

## **Tributaries to Gebser's Social Thought**

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Gebser's archeology of consciousness with its unstoppable gravitation toward its natural immanence contains a vital core of social philosophy.

He despised both Nazism and Communism without becoming an ideological spokesman of Western-style consumer capitalism. He saw crisis coming "big time," ushering in renewal.

Mutation toward universally "intensified awareness" (Gebser, 1984 -- henceforth EPO -- p. 335) means the liberation of the individual from anxiety (EPO, pp. 360 and 361) and alienation manifest in "isolation and collectivism" (EPO, p. 358). How could such a portentous transformation occur without a change in the substance and form and politics, without new, hitherto unseen social and economic institutions, without a new statecraft, without a new form of global self-organization? Despite his occasional beatific overtones and his generally theoretic-aesthetic disposition, Gebser was not a pessimistic quietist.

Besides his brush with the brown-shirts in the nascent Third Reich and witnessing the agonies of Spain, what further personal experiences and sources shaped Gebser's views about history, society, and the future?

The presumption that philosophical greats like Miguel de Unamuno y Jugo (1864-1936) and Jose Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), who were present on the Spanish cultural scene during the Second Republic had a major influence on Gebser needs to be discarded.

EPO cites Unamuno only once in an endnote (p. 417, note 117) as one of several authors whose views on religious philosophy were outside the tome's interest. Ortega is mentioned twice in the text (three times among the endnotes). Gebser agrees with his famous "Truth is man's agreement with himself" (EPO, p. 437), but sharply disagrees with his take on perspectival thinking.

For Ortega, "perspective" is related to subjective inner perceptions, each of which represents a separate, respectable comprehension of reality, an idea that he considered to be in perfect harmony with Einstein's special theory of relativity. Just as any particular observation of a physical phenomenon through a subjective frame of reference provides a valid insight into absolute reality, so do the varied expressions of gifted individuals into the dynamism of the human world. Ortega's perspectivism was enthusiastically embraced by artists and writers as liberation from the shackles of formalism, romanticism, and social transformation-blocking relativism. His brand of perspectivism may be regarded as an early postmodern manifesto that signaled a high-visibility green light to iconoclast vanguardism, including nonrepresentational art, which so forcefully demanded public recognition during the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In Ortega's defense, there is no contradiction between his perspectivism and his refusal of relativism. Universal moral and aesthetic values do exist, he maintained, but their view from individual perspectives may have an infinite variety.

Gebser's understanding was totally different. To quote:

“Ortega y Gasset, speaking as *espectador* or “spectator” associates his *perspectiva particular* (personal perspective) with truth, subsuming it into the trinity of a visual, intellectual, and evaluative perspective where not just real or imagined, but also particularly desired and dreamed of things are united...Our concept of perspectivity has little to do with such a definition ...” (EPO, p. 255).

Gebser considers “perspectival thinking” an attitude that confines us within spatial limitations and excludes the possibility of truly comprehending the whole (EPO, p. 18). Although without it we could not locate facts and events in space and spatialized time and, therefore, could not effectively conceptualize (EPO, p. 61), this eminently mental attribute turns estimation into arrogant, presumptuous calculation (EPO, p. 255); eventually deteriorating into a deficient mode of approaching problems; evocative of Platonic diaeresis (that is, subdividing, hairsplitting); a persistent hyper-analytical narrowing from the general to the particular (EPO, p. 258) leading, through reverse induction, as it were, toward single-minded intellectualism that deprives man of his qualitative potentiality (EPO, p. 429).

How about the poet and dramatist Federico Garcia Lorca (1898-1936), who must have been instrumental in evening the path of Gebser's life and career on Spanish soil? Lorca was a nationwide celebrity, a darling of antimonarchic, anti-clerical Spain, who maintained his commitment to the republic even after the communists began to dominate it following the Popular Front's election victory in February 1936. It is quite reasonable to assume that it was Lorca who helped Gebser attain an important position in the Ministry of Culture. But as far as developing Gebser's social thought, we look in vain for his influence in EPO.

At one place, Gebser praises Lorca for the crafty skill deployed in advancing his magically and psychically ambivalent nihilism (EPO, pp. 493 and 494) and at another he refers to him, along with James Joyce and Austrian writer, dramatist Hugo von Hofmannsthal, as authors who dared to break stylistic traditions by starting sentences with the conjunctive word “and” (EPO, p. 500).

Then came the years in Paris! And what a time it was to be there!

With the simultaneous presence of Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Giacometti, Leger, Braque, Miro i Ferra, Malraux, Gide, Dali, and Joyce, the French capital of the interwar period was bursting with a concentration of creative talent and energy unparalleled in the modern era. (Perhaps only the long history of Plato’s academy and Aristotle’s Lyceum beginning in the fourth century BCE prevents one from venturing the ultimate generalization.)

By the time of Gebser’s arrival in November 1936, the far-leftist *Front Populaire* was in charge of France’s government. Though by mid-1937 it was out of power, the spirit of the cafes, bars, studios, salons and galleries around the bohemian hub of Montparnasse remained radically anti-bourgeois and antifascist.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Gertrude Stein, whose salon was a central venue for the congregation of some of the best known figures of 20<sup>th</sup> century art and literature, returned to the United States in 1934. Thus, Gebser did not meet most of the American contingent of extraordinary talents.

Was exposure to this Marxist-leaning political atmosphere on the Rive Gauche alone sufficient to account for Gebser's conviction that the civilization he observed was untenable and that one day it would be replaced by a better one? Hypothetically, of course, the answer is "no."

Gebser had personal contacts with Picasso (EPO, pp. 27 and 28) whose temporic concreteness (i.e., making figures transparent by showing them front, side, and back at the same time) served to demonstrate the advancement of integral consciousness in the arts. But this influence did not translate into a social theory. Gebser certainly had conversations with Spanish Civil War veteran Malraux, who, just like his close friend Gide, already had serious reservations about Soviet communism.

Among EPO's postwar sources, we find approving quotes from Swiss political economists Fritz Marbach and Christian Gasser. The first criticized economics for ignoring human qualities in its investigations (EPO, p. 428) and the second argued that the "working man" must not become a mere expense factor, a quantitative element (EPO, 428 and 429).

Gebser had also made enthusiastic references to Elton Mayo and F.J. Roethlisberger, associates of the Industrial Research Department at Harvard University; to French economist George Friedmann, and to Norbert Wiener ("the father of cybernetics") who famously said that "any use of a human being in which less is demanded of him and less is attributed to him than his full status, is a degradation and a waste" (EPO, p. 429).

