

Against Posthumanism: Posthumanism as the World Vision of House-Slaves

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I. Introduction

With the birth of the new millennium, assertions of political correctness have taken the place of reasoned debate in the realm of ideas among those who claim to be politically radical. Aligning themselves with information science and Foucault's proclamation of the death of man, posthumanism, inspired by Donna Haraway's essay "A Cyborg Manifesto" (1991) and Katherine Hayles's book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), is replacing postmodernism as the defining form of political correctness in the humanities. This provides further justification for the elimination of the humanities, the *raison d'être* of which is to cultivate the humanity of people. This is at a time when more humanity is needed than ever before to challenge the power of the global corporatocracy who have massively concentrated wealth and subverted democracy, and to avoid the catastrophe of a war of all against all as global ecological destruction destroys the conditions for civilization. Posthumanism is essentially a philosophical notion, and although the term did not originate in the work of philosophers, a good many philosophers have conformed to what is politically correct and embraced posthumanism. To those with some knowledge of the history of philosophy and a concern for what has been happening to universities, the celebration of posthumanism as something new, and also as politically correct, appears odd to say the least.

Could it be a matter of just accepting that reductionist science has revealed the truth about reality, and all we can do now is accept its triumph? Reductionist science is committed to explaining psychology through biology, biology through chemistry and chemistry through physics. It is a tradition of thought that originated with Thomas Hobbes in the Seventeenth Century. Most analytic philosophers, while being situated as part of the humanities, aligned themselves with reductionist science, some attempting to pass themselves off as scientists, although ordinary language analytic philosophers offered some defence of the humanities. While anti-humanist psychologists in the Twentieth Century conceived humans as stimulus-response mechanisms with or without Pavlov's reflex arcs, in mid-century the reductionists found a far more powerful basis for upholding their reductionism with the development and integration of information science and cybernetics. This integration was effected during the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics held in Britain between 1946 and 1953. As Dupuy (2009) showed, the goal of these scientists was 'to mechanize the mind'. With the incorporation of information science into biology through

molecular biology conceiving organisms as gene machines, and then later efforts to characterize the mind as a computer, the proponents of the Hobbesian view of humans appeared in a position to triumph over the humanists. This was largely supported by Analytic philosophers who have extended their influence around the world.

However, the humanists were finding support in the development of historically oriented philosophers of science and radical scientists. These philosophers of science invalidated the positivist conception of knowledge used to identify science with reductionist explanations and to uphold scientism, the view that the only valid knowledge is that achieved through the application of "the scientific method." Their work legitimated the work of the radical scientists challenging the tacitly held metaphysical assumptions of mainstream science in their efforts to transform science to align it with the humanities and to support the humanistic forms of the human sciences. If this is the case, why have defenders of humanism been marginalized within universities with the help of academics located within humanities?

To understand this, it is necessary to understand who were these defenders of humanism. Posthumanism amounts to a total rejection of the revival of humanism by the New Left, which reinterpreted Marx's work on this basis to oppose the nihilistic, instrumentalist thinking dominating both Soviet Marxism and Western bureaucratic capitalism. The New Left in turn were recovering the heritage of German thought developed in opposition to the atomistic, utilitarian philosophies dominating France and Britain. They were defending a more exalted idea of humans and humanity that acknowledged their capacity for autonomy, and central to this, a more exalted view of reason and imagination, conceived to be creative in a way that empiricists and mechanists had refused to countenance (Engell, 1981). These Germans in turn were reviving and developing the civic humanism that emerged with the defence of democratic republicanism of the Florentine Renaissance, inspired by the Roman republicans and Ancient Athens, and reviving at the same time appreciation of Roman and Greek philosophers.

That all this should be rejected for an updated mechanistic conception of humans, which is now being used by Nick Land and others to argue that as artificial intelligence surpasses the intelligence of the most intelligent humans, humans should reconcile themselves to being displaced as the next stage of evolution, is something that calls for investigation. Can the posthumanists be seen as just Hobbes's epigones, continuing the work of the reductionist tradition of thought to undermine the values associated with the humanities, perhaps now trying to advance their careers by disguising their alignment with ruling elites hostile to the very idea of democracy? It appears there is more to it than this. Although posthumanists have embraced information science, in characterizing themselves as posthumanists they refer to Michel Foucault's work heralding the death of man. Like the postmodernists, their reference point is French philosophy, although they have tacitly accepted the social

imaginary of the reductionists (to use the language of Cornelius Castoriadis) of gaining total control over the world through techno-science, with the ultimate goal being to overcome mortality. Why should they be subverting the humanities? To comprehend why posthumanism is being promoted and taken to be politically correct a broad historical perspective is required.

II. The Historical Background of Humanism

We know from the work of Hans Baron (1966), and following him, J.G.A. Pocock (1975/2003) and Quentin Skinner (2002a), that civic humanism emerged in the Florentine Renaissance, reviving ideas from the Roman Republic and Ancient Greece as part of the struggle to defend and advance the liberty achieved by northern Italian city states from the Holy Roman Empire, the Catholic Church, and later, from tyrants. Florence as a democratic republic (until this was overthrown by the Medici) was the centre of intellectual life in Italy, and Petrarch introduced the humanities as a form of education designed to inspire people to develop the virtues of wisdom, justice and courage to defend their liberty and participate as citizens in the governance of their republics. That is, the humanities were committed to fostering *humanitas*, or humanity, combining *philanthrôpía* (loving what makes us human) with *paideia* (education). Proponents of this were the civic humanists. As despotism displaced republican democracy, civic humanism took a more radical, egalitarian form, incorporating into it a radical form of Neo-Platonism that was elaborated into an entire cosmology. This was a pantheistic materialism and was characterized as “nature enthusiasm.” Giordano Bruno, who was burnt at the stake in 1600, was the foremost proponent of this.

The work of Margaret Jacob (1981/2003), Stephen Toulmin (1994), Quentin Skinner (2008) and others have shown that the major figures of Seventeenth Century scientific revolution: Marin Mersenne, Pierre Gassendi, René Descartes, Thomas Hobbes, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton and John Locke, were driven by hostility to these civic humanists and their republican ideals, and even more to their celebration of nature, and sought to develop a philosophy to replace their ideas. Toulmin (1996, p.24) characterized Descartes’ work and influence as the *counter-Renaissance*, and this characterizes the work of all these philosophers. They argued in opposition to Bruno that nature is just meaningless matter in motion. The most important of these philosophers for the future of modernity was Hobbes who developed a conception of humans as machines moved by appetites and aversions and characterized science as the accumulation of knowledge of causal relationships to facilitate control of nature and people. In accordance with this conception of humans and their knowledge, he argued that all thinking amounts to adding and subtracting, or as he put it:

When a man Reasoneth, hee does nothing else but conceive a summe totall, from Addition of parcels; or conceive a Remainder, from Subtraction of one summe form

another... These operations are not incident to Numbers onely, but for all manner of things that can be added together, and taken one from another. (Hobbes, 110)

The function of language is to register knowledge of causes, conveying it to others and to make our will known to others, and apart from these functions, is simply playing with words for amusement (101f.). History and literature are reduced to nothing but forms of entertainment. Liberty is redefined as “nothing other than absence of impediments to motion” (Skinner, 2008, p.109), with such motion being a manifestation of internal motions of matter caused by external motions of matter.

Essentially, as Skinner has shown, Hobbes was attempting to transform language so that the quest for autonomy and liberty as these had been understood in the Ancient world and in the Renaissance, and the development of people’s character to make these possible, would be unintelligible. This allowed political order to be equated with conforming to the edicts of a tyrannical sovereign. As Skinner (2002b, p.13) wrote of this transformation of language:

Renaissance political writers had begun to describe self-governing communities as *states*, *stati* or *états*, and more specifically as *stati liberi* or free states. They tended as a result to equate the powers of the state with the powers of its citizens when viewed as a *universitas* or corporate body of people ... Hobbes dramatically reverses this understanding, arguing that it is only when we perform the act of instituting a sovereign to represent us that we transform ourselves from a multitude of individuals into a unified body of people.

Hobbes was the original posthumanist.

Hobbes’s conception of humans was embraced and came to dominate modernity, usually in the watered-down form bequeathed by John Locke’s philosophy in which the goal of life was portrayed as maximising pleasure and minimizing pain rather than satisfying appetites and avoiding aversions, and plutocracy was defended rather than tyranny. Knowledge and reasoning were explained as interactions between what is given to the senses and decaying versions of what has been sensed, implying an utterly impoverished notion of the imagination. This notion of humans was incorporated into economic theory as *homo economicus*, displacing Renaissance economic theory which had focussed on the development of people and the arts as the basis of prosperity (Reinert & Daastøl, 2004). Subsequently, economic theory became the main discipline through which the ruling elites of societies, beginning with Britain and France, interpreted and legitimated themselves. As Robert Young (1985) showed, Hobbesian thought was strengthened in the Nineteenth Century by using economics as a metaphor for nature, and characterizing evolutionary progress not only in society but in nature as the outcome of the struggle for survival between competing machines. Nowadays, very much in accordance with Hobbesian thought, these machines are characterized as information processing

cyborgs, the survival machines of DNA which itself is coded information. Similar concepts, including autopoiesis, that is, self-making based on second order cybernetics, now pervade the human sciences.

Through the work of Jacob (1986/2003), we also know that Renaissance thought, while suppressed at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century, survived. It survived in the Dutch Republic where it had influenced the work of Benedict Spinoza who had brought together all work that divinized nature and defended republicanism, and in Italy where the humanities were defended and further developed by Giambattista Vico. It also survived in the work of John Toland in Britain and in masonic guilds, particularly in the Dutch Republic, before being taken up in France by such figures as Jean-Baptiste Rousseau and Denis Diderot. Along with Leibniz, these outposts of humanism inspired what has since been called the German Renaissance as this developed at the end of the Eighteenth Century and beginning of the Nineteenth Century (Watson, 2010). This whole movement was dubbed the Radical Enlightenment by Jacob, a designation since taken up and elaborated on by Jonathan Israel (2002) who emphasised the role in it of Spinoza. Israel contrasted the Radical Enlightenment with what he called the Moderate Enlightenment, exemplified by Voltaire who proselytised the work of Newton and Locke. The Radical Enlightenment focussed on the mind, developing more adequate notions of imagination and reason to defend and redefine the reality of human freedom, and revived the pre-Socratic notion of nature as developed by Bruno and the Spinozists (who were also influenced by Leibniz's physics) as creative process.

III. The Radical Enlightenment and the German Renaissance

The Radical Enlightenment flowered in Germany under the influence of Immanuel Kant and his students. Kant is known primarily for his critical philosophy, but as Van de Pitte (1971) argued, all Kant's philosophical work was built on his earlier work on philosophical anthropology, and this was the reference point for all his whole philosophy, an argument that provides support for the more recent interpretation of Kant by Robert Hanna (2006). Kant was inspired to make philosophical anthropology the focus of his interest after encountering the works of Rousseau in the 1760s, and he continued to lecture on philosophical anthropology until the end of his career. In his *Jäsche Logic* (2005, p.17), published in its final form in 1800, Kant proclaimed that philosophy in its cosmic sense "is the only science which has a systematic connection, and gives systematic unity to all the other sciences." It can be reduced to four questions, What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope? and What is Man?, and concluded "all these might be reckoned under anthropology, since the first three questions refer to the last." Interpreted from this perspective, the most important achievement of Kant's later critical philosophy is to have defended a robust notion of imagination, including productive or creative imagination, resurrected a place for

reason above calculation and instrumental knowledge, accorded a place to autonomous agency both in inquiry and in action, provided an alternative to the mechanistic conception of life defended by the Cartesians, and accorded a place to the arts beyond being just amusements. This interpretation accords major significance to the *Critique of Judgement* where the significance of imagination, downplayed in the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* and almost absent in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, was reaffirmed (Makreel, 1994).

Kant's most influential students were Johann Herder (1744-1803), who had attended his lectures from 1762 to 64, and J.G. Fichte (1762-1814) who attended Kant's later lectures. Herder was a major influence on Goethe, and Herder (along with Goethe) and Fichte together inspired the Early Romantics, G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Schleiermacher and Friedrich Schelling and almost all subsequent German philosophy. Education, now characterized as "*Bildung*," was a major focus of interest of these philosophers. *Bildung* can be translated as "education," "self-cultivation," "character-formation" or "culture" (Beiser, 1998). It was seen as part of the general process of self-realization, the development of all one's characteristic powers as a human being and as an individual. As with the Ancient Athenians, *Bildung* was seen as the condition for people to be free and to govern themselves.

Herder's philosophy was a continuation of Kant's early work on philosophical anthropology. He argued that humans are formed by culture, and each nation has its own culture and is challenged to find its own centre of gravity and realize its own unique potentials, and thereby to contribute to the advance of humanity. Individuals, inheriting their culture, further this process of advancing their nation and humanity by discovering their own centre of gravity and realizing their own unique potentials, expressing themselves in their work and lives in doing so. On this basis he developed an ethics of self-realization. The study of history plays a major role in Herder's philosophy and his views on education. The study of history involves feeling oneself into the worlds of people with very different ways of living and thinking, appreciating their uniqueness and achievements, thereby being inspired to fully realize one's own unique potential. On this basis Herder defended democracy and argued against imperialism (Bohm, 2000).

Fichte, in developing Kant's notion of freedom through acting according to universalizable ethical principles, argued that the self-conscious "I" emerges through being recognized as free and summoned to be free by others who are recognized in turn as capable of free action, and constraining one's actions to accord with the freedom of others. Consequently, politics, by which people are brought to think of themselves as free persons, plays a formative role in constituting individuals as self-conscious, responsible agents. This requires education. As Fichte (2000) put it,

[t]he summons to engage in free self-activity is what we call upbringing (*Erziehung*). All individuals must be brought up to be human beings, otherwise they would not be human beings.

