Chapter Three
Personalism: The Escape from Institutions

It's not going to be easy redefining who we are as human beings in this post-modern world.

Hillary Clinton

At mid-20th-century, the objective notions of moral goodness, human decency and personal responsibility that gave us guidance with the daily practice of our lives were grounded in the vestiges of a two-thousand-year-old moral and religious tradition of Judeo-Christianity and Classical antiquity. The forces of modernity have ground up the fragments of this tradition-based moral and religious framework. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that they have been swept away by post-World War II events, particularly by the Cultural Revolution in the West ushered in with the fractious and nihilistic 1960s.

In 1968, new-left radical and counter-culture impresario, Abbie Hoffman, published Revolution for the Hell of It, a title profoundly emblematic of the times and a prognostication of a new mentality. It was an exceptionally dreary and pathetic tract. However, this piece did showcase the author's one conspicuous dimension of talent—a flair for vulgarity and exhibitionism. This vulgarity would become the indelible signature of the 1960s counter-culture, an instrument consciously developed to attack "the establishment." The penchant for vulgarity percolated for a generation as the counter-culture began to exert its power.
Counter-culture vulgarity seeped into a post-war middle class that lay in the grip—soft though it was—of Victorian inhibitions still in place from the previous century. The vulgarity of the mass culture reached full blossom in the 1980s—succinctly expressed in the popular tee-shirt and scatological bumper sticker, “Shit Happens!” Indeed! It did happen—nearly everywhere. The “counter” part of the counter-culture was co-opted and commercialized, quickly absorbed as an essential, dominating component of an amusement ethos which scorned inhibition and restraint. The counter-culture in its early years was frisky and militantly self-indulgent, driven by aspirations of sexual liberation, the worship of youth, the disdain for work, and reckless, chemically-assisted self-expansion that turned into self-disintegration. In the late twentieth century it became the dominant culture where the only “downer” was disapproval itself.

A quick note of the careers of two men, about thirty years apart, gives some sense of how steep our descent into the swamps of vulgarity and scatology has been.

Lenny Bruce in the 1960s was repeatedly arrested and prosecuted for what local authorities judged to be the obscene and offensive material of his nightclub comedy routines. Bruce, to his fans and adulators, was a creative, free-spirited iconoclast, a rebel against the hypocrisies of middle-class American social life, a “victim” of the pruderies and sexual inhibitions hanging over from the 1950s. By the 1990s not a trace of them would remain.

Lenny Bruce as professional vulgarian gave way to movie star, entertainer, and political aspirant, Howard Stern. These, however, are challenging times for ambitious iconoclasts. There are few icons left that are not already in pieces. Nothing remains for Stern other than a seemingly persistent yearning to lower the level of coarseness and vulgarity and to soil his surroundings. Unlike thirty years ago, Stern faces no arrests, no proscription of any kind. He encounters no official resistance to the purveying of the obscenities he invents and delivers as “shock” amusement to millions over radio and television. Unlike Bruce who remains an early counter-culture hero and martyr, Stern is solidly “establishment.” He is a
steady fixture of the large and profitable “vulgarity” wing of the amusement industry which includes much of popular music, movies and television. His cable television talk show features “conversations” with guests that are far more lewd, debased and disgusting than any of the rather creative vignettes that got poor Lenny Bruce hauled before the local magistrates. He is particularly crude with women and appears to enjoy degrading them. Stern’s public performances are scenes, using Gibbon’s language to describe the profligacy of the degenerate emperor Commodus of the 2nd century A.D. in which are scorned “every restraint of nature or modesty.” While Bruce’s “offensive” comedy was confined to nightclubs frequented only by adults, Stern’s flows into millions of households via our main organ of cultural dissemination, television. Thus even our children can easily contemplate his unique contributions to the growing number of obscene and sexually debased programs that now pass for regular amusement and are generally regarded as normal fare. Only in a disintegrating society where values like honor, propriety, public decency and modesty are being completely emptied of all significance could a moral degenerate like Stern operate with no social impediments.

The 1960s introduced an era in which no experiments in perversity would be untested, no rituals of self-degradation would be considered unfit to proclaim as breakthroughs in amusement or as possible models for personal liberation or affirmation. Firmly in place by the 1980s were government agencies staffed by the culturally superior apparatchiks produced by the universities. They were installed to elevate the “appreciation of the arts” by the hoi polloi and advance other cultural imperatives. They handed out tax-payer subsidies to “artists” whose creative endeavors culminated in masterpieces like “Piss Christ”—a plastic crucifix placed in a jar of urine. For comparable State-sponsored acts of religious sacrilege, we have the example of the mad Roman emperor Caligula ordering his statue to be placed in the temple of Jerusalem so as to insult the Jews: but while the ancient Jews exploded in riot against this mindless religious desecration, modern Americans remained largely indifferent to this official soiling of their
religious heritage. The few “puritans” who voiced objections to the government subvention of the artistic march of progress were castigated by the elites as religious extremists, censors, and dangerous narrow minded enemies of “artistic freedom.”

Inhibition has been routed. Lest there be any doubt one simply need turn on the television. Daytime television talk shows have few limits placed on their presentation of perversity and are completely immersed in vulgarity. The dregs of the proles now parade across the studios. Obscenity-spewing freaks and degenerates make their way directly into the living rooms of millions of homes just in time for our children’s after school edification. Herein lies a culmination of our uninhibited quest for self-expression combined with a total eclipse of any standard of public decency. Television, our major amusement and information medium, has sunk itself lower than was ever imaginable even a short twenty years ago.

The title of Abbie Hoffman’s book still reverberates with the insipid nihilism that has subsequently seeped into so much of our current popular culture. The opening sentences of this semi-literate, antinomian manifesto illustrate a “mentality” of emptiness and shallowness.

Revolution for the hell of it? Why not? It’s all a bunch of phony words anyway. Once one has experienced LSD, existential revolution, fought the intellectual game playing of the individual in a society, of one’s identity, one realizes that action is the only reality; not only reality but morality as well. One learns reality only in a subjective experience. It exists in my head. I am the Revolution.¹

Spoken like someone locked in a permanently arrested stage of adolescence. Too much free time. Too many drug trips. Too much Herbert Marcuse and Che Guevara. Hoffman and his ilk were infected with a distinctive post-World War II affliction, a weird miasma of boredom, angst and delusional self-importance that plagued overindulged rich kids of the sixties who hung out at prestigious universities like Berkeley, Columbia, and the University of Wisconsin. In earlier times no one in any position of responsibility would have brooked this kind of
nonsense. Had Hoffman taken refuge for long in any of those “People’s Republics” ruled by the sorts of revolutionary gods to whom he paid ceaseless homage, his dope-ridden, self-indulgent anti-authoritarianism would have probably gotten him liquidated.

However, Hoffman hit his prime at the right time and the right place. Conventional restraints were falling away. The government was drafting scores of young men to fight in an increasingly unpopular and perplexing war that stimulated unprecedented youthful rebellion and defiance. In a society where television had come to dominate the presentation and interpretation of national and world events, student revolutionaries with their own unique talents for self-indulgence, obscenity and vandalism, made engrossing footage for the evening news. The protests and disruption of university campuses provided shock amusement for the incredulous middle class viewer. Hoffman and the others like him—mugging it up for news crews in search of the sensational story—acted out their fantasies of revolution. They played at radical politics, copulated indiscriminately, and gleefully annihilated with powerful recreational drugs any slight glimmers of reality that might have pressed in uninvited upon their horizons. Also, they engaged in copious self-congratulatory, self-righteous posturing declaring that they were “part of the solution rather than part of the problem.” This was the generation that would usher in a greed-free universal reign of peace, harmony, and love. Yet when these “Woodstock Nation” nihilists were done nothing of any lasting positive value survived—just a crude and vast affinity for immediate, chemically-assisted gratification and a legacy of self-indulgence. Sex, drugs, and rock ‘n’ roll. Hoffman’s subjectively defined revolution culminated for him with a very personal action, a suicide drug overdose at age fifty-two.

The stable boundaries of good and evil that were once in place have shifted, collapsed even, over the last fifty years. The 1950s mark the end of an era: the years that followed opened up many possibilities and expanded choices—copious sex, easy divorce, lots of dope, abortion on demand, and an explosion of
social pathologies. With the yin of the exploding pathologies came the yang of new therapies.

For the last four decades we have been carried briskly along in the steady expansion and acceleration of the phenomenon of personalism, a term coined and applied by the 1960s counter-culturalists themselves. Personalism is the quest for the liberation of the individual from constraints—those primarily which take shape in the development of social roles and conventions and in the submission to obligations imposed by traditional institutions. The church, the family, the school, all of these traditionally structured institutions have long been open to ideological attack because of their hierarchical structures and the significant role differentiation that flows out of them. Many of these role differentiations came to be regarded as obnoxious and intolerable because they supported many social relationships that were definitely unequal. These institutions and the hierarchies they encompassed have been transformed, dismantled in some cases, over the last forty years by personalist ideology put into action.

Theodore Roszak’s popular paean to the radicalism of the 1960s, *The Making of a Counter Culture*, stresses correctly the personalist features characteristic of the many varieties of what came to be a religion of dissent that were practiced during that time.² Many of them were identified with the New Left, the political vanguard of the social revolution of early 1960s.

The underlying unity of these differing styles of dissent is revealed by the extraordinary personalism that has characterized New Left activism since its beginnings.... By and large, most New Left groups have refused to allow doctrinal logic to obscure or displace an irreducible element of tenderness in their politicking.³

This personalism that Roszak sees as so characteristic of the counter culture is all of a piece with his observation of the refusal of the 1960s radicals to be bound by any “doctrinal logic” or logic, period. Unlike their 1930s radical, leftist predecessors who were steeped in Marxist dialectic and artfully interpreted the major events of the times with it, these post World War-II enemies of capitalism and bourgeoisie morals were more inclined toward group sex, campus vandalism,
trips on LSD, and slogans. They preferred to be free of discipline, rules or "doctrine" of any kind.

Comically emblematic of this deep difference in radicalism between the generations was an event in New York City in 1970 featuring the aged German-born leftist philosopher, Herbert Marcuse, who was addressing the Socialist Scholars Conference. Abbie Hoffman crashed the convention and, dressed as a cowboy replete with cap pistols, presented Marcuse with a joint. Forget the theory ("doctrinal logic" in Roszak's terms) and get on with the self-indulgence, it would seem, was the point of Hoffman's stunt. Adds Roszak,

> For most of the New Left there has ultimately been no more worth or cogency in any ideology than a person lends it by virtue of his own action: personal commitments, not abstract ideas, are the stuff of politics.

Personal commitments indeed—the political was to become indistinguishable from the personal. The New Left was probably unique in the depth of its subjectivity. Roszak here merely echoes the notes from Hoffman's pied piper's tune of moral solipsism cited above, and it is easy to understand in retrospect why whatever serious political inclinations or aspirations that might have energized the New Left quickly dissipated in the 1970s. The natural, predictable political trajectory of a mentality which focuses so exclusively on the self ("I am the revolution", "the revolution is in my head", etc.) is not likely to be a movement which achieves its aspirations in a political revolution or coup and the toppling of governments (Lenin and Mao never touted this kind of "tender" solipsism), but rather in "creative" self-indulgence. The ultimate destiny of the sixties American radical—fortunately, perhaps, for most of us—was not to be the triumphant head of a "People's Republic," like Leon Trotsky at the Kronstadt naval yards rounding up and shooting doubters and dissenters, but rather to be soaking in the hot tubs at the Esalen Institute in San Francisco exploring the psyche, or growing chemical-free vegetables and protesting at nuclear power plants, or pitching paint on the fur coats of rich women. The revolution brought by the sixties, subjective and personal to its core, was cultural rather than overtly
Political protesting and psychic exploration in various forms have been intertwined since the sixties. They are complementary activities. Also, they combine the powerful impulses of self-assertion, under a confused impulse of fanatical moralism, with the quest for amusement. One's political protest action "makes a statement" that gives vent to strong personal feelings and opinions, and the protest event itself becomes an opportunity for diversion, providing escape from the routines and conventions that impose order and make social life boring and predictable. Observing the confusion and the disarray that results from the disruption can be exciting and fun, particularly if one can contemplate it in the grip of an aggrieved sense of moral superiority. Many of the protests of the 1960s had a bacchanalian component.

The growing number of Hollywood celebrities who have become political "activists" illustrates the growing cultural pervasion of amusement. Celebrityhood carries with it the privilege of being taken seriously as a social and political critic. Politics is merely one more venue into which the "self" can be projected as an act of personal expression.

Jane Fonda's long career is emblematic of what is now a fairly common phenomenon—the "political activist" actor/actress. An extraordinarily talented actress, in her youth she did glamour roles in the movies and played the hip-radical in her spare time. Later she became a successful capitalist mogul and reigned over an aerobics empire, selling millions of aerobic exercise and diet books and videos. She shuffled off her aging and increasingly unglamorous, boy-radical husband for an egotistical news-amusement colossus. Such was the career of a radical entrepreneur—from cavorting on camera, cheerleading for the North Vietnamese during the Vietnam war in Hanoi in the sixties, to doing the tomahawk chop at the Braves games during the World Series in the nineties—she always looked sleek and fit. No one could deny it. This was probably the natural course of self-exploration that a thoughtful observer might have predicted for a high-profile 1960s radical, a perfect narcissistic blend of celebrity politics, old-
fashioned hustling and self-aggrandizement. The only consistency in any of the many businesses and adventures was the pursuit and exaltation of the self. To find that “irreducible element of tenderness” of Roszak would require a microscope of infinite power.

The personalist evinces a faith in an unbounded abstraction known as progress. This faith is conjoined with limitless confidence in the personalist’s own moral predilections and interior vibrations which he believes are far superior to those held by his predecessors. For the personalist the future is the moral promised-land of self-fulfillment and self-realization, if and only if the constraints and benighted practices of the past can be discarded or undone. Inherent in personalism is a persistent, dominating aim: to escape the limits of traditional institutions and conventions. The ties of these institutions to the past taint them with the ignorance, the irrationality and the repressive and freedom-limiting features that plagued our less enlightened ancestors. Personalism strives to break profoundly with the morality and norms of the past and offers a radically different conception of human aspiration and obligation. Historian and adulator of the “spirit of the sixties,” James J. Farrell, in a chapter entitled “Counter-cultural Personalism,” describes what he calls the “ethical core” of counter-culture personalism.

Focusing on the inherent value of persons, and distancing themselves from an authoritarian state and a capitalist economy, people in the counter-culture criticized the impersonal institutions of American society, and created communitarian enclaves that prefigured the social and political order they hoped for. There is, unfortunately, little of substance to extract from this ethical core other than the adolescent-sounding declamation against the repressiveness of “authoritarian” institutions and the ritualized castigation of capitalism. It is difficult to see, as noted above, that anything unique or constructive survived the introspection and the rebellion, so one is at loss to say exactly what moral or ethical achievements they “prefigured.” The communitarian enclaves seemed to be little more than temporary escapes and came to nothing. The criticism of the
"impersonality" of the capitalist-driven American institutions is strikingly naive and ignorant given the evidence that was coming out, even during the 1960s and 1970s, of the effects of the massive, faceless impersonal bureaucracies created by the socialist people's republics in Eastern Europe, China, and elsewhere. Gifted writers and heroic truth tellers from the Soviet block like Alexander Solzehnitsyn and Milovan Djilas exposed the hypocrisy of the twentieth-century revolutionaries and helped us understand the desolation that emerged from the systematic efforts to dismantle the old order and to create a "new man." Yet somehow "redefining" ourselves as human beings is, as Hillary Clinton seems to suggest above, the daunting moral project for post modern Americans.