The motives and thoughts of all these individuals mesh perfectly with progressive postwar Western liberalism.

To see Gebser more clearly, let us light up our macrohistoric markers.

So far, the world has known two global systems. The first one, GS1, characterized as *laissez faire/zero multilateralism/metal money* was born in the mid-1830s and fell apart with the outbreak of World War I. The second global system, GS2, has existed since the end of World War II. In telegraph style, it may be called *mixed economy/weak multilateralism/fractional reserve money*.

In my own project, *New Historical Materialism*, the “1914-1945” period is considered the chaotic transition that led from GS1 to GS2. One is not mistaken by designating the first as “classical” and the second as “reformed” capitalism. There are major differences between the two. Whereas Capital enjoyed nearly absolute power over Labor under GS1, GS2 is based on a compromise between the two. Labor can bargain collectively, workers enjoy unconditional legal and political enfranchisement in industrial democracies; respect and dignity in all spheres of life. From being a mere watchman of

private property under GS1, the role of the state has increased to that of a responsible director of economic and social development. The international community had no framework of cooperation under GS1. As of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it has had the United Nations with its many charter organizations.

While Gebser's attitude toward the postwar world is one of recognition accorded to work in progress, GS2 was clearly not his *ultima Thule*.

Hence the question: Why was he so strongly critical of modernity's obsession with progress and so deeply convinced that the increasingly deficient mental structure was degrading society; that overwhelming forces were pushing and pulling the world toward a teleological attractor that signified a deeper understanding of the species' existence, toward a more satisfying, more balanced, healthier individual life, with open spaces for creative self-actualization? The mutational phenomenology of consciousness is inseparable from the external world, from the reified relational structure of social and economic life. Although Gebser never talks about capitalism *per se*, he knew that even the postwar reformed economic system relied on the

private ownership of the means of production and on the market. And could a classless society envisaged by Marx and Engels be anything but arational?

We need to examine his relationship with Marxism!

Part 2 of EPO provides evidence of the rise of the aperspectival world by describing three of its canonical manifestations: (1) the consideration of time; (2) the supersession of dualism; and (3) the tendency toward arationality.

Section 2, “Sociology and Economics” in Chapter 7, which is dedicated to the social sciences, begins by describing the first manifestation (“the consideration of time”) with a reference to Marx (EPO, p. 427).

In a sociological sense, Gebser explains, time irrupted with the French Revolution. That epoch-making singularity conveyed a simple message: Laboring people are more important than those for whom they labor. With one more step of abstraction: The time working people spend working is the foundation of civilization. The formalization of this view was a merit that Gebser correctly attributed to the Marxian labor theory of value (LTV).

While all LTVs shared the underlying conviction that the amount of labor spent in producing a commodity determines its value, Marx's ideas stood markedly apart from those promulgated by his classical predecessors -- most prominently by Adam Smith and David Ricardo, as well as from those of his eminent contemporary, John Stuart Mill.

Marx's LTV was more temporic (more preoccupied with time) than any comparable approach because its central theme was the workday; how and why it was split into necessary and surplus labor, this second being, of course, expropriated profit.

By considering the means of production or real capital dead labor (or congealed labor in some translations) Marx *de facto* presentiated; that is, eliminated the dividing line between the past and the present. Although we find the same feature at Ricardo (who defined capital as "stored up labor"), Marx's approach was much more intense and explicit, if not dramatic. To quote: "Capital is dead labor, that vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks." (Marx, 1906, p. 257.)

Specifically, Marx rejected the proposition of other proponents of the LTV whereby profits originated from the abstinence of the capitalist. According to this doctrine, an individual becomes a capitalist by refraining from consumption; so that he may use his judiciously accumulated savings as capital to launch his entrepreneurial undertakings. Marx ridiculed this reasoning claiming that profits are essentially unpaid labor.

Marx also criticized economic authorities for not considering wages income. National income in his time was defined as the sum of rents, interests, profits, and royalties; wages were deducted as cost. Today, characteristic of the compromise between Labor and Capital worked out during the American

New Deal, wages appear on national income accounts both as cost and income [1].

Gebser cites Marx with approval for attributing qualitative value to labor, for advancing the process he called “the emancipation of the left;” that is, the correction of social and economic injustices implied by the exclusive rule of the right. These two reasons are really one since Gebser regarded time as quality (EPO, p. 285); accepting labor as time means attributing qualitative value to it.

Marx was eminently temporic also because he placed his LTV into a broad historiographical context [2]. He did this in a way that avoided some fundamental errors that Gebser found in Hegel. Whereas the mighty thinker considered history in a way that left the past behind like a mere corpse (EPO, p. 43), the father of scientific socialism saw the present as coming from the living womb of the past. Indeed, there are no rigid epochal breaks between his socioeconomic formations. Marx “presentiated” in a Gebserian sense. Whereas with Hegel, history ends with the complete self-unfolding of the Absolute Spirit, Marx expounded upon what may lay behind the ideal stage his theory envisaged (EPO, p. 488). Marx and Engels considered the universal process leading to world revolution mankind’s prehistory.

Marxian voices also echo from Gebser's complaints about alienation, apropos growing dependence on technology (EPO, p. 41) and the consequent debilitating transformation of man into a mere instrumentality of the machine (EPO, p. 133). Gebser eloquently criticized the industrial economy's obsession with time and quantity to the detriment of quality and individual wholeness (EPO, p. 428).

The following is a quote:

“Through the subordination of man to the machine the situation arises in which men are effaced by their labor ... Time is everything, man is nothing; he is at the most the incarnation of time. Quality no longer matters. Quantity alone decides everything...”

This sounds like Gebser but it was actually Marx who said it in the *Poverty of Philosophy*, as quoted by Georg Lukacs in his *History and Class Consciousness* (Lukacs, 1999, pp. 89 and 90) first published in 1923.

Marx vilified capitalism for reducing human efforts to a line segment representing the workday. In a remarkably consonant fashion, Gebser saw the liberation of man in the “dequantification of time” (EPO, p. 429).

But familiarity with the writings of Marx, Gebser, and Lukacs proffers the thesis that Gebser's understanding of Marxist philosophy originated mainly in secondary sources, including Lukacs, whom he must have read with great care.