Education as *Bildung* is not the acquisition by a person of useful knowledge; it is that through which one becomes a person. Consequently, one of the most important professions in society is that of the “scholar” (*Gelehrter*). Fichte wrote of the vocation of the scholar that this can only be understood in relation to society, and must answer the question What is the vocation of people in society? which in turn must answer the question, What is the vocation of humans as such? Answering this question must be the ultimate end of philosophy. As Fichte (1988, p.146) proclaimed:

All philosophy, all human thinking and teaching, all of your studies, and, in particular, everything which I will ever be able to present to you can have no purpose other than answering the questions just raised, and especially the last and highest question: What is the vocation of man as such, and what are his surest means for fulfilling it?

The Early Romantics, integrating ideas from Herder and Fichte, conceived *Bildung* as enculturing people to realize their potential to be free, to recognize each others’ freedom and to discover and realize their vocation to advance freedom. Under their influence, Hegel in his early lectures developed the notion of *Geist* (spirit or mind), arguing that individual subjects transcend their immediate engagement in the world to become essentially social minds and free agents not only through mutual recognition developing in the context of institutions such as the family, but also through using tools and learning language (Habermas, 1974). In each case, institutions, tools and language are integrated into to their own activities, allowing them to transcend their subjective immediacy and situating themselves from the perspective of the universal. It is in this way that they gain selfhood. This generates imperatives operating on individuals, societies and civilizations to extend and advance recognition of people’s freedom, to develop their tools to augment the power of labour and language to augment their capacity for representation. This notion of *Geist* was then used by Hegel to develop a theory of history, explaining how humanity has progressed ethically, technologically and cognitively through the interdependent but partially autonomous dialectics of recognition, labour and representation. This conception of humanity was incorporated into Hegel’s later philosophy based on the notions of Subjective, Objective and Absolute Spirit, as Robert Williams (1992) has shown. Schelling, developing his philosophy at the same time, advanced ideas similar to and consistent with Hegel’s anthropology, while conceiving humans as the product of the evolution of nature and paying more attention to the nature of individual freedom (Williams, 1997, pp.39ff.), a theme that he took up later in life to oppose the tendency in Hegel’s later work to reduce individuals to instruments of a transcendent *Geist*. These conceptions of humanity later inspired Karl Marx.

When the University of Berlin was founded in 1810, Wilhelm von Humboldt, under the influence of Schleiermacher and Schelling, not only made the humanities the core of this university, but promoted a revolution in science to make science accord with and legitimate the conception of humans being developed in the humanities. The new philosophy of nature called for by Schelling (and supported by Schleiermacher) to achieve this would make it possible to recognize the intrinsic value of all life, rejecting the idea that nature should be valued only to serve human purposes. Philosophy was situated as part of the humanities and required to play the central role not only in the humanities, but in the sciences. Fichte was the first professor of philosophy of the University of Berlin, Hegel its second. Through the influence of the Humboldtian model of the university on the rest of the world, the humanities characterizing humans as cultural beings formed by their national cultures or *Volkgeister* (national spirits), but in being formed, developing the capacity to master themselves and critically reflect upon and develop their own cultures and engage with other cultures to advance humanity, continued to uphold and advance this anti-Hobbesian conception of humans.

IV. The Struggle between the Radical Enlightenment and the Moderate Enlightenment

Since the end of the Eighteenth Century there has been a struggle, often confused, between the humanists associated with the Radical Enlightenment and the atomists and mechanists associated with the Moderate Enlightenment. The former have defended the potential of humans through being educated to take responsibility for themselves, their communities and the future, the latter have claimed that the distinctive qualities of humans with their apparent consciousness and freedom are illusions that can be explained away. They have defended egoism in the context of social mechanisms, most importantly, imposed markets and punitive laws and their enforcement to protect life and property along with the manufacture of consent to maintain order. Proponents of the Radical Enlightenment have defended communitarianism of one form or another while proponents of the Moderate Enlightenment have defended possessive individualism. For the Radical Enlightenment, liberty is equated to not being enslaved and being empowered by developing their potential to participate in the life of their communities; for the Moderate Enlightenment, liberty is equated with freedom from constraint in private life, providing the life and property of others are respected. The Radical Enlightenment involves a commitment to democracy, while the Moderate Enlightenment involves efforts to impose and extend markets, and rule by plutocracy. While often confused, the forms of thinking upholding the Radical Enlightenment were developed in the humanities where the importance of philosophy, history, literature and the arts were upheld as essential to the cultivation of character and advance of civilization, while the forms of thinking upholding the Moderate

Enlightenment were developed in the sciences and economics faculties of universities. The two traditions collided in the human sciences, with proponents of the Radical Enlightenment defending humanistic approaches treating humans as essentially cultural beings capable of achieving self-determination, and the Moderate Enlightenment arguing that the human sciences should conform to the natural sciences and produce the knowledge required to control people efficiently.

It is more complicated than this, however, since many philosophers aligned themselves with the Moderate Enlightenment, promoting “scientism,” the view that only science, mathematics and logic provide genuine knowledge, accepting that history, literature and the arts, or “high culture,” are simply refined amusements. Almost always, this involved defending reductionist approaches in the sciences with the conviction that economics and other human sciences could be modelled on and finally reduced to the natural sciences. In the Twentieth Century this reductionism was strongly defended through logical positivism. The ultimate aim of such reductionists has been to reduce all explanations to mathematical models. Conversely, as I have noted, many mathematicians and scientists have rejected such reductionism and in the tradition inspired by Schelling and the *Naturphilosophen* have striven to overcome reductionism and align the sciences with the humanities (Gare, 2011).

This complication and confusion were vastly increased through the work and influence of Marx. Marx was and is a major figure in the Radical Enlightenment, being inspired by the German Renaissance. The triumph of the Moderate Enlightenment was associated with huge technological advances along with concentrations of wealth, an industrial revolution, impoverishment of the working class, recurring depressions and imperialism, mainly by Britain and France. Marx exposed the irrationality and illusions of freedom created by the Moderate Enlightenment where people were being alienated from their own work and its products as they were forced to sell their labour power as a commodity, at the same time, alienating them from each other, from nature and from their humanity (their “species-being”). Most people in Nineteenth Century Britain were being reduced to wage-slaves under appalling conditions and people in colonized countries were being subjugated and impoverished. However, in searching for a solution to this problem, Marx placed his faith in the growth of the working class and its potential to take power and gain control over the rapidly developing means of production. However, he did not publish his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* where he analysed alienation, and at one stage, he formulated a theory of history claiming that the development of the base, consisting of forces of production (technology) and relations of production, was the driving force in history, with the superstructure simply serving this base. Marx left it very unclear what kind of social order could be created to replace capitalism, putting his faith in a revolution that would establish a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’ without spelling out the implications of this, even when challenged to do so by the Russian anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin. Although Marx himself rejected the base-superstructure model of society in his major

work, *Capital*, having expunged it from the final version (White, p.461), this characterization of history was embraced by most Marxists, particularly outside the advanced capitalist countries. What these supposedly orthodox Marxists aspired to was ‘scientific socialism’ based on a conception of humans far closer to the Moderate Enlightenment than the Radical Enlightenment. Orthodox Marxism was essentially Hobbesian Marxism.

With the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, there were many followers of Marx who understood the radical nature of Marx’s critique of political economy and rejected the base-superstructure model of society. The most important of these were Alexander Bogdanov and his brother-in-law, Anatoly Lunacharsky, who became Commissar for Enlightenment (or Education) (White, 2019). Bogdanov argued that the creation of a new social order would involve the creation of a new culture (*proletkult*), incorporating the best of all previous cultures but going beyond them, overcoming Cartesian dualism and the mechanistic view of nature and according value to “ideological” work as well as physical work. With the support of Lunacharsky, this vision inspired enormous creativity in the 1920s, not only in the arts and humanities, but also in the development of post-reductionist science, most importantly, ecology, although many objected to the characterization of this new culture as ‘proletarian’ culture. This creativity was associated with the discovery and publication of Marx’s *Manuscripts of 1844* and other early writings, revealing the deeper assumptions about humans and humanity driving Marx’s critique of capitalism, and vindicating philosophers such as György Lukács who had interpreted Marx as a radical Hegelian thinker.

However, orthodox Marxism was used to justify the creation of command economy, which under Stalin served to rapidly industrialize the Soviet Union, but effectively enslaved most of the population to a new class of bureaucrats and technocrats, as Bogdanov had predicted (Gare, 1994). It had no place for those involved in the creative burst in the arts, the humanities and the sciences in the 1920s, and many of the major figures in this cultural renaissance were sent to the Gulag. Some were executed in the 1937 purge. David Riazanov, who founded the Marx-Engels Institute and published Marx’s *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, was executed in 1937. Pavel Medvedev, a member of the famous Bakhtin circle and author of the brilliant *The Formal Method in Literature Scholarship*, was arrested in 1930 and shot in 1938. The Bolshevik order facilitated the defence of Russia, but also the expansion of what was really a Russian Empire. Bolshevism under Stalin proved to be at least as brutal as capitalism, although this was only fully revealed in the 1950s.

V. The Rise of the New Left, and its Influence

Anglophone philosophy in the Twentieth Century was characterized by the triumph and domination of Analytic philosophy inspired by advances in symbolic

logic. This had its roots in Nineteenth Century developments in logic but came to dominate in the early Twentieth Century where it was developed in opposition to Idealism. However, in opposing metaphysics it also involved sidelining the process metaphysics of C.S. Peirce, Henri Bergson, Alfred North Whitehead and Robin Collingwood. Idealism and process metaphysics were inspired by the humanism of the German Renaissance, and opposition to them developed as a strong form of anti-humanism, although some ordinary language analytic philosophers offered some support for humanism. Analytic philosophy, which originated in Germany, evolved from logical atomism to logical positivism before being countered by ordinary language philosophy. While logical atomism was apparently abandoned, many Analytic philosophers remained committed to logical positivism, or more broadly, logical empiricism, while formulating this as a form of naturalism. In doing so, they preserved logical atomism, with knowledge coming to be understood as information (Dretske, 1981). Logical positivism provided a defence of reductionist science, with later proponents such as Quine claiming that philosophy is part of science rather than the humanities. As C.D. Broad (1947) observed, Analytic philosophers were excluding two of the other essential components of philosophical thinking, synopses (which means “viewing together”) whereby contradictions between diverse domains of culture could be exposed, and synthetic thinking whereby new ways of understanding the world could be developed to overcome such contradictions. Synopses are also an essential to historical thinking and to appreciating the context of anything being examined. Imagination, seldom taken seriously by Analytic philosophers, is essential for both synopses and syntheses. Unsurprisingly, Analytic philosophy became increasingly self-referential, concerned with paradoxes generated by its own deep assumptions that they had placed beyond questioning. As Robert Hanna (2001) has shown, these paradoxes derive from having ignored some of Kant’s crucial insights.

In USA, this narrowing of philosophy had been opposed by John Dewey and Whitehead, while in Britain it had been opposed by Collingwood. Collingwood had been a major historian of philosophy with an extremely broad range of interests, including the history of Roman Britain. At Collingwood’s untimely death in 1943 at the age of 53, he was replaced by Gilbert Ryle who differentiated Analytic philosophy from “continental philosophy,” dismissing the latter as of no value (Monk, 2019). While this included German, Italian, and Spanish philosophy, continental philosophy was usually identified with French philosophy. That Analytic philosophy originated in Austria and Germany was ignored, along with the rest of the history of philosophy. Similar attitudes developed in USA in the 1950s in an intellectual environment in which academics were intimidated by the McCarthy witch-hunts against leftists, and W.V.O. Quine came to dominate philosophy at Harvard University (McCumber, 2001).

Some of the younger Anglophone philosophers, dissatisfied with the sterility, limited scope and triviality of most Analytic philosophy, were attracted to “continental philosophy” (although some remained faithful to Peirce, Dewey, Whitehead or Collingwood). However, the real catalyst for the turn to “continental philosophy” was the rise of the New Left.

The New Left emerged in Britain in the 1950s as a movement influenced by Marx, but following the invasion by the Soviet Union of Hungary and revelations of how oppressive Stalin had been by Khrushchev in 1956, its proponents were highly critical of East European communism and totally hostile to Stalinist tendencies of communist parties in the West. In place of the scientism of orthodox Marxism, they embraced and defended humanistic forms of Marxism (if they did not move on to become post-Marxists), looking back to Marx’s early works, most importantly, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. This was associated with a revival of interest in Hegel. While in the USA the journal *Dissent*, first published in 1954 could be taken as the first New Left publication, in Britain this movement began with the publication of *Universities & Left Review* and *The New Reasoner*, which both began publication in 1957 and were then combined in the *New Left Review*, first published in 1960. Charles Taylor, one of the editors of *Universities & Left Review*, had written his Ph.D. at Oxford on alienation from Hegel to existentialism. The contributors to *The New Reasoner* defined themselves as humanist Marxists or humanist socialists, in opposition to the scientific socialism of the Soviet Marxism. Contributors included Jean-Paul Sartre, whose essay was published in the first issue, attacking the Stalinism of the French Communist Party, the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson who wrote a two-part article on socialist humanism, Charles Taylor who wrote on Marxism and humanism, and Alasdair MacIntyre who wrote a review of Herbert Marcuse’s *Soviet Marxism* and a two-part paper entitled “The Moral Wilderness.” There was also a study of Pasternak’s book *Dr Zhivago* by Doris Lessing. These writings indicated a concern to provide Marxism or post-Marxist socialism with the humanist political philosophy and the ethics that Soviet Marxism lacked. There was also an article on the African National Congress and their struggle against colonialism, translations of the writings of Antonio Gramsci and studies of Yugoslavia’s efforts to create industrial democracy. The first issues of the *New Left Review* contained further articles by Thompson, Taylor and MacIntyre on Marxist humanism, ethics and community, and also major contributions by Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams focussing on culture as constitutive of social and economic relations while examining the effects of advertising, television and the mass media. Other forms of oppression were also examined, including existing gender relations. In examining Marx’s work, the focus was on the concepts of alienation, reification, and commodity fetishism rather than the base-superstructure model of society. These articles revealed the conception of humanity underpinning Marx’s critique of political economy and capitalist social relations to have been diametrically opposed to the Hobbesian view of humans. The perspective of the left had been vastly broadened by such work and generated a

revival of interest in German and French philosophy. MacIntyre published a book on Marx's relation to Hegel, Feuerbach, and later Marxists, and to Christianity (1968/1995), and Taylor wrote a major study of Hegel (1975).

