

Chapter 2

Deep Traditionalism or How to Heal the World

Farasha Euker

Socialism and communism of the West are based on certain conceptions which are fundamentally different from ours. One such conception is their belief in the essential selfishness of human nature. I do not subscribe to it for I know that the former can respond to the call of the spirit in him, can rise superior to the passions that he owns in common with the brute and, therefore, superior to selfishness and violence, which belong to the brute nature and not to the immortal spirit of man. Our socialism or communism should, therefore, be based on nonviolence and on harmonious co-operation of labor and capital, landlord and tenant.¹

Historically, leftist ideologies, such as Marxism and anarchism, tended towards future centrism. They advocated the further mechanization of the means of production, including the human body. Despite this, some dissenting authors, such as Fredy Perlman, Pierre Clastres, David Watson, and Jacques Camatte, have kept some of the political goals of the classic left, while shifting the focus to environmental issues, and even criticizing the foundations, not only of modernity, but of post-agricultural civilization. Clastres' anthropological writings dispel some widely held misconceptions about *primitive* societies, and Perlman, Watson, and Camatte all advocate a returning to previous modes of *be-ing*. Despite this, much of *green* anarchism is still based upon Enlightenment ideas and ideals. A spiritual, environmentally aware, and queer friendly activism must have deep philosophical foundations. Some of the best places

¹Mahatma Gandhi. *The Communist Creed*. Gandhi Book Centre. July 2012. URL: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap52.htm>.

to begin unearthing these foundations are the writings of William Morris, William Blake, Spinoza, Gandhi, and Arne Naess. The Deep Ecology movement in particular, is one of a small number of movements with a similar outlook. The importance of this doctrine—almost an immanent unitary theology—is principally derived from Spinoza and Buddhism, though Ibn ‘Arabi and Jacob Boehme could easily enrich the doctrine a great deal. Why is such a doctrine—a radical re-thinking of all that Western culture holds dear—important? Children are our future, but children are often left alone by their parents to play mind-destroying video games, then after those games destroy their thought patterns, they take medications that put them in a box and force them into a life of mediocrity. The best and brightest were, after all, always characterized with labels such as *deviant*, *insane*, or *freak*. Any society that treats its children in such a manner is ripe for change.

Communism puts an end to castes, classes and the division of labor (onto which was grafted the movement of value, which in turn animates and exalts this division). Communism is first of all union. It is not domination of nature but reconciliation, and thus regeneration of nature: human beings no longer treat nature simply as an object for their development, as a useful thing, but as a subject (not in the philosophic sense) not separate from them if only because nature is in them. The naturalization of man and the humanization of nature (Marx) are realized: the dialectic of subject and object ends. Revolution can no longer be taken to mean just the destruction of all that is old and conservative, because capital has accomplished this itself. Rather, it will appear as a return to something (a revolution in the mathematical sense of the term), a return to community, though not in any form which has existed previously. Revolution will make itself felt in the destruction of all that which is most modern and progressive (because science is capital). Another of its manifestations will involve the re-appropriation of all those aspects and qualities of life which have still managed to affirm that which is human. In attempting to grasp what this tendency means, we cannot be aided by any of the old dualistic, Manichean categories. (It is the same tendency which in the past had held back the valorization process in its movement towards a situation of complete autonomy.) If the triumph of communism is to bring about the creation of humanity, then it requires that this creation be possible, it must be a desire which has been there all the time, for centuries.²

²Jacques Camatte. *The Wandering of Humanity*. Marxists Internet Archive. July 2012. URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/camatte/wanhum/>.

The best metaphysical foundation for such a rethinking is, perhaps, a *transcendent-immanent* ontology and cosmology. Without transcendence, there can be no-thing, but without immanence, there can be no connection to the Divine. Meister Eckhart, Shankara, and Ibn ‘Arabi were all adherents of the *transcendent-immanent* and monist perspectives. Pluralism is a veil, an illusion, or *maya* in the terminology of the Vedantins. “And God’s is the east and the west: and wherever you turn, there is God’s countenance. Behold, God is infinite, all-knowing” (Qur’an II, 115). If God is everywhere, then why is the environment being destroyed? The answer is the loss of the *sense of the sacred*, both individually and as a society. This is why secular environmentalist projects are doomed to failure. The degree of environmental destruction in the Soviet Union may have been due to the communal view of property as not really belonging to anyone. If, however, God owns all property, and one deeply believes in that deity, then environmental consciousness should increase to the level of a good house-guest who takes care of property that is not theirs and whose owner is just and will take one to account for each act of carelessness. But the masses continue to desecrate the planet, destroying nature wherever it exists in a pure and untouched form. Even people who are not directly involved in the destruction of this planet are implicitly to blame for their complicity in the systems of thought and action that continue to do harm. If one knows that the creation of a product involves exploitation of child labor, the destruction of old growth forests, or the production of toxic waste, why do they continue to buy it? The simple answer is most likely *convenience*. Poverty is wrong, war is wrong, and violence in all of its nefarious manifestations, is morally unjustifiable, therefore, inconvenient as it may be, one should never directly or indirectly support a system, government, or product that is a result of or results in any of the above. Many see religion as a form of oppression, but it is not the essence of a faith that is oppressive, but an *accidental* framework that may have grown up around that faith. The materialism in Marxism was its accident, while its emphasis on social justice was its substance, just as the inquisition was accidental to the substance of Christianity. All true religions are, at their core, socialist and environmentalist, though not necessarily in the way those terms are currently meant. Greedy usurpers of power later warped religion to fit their needs. The incessant desire for power that led to so many travesties, meant that the small number of faiths that did not deviate from their original principles were obliterated from the face of this planet. The true core of religion is still there for all who are willing to open their eyes. Social justice should be a microcosm of divine justice.