One significant effect of personalism's advance over the last forty years is the alteration of our view of the possibilities of self-perfection and our regard for traditional institutions. Whether we believe that human beings are irrevocably flawed and imperfect or are temporarily impaired, primarily by ignorance, but possess the potential for limitless self-perfection, has enormous implications for how we live. Writes historian Richard Pipes:

Until the seventeenth century, the immutability of man's 'being' was an unquestioned postulate of all philosophic thought, both in the West and in the East. It was considered a mark of folly to believe otherwise.7

This philosophical postulate has been overthrown—a casualty of a modern "progressive" view of human nature. Recreating and reinventing ourselves involves starting fresh and anew. We now conceive of ourselves as creatures with unlimited potential for self-realization and self-discovery. Tradition, blind and ignorant, places heavy constraints upon us. These constraints prevent us from realizing our true human potential—they are de-humanizing. With the past so conceived, our energies should be concentrated on escaping, evading, or best, overthrowing those benighted constraints imposed by tradition and creating less repressive, more humane institutions. This is no small point. The notion of human perfectibility and the primacy of self-realization have exerted an increasingly stronger force over the last two hundred years both in the unfolding of political
history in the West and in the development of Western social and political institutions. They are also, as we will see in the following chapter, instrumental in the creation of a therapeutic approach to morality. To understand the appeal of personalism, however, we must speak of its historical origins and its incorporation into our modern, contemporary perspective.

II

The Swiss-born, vagabond-philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau is the originator of personalist thought and may be the most influential individual of modern times to theorize about the human social condition. In order to understand personalism, one must at some point encounter Rousseau—for his life and thought remain its embodiment. In fact, Rousseau with his enmity for social tradition and his passion for social equality is still, two-hundred and twenty years after his death, the most important precursor of late-twentieth-century political and social thinking and, one should add, of emotion and attitude.

Rousseau’s life was tumultuous. To his successors he bequeathed an ever mounting enthusiasm for the ideology of social equality, an enthusiasm fused with a heightened sense of his own moral superiority. His notion of the human condition—sufficiently radical during his time to warrant official proscription—has gradually but inevitably wended its course, first capturing the hearts of visionaries and revolutionaries, and utopian intellectuals (Rousseau was one of the French-educated Pol Pot’s favorite writers8), impressing the enlightened elite, and finally insinuating itself into the popular consciousness and firmly entrenching itself there. This path has been traced in a controversial book by J. D. Talmon, The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy. Social equality is an essential element of the personalist outlook. It is now an unquestioned article of faith of the modern mass culture. We are all in our late-twentieth-century pursuit of self-discovery and acclamation of equality, one might say, Rousseans now. The truth of this and its far reaching significance for our mode of living becomes apparent as we proceed.

Rousseau was a lonely, tormented, pathetically insecure man who spent
his later years fleeing the authorities who sought to punish him for his subversive ideas on politics, religion and education. The life of this petulant, self-taught genius remains a fascinating study in itself of perpetual maladjustment and unhappiness. In many ways Rousseau's career is personally emblematic of the myriad forms of modern social alienation. Rousseau's own personal history, brilliantly recreated in his Confessions, is a prolix but artful piece of self-dramatization and self-invention. It is a fascinating and absorbing personal document. Indeed, Confessions established itself as a prototype of our modern confessional motif in its prideful shamelessness and uninhibited self-revelations of short-comings of character, particularly of sexual perversity. Rousseau claimed that this confessional document was a daring and unprecedented piece of work. "I have resolved on an enterprise," writes Rousseau in his opening sentence, "which has no precedent, and which, once complete, will have no imitator." About the lack of precedent he was probably right; but about the imitators, he was certainly wrong.

I had always been amused at Montaigne's false ingenuousness, and at his pretence of confessing his faults while taking good care only to admit to likeable ones.... I knew that I was represented in the world under features so unlike my own and at times so distorted, that notwithstanding my faults, none of which I intended to pass over, I could not help showing myself as I was. Besides, this could not be done without showing other people as they were, and consequently the work could only appear after my death and that of many others.

There is so much unintended irony in this, particularly in his smuggling in the self-congratulatory advertisement that "I could not help showing myself as I was." He could not indeed! The "honesty" and genuineness which Rousseau invented and boastfully introduced to the world was not the kind that consists of adherence to principle—keeping one's promises, honoring commitments, following the rules—but rather one which has many modern imitators and which consists in emotional evacuation and sensation-producing soul-baring. Indeed, it is an honesty fundamentally connected with strong emotions (Rousseau speaks often about his deep, intense emotionality) and the constant need to self-ventilate. It is
measured by the willingness to express deep intimate feelings—to revolt (an increasingly important and exalted modern social activity) against the hypocrisies of social conventions, such as politeness, which requires at times dissimulation or artificiality.

This emotive-based honesty of personal self-disclosure became the prototype of conduct that is now a part of the common routines of our modern twenty-first century amusement state. Shameless self-exposure is one of the driving, pervasive forces of our modern, secularized confession-rituals: the emotional, soul-baring dialogues of the encounter groups; the self-revelations of vulnerability and wounded self-esteem extracted from the sensitivity training sessions; and the emotional self-surrender demanded by the facilitators of group therapy and recovery group meetings. Self-exposure, even of the most intimate variety, is also an essential, dynamic element of our amusement culture which is geared toward the exploration of the intimate details of the lives of the celebrities who are our objects of adulation and our sources of amusement.

Carl Rogers in one of the most popular books ever written on psychotherapy, *On Becoming a Person*, made the honesty of self-revelation the linchpin of his self-ameliorating psychotherapy. Rogers follows faithfully in the tradition of Rousseau. Essential to the success of the highly acclaimed Rogerian therapy was the initiation of a liberating process of repudiating or discarding conventional roles. Liberation, for an individual, was achieved by dropping “the false fronts, or the masks, or the roles, with which he has faced life. He appears to be trying to discover something more basic, something more truly himself.” The socialized self for Rogers, as it was for Rousseau, is the problem. Those elements of socialization regarded by some as part of a civilized order are too often oppressive, pieces of disingenuousness, a pastiche of roles that one discovers others have constructed and foisted upon him or her. Says Rogers,

One young woman student describes in a counseling interview one of the masks she has been using, and how uncertain she is whether underneath this appeasing, ingratiating front there is any real self with convictions.
The "real self" lies buried and suffocating beneath a false presentation by an over-socialized, convention-bound creature.

Rousseau invented a form of honesty marked by an appeal to voyeurism: it is a measure of one's willingness to engage in self-exposure and self-disclosure. In its fullness it is devoid of inhibition and shyness. Honesty of this sort, as we often hear it lauded today—particularly in the context of moral or artistic struggles—often comes qualified with terms like "brutally" or "ruthlessly" (e.g., "a brutally honest portrayal"), usually referring to the willingness of someone to delineate upon or dramatize some unsavory, perverted, or base aspect of their own character or personality, as well as to reveal the details of intimate private moments of their friends and family. Honesty in this context also thus comprehends the betrayal of friendship and intimacies. (In defense of Rousseau, he at least arranged to delay the publication of his confessions until most of those whom he told on were dead.) Thus, these qualifiers have an unintended ironic significance. They suggest how devoid of decency and integrity the confessor really is—brutality and ruthlessness in fact are the salient qualities of the confessor's character. The confession is another piece of shameless self-indulgence.

Rousseau's late twentieth-century confessional imitators are in great abundance. In fact they have come upon us in a deluge—aroused by the smell of profit—and they possess not a modicum of their master's insight, originality, or talent. They are happy to take the money and rat on their friends, families, and associates while they are still alive. They tend to be celebrities of various stripes—movie stars, politicians, sports figures—who, before descending into oblivion, attempt to parlay their feckless moments of fame or notoriety into cash. Assisted by ghost writers or television talk-show hosts, they "tell all" which usually amounts to a compilation of sordid anecdotes and shameless rationalizations with some sufficiently lurid details from the encounters with those whom they screwed—literally as well as figuratively, often in great abundance—and why all the rotten things they did are really someone else's fault, and why we
should in complete defiance of any standard of decency or reasonableness somehow still think fondly of them or even think of them at all.

Incapable of forming normal, stable attachments to others—Rousseau trundled the five children he fathered with his mistress Therese off to a state foundling hospital. Nevertheless, this “philosopher of human misery,” as the intellectual historian Judith Shklar has called him, was a brilliant and compelling thinker. He created a highly influential and empathetic view of human beings and human society which became the ideological driving force of the French Revolution that began some twelve years after his death. The enthronement of equality by the French revolutionaries, the subsequent enthusiasm for it by our own social theorists, and its ultimate achievement of moral orthodoxy in our own time is in great part the legacy of J. J. Rousseau. Rousseau’s famous oracular pronouncement that opened his famous political work, *On Social Contract*, “Man is born free but everywhere is in chains” is emblematic of a view of the human condition that conceives of human beings as naturally good and benevolent, confronting a society that represses that natural goodness, corrupts the spontaneous benevolence of the individual, and ultimately ruins his happiness. Self-righteous victimhood, one of the predominant themes that drifted out in the turbulent ideological wake of Rousseau’s political and social philosophy, is now a valuable sociological commodity, peddled to the masses by the organs of our mass culture with a marketing language developed and refined by the illuminati from our best universities. Rousseau’s name is unforgettably linked to his philosophical fascination with, and elucidation of, the “noble savage,” pristine man, without the corruptive, inhibiting influences of society.

Rousseau’s social thinking challenged a concept in the West that was at least as old as Aristotle: man by nature was a social and political animal. Social and political institutions were necessary, primarily for coping with the perennial shortcomings and imperfections of human beings. This traditional view in both its classical and Christian manifestations saw human society as a web of potentially supporting institutions, the chief value of which was to offset the naturally
egoistic, overreaching tendency of individual human beings. The development of social institutions and the growth of civilization were fundamentally humanizing endeavors as they provided the tools to soften or attenuate the egoism and constrain the inevitable tendencies for self-destructive overreaching. Without restraints, powerful restraints, human associations present innumerable paths of unimpeded descent into destructive chaos. Laws, morals, rules of etiquette, the art of discipline are, all of them, imperfect but useful social inventions. The pre-Roussean view of civilization and social morality was, to put it somewhat crudely and over-simply, a theory of “containment,” containment, somehow, of a natural and perennial human egotism and selfishness.

The insistence of Rousseau on the reality of an innate, natural human goodness and the inherent repressiveness of traditional institutions with their entrenchment of inequalities was, however, an exquisite creation of a proto-modern mind. Rousseau was a thinker far ahead of his time. His ideas were destined to be an energizing ideological force with unlimited potential for the production of intellectual resentment—raw, festering, and intense—as the inequalities come into view, and for the launching of total political revolution. For the Roussean, the gross disparities, the innumerable inequalities, the invidious comparisons that one inevitably finds separating human beings are the work of inherently corrupt social forces. Truly creative, humanizing work expresses itself in the undoing of the inequality and injustice ruthlessly established and cruelly perpetuated by the agents of social institutions. “Liberty, fraternity, equality,” the famous slogan of the French Revolution, emanated from those whom Thomas Carlyle called “eleutheromanics,” philosophers infected with a passion for freedom that was akin to madness. Our own Thomas Jefferson was by some accounts much infected by this French “disease.” The slogan captures the spirit of Rousseau’s profound opposition to and revulsion with the old order and led to the call to overthrow the hated Ancient Regime ruled by a hierarchy of a king, aristocrats and priests, agents of temporal and spiritual tyranny. The passion expressed by the slogan became a fundamental enthusiasm of modernity that
would be translated into revolutionary programs designed to carry out the smashing of the old orders. The throne and the cross were the most obvious symbols of oppression for the French revolutionaries, corruption and immorality—the last priest was to be strangled with the entrails of the last king.

Here, late in the eighteenth century, was the terrible birth of total revolution, a new, totally modern phenomenon. Total revolution would become a large part of the twentieth century’s legacy of mass murder and systematic enslavement. One of the great ironies of Rousseau is that his reaction against the crushing of the authentic self by a false and hypocritical society unleashed a subjective and emotive orientation steeped in self-righteous resentment that has only increased the alienation associated with modern life.

Though an eighteenth-century philosopher, Rousseau’s view of human nature and the relation of the individual to the community has flowered in a powerful, infectious ideology which dominates the social thinking of the West in the early-twenty-first century. Rousseau’s passionate theorizing has become a familiar underpinning of our contemporary efforts at social critique. It inverts the traditional conception of individual-to-institutional relationship. In both the traditional conception, and the modern inverted version, the theme of constraint vigorously asserts itself—the radically different interpretation of its role and effects creates this all important inversion.

With the containment view of civilization, constraint is understood to be an inevitably necessary evil because of the persistence of human egoism, which has never been naturally self-limiting or self-policing and which remains a perennial centrifugal force on human association. Egoism always lurks, and unchecked or un-moderated it threatens to pull almost every kind of human community and association—large or small—into pieces. Institutions are by their nature rule-creating and rule-enforcing social entities that take the rough edges off of human beings and make social life possible—at some costs (as Freud argued). The costs are much greater in some societies than in others. The constraints may take a terrible toll. To the extent that a civilization progresses, the toll diminishes.
The underlying assumption, though, is that human beings are fundamental and irremediably flawed—hence always the need for containment. For Christianity that flaw is expressed in the notion of sinfulness. An institution that makes the assumption of some inherent imperfection—sinfulness, or weakness, or similar notions of that sort—must develop and reform with that imperfection in view. The containment view imposes upon us an abiding humility. Institutions should develop so as to compensate for a natural human vulnerability and a propensity to self-preference and self-exemption from the rules that limit our tendencies to overreach. The constraints are supposed to be ameliorating and constructive. The great seventeenth-century political philosopher, monarchist and theorist of power, Thomas Hobbes, put it artfully with a metaphor of optics.

For all men are by nature provided of notable multiplying glasses, (that is their passions and self-love,) through which, every little payment appeareth a great grievance; but are destitute of those prospective glasses, (namely moral and civil science,) to see a far off the miseries that hang over them, and cannot without such payments be avoided.14

With the inverted modern version, constraints (Hobbes’s “prospective glasses” of “moral and civil science”) are not a necessary instrument of social stability. (For Hobbes, misery of the worst sort is the consequence of the failure of constraint.) Instead, constraints have come to be viewed and resented as the embodiment of something quite nefarious—engines of social exploitation and sources of social inequality. The reason for this is that the constraints, the laws, rules and norms that are in effect in society may in their abstract form appear to be necessary or fair or reasonable. But constraints, alas, are ultimately linked to constrainers, to individuals—real people hiding behind the abstractions—who enjoy the benefits that accrue from their socially or politically advantaged positions, while avoiding the constraints themselves—gross hypocrisy at the core, always! This is most certainly the view of Rousseau and of all his ideological progeny; it is a seductive, troubling perspective that has traveled for over two hundred years far and well into the twenty-first century.

Institutions, upon the careful critical scrutiny of the Rousseau-inspired
Personalism: The Escape From Institutions

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critic, emerge as surreptitiously coercive human organizations. Though they may initially establish themselves through open force, they do not perpetuate themselves by naked coercion, but by means of authority perceived to be natural. Institutions are sustained by belief-systems, ideologies, if you will, in which lie much of an institution’s power and efficacy. The strength and credibility of an institution depends heavily upon its believability, that is, whether its representatives are thought to deserve to hold and exercise the power they actually do. Authority rests upon respectful opinion, a belief in the legitimacy of the institution. It is more than simply the threat of or the application of power: a gunman after your money, thrusting his Luger under your chin, threatens and exerts for the moment a terrible power over you; but he has not a shred of authority and certainly commands from you no respect. Respect creates authority, confers credibility upon institutions and their representatives, and legitimates their power. For institutions to endure, their representatives must be accorded respect. That is why one of the best ways to attack an institution is to undermine and erode its respect, and hence the authority and ultimately the legitimacy of its representatives.