The New Left developed in other countries along similar lines. In USA, the early proponents were C. Wright Mills and Erich Fromm, both associated with the journal *Dissent*, and Herbert Marcuse became increasingly influential. Fromm and Marcuse were both refugees from Nazi Germany who had been members of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, but unlike other members of the Frankfurt School, remained in USA. Fromm published a translation of Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* in 1964 and developed a humanist form of psychotherapy that supported a critique of both Naziism and bureaucratic capitalism. Marcuse was a Marxist, but also strongly influenced by Hegel, Max Weber, Sigmund Freud, and Martin Heidegger. He published *Reason and Revolution* (1954), an interpretation and defence of Hegel's thought against the charge that it supported fascism, at the same time defending T.H. Green's neo-Hegelian political philosophy and attacking positivist social science. He then published *Soviet Marxism* in 1958, a scathing analysis of the Soviet Union, and *One Dimensional Man* in 1964, a damning critique of American culture. Living in a society dominated by the military-industrial complex, as President Eisenhower had called it, Marcuse (1964, p.1) began this work by claiming that "[a] comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress." With the total domination of society by instrumental reason, people had reached a higher stage of alienation where alienation was just accepted, without any genuine opposition because reason had been redefined to make opposition unintelligible. The positivism of Analytic philosophers with their highly restrictive notion of reason served to blind students to even the possibility of any alternative.

French existential phenomenology also played a major role in the development of the New Left, mainly through the influence of Sartre, but also of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (who died in 1961) and his students. For students studying philosophy, existential phenomenology provided an alternative to Analytic philosophy, and particularly as formulated by Sartre, demanded of its adherents political commitment. French phenomenology was inspired by Husserl and Heidegger, and influenced by Hegelian thought, but also by the thought of Henri Bergson, particularly in the importance accorded to temporality, embodiment, and agency. As Sartre argued, existentialism is a form of humanism. The existentialist movement was in fact an affirmation of a strong form of humanism, and in his *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (1960/76), Sartre offered a synthesis of existential phenomenology and humanist Marxism. This provided a characterization of how political movements develop from individual protest to joint praxis to overcome the practico-inert ensembles which serialize and alienate people from each other. It upheld a vision of the future in which society would be free of these practico-inert ensembles, although he showed how such

ensembles tend to re-form after revolutions, explaining in the process the trajectory of the Bolshevik revolution. Such ideas had an influence well beyond philosophy and politics and were taken up in psychology and psychiatry in opposition to behaviourism and a sterile form of Freudian psychoanalysis. Sartre's ideas were popularized in Anglophone countries by the existentialist psychotherapist R.D. Laing and D.G. Cooper in *Reason and Violence* (1964).

The spirit of the New Left influenced science and the way it was understood. The attacks by historically oriented philosophers of science on logical positivism, such as Gaston Bachelard, Alexandre Koyré, Michael Polanyi, Norwood Russell Hanson, Stephen Toulmin, Thomas Kuhn, Imre Lakatos, Paul Feyerabend, and later, Robert Young, were embraced, opening again the possibility of examining, critiquing and replacing the assumptions of mainstream science. In the 1950s biology had been dominated by the synthetic theory of evolution, molecular biology, and information science, upholding the reductionist view of life that culminated in the rise of sociobiology. The theoretical biology movement begun in the 1930s in Britain by Marxists influenced by Whitehead's process metaphysics, led by Joseph Needham and C.H. Waddington, had been well and truly suppressed, despite outstanding achievements. However, Waddington had continued his work, and set out to revive theoretical biology in the late 1960s, culminating in international conferences on theoretical biology at Bellagio, Switzerland between 1968 and 1972, the proceedings of which were edited and published in four volumes by Waddington as *Towards a Theoretical Biology* (1968-72). This brought together not only leading opponents of reductionist biology, including Richard Levins and Richard Lewontin, but also a leading theoretical physicist, David Bohm, and a leading mathematician, René Thom. At these conferences, the positivist view of science was totally rejected and the importance of metaphysics to science strongly affirmed. Waddington explained the importance of Whitehead for the development of new concepts in embryology. He and other participants at these conferences, including his student, Brian Goodwin, took up the issue of ecological destruction, and Goodwin and those aligned with him, including Mae-Wan Ho, became leading figures in the global environmental movement, calling for a radical transformation of societies to avoid ecological destruction.

The development of the New Left in the West influenced philosophers in Eastern European countries, who also turned to the early works of Marx. This was less so in the Soviet Union where the radical thinkers of the 1920s had been suppressed and often executed. However, even in the Soviet Union, ideas developed in the 1920s were revived with the formation of the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin and his circle, and with the emergence of theoretical biology, making links with the theoretical biology movement in Britain. This involved reviving work in ecology, a discipline that had been severely suppressed in the 1930s, and setting the stage for the later development of biosemiotics and ecosemiotics. The

journal of this school of semiotics, *Sign System Studies*, began publication in 1964. In other East European countries humanist Marxism was taken up and promoted. In Poland, a leading Marxist philosopher, Adam Schaff, published *A Philosophy of Man* in 1963, a collection of essays in which he engaged with Sartre's existentialism and examined varieties of humanism. At this stage he was supported by Leszek Kolakowski, who later became famous for his critique of Marxism. In Czechoslovakia, Karel Kosík published his *Dialectic of the Concrete* (1976), a reformulation of Marxism through Hegel and Heidegger, also in 1963. Influenced by Western Marxism, the Praxis School of Marxism was founded in Yugoslavia, publishing the journal *Praxis* from 1964 onwards. In 1965 Erich Fromm published an anthology, *Socialist Humanism*, with contributions from humanist Marxists from Yugoslavia, England, Italy, France, Senegal, Poland, Germany, USA, Australia, India, Czechoslovakia, and elsewhere, including an essay by Kosík. Kosík became a leading figure in the "Prague Spring" in 1968, the quest to create "socialism with a human face." This led to the invasion of Czechoslovakia by other communist countries (with the notable exception of Rumania, whose leaders denounced it). A student, Jan Palach, self-immolated in protest. Kosík was sacked from his position in 1970, but in the 1990s, with the restoration of capitalism, became a leading left-wing social critic. This invasion of Czechoslovakia was supported by all Western communist parties, revealing their opposition to Marxist humanism.

Students were radicalized around the world. In the USA, racial discrimination became the first major target of the New Left, followed by opposition to the Vietnam War. As opposition to the Vietnam War grew, a more general understanding and opposition to neo-colonialism developed. Neo-colonialism involved dominating Third World countries by overthrowing elected governments and imposing corrupt dictatorships supposedly defending the "Free World" in order to extract their natural resources. In Britain, West Germany and France, the New Left emerged to oppose the nuclear arms race and the military-industrial complex associated with NATO, and also to changes taking place in universities which undermined their autonomy from the military and from business interests. These movements erupted in 1968, most famously in Paris, but also in Prague, where students played a major role in the Prague Spring. In the USA, the New Left were a major force for ending the Vietnam War.

In the 1970s people inspired by the New Left in Scandinavia, Australia, Germany, USA, and other countries turned to ecological problems as the focus of their opposition to the domination of societies by market forces and bureaucracies. The essence of this turn was expressed by Arne Naess, a Norwegian philosopher, in his seminal essay "The Shallow and the Deep: Long-Range Ecological Movements" (1973), promoting an ethics and politics of self-realization, and also by the work of Murray Bookchin who inspired the Social Ecology movement. The vanguard of the New Left entered environmental politics, setting up Green political parties and going on to build a global green movement.

However, the New Left as a political movement had already begun to disintegrate. The student protests that swept the world demonstrated a lack of direction and exposed divisions, for instance between middle-class students and the working class, between pacifists and those promoting violent insurrection, and between counter-cultural libertines opposed to any constraints on individuals and those promoting participatory democracy. In the USA, *Students for a Democratic Society*, founded in 1962, dissolved in 1969 when the Weatherman faction walked out. In France student protests in May 1968 which led to a general strike, amounted to an insurrection against the government and was supported by Sartre, Castoriadis and Claude Lefort, while Louis Althusser, the opponent of humanist Marxism, and Foucault, did not get involved. However, the students were not aspiring to state power and achieved very little. The general population demonstrated their opposition to what had happened in elections the following year when the Gaullists achieved an overwhelming majority. In Italy, Germany, and the USA the New Left spawned violent revolutionary groups: for example, the Red Brigades in Italy, the Baader-Meinhof Group in Germany, and the Weathermen and Black Panthers in USA. Many New Leftists took inspiration from the Cultural Revolution in China and became Maoists. Others aligned themselves with Che Guevara, the Cuban revolutionary. They believed that they were igniting a global revolution against imperialism and all forms oppression, and capitalism. They were a real threat to those in power by virtue of their violence. The Red Brigades abducted and executed Italy's Prime Minister, Aldo Moro, in 1978. They were isolated from the general population, and their call for a global revolution involved no clear vision of what they were aspiring to. What they did do, however, was to mobilize opposition to themselves. In France, many of those caught up by the New Left in 1968 became disillusioned with all left-wing politics and united to form the anti-Marxist *nouveaux philosophes* movement in the late 70s. These were the precursors of postmodernism as it was articulated by François Lyotard, as Alex Callinicos (1989, p.4) observed. In China, reaction against the excesses of Mao's Cultural Revolution facilitated the rise to power of Deng Xiaoping, the dismantling of Mao's legacy and the integration of China into the global market. It was in this context that many philosophers turned their backs on New Left humanism.

All this could be seen as a failure of the New Left, or alternatively, as a failure of most students caught up by the New Left movement to understand what is required to liberate people and create a genuinely democratic social order. The supposedly radical students of the 1960s had not only lost the plot of the New Left; it became evident that many of them had barely understood it in the first place. Those promoting violent insurrection had not taken onboard that the Bolshevik seizure of power under the leadership of Lenin purporting to represent the proletariat had paved the way for the rise of a Stalinist police state. And counter-culturalists were too preoccupied with themselves to take anything else onboard. Another factor is that those who adopted violent tactics provoked a reaction against their radical ideas, leading to the development of a New Right. The New Right used the violent elements of New Left

to legitimate the imposition of law and order while co-opting the hedonism of the counter-cultural fraction of the New Left in order to promote consumerism. The result was the triumph of Neoliberalism.

VI. Humanism and Anti-Humanism in French Philosophy

The radical humanism of French existential phenomenology generated an anti-humanist reaction from the structuralists who argued for a scientific approach to culture and society. The tension between these schools of thought were interwoven with support and opposition to the New Left and had a major influence on subsequent philosophy and politics around the world. Structuralism developed in different ways, with the genetic structuralism of Jean Piaget, Lucien Goldmann, and Pierre Bourdieu being really forms of humanism. They supported left-wing politics, although not the extreme form defended by Sartre, while the anti-humanism of mainstream structuralism, denying any significant role for subjects, subverted the very idea of democracy. Foucault, who was strongly influenced by structuralism while denying that he was a structuralist, played a crucial role in undermining the humanism of the New Left.

The observation from Foucault embraced by the posthumanists comes from the concluding two paragraphs of *The Order of Things* (1970, p.387; Wolfe, 2020, p.xii) where he wrote:

As the archaeology of our thought easily shows, man is an invention of recent date. And one perhaps nearing its end. If those arrangements were to disappear as they appeared, if some event of which we can at the moment do no more than sense the possibility—without knowing either what its form will be or what it promises—were to cause them to crumble, as the ground of Classical thought did, at the end of the eighteenth century, then one can certainly wager that man would be erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea.

This claim echoed the conclusion Foucault (2008) had come to in his study of Kant in his complementary thesis for his Ph.D; and it concluded what overtly was a study of the human sciences; but there was more than this: it was essentially a rewriting of history of culture, portrayed as a sequence of epistemes that dominate for a time and then are replaced, with each episteme being characterized by a particular conception of order. The result was an account of history that excluded any place for dialectical struggle between competing research programs or political agendas, or the struggle between people understood as conscious agents. In giving a place to the Renaissance episteme, the classical episteme and the modern episteme, renaissance humanists, scientific materialists and proponents of the radical enlightenment were all accorded a place, but through a convoluted effort to describe all thinkers within each epoch as dominated by the same episteme with its assumed conception of order, the struggle

between rival ways of thinking within each epoch could be ignored. It was a simple matter then to describe the revival of anti-humanism as a new episteme leaving behind the radical enlightenment conception of humans.

Theoretically, Foucault's work was a development of the history of science, extending this discipline from the physical sciences and biology to the human sciences, in this regard, extending the work of Bachelard and Canguilhem. It was also a reaction against Foucault's teacher, the Hegelian Jean Hyppolite. As Foucault himself acknowledged, it was an attempt to escape the influence of Hegel, drawing initially on the work of Marx (Foucault, 2008, p.128). To begin with, Foucault befriended and was influenced by Althusser and embraced his form of Marxism. Like Althusser, Foucault was hostile to Marx's humanism. Both Althusser and Foucault were characterized as structuralists, but both rejected this categorization. As Mark Kelly (2014, 84) argued,

[t]o call it French antihumanism would be more accurate. This antihumanism entails a rejection of a philosophy that makes the sovereign human subject its centre and instead emphasises the constitution of the human by anonymous structures outside of the subject's control.