In societies dominated by modern conditions of production, life is presented as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation.³

One school of thought that has, perhaps, the greatest potential to realize the above is the traditionalist school. Some brief clarifications are in order, due to the common misconceptions surrounding tradition in general and traditionalism in particular. Tradition can be defined as *praxis* toward the Divine, and those sets of doctrines and practices, which are imbued with the spirit of the Divine. This is not limited to any one particular time or place. The present could theoretically be just as traditional as the past. A common mistake is to conflate tradition with the past, which is wrong in principal, though often correct. Theoretically, a work of philosophy, art, music, or architecture created tomorrow could be just as traditional as a work from a thousand years ago. Ultimately, the qualifications would be whether the creator was a vessel for the Divine and that the purpose of creation was to lead others to the transcendent realms of the imagination. Traditionalism tries to recreate a situation in which a thousand Fra Angelico's could bloom. Strange as it may sound, Nietzsche, Deleuze, Heidegger, and other modern thinkers can be of use to traditionalists. Henry Corbin, for instance, used Heidegger's concepts a great deal in his writings. Even Baudrillard had something of importance to say. These individuals can help us criticize modernity and so-called post-modernity. They can help us to understand the world's current malaise and, perhaps, can offer us solutions to get out of that malaise. One does not read Heidegger or Deleuze in order to understand how to pray, but reads them in order to have a critical understanding of the structures of late capitalist ideology and society. With such a critical understanding, one can be better prepared to make astute criticisms, educate the proletariat about their mistakes, and offer ways forward. Sartre and Deleuze may not contribute to tradition as such, but they certainly can contribute to traditionalism, even if only through their strong critical apparatus.

Who built Thebes of the seven gates?
In the books you will find the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
And Babylon, many times demolished
Who raised it up so many times? In what houses
of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
Where, the evening that the Wall of China was finished
Did the masons go? Great Rome

³Guy Debord. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. by Ken Knabb. Rebel Press, 2005, p. 11.

Is full of triumphal arches. Who erected them? Over whom
Did the Caesars triumph? Had Byzantium, much praised in song
Only palaces for its inhabitants? Even in fabled Atlantis
The night the ocean engulfed it
The drowning still bawled for their slaves.⁴

We must read deeply and widely, including the Daoist canon, Gandhi, Aurobindo, Buddhadasa Bhikku, Shariati, Tolstoy, and Jacques Ellul. All of these figures lived a relatively simple lifestyle, and all were spiritual socialists, focused on creating a more just society. No government is inherently traditional. Even the best government can only foster tradition, whereas the worst governments sow the seeds of decadent materialism into their population's hearts. Capitalism and communism as existing are both poor governments in this regard. It is difficult for one to focus on the Absolute when one cannot find enough food to eat. One of the names of God in Islam is the *Just*. As the microcosm of the Divine, it is humanity's responsibility not only to follow spiritual principles, but to embody all of the attributes of God. As such, we should be just, merciful, and compassionate in all aspects of our lives, from our daily encounters at our workplace to the way we treat a bug we find in our homes. All living things are sacred, and all deserve to be treated with the respect due to a creation of something much higher than our minds can possibly comprehend.

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper's cry
Every black'ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear

⁴David Levine. *Reproducing Families: The Political Economy of English Population History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 6.

How the youthful Harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.⁵

References

- Blake, William. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Ed. by David V. Erdman. New York: Anchor Books, 1988.
- Camatte, Jacques. *The Wandering of Humanity*. Marxists Internet Archive. July 2012. URL: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/camate/wanhum/>.
- Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*. Trans. by Ken Knabb. Rebel Press, 2005.
- Gandhi, Mahatma. *The Communist Creed*. Gandhi Book Centre. July 2012. URL: <http://www.mkgandhi.org/momgandhi/chap52.htm>.
- Levine, David. *Reproducing Families: The Political Economy of English Population History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

⁵London William Blake. *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*. Ed. by David V. Erdman. New York: Anchor Books, 1988.