Aristocratic authority and power were illegitimate in the eyes of Rousseau. Whatever respect there was for the ruling class was fraudulent and undeserved. Rousseau’s oracular proclamation that “Man is born free but is everywhere in chains” is deliberately ironic and deeply provocative. It represents the core of Rousseau’s subversive sentiments and suggests the orientation of his theorizing—the instruments of civilization, ironically, are the instruments of oppression. The authority behind the civilized structures of authority is fraudulent, deserving of repudiation.

Delegitimization remains the serious business of our own intellectual elites who follow Rousseau’s call to expose the illegitimacy of the old order. Their motto is écraser l’infame. Their vocation is the systematic dismantling of traditional institutions. These institutions reveal their moral bankruptcy and their origins in the corrupted exercise of power. The Rousseans proceed by attacking
the hypocrisy of the institutions, by showing that the ideals of the institutions—"life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness," as stated in our own Declaration of Independence, for example—are belied by historical practices that exclude all but a select few from the enjoyment of the institution's benefits. No critique of an institution renders a more withering and morally deflating verdict than when it exposes a base hypocrisy; and no institutions exist without hypocrites. Delegitimation springs from basic impulses of personalism. It proceeds with the moralistic cry of *J'accuse.* The moral prosecutors are everywhere, examining everything, finding grievances and filing their briefs: many institutions now in defensive, apologetic postures typically find themselves accused of pervasive, systemic forms of collective culpability. The practitioners of *J'accuse* are full of the deepest and most enduring forms of resentment.

Ronald Takaki is one of the more articulate masters of delegitimization. His work on American history is a first rate example of this type of activity in late twentieth-century America. Takaki's America was and is a brutal place run by ruthless, morally defective hypocrites. He sees racism as a pervasive feature of modern America and as the malignant legacy of the country's founders. Takaki's aim is to expose the fundamental iniquity and hypocrisy at the base of American institutions revealed in the lives of its "great" men.

The American Revolution for Americans long has been understood as the embodiment of a noble quest for liberty and self governance. The colonists, against remarkable odds, threw off a tyrannical king, separated themselves from a world empire, established a limited, republican form of government—unique to the world—and most importantly, set the foundations for a society that abolished privilege and committed itself to the rule of law and the ideals of freedom and opportunity. The men who laid these foundations and articulated the ideals, for all of their imperfections, were of heroic stature, men of character and immense historical understanding and insight who had the wisdom to create great and enduring political institutions.

The American Revolution set the stage for the acculturation of republican
virtue, which was supposed to shape the character of a people such that they were fit to rule themselves. This ideal of self-rule was not just political but moral as well. Republican virtue was the guarantee of freedom.

All of this for Takaki is a self-serving fabrication. Behind Republican virtue was an ideology that unleashed a voracious capitalism, which was particularly cruel in its dehumanization of non-white peoples. For moral excavators like Takaki, archetype republicans, like Thomas Jefferson, were in fact pathologically divided human beings (men whose lives reveal a terrible "fragmentation of self"). Fearful of normal passions and of the sensual dimension of the self, they projected their self-hatred onto non-white peoples. Their constricted visions of what civilized human beings should be like and their dehumanized recreations of people different than themselves would be translated into practices which would bring about the most ruthless treatment of Blacks and Indians. ¹⁵

Republican ascetic self-control and individualism isolated people from each other and helped to make possible the ascendancy of bureaucratic corporate capitalism; both, in turn, in their domination of the instinctual life and their denial of human completeness generated the discontent and rage which gave power to the demonic 'iron cage'. ¹⁶

The real American history of Republican virtue at its core unfolds as a history of capitalist oppression by self-hating, puritanical, avaricious white Europeans over people of color. This self-hatred was projected onto Native Americans and African Americans with the most ferocious consequences. Those founders who resisted and overthrew British rule and built the republic were not admirable at all and worse than flawed; they had fewer moral and humane qualities than those they resisted.

All of Takaki's representative American figures—Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Rush, Andrew Jackson, and George Custer—appear as classic degenerates, sexually twisted and driven by dark obsessions and profound psychological weakness. ¹⁷

Thus, for Takaki, by demonstrating the complete corruption of personality and
character of those historical figures who have been held up as exemplary, the history and value of those institutions they shaped significantly changes.

Takaki’s delegitimization of American history is emblematic of the broad sweeping condemnation routinely performed by our intellectual class. As the outrage against the old order intensifies, the corrupted, reactionary modes of thinking and the offensive practices that have produced the oppression become more apparent, pervasive and egregious. The condemnation rendered is terrible because it is provoked by the discovery and contemplation of injustices that have been long sustained, and are particularly gruesome in their dimensions of brutality, hatefulness and inhumanity. Consider, as another, even more sweeping example of condemnation Susan Brownmiller’s declamation about men-women relations in her work, Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape, was a widely read and much discussed book in the mid-1970s.

Man’s discovery that his genitalia could serve as a weapon to generate fear must rank as one of the most important discoveries of prehistoric times, along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe. From prehistoric times to the present, I believe, rape has played a critical function. It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear.  

Here is a monumental display of “grievance-inflation,” a key part of the J’ accuse strategy of our present day Jacobins. Grievance inflation transforms a particular kind of crime or evil piece of conduct into a primal or central event, a pivotally defining factor in human relations, an interpretive key to unlock understanding of the exploitative processes at work in world history. Rape, therefore, is not simply one of many terrible crimes that some individuals over the course of history have committed against others. Rape is not, in Brownmiller’s characterization, even an act of an uncivilized man (she puts it in the category of technological innovation, a curious Roussean interpretation of sorts). Rape down through history is the favorite handyman’s tool for building and keeping the civilized house in order—his house and his order—a powerful instrument of oppression that all men use against all women—by design, that is, it is “a conscious process.” All men, in
what must be some fundamental, insidious way, are rapists, at least potentially. Rape, as Brownmiller insists, is at the cold-dead center from where all male-female relationships originate and ultimately develop into social reality. The practice of rape is historically pervasive and absolutely definitive of the character of men and the power they have always collectively exerted over women.

Catherine MacKinnon puts it in a similar vein but adds an explicit political dimension that makes rape an even more sinister and conspiratorial phenomenon.

In feminist analysis, a rape is not an isolated event or moral transgression or individual interchange gone wrong but an act of terrorism and torture within a systemic context of group subjection, like lynching.¹⁹

Just as the Stalinist mode of social explanation typically began with...“It is no accident that...”", meaning that there were always capitalists somehow operating behind any scene of human misfortune conniving and manipulating, so in the MacKinnon-feminist interpretation of social reality, there are always men with institutional power plotting in camera to demean and degrade women and to perpetuate their status of subjugation—rape is just one of the many strategies of domination and exploitation. The evil in an act of rape cannot be understood simply as the reprehensible work of a corrupted human being, an assault by one person upon another, deserving of harsh condemnation and the severest punishment: it is rather a collective and “systemic” evil intrinsically linked to a social order and power structure that is fundamentally at fault, and egregiously so.

As an “act of terrorism,” rape for MacKinnon must be ultimately a political act. Behind rape there lurks a collective will that employs “torture,” violence in its ultimacy, to execute a broad social purpose, the imposition of an insurmountable group domination, a domination of gender. Rape as a violent act is thus to be compared with lynching. It is a comparison that has potential for the creation of some very powerful sociologically-based condemnations. Women in this society, to follow the theory carefully, have a social status accompanied by modes of degradation and oppression analogous to those suffered by American Blacks under the worst periods of apartheid or Jim Crow. This degraded social
status is not just a mark of the past: it is a condition of the present. For MacKinnon, as for Brownmiller, all men are engaged in a dark, collusive effort to exert social control over women by whatever means it takes, including systematic violence and the crime of rape.

From the degradation of women to the relations of race in America, the sweeping condemnation is no less severe. This consummate expression of the most “violent indignation” comes from the mid-twentieth-century America-despising, French intellectual, Albert Memmi. Memmi explicates James Baldwin’s view of racism in the United States with the most reprehensible possibilities and calamitous predictions.

There is no reason why Americans should not one day attempt against their blacks what the Germans, another white, Christian nation, attempted against the Jews. Once again the reader is bound to protest when he reads this pitiless indictment. I believe, on the contrary, that Baldwin had glimpsed here a terrifying truth: just as pogroms were no accident in Jewish history, but the sign of an endemic disease, exacerbated and coming to a head, so lynchings, hangings and bonfires are the final explosion of true sentiments of the white man with regard to the black man.20

Just as all men are rapists in some basic way for Brownmiller and MacKinnon, all American whites for Memmi are murderously hateful of their fellow Black countrymen. There is “no reason” Memmi knows why American Blacks do not meet the same dolorous, collective fate as the European Jews did under Hitler and the Obermenschen of the SS. Memmi, like MacKinnon, plays the “it is no accident” Stalinist. What clever dishonesty. The American racial holocaust never happened, and never will. The “lynchings, hangings and bonfires” were not the “final explosion of true sentiments of the white man” but rather the dying gasp of American segregation.

But Memmi’s “there is no reason” creates the implication of an ever present potential for genocide. The system itself is unfixable and should be overthrown—revolution, the twentieth-century remedy for all of our social ills. Memmi sees nothing redeemable in the American character and American
institutions, nothing that might help us understand why the gas chamber-showers have not yet been built and put into twenty-four-hour-a-day production. The slim moral difference between the Nazis and the American whites for Memmi is that the former actually carried out the mass killings—yet genocide lives and thrives in the hearts of both groups. The two essential elements for carrying out a “final solution” are in place on both sides of the ocean—being white and being Christian. And to make certain that no one falls prey to any false or naive optimism and supposes that the intense hatred and bigotry so identified might some day abate, Memmi does not hesitate to affix the familiar pestilence metaphor, “endemic disease” to the whole business. Thus he overlays with great heaviness a particularly ominous and hopeless tone upon this horrible description of America’s worst malignancy.

American intellectuals are also on record in the production of this sort of self-loathing: Susan Sontag in 1966 had said that “the white race is the cancer of history.” This radical and racist moral pronouncement, of course, was offered up before the non-white, non-Christian Pol Pot carried out the ideologically-motivated mass murder of his countrymen—wiping out a percentage of the population of a nation unprecedented in history, and before the non-white Hutus were committing acts of genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, but well after the non-Christian Stalin had murdered tens of millions of people in Eastern Europe and the non-Christian Turks had murdered hundreds of thousands of Christian Armenians. Such sweeping, categorical judgments, as we see above with the likes of Takaki, Brownmiller, MacKinnon, Memmi and Sontag, are neither provable nor dis-provable: they are, in my view, more akin to articles or tenets of a powerful religious faith, one albeit that overflows with the most intense, bitter emotion and the deepest conviction.

Bitter and implacable resentment fueled by the imagery of persecution and personal violation lies beneath these kinds of denunciations. It is this sort of impassioned, embittered definition of self, engulfed in a suffering that others plan and maliciously perpetuate, that attempts to convict the institutions of the most
egregious crimes, and that sees in them nothing but oppression, exploitation and criminality.

Once accused, the institution itself becomes an object of unappeasable, relentless execration and assault. Once convicted, the institution finds itself undergoing a transformation in its character. It becomes virtually unrecognizable. The language and accusations, as we see above, do nothing but execrate and condemn. They point to what Matthew Arnold in an earlier age called “the ways of Jacobinism.” His words remain a perfect description of this late-twentieth-century phenomenon. These “ways” are a

violent indignation with the past, abstract systems of renovation applied wholesale, a new doctrine drawn up in black and white for elaborating down to the smallest details a rational society for the future.22

Special note should be made of just how “violent” this indignation with the past” really is. Traditional institutions are, upon the critical scrutiny of the above de-legitimizers, arbitrarily-established orders of inequality. This is in spite of any rhetoric of legitimacy that presents them as natural or inevitable. Institutions protect the interests of some, usually the few, to the detriment of the well-being and happiness of others, the many.

The task of uncovering the surreptitiously coercive character of traditional institutions has become a regular occupation, indeed a profession with a unique social-occupational role taken up and expanded by our intellectual class. Intellectuals, another group of specialists bequeathed by late modernity, specialize in the invention and refinement of “social critique”: they design and wield the theoretical apparatuses for exposing the unjust and coercive character of traditional institutions that might be hidden away, as we have seen with the above examples. They are the vanguard of what Lionel Trilling has called the “adversary culture.”

Any historian of the literature of the modern age will take virtually for granted the adversary intention, the actually subversive intention, that characterizes modern writing—he will perceive its clear purpose of detaching the reader from the habits of thought
and feeling that the larger culture imposes, of giving him a ground
and a vantage point from which to judge and condemn, and
perhaps revise, the culture that produced him. 23

The intellectual specializes in the discovery and articulation of grievances and, as
Richard Pipes has pointed out, unlike people generally, tends to conceive of
grievances as pervasive, universal, and on a grand scale, rather than specific and
limited. Modern revolutionaries, like Lenin, Hitler and Mao, have always spoken
in the most violent of ways of the old order, of “destroying” it, “smashing” it or
“sweeping” it away, including its representatives. The violence of language has
always been followed by an even greater violence in practice. The old order, its
authority and its works, have to be cleared away, like so much rubbish, and a
brand new one, free from any of the corruptive elements of the past, should be put
in its place. 24 Many of the crimes against humanity committed in the twentieth
century by the likes of Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot were atrocities that were
justified under moral abstractions, the products of fierce intellectual hatred and
revulsion with the status quo. The “intellectual” aspect of the intellectual hatred
helped to create the rationalizations for the acts of wiping out millions of people
connected with or in any way representing the status quo.

Rousseau was the intellectual’s intellectual. As the philosopher of misery
and the original theorist of socially determined victimhood, he cast the original
molds for the production of the “socially conscious” moralist. These were the
theorists, richly infused with the indignation that the contemplation of social
misery arouses, and the revolutionary—Lenin, Mao, Castro, Pol Pot, who could
fan the white-hot coals of long-smoldering moral outrage into the blazing fires of
an ideological conflagration. Liberation is the intellectual’s elixir. Alienated and
detached from his own institutions, impressed with his own infallible moral
insights, he remains the solidly self-righteous, resentful agent of social
insurrection.

Liberation has been an ideological chimera in constant expansion
throughout the twentieth century. The quests of liberation cover an extraordinary
range—self-realization, authenticity, rights for animals, saving the earth. Whatever these causes or programs of liberation are, they are held to be ultimately and fully self-justifying. They sanctify the personalities and characters of the individuals who embrace them unconditionally. That is, their personal qualities of character, their methods for attaining their objectives, and their conduct are morally and ethically secondary to the moral purity of their aspirations, the loftiness of their ideals and the nobility of their intentions. Wrongful conduct—lying, manipulation, theft, murder—is justified if it somehow serves the aims of the sanctified individual who embraces the cause of liberation. Just societies for the personalist are led by people who direct their energies and resources into projects which completely dismantle hierarchy, overturn traditional norms, and eliminate all forms of social inequality.

The primal, rock-bottom embodiment for Rousseau of inequality, the basis for civilization, was the invention of the institution of private property. This would be a terrible event in the history of the human race. The convention of property, the invention of “mine and thine,” turned out to be a perfidious act that would thrust upon an originally happy and pristine world the most profound source of human divisiveness—an institutionally-sanctioned, class-defining partition of haves and have-nots. Thus, as he states in hyper-dramatic fashion in his *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*.