Rejecting Marxism altogether, Foucault drew on Nietzsche, embracing his notion of the will to power, although the role of power in characterizing these epistemes and their succession was not spelt out until later. However, this was a particular interpretation of Nietzsche, one that allowed Foucault to retain aspects of Hegelian thought, but without any role for subjects. The cunning of power took the place of Hegel's cunning of reason in using people as instruments for its development to discipline human bodies to make them more governable, without even the theoretical possibility that people could be educated to take responsibility for themselves and others and govern themselves.

The movement Foucault was opposing was existential phenomenology, initially as this had been developed in psychiatry by Ludwig Binswanger who had been strongly influenced by Heidegger; but he was also opposing the ideas of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Ponty's work, judged nowadays to be philosophically more important than Sartre's, should be seen as both a revival, defence and an advance in the humanist tradition of thought; and towards the end of his life, Merleau-Ponty was working to meet the challenge of structuralism. Like Foucault, Merleau-Ponty was reacting against Hegel, but for different reasons. While Foucault was closer to Hegel's late work portraying history as governed by impersonal logic, in *Sense and Nonsense* (1964 63f.), Merleau-Ponty defended Hegel's early work where the human subject was accorded a much more significant place:

All the great philosophical ideas of the past century—the philosophies of Marx and Nietzsche, phenomenology, German existentialism, and psychoanalysis—had their beginnings in Hegel ... Kierkegaard, the first to use “existence” in the modern sense of the word, deliberately set himself up in opposition to Hegel.... The Hegel he had in mind was the late Hegel, who treated history as the visible development of a logical system ... This Hegel of 1827 offers us nothing but a “palace of ideas,” to use Kierkegaard's phrase ... This last Hegel has understood everything except his own historical situation; he has taken everything into account except his own existence.... Kierkegaard's objection, which is in profound agreement with that of Marx, consists in reminding the philosopher of his own inherence in history. But if the Hegel of 1827 may be criticized for his idealism, the same cannot be said of the Hegel of 1807. The *Phénoménologie de l'esprit* is a history not only of ideas but of all the areas which reveal the mind at work: customs, economic structures, and legal institutions as well as works of philosophy.

Similarly, Merleau-Ponty initially embraced Marx's work, but totally rejected the scientism of Althusser. As he wrote in the same place (125f.):

One would get a strange idea of Marxism and its relation to philosophy if one were to judge it on the basis of the writings of certain contemporary Marxists. They evidently consider philosophy as wholly a matter of words ... want to replace it with science and reduce man to the state of a scientific object.... As Lukacs notes, scientism is a particular case of alienation or objectification (*Verdinglichung*) which deprives man of his human reality and makes him confuse himself with things.

Again like Foucault, Merleau-Ponty later rejected Marxism, but in his case, this was only after a thorough study of the Soviet Union, examining its brutality and practical failures, but also the problems it faced, and how various figures responded to these, including the threat of invasion and subjugation by Nazi Germany. He first defended it, despite all the violence, oppression and mistakes, in *Humanism and Terror* published in 1947, but then, offering a critical examination of the work of Lukács and its reception, Trotsky's career and Sartre's philosophy in his book *Adventures of the Dialectic* published in 1955, abandoned Marxism understood as the belief that history is moving towards a final goal. However, his post-Marxist conclusions were very different from those of Foucault.

Foucault, focusing on how people were made governable, was not taking the perspective of the governors. He claimed to be providing a micropolitics revealing to the governed how they were being controlled by imposing ideas of normality. In his early work he offered no advice on what the governed should do apart from dismissing suggestions by those who had read his work on prisoners that prisoners should be released, although it appears that he did have an agenda to free people who had been defined as sexually deviant (for instance, paedophiles such as himself) from imposition of notions of normality. Towards the end of his career, he became

concerned with the rise of neo-liberalism, but this was not developed as a coherent extension of his theoretical position and has had no influence on the posthumanists. By contrast, Merleau-Ponty while arguing against Marxists in *Signs*, argued that while there can never be final solutions to oppression, it is still necessary to be politically engaged, and this was part of a coherent development of his ideas. Political reality is full of tensions, conflicts, irrationalities, obscurities and paradoxes which can never be fully understood, he argued, and yet it is still necessary to try to make the world a better place. One chapter is devoted to Machiavelli, whom Merleau-Ponty treated sympathetically as someone who understood the complexity of power and who was attempting to show what can be achieved despite conflicts and the vices of people. Merleau-Ponty's humanism was completely in accord with the humanism of the Renaissance humanists.

The difference between Foucault and Merleau-Ponty is most evident in the place accorded to philosophical anthropology, the effort to characterize what humans are. Foucault in the *Introduction to Kant's Anthropology*, his complementary Ph.D. thesis, pointed to a problematic feature of Kant's philosophy in claiming to ground his critical philosophy in anthropology, while having undermined through his critical philosophy the kind of knowledge claimed for his anthropology. Foucault's goal was to show that anthropology could not take the place of metaphysics, and this argument served as the basis for both for his critique of the human sciences and for his 'death of man' thesis. Merleau-Ponty avoided this problem with his version of phenomenology influenced by Hegel as well as Husserl. While originally Husserl had claimed that phenomenology would provide apodictic knowledge of experience and thereby absolute foundations for the sciences and all other forms of knowledge, Merleau-Ponty never accepted this and treated phenomenology and the sciences, including human sciences, as in reciprocal relationship to each other, advancing dialectically, making possible provisional commitments to knowledge claims in a permanently indeterminate universe. His approach was made explicit in one of his last published papers, "Phenomenology and the Sciences of Man" (1974).

Philosophical anthropology, characterizing the nature of humans, was central to this. This question was not addressed in isolation from other questions and involved characterizing the nature of life and the nature of physical existence, essentially recovering Aristotle's way of organizing philosophy. As Merleau-Ponty wrote in his first work *The Structure of Behaviour* (1963, p.3), "[o]ur goal is to understand the relations of consciousness and nature: organic, psychological and even social." In this work, he utilized and developed the work of the neuroscientist, Kurt Goldstein along with Gestalt psychologists to demolish the claims of Pavlov's reflexology to explain consciousness. His last lectures, published as *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, involved "naturalizing" phenomenology. It offered a history of natural philosophy from Aristotle onwards, including Kant, Schelling, Bergson and Husserl. He was also studying Whitehead at the time. These lectures

engaged with developments in the physical sciences, following which he examined the development of modern biology and studies of animal behaviour. Here, Merleau-Ponty focussed on the work of Jacob von Uexküll who argued that living beings can only be understood in relation to their environments defined by them as their *Umwelten*, their surrounding worlds. He then examined the human body in the context of the study of nature, supporting the conception of humans he had been developing throughout his career as “beings-to-the-world,” essentially social, and by virtue of their sociality creating an “inter-world,” in the context of an evolutionary naturalism. Among other things, this enabled Merleau-Ponty to characterize the distinctive characteristics of humans as part of nature, while appreciating the intrinsic significance of organisms with surrounding worlds that have meaning for them. The political implications of his work were drawn by his students for example, Claude Lefort. He also influenced Castoriadis, André Gorz, Paul Ricoeur, Pierre Bourdieu, and Alain Touraine. All this work can be seen as an affirmation of and development of humanism and philosophical anthropology. It has been largely ignored by academics in the humanities in Anglophone countries who instead embraced the anti-humanism of the structuralists and poststructuralists.

VII. The New Right and the Neoliberal-Managerialist Revolution

The defeat of the New Left meant not only a defeat of their radical agenda, but the defeat of the social democratic consensus that had dominated the West since the end of World War II. It resulted in the triumph of neoliberalism with an agenda to free markets from government controls and to dismantle the welfare state. Neoliberalism as a movement was initiated by the Austro-Hungarian minor nobility whose comfortable lives had been disrupted by the breaking up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after their defeat in World War One (Slobodian, 2018). Ludwig von Mises and Friedrich von Hayek were the leading figures in this. The problem as they saw it was the involvement of the masses in politics. Foucault identified the beginnings of neoliberalism in a conference at Freiburg University in 1938, although it has since been shown to have originated earlier. It began as a reaction to Bolshevism and Woodrow Wilson’s support for the right of nations to self-determination. Neoliberals lumped together communism, Naziism and social democracy as mass movements leading to serfdom, and embraced Walter Lippmann’s argument in *The Phantom Public* of 1927 that the world have become too complex for democracy and ruling elites should manufacture the consent of the rest of the population. After World War II they met at Mont Pèlerin in Switzerland to establish a movement to create a global market and to impose markets on all facets of life, reversing developments associated with Keynesian economics and the emerging social democratic consensus, recreating the kind of order that existed in the Austro-Hungarian Empire on a global scale. They looked for support from big business, and big business was advancing rapidly in the post-war era with the development of transnational corporations. With this financial

support they set up think-tanks around the world and penetrated the economics departments of universities and even tried to influence schools (Mirowski, 2009). They were most successful at the University of Chicago where they recruited Milton Friedman. While, neoliberal economics was the main vehicle for promoting their agenda, it was supported by the revival of social Darwinism through the development of sociobiology based on the notion that organisms are merely vehicles for the reproduction of selfish genes (as its most famous exponent, Richard Dawkins put it), which in turn could be understood as information encoded in DNA molecules, and psychology defending genetic determinism and arguing that some races are intellectually inferior to others. Von Hayek (1976) and Friedman (1962/1982, p.2f.) dismissed the quest by governments for social justice.

The threat from the New Left together with the problems of stagflation in the 1970s provided the crisis they needed to push through their policies. Effectively, they succeeded in a struggle for cultural hegemony, not just against the New Left, but against the social democratic consensus of the post-war era. Neoliberals were able to dominate the policy formation of governments, both right and more significantly, the left from the late 1970s onwards, utilizing the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization to impose these policies on recalcitrant nations, or where it was deemed necessary, assassinating political leaders or invading countries. Policies involved eliminating trade barriers and constraints on the movements of capital, dismantling the welfare state, privatizing (or rather, plundering) public assets, undermining trade unions, reducing taxes on corporations and eliminating where possible redistributive taxation systems, while expanding security systems to control the population. It also involved imposing a new management philosophy on public institutions to make them function like business corporations. This included education and research institutions.

Through such policies the labor movement was effectively destroyed, globally and in almost every country apart from North Western Europe. China was included in this world order after the death of Mao and the rise of Deng Xiaoping, so workers in First World countries found themselves having to compete for work with Chinese workers working 12 hours a day, sometimes seven days a week, and living in dormitories. The collapse of the Soviet Union and its empire in Eastern Europe in 1991 added these countries to the global market, supplying cheap educated labour to Western Europe and America. These developments were facilitated by advances in information technology allowing easy communication within transnational corporations, control of the mass media, and unprecedented levels of surveillance. The development of container ships, which made international transport far cheaper, was also important. The outcome was a global corporatocracy based in transnational corporations operating in a global market ruling over fragmented communities and isolated individuals. Margaret Thatcher's claim that "there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families" was becoming a reality.

This transformation involved the hollowing out and effectively subverting what democracy there had been. This has been well analysed by Carl Boggs (2000). To achieve this, far more effort had to be devoted to the manufacture of consent. This involved massive spending on public relations and advertising, the new mind control industries, and where possible, transforming education. This was achieved by taking up themes of the New Left and reformulating them. For instance, the New Left were reacting to constraints on freedom imposed by institutions, and the burden of being locked into a career. This was associated with the defence of libertinism by some of the New Left. Illustrating this strand in New Left thought, Dany Cohn-Bendit, one of the leaders of the New Left in Paris in 1968, later ran a kindergarten and claimed to have engaged in sexual activities with very young children, describing it as a beautiful experience. Elsewhere, the use of drugs was defended. In general, it amounted to what Marcuse had characterised in *One Dimensional Man* (1964) as “repressive desublimation.” The Neoliberals argued that the way to freedom is through free markets, where everyone is free to do what they like, providing life and property are respected. Many former New Leftists embraced this project and joined the corporate world to make capitalism more flexible, attacking the role of the welfare state, advancing what Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2007, p.195ff.) described as *The New Spirit of Capitalism*. With this new spirit, the impositions of trade unions were dissolved, eliminating the protection they provided for workers. People could also be free from lifetime commitment to a particular career. In this way, the precariatization of work was portrayed as liberating. People were relieved of the onerous demands of being citizens and could define themselves as consumers. Such freedom could be extended to freedom to take drugs and to have one’s own opinions without others questioning them and asking for their beliefs to be justified. In this way the life of dialogue, essential for democracy, could be closed down. People could be relieved of the obligation to make commitments, and be allowed to live for the present. The extreme anti-elitism of some of the New Left (which later led them to embrace postmodernism) was harnessed to oppose those valuing education as the formation of character, which implied that people who had had their humanity cultivated by education were superior to other people. All hierarchies, except those associated with income or sport, were devalued (Bourdieu, 1984, p.370f.; Gare, 1995, p.18f.). Essentially, there was a largely successful project to depoliticise the population while those with wealth were given the freedom to buy politicians and political parties, buy control of the institutions of the state, buy control of people’s minds through the mind control industries and control of the media, and plunder public assets, all the while being relieved of responsibility to society. In short, in accordance with the image of humans as *homo economicus*, people were urged to act in their own selfish interests and focus on consumption, forgetting about democracy, the common good and notions of justice. As Gordon Gekko in the film *Wall Street* (1987) spelt this out,

greed, for lack of a better word, is good. Greed is right, greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit.