To use concrete examples –

Lukacs paraphrases Marx (from Part IV, Chapter XII of *Das Kapital*) in this fashion:

“... time sheds its qualitative, variable, flowing nature; it freezes into an exactly delimited, quantifiable continuum filled with quantifiable ‘things’ (the reified, mechanically objectified ‘performance’ of the worker, wholly separated from his total human personality): in short, it becomes space” (Lukacs, 1999, p. 90).

This is pure Gebser. He also talks about the quantitative and spatial emphasis of the mental structure (EPO, pp. 139 and 173), underscoring the harm that comes from the spatialization of time and the conversion of intensities into spatial extensities (EPO, p. 353), bringing with it the ever-increasing reification of the world (EPO, p. 139) and the disintegration of human personality (EPO, p. 22).

Overlap in the use of the word “reification” (*Verdinglichkeit*) is, by itself, worth a moment of reflection. This Marxian concept was central for Lukacs. One of his best known works is, in fact, *Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat*. He connected the unmodifiable structure of socioeconomic relations to individual consciousness, more specifically to its rationalistic deformation:

“... a relation between people,” he asserted “takes on the character of a thing and thus acquires a ‘phantom objectivity,’ an autonomy that seems so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people” (Lukacs, 1999, p. 83).

We can detect a similar thought in EPO:

“The space-time world is the stage, as it were, on which consciousness itself is capable of being actual and efficacious. The reification attendant upon this is evident because the increasing consciousness summons forth an increasing materialization” (EPO, p. 137).

Of course, Gebser ties materialization to the quantitative emphasis of the rational attitude (EPO, p. 139).

Lukacs blamed capitalism for breaking the centuries-long bond between handicraft and narrowly interpreted art in providing such necessities of daily life as furniture, clothes, and dwellings (Lukacs, 1999, p. 236).

Gebser also complains about the loss of artistic skills in workmanship. “The rootlessness and homelessness of today’s salaried employees and factory workers,” he wrote, “their remoteness from any sensitivity to art and their notorious ‘objectivity’ are only too obvious proofs of the *loss of nature and art* which man has endured now for several generations” (EPO, p. 306).

Gebser considered atomization the end-result of the mental structure’s self-destructive rampage to quantify, divide and subdivide in the aggressive conquest of space (EPO, pp. 60 and 536). This is not far from Lukacs who said: “The atomization of the individual is, then, only the reflex in consciousness of the fact that the ‘natural laws’ of capitalist production have been extended to cover every manifestation of life in society...” (Lukacs, 1999, pp. 91 and 92).

Like Lukacs, Gebser attributed great importance to the temporal development of systematization. For Gebser, the proliferation of philosophical systems coincided with a proportional decrease of mythical elements (EPO, p. 84). For Lukacs, the development of mental comprehension through systematization coincided with the coming of age of capitalism. “System” as the focus of thinking, he maintained, first appeared vaguely in classical Greek philosophy to become central with Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant (Lukacs, 1999, p. 211, n. 11).

Both authors regarded the imperial rule of rationality as a transitional phase (EPO, pp. 73-97; Lukacs, 1999, pp. 116, 117, 139, 210, n. 4, and 233). But whereas Lukacs considered the appearance, gathering strength, predominance, and immoderation of rationality an epiphenomenon of the triumph and decay of capitalism; Gebser placed the same sequence into the mutational momenta of consciousness.

They both saw a close relationship among egoism, rigidification, isolation and the pursuit of narrowly rational, perspectival goals.

Lukacs: “For the ‘freedom’ of the men who are alive now is the freedom of the individual isolated by the fact of property which both reifies and is itself reified. It is a freedom *vis-à-vis* the other (no less isolated) individuals. A

freedom of the egoist, of the man who cuts himself off from the others, a freedom for which solidarity and community exist at best only as ineffectual ‘regulative ideas’” (Lukacs, 1999, p. 315).

“... the haptification of space rigidifies and encapsulates the ‘I’ with the resultant possibility of isolation evident in egocentrism,” says Gebser (EPO, p. 22); further specifying that the overemphasized ego of the deficient mental phase is inclined to a “pendulation between isolation and rigidification” (EPO, p. 151).

Deeply acculturated ruthlessness and greed, manifest in competitive acquisitiveness, debars the individual from its wholeness, dehumanizing society via capitalism by turning the producer into a commodity in the thought-world of Lukacs (Lukacs, 1999, p. 92); by atomization and de-individuation, according to Gebser (EPO, p. 537).

The emergence of the integral man is an essential part of Gebser’s meta-sociology, and yes, Lukacs also talks about restoring the individual to its wholeness (Lukacs, 1999, pp. 139, 319, and 320).<sup>3</sup>

Both dwelled on the historical emersion of transparency.

“The past only becomes transparent when the present can practice self-criticism...” says Lukacs (Lukacs, 1999, p. 237). “Until that time the past

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<sup>3</sup> It is noteworthy in this respect that Lukacs urged sociologists to examine the wealth of the pre-capitalist past beyond the work of Engels. Cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1955, p. 77.

must either be naively identified with the structure of the present or else it is held to be wholly alien, barbaric and senseless, beyond all understanding.”

(Ibid.)

Gebser's diaphaneity is, of course, the ever-present spiritual origin shining through rather than world history revealing its necessity through the overthrow of capitalism by the victorious proletariat. Nevertheless, Gebser's diaphaneity also implies a critical stance of the individual toward itself.

Self-criticism (EPO, p. 368) linked to ego-transcending “transclarification”

(EPO, p. 529) is a precondition of making sense of the past that mental

consciousness in its deficient phase regards either as a periodizable

progression toward its present-day perfection or annuls it through arguing

that there is nothing new under the sun. (See point ii. under [5].)

How will that better future associated with integral consciousness emerge?

Although Gebser never uttered deft political statements, he also did not

believe that the rosy dawn would fall into the lap of mankind without ardent, conscious struggle.

Both rejected nationalism and so-called progress.

Lukacs, like all Marxists, attributed nationalist sentiments to a capitalist ruse to distract the masses' attention from class warfare (Lukacs, 1999, p. 265).

Gebser thought it was a passing phenomenon of three-dimensional static thinking (EPO, p. 291).

Progress was a misleading notion for both, although for different reasons.

Gebser saw it as a rationalistic cliché (EPO, pp. 37 and 38) that helped mask movement away from the origin (EPO, pp. 41 and 131). For Lukacs it was a tool of bourgeois ideology to minimize social problems and assume their automatic resolution (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1955, p. 49, n. 2).

