying it adequately have consciously or unconsciously inspired many intellectual and practical steps in Europe for over a century. The same inspiration has captured increasingly large portions of other continents. Hence so many efforts at "adaptation," "readjustment," and "modernization,"

so termed by those responsible and by public opinion, without anyone being able to tackle the problem effectively for lack of a correct formulation.

The evolution of Roman Catholicism in recent years provides an orthodox illustration of these attempts in the religious domain, just as modernism had recently dealt with its own dissidents. It is a reform of the Counter-Reformation. In art the rejuvenation of schools and styles, looking to the past rather than, as maintained by Malraux, to "reality," which is so dear to all sociological or socialist aesthetics, might indicate on their part the same effort to go with the times. In the Third World, and above all in the Islamic countries, with which I am better acquainted, the opposition of *jadid*, "new critical," to *qadim*, "old, organic," resounds with a vigor proportional to the contrast that opposes the facts and behavior inspired by an alien modernity to a society that is still largely dominated by Islam. Towards the end of the last century the famous sheik 'Abduh meritoriously offered a welcoming structure to this ravaging modernity. In stripping observance of any deviations, by returning to the source and the principle, he trimmed down the norm, accelerated the evolutionary, and reduced the immutable to a strictly metaphysical minimum. Today, the themes of "renewal," "growth," and "development," in the majority of Arab societies, and, more broadly, tricontinently, reveal by the sheer amount of planning, reforms and revolutions, a unanimously acknowledged need to bring the matter out into the open.

Considering itself as the yardstick, judge, and motive force behind contemporary situations, history is generally brandished polemically against attitudes that claim to be of essence or substance. Even a few years ago, there was doubtless an almost general consensus of all that strove to be secular, democratic, or progressive, before other interpretations, inspired by the analogy of language, had started to put forward the demands of the structural, the synchronistic, and the invariant.

ADAPTATIONS AND NEW DEPARTURES

It is true that, by an inverse process, other systems sought to contradict history in human affairs. These worked as counter-

weights, emphasizing those forces capable of counterbalancing the specific consequences of the industrial age.

Let us take a look at certain Third World societies where this procedure is practiced more openly than in ours. They are striving to circumscribe what they feel to be an invasion, an intrusion, an undermining; that is to say: modernity, to the extent that it reaches them from an alien source. In order to minimize depersonalization they have recourse to certain safeguards: faith, the absolute, sexual and family morality, the greatness of their language or traditions. These safeguards can be seen to be heavily charged in a way that might almost be termed symbolic, for they act upon collective practice by means that are screened from discussion and from the future. One step further, one more bitterly felt distortion, one more angry uprising against the imitated and the acculturated, one more threat to their identity, felt to be even more severe, and compensation will no longer only be sought in the idea of counterbalance but rather in that of reaction. Let us consider such a society. It escapes the besieging history; its values conflict without that unity of purpose which would make their dispute a fruitful one.

This reciprocal rejection is never more serious than when it rages within the framework of a voluntary modernization. Disastrous contrasts then fragment the unity of such a country into a "modern area" and a "traditional area." The latter, almost always the larger, becomes a symbolic breakwater of resistance against the officially pursued changes. Even more dangerously, it can call upon the dominant religion to support its aims. Such an association, of the so-called *al-Qiyam* "values," was seen in post-independence Algeria and rose up against the plans for agrarian reform. Other examples could be cited. Pernicious alliances can thus unite a departure from the authentic with the most egoistically retrogressive aims: Confucius coming to the aid of the warlords, or a bourgeoisie of *compradores!*

It would be wrong, however, to deny the educative value of these disputes. Compensation is certainly one mode of collective readjustment. When a particular social dimension becomes accelerated or emphasized in response to the acceleration or emphasis of another, this is only normal and sometimes salutary.

Let us consider more specifically the cultural activities of a certain group. They do not merely "reflect" its overall dynamics,

but also challenge, transcend, and perpetuate them. They fit into the general pattern by a sort of continually unsuccessful, but continually attempted, adjustment. A creative tension reigns between their vigor and that of other sectors. What else could it be called? It is undoubtedly to a tension of this kind that we owe the development of Romantic literature simultaneously with the age of steam, impressionism with that of electricity, dodecaphonic or serial music with our own, etc, etc. But in fact, far from having to view them as always being directly determined by a certain stage of technological development, is it not so that revolutionary advances stem from the very protest which this development stimulates in the imagination, in ethics, in desires? And this might apply to others than the so-called "cultural" revolutions...