VIII. The Response of New Left Intellectuals to Neoliberalism

The failure of the New Left as a movement and the rise of neoliberalism was not the end of the New Left as an intellectual movement, however, although it greatly thinned their ranks. Many members of the movement accepted their defeat and abandoned all attempts to envisage a better world. They gave up on utopia, and as Russell Jacoby put it, embraced myopia (1999, pp.101-124). Some focused on their careers in academia, becoming “professional philosophers,” either promoting mainstream analytic philosophy or deconstructive postmodernism, which really meant contributing to the subversion of philosophy. Others turned to identity politics, which really meant an abandonment of the quest for universal justice and the mobilization of different groups to assert themselves to gain more power within the existing order. Identity politics was often associated with the defence of multiculturalism. As opposed to the transculturalism practiced by the theoretical biologist, sinologist, and philosopher Joseph Needham, based on the assumption that diverse cultures can both learn from and provide critical perspectives on each other, multiculturalism leaves people to simply assert their own cultural values against others. Transculturalism advances dialogue; multiculturalism precludes it. However, the growing environmental crisis was evidence that the New Left were right in seeing something very fundamentally wrong with the civilization of modernity dominated by the logic of markets and instrumental reasoning, and right to argue for the subordination of markets to principles of justice.

Along with the older concerns with alienation, commodity fetishism, exploitation, imperialism, racism, and oppressive gender relations, the relationship between humanity, technology, and the rest of nature became a major concern. Along with capitalism, the technosphere itself was coming to be recognized as a fetishized force enslaving people (Hornborg, 2001; Orlov, 2017). New radical journals were established, for instance *Thesis Eleven* in 1980, *Z Magazine* in 1987, *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism* in 1988, *Historical Materialism* in 1993, *Democracy and Nature* in 1995, the online journals *openDemocracy* in 2001, the *International Journal of Inclusive Democracy* in 2004 and *Cosmos and History* in 2005. Many of the New Left, notably the German student leader Dutschke, joined the Green movement in the 1970s and were involved in setting up Green political parties which have since been established around the world. Dutschke was involved in this when he died in 1979 due to injuries received in an assassination attempt eleven years earlier.

For philosophers inspired by the New Left, it was a challenge to understand not only the failures of Marxism but what had gone wrong with the New Left as a cultural, social, and political movement, to counter the opponents of humanism, whether economists, psychologists, sociobiologists, or French structuralists and poststructuralists, while critically examining the claims of the neoliberals to have

liberated humanity through having liberated markets, and coming to grips with the existential threat to humanity of global ecological destruction. As far as students were concerned, Dutschke had been shown to be right that what was required of radicals was a “long march through the institutions” rather than violent insurrection or self-indulgent rejection of all constraints. Such a long march requires a clear vision of where one is coming from and where one is going, and why.

The actions of violent extremists had totally discredited them, finally and completely, with the Red Brigades murder of Aldo Moro. Also discredited were those promoting hippy decadence, symbolized at its worst by Charles Manson. Democracy became the focus of interest, as it had been for early New Left thinkers such as C. Wright Mills and Charles Taylor, along with environmental concerns. Typically, Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis began the first chapter of their book, *Democracy & Capitalism* (1987, p.3):

This work is animated by a commitment to the progressive extension of people’s capacity to govern their personal lives and social history. Making good this commitment, we will argue, requires establishing a democratic social order and eliminating the central institutions of the capitalist economy.

At the same time the democratic opponents of Bolshevism were rediscovered and Karl Kautsky’s proclamation that “[s]ocialism as the means to the emancipation of the proletariat, without democracy, is unthinkable” was typically quoted with approval by Christopher Pierson in *Marxist Theory & Democratic Politics* (1986, p.58). This was a study of efforts by Marxists to develop a theory of the state and of democratic politics, which shows that Marxists totally rejected the two-part idea that socialism is the end of history and that this justifies the use of any means to realize this end. At the same time, New Leftists pointed out repeatedly that far from promoting democracy, the neoliberals have been destroying it. The problem then was to characterize what democracy had meant, since neoliberals were also claiming to be on the side of democracy, as was North Korea. To those committed to what they believed was genuine democracy this made it difficult to make a case that neoliberalism, dominated by markets manipulated by powerful members of the corporatoracy, is the antithesis of democracy, particularly as time went on and depoliticised young people had no experience of anything else.

The obvious way to overcome this problem was to turn to history. Whichever version of democracy was being defended, philosophers inspired by the New Left who had not turned to structuralism and poststructuralism or succumbed to pessimism and apathy, or even worse, embraced the struggle for power within the current system, realized the need for a full recovery of their understanding of the history of democracy, institutions, and civilization, and their relation to the history of philosophy, including the history of science and mathematics. Some realized that

Western civilization had to be understood in relation to other civilizations and how European civilization came to conquer and dominate the world (Gare, 1996). This was particularly the case with the philosophers who grappled with the looming ecological crisis. These recognized rival research traditions in the natural sciences and alternative traditions of thought in non-Western cultures and civilizations, how these influenced the significance accorded to nature and different forms of life, and how they have been associated with different conceptions of what we are as humans and what is our place in nature. It also came to be appreciated that it is necessary to work out what are institutions and how they could be transformed or developed to create an ecologically sustainable civilization. This work has been associated with the revival of natural philosophy, philosophical biology, and philosophical anthropology. However, the impetus for these revivals has for the most part come from scientists and mathematicians rather than professional philosophers. These scientists made links with radical philosophers in their efforts to understand the philosophical assumptions dominating and hindering the advance of current science, but there were few of them.

In Germany, Jürgen Habermas, the heir to the Frankfurt School, who had previously offered a history of the rise and fall of the public sphere, defended communicative rationality, as opposed to instrumental rationality, in order to defend and revive the public sphere grounded in the life-worlds of people. It was the autonomy of this public sphere and insulation of the life-world from encroachment from the systems of purposive-rational action, and then the constraining of the systems of purposive-rational action by the communicative rationality of the public sphere, that had to be defended. Pathologies of the life-world caused by their penetration by systems of purposive-rational action including alienation and anomie, along with pathologies of the individual psyche. In the process of developing these ideas, Habermas embarked on major studies of and reworking the history of philosophy (1974). His most important study was of the early work of Hegel, which led to a revival of interest in the dialectic of recognition among his students and other philosophers. He examined the work of Dilthey and Peirce, Freud, and Marx, but interpreted Peirce as defending a purely instrumentalist view of nature and eschewed natural philosophy, claiming that his own philosophy was “post-metaphysical.” Third generation Frankfurt School philosophers, for example, Axel Honneth and Hans Jonas (1988), have built on Habermas’s discovery of Hegel’s early work and revived philosophical anthropology, paying particular attention to the dialectic of recognition, but neither has engaged with natural philosophy or the natural sciences.

An historical approach also was adopted by Castoriadis (1991) to defend a much more radical agenda, of achieving autonomy. He offered a portrayal of what democracy and the quest for autonomy actually meant in Ancient Greece, showing how it involves questioning institutions and recognizing our responsibility for them. This became an essential part of the development of democracy, and as Castoriadis pointed out, it was democracy which engendered philosophy as people in their quest

for agreement were impelled to ask what the goals of society are, what is justice, what is truth, what is knowledge, involved in reasoning and what are humans. It was democracy that also gave rise to history, drama, and the great developments in art. This is the spirit that was revived in medieval Europe and the Renaissance, and appears to be dying with postmodernism. Castoriadis defended the role of the radical imagination in history, and before he died, was embarking on a study of the treatment of imagination in classical German philosophy. However, he showed only a slight interest in natural philosophy and developments in the natural sciences.

In Anglophone countries, even the appeal to history was difficult where ahistorical analytic philosophers continued to dominate philosophy departments and classics departments were being eliminated. Under the banner of naturalism, academic philosophers continued to defend scientism (identifying science with reductionism) and dismissed any value to history apart from being a form of amusement. History had to be explicitly defended in order to recover the importance it had been accorded by Collingwood. The strongest defence of history was made by MacIntyre (1976), who argued that all human endeavours require narratives through which what has been achieved in the past, what are the problems faced in the present, and what is being aimed at, are understood, and judged. This includes science, where major advances can only be recognized as such through providing a perspective from which a new narrative can be constructed, making intelligible the successes and the unavoidable failures of earlier science and how these failures are overcome. Such narratives then reintegrate traditions of inquiry. This defence of the history of philosophy was strengthened in a major anthology edited by Rorty, Schneewind, and Skinner, *Philosophy in History* (1984), with contributions from Taylor, MacIntyre, and Skinner. Taylor made the important point that it is only through the history of philosophy that deep assumptions dominating the present can be revealed at their inception. It is only through such history that their questionability and weaknesses can be fully exposed.

This defence of history involved not simply a challenge to mainstream analytic philosophy, but of the way these dogmatic Analytic philosophers had redefined philosophy so as to eliminate any place for speculative thought able to challenge and replace prevailing assumptions. It also led to critical studies of the development of Analytic philosophy and its diverse forms. An undogmatic and historically oriented Finnish analytic philosopher, Jaakko Hintikka, offered such a history, challenging mainstream Analytic philosophy from within. A logician influenced by Boole, de Morgan, Peirce, Brentano, and Collingwood, rather than Frege, and with a deep knowledge of the history of philosophy, Hintikka (1997) revealed, and argued against, the disturbing agenda of the leading figures in Analytic philosophy. Mainstream Analytic philosophy emerged from the work of Frege. Frege was reviving Leibniz's quest to create a *Lingua Universalis*—a universal medium whose symbolic structure directly reflects the structure of our world of concepts. In other words, Frege, and the

logicians who followed him, aspired through their work in mathematical logic to advance Frege's agenda of creating a perfect universal language. With this language, disputes could be resolved by the application of a rigorous method which ultimately, could be simulated by calculating devices, that is, computers. It was philosophers committed to this goal who redefined science as the accumulation of knowledge that could be organized and processed through this universal language, making predictions possible and thereby achieving more control over the world. To fit humans into this universal language, Analytic philosophers like Bertrand Russell and Quine defended behaviourism. Scientific knowledge then would facilitate control of people as well as the physical and biological world. Quine's efforts to "naturalize epistemology," claiming in the process that philosophy was simply part of science as logical empiricists had defined it, amounted to an effort to invalidate the cognitive claims of every other discourse, including history, locking in place this agenda. All this was accompanied by developments in the philosophy of mind that moved on from behaviorism, to the identity theory of mind, to functionalism, and then to efforts to characterize the brain as an information processing computer.

This characterization of the mind was totally rejected by the eminent computer scientist, Joseph Weizenbaum (1984), who at the same time, offered a history of the development of technology, including computer technology which he called a child of the military, and warned of the dire effects that computer technology could have if its calculative reason were identified with human reasoning, and "deciding" based on information, with choice being based on wisdom and compassion. As I have been arguing, the thinking behind the modelling of the mind as a computer is an updated version of Hobbes's conception of humans and his quest for achieving total control over people. Further arguments against this conception of humans were made by Hubert Dreyfus, strongly influenced by Heidegger, and John Searle, an ordinary language-style Analytic philosopher. They have had little impact on mainstream Analytic philosophy, however. This dogmatic form of Analytic philosophy has continued to dominate philosophy departments and is spreading internationally, even to France (Glock, 2008, p.1). Many of those disenchanted by Analytic philosophy still turned to "continental" philosophers, and French philosophy still tends to be the chosen tradition. However, with the anti-humanist turn in French philosophy and its rapidly changing fashions, this has not provided the basis for challenging mainstream Analytic philosophy and its anti-humanist tendencies.

Those philosophers who did engage with the history of philosophy examined philosophy and philosophers in the context of the history of science and culture more generally. Despite the small number of these, they have been responsible for huge advances in our understanding of earlier philosophers, the logic of how their ideas developed, and the relationship between these developments and the advance or otherwise of civilization. However, most of this work has been marginalized with the transformation of educational institutions, since very few people have been in a

position to understand the significance of their work. The transformation of universities into business corporations meant that academics sympathetic to such work seldom have had the opportunity to teach it to students, and with the growth of universities, intellectual life outside universities has declined. In a neoliberal postmodern world, very few young people are interested in the history of civilization. Furthermore, as a by-product of the publish-or-perish syndrome and the growth of managerialism, there has been an explosion of publications, making it almost impossible to survey what is published and to identify real advances in knowledge.

The solution adopted by many of philosophers alive to the history of philosophy has been to focus on one partly forgotten, underappreciated, and partly misinterpreted philosopher. If MacIntyre is right, and I believe he is, this is not enough by itself. It is necessary to develop a perspective able to understand the achievements and limitations of all other philosophers. That is, to recover the plot of the New Left, it is necessary to show that philosophy does in fact progress rationally, as Hegel, Schelling, and later Collingwood argued, and to show this rational progress legitimates their aspirations. If narratives are essential to all human endeavours, including science and mathematics, then the humanities must take precedence over the sciences. Situated within a coherent narrative, the Hobbesian tradition of philosophy, as developed by logical empiricists treating philosophy as part of science and portraying science as capable of accounting for itself, must be taken seriously. The most advanced effort in this direction is associated with evolutionary epistemology formulated through information science, according a place to second-order cybernetics in which cybernetics is applied to itself. Even allowing second order cybernetics, however, there are insuperable problems, the most basic of which is the inability of this research program to give a place to conscious subjects able to ask questions, strive to answer them, and then strive to convince others of their proposed answers (Gare, 2020). It cannot provide the perspective required to comprehend rival positions in a way that justifies their dismissal. The absurdity of this whole project only becomes fully clear when seen in the context of the history of philosophy.