But their thoughts intersected again when it came to exposing the fallacy of technical advance as the taproot of progress. Gebser was convinced that man's technological overconfidence, a touchstone of the modern notion of progress (EPO, p. 545), was leading Western civilization to its suicide (EPO, p. 357) by "fulfilling the law of the Earth" (EPO, p. 96); justifying gloomy presentiments (EPO, p. 158, n. 23). Lukacs claimed that the much-lauded infinite progress in service of private profits only hastened the breaking forth of capitalistic contradictions (Lukacs, 1999, p. 161).

They both pointed at the erroneous nature of the polar opposites of voluntarism and fatalism.

Lukacs warned against the fatalistic underestimation of what people can actually accomplish in concrete socio-historical situations as well as against the voluntaristic overestimation of what the leader can do (Lukacs, 1999, p. 318).

Gebser considered fatalism or blind belief in destiny a manifestation of mythical consciousness, a kind of helplessness from which mental man attempts to flee through volition (EPO, pp. 148, 173, and 300). He underscored that mutation is not a volitional phenomenon (EPO, p. 41); nor can it be grasped as a necessity in the way three-dimensional man's perspectival mind would conceptualize it (EPO, p. 358).

Navigating between the Scylla of man charting his course as if he were the master of his fate and the Charybdis of being born helplessly by forces he cannot comprehend, both thinkers anchored their insights to consciousness groping toward clarity (EPO, p. 136; Merleau-Ponty, 1955, pp. 92 and 93).

The similarity of critique leveled at Protagoras is remarkable. While Gebser locates the most quoted anthropocentric Protagorean gem -- “man is the measure of all things” -- behind the gates of mental consciousness (EPO, p. 77), Lukacs suggests examining that certain measure as well (cf. Merleau-Ponty, 1955, pp. 77 and 78). Clearly, he also went beyond mental consciousness.

How is this possible? Isn't a Marxist-Leninist the archetypal mental man who regards the communist party as the organized form of revolutionary consciousness that can read the actual political and international situation with the serene detachment of a natural scientist?

But that's just it! Lukacs had been excommunicated by Comintern; *History and Class Consciousness* was put on the index. His life was in danger in Moscow where he lived during the 1930s and through the war.

The heresy of Lukacs began with reminding the world that the demiurge of dialectical materialism was Hegel's student after all.

“The strength of every society is in the last resort spiritual strength” Lukacs quotes Marx (Lukacs, 1999, p. 262), insisting that the reform of consciousness *is* the revolutionary process itself (Lukacs, 1999, p. 259.)

Marx: “The reform of consciousness consists *only* of making the world aware of its own consciousness, in awakening it out of its dream about itself, in *explaining* to it the meaning of its own actions... Hence, our motto must be: reform of consciousness not through dogmas, but by analyzing the mystical consciousness that is unintelligible to itself.” (From Marx’s letter to Arnold Ruge, under the title “Ruthless Criticism,” September 1843.<sup>4</sup>)

Thus, by attributing the role of substratum to consciousness, the Marxian view of universal history reduces the distance between the *Weltgefühl* of Gebser and Lukacs. (See more on Lukacs, including his particular relationship with “consciousness,” under [3].)

Gebser strongly emphasized that integral consciousness will overcome dialectics (EPO, p. 362). And, indeed, one of the accusations of Soviet ideologues against Lukacs was that he questioned dialectics, namely as it was considered valid also to nature by Engels (Congdon, 1999, p. 66).

Applying it to society and history is one thing, extending the method to the rest of the medium in which we live, if that can be separated from the way we understand our being, is quite another. Moscow was outraged. Ernst Bloch’s wisecrack about Russian communists acting like philosophers, after a fashion, but thinking like dogs comes to mind (*ibid*). (He probably meant

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/letters/43\\_09.htm](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/letters/43_09.htm) (found on the Internet on December 18, 2012). Arnold Ruge (1802-1880) was a German philosopher associated with the Young Hegelians. He participated in the 1848 revolution as an organizer of and spokesman for the extreme left.

that they were always sniffing for intruders and were ready to bite on behalf of the owner.)

Having the temerity to contradict Engels, with whom Marx always concurred, was not the only heresy imputed to Lukacs. He had criticized the simple-minded demarcation between subject and object, weakening implicitly one of the most cherished tenets of the Marxist-Leninist doctrine; namely, the ability of the vanguard (i.e., the communist party of the USSR) to identify the tactical possibilities that the dialectical tension opens up between the current socio-historical situation and the ultimate goal of world socialism. (For the rest of his life, Lukacs apologized for the apostate deviations of *History and Class Consciousness* and remained a fanatic communist. Cf. Congdon, 1999, pp. 97 - 99.)

Totality without remainder was fundamental for Lukacs. But his “totality” was not Gebser’s consciousness. A crucial divergence! Gebser censured as misleading perspectival fallacy all uses of “totality” that did not arise from systasis (EPO, pp. 18 and 386). The usurpation of erroneous integral by politics, he emphasized, always points toward totalitarianism (EPO, p. 382).

Nonetheless, the obvious fact that Lukacs was a communist and Gebser was not ought not to lead to the automatic conclusion that they are incompatible. The substantive reasons why Lukacs was labeled an “idealistic backslider” and was subsequently excluded from Lenin’s school of gnoseology brings Lukacs closer to Gebser than it would appear from the divergence of their political convictions.

The following paragraph written by Marx’s most prominent 20<sup>th</sup> century exegete could very well be a portmanteau quote from Gebser:

“Nature thereby acquires the meaning of what has grown organically, what was not created by man, in contrast to the artificial structures of human civilization. But, at the same time, it can be understood as that aspect of human inwardness which has remained natural, or at least tends or longs to become natural once more. ‘They are what we once were’ says Schiller of the forms of nature, ‘they are what we should once more become’... man as a perfected whole who has inwardly overcome, or is in the process of overcoming, the dichotomies of theory and practice, reason and the senses, form and content; man whose tendency to create his own forms does not imply an abstract rationalism which ignores concrete content; man for whom freedom and necessity are identical.” (Lukacs, 1999, pp. 136 and 137.)

To sum up the Lukacs-Gebser connection; matching perceptions regarding the spatialization of time, similar use of reification; regret about the loss of handicraft, concern with atomization; kindred views on the development of “system” in the history of philosophy; agreement that the closely related

phenomena of vehement egocentrism, rigidification, the pursuit of narrowly perspectival goals, and the dominance of rationality represent a transitory phase in universal history; their shared vision about a better future centering on the integral man; about the coming transparency and correlative necessity of heightened individual self-understanding and self-criticism; their equal contempt of nationalism and so-called progress; their mirror-image recoiling from the extremes of voluntarism and fatalism cannot be attributed to mere coincidence.