It is really the following that give a negative or even pathological tone to certain compensatory excesses:

1) a discontinuity in the semantic sector, in which tension could be a useful agent, and effect a readjustment.

2) and, on the other hand, the fact that the partial dynamics thus aroused do not operate extra-temporally, in which there would be nothing amiss were it in their nature, but rather in a distortion or counterfeit of temporality.

RECIPROCAL CONDITIONING FACTORS

By a singularly powerful strateg, °Abduh the Egyptian hoped to unite the spread of Islam with innovation by returning to the original. But although Moslem societies have for over half a century been subjected to more considerable upheavals than he was able to foresee, and have to a large extent surrendered to the commands of the new times, one cannot say that the duality of terms unified by his thought, fundamentalist on the one hand, and resolutely historicist on the other, is exclusively dominated by the second. In the approaches to the Twentyfirst Century, the collective behavior of the Arabs, for example, has still far from abolished specific characteristics that are bound up with the whole preceding age, and transcends or rejects so esoteric a principle.

And what is proved true of the Arabs collectively is also true of all societies concerning the relationships which can be formed between a technological age and the other modes of collective practice. A social syllogism, one might say, in the sense that several logics are involved. Equally well, the relationship of one to the other can remain one-sided. Neutral time, and the unilinear progression postulated by positivism are only, in the final analysis, a conjectural reduction. Indeed, the effectiveness aspired to by mechanism on a planetary scale undergoes extremely varied modifications—in the field of invention, for example, or in that of actual factory work—impulses, delays, and qualifications. Weighed down by the demands of concrete application, it thus becomes part of the pattern affecting the organization of societies, their aesthetics, their recreation, and other aspects too. It becomes colored by a sociological variety which is necessary for its own achievements. Far from paralysing the factory, the strike enriches it with the humanity which alone, we believe, carries it to its goal. Indeed, no technological activity could be grasped in its pure state, without striking, from near or far, other harmonies. This mutual implication is increasingly prominent on passing from the technological to the economic, so that, even in an hierarchical analysis, which breaks reality down into structures and superstructures, to try and distinguish one from the other would be a risky undertaking.

This is what many Marxists still do, thus illustrating the weakness of a sociology that is over-oriented towards a predominating factor and towards classifying. Yet are these notions Marxist or positivist? On the contrary Marxist anthropology, the “technological thinker,” took into account more vividly and actively than all its predecessors the drive stamped upon history, and even upon human nature, by the industrial revolution. Under the heading of capitalist “relations of production” it gave a critique of what the present work qualifies as a discordance between the technological and the other dimensions. Based upon these very discordances, it summoned up all the militant drives to their radical rectification. In actuality, having come to power in certain countries it would be seen there to stamp on the economy of the productive forces, mechanisms of choice and reasoning that were capable of transforming them to the very roots. Nevertheless, while rightly criticizing economism, it would con-

tinually make the economy its main foundation. And although classification seemed to it to tend through a struggle towards its own suppression at a later stage, in which classes would disappear altogether, it underestimated many other types of differentiation: functions, for example, such as are closely linked to what is here being described from a pluridimensional viewpoint.

BUILDING BRIDGES

By unbalancing a false equilibrium, socialism in many respects proposes a genuine control of the interplay between social dimensions. Undoubtedly, it is to reductionist and, hopefully, transient interpretations that one must attribute the one-sided emphasis that is brought to bear on the economy, production, manufacturing and its consequent relations, which are held to be determinants of everything else. It is, on the contrary, a *de-reduction* of Marxism, and more generally of historicist theories, which in the short term seem to us to demand a future for these schools, for their morality, and even for their effectiveness. They have usually set themselves the task of subjecting technological growth to distributive justice, and this sole objective rouses militants by the million. What even more rousing attitudes would not result from a readjustment that extended to every social dimension.

More precarious and, certainly, more hypothetical than the relationship between production and retribution would be those that would have to be built between the productive dynamism of our societies and the dynamism of other sectors, including those that seem most remote: the aesthetic and the recreational, for instance, the sacral itself—why not indeed?

Let us stop for a while to consider this last term, which many prefer to deal with by omission. But omission resolves nothing. Let us therefore call things by their names, and judge arguments by their results. That positivism which assimilates religious belief into an ideology which is erroneous beyond all others, in that it exploits the temporary enfeeblement of individual and collective consciousness, commits itself, when outlawing metaphysics, to a metaphysical debate whither we will not pursue it. Which, let us ask, is the most historicist: the threatening or narrow-minded denial of the sacral, or the realist approach which enjoins it to

project itself, in its own way, onto the same pattern of development as the other areas of society?