The first man who, having fenced off a plot of ground, thought of saying ‘This is mine,’ and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. 25

The institution of private property erupted as a primal force that introduced those impersonal, socially-sanctioned forms of cruelty that formed the jagged edged reality underneath the gentile facade of a so-called civilized order. From the gradual imposition of private property and all the material advantages property conferred were derived those social cleavages in which some rule or enjoy advantages over others—not by virtue of any inherent qualities of personal goodness or character, but by luck, cleverness, or by force. There is, as Rousseau
suggests with his reference to the simpletons who passively and lackadaisically assent to this sinister symbolic act of appropriation, a huge, treacherous fault line of falsity and delusion that runs through the bedrock of norms that established the basis of civilized institutions and the foundations of inequality.

The enemy of all human happiness and well-being, quite clearly for Rousseau, was social and political inequality, and thus only associations voluntarily entered into and fully participated in were for him legitimate. The ideal of full, equal, voluntary participation in all associations has made itself strongly felt: it continues to have enormous potential for expanding the ranks of the oppressed. Applied universally and literally, even the most open, democratic society disguises an abundance of individuals who, temporarily or permanently, and for many different reasons, are unable to participate fully or equally in many social functions. Children, the physically, intellectually and emotionally disabled find themselves in positions of inequality, unable to work or learn or play or function in the same way, on an equal level, as others—the potential circumstances for inequality are innumerable. Such inequalities, whatever their cause and whatever the circumstance are, for the equalitarian, the basis of moral claims to be pressed against the “advantaged.” Robert Nisbet has suggested that the passion for equality as an energizing ideological force may likely result in an unlimited assault against institutions.

Once the ideal of equality becomes uppermost it can become insatiable in its demands. It is possible to conceive of human beings conceding that they have enough freedom or justice in a social order, it is not possible to imagine them ever declaring they have enough equality—once, that is, equality becomes a cornerstone of national policy.26

When the quest for equality becomes unlimited, those with power often see themselves as no longer bound by any existing conventional constraints in attempting to achieve it. Laws, conventions, morals—all of these represent impediments to the achievement of liberation and full equality. To Edgar Snow, Mao was reported to have said, “We don’t know really know what is meant by law, because we never paid any attention to it.”27 Law for Mao was merely a
hindrance to the attempts of the party to implement its programs. The benevolent intentions—again, intentions reign supreme and become self-justifying—of the party leaders were not to be thwarted by conventional impediments. Law, with its impersonality and impartiality, must give way to a very personalized order. The rule of law is an obstacle to the personalist.

Monarchies became the first institutions to run afoul of the personalists—illegitimate and unjust orders. Rousseau deemed them illegitimate because monarchs rule without the formal consent of all those who are under their dominion: they were unjust because they imposed arbitrary, social orders of inequality. The tremendous, religious-like passion of the French revolutionaries for the Republic found its deep roots in a Rousseau-inspired moral revulsion with monarchy and its trappings of power and privilege. But formal political inequality is only one piece of a much larger, complex social picture. Equality can be envisioned across the entire spectrum of human association. Inequality remains the ultimate iniquity for the Roussean, and it is particularly virulent because it pustulates in all traditional social institutions and in many different contexts. It assumes many invidious forms and many different groups suffer its effects. A great portion of political history in the West since the French Revolution has been the ongoing discovery of inequality in ever expanding social arenas, and a morally-inspired organization of rebellion against it.

The twentieth century was vigorously Roussean, distinguished by an obsessive pursuit of equality. Ironic in all of this is that the most passionate theoretical espousers of equality, when empowered, often turn into the cruelest and most malignant of despots. Why? Because relations of inequality are, as suggested above, discoverable everywhere. The discovery process becomes an end in itself, exalted and sacrosanct. It always finds more inequalities to be addressed. Once uncovered, these relations of inequality invite vigorous, large-scale modes of redress, which in turn require enormous and continuous applications of power. Resistance, for whatever reason, simply inflates the resentment of those in power and intensifies the ferocity of their retaliation.
against the resisters. The history of the communist revolutions in the twentieth century confirms this. The link of despotism to an unlimited quest for equality, so conspicuous and manifest a political phenomenon in the twentieth century, is also due to the fact that unconstrained power in the hands of passionate moralizers breeds, with credit to Lord Acton, a particularly virulent, self-righteous corruption of character and degradation of the personality.

The corroded mummy of Lenin, still stretched out for public veneration eight decades after his expiration, is perhaps the twentieth-century's most grotesque illustration of Acton's profound observation. (The irony of this intense hater of Christianity turned into a religious relic, ensconced saint-like in the Stalin-built shrine to his militantly atheistic communism, has been noted by numerous observers.)

Lenin overflowed with a vehement detestation of all the traditional hierarchies, particularly the church. His hatred for the capitalist exploiting class and its "enslavement" of the workers was deep, cold and boundless. Hatred and resentment, to purloin one of Gibbon's oft-employed, elegant expressions, were the "ruling passions of his soul." Yet, when he finally wielded the power he had struggled so ruthlessly to possess, the attainment of his driving, life-long ambition for a classless society with full equality took shape in the largest and cruelest police state in the history of the world. Secret police with arbitrary life and death powers, concentration camps (a Leninist invention), mass deportations, and the purposeful savage destruction of an entire economic, social class of people were the main contributions of this great equalitarian. "The whole of society," predicted Lenin for the aim of his revolution, "will have become a single office, a single factory with equal work and equal pay."28

With monumental drama on a world historical scale, Lenin's career demonstrated what many social theorists have long understood: that a vigorous, full throttled drive toward the realization of equality often produces a grotesque irony in an application of the law of unintended consequences. The pursuit and maintenance of equality requires near limitless coercion with the result of the
most unequal order of all—*the coercers*, unrestrained and determined to impose at any cost whatever measures their current ideological vibrations dictate; *the coerced*, defenseless and passive, hoping that the coercers will discover within themselves some hidden vein of benevolence or forgiveness.

Indeed, in reading of the early years following the Bolsheviks' seizure of power, it is astonishing to observe that Lenin believed that he could create his new, greed-free society and get rid of human exploitation and material disparities by passing decrees, giving orders, expropriating property, and imprisoning and shooting those people who were insufficiently enthusiastic about obeying his commands, endorsing his ideas, and embracing his policies and programs.²⁹

Rousseau's political philosophy left posterity with the design for an ideological engine with enormous power; power to dismantle traditional social institutions. To the extent that they confine or suppress individuality, impose authority through hierarchically defined roles, institutions must be resisted, rebelled against, and perhaps even rightfully destroyed. This is a Roussean perspective that has insidiously pervaded our mass culture. But it is not simply political institutions or governments that should be resisted. All social institutions insofar as they constrain and confine are benighted and outmoded. They require the attention of experts who know how to properly reconstruct, or, if necessary, simply dismantle them. Examples of this destructive impulse will be explored below.

The language of the intellectual critics who make up the adversary class, particularly the more recent ones of the last several decades like those quoted above, betrays a deep and abiding hostility toward traditional institutions, one with an ideological linkage to Rousseau. This is evident in part both from the language that is used and the denunciatory, Lenin-like style in which the criticism is often cast. The critiques that examine our past and whatever remnants of earlier tradition govern our modern life are dominated by verbs like "unmask," "expose," "uncover," "confront" and similar morally denuding locutions that suggest the most extreme and insidious designs of domination, exploitation and oppression.
"Feminism," exclaims Catherine MacKinnon, "has unmasked maleness as a form of power that is both omnipotent and non-existent, an unreal thing with very real consequences." The mechanisms of oppression—hidden and awaiting discovery and exposure by the theoretical denouncers—are identified sometimes as economic (as in capitalist exploitation), gender-based (as in patriarchal domination), race-based (as in racial discrimination and oppression) and sometimes as combinations of all of these and more.

This social criticism displays a character that is fundamentally ad hominem, attacking the moral character and motives of those who in any way represent or defend the status quo. This ad hominem style of criticism always seeks to expose the real, social bedrock coercion behind the false appearance of cooperation. It identifies the reality of carefully veiled power structures behind which privileged beneficiaries hide and impose inequalities and ruthlessly perpetuate them. The unmasking always points toward the motives of the members of the ruling classes. Their hypocrisy and their iniquity can, in ways both subtle and obvious, be discovered in those things that they hold up as their most important accomplishments, what they value. The cultural artifacts—works of art, religious ideas, educational practices, even scientific theories, when carefully and critically examined, reveal underneath vested structures of privilege and power. Those engaged in activities like art, religion and science are, ultimately, discovered be practitioners of social domination. Art's efforts to express beauty, religion's promise of forgiveness and salvation, and science's quest for truth can be dismissed with a sneer; they are nothing but surface, fraudulent poses. Social criticism politicizes all of these cultural endeavors, reducing them to their essential true nature, instruments of social power and exploitation.

The quest for the expansion and expression of self, late twentieth-century style, has long been popularly conceived as a process of personal liberation, primarily a freeing of the individual from social constraints imposed by traditional institutions. There is a popular term from the 1960s that conveys the gravity of
this impulse for liberation—"consciousness raising." This remarkable metaphor suggests that the process itself moves toward a morally enlightened ascent—from a lower immersion in shadows to a higher, illuminated plane.

Charles Reich in his popular book of the early 1970s, *The Greening of America*, schematized in religious terms this spiritual ascent, demarcating three levels of consciousness, I, II, and III, the last of which he describes as a full dramatic "conversion." "In contrast to consciousness II, which accepts society, the public interest, and institutions as the primary reality, III declares that the individual self is the only true reality."31 This is essentially the same theme expressed more bombastically by Abbie Hoffman, above. The reality of "society" and "public interest" that have been superseded in this ascent are seen to be repressing and limiting. Consciousness raising, as the metaphor of implied bondage seems to indicate, is a process of escape, a move toward a higher plane of reality. It usually requires the assistance of another, someone who has made the journey, some self-proclaimed member of the cognoscenti who has already escaped from the institutionally-created cage.

Consciousness raising has a philosophical and ideological linkage to Karl Marx’s scourge of the bourgeoisie for their "false consciousness." Marx, living in poverty and translating his moral rage into many volumes of economic history and political economy amidst the squalor of the mid-nineteenth-century London slums, became the great avatar of modern day intellectual resentment. Marx was able to make sophisticated theory out of raw resentment. His writings gave philosophic articulation and systematical application both to Rousseau’s innate and deeply felt misery and his intuitive sense of social class victimhood. From the caustic and irascible Marx there emanated his social-economic critique, a distinctive and highly imitative mode of analysis and interpretation by which the direction of human history and the nature of social interaction could be fathomed. All of human history, understood in proper Marxist dialectical fashion, must be seen in its ultimacy as the playing out of the effects of class domination. History is in fact a kind of grand morality play, a dramatic struggle which leads to the
domination and oppression of one social-economic group by another—
domination is the quintessential theme of Marxist historical-social analysis;
resentfulness is the distinguishing affective mark of the analyzers.

Marx’s living, enduring legacy was the establishment of this infinitely
expandable and highly flexible system for analyzing and explaining nearly every
kind of social relationship. Almost all human interaction, by this compelling
interpretive approach, gets turned over, dissected and scrutinized until there
emerges right at the vital center a power relation by which the stronger or the
advantaged party manipulates and exploits the weaker or disadvantaged party.
This is, perhaps, the major reason why Marx has been always been, and still is, so
seductive for representatives or spokesman of the legions of the dispossessed.
And it is why capitalism (ever since Marx identified it as such) is so often blamed
for the far flung miseries of the human race even though oppression and
exploitation persist in every social-economic system there is. Human social
interaction for Marx and his progeny operates with a large component of
exploitation—rationalized or covered up or ignored, depending upon which
strategy at any given moment works the best. The mark of a sophisticated
understanding is the capacity to penetrate through these veneers of rationalization,
ideology and the various strategies of domination, and move to the rock bottom of
human interaction where the mechanisms of social conflict operate and determine
the structure and context of human relationships as well as all of culture.

While Marx proclaimed with his customary vehemence that his theory of
dialectical materialism was scientific, its extraordinary nineteenth- and twentieth-
century career seemed to resemble more closely that of a prophetic religion.
Marx’s followers acted more like religious disciples and zealot-evangelists than
scientists. Marx’s thought rapidly turned into Marx-ism and then fatally
burgeoned into a Great Orthodoxy owing much of its success as a system of
explanation to the energy and inspiration of the originating Prophet. Everything
necessary for propagation of the Word was in place—an inspired, infallible
scripture, from which explanations and rationalizations of nearly everything could
be conjured by the Priest-Interpreters, and a fanatical, true-believing corps of the faithful who engaged in vigorous proselytizing, conversion, and war against the non-believers, and who busily readied themselves for the arrival of the eschaton.

In those places where the priests of dialectical materialism actually found themselves in possession of political power (as in the Soviet Union, China, North Korea or Cuba) heretics, imagined or otherwise, were routinely carted off to the slave camps, gulags, and prisons, forced into exile, or just put to death.

The practitioners of official, orthodox Marxism were enthusiastically self assured in announcing their discovery of the exploitation of the workers by the capitalists. They were also most assiduous in their preparation for the inevitable collapse of capitalism and confidently awaited the dawn of the classless society. The day would indeed arrive when all the material resources of modern production would be equitably distributed, everyone could reach their full human potential, and no one would be taking unfair advantage of anyone else.

Like most orthodoxies over time, however, its categories of thought became duly calcified, and its explanations of reality strained and implausible, no longer convincing or believable. Marxism as a secular, state-sponsored religion, particularly in comparison with world religions like Christianity and Islam, has had a phenomenally short life. In those final dreary years of Eastern block communism where Marxian theodicy had been fully institutionalized, no one with a fully functional brain could possibly take the promise of a world revolution, the immanent demise of capitalism, and the withering away of the state seriously, not even the nominal Marxist mandarins who wielded power and enjoyed the perks of party membership. This is one reason why the whole edifice collapsed as quickly and bloodlessly as it did. Not so much as a shadow of an ideal or principle could be found to operate behind any official thought or action. No powerful symbols were guiding the party elites that anybody believed were at all worth fighting to advance or even preserve.

Few serious thinkers today, even Marxists, give credence to Marx’s grandest piece of prophecy, his prediction of the overthrow of capitalism; but
Marxism is very much alive. His theory of exploitation and domination remains with us as the powerful, driving force of contemporary social critique. Even though Marxism as a political philosophy and a social experiment has failed miserably, Marx's vision and language of exploitation—most efficacious for stirring moral outrage—have proved to be extraordinarily resilient. Not only are they infectious, but also expandable, malleable and very insidious. Social relationships of all sorts are now run through the hermeneutical mills of twentieth-century-customized Marxism and emerge revealing the existence of hitherto unknown or unrecognized agencies of exploitation and domination. They exact, we are brought to understand, a terrible de-humanizing toll.

Exploitation, or, "strategies of domination" in the more contemporary expression thus, if one pays any attention to those who produce the theory and make comment on such matters, would seem to be in place and at work in many or most of our social institutions and relationships. Exploitation is at the core of most human relationships: it is the force that conditions many of our basic social practices and institutional norms. It is difficult it seems now to look anywhere in modern society and not find some form of social exploitation.