Yes, Gebser must have read *History and Class Consciousness*! Even the contrast he established between consciousness and totality seems like a critical comment on Lukacs. Why is he never mentioned in EPO? Gebser credits Georg Simmel (the philosophy professor of Lukacs at the University of Berlin from 1906 to 1910) for helping to discard the purely rational, and hence dualistic, mode of thought (EPO, p. 408). He mentions Max Weber (1864-1920), Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) and Stefan George (1868-1933) who were close associates of Lukacs in Heidelberg shortly before World War I. In light of this additional circumstance, Gebser's unfamiliarity with the then already famous Lukacs is simply unbelievable.

This omission makes one consider the possibility that Gebser's non-negligible survival instinct operated at full capacity in his chosen country. Switzerland's postwar stance toward communist sympathies within its borders came probably closest to McCartyist standards in Europe.

But one needs to reject this hypothesis based on Gebser's true disgust with communist tyranny (EPO, p. 427). Leaving Lukacs unmentioned was neither a peccadillo nor an inadvertent oversight on his part. Quoting a title such as *History and Class Consciousness* would have tainted his oeuvre. And indeed, remaining nameless may well be the just punishment history has meted out to Lukacs for dedicating his talent to the furtherance of a murderous utopia.

This may be an appropriate place to mention another author whom Gebser must have read but who also remained unreferenced in EPO. His name is Werner Sombart (1863-1941), one of the best known sociologists of culture during the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The young Gebser took some of his courses at Humboldt University in Berlin. Sombart had a well-documented influence on philosophers (like Simmel), social scientists (like Lukacs), and artists (like Hoffmannsthal). Reading through the collection of

his best known essays (Sombart, 2001) leaves no doubt that he influenced Gebser as well; perhaps most importantly by elaborating extensively on the negative effects that the progressive rationalization of society exerts on the individual. Unfortunately, Sombart became a Nazi.

Once again we may recognize in Gebser the exponent of intellectual justice. He withheld credit where its attribution would have implicitly endorsed ideologies the world has learned to abhor.<sup>5</sup>

Returning to the Lukacs factor -- in and of itself, a no-holds-barred rejection of communism does not explain Gebser's views about society, history, and the future. Many active supporters of the Spanish Republic during the civil war, when *camaradas* dominated the government in close consultation with Moscow, later gave thumbs down to the Soviet regime. Malraux for example, who threw bombs on anti-Republican troops from open cockpits, became a cabinet member in General De Gaulle's government. British journalist Arthur Koestler, a high-profile communist, who barely escaped Franco's firing squad, became an anti-Soviet crusader after World War II.

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<sup>5</sup> I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Aaron Cheak of the University of Queensland (Australia) for drawing my attention to Sombart's possible influence on Gebser.

Hemingway, despite his adulation in the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War, had no use for bolshevism.

Gebser's brilliance is manifest in, but not exhausted by, his adverting to the world's sustainability problem decades before resource depletion and environmental degradation became a subject of public discourse. He already saw human prospects darken because the stubbornly pursued conquest of space, which is the conceptual equivalent to blind economic expansion [4], would eventually amount to mental-rational man throwing his glove into Nature's face. Remarkably, he developed his insight without data, the use of differential calculus, or any other extrapolative analytical method.

To compose Gebser's vision of global society's future, first we need to acknowledge that he was aware that the cognitive contents of consciousness reflect the empirical reality surrounding the individual. He linked the magical structure to prehistoric hunting and gathering, the mythical structure to agriculture and the mental one to industry.

Now let us have a glance at the "Big Picture" -- the state of the world.

The dramatically exponential economic and demographic growth of the past two centuries is nearing its end. But while the cost of energy rises, several economically vital nonrenewable resources are becoming depleted, and rampant environmental damage is turning into an imminent source of danger; telluric occupancy is still on the rise. The planet's population, currently seven billion, could easily reach 10 billion by the hundredth anniversary of EPO's publication. And everybody on God's green earth wants to dine on gourmet foods, drive a Mercedes, and sport Louis Vuitton accessories.

Our civilization is colliding with its ecological constraints, yet its form of self-organization, the direction of its technological advancement, its common values, beliefs, and coercions; its ethics, culture and politics -- all concrete dimensions of mental consciousness -- are such that it cannot stop this massive élan from turning into a full-blown historic crisis. How ironic! Rationality, believed to be the acme of objective thinking, the mental force that can cast a glaring light on any problem, keeps reality in a thick fog [5].

If, and only if, the expectation of unceasing growth in material welfare is excoriated from individual behavior and institutions, competition yields to

cooperation, indifference to acquiescence; isolation to responsible sociability, unlimited hunger for consumption to spiritual strength, stubborn dogmatism to integrative open-mindedness, would the global community be in reality mode and find equilibrium in planet-wide sustainability.

A third global system, GS3 will have to emerge. What will its parameters be? Even today they cannot be figured out. Any consistent attempt to think through the answer must come to the conclusion that a radically new social, economic, and political organization from the local to the global will be needed to deliver the world from itself.

“Ay, there is the rub...”

The difference in institutional terms between GS3 and GS2 is so great that bridging it is impossible without envisaging a major transformation of individual consciousness; yet, the average individual would not -- could not! -- be inwardly transformed as long as socioeconomic institutions characteristic of GS2 prevail. Patterns of mental consciousness in tune with the extant global system have been reified so strongly that they may be considered our second nature.

“The germinal phase is the crux,” Gebser quoted “I Ching;” the “Chinese Book of Changes” (EPO, p. 314). Without the slightest pretension to messianic prophetism, his penetrating insight illuminated the embodiment of integral consciousness in global self-organization as the solution, long before the world even knew that it had a problem. Hence, the conclusion: The major tributary to Gebser’s social thought was his own mysterious genius. He sensed the contours of the future with synareitic prescience.

## NOTES

1. GDP is calculated in two ways; through the expenditure approach (Consumption + Investment + Government Expenditures + Net Exports) and the resource cost/income approach. Under the second one (Employees Compensation + Self-employment Income + Rent + Interest + Profit + Indirect Business Taxes + Depreciation + Net Income of Foreigners), wages appear as both income and cost, and profits are often called “cash flow paid to business owners.” The two sums are roughly equal for the same period.
2. Marx’s LTV has engendered a long and intense debate that lasted until the end of the Cold War.