Other bridges that might be built from one dimension to another, between the aesthetic and the technological for instance, become all the more evident to common sense, and, indeed, enter into current observation. As Condorcet had already noted, every art utilizes techniques that hinge upon the technical development of the day. The great styles of artistic creation contain their proportion of general thought, practical activity, and attitude to life. How can one forget, for example, that depth-perspective, the invention of pre-Renaissance painters, had affinities with Galileo's research and promised a growth of creative energy, just as the probability calculus, born of the experience of playing cards, implied mathematical extensions and concrete steps, beyond Pascal's Wager.

It remains to be said that these links, which only explore cultural anthropology and so-called sociologies of art, religion and knowledge, from afar, are still neither systematized nor clearly recognized as the ends of a common action. If their financial implications enter indirectly into the budget of modern nations, we have yet to see any plans to bring within its embrace those sectors so fearfully neglected and which yet overflow into the habitual areas of governmental activity with an obviousness and necessity that is anything but insignificant. The time is not distant when the citizen will find intolerable the amputations inflicted upon the legitimate objectives of what Rousseau termed the General Will, and which is the culmination of collective behavior.

THE PROMISES OF THE THIRD WORLD

It is, however, the resurrection of the Third World and the tricontinental cultures which, hurling bitter denials against the alleged superiority of the West, force us towards the most radical dispute of industrial primacy, which was and remains tied to the age of Imperialism. The disastrous events, the grimness of the struggles which marked the end of classical imperialism, make us forget too easily all the liberal pedagogy it had been able to display in its maturity. In fact it merely constituted a monopolization and a misappropriation of the then quite fresh powers of

industrial production, very close cousins, it has to be said, of bourgeois democracy and historical Reason. These positive relations explain how it has been able to rally to itself, at some time during their career, such unquestionable patriots as the Algerian Abel Kader, the Egyptian Zaghoul, and the Indian Ghandi! By a reductive process in which everyone more or less participated from Victorian times to the Great War, the industrial primacy, and the social and mental relationships that it creates everywhere in the world, repressed, denigrated, and consigned to the dark, all values which were different. These latter disappeared from collective behavior. Because they lay outside, or were unamenable to, the governing idea, the tricontinental nationalities and cultures also disappeared. All acceded willy-nilly to the new history: but it was a one-sided and rigid history: a *lock-jaw* history.

It is the rebirth of diversity that has by degrees re-established, or will re-establish, the colonized peoples and ourselves. The incomprehension with which it has long clashed, the allegation, current in left-wing parties, that it was synonymous with an addiction to the past, and with irrationality, this all too often, have only retreated in the face of failure. The upsurge of the Third World is also therefore that of the pluridimensional, and there is nothing surprising in the fact that it is perpetuated by a kind of inverted *reconquista*, and in the uneasiness with which the ancient Metropoles henceforth confront their own problems and reinterpret their own past. Thus the new historical Reason which is unfolding over the ruins of imperialism, of bourgeois liberalism, and of unilinear socialism, must *de-reduce* on pain of uniting against itself the legitimate rebellion of righteousness, as opposed to that of the most nefarious archaisms. We would say that this is not often, but too often the case.

PROPULSION AND DIVERSITY

A completely accurate historical account must recognize and emphasize the interference of the most apparently ascendent dimension, which is to say industrial dynamism, with those whose own behavior responds with different characteristics. Dare we repeat it? The first, although responsible for cumulative changes

of position, does not, as positivism presumes, act upon the others by some "material" prevalence over something that is not material, but rather "advances," "accelerates" (words which are themselves erroneously held to be synonymous with "progress,") by a pressure exerted in all directions. The essential feature of each dimension's original motion certainly still escapes us, as do the secrets of the mutual interference of the whole; but we shall accept as a criterion of genuine progress, and even as a postulate of modernity, that all must and can join together in a common course, provided that each do so in its own way.

Now, it has to be restated that this multiplicity of dimensions, modes, or systems, are only fragments of a single entity. A society cannot be broken down into technology, organization, the sacred, etc. It *is* all this both simultaneously and separately, and *actualizes* it. To distinguish between these characteristics is certainly in the order of the didactic rather than the experiential, or even the analysed. The most adequate formula that seems to offer itself to describe this very unequal, but, if one might say so, so harmonious, interaction, is that of saying that social historicity in contemporary times necessarily combines the call for a sustained intensity with the qualifications of variety.