Hilton Kramer, reflecting on the careers of the prominent New York intellectuals of the 1930s like Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, Sidney Hook, and Mary McCarthy, wrote that,

The issues that were of primary concern to the New York intellectuals from the Thirties onward—namely Marxism in politics and modernism in culture—are still, in one form or another, the central political and cultural issues of the present day, and they affect a larger part of our society than ever before.32

Kramer wrote this in 1986. It still holds. The minds, or what today's Marxist critics say, the "value-systems" of the dominant groups, are inherently disposed to universalize (to "totalize" in the current argot) and thus impose their values on everyone else.

Marx, of course, identified the politically and culturally dominant group as the bourgeois, the exploiter of working class. Its members go about their lives...
confidently self-deluded, carried along by the support of ideals and values that are ultimately class-determined rationalizations that protect the exclusive, vested interests of the privileged class. Every bourgeois value and ideal is camouflage for some form of advantage or privilege. Every virtue is a class-interest-motivated social construct plastered over with a practical veneer of hypocrisy and perhaps some high blown religiosity to make it seem objective and eternal. “False consciousness” was Marx’s term for the inherent illusory character of one’s thinking and valuing, illusions derived from a failure to recognize the determinacy of those values by the interests and advantages conferred by social-economic class. Thus, the bourgeois operated with an entirely false set of values: religion, morality art, science—all cultural endeavors—are activities conditioned by the economic relations of production which in turn are the infrastructure of class domination. Just how these cultural activities might be articulated, explained and justified in their own terms is irrelevant to their fundamental existence as class-conditioned realities. There is no such thing as a purely disinterested search for truth (pure science or philosophy); no pure love of and devotion to one’s fellow creatures (pure religion); no unsullied quest for beauty and form (pure art). An appeal to logic, facts, consistency, or principle can never be successful in establishing the ultimate worth or autonomy of these enterprises because the whole social edifice which supports them is undergirded by class-determined, bourgeois assumptions.

Consciousness raising as it has emerged from the 1960s and developed over the last several decades is a radical response to the Marxian-posited “false consciousness” that dominates the corrupted social order. The experience has affinities with the experience of religious conversion. Through its operations one comes to the acceptance of a profound truth to which he or she was previously resistant or blind. Overcoming false consciousness is an act of removing moral blinders; it requires the repudiation of the things that one once believed were important. MacKinnon writes that:

Consciousness raising is a face-to-face social experience that strikes at the fabric of meaning of social relations between and
among women and men by calling their givenness into question and reconstituting their meaning in a transformed and critical way.33

Thus conceived, consciousness raising is a life altering, socially transforming process. One’s understanding and conception of social reality profoundly changes—meanings are reconstituted or re-invented. In this process is a release from the bonds of ‘x-induced’ ignorance—substitute for ‘x’ gender, economic class or whatever one determines is the defining characteristic of the dominant group, that is, its basis and rationale for power.

This process of conversion one undergoes is holistic in its overturning of basic assumptions and predilections. Often it is accompanied by bitterness, resentment and hatred. Marx himself was an angry, hate-ridden man, who heaped scorn and ridicule upon those with whom he disagreed and with whom he contended for power. Lenin was equally, if not more, accomplished in the arts of vituperation. The reason for the rancor and resentment that comes with the raising of consciousness is due to the painful awareness of massive exploitation and manipulation by the dominant class or group. Behind this quest for relief from repression is a perspective on human nature and social institutions that descends over the last two hundred and forty years from Rousseau. The spirit of self-fulfillment is the now ubiquitous ghost of Rousseau who speaks eloquently in many tongues for the individual who has been trampled upon by the agents of traditional institutions.

The self-fulfillment and self-awareness of a raised consciousness is more than the improvement of one’s character or the attainment of one’s individual potential. It is a “self-re-defining,” revolutionary process, a career of self-discovery through liberation from benighted assumptions about how one is supposed to live and to act. With the overthrow of the “old” assumptions comes the freeing of one’s self from traditional restraints and obligations that flow out of these assumptions; for these can only bind if one believes in the value and essential worth of the institutions behind them. Being a Catholic and being a father, for example, are only important if Catholicism and fatherhood stand for
important, valuable things. Self-fulfillment is, again to use the idiom of the day, an act of liberation—liberation from the constraints imposed by social institutions. Self-fulfillment is an escape from the repressiveness of social institutions—the “dogmas” of the church, the confinement of family roles and their demands and sacrifices, the inhibitions of middle class morality—particularly the long-standing ones that are shaped by “blind” tradition. The achievement of self-liberation and self-fulfillment comes out of the throes of a struggle that pits a vulnerable individual, with his unlimited potential for expressiveness and expansiveness, against social groups with ruthless, well-refined capacities for devouring that individuality and for imposing a stifling conformity to their norms of behavior.

Traditional institutions work their mischief through an illicit, unjust imposition of authority. For Rousseau’s early epigones, a hereditary monarch was both a symbol and an incarnate embodiment of oppression, a man who imposed his will and authority over others without their consent and their authority. Political authority could be legitimate only if it was fully, universally participatory. From the monarch, who inherited (again that nefarious notion of property at work) his throne and his power, flowed the other evils of the traditional role, that is, the subordination in the form of hierarchical ranks of people with differentiated roles. For the initial followers of Rousseau, the ancient regime symbolized everything evil and oppressive. It was a corrupt social order that ought to be overthrown; total revolution was a moral as well as a political act.

Rousseau’s original critique of the ancient regime became an extraordinarily expandable tool of criticism. His arguments, and more importantly the strong sentiments behind them, have proved to be compelling and addictive and have, in their application during the course of two centuries, expanded far beyond formal political institutions. Almost every power and authority structure in the West, including the family, the church, educational institutions have been subject to the critical, egalitarian ideals proclaimed by Rousseau and have undergone radical changes that reflect in some way his original passion for
equality and his disdain for traditionally formed institutions.

In order to understand how pervasively the eighteenth-century Roussean critique of inequality has insinuated itself into the early-twenty-first-century pursuit of equality, it is appropriate to examine our own social institutions, note their linkages to traditional religious notions of morality, and observe how Roussean-style thinking over the last fifty years has challenged and fundamentally changed them. I will consider the impact of personalism on institutions such as the marriage, the family, the church, and education. Consider first the most intimate, personal and basic of our traditional institutions, marriage.

III

The institution of marriage, particularly in its traditional religious and moral trappings, has undergone the most remarkable transformation during the last fifty years. Many Americans, as recently as at mid-century, still embraced marriage as a social bond with a transcendental origin and purpose that endowed it with meaning and importance beyond that of other human relationships. Marriage was supposed to be a life-defining moment. It brought unique responsibilities and obligations, and it established new and important social roles. So important was this institution that it had the support of most of the other institutions such as the church and the state and was solidly and staunchly upheld by conventional attitudes and religious prejudices. "What God hath joined, let not man put asunder", enjoined the minister at the end of the wedding ceremony. Marriage, until very recently—forty or fifty years ago—was an institution with essentially religious roots. For Catholic Christians, marriage was (still is even) a holy sacrament.

Until the 1960s, traditional marriage was relatively stable and, even with its obvious role differentiation, was generally accepted. By generally accepted I mean that couples tended to stay with the marriage even when it was far from fulfilling; divorce rates were low. Unhappy marriages were endured for the sake of the children. Once married, one remained married. Divorces were hard to get and their effects were often nasty. A social stigma was attached to them. During
the early 1960s, one might recall the intense scrutiny from the national press to which Nelson Rockefeller was subjected over his efforts to shed his first wife so he could marry Happy, his mistress. It was, though it is hard to imagine now, a major production for Rockefeller—such was the newsworthiness of the whole business. In New York only adultery and cruelty were grounds for divorce, a dilemma for a nationally prominent politician like Rockefeller who badly craved the Presidency. For divorcée Ronald Reagan in 1980, a dissolved first-marriage which would have probably seriously impaired his chances a generation earlier was no longer a problem politically. The voters themselves, including many Roman Catholics by that time, had become quite regular practitioners of "putting asunder" what God originally had joined. Reagan, a divorced movie actor with a long career in the "Sodom and Gomorrah" of Hollywood, was the favorite in the 1980s, ironically, of conservative Christians. Even more ironically, as Governor of California, he signed the first no-fault divorce bill in the country into law.

A generation ago marriage was still vested with some religious meaning and transcendental significance: its dissolution signaled a serious moral and spiritual failing. A divorce was still a social anomaly and something to be ashamed of and to regret. Over the last fifty years however, marriage, like many other practices of our post-World War II culture that were once shaped and guided by a religious understanding of human existence, has been thoroughly naturalized, that is, separated from supernatural moorings.

Between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s came the veritable explosion of divorce. It was during this period that the moral view of divorce drastically changed for many Americans—from an anomalous, disturbing event signaling shame and a sense of failure to a relatively normal occurrence. All of a sudden it seemed divorce was all around us—our friends, ourselves, even our parents were routinely detaching and reattaching themselves. Books like Creative Divorce, Surviving the Breakup: How Children and Parents Cope with Divorce, and Learning to Love Again began to appear. Productions like these tapped into the rapidly expanding psychological "self help" genre of publishing—almost non-
existent prior to World War II—and encouraged Americans to look at divorce as another difficult but normal phase of life that, with the appropriate therapeutic conditioning or life-style rearrangement, could be an important “learning experience” and one more opportunity for personal growth and self-expression. Now, some thirty years after that remarkable social revolution and its own unique “enervation of authority,” couples enter into marriage with the complete normalization of divorce in the background. The dissolution of a marriage is more akin to the failure of a business venture, a deal gone bad, a miscalculation of material circumstances—a common occurrence but while disappointing, completely unremarkable, and understandable and frequent.

Traditional marriage imposed gender-defined obligations for men and women. These have become increasingly onerous, and it has been impossible for traditional marriage—defined by religious ideals—to withstand a withering critique which is driven by the aspiration of complete social equality.

Critics of traditional marriage are often indifferent, if not hostile, to traditional religious ideals. If marriage has an institutional foundation of archaic religious obligations and aspirations, then escape from it should never be a stigma. Traditional marriage was binding. Many of the norms imposed by the institution became impossible to justify in a purely secular context and in secular terms. Being bound is, again, inimical to the personalist ideal of development and self-expansion.

In 1972, Nena and George O’Neill published Open Marriage: A New Life Style for Couples. This widely read, much commented-on book was so popular, I suspect, because the “new life style” into which traditional marriage was to evolve was the culmination of the personalist quest for personal growth and self-fulfillment. “Open marriage” was the circle squared: commitment with no constraints or inhibitions. The Preface and Acknowledgement section of the book clearly and succinctly states the personalist ideal of marriage.

Two consistent threads ran all through our interviews: one was the desire for freedom, and the other, a longing for relatedness to another—a search for a deeply personal and mutual commitment in
A relationship that would not bind—the cake that one could both have and eat. Open marriage, of course, was not marriage at all, but merely another post-1960s “life style” variation that attempted to capture the dominant theme of the new age, self-fulfillment.

Traditional marriage formed a relationship, in some important respects, of subordination and thus, judged by the norm of full social equality, unjust. The beginning of the end for marriage as it was viewed and practiced up to the 1950s came in the 1960s with the major assault launched from the growing feminism movement, aided by other social forces such as the development of low cost and highly effective birth control methods which made sex more easily detachable from marriage, and a rapidly expanding consumer-oriented economy in which sex itself became a highly marketable commodity.

The family of the 1950s was ruled by what Barbara Ehrenreich has called the “breadwinner ethic.” Men were supposed to provide for their wives and children. Not to do so was to fail in being a man. The following decades have eroded that ethic as men too have been liberated from an “oppressive” role defined by traditional marriage.

Feminism opened an attack on traditional marriage, and the movement was carried along with what was essentially a Roussean-revulsion with the social hierarchy it imposed. Marriage, as the now-familiar argument unfolds, is a repressive, patriarchal institution that degrades women, presses them into service in confining, male-defined roles, and ultimately devalues their unique character and essence. Patriarchy, represented officially and essentially in the structure of authority in traditional marriage, is indeed, illegitimate, a usurpation of power and an abominable celebration of male-privilege. A 1970s feminist, Shulamith Firestone, presents an implied critique of marriage and a proclamation of revolution in her *Dialectic of Sex*. Marriage is fully equated with tyranny.

The new feminism is not just the revival of a serious political movement for social equality. It is the second wave of the most
important revolution in history. Its aim: overthrow of the oldest, most rigid class/caste system in existence, the class system based on sex—a system consolidated over thousands of years, lending the archetypical male and female roles an undeserved legitimacy and seeming permanence.  

Such are the judgments and sentiments of a late twentieth-century gender-Jacobin reflecting upon the rigid caste system of which traditional marriage is an essential part. The iniquities which are protested are most egregious and of long duration. The only remedy is “revolution” (again, that often prescribed twentieth-century moral-political cure for social ills) a total dismantling of the completely rotten system. The patriarchal husband is fully analogous in political and moral terms to the hereditary King (the object of Rousseau’s animadversion) with his duplicitous practice and iniquitous celebration of undeserved authority and his exercise of arbitrary power. The legitimacy of the patriarchal family, like that of the King, is false. The apparent naturalness of marriage as a permanent, enduring institution is an illusion, an important element of a false consciousness in which most of us have long been trapped.

Marriage, that is, traditional marriage as it was generally practiced and understood until mid-century, was thus, under the feminist-Roussean critique, an institution that ensured the subservience and detriment of women in much the same way that monarchy worked against the lower classes—lashes and gruel for the oafish serfs, exaltation and roast pheasant for the king; corporate presidencies, professorships and country club outings for the man, housework, unwanted pregnancies and dirty diapers for the little woman.

The norms and the values that were embraced even fifty years ago that set up the boundaries of traditional marriage have now been removed. They are an outmoded expression of benighted patriarchy. Women, under the patriarchal forms of authority imposed upon them, without their consent, suffered. They were reconstructed creatures, assigned subordinate roles, duped, coerced, intimidated, seduced, in many diverse and degraded forms, subjected to the authority and ultimately the domination of men.
For the last forty years or so, the feminist-Rousseau attack on patriarchal marriage has unfolded in a manner somewhat analogous, though considerably less dramatic and violent, to the Jacobins’ overthrow and execution of Louis XVI. The central vehicle of assault has been through divorce. The traditional institution of marriage for women was a clever, male-designed trap. Its divine and religious sanctions—ideological cover for the oppressors—gave it a transcendental authority that made it seem that it ought to be natural and permanent. From what God ordains there must be no escape. Women were bound ideologically in marriage by spiritual and religious fetters riveted by theologians, men who had made God in their male image, a God whose will just happened to work to advance the interests and desires of men.

Traditional marriage had to be ideologically challenged and politically overthrown much like the traditional monarchy of the eighteenth-century in all of its decadence and corruption had to be discredited and ultimately toppled. Political society in Roussean ideology could establish its legitimacy only on the basis of pure consent, and so marriage, where it was entered into at all, was to be reconstructed as a fully and completely contractual relationship with simple and easy cancellation rights. Marriage as a historical institution, rich with religious and mystical trappings, had to give way to a lean and legalistic “relationship.” With the recreation of what was once a “holy union” as a purely secular and contractual relationship, marriage became an arrangement, pure and simple, of mutual convenience, and most importantly, easily undoable.