Some of the attacks, which may be labeled political-economic in nature, were based on the assertion that besides labor, entrepreneurship is also an indispensable contributor to value. Thus, profits are well-earned and labor does not have the moral right to everything produced (i.e., to the entire national income). Further, on purely technical grounds, the scarcity of some natural resources in industrial production and differences in the quality of soil in agriculture make the proposition whereby labor time alone determines value absurd.

Marxist ideologues answered that, whereas it is undeniably true that returns to the “means of social production” include rewards for organizing the factors of production and that the scarcity of some natural resources and top quality land distort values, the entire national income still belonged to the working people (read “non-capitalists”) as represented by the socialist state.

Marx’s LTV has also been criticized for having faulty microeconomic foundations. Neoclassical economists maintain that utility maximization centering on the tastes and demands of consumers is the principal driving force of the economic process and not profit maximization as Marx claimed. More precisely, it is the utility of the last unit consumed (“marginal utility”) the buyer can derive from a good and not “the socially necessary average labor time” required for its production that determines its value. And there are no absolutes! The marginal utility or the price of a good has meaning only in relationship to the marginal utility or price of another good.

Defenders of Marx responded that under the bourgeois socioeconomic order, demand always means money; and since the propertied classes have much of it and “wage slaves” very little; sensations of utility, and hence market prices, are distorted by the gross asymmetry of class-specific budget constraints. In other words, rather than being purely objective, individual sensations and perceptions associated with utility are socially determined by one’s role in production, whether one is a capitalist or a proletarian.

Critics of Marx further asserted that microeconomic reality has drastically changed since *Das Kapital*. In advanced liberal democratic societies individuals are free to allocate their time between work and leisure so as to maximize their subjective utilities. Not so, the answer came by return mail. The amount of work available is determined by the level of

technology, the momentary state of the economy, the competitive struggle among capitalists and that between labor and capital; the former wants high wages and short work days, the second, low wages and long hours. Consequently, individuals are far from free to choose between work and leisure.

The collapse of communism, spectacularly demonstrating the failure of central planning along with the rest of socialist economic principles, has forced the defenders of Marx to rest their case.

3. Georg Lukacs (1885-1971) was a highly influential Marxist scholar, historian, art critic, and revolutionary. His departures from dogmatic Marxist-Leninist disquisition turned him into an isolated and condemned theoretician; his neck came perilously close to the hangman's noose during the 1930s in the USSR and after the defeat of the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Yet, with blood on his hands, his unwavering allegiance to the communist cause (he ordered executions during the months of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in 1919) has defamed his high-quality scientific work. Courses continue to be offered on Marx at Western universities but not on Lukacs. Although he is often referred to as one of the founders of "Western Marxism," he is a *persona non grata* in the ex-Soviet Block as well as in countries where communist parties still rule.<sup>6</sup>

Orthodox Marxist-Leninist ideologues accused Lukacs of having rejected philosophical materialism by questioning the "dialectics of nature" as elaborated by Engels; who, as his censors insisted, was always in perfect agreement with Marx. The word of one was a perfect substitute for the other.

The "Dialectics of Nature" is a posthumously published book of Engels, put together from manuscript fragments, articles and notes. It claimed that nature could be reduced to three canonical laws: everything is maintained by opposing forces; gradual alterations lead to turning points (e.g., cumulative quantitative changes lead to qualitative transformations); and changes in nature are not circular but have definitive directions even if these are rarely linear.

In his critique Lukacs argued that nature is a societal category; its content, range and objectivity are all socially conditioned. He did have a point. Nature appeared to be exact, calculable, and conquerable in the time of Engels. But then relativity and quantum mechanics appeared on the horizon. Splendid as these discoveries were, they also revealed a much more humble position for man than the Victorian age pictured it.

The miniature universe below what human senses can directly perceive has revealed probabilistic indeterminism, casting general doubt on the possibility of separating the subject from the object of investigation. (The *Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum*

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<sup>6</sup> Lukacs' early writings were neither aggressive nor propagandistic. A nonoffensive socio-philosophical Marxian *Weltanschauung* marks his essays on 19<sup>th</sup> century German literature (Lukacs, 1967); and his criticism of Hegelian idealism (Lukacs, 1975) still commands scholarly attention. Excerpts from the last-quoted book were included as an epilogue (*Nachwort*) in some postwar German publications of the "phenomenology" (see, for example, Hegel, 1973).

*Physics* made it clear that observations interfere with the observed phenomena.) And the medium of existence beyond the scales of life on Earth turned out to be four-dimensional; something that mental mind cannot comprehend through direct visualization. Confidence in man's triumph over nature suffered a huge setback.<sup>7</sup>

The idea that the separation of the experiential subject from the object of experience was an illusion led Lukacs to identify thought and being (Congdon, 1991, p. 66); and consider the proletariat both a subject and an object of history (Merleau-Ponty, 1955, p. 73). "Relativity" pushed Lukacs toward accepting Hegel's assessment about man's limited ability to understand the future. According to the mighty thinker, the present always points dialectically beyond itself (Congdon, 1991, p. 75); recognizing historically significant tendencies is the extent to which insight into the future may be gained.

Thus, Lukacs deviated from Lenin who claimed in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* that the material course of history and society's conditions of production determine theory; i.e., the superstructure (Congdon, 1991, pp. 66 and 67). Lenin's view provided space for an independent mind to analyze social developments and political situations with scientific precision; hence justifying the leading role of communist parties.

But the "heresy" of Lukacs went even further. He rehabilitated consciousness as the all-inclusive phenomenon of cultural and civilizational history, professing that the dualistic separation of existence and consciousness leads to a failure to comprehend history as a process (Lukacs, 1999, p. 321). Moreover, he advocated a much more liberal approach to aesthetics than communist authorities found desirable. Lukacs represented a great danger for Bolshevik dogma because he could credibly tie his arguments to Marx. Did he not explain that the two relationships -- the one whereby history produces consciousness and the other whereby consciousness propels history -- are tied together in an inseparable dialectic? (Merleau-Ponty, 1955, pp. 56 and 57.) Did he not suggest that "the world has long possessed the dream of that which it must only become conscious in order to possess in reality"? (Congdon, 1991, p. 66.)

The aesthetics of Lukacs recognized something enduring in subjective individual experience, a certain core that appears to be eternal as it demonstrably survives profound historical changes. Communist ideologues were outraged. A Marxist should know better! It is one's appurtenance to a social class that determines one's experience and that alone is reflected in arts and literature. Yes, Lukacs answered, but Marx also said that although Greek art and epic emerged in a social form that is defunct by now (slavery), they still give us artistic pleasure and stand out as unequalled norms and models of human creativity (Lukacs, 1999, pp. 234 and 235).