Propulsion on one side, diversity on the other; such is doubtlessly the binomial obeyed in contemporary times both by the global dynamic and the sectional dynamics of societies. Is the equilibrium of these two terms merely an abstract dialectic? The affinity of the industrial age with the quantitative should detain us less than these transitions from one mode to another, the existence and strength of which I have discovered everywhere. It is at least certain that the diachronous transformation of the world does not depend solely upon our productive powers. It is realised only through variations in geographical, social, cultural and psychical space; and if this be true the temporal variation of the world is tied to the variety of cultures and to that of individual and collective behavior.

A DIGRESSION ON THE GALAPAGOS ISLES

From the study that he made of this desolate archipelago in 1835, Darwin drew one of his principal inspirations: that of the adap-

tation of living species to various environments. This was in a purely naturalist phase of his thought which had as yet not hardened, shall we say, nor undermined Malthusianism. The scattered fauna which he observed in these volcanic lands, separated from each other by great deeps and the cold Pacific current, offered so many affinities with that of their respective native territories that, for lack of belief in a multiple Creation, which was a reactionary hypothesis, it was necessary to admit the descent from an original type. Thus among the giant tortoises, the sea iguanas, from the twenty-six species of birds, many of which were of the same genus, were the *Geospiza*—differing one from another, from island to island, by the profile of the head and the size of the beak. Thus it was with a number of other related forms which had branched out and were spread across the islands according to a strange “law of distribution,” as he termed it; I would even call it, of selection.

If I refer here to Darwin rather than to Humboldt, whose teaching would seem to be more relevant since he came to Venezuela, it is because the binomial of the terms gathered under the title of that essential book, *The Origin of Species* (1859), proposed a significant treatment of the problem under consideration in the present work. But it is a treatment in the style of the Nineteenth Century. In his account, Darwin attributed variations of a single form to divergent evolution rather than to differences within a system. Later on he was even to recall the kinship of the primate to the human form itself! The essential of his theory is still relevant to us, and from time to time fossils are found to confirm it, as do the most recent biological discoveries. Only Darwin enlisted quite vehemently against the ideas of chance and design which today seem to constitute the rallying point of the life-sciences. The interruption of morphological series, either sequentially or simultaneously, created a problem for him. Even more outmoded are doubtless the sociological and even political schemes that claim authority from him. The “vital struggle” and the “selection of the fittest” could be called to support imperialism and racism, and indeed, they have served well. Even if anthropology today reinstitutes the idea of plurality and the equivalency of civilizations, such an idea remains purely a museum piece as long as the militant proclamation of the right to individuality, and as long as the fight of collective identities for survival

do not actualize it historically. To this are opposed not only the hegemony of the so-called "central" types, but also a strange collusion among the dominated.

It is a fact that the creativity, so inspiringly recognized by Darwin, stops short at natural morphologies, and, as far as man is concerned, only too easily postulates a convergent hierarchy of races. There are many reasons for this: a technological dynamism, compulsory for all on pain of extinction; a communication network covering the whole planet which, by degrees, eliminates all isolates; and finally that idea that a single history would be a human answer to the animal and vegetable diversification of species. Man would thus substitute Nature's synchronous variation by a temporal one. Going over Darwin's method in the opposite direction, he would have unearthed, if one might say so, his own origin in the future. This would be historical, but at the price of diversity; which is also the same as saying his identity, to our way of thinking.

GENESIS AND DISCONTINUITY

Let us repeat that, in the animal and vegetable kingdoms, the absence of intermediary links, or rather forms, between types, posed a problem for Darwin. The sort of crystallization that imprints its individual shape upon each one, separated by a discontinuity from its sisters and as though by a lacuna from the type, found no scientific explanation in his times. *Natura non facit saltus*, it was believed; things are no longer the same today. Linguistics, at least, familiarizes us with the concept of connection between discrete entities. It establishes the necessity of peculiarity amid synchrony, and it is not unthinkable that it is, at the same time, re-establishing the idea of development, for, we believe, a system remains unintelligible unless one takes into account the flux upon which it is carried along and the direction in which it is travelling. One has to acknowledge that this consideration is sufficient to run into conflict with certain specialists. But their justified insistence upon revealing the invariables that lie at the heart of variations, on the molecular scale for example, upon discovering what it is in social movements that stems from structure, system or model and is discernible only as a micro-differential

and synchronous activity, all this might suggest that at every level of reality there is a reciprocal interaction between variables and invariables, a fortuitous and struggling asymmetry between the two. If Darwin contracted the plentiful evidence of diversity into a genetic dynamism, why would it not be equally legitimate to expand that same evidence into the terms of future history? With this additional justification that, dealing now with a human order, that is to say one which is underpinned if not defined by language, and which is also, therefore, a function of consciousness, it is highly improbable that it would be affected by any overall contraction without losing its identity.