Divorce equaled liberation—escape from an oppressive institution, a blow against twentieth-century tyranny, Western-style patriarchy. Marriage has thus become a radically transformed institution, the “archy” of patriarchy completely dismantled. The roles and responsibilities offered in the traditional marriage were barriers to the expression of the genuine self of a woman. The husband tyrannized. The children constrained. The wife, powerless and compliant, obeyed. The woman, as wife and mother sacrificed herself, chained by duty to an institution that denies her herself.
Essential to the contractualist reconstruction of marriage and the destruction of patriarchy was the legalization of abortion. Pregnancy, childbearing, and all the risks, obligations, and constraints these things brought into play were essential pieces of the traditional marriage, and fetters exclusively binding upon women. The criminalization of abortion that had long been in place was discovered to be an insidious maneuver, one of the most debilitating effects of the reigning ideology of the patriarch, an effort, legally as well as morally, to make biology into a prison for women. Illegal abortion was a key component in a coercive, male-designed apparatus that helped maintain the subjugation of women.

The legalizing of abortion by the Supreme Court in 1973 might be viewed symbolically as a “storming” of the male-guarded, biological Bastille, an escape from the “prison” of reproduction, and in part a further dismantlement of the traditional institution of marriage and a repudiation of the ideology behind it. “Choice” relative to the continuance of pregnancy was another key element in an expanding repertoire of personal freedoms, an equalizing move of the wife relative to the husband, if he was deemed to be even necessary anymore.

But the legalizing of abortion meant much more than simply decriminalization. The new freedom to abort had to be tied to an ideology with a cluster of moral and political arguments sufficiently compelling and energizing so as to appeal to a broad spectrum of the American people who might still be inclined toward the acceptance of more traditional norms and thus troubled and even resistant to their overturning. The legalization of abortion, most importantly, required its moralization—its vital, instrumental linkages to personal liberation and reproductive freedom—and thus the enormous and still unresolved conflict with all the intense, turbulent emotions that issued from it in the wake of the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision. Roe v Wade, as both sides came quickly to recognize, was about more than just the legality of abortion: it represented a most profound shift in moral outlook and orientation, behind which had taken place a major rethinking and reordering of the most basic social relationships.
The legalization and moralization of abortion as a revolt against a traditionally religious view of marriage and reproduction and as the central social-ethical issue of our time thus was to be argued with the language that emerged in the 1960s of expansive individual rights—another aspect of the Rousseauan legacy of personalism. The option to obtain an abortion was to be constructed as a legal and moral right to an essential kind of freedom that had long been arbitrarily denied. Legal abortion enabled women to protect themselves, expand their range of important life choices, and extend their control over their own bodies. The arguments follow logically from the assumptions and are, of course, all of a complete piece with the Rousseauan-personalist view of society which pits individuals against institutions and seeks to realign the balance of a secularized, personal freedom against social obligations and social roles that appeal to traditionally religious concepts. The woman’s legally recognized “right” to control over her body became another move toward the complete secularization of American society and a concomitant enlargement of the subjective self as the primary moral entity.

Whether or not one believes that liberalized divorce and legalized abortion have been good for women, it is undeniable that these developments have transformed the institution of marriage. Marriage in its late-twentieth-century form has been reconstructed as a formal equation with a predominately individualistic-utilitarian measure of a frequently shifting balance. The equation operates according to a complex system of cost-benefit analysis: the costs and benefits on each side are added up, and if they do not equate, by either partner’s calculation, then the lawyers step in, draw up the divorce papers and take their twenty percent. The judge and the court-appointed social workers consort and advise the de-coupled couple on how to reconstruct the broken lives of the children. Then the partners go their separate ways. Often they try it again with about the same failure rate. Moreover, the evaluation of the costs and the benefits has increasingly been extended into the highly subjective, introspective plane of self-realization and self-fulfillment such that the failure of either partner to
establish, maintain, or recreate the unique conditions for self-expansion, is sufficient grounds for dissolution.

For men, liberalized divorce, according to the utilitarian calculus, has also proved to be self-enhancing. It has provided more opportunities for sexual exploration and adventure and made it easier to shed or dilute the onerous responsibilities (financial and otherwise) of fatherhood. When a man’s wife of his youth gets older and begins to lose her physical, sexual allure, it is now easier and more socially acceptable for him to dump her and get a younger, prettier one—the proverbial “trophy wife,” a nicely dehumanized trope of late-twentieth-century sexual liberation.

The liberalized norms of divorce are also more compatible with the ascending ethos of amusement. It is now considerably easier to rearrange partners in whatever temporary configurations are sufficiently appealing so as to attain the maximum consumer level of sexual pleasure and satisfaction. Boredom, the arch enemy of amusement, can now be more easily evaded than ever before by divorce. In a way, divorce has become a major modern solution for boredom.

Marriage is now an individualistic, atomistic institution, if it can be considered an institution at all, completely naturalized with little religious significance beyond that of self-affirmation. That process of affirmation takes many different forms at different times of life, and therefore requires that one match up with different consorts at the different stages in order to extract the most personal fulfillment and meaning out of life’s personal, individual journey. Marriage is just one more modern means for self-enhancement.

This contractualized, de-sacralized form of marriage, with the easy cancellation clause, has firmly established itself: marriage is something far removed from its traditional, religiously-guided form. With what will soon be the legal sanction of gay marriage, most of the traditional remnants and trappings will be gone and marriage will be little more than a pairing off, or perhaps even, a “grouping off” of individuals based upon whatever particular need or inclination happens to draw them together. If marriage need not be between members of the
opposite sex, as is argued by gay rights advocates, if it is primarily an expression of commitment, then why does it need to be limited even to two people? The logic behind the arguments for gay marriage can with little contortion readily be applied to arguments for the legal and social sanction of polyandrous and polygamous marriages.

Marriage, twenty-first century-style, will at some point in the West have ceased completely to be a religious institution. In fact, it will hardly exist as a non-legal institution at all, since “marriage” will be invoked legally to characterize almost all social-sexual arrangements, no matter how temporary or unconventional. At some point, probably in California, someone with the assistance of an animal rights advocacy group will file a suit to obtain legal recognition of a union with their pet Chihuahua. Insofar as it exists formally at all, marriage’s purview will belong to the State and will be a purely legally defined, bureaucratically managed set of social relationships that exist for the administration and regulation of health insurance, social security pensions and retirement benefits, and other material social benefits and necessities. This is the case now in Canada where the legal concept of marriage includes homosexual couples: the Canadian Supreme Court in 1999 struck down the heterosexual definition of the word “spouse” in a suit involving alimony claims by two lesbians.

Traditional marriage has been the moral and social foundation for the family for hundreds of years. The family was the vehicle for transmitting the basic moral and social values across generations. The contractualization of marriage in its late-twentieth-century form, of course, has enormous implications for this important cultural process. The traditional family was a hierarchical structure with layers of authority and a significant differentiation of roles. Wisdom and authority were vested in the parents, and the children were subject to the constraints and the discipline of their mothers and fathers. The conduct of the parents toward their children presumably was governed to a large extent by a natural disposition of benevolence. The age and experience of the parents were supposed to be the
foundation of a practical, common sense wisdom that provided the basis for guidance, and the constraints they imposed upon their children, constraints motivated by their natural love and affection. The family was supposed to protect children, to care and nurture them and to impart to them, primarily by example, the accepted and appropriate norms for behavior as adults. Only children were supposed to act like children. When the children grew up they were supposed to assume responsibility and be decent and honorable just as their parents had shown them. This presumed a traditional differentiation of roles out of which derived an authority to which some members of the family would be subject. And it placed expectations on the part of the parents to act decently and responsibly—expectations to talk, dress and behave differently than their children.

Under the pressures from the ascending ideology of social equality and its move against hierarchy in all forms, these differences have inevitably diminished, and it is sometimes difficult, aside from physiological marks of appearance, to distinguish children from adults.

The popular late nineteen-fifties television show, *Father Knows Best*, captured, as best a television show could, an idealized traditional fifties notion of the American family with all of the strengths and weaknesses of its middle class character. Robert Young as Jim Anderson symbolized the traditional father—gentle but firm, practically wise and benevolent—impacting to his children standards of integrity and basic decency. His wife, played by Jane Wyatt, was, of course, a fine 1950s graceful model of subdued femininity, respectful and dutiful. The three children were stereotyped, “goodie two shoes” middle class youths, growing up in an idyllic, convention-bound middle America, learning and yearning to be just like mom and dad.

Young’s character is now a joke, a sappy parody. The show, forty years later, provides a great target for later-day critics who can feast on the many now obvious “sub-texts” of its 1950s themes of patriarchal conformity and self-satisfied middle class insularity. As one critic disdainfully notes:

*Father Knows Best* preached many basic lessons: Fulfill your promises; respect others; don’t lie to your parents; always do your
best work. But if it had one driving theme, it was this: Learn to accept your role. 37

Promise-keeping, mutual respect, honoring your parents—all of these apparently good things seem for the critic to be less important as positive values than the real ugliness and deformity lying underneath the happy appearances—the oppressive conformity that this idealized family represented and held up as a model. The criticism rendered is relentlessly personalist—those constraints that operated on 1950s family, no matter how idealized, took their toll on those who learned to accept their confining “roles.” Fortunately, for the critics, the 1960s followed and opened the gates for personal liberation. Those constraints, we can see, were some of the more benighted features of the times, happily now overcome. The years of the 1950s in the minds of today’s critics represented a post-War recrudescence of an earlier American Puritanism, a tyranny that repressed the mind and the spirit.

The wise and benevolent father figure that Young so compellingly developed in Father Knows Best is, from today’s personalist-oriented critic, a naive piece of fifties patriarchal, middle-class mythology belying the ugly realities of the American family—the ubiquitous wife-abuser, the dead beat ex-husband who refuses to pay child support, and the sexual predator who molests his daughters. The strong and decent man that the television audience was drawn to in Jim Anderson was a typical 1950s bourgeois fraud, a patriarchal cover for undeserved, and often abused, power.

In contrast with the mid-twentieth-century television father who possessed some wisdom, a generation or so latter, comes the late-twentieth-century one, represented by the character Al Bundy on the show Married with Children, a crude, foul-mouthed cynic, besieged by a nasty, prurient wife and surly, disrespectful children. No moral authority, or authority of any kind, is to be found in this late 1980s and early 1990s family. No one in this family “knows best” or even pretends to—“knowing best” is, after all, a subjective “value judgment.” Knowing anything does not even seem to count for much. Everyone looks and talks the same—sneering, contemptuous, blasé and disaffected. Even the titles of
these two television shows betray the steady drift toward the "social realism" that
dominates the presentation of human relations and social interaction on
contemporary television—Father Knows Best being homiletic and prescriptive
in its tone, in comparison with Married with Children which was obviously
supposed to be sociological, descriptive, and, of course, "more realistic." The
social-aesthetic equation that drives the critics is the following: the more vulgar
and base the portrayal of human beings, the better. Human beings stripped of their
social conventions are more "genuine."

We now observe the emergence of a social life that increasingly seems to
imitate the "art" of television. No moral, intellectual differentiations prevail in the
emblematic television family of the Bundys—certainly no pretense anywhere of
ideals to be shared or wisdom to be handed down from one generation to the next.
Who, within the Bundy family, would want to be like any of the others? Each
family member amounted to little more than a gross caricature representative of
some bundle of social pathologies or sociological stereotype that the television
audience could easily pick up on and apply with a coarse cynicism that matched
those of the television characters. The predominant mode of interaction between
these family members was a contest of surly put-downs, embedded in crude,
relentless sexual innuendos—sullen and usually mean-spirited, always unfolding
with the same predictable bleakness and stultifying vulgarity.

Marriage, over the last forty years, has been an institution subject to the
most intense criticism directed at its imposition of traditional roles which
perpetuates a status of subordination and conditions of inequality for women. The
relationship of marriage partners has come increasingly to be normatively
reconstructed entirely in contractual terms. A contract is essentially a legal
construct. The legalization of marriage marks an evolution of marriage from a
moral and spiritual institution to a purely legal one. This is also the case with the
entirety of traditional family relationships. Childhood, just like marriage and
motherhood, has been revealed to be a patriarchal contrivance, invented to gratify
the adult male ego and make the physically weaker family members easier to
manipulate and control.

Shulamith Firestone’s contempt for the traditional family is consistent with her repudiation of marriage—the work of self-serving patriarchy, benighted and unredeemable.

[T]he power hierarchies in the biological family, and the sexual repressions necessary to maintain it—especially intense in the patriarchal nuclear family—are destructive and costly to the individual psyche.38

All the personalist elements of a Roussean style social critique are once more apparent. The traditional family as an institution is judged to be thoroughly corrupt; and its dismantlement follows as a moral imperative. The family and its traditional roles are of real benefit to no one but the husband whose usually superior physical strength was the original basis for a coercive mode of social control that enabled him to impose upon the weaker the various levels of subordination that fit his particular needs and gratified his ambitions, however peculiar or self-serving they might be. This subordination inhibits the possibilities for personal growth and individual self-fulfillment by other members of the family, particularly through the systematic repression of sexual expression.

Children have thus taken their necessary and rightful place in the rapidly growing “community of the aggrieved,” another constituency for which “rights” must be created that are enforceable by courts in this case against adults, most likely the parents, who, like the king animadverted by Rousseau, abuse their traditional, undeserved power.

During the 1960s and 1970s we saw a rapid and promiscuous growth of myriad constituencies, including animals, to which were attributed specially tailored and refined legal and moral rights. Article 24 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights even affirms the “right” to relaxation and time off of work with pay. “Everyone has the right to rest and leisure, including...periodic holidays with pay.”39 Such claims may strike one initially as bewildering or even ludicrous: inflating rights, like inflating anything else, results in devaluation.
The substantial inflation of rights that has occurred in the twentieth century is part of a shifting propensity for making good intentions the entire measure of moral action. Thus, proclaiming the possession of something that many or most people regard as good or desirable as a “right,” regardless of whether such goods can or should be delivered to everyone, becomes a means for establishing impeccable moral credentials. It is the intention or good will alone that counts. “[I]n the prosecution of a favorite scheme,” says Gibbon, “the best of men, satisfied with the rectitude of their intentions, are subject to forget the bounds of moderation.” Little moderation can be discovered in the modern rhetoric of rights. The proliferation of rights helps the personalist’s aim to achieve the de-legitimization of traditional institutions. How? The newly created rights come with a rhetoric of justification and the legal means and resources for enforcement. Moral rights and obligations imbedded in traditional institutions like the family—accumulated conventions that have guided parents in the treatment of their children, each other, etc.—become inimical to the rights defined legally by the State and enforced by its representatives. Thus, the expansion of rights has enabled the personalist to displace the traditional moral rights and obligations that might compete with the State-assisted “new rights” accorded to the various disadvantaged constituencies.

The morally instructive role of the family has faded. This is both a logical and sociological consequence of the complete subjectivization of morals which rules out appeals to traditional authority structures to justify norms or to impose conformity. The moralists representing the State have moved in to fill the vacuum created by the disintegration of traditional values. Family members now are often pitted against each other like injured parties in a contract dispute. Officials representing the supposedly neutral State enforce the “rights” invented by the modern Roussean moralists. Children, of course, with the destruction of parental authority and the atomization of the family increasingly, need the formal protection of the State. Works such as Children’s Rights: Overcoming the Oppression of Children, published in 1977, presented the case for the
condemnation of the traditional family as an oppressive institution, fundamentally inimical to the well-being of children.