That certain "core" may remind one of Gebser's "it," as indeed, many of Lukacs' thoughts that reveal his distance from scientific socialism appear to be "Gebserian." For instance, he elaborated on the complex relationship between origin and validity (Lukacs,

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<sup>7</sup> 19<sup>th</sup>-century optimism about the future of science pales in comparison with the techno-triumphalist hubris of contemporary unecological economics.

1999, p. 234) and maintained that consciousness has a structure (Lukacs, 1999, p. 321); that “false consciousness is unfreedom” (Lukacs, 1999, p. 319) and that history moves society toward greater self-knowledge (Merleau-Ponty, 1955, p. 85).

As mentioned in the text, Lukacs -- just like Gebser -- had a critical stance toward rationality. But it is worth pointing out significant divergences in their respective disapproval. Lukacs accepted the philosophical claim that the human mind is the source of truth as long as it was associated with the right consciousness. Whereas so-called rational thought and behavior in a capitalist society emanated from man’s “second nature;” that is, from his bourgeois consciousness, historic reason as an epiphenomenon of the proletariat’s revolutionary consciousness correctly identified humanity’s true nature and destiny. In short Lukacs approved rationality as a method, with qualifications.

In contrast, Gebser rejected rationality both as a *philosophem* and as an approach, the two remaining linked as reflections of the deficient phase of mental consciousness. His most fundamental teaching about the future is that mutation into arational-integral consciousness would reveal the transparency of existence through *concretion*; implying *synairesis* (equilibrium among all modes of apprehending the world) and *systasis* that goes beyond mental-rational systematization.

Lukacs also attacked systematization as a symptom of universalized rationality. Once you adopt a system, he asserted, every other system appears to be inadequate (Lukacs, 1999, pp. 116 and 117). As a neo-Kantian, he insisted on balancing the deployment of even the best reason with empiricism, allowing lessons drawn from political-ideological “praxis” to guide consciousness in its *tâtonnement* (“trial and error”-styled groping) toward liberation.

These views may bring Lukacs’s “totality,” which he characterized as “the constant center of the transcendental dialectic” (Lukacs, 1999, p. 115), somewhat closer to Gebser’s “consciousness.”

But in the end, the two ought not to be considered brothers in spirit. Consciousness at Lukacs always remained “proletarian” (Merleau-Ponty, 1955, pp. 75 and 76), thus limited by Marxism as the ultimate authority. What is more, Lukacs never ceased to be a fervent agitator and propagandist for the communist scheme of salvation, offering all his propositions for rejection if the party leadership so wished. His submission to “party discipline” may have saved his neck but not his work from the condign desert of oblivion.

4. The identity between humanity’s material advancement and the conquest of space may be recognized at both macro and micro levels,<sup>8</sup> as well as in a physical and social sense.

The macro-physical consideration begins by observing that the terrestrial sphere contains a (roughly) fixed number and composition of atoms. This aggregate is divided between

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<sup>8</sup> The prefixes “macro” and “micro” are used as known from economics. The first one indicates concern with aggregates or with totality (the aggregate of aggregates) and the second one refers to the analysis of interactions among composing units.

the human biomass, human-fabricated objects, and nonhuman life-forms in human service (*global population plus economy*, GLOPPE, for short) and the residual “surroundings;” i.e., atoms in the terrestrial sphere minus those contained in GLOPPE. To the extent GLOPPE expands, it takes matter away from the “surroundings;” a process that may be perceived as “conquest of space” in the physical sense since space and matter are strictly linked (EPO, p. 311).

The development of transportation and communication, a vital aspect of modern civilization, is a space-conquering macro-social process. While air transportation and e-mails, for example, do not bring more space under control, they allow for the intensification of interactions, thereby catalyzing GLOPPE’s growth (the macro-physical conquest of space).

On the micro-level, when the material influence of a nation, a business firm, any group, or that of an individual expands, space is taken away from the rest of the sphere under consideration. For example, when a nation increases its material might (through military victory or by deploying indirect political, economic, or financial means); another nation’s influence over spatially interpreted matter is reduced. At constant GLOPPE, the micro-physical conquest of space is a “zero-sum game.”

Turning to the micro-social, both Lukacs and Gebser noted that the organization of production accompanying the growth in material output is being shadowed by the spatialization of time. (Cf. Lukacs, p. 90; EPO, pp. 178-180, 285, and 353.) A schedule of tasks to be performed subject to positions on the clock (e.g., when working along an assembly line or multi-tasking) transforms time as a quality or intensity into a quantitatively measurable, subdivided movement along a horizontal continuum with a rightward pointing arrow. Such choreographing of human energy into movements (exertions per unit of time through space) turns labor into the extrasomatic extension of 3D physical capital. Individuals become objects (EPO, p. 431) with severe negative consequences: “...the motorization, mechanization, and technologization impose quantitative conditions on man that lead to an immeasurable loss of freedom,” increasing “de-individuation” (EPO, p. 537). While this development has been a major catalyst behind GLOPPE’s growth (in a macro-physical sense), it is essentially a social phenomenon on the micro scale.

Not surprisingly, a close etymological bond exists between *conquest* and *reduction* (as well as between their synonyms). Disorder is subdued (conquered), for example, when formerly fallow land is made arable; a triumph that reduces the domain of chaotic forces into an orderly component. Whereas drafting land into human service is a macro-physical conquest; the elation felt by the accomplishment is a macro-social (socio-psychological) phenomenon: science, technology, and the entrepreneurial spirit have once again succeeded in diminishing (reducing) nature into man’s servant.

Military conquest is a micro-physical reduction (e.g., Cyrus reduced Babylon). The subjugation of one social group by another (as slaves by slave-keepers, for example) is an

obvious micro-social diminution, conquering the space (as it were) occupied by the subordinated (diminished) ones.

The overemphasis of space by mental consciousness is manifest in “time anxiety” (EPO, pp. 22 and 531). We may recognize the validity of this Gebserian thought in the irreconcilable conflict between the world’s exponentially growing demand for matter and the terrestrial sphere’s spatially closed nature on the macro scale. The individual being forced to become space (extension of physical capital), thus experiencing the spatialization of its time (life) via economic organization, may well be a major source of anxiety at the micro level.