Let us pursue this idea to its conclusion. The leap separating one species from another, and individuating it, is also that which gives it a face; and the differences between faces which allow them to be identified, far from being merely superficial attributes, stem from the very movement that projects their development by diversification. If this be as true of human cultures and social systems as of natural species, is it any less true of the human body? All are part of the genetic flux, but each particularizes and brings this flux to life in individual peculiarities. Thanks to these the formal discontinuity between genus and species sometimes culminates in what we call beauty, and which is perhaps only the fleeting and moving encounter between the model, the distinctive, and the transient...

Let us go further. This movement of the one and the many, and the configurations in which it reveals and cloaks itself, characterise the whole conspectus of orders and systems. Whenever we speak of a person we are necessarily invoking a vertical conjunction of his subjective and objective attributes. Whenever we speak of a people we are invoking another, much more far-reaching one, ranging from its ecology to its consciousness and its future. If the "primitive thought" of the Guajiros brings together animals and plants in discourse and myth, this is because it is still able to create analogical links between nature and society, even the very need of which has been lost by the majority of allegedly civilized people. From this there stems an overwhelming need, to which all are subject but which few acknowledge: that of restoring these unities in their entirety to a position of prominence.

Now, it is not only the maintenance of differentials in cultures and attitudes in human history that appears necessary for the

latter to remain creative, but also, on a more global scale, the survival of animal and vegetable species. Thus also, with the whales hunted across the oceans, the Arabian oryx, the atoll tortoises being sterilized by our nuclear explosions, so it is with all of you, old companions, entries barely or soon to be effaced from a universal lexicon of types, that the loss of the images and faces that you project onto the common biosphere ravages our own future.

A COMMON LEVEL?

Propulsion and diversity are not applicable to a philosophical limbo. They are bound to man and nature, and are bound by them. The reciprocal adaptation of man and nature would have to proceed via one or the other.

This adaptation obviously goes beyond technology, and implicates all the other dimensions of social man. The present time both enhances its opportunities and aggravates its weaknesses. But it is its regressions, almost always imputable to interdimensional discord, that rekindle the feeling of its necessity by challenging it. Confirming the Marxist notion of "the humanization of nature/the naturalization of man," it (the present time) can realize the methods and achieve the advances which illuminate the analyzable, and sometimes quantifiable, setbacks. These setbacks, that we are increasingly justified in imputing to error or fault, trigger off sudden upsurges of protest, deepening the critique, and thereby stimulating application, theory, and hope. In such processes, the subjective and objective mingle with one another, as they ought. In the domain of individual and collective behavior, an existential intensity asserts itself, constantly deepened by education and struggle, while for her part, nature increasingly accomodates herself to the thought and action of man.

If time thus affects each dimension of social intercourse in a way that is both general and specific to each, and if a cumulative effect reveals itself in the reciprocity between men and things, do we not have at our disposal the evidence upon which to submit this multiple movement to common judgement? It is certainly not by surpassing the conceptions of Heraclitus, the aesthetics of the Parthenon or the Cathedrals, the morality of the Buddha, Jesus or

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Mahommet, that we will claim to gauge the direction of the time so variously manifested in ways all influenced by the stimulation of the industrial age, but whose ordained diversity must be protected by all, on pain of sterility and chaos. Rather, it is by an increasingly active and questing advance of man towards his terrestrial, and—why not?—cosmic, integration, it is in an ever more exacting participation by individuals and groups in a march, doubtless without end but not without finality, that we shall be allowed a glimpse of the goal and the landmarks of what we shall henceforth have the right to call progress.

Were we to retrace the advance along each axis of collective activity, such a goal would highlight the articulations and inclinations of each, which make up the pattern of the whole. One more attempt at analysis, and we would be able, one day, to describe this unified pattern and its distinct components and, who knows, even measure them...