IX. Recovering the Radical Enlightenment

To reconstruct the history of philosophy, it is still necessary to acknowledge that the scientific revolution of the Seventeenth Century was so successful in advancing our comprehension of nature that it is impossible to go back to Aristotelian cosmology. And it is necessary to recognize the enormous success of science as an intellectual endeavour. However, it is also necessary to recognize the achievements of the Radical Enlightenment, most importantly, that German philosophy (anticipated to some extent by Vico), challenging and offering an alternative to the Hobbesian tradition of philosophical anthropology, was also successful, as I have suggested above. At its core it exposed the fundamental contradiction in scientific materialism

in claiming superior knowledge while making the existence of humans as conscious beings who could develop such knowledge incomprehensible (Gare, 2011). Kant had shown that neither the rationalism deriving from Descartes and Leibniz, nor the empiricist tradition engendered by Bacon and Hobbes, could account for what is involved in developing mathematics and science. These involve a creative imagination and forms of reasoning that were not given a place by these materialist philosophers. Those Kant influenced, for example, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling, and later still, Peirce, Whitehead, and then the post-positivist philosophers of science, developed this argument further, showing the essential sociality of scientific rationality.

Kant was also grappling with the problem of how the physical world and life can be understood to make the existence of human minds, capable of producing science, intelligible, an aspect of his work overlooked by most neo-Kantians and Analytic philosophers who ignored both his earlier and his later work, including both the *Critique of Judgment* and *Opus postumum*. Schelling, also influenced by Herder and Goethe, took this project further, “naturalizing the transcendental” by developing a form of dialectical reasoning in order to challenge and replace the basic concepts of mathematics, Newtonian physics, and mechanistic biology, defending these as the condition of making intelligible how life and then human minds could have evolved within nature (Gare, 2011). This synthesis of ideas also made philosophical anthropology central, while solving the problem identified by Foucault about the relationship between Kant’s philosophical anthropology and his critical philosophy. Peirce and other process metaphysicians, along with philosophical anthropologists associated with efforts to naturalize phenomenology, directly or indirectly influenced by Schelling, further advanced this scheme of thought and research program.

Relatively recent history of science has shown that Schelling and his followers succeeded in stimulating a sequence of scientific advances in mathematics, physics and biology, and in so doing, made it possible for science to go beyond the Newtonian paradigm of science. Major advances in mathematics, the development of thermodynamics, and Faraday’s and Maxwell’s notion of electro-magnetic fields, offered an integrated theory of magnetism, electricity and light as called for by Schelling, developments which underpin current physics, are products of this revolution (Gare, 2013). So also is the theory of evolution and the conception of living organisms as actively maintaining and developing their forms while interacting with their environments, defining their environments as their worlds. This is a revolution which is still underway (Kauffman and Gare, 2015). Its development is providing support for the humanities and the social and political thought of Vico, Herder, Hegel, and Marxist humanism and later developments in humanistic forms of the human sciences.

Veterans of the New Left effected some recognition of this work, and their efforts in this regard should now be acknowledged and properly appreciated. They generated a growing appreciation of other efforts to revive the Radical Enlightenment and utilized work that had been forgotten in order to create a new renaissance. Work on the history of Russian philosophy, cultural theory, psychology, and ecology has revealed and revived an explosion of ideas that arose in the 1920s committed to advancing the humanities, to democracy and to ecological sustainability, very different from the orthodox Marxism that came to dominate the Soviet Union (White, 2019). While this was severely suppressed, it survived and was revived at least to some extent, a revival associated with an appreciation of the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his circle with the birth of the Tartu-Moscow school of semiotics in the 1960s and the development of theoretical biology in Estonia (stimulated to some extent by Waddington), associated with the revival of interest in the Estonian biologist, Jacob von Uexküll.

At the same time there has been a growing appreciation of the American philosopher, Charles Sanders Peirce, and also the pragmatist philosophers he influenced, including George Herbert Mead and the symbolic interactionist sociologists. Peirce saw himself as a scientist, mathematician, and logician rather than a philosopher, but he had studied Kant's philosophy as a teenager and later characterized himself as "a Schellingian of some stripe." His work inspired the tradition of pragmatism. The Hungarian American semiotician, Thomas Sebeok, called for the development of biosemiotics, thereby integrating Peirce's theory of semiotics and von Uexküll's theory of biology. This project was taken up to begin with in Denmark, first by Jesper Hoffmeyer, a biochemist influenced by the New Left (he had been in Paris in May, 1968), and a philosopher of science and proponent of natural philosophy, Claus Emmeche. From this perspective, human culture is situated as an evolutionary development of the "semiosphere" as this was characterized by Hoffmeyer (1996, p.62). It is in these terms that Terrence Deacon characterized the evolution of humans as the *Symbolic Species* (1997).

In what has come to be seen as a manifesto for biosemiotics, *Signs of Meaning in the Universe* (1996), Hoffmeyer launched an attack on the deployment of information science in biology. He pointed out that "form" for the Romans was a mangled version of the Greek "morf" (or "morph"), and that "information" meant *being formed mentally*. Atomistic thinking in the Twentieth Century led to "information" being understood as isolated chunks of knowledge, and this was taken over by the physicists, who then characterized it as something in the world, independent of anyone, and then tried to impose this inverted concept of information on all other disciplines. In his later book *Biosemiotics*, Hoffmeyer wrote that

up-to-date biology must acknowledge that the biochemical concept of information is just too impoverished to be of any explanatory use. (p.61)

Hoffmeyer was closely aligned with Kalevi Kull (2010), leader of the Tartu-Moscow school of biosemiotics, and a proponent of ecosemiotics as the basis for an ecological ethics (Kull, 2010; Tønnessen, 2003). In Czechia, Anton Markoš (2002) developed a parallel movement in theoretical biology that he characterized as biohermeneutics, now aligned with the biosemiotics movement. Biosemiotics is currently a vigorous global movement, represented in the journals *Semiotica*, *Sign System Studies*, and *Biosemiotics*, and exemplified in the articles in anthologies such as *Introduction to Biosemiotics* (Barbieri, 2008) and *Towards a Semiotic Biology* (Emmeche and Kull, 2011).

Such work parallels and is supported by the revival of natural philosophy elsewhere. Merleau-Ponty's work on natural philosophy and efforts to naturalize phenomenology have been taken up within the sciences (Kauffman and Gare, 2015). Edmund Husserl's project of making phenomenology into a presuppositionless philosophy providing apodictic knowledge, thereby providing the foundations not only for philosophy and the humanities but also for the sciences, failed, as Husserl acknowledged. However, this failure was irrelevant to Merleau-Ponty's dialectical phenomenology. Making no claim to certainty and developing his ideas through engagement with rival views from all disciplines, Merleau-Ponty developed and defended his own views by showing their superiority to these rival views. In doing so, Merleau-Ponty engaged with Cassirer's neo-Kantianism, empiricism, Hegel's philosophy, Marxism, and Sartre's existentialism, as well as with developments in neuroscience, psychology, ethology, anthropology, and physics. His work and those who were influenced by it, have revived the whole trajectory of Schelling's call for a new science and the development of a new world consciousness.

One of the philosophers involved in this was Gilbert Simondon, who had been a student of Merleau-Ponty. Simondon subjected the claims of information science and cybernetics to a searching critique in his Ph.D. thesis, published as a book with a dedication to Merleau-Ponty, although it was also influenced by Jean Piaget. This work has only recently been translated into English as *Individuation in Light of Notions of Form and Information* (2020), with a belated appreciation of its significance. Simondon's major concern was to challenge and reformulate the notion of information as it had been developed by Shannon, Weaver, von Neuman, and Wiener, and along with information, the notion of cybernetics and the way it had been used as an analogy for living processes. Some of the ideas associated with this challenge were developed at a conference in Paris in July 1962, organized by Simondon, in which Norbert Wiener was a major participant (Bardin 2015, p.31). Simondon embraced the development of information science and cybernetics, seeing them as a creative hybrid of advances in logic and technology, but argued that the source of these ideas in technologies of communication must lead to the exclusion of what is most important when it comes to understanding information. He then pointed out the problems with the assumptions on which information science was developing. It presupposed an individual sending a message, an individual bit of information or signal and a code

through which it is encoded, and an individual receiving the message by decoding it, as though information could be identified and understood in complete abstraction from the process of informing. Information is individuated as such only where there are metastable systems receptive to being informed. The problem is to account for this individuation. Living beings are theatres of individuation, and it is only when individuation is achieved and maintained, that mechanistic models of living processes have some applicability. Life is more fundamental than mechanisms, which always presuppose a life-based teleology. Without life, there would be no mechanisms, and life cannot be understood as just the sum of all its mechanisms. Simondon thus provided strong support for Hoffmeyer's critique of information science when applied to biology (Gare, 2020).

X. Confronting Economic and Ecological Crises

The work of such philosophers and scientists is immediately relevant to more recent efforts to rethink the place of humanity in nature in response to the threat of ecological destruction. Environmentalists, re-examining Marx's work, have developed eco-Marxism in order to promote eco-socialism (Benton, 1996). Charles Taylor and Alasdair MacIntyre, and those influenced by them, related their work to environmental issues. An anthology has been published relating Merleau-Ponty's philosophy to environmental philosophy (Cataldi and Hamrick, 2007). Interest in Whitehead's philosophy was revived, insofar as his work and the scientists and economists he had influenced came to be seen as essential to understand and provide solutions to the ecological crisis. Proponents of Whiteheadian process metaphysics have linked up with Chinese environmentalists to promote the creation of an ecological civilization (Gare, 2017). Biosemioticians are also playing a major role in the global environmental movement and are supplying core ideas on which an ecological civilization can be created (Wheeler, 2016). All this work, in various ways inspired by the New Left, has come to the fore in the struggle to deal with a global ecological crisis associated with the growth of the technosphere and the power of the global corporatocracy and the military-industrial complex (Orlov, 2017).

The environmental crisis has brought home the imperative to regain control over the dynamics of markets to ensure that they augment rather than destroyed ecological communities, whether non-human or human. In Britain in the 1970s, the political economy movement, led by Joan Robinson, had taken up the challenge of exposing the illusions of neo-classical economics and revealing alternatives, integrating ideas from Keynes, Sraffa, and Marx, while in the USA the institutionalist economics of Thorstein Veblen was revived and is now being embraced in Europe, particularly in Norway and Estonia (Mirowski, 1989; Reinert and Viano, 2012). Originally, Veblen studied philosophy, where the focus was on Kant and Hegel, and he also attended Peirce's lectures. He made the quest for recognition (or "esteem")

central to his economic theories. However, with the transformations of the global economy and the intensification of the global ecological crisis, it became evident that this was not enough. An ecological economics movement emerged. This was inspired by the work of Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen (1971), an economist who had taken the second law of thermodynamics seriously. This in turn led to the rediscovery of a tradition of ecological economics originating in the Nineteenth Century (Martinez-Alier, 1987). Again, this movement was characterized by different degrees of radicalism, from communitarian anarchism of the “inclusive democracy” movement led by Takis Fotopoulos (1997) and influenced by Castoriadis and Murray Bookchin, to the work of Herman Daly and John Cobb Jr (1994), aligned with Whiteheadian process philosophy. Both these approaches involved a commitment to strong democracy, with this commitment being defended by Prugh, Costanza, and Daly in *The Local Politics of Global Sustainability* (2000). A different approach was taken by institutionalist ecological economists such as Arild Vatn, focussing on how to defend, transform or create institutions through which communities can regain control over the economy and subordinate markets into instruments serving these communities. In all such cases, what was being challenged and replaced are the basic assumptions about nature and humans of mainstream economics deriving from Hobbes. Vatn (2005, p.26ff.) explicitly rejected assumptions deriving from Hobbes and Locke and defended the social constructivism of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman, sociologists influenced by the phenomenologist philosopher Alfred Schutz and the early works of Marx, and explicitly upholding the humanist tradition. Vatn (p.98) noted that Veblen, whose work he claimed was very much in line with the perspective of Berger and Luckman, has been characterized as the first economic anthropologist. Such work was supported by the human ecologists, with Alf Hornborg critiquing the functioning of the market from a biosemiotic perspective. Examining the economy in the context of human ecology, Hornborg (2019) has recently argued for a fundamental transformation of the institution of money and how it functions in the economy, eliminating “all-purpose” money.

Such work has been strongly supported by the development of ecofeminism. The works of Rachel Carsons and Vandana Shiva revealed the destructive impact of agribusiness, poisoning the environment and destroying more traditional forms of agriculture and more sustainable ways of living in which women had played a major role. Ecofeminists, for example, Carolyn Merchant in *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1980) and Val Plumwood in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), have revealed the connection between domineering orientations to nature and the celebration of masculinity along with the denigration of femininity, and the connection between this opposition and the development and the development and imposition of the mechanistic world-view and ecologically destructive practices. This argument concurs with feminist philosophy of science, where it has been shown that theories which challenge the prevailing domineering world-orientation to nature tend to be marginalized. Treating nature as nothing but

inert, meaningless matter ruled by immutable laws is seen as tough-minded and masculine, and the reductionism associated with it tends to be taken as the reference point in science, even though it is demonstrably wrong. The humanities and social sciences are seen as feminine, as opposed to masculine natural sciences (especially in their reductionist forms), or as the Australian Analytic philosopher J.J.C. Smart characterized them, the “girl sciences” as opposed to the “boy sciences.” Economics, so long as it emulates reductionist physics and concentrates its efforts on mathematical models, can avoid the stigma of femininity to some extent. It is for such reasons that ecology, particularly in its anti-reductionist form, struggles to be properly recognized within the sciences. As Lorraine Code (2006, p.15f.) noted,

Rachel Carson’s warnings about the risks of DDT to birds and other wildlife, was dismissed as trivial in the 1960s by “man centred” antipollution reformers who had little patience with “nature lovers.”

This deep-rooted binary opposition has been shown to be a major obstacle to those struggling to defend the humanities by aligning it with and then defending post-reductionist science, in order to effectively challenge defective thinking on environmental issues.