Here again, Rousseau emerges as an early modern prototype of a 1970s mode of social enlightenment. The depositing of his five newborns mothered by his mistress Thérèse in State-run orphanages was, as he presents it to his readers, the ultimate paternal act of altruism. Rousseau rationalizes this act of abandonment, late in his *Confessions*, seeming somewhat uneasy about having to account for this embarrassing piece of his past:

I will be content with a general statement that in handing my children over for the State to educate, for lack of means to bring them up myself, by destining them to become workers and peasants instead of adventurers and fortune-hunters, I thought I was acting as a citizen and a father, and looked upon myself as a member of Plato’s Republic.\(^{41}\)

What a proto-modern rationalization this is with its begging off of responsibility by an appeal to his self-produced penury! “Lack of means” indeed. One must be struck in considering this amazing comment about his own children by how little fatherhood must have meant to him. Was Rousseau completely immersed in self-delusion, or was he, with this fatuous invocation of Plato as philosophical cover, simply trying pathetically to slip this shameful, widely known business past the reader? It would be difficult to find a more self-serving, disingenuous act of “confession” than this. This rationalization endures as one of the more indigestible, vintage pieces of Roussean “honesty.”

The prevailing *motif* surrounding the American family of the last three decades has been abuse: husbands abusing their wives; parents abusing their children; adult children abusing their elderly parents; physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological and emotional abuse. The family, once an affective institution that taught and transmitted social and moral values, is now a milieu of social pathology and physical predation. As a nurturing, instructive socializing institution it has been displaced in many of its functions by a constellation of government subsidized professional organizations and services. The well being of family members has now become a professionalized set of concerns, the business
of social workers, psychologists, counselors, divorce court personnel, professional educators and government policy-makers, all devoted to helping protect family members against each other and against themselves. The social role that the family carried out in "normalizing" the behavior of its members—helping them to cope with the stresses of daily life and make their way successfully in the world—has been taken up by State functionaries who operate largely with a therapeutic model of human behavior. These functionaries attempt the normalization with coercive apparatus of the State.42

With its traditional configurations and practices, marriage was an institution intended in part to restrain and control sexual conduct, hence the Firestone accusation of sexual repression. Marriage served formally, often with religious sanctions, to legitimate sexual conduct: thus sex was reserved, that is, legitimate in both a social and legal sense only for those who were married. Viewed from the perspective of one who conceives of absolute equality as a social ideal, the institution of traditional marriage, like the institution of private property, unjustly created classes of "have" (those for whom sexual conduct is socially approved, namely married men and women) and "have-nots," (those whose sexual practices or indulgences incur social disapprobation which in turn causes them suffering). The traditional have-nots—fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals—endured in the past severe sanctions: adultery was a capital crime for the ancient Hebrews and the Puritans, and homosexuality in many cultures, including our own, has been severely proscribed. Those who were born of unwed parents carried the stigma of illegitimacy. More recently in the West, however, the punishment has steadily faded into varied intensities of social disapproval. Today, however, even most of these practices of expressing disapproval are either completely gone or very faint. Fornication, a dominant motif and preoccupation of our massive, ubiquitous amusement industry, has been rendered as just one more lifestyle option, and in mainstream America carries no social disapproval whatsoever. Adultery, while always common, now bears few public sanctions of any kind—witness the complete indifference of general public reaction to the
behavior of national level politicians and other high level figures of authority. The category of unwed motherhood has undergone what has now come to be a familiar, self-esteem-enhancing fiat of linguistic de-stigmatization, re-christened as “single motherhood” or “single parenting.” No shame exists now for out of wedlock childbearing—the effects of its absence are now glaringly apparent in the extensive proliferation over the last four decades of single mothers. Homosexual marriage, as noted above, will, I believe, most likely be legal everywhere in the United States within five to ten years.

Sexual norms and standards of personal behavior were once the prerogative of the family, supported by teaching and sanctions of the church. No longer. Secularization and the television-based amusement culture have nearly completed the route of religious—based sexual morality that was already underway in the 1950s.

Gradually, over the last forty or fifty years, sexual norms have become the professional concern of various and sundry experts, many of them employed by the state. These experts—social workers, counselors, professional educators, sex therapists—often have relatively high levels of formal education with extensive formal credentials, and are compensated and regarded as professionals.

This cluster of helping professions—a high employment growth area in the last forty years—is a locus for an unprecedented concentration of social power, power to intervene in and determine the course of lives, power to enforce State-sponsored values and to entrench at as many social levels as possible representatives of the official ideology. Their jobs are primarily to do what family used to do, but now cannot, that is, look out for the well-being of their children and advance their interests. They offer scientifically-based, enlightened advice and council—with the assistance of the coercive arm of the State. Moreover, they combat the old-fashioned, benighted mores of tradition that are heavily determined by the real enemy, namely traditional religion.

Practitioners of traditional religion tended to regard sexuality, particularly with its great enticement for the young, with some apprehension and suspicion.
Underlying this reticence was a notion that sex was a vastly powerful and wildly irrational business, a potential threat to the stability of all sorts of social institutions and conventions. Without regulation or containment it was dangerous and unpredictable—control and circumscription were essential. Childhood, particularly early childhood, was a period in which children were to be protected from knowledge of advanced sexuality and discouraged from the early practice of it. Sexuality was supposed to be constrained by the family.

The traditional practice of imposing restraint comes into conflict with the personalist view of human behavior which generally eschews such proscription of human impulses and which views the activity of traditional institutions as repressive, manipulative exercises of power. Traditional constraints on the expression of natural inclinations, especially ones of sexuality, are like other traditional constraints, namely instrumentalities of oppression.

The level of restraint to be placed on sexuality—the degree to which sexuality should be free and expressible—is, of course, a major point of contention in the consideration of whether the changes in our institutions, particularly the changes brought about by the “sexual liberation” of the sixties have always been for the best. It is a huge issue because for one reason of the enormous potential motivating power and force of sex to subvert conventions, such as marriage, that offer long-range benefit. And two, the limitation of sexual impulses and inclinations is linked in much modern psychological theorizing to the potential damage to one’s psyche—the repression of sexual impulses is considered to be unhealthy.

Freud was one of the first to theorize about the damage, in the form of neurosis, that sexual restraint, in his terms, “repression,” did to the individual personality. But in some ways, the Viennese neurologist remained true to the tenets of his nineteenth-century, bourgeois Victorian sexual morality. Civilization, he theorized, could only be built by confining—repressing to a great extent—sexual impulses. Freud argued that uninhibited sexuality and a civilized order were incompatible. Also, Freud possessed a rather dark view of human nature—
civilization was at war with, and barely able to prevail over, the instinctual, sexually-driven forces of human nature, which unchecked were powerful and destructive. Freud’s successors liberated themselves from this unduly restrictive perspective of negativity both in theory and practice. The psychotherapeutic trends of the 1960s and 1970s, such as the humanistic psychology of Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, and their positive conceptions of an essentially benign human nature, were major social forces in the overthrow of constrictive, Victorian sexuality and its less sanguine view of human nature. As Ellen Herman notes,

The bulk of twentieth-century psychological thought hypothesized a malignant psychological interior, an awful place where destructive instincts and monstrous terrors lurked, threatening to rip through the veneer of Western civilization. ‘There is no beast in man,’ Rogers wrote defensively in 1953. ‘There is only man in man.... We do not need to be afraid of being ‘merely’ Homo sapiens.’

In the post-World-War-II period Americans underwent a general conversion from a heavily conditioned Christian view of sex—a mixture of suspicion and awe—to an understanding and affirmation of the essential goodness and wholesomeness of the practice of unfettered sex.

The personalist affirmation of the ultimate natural goodness and wholesomeness of sex, the driving view of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, opened up sexuality to a much greater degree than in the past to children. Children are no longer sheltered from knowledge of the details of advanced sexuality. Television is a major preoccupation of the typical American family. The average American watches four to six hours of it per day. Moreover, television has swept aside the post-Victorian taboos on the public discussion and display of sexuality. It is difficult to overestimate how profound the effect of this change really is. The examination of many aspects and details of sexuality on television, once reserved for adults in all of their prurient and voyeuristic dimensions, is commonplace, and children are exposed to the casual presentation of sexual deviation, excess and pathology. Every conceivable sexual perversion and debasement is now accessible on the Internet: communication technology
makes available in an unprecedented fashion the full spectrum of sexual perversity and degradation.

With the spectacular unveiling of President Clinton's own dissolute affinity for sexual adventuring, the most intimate sexual details of the unseemly conduct of the President of the United States became the subject of intense examination and discussion on television. Many pundits evinced resentment toward the President because the revelations of his conduct had introduced oral sex as a regular topic of the evening six o'clock news. How was this to be explained to the children? The resentment, however, was misplaced. Television itself has reconstructed, overturned rather, the norms and conventions surrounding the public discussion of sexuality. Television has invaded every aspect of cultural life. It has swept aside long standing limits governing public discussion, making the both the grotesque and the intimate the subject matter for intrusive public inspection, comment, interpretation and speculation. In a pre-television era, such behavior by a high official would either have been covered up or, if the person were a regular practitioner as our forty-second President appeared to be, he would have eventually been removed from office under some other pretext. But we are now "television-people." Television goes everywhere, looks at everything, knows everything, and tells everything about everyone to everyone. Nothing and no one is exempt from its probing or intrusion. No topic is untouchable. Every event is a potential topic for discussion, ultimately a piece of amusement, diversion, or voyeurism.

Not only is this the case on the programming side of television, but on the commercial side of it as well. There is no distinction between the public and private side of life when it comes to the subject matter for advertising. Every bodily part and function, insofar as some product can be applied to it is a topic for open discussion. Medication for hemorrhoids and drugs for sexual impotence are purveyed by former Vice-Presidents of the United States just like any other product. "Sure [announces a smiling, attractive young woman in a television commercial] I may have genital herpes, but I don't let it get me down." Of course
it doesn't get her down: And, why should it? Why should anyone feel bad about anything? "Feel good about yourself" is the categorical imperative of the mass amusement culture. No constraints or barriers of modesty should intrude particularly when the constraints might impose some inhibition over any endeavor of self-expression or in anyway diminish self-esteem.

Neil Postman has with great acuity observed that one of the most far reaching effects of television has been the destruction of childhood, a protective social creation by bourgeois culture that began over 300 years ago. Children were treated differently than adults—sheltered and protected to a certain extent from the social demands and realities imposed on grown up people. This sheltering was achieved through the creation for and by children of their own unique set of shared symbols. These symbols represented the world differently: by means of them children operated in the world differently. Television has broken down that symbolic world of childhood and pushed children earlier toward operating as adults.

Commercial television is a medium that does not segregate its audience, and therefore all segments of the population share the same symbolic world. You may find in the end the line between adulthood and childhood has been erased entirely.44

Television, as Postman argues, is a great leveler, erasing or obliterating social hierarchies, centuries in the creation, which operate with different sets of symbols. The attempt to rate movies by assigning age-appropriate categories (G, PG, etc.) is a feeble, token gesture by the amusement industry toward the protection of children. Video and digital technology makes access to movies at home by children unlimited. One might also note the irony of the ratings: PG equals "parental guidance," which in a television culture saturated by a near complete reflexive subjectivity begs the question. The parents who are supposed to do the "guiding" were themselves a short time ago children immersed in an amusement medium that has for the last thirty years relentlessly rolled back standards of restraint—more explicit sex, more violence, more vulgarity. Viewing the television shows of the 1950s makes this apparent. What the typical parents of
today let their twelve year-olds watch on television or at the movies would have probably appalled the typical parents of 1950.

The ascendency of personalism has deeply effected the institutions of marriage and the family in America: it has also changed the institution of education. In the traditional family, the elders commanded respect: they possessed a certain authority by virtue of their age and experience, and it was considered natural and appropriate for children to be subordinate to them. Likewise, the practitioner of education in its more traditional forms operated with the assumption that the teacher possessed a rightful authority. Indeed, the teacher was a central authority figure who, ideally, carried out the most important of our cultural labors—helping to transmit the knowledge and wisdom accumulated from the past to future generations. By virtue of that cultural authority, the teacher commanded a certain kind of respect. The subordination of students was regarded as natural and appropriate. But as it is with many other institutions, the authority has been subjected to skepticism and the respect has gradually and inevitably eroded.

One reason why the authority of the teacher has fallen into decline is because the traditional hierarchy of teacher-student subordination has become a suspicious relation of inequality and because the authority was also based on the assumption that the teacher knew something the students did not. But personalism, with its relentless subjectivism, has always resisted the notion that there exists an objective body of knowledge that with confidence can be imparted to others. Again, the thinking of Rousseau is prototypical in its hostility to traditional institutions, in this case traditional education. "Man’s wisdom is but servile prejudice," says Rousseau in his work on education, *Emile*, "his customs but subjection and restraint. From the beginning to the end of life civilized man is a slave." The authority behind the supposed "wisdom" to be passed on to students by the elders is like the political authority of the monarch who rules, a fraud. Following the inspiration of Rousseau, education has come to be conceived as liberation from traditional wisdom and traditional constraints. Education is now
supposed to be less a communication of knowledge or an imparting of values and ideals which have more than a passing or immediate significance, than it is a creative social process of self-affirmation and self-discovery.

Education, like other institutions in the twentieth century, has accommodated itself to the subjective and self-exploratory aims of personalism. For the professional educational establishment, one of the major goals of teaching is to provide for the students assistance in the production of self-esteem. It is the self, the subjective element that has become dominant. What the teacher knows about a given subject seems to be less important than the facility he acquires with the processes of teaching, the processes functioning primarily as methods of liberation.

The traditional student-teacher relationship from the perspective of the personalist must be regarded purely as one of power, a relationship necessarily of inequality and thus suspect. Contemporary educational theory has moved prescriptively against this traditional relationship of subordination: the teacher is supposed to be a “facilitator” and “guide” for supporting the many different “learning styles”—again more subjectivity and relativity. The movement of education as an institution, as it is with the development of many of our institutions, has tended to be away from formal relationships, particularly expressed in hierarchically defined roles, to informal, so-called collaborative relationships.

The “lecture” as a pedagogical tool has an obsolescence status analogous to the “horse and buggy” as a means of transportation, in large part because traditional lecturing competes at an obvious disadvantage with modern technology. Lecturing is purely verbal and in a society where the visual has risen to ascendancy, words alone are no longer interesting, moving, or influential. But the lecture as a major pedagogical tool also has fallen into disfavor because it prevailed in a social setting rife with traditional hierarchical associations. A lecture is properly delivered by someone who speaks with knowledge and authority: thus in a society where knowledge is relativized and authority is viewed
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as a cover for naked power, lecturing, as an educational method, represents dogmatic and authoritarian ways of the old order. Lecturing, more generally, also carries disagreeable moralistic connotations—someone having to endure unwanted advice or instruction.

Technology develops an increasingly important role in education, and while it offers enormous possibilities, its expansion at the same time, creates more interconnections and associations with the world of amusement. Disappearing is the role model of the teacher as an embodiment of something he or she teaches.

College and universities are inhabited by a cynical professoriate who initiate the unsuspecting students in the ways of anti-wisdom commonly known as post modernism. Post modernism, with much fanfare, has arrived in full force and with the fullest enmity toward everything traditional. The term itself has invited derision. The philosopher, Leszek Kolakowski says that:

I do not know what postmodern is and how it differs from premodern, nor do I feel that I ought to know. And what might come after the postmodern? The post-postmodern, the neo-postmodern, the neo-antimodern?6

However, post modernism might best be characterized, as the most fully articulated, openly personalist form of reaction to the traditional authoritative structure of the academic world. It represents yet another social revolution, this one against traditional scholarship, conducted by the students in the 1960s, who are now the professoriate. And this revolution leads us once again to recall Tocqueville’s maxim that “there are no revolutions that do not shake existing belief, enervate authority, and throw doubts over commonly received ideas.” Traditional scholarship in both its humanistic and scientific manifestations was guided by certain assumptions, methods and ideals. The assumption operating in traditional scholarship, naive, from the post modernist perspective, was that there was an objective order that could be known, albeit in some imperfect way, and which could be truthfully described and characterized. Evidence that related to the subject matter of inquiry or a point of theoretical contention could be gathered and evaluated and arguments advanced, established or refuted. Detachment from
self-interest, objectivity, and impartiality were the moral and intellectual ideals surrounding what was believed to be an activity through which human beings could produce objective knowledge about their own condition as well as the actual constitution of the world.