5. The public at large, unfamiliar with Gebser, is taken aback upon hearing criticism of rationality. It sounds like a blanket rejection of objective, matter-of-factness in diagnosing personal, business, or social problems. “What is the alternative: irrationality?”

Gebser was aware of this reaction and made it absolutely clear that he did not equate *ratio* with understanding or with common sense (EPO, p. 95). Rather, he used the concept in accordance with the word’s original Latin meaning: to reason by comparing magnitudes. He considered rationality (the general practice and adulation of the *ratio*) the deficient phase of mental consciousness because of its proclivity to subdivide complex phenomena into partitioned sectors with an exaggeratedly quantitative preoccupation (EPO, p. 93). Syntheses built on this approach result in rigid, disconnected systems that have little to do with the fullness of reality.

Rationality so interpreted is complete with axe-grinding advocacy of whatever knothole perspective the individual represents. (Gebser compellingly tied this combative mental habit to the Greek words of *menis* and *menos*; EPO, pp. 74 and 75). He showed that the progressive strengthening of rationality is destructive (EPO, pp. 96 and 97) as it reduces comprehension to “amorphous nullity” (EPO, p. 180), leading a dehumanized humanity to “rational chaos” (EPO, 303). And, of course, the sequel to rationality is not irrationality but intensified consciousness (EPO, p. 480); integral comprehension, transparency, “a-waring of the whole” (EPO, pp. 352 and 530).

How well contemporary economics confirms Gebser’s misgivings about rationality may be seen in (i) the reduction of individual motivations to hunger for consumption and the accumulation of material wealth; (ii) blatant a-historicity; and (iii) narrowly perspectival analytical propositions to deal with looming physical constraints to economic growth.

(i) In the name of rationality (taken as a synonym for reason), run-of-the-mill economics has demoted *Homo sapiens* to *Homo oeconomicus*; a software code with the intelligence level, emotional universe, and intentionality of a web search engine. (For detailed explanation, see Dopfer, 2005, pp. 21, 22, 27, 28, 29, 33, 41, 371, *et passim*.) This simplification has lent itself to a dazzling variety of sophisticated mathematical models that portray the economic process as a self-perpetuating, indefinitely expanding circular-motion machine.

(ii) Reality thus flattened has turned history into the history of how the forms and modalities of market forces have accommodated the timeless human expediency to maximize profits and consumption. Rationality-infected historiography denies the temporal relativity of socioeconomic arrangements; its votaries see present society and its antecedents through neoclassical utility and production functions. Accordingly, the past is best described by recognizing the proto-variants and primitive manifestations of today's market-oriented behavior, social interactions, and legal-institutional framework. The favored approach to economic history resonates with the French adage: *plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*.

A prime example of this is the critically acclaimed work of Reinhart and Rogoff (2009), motivated by a kindred mantra: "We have been here before." The study is certainly thoroughly researched and elegantly presented. But this hardly exonerates first-rank scholars from the folly of equating numerous sovereign and banking crises since the early infancy of capitalism based on a limited number of unhistorical characteristics. (It was not flawed Latin grammar that led to the rejection of *Malleus Maleficarum*.) Self-feeding speculative episodes ending with spectacular disruption may have always been driven by the prospects of personal aggrandizement, corporate miscalculation, and political survivorship and they may have always been marred by manipulation, gullibility, and inertia in mass behavior, but they have differed essentially in the modality and scope of their impact on the evolving individual as a social component, on the constantly transforming national economies and on international economic relations.

Accelerating demographic and economic growth is a relentless novelty producer. Consequently, the world changes beyond the control of mind and will, sweeping along personal lives and reasoned judgment. The *cogito* is inundated with so much new information that believing that "this time is different" is par for the course because in so many different ways it really is.

Deemphasizing the multifaceted diachronic variance among selected events negates the fundamental dynamism of universal history; the crucible of finding, maintaining, and renewing order amidst the unstoppable expansion of the human biomass and produced, extrasomatic structures. But this is exactly what a global system (the extant world order) wants to hear and is bent on rewarding: "I will always be because I have always been!"

If a professor of economics could demonstrate that already prehistoric hordes practiced some ancient form of stock-jobbing and agiotage (perhaps using red salt and dried fish bones as the medium of exchange and store of value); he stewed this thesis in what Keynes ironically called "a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols"<sup>9</sup> (Keynes, p. 298); serve it with a deep bow toward the theory of rational expectations ("individuals act based on their rational outlook") and the efficient market hypothesis ("the market knows best"), the central bank of Sweden might consider him for the Nobel Prize.

(iii) A concrete example: Two eminent energy experts, M.Z. Jacobson and M.A. Delucchi, estimated that a comprehensive strategy to shift the world's energy basis toward

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<sup>9</sup> Reinhart and Rogoff (2009) did not engage in such fustian symbol juggling.

renewable sources would require about 3.8 million wind turbines. (See “A Plan to Power 100 Percent of the Planet with Renewables” in the November 2009 issue of the *Scientific American Magazine*.) But, according to André Diederer (senior scientist at the Netherlands-based research institute, *TNO Defense, Security and Safety*) the manufacture of that many large (5 MW) wind turbines would demand roughly three million tons of Neodymium. The current annual production is 18,000 tons and Lenntech (an associate organization of the Technical University of Delft in the Netherlands) puts global reserves of Neodymium at eight million tons.<sup>10</sup>

To begin with, a total reserve figure does not reveal what proportion of it is economically recoverable (since it is the sum of proven, probable and possible deposits); a circumstance aggravated by the fact that this “rare earth” element is hardly found in pure form, implying that a good chunk of the eight million is too expensive to access. Moreover, unlike the commons (the oceans and the atmosphere), metal reserves are national property. China happens to be the richest in Neodymium and it has recently imposed controls on the exportation of “rare earth” elements. Even if three million tons could be produced (an extremely unlikely event) how about replacing wind turbines? They don’t last forever.

The obstinate advocacy of nuclear, geothermic, hydroelectric, solar power, natural gas, or bio-fuels reeks of similar deficiencies. But this is hardly noticed. Narrow-minded parochialism does not provoke the tocsin of reality check in rationality-ruled mental consciousness, not even when issues of survival significance stare humanity in the face. These problems are unsolvable without recognizing the “manifold aspectuations” (EPO, p. 447) that hide in the field of crucial interdependencies.

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<sup>10</sup> From André Diederer’s presentation, entitled “Materials Scarcity and the Elements of Hope,” at the *Bioneers Global Conference*, May 31- June 1, 2010, Driebergen, the Netherlands.

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