What has united all such work has been a rejection of the mechanistic view of life and of humans. Living beings are not gene machines, as Richard Dawkins argued, or information processing cyborgs. Nor is the brain a computer. Even the most basic life forms have *Umwelten*. Their environments have meaning for them, involving a proto-sense of their own significance in being alive. Symbiosis rather than competition has been shown to be the most important basis for evolution, and this involves living beings recognizing each other. Semiotic bonds are central to the organization of ecosystems, non-human and human, and are essential to symbiosis, and organisms have been characterized as highly integrated ecosystems. On this basis it has been shown to be possible to trace the increasingly complex and increasingly sentient forms of life that led to the emergence of human beings, characterized by cultures and the capacity for critical reflection, creative thinking, and free agency (Schilhab, Stjernfelt, & Deacon, 2012). This work has facilitated the revival and defence of philosophical anthropology, thereby upholding and developing the conception of humans elaborated in the German Renaissance in opposition to the conception of humans put forward by Hobbes, while situating humans within ecosystems with the potential to either destroy or, by providing the conditions for people to develop their full potential to advance life, augmenting the health of these ecosystems. This has provided the basis for rethinking the foundations of the human sciences, including economics, and elevating the status of human ecology as a transdiscipline.

The financial crisis that began in 2007, the outcome of the massive concentrations of wealth and increasing dominance of the economy by the financial

sector, all predicted by Keynesian economists, and the response to this crisis, should have invalidated neoliberalism and provided the conditions for such ideas to be embraced, mobilizing societies to address the global ecological crisis. The financial crisis demonstrated that the economy was not a self-regulating system that was best left to function without government intervention and that governments should cut costs and balance their budgets. This failure coincided with several other crises, some more severe. The weakness of the US military-industrial complex was revealed by the inability of the USA to control Iraq and install a compliant comprador government after its conquest in 2003. The export of polluting industries to China, while exploiting their cheap labour and damaging China's environment, provided the foundation for China to develop its economy to challenge the hegemony of USA in the global economy. Those who claimed that the threat of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions and weakening of the global ecosystem through local ecological destruction had finally won the scientific debate and denialists had to resort to claiming that there was no scientific consensus. The time appeared right for those who had been sidelined to take the initiative and set civilization in a new direction.

In China, moves in this direction were made. A strong movement against the massive concentrations of wealth and environmental damage that had occurred under the presidency of Jiang Zemin between 1989 and 2003. Hu Jintao, who was president from 2003 to 2013, attempted to deal with income and wealth inequalities and fostered a vibrant public sphere. This generated some very critical works on the state of China. One of the leading intellectual figures, Wang Hui (2011, pp. 3-18), while distancing himself from Maoism, developed what was recognized as a New Left perspective and attacked the neoliberalism of both Chinese intellectuals and the government and deplored the subsequent depoliticization of the population, not only in China, but globally. This was in conjunction with his call for democracy, understood, as he put it, not as

a ready-made pattern that can be ready copied. Rather, it should be a creative process, a broad social reality that takes into account specific political, economic, and cultural practices. (2003, p.x)

Pan Yue as a deputy minister and the leading figure in the environmental movement along with other members of this movement was able to persuade the government to see the seriousness of ecological problems. In 2007 the government embraced the project of creating an ecological civilization.

Elsewhere in the world, however, with a few exceptions, governments both right-wing and supposedly left-wing continued to pursue neoliberal policies, replacing welfare for communities with welfare for financial institutions and transnational corporations. Green parties for the most part demonstrated their ineffectuality and absence of any clear vision for the future. They had accepted a

subordinate role as nothing but a pressure group, addressing each environmental issue in isolation. What changes there were, came from right-wing parties, with Angela Merkel taking environmental concerns very seriously. Elsewhere, neo-conservatives dismissive of environmental issues and generally anti-intellectual, broke with neoliberal economic policies to defend their national economies. Right-wing populists verging on fascism like Donald Trump were able to gain power by taking up the concerns of people who had suffered under neoliberalism and had been ignored by supposedly left-wing political parties, such as the Democratic Party in USA under Clinton and Obama. The academics and other intellectuals who had been working to develop a genuine alternative agenda with a different vision for the future, were completely ignored by policy makers and have been unable to have any significant influence. What happened?

XI. From Humanism to Anti-Humanism in the Humanities

Intellectuals, involved in the production and dissemination of ideas, play an important role in every society. In a democratic society, their role is relatively straightforward, to search for the truth, questioning prevailing beliefs, discovering new patterns in nature, society, and thought, identifying and defining problems and providing new solutions, and through their insights and defence of these, advancing their culture to achieve a better understanding of the world, including people and their problems and prospects, while educating the next generation to take up and carry on these quests. They should do this not by claiming to have apodictic knowledge but instead by situating all knowledge claims in relation to past and present debates and enquiry, maintaining a dialogue between philosophers and those involved in specialized areas of research in mathematics and science, artists, and writers, professionals of various kinds and diverse people in everyday life, and with other cultures, always in the context of interpreting voices from the past. Philosophy as a transdiscipline, questioning the assumptions and interrogating the values and claims to knowledge of all other disciplines, revealing their significance in relation to each other, asking new questions and opening new paths of inquiry, should be central to this. Philosophers are the physicians of culture, as Nietzsche suggested, and as Karl Jaspers (1993, p.144) characterized Schelling's view of philosophy,

[p]hilosophy must enter into life. That applies not only to the individual but also to the condition of the time, to history, and to humanity. The power of philosophy must penetrate everything, because one cannot live without it.

Neoliberalism meant opposing this role. Rather than developing an educated population able to participate in the governance of their communities, neoliberal economists and politicians in alliance with what had become a global corporatocracy, were concerned to augment their control of the world and manufacture consent. Consequently, the role of intellectuals and educational and research institutions

changed dramatically with the rise of neoliberalism. Neoliberals even attempted to control what was taught to school children in order to indoctrinate them in neoliberal ideology. There was a place for science, but not as open inquiry searching for comprehensive understanding, but instead for highly specialized work developing instrumental knowledge. In conjunction with and allied to the rise of the corporatocracy, a technocratic intelligentsia has vastly increased its power. There was still a need to legitimate this social order, but that could be achieved through public relations and advertising, serving to manufacture consent. Beyond that, the identification of science with means for developing technology meant biasing science towards various forms of reductionism, the latest being information science and advancing information technology, thereby upholding mainstream Darwinism and social Darwinism, and marginalizing challenges to these. As far as the arts and humanities were concerned, as Hobbes had argued, these were reconceived as forms of amusements, and efforts were made to harness them to the entertainment industry.

One of the most important challenges for neoliberals was how to eliminate criticism of all this coming from universities. Direct control and censorship did not sit well with the neoliberals' claim to be on the side of freedom. The solution was to transform universities into business corporations and to commodify education and knowledge, integrating universities into the market economy, leaving no place for dissenting voices. Effectively, this meant proletarianizing academics. The effect has been dramatic. There has been a massive growth in the number of and remuneration to university managers, who are now part of the global corporatocracy, and a major transformation in education and research, with a massive decline in the working conditions of those engaged in teaching and research. Also, there has been major growth in such areas as business studies, marketing, and public relations. Economics departments, now located in business faculties, have been stocked with neoliberal economists who are happy to play the game of getting promotions by churning out papers reinforcing the dominant ideology while blinding the population to what has really been happening in the economy. Economic history and the history of economic thought have been eliminated. Those engaged in science have increasingly had to rely on funding from business corporations. There is little sympathy among university managers for scientists grappling with fundamental questions about the nature of physical existence, life, and humanity. This has changed the dynamics of science faculties, where ultra-specialists now treat with disdain colleagues concerned with broader questions and who cross disciplinary boundaries to address these questions.

The biggest impact, however, has been on the Arts Faculties and most particularly, on the humanities and social sciences. The conditions of academics in these faculties have deteriorated the most, with much of teaching casualized. It is here above all that one would expect resistance to these changes, which are massive as compared to the changes that led to student protests in the late 1960s. Instead, those protesting such changes have been marginalized by their colleagues, who have been

only too willing to embrace the managers' view of their work as contributing to the development of the entertainment industry, and to recruit students by misleading them into thinking that such education would improve their prospects for making money. This does not mean that they have totally withdrawn from the traditional role of intellectuals in putting forward ideas in order to legitimate or criticize the existing social order. Economics alone could not justify what has happened. Academics in the humanities have played a major role in upholding the values being implemented by their corporate managers, and marginalizing and drowning out the voices of those criticising the corporatocracy. They have played a major role in rejecting humanism, promoting first, structuralism, then deconstructive postmodernism, and now posthumanism.

The acceptance of structuralism and rejection by intellectuals of humanist approaches in the human science and humanities, whether pragmatist, symbolic interactionist, hermeneutic, phenomenological, or humanist Marxist, suggested a loss of faith in what they had been doing and a concern to defend their disciplines by making them more "scientific." Structuralism, influenced by Saussure and structuralist mathematics, was a research program with a theoretical object that appeared to be progressive. However, it was also a rejection of the humanism of the New Left and of other proponents of democracy. This was evident in Althusser's work. As noted, Althusser was hostile to humanist Marxism, dismissing Marx's *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* as irrelevant to Marx's later work, which, in creating a theoretical object, the base and superstructure model of society, was genuinely scientific. Althusser also embraced the structuralist psychology of Jacques Lacan, that implied the impossibility of overcoming alienation, and denied any significant agency to the subject. Althusser made it possible for academic Marxists to advance their careers, appearing to be radical without really challenging the existing order. The influence of Althusser on the *New Left Review*, associated with the dismissal of its founders by its new editors in 1963, contributed to undermining the appeal of the New Left to students and greatly disoriented and weakened the New Left as a political force.

Structuralism helped pave the way for a new generation of academics who embraced the work of Derrida and Foucault, together with Lyotard's claim that grand narratives of emancipation have lost all credibility. These were the deconstructive postmodernists. In Anglophone countries, postmodernist academics deploying terms taken from Derrida, debunked what they took to be high culture, which included the quest for truth whether in philosophy, science, history, or art, although they tacitly accepted the benefits generated by techno-science. Not only were grand narratives challenged, but narratives as such. Walter Benjamin had complained that information was displacing stories, and deconstructive postmodernists facilitated the advance of this displacement (Gare, 2002). Under the umbrella of postmodernism, at least the brand of postmodernism deriving from the appropriation of French philosophy, these

academics, including many philosophers, took it upon themselves to debunk not only the humanities but also all they had stood for since Petrarch and Wilhelm von Humboldt. This left uncontested the grand narrative of neoliberalism, having as its end the total domination of the world by the market and its most powerful actors, the corporatocracy and their allies, the technocrats. The rest, driven by competitive struggle in unregulated markets in a globalized economy, were left without the conditions to offer any but small-scale and ineffectual local resistance to this domination.

So, we had the paradoxical situation in which leading scientists and natural philosophers were strongly defending and providing foundations for the humanities and warning about the threat posed by the advance of the techno-sciences, while academics in the humanities, most importantly, in philosophy, were undermining the humanities, and along with the humanities, humanistic approaches in the human sciences together with the arts. In this way, they have played a significant role in marginalizing and blunting opposition to the cultural hegemony of the global corporatocracy and their technocratic allies, even while policies based on this ideology of technological domination combined with consumerism were having a devastating effect not only on the economies of nations and on the broader ecosystems in which they are located, but on academia itself. So, as Philip Mirowski documented in *Never Let a Serious Crisis Go to Waste: How Neoliberalism Survived the Financial Meltdown* (2013), when the financial crisis occurred in 2007-2008, even though it was predicted, it was the neoliberals who were able to further their agenda of concentrating wealth and corporate power.

XII. The Posthumanists

How should we understand posthumanism in this context? Posthumanism is the successor to deconstructive postmodernism. There are several reasons why postmodernism was superseded. First, it was associated with an extreme scepticism towards science, which, given the technological achievements evident all around us that were made possible by science, seemed absurd. Second, it led to intellectual stagnation. As Paul Mason (p.177) observed, citing the work of the Australian-Italian feminist Rosi Braidotti:

postmodernist academia had entered a “zombified landscape of repetition without difference and lingering melancholia” which had run out of new ideas. A new theory beginning with “post” was needed to justify the usefulness of humanities departments and pay the rent. Post-humanism was the result. Its central claim was outlined by Katherine Hayles, an American literary critic: the human self is basically information, so whether it resides on a computer or a body doesn’t matter. Consciousness is in any case a “side show,” because the Libet experiment in neuroscience is said to have

proved we take most of our decisions unconsciously. As a result, the human being can be “seamlessly articulated with a machine.”

Referring to Donna Haraway’s “A Manifesto for Cyborgs” (1987), Katherine Hayles, in *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (1999), offered a history of information science from its establishment in the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics from 1946 to 1953. As noted, cognitive scientists embracing information science believed they had the concepts required to “mechanize the mind,” showing that organisms, including humans, are nothing but complex information processing machines (Dupuy 2009). By adding information to matter and energy, and even privileging information, some participants believed they had the basis for a metaphysical monism, a belief that was embraced by many others, despite the scepticism of major figures at the conferences (acknowledged by Hayles). For these ontological reductionists, the universe’s essential nature is digital, composed of bits of information (Zurek 1990; Floridi 2011: 91). It appears that the technological achievements made possible by information science persuaded Haraway and Hayles to accept the universalizing claims of this science, viewing human individuals as mere information processing nodes in a landscape dominated by information technology. They were left only to consider how we might rescue some remnants of humanity from this claimed revolution in science.

The oddity of this is that both Haraway and Hayles are historians of science, and Haraway had previously written a book on the history of embryology that discussed the work of Waddington and other anti-reductionist biologists. As I have pointed out above, the anti-reductionist philosophers and scientists from Schelling onwards have been struggling to align the sciences and the humanities, not only because they support the value of the humanities, but because the mechanistic conception of life and mind developed by thinkers influenced by Hobbes made science itself unintelligible. In doing so, these anti-reductionists have been enormously successful, as I have also argued above. The proponents of information science have been concerned to update reductionism to make it more plausible, but without success. Their work brings to mind C.D. Broad’s observation (1926, p.623) that “Reductive Materialism in general and strict Behaviourism in particular” are

instances of the numerous class of theories which are so preposterously silly that only very learned men could have thought of them.