Post modern theorists have devoted their energies to assaulting these “foundationalist” assumptions and values. For the post modernist, the moral and methodological ideal of detachment and the goal of objectivity are ruses used to dissimulate the undeserved possession of power and privilege that is inevitably linked to officially certified domains of “knowledge.” The ideal of objectivity is at the same time a fraud—perpetuated by the dominant group—and an illusion, a particularly cruel one it seems for the members of the non-dominant, “marginalized” groups. Knowledge-claims from a personalist-Rousseau perspective should be understood as an attempt to create what might be called intellectual property: and property, we know from Rousseau, is an arbitrary contrivance used to make invidious distinctions between people and create unjust hierarchies. What was for centuries an expanding, objective body of knowledge, open for exploration to anyone who would take up the methods and undergo the discipline, under the post modern critique has been revealed to be a domain of ideology, a massive social edifice of privilege and prejudice. Scholarship in the traditional sense of objectivity and detachment is thus a reactionary pretense, and the course of action for the post modern theorist would be to demonstrate the power-corrupted features of all purported objective knowledge, to “deconstruct” all knowledge and truth claims into revelations of relations of power and exploitation.

French feminist Luce Irigaray asserts in proper post modern parlance that logical precision, objectivity, and clarity of thought are aspects of a “phallocratic” imposition. The rules of grammar and of logic, she argues, have always been a patriarchal trap for women. To escape this trap women should:

[t]urn everything upside down, inside out, back to front. Rack it with radical convulsions.... Overthrow syntax by suspending its eternally teleological order.... It is still better to speak in riddles,
allusions, hints, parables. Even if asked to clarify a few points. Even if people plead that they just don’t understand. After all, they have never understood... So why not double the misprision to the point of exasperation. 47

Indeed, why not? Again, we have a theorist prescribing revolution as the normal mode of operation—the “overthrow” of syntax and a deliberate strategy of chaos and confusion at the intellectual level analogous to upheaval and destructiveness one would find during the course of a political revolution—and for what purpose? Political revolutions in themselves are usually violent and destructive. Purportedly they are conducted either to return to a legitimate order of the past or to lead to something better, in either case something that in the future becomes established and non-revolutionary. But for the post moderns, revolution, subversion, and destruction seem to have become ends in themselves—“revolution for the hell of it,” as Abbie Hoffman quite properly understood and to which he gave his apt expression for the sheer nihilism underlying the whole project. Irigaray also seems to propose a revolution for the hell of it.

Traditional scholarship, with its constraints, its norms of objectivity and evidence, and its insistence on clear and precise expression is another convention—hypocritical at its base—that must be dismantled and exposed as a self-interested instrument for the perpetuation of inequality. The post modern critic has mastered the ad hominem attack. The traditional scholar himself must be brought to the dock and prosecuted—his interests, his motives, his methods are revealed to be part of the typical repressive apparatus of those who make up the existing power structure.

For the eighteenth-century Roussean proponents of equality, the church was the enemy. The priests were in league with the kings: religion was a reactionary cover to celebrate undeserved authority. It is impossible to deny that the traditional church has historically been an institution that has both created and at times vigorously defended many different forms of inequality. Clearly, the traditional church is fundamentally incompatible with the modern ideals of personalism and the open hostility it bears to all forms of “social inequality.” For
the personalist the traditional church is an out-of-date, reactionary corporate body, a striking exemplar of an institution that constrains, and that divides the world into spiritual classes of haves and have-nots. A church is by its nature a highly exclusive community. The generally pervasive practice of religious persecution throughout history, upon reflection, makes it obvious how much the church as a community of believers turns out be a corporate entity that self-consciously, pridefully, sets itself apart from others. The history of religious and ecclesiastical persecution bears this out. Gibbon’s Christians were persecuted by the pagans because of their disdain for the traditional gods and their deliberate acts of setting themselves apart from the social community.

It might therefore be expected, that they [the non-Christian Romans] would unite with indignation against any sect or people which should separate itself from the communion of mankind, and claiming the exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should disdain every form of worship, except its own, as impious and idolatrous.48

The Christians had incurred the resentment of their fellow citizens by setting themselves up quite conspicuously as a class of ‘haves’, claiming, as Gibbon puts it, in the property-terms of ‘mine and thine’, “the exclusive possession of divine knowledge.”

A church is a community of believers. Yet more than belief holds the community together and keeps it intact. Such a community is also strongly affective. The church unites around a set of beliefs or ideals that affords its members moral and emotional sustenance for enduring life’s adversities and provides them with important guidance for making life’s decisions. Even the most non-sectarian churches affirm some action-guiding beliefs or ideals. Unitarians enthusiastically espouse the practice of tolerance and open-mindedness and reject Fundamentalist notions of religion expressed in creed and dogma. Unitarians would also be reluctant to include in their midst those who themselves were not inclusive, tolerant and non-dogmatic. They would not tolerate the intolerant.

Religious belief advances a doctrine or creed, or a set of principles or ideals which affirms certain spiritual or moral truths and realities. Not believing,
not affirming what the church doctrine or creed affirms has always been the basis for exclusion. If you do not believe that what the church says is true or espouse the principles it proclaims, then you cannot or should not be one of its members. The compulsion here is both logical and moral. It makes no sense to aspire to membership in a community of practicing believers and not share the basic beliefs, just as it would be hypocritical to espouse the beliefs and not observe the moral practices that follow from the beliefs. In a word, the institutional church as a community of believers puts a constraint on belief. The constraint is not just limited to belief. This by itself grossly violates the spirit of personalism with its high value on personal expression and personal freedom. Belief, however, entails practice. Practice is linked to virtue or at least an exemplification of the ideals and an affirmation of the principles. To the extent that one puts into actual practice the beliefs of the faith, one supposedly emulates God and achieves a certain saintliness or moral goodness. Both of these, belief and practice, must be in place and in some way evident or demonstrable. Rejection of either places one outside of the church, outside the reach of salvation, enlightenment, blessedness or whatever may be the ultimate spiritual goal that the church holds up for its members.

Thus as modern day Rousseans, we observe yet another profound manifestation of life’s inequalities created by, or acknowledged and perpetuated by the church—the spiritual orders of the saved and the damned, sinners and saints, orthodox and heretics, the enlightened and the unenlightened. Given the profundity and suggestiveness of the inequality, one can understand why so many ferocious wars of religion have been fought and why so many people have been killed contending over spiritual beliefs and ideas. One, of course, could not conceive of a more invidious set of have and have-not classes, especially when these spiritual states of being are linked to a future state of eternal existence or spiritual rewards and punishments. This is deeply troubling for the personalist: the “saved” person turns out to be the analog, in the spiritual-moral realm, to Rousseau’s property owner in the material-economic order—someone who
possesses something of immense value (salvation) that someone else does not, and for fortuitous reasons. There but for the grace of God go I! A gross inequity! A completely egalitarian God would be the only kind acceptable to the Roussean. The moral and spiritual gulf between the saved and the damned, the sinner and the saint, the enlightened and the benighted, remains every bit as incomprehensible and deplorable as the terrible distance we all see that separates the rich from the poor. If material poverty is wretched, unfair, and a driving force of despair, spiritual disparities must be even more so.

Such invidious, gross inequalities are unpalatable for the late-twentieth-century church that has assimilated the personalist perspective and orientation and a completely subjective view of moral and spiritual reality. Doctrine, refined by the ecclesiastical hierarchy, the actual substance of belief and affirmation, is scarcely worth contending for. Materialism and skepticism have eroded the creedral importance of church teaching and whatever confidence there may have been in spiritual truth and reality. And, with the creed weakened or dissolved, and with the spiritual realm cast into fleeting shadows, it is increasingly difficult to defend any sort of traditionally established inequalities that might in any way appeal to or be supported by, explicitly or implicitly, the creed.

What remains for the twenty-first century church? Perhaps to purvey values that have gained ascendancy but are essentially secular: toleration, inclusion, and acceptance are widely, embraced values but are doctrinally neutral. Not only that, these values are formal rather than substantive, that is, they provide a general guide on how we usually ought to act—we should generally be tolerant, inclusive, and accepting, etc.—however, they provide no substance or specific direction since we can never be nor would we want to be completely tolerant, and cannot include everything in our registry of moral approval nor accept just anything as permissible. The destiny of the church, perhaps, is to become another social service agency that will combine therapy with some soothing, hollowed-out rituals to administer to the abounding social pathologies in the last forty years that have beset so many individuals and families.
Unfortunately for our hedonistic, amusement-oriented society, religion in its most vital manifestations is militant, with a streak that is both self-denying and/or dogmatic. Because religion for millennia concerned itself at least in part with the immaterial, with the larger concerns of life, death, meaning, and all the abstract, spiritual issues, its practitioners must be passionate, intense and committed in order for the religion to be attractive and compelling. Tepid, timid, qualified religion fails to move people. It lacks appeal, which is probably why membership in mainline churches has declined so precipitously over the last thirty years. Military religion assaults, confronts, conquers. The devout, politically powerless Christians, as Gibbon told us, eventually with their great zeal and conviction helped to topple the empire of pagan Rome, an empire in which they began as an invisible minority. Muhammad's impassioned followers swept across three continents in less than two hundred and fifty years and established the sign of the crescent that symbolized a great world religion. When a religion becomes completely tolerant, accepting and inclusive, what serious attraction can it hold? What makes people and institutions interesting and alluring is what sets them apart from others.

What militancy remains in Christianity, apart from the despised fundamentalists, comes mainly from the personalist egalitarian critics who are often explicit and open about their intentions to dismantle or completely restructure the traditional church. In a recently published volume From Queer to Eternity, self-described "queer theorist" author, Peter Sweasey, in his discussion of gay worship within traditional, that is, orthodox religious settings, expresses these intentions openly.

Although these queers are worshiping within orthodox religions, they are not even taking orthodox positions. They are not following orders, nor turning a blind eye. Their presence does not validate the mistakes and prejudice of those in power. Instead, queers are a thorn in their side—and a catalyst for change. Queers are reforming them from the inside; or maybe even detonating from within. 

Note the thematic continuity of Sweasey's language with Irigaray's, above.
Sweasey urges the "detonating" of the churches; Irigaray calls for "radical convulsions" in our uses of language. The desire for deliberate, wholesale destruction drives these writers. One is struck throughout these post modern critiques by the violence of the language and the motivations of moralistic resentment and aggrievement behind it.

It would be difficult to find a more clear and direct summary of a personalist view that states how the traditionally "disinherited" are to play an aggressive, adversarial role directed toward dismantling the traditional institutions. In this case the feat is accomplished by a kind of guerilla action from the inside against the spiritual establishment—riddled and thus de-legitimized by its "mistakes and prejudice." From the tendentious tone of the observation one would gather that the preference is for "detonation" of the orthodox religions over the "reforming" of them. Difficult to imagine, though, is what structural or authoritative apparatus could be in place in most any church today such that its members would even find themselves in the position of not wanting to be "following orders." Is he joking here? Where, given all the choices available and the general skepticism of any kind of authority today, are the churches in which orders are barked out to submissive parishioners by the elders or the clergy? We have traversed light years from Calvin's Geneva or New England Puritan Congregationalism. Sweasey continues:

'Lesbians and gay men, together with feminists, liberation and black theologians, are reclaiming the Christian tradition from the underside,' believes Eric Bond, an Anglican. 'I believe the outcome will be invigorating. It may lead to the death of the Church as we know it and that may be no bad thing. What will replace it will be exiting, nurturing and subversive.'

One notes the casual, "who cares?" prediction for the destruction of the traditional institution, "the Church as we know it." But that "death" is for Bond and Sweasey, just as well because the church is obsolete and repressive and whatever it becomes will be much better anyway. The old, the traditional seems flat and dull—certainly not "stimulating." The successor to the traditional church is also "subversive," although once the subversion completes the destruction that it has
so diligently sought it is not clear what is left to subvert. Subversion, consistent with the post modern radical stance, appears always to be an end in itself—revolution for the hell of it. An institution, however, cannot remain perpetually subversive: it must at some point attempt to affirm, uphold and defend something as well. The claim that the overthrow of the old Church will be “nurturing” is a piece of self-congratulations that is thrown in to help affirm the moral self-superiority of these ecclesiastical guerillas. These nurturing subversives stand in sharp contrast against the oppressive, obsolete enforcers of the old order and make obvious the necessity for its overthrow. Sweasey’s posture toward the church with all of its revolutionary élan is just a particular instance of what is a general perspective of personalism and its reflexive affinity for the destruction of what is old and established.

Thus, as we step into the twenty-first century and begin making our way in the third millennium A.D., we survey our institutions—families, schools, and churches—and come to realize not only how much they have been transformed in just the last forty or fifty years, but what moral and spiritual effects this transformation has brought and what it portends for the future. These momentous changes, as we have seen, have their roots in social and technological developments, but also, and more importantly, in ideas that are religious and philosophical. For whatever reason, human beings need in a most basic, primal sense to possess some central moral or spiritual principle that enables them to give order and purpose to their lives and to make sense of a short, precarious span of existence that culminates in physical dissolution. What can a human life be that goes nowhere and is merely a succession of diversions, inclinations, re-inventions and acquisitions; and how can it go anywhere without some guiding principle or ideal? Nihilism presses in on us. Modern existence (the last three or four hundred years) with the fragmentation and compartmentalization of life and with the specialization and professionalization of knowledge, has made it difficult, perhaps impossible, to find and sustain such an organizing principle or system of belief.
But it has been especially the last fifty years, with the ascendancy of personalism and its exaltation of the mutating self against the authority of traditional institutions that the dismantlement of belief in the true and sacred has occurred. In 1948, Richard Weaver lamented that modern man:

is in the deep and dark abyss, and he has nothing with which to raise himself. His life is practice without theory. As problems crowd upon him, he deepens confusion by meeting them with ad hoc policies. Secretly he hungers for truth but consoles himself with the thought that life should be experimental. He sees his institutions crumbling and rationalizes with talk of emancipation.\(^{31}\)

Practice without theory—in just three words Weaver captured fifty years ago what would be the unintended social culmination of the personalist quest—a descent into enthusiastic but meaningless self-assertion. He clearly recognized how destructive of our institutions the deep subjective forces of personalism would be, how the “talk”—the ceaseless propaganda of revolution, subversion, liberation, and the “ad hoc” invention of social policies would become an essential part of our frantic social and political routines. Underneath all the usual commotion, however, is a corrosive, unremitting nihilism—“Revolution for the hell of it”—brash, vulgar words from a passionate, theory-less practitioner of destruction. These words betray a wild, angry and desperate need to do something important, to remake the world, but with no ultimate reason why. Practice without theory indeed! Revolution has become the way of modern life, ironically ordinary and routine as it reaches everywhere and touches everything and turns it over. The “liberation” that we have come to embrace with so much enthusiasm over these recent decades has turned out to be a stepping out into a free-falling “abyss.” With the inward turn and the restless quest to discover the essence of our deep subjective selves, we have become human beings caught up in a furious process of endless experimentation, inventing, reinventing ourselves, tearing apart our institutions and then decrying the desolation that must inevitably follow.
Chapter Three: Endnotes


38. Firestone, *Dialectic of Sex*, 72.


40. Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, 1, 345.


50. Sweasey, *From Queer to Eternity*, 76.