This paradox requires a closer examination of the posthumanists. While Haraway and Hayles were trying to find some residual place for humanism within information science (and it appears that Hayles has since come under the influence of the biosemioticians), those who embraced the notion of the posthumanism evinced a deep hostility to humanism. For instance, Primod Nayar in *Posthumanism* (2014, p.22) referring to “critical posthumanism,” wrote:

Critical posthumanism shifts away from the moral transhumanist position in one very significant way. Moral transhumanism believes we can accentuate and enhance specific human qualities (such as compassion) for the greater good of life on earth – but with this it retains a very clear idea of the desirable qualities of the human. The human is still the centre of all things desirable, necessary and aspirational. In the case of critical posthumanism, it treats the “essential” attributes of the human as always already imbricated with other life forms, where the supposedly “core” human features, whether physiology, anatomy or consciousness, have co-evolved with other life forms. Where moral transhumanism seeks enhancement of supposedly innate human features and qualities, critical posthumanism rejects the very idea of anything innate to the human, arguing instead for a messy congeries of qualities developed over centuries through the human's interactions with the environment (which includes non-organic tools and organic life).

Similarly, Rosi Braidotti wrote in *The Posthuman* (2013, p.1) that

the concept of the human has exploded under the double pressure of contemporary scientific advances and global economic concerns. After the postmodern, the post-colonial, the post-industrial, the post-communist and even the much-contested post-feminist conditions, we seem to have entered the post-human predicament.

She then set out to defend a posthuman subject based on the notion of autopoiesis, that is, second order cybernetics.

Embracing Foucault's proclamation of the “death of man” appears to be central to the thinking of these posthumanists, with the advance of information science providing justification for their allegiance to Foucault and providing direction for their militant attack on humanism. Their world vision is a complete negation not only of the humanism that emerged with the New Left in their reaction to Stalinism and domination of the West by the military-industrial complex, but also to the whole history of humanism with its struggle for autonomy, democracy and social justice from the pre-Socratics and defenders of the Republic in Rome to the Renaissance and then the Radical Enlightenment. As noted, Foucault's critique of humanism was technical, directed principally against Kant, and his “death of man” proclamation appears as something of a rhetorical flourish. However, humanism had been criticised by a number of philosophers, including Heidegger, who had reacted to Sartre's affirmation of humanism in his *Letter on Humanism*, as well as by the structuralists and poststructuralists. The posthumanists have interpreted Foucault as being aligned with a broader tradition of posthumanism. To support this anti-humanism, they have embraced information science and the technologies advanced through it in order to question the boundaries that defined human beings in the past, associated with embodiment, claiming along with the transhumanists that we can extend ourselves beyond embodiment through new technologies. There is now no clear division between what people are and what their technology is, or for that matter, what other

forms of life are or what is not alive. We are largely made up of non-human micro-organisms moving in and out of what had previously been regarded as the boundaries of the body. As information processors, what had been taken to be humans are now seen as continuous with the physical processes around them. From this reductionist perspective, there is nothing but energy, information, and matter (Gare, 2020). Since information technology emerged during World War II and has been driven by the drive to augment military and industrial power, posthumanism amounts to accepting our complete absorption into the military-industrial complex.

Posthumanism is claimed to be anti-elitist and aligned with ecological thinking, but offers a debased view of life and provides no place for people taking responsibility for ecological destruction. Those who call for the development of such responsibility are in the long tradition of humanism and therefore politically incorrect. As became clear from New Left thinking, it was the elimination from orthodox Marxism of a conception of humans as subjects whose humanity could be cultivated, but who could also be dehumanized, that paved the way for the brutality of Stalinism. Slavery amounted to a failure to acknowledge the humanity of people and their potential; and depriving people of access to the means of production and treating their creative potential as a commodity, as labour-power, dependent upon others who could destroy their livelihoods, had also been shown by Marx to be a form of slavery. A conception of the world and people as machines, and identifying reason with instrumental rationality, produces a one-dimensional culture that eliminates the basis for even criticising this dehumanization. Orthodox Marxism as developed in the Soviet Union had simply reproduced such thinking in a slightly different form. The development of philosophical anthropology, characterizing humans and their potential, and showing which potentialities should be realized, provided the basis for challenging and overcoming such thinking both theoretically and in practice. This conception of humans, while differentiating humans from other kinds of living beings, was the basis for reconceiving the nature and life. Showing that even plants have *Umwelten*, surrounding worlds that have meaning for them and that semiosis, the production and interpretation of signs, is central to all life, including ecosystems, has provided the basis for defending the intrinsic significance of all life. To conceive life as nothing but information processing cyborgs is a rejection of this work, without even acknowledging it, and undermines the basis for any appreciation of this intrinsic significance and eliminates completely any possibility of challenging domination by instrumental rationality (Gare, 2020).

Beyond this, it is difficult to gain a clear picture of what the posthumanists stand for. Continuing deconstructive postmodernists scepticism about reason and anti-elitism, they simultaneously uphold being non-judgemental as a virtue while engaging in enforcing political correctness and upholding the new “cancel culture,” defending this on supposedly scientific grounds. While censoring humanists of all kinds, they appear to have embraced the promise of the new information technology,

with the hope of achieving immortality through freeing ourselves from the constraints of being embodied. Dmitri Orlov (2017, p.33f.) has charted where this vision will lead:

[A] movement will develop to virtualize people in their entirety, their heads included, by replacing them with computer simulations. At first this will be done to keep your loved ones seemingly alive once they have passed away, but later people of child-bearing age will decide that having virtual, simulated children is much less troublesome than having physical ones, what with all of the expense of giving them neural implants and later having their bodies amputated. People in their advanced years, fearing the onset of dementia, will opt to have their brains digitized ahead of time to avoid embarrassing themselves on social media.

And this will set in motion the final, inexorable trend in which actual, physical humans will be replaced with computer simulations of them. By then computing power will have progressed to the point where the simulations will bear an uncanny resemblance to the supposed original, being able to text things like “OMG!” and “LOL!” and exchange selfies of their simulated duckfaces in front of simulated tourist locations just like the originals once did.

This was not merely an accommodation to the managers of the new neoliberal model of the university, however. It was a militant celebration of the new order and signalled a more complete rejection of humanism and greater hostility to its proponents than had been the case with the postmodernists. It must be examined as an ideology.

XIII. Conclusion: Posthumanism as the World Vision of House-Slaves

Posthumanists are the successors to the postmodernists, faithfully carrying the mantle of pseudo-radicalism as the “reconstruction of deconstruction,” as Cary Wolfe (2010, p.3) put it. They are difficult to argue with, because they eschew dialectical engagement with opposing views. And they are in fashion, just as postmodernists were in fashion in the 1980s and 1990s. As Francesca Ferrando began her recent book, *Philosophical Posthumanism* (2019, p.1), “[p]osthumanism is the philosophy of our time.” This gives them power, and they see no reason to risk this power by engaging with those who are not in fashion. There is not much point, for instance, in asking them why they have aligned themselves with those striving to mechanize the mind based on work in the 1940s and 50s, why such work is a refurbishing of Hobbesian posthumanism updated through symbolic logic and information science, or why they have ignored criticisms from post-reductionist philosophers and scientists of the pretensions of information science, most recently by the biosemioticians who have provided an alternative and far more defensible account of the relationship between humans and the rest of nature. Or to ask why they have ignored Alf Hornborg’s critique of machine fetishism in *The Power of the Machine* (2001), treating technology as though its development were not the product of people. Or heed the warnings by Steven Hawking, Elon Musk, Steve Wozniak, and Bill Gates that this fetishized

information technology is now an existential threat to the future of humanity. Nor is there much point in asking them why they have given up the quest for democracy and the conditions for achieving it. The struggle for and practice of democracy and the cultivation of the virtues required for it to function are dull and boring compared to “exuberant excess” of the quest to “deterritorialize both humanism and anthropocentrism,” as Rosi Braidotti described Ferrando’s posthumanism in the introduction to her book (Ferrando, 2019, p.xi). In order to understand their claims, there is not much point in examining their arguments, since they appear to be uninterested in logical coherence or historical accuracy.

It is far more illuminating to examine how their beliefs make sense as accommodations to their social conditions. If social being does not determine consciousness, as Marx claimed, nevertheless it has a great influence on consciousness. And while individuals might differ, social groups tend to develop what Lucian Goldmann (1964, p.17) called a “world vision,”

the whole complex of ideas, aspirations and feelings which links together the members of a social group (a group which, in most cases, assumes the existence of a social class) and which oppose them to members of other social groups.

As I have noted, academics have been proletarianized, losing job security, and no group has been more affected by this proletarianization than academics in the humanities. With the transformation of universities where academics are treated as just instruments for generating profits and are evaluated according to whether they can generate surplus income over the costs of employing them, those in the humanities are in a very weak position, even if they do accept that their new role is to educate people for the entertainment industries. They are not in a good position to attract high paying students or to attract research grants. And yet those who do manage to get full-time academic positions, even if they do not have the security of past academics, are far better off than those employed as adjuncts. And given their skills or lack of them, even adjuncts are better off than those educated in the humanities who have no position in universities at all. If such people are slaves, they are “salary-slaves” rather than “wage-slaves.” In fact, they are the equivalent of the “house-slaves.”

The effect of being slaves had been observed by Renaissance thinkers. As Quentin Skinner (2008) pointed out, the Romans characterized the condition of enslavement as the opposite of liberty. It was understood as the position of being dependent on others whose decisions could affect one. This condition was characterized as “obnoxious” (p.42). Renaissance thinkers noted that people in such obnoxious positions tended also to become obnoxious characters (p.94). They lose any sense of honour or concern for the public good in their quest to ingratiate themselves to those who have power over them. This is particularly true of house-slaves,

brilliantly portrayed in the Tarantino film *Django Unchained*. House-slaves have a strong propensity to identify with those who have enslaved them and to despise inferior slaves – the ‘field-slaves’. What I am suggesting is that posthumanism, as a further development of deconstructive postmodernism, is the world vision of academics in the humanities who have become house-slaves and accepted their role. Such people were well described recently in an open letter by Petra Bueskens (2021) describing academics in Australia, although these are just an extreme case of academics in the humanities almost everywhere:

Let me make a bold claim: the confluence of neoliberalism and postmodernism has produced a cadre of academics who lack imagination, passion, flair, originality or courage; they are all in lock-step with each other, more like a school of fish than a cohort of scholars. To my colleagues I say this: honestly, stop pretending you are victims of anything other than your own limbic hijack and petty careerism. Most of you are so busy checking metrics, expanding CV's, meeting KPI's, applying for grants, attending nauseatingly boring Zoom meetings, self-promoting, networking, virtue signalling and ensuring you support the corporate brand formerly known as the university that there is no time for *thinking as an end in itself*. The sociological imagination is a bespoke luxury that no longer exists in corporate academia. Keeping in line ideologically is now part of this dog and pony show. Pretending you are the vanguard of the latest civil rights movement is as dishonest as it is laughable. Many colleagues have contacted me privately to express their support; a handful of these feel they cannot support me publicly for fear of losing their jobs or being tainted. This too is evidence of the problem of “progressive illiberalism” sweeping the universities. If academics, for whom tenure was created precisely to protect their intellectual freedom, cannot speak for fearing of being exposed for wrongthink, then really what is the university today? It is a sham.

The world-vision of such people is an expression of resentment as this was described by Friedrich Nietzsche, characterized by the denial of higher values by those incapable of realizing them. In *The Genealogy of Morals* (1956, p. 158) Nietzsche also noted that this manifest itself in the work of psychologists. As he characterized their work, and the people who produce such ideas:

What are these English psychologists really after? One finds them always, whether intentionally or not, engaged in the same task of pushing into the foreground the nasty part of the psyche, looking for the effective motive forces of human development in the very last place we would wish to have them found, e.g., in the inertia of habit, in forgetfulness, in the blind and fortuitous association of ideas: always in something that is purely passive, automatic, reflexive, molecular, and, moreover, profoundly stupid. What drives these psychologists forever in the same direction? A secret, malicious desire to belittle humanity, which they do not acknowledge even to themselves? A pessimistic distrust, the suspiciousness of the soured idealist? ... Or is it, perhaps, a kind of stew-a little meanness, a little bitterness, a bit of anti-Christianity, a touch of prurience and desire for condiments? . . . But, again, people tell me that these men are

simply dull old frogs who hop and creep in and around man as in their own element—
as though man were a bog.

“The goal of science,” Nietzsche (1979, p.156n.9) observed, reflecting on its nihilistic tendencies, “is the destruction of the world.”

Posthumanists, aspiring to dominate the humanities departments of universities and pushing out those defending the tradition of Renaissance civic humanism as this had been advanced by the German Renaissance, by Anglophone philosophers such T.H. Green, C.S. Peirce, Alfred North Whitehead, and Robin Collingwood, and then by the humanist Marxist and other philosophers of the New Left, are aligning themselves with the nihilism of reductionist science, despite such reductionism having been rendered obsolete by advances in the natural sciences. They have elaborated a world vision supporting the world vision of the corporatocracy and their military and technocratic allies, treating humans as nothing but disposable instruments of the technosphere generated by the military-industrial complex. They are functioning to eliminate opposition to the quest of these managers and technocrats for total world domination, ultimately hoping to achieve immortality for their own kind by extending their lifespans through medical and digital technology, or to download their minds onto computer disks. At the same time, this posthumanist world vision legitimates indifference on the part of these managers and technocrats to the damage to people, other life forms and ecosystems by what they claim is economic and technological progress.

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