

# The Inorganic Body and the Ambiguity of Freedom

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The universality of man manifests itself in practice in that universality which makes the whole of nature his *inorganic body*, (1) as a direct means of life and (2) as the matter, the object and the tool of his life activity. Nature is man's *inorganic body*, that is to say nature in so far as it is not the human body. Man *lives* from nature, i.e. nature is his *body*, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature.

(Marx, *Early Writings*, p. 328)

If we place this notion in the foreground of Marx's early thought, that thought immediately becomes more fertile and suggestive of important insights than if it is interpreted with 'humanism' in the foreground. We can once again learn from it, even if we entirely accept Althusser's critique of that humanism.

No doubt the 'inorganic body' thesis was not in the foreground for Marx himself. It is an aside, and he never works out its implications. But there are a few things to be said about what is implied by Marx, in context, before I go on to draw on other sources to elaborate this notion.

In the first place, it means that we interact causally with the rest of nature, and are dependent for our existence, and for *what* we are, on that interaction. That we are dependent on nature is obvious enough, but Marx is drawing attention to the special nature of that dependence: on the one hand, that it is not dependence on something *external*, in that we are constituted as the beings that we are by the way we live out that dependence; and on the other hand, that we 'live from' nature *actively*, and thereby transform it, so that nature (at least on this planet) is always shot through with human history. For instance, the New Forest, in which I walk at every opportunity, and in which I conceived many of the ideas in this paper, is no gift of nature – except in the sense that everything is; it is a monument to the Norman tyrants' lust for blood-sports. Taking these two points together, our transformation of nature is also the transformation of ourselves, and the primary way in which we, as a species, do transform ourselves. (This last clause is another way of formulating the materialist conception of history.)

While this position is as far as could be from any 'Luddite' hostility to our cumulative productive powers, it does highlight their peculiarly destructive *potential* – a potential actualised by capitalism. It does so in three ways:

(1) if the world 'outside' us is essential to our being, then the propertylessness of the proletarians is not a deprivation of something 'external', leaving them in free possession of their

essential being. Our advantage over the animals is transformed into a disadvantage, in that our inorganic body is taken away from us, as Marx comments on the page following the above quote. When he goes on to say that 'estranged labour' estranges us from our own body, from nature outside us, from our spiritual essence and from our human essence, he may be read as saying the same thing in four ways, rather than four things.<sup>1</sup>

(2) While we must *use* nature if we are to live, the idea that it is our inorganic body suggests that this is essentially more like the way that we 'use' our own bodies-actual,<sup>2</sup> our own limbs and organs, than it is like any means-end relationship. Treating nature as a means to individual existence is specially mentioned as part of estrangement, in the passage just referred to (*Early Writings*, p. 329). This distinction between two kinds of use of nature is taken up later in Marx's manuscripts (*Early Writings*, pp. 352–53): under communism 'nature has lost its mere *utility* in the sense that its use has become *human use*' – while 'the dealer in minerals sees only the commercial value, and not the beauty and peculiar nature of the minerals; he lacks a mineralogical sense'.

(3) The manuscript on money (pp. 375–79) can be read as spelling out two ways of living our inorganic bodies. The omnipotence of money in the market economy does not, of course, make us any less dependent on our interaction with nature, but it takes away the personal, situated, integrated manner of exercising our physical, emotional and intellectual powers upon the natural and human world about us, each from their historical and geographical perspective, with its specific links to others and to one's habitat. Instead, our powers are subsumed under a single, infinitely divisible and amassable power, indifferent to its agent and the content of its exercise: money.

He who can buy courage is grave, even if he is a coward. Money is not exchanged for a particular quality, a particular thing, or for any particular one of the essential powers of man, but for the whole objective world of man and nature. (ibid., p. 379)

In the next two sections, I shall try to work out a fuller conception of what is involved in thinking of ourselves as bodies-cosmic rather than bodies-actual, drawing on the work of Heidegger and of Spinoza; in the final section, I shall spell out the political implications.

## **Body as World: the Heideggerian Approach**

One way of following up the ideas that our material being is more extensive than the space enclosed in our skins is Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-World as definitive of human existence,

and his analysis of what it means to be 'in' the world. Heidegger makes a sharp break with all accounts which locate our minds inside our bodies; we *are* our worlds – and whatever it is that gives unity to our selves (and Heidegger has two alternative accounts of what it is, according to whether we exist authentically or inauthentically), it is *not* that either body or mind is a substance.

One way in to this idea is by contrasting a metaphor of Heidegger's with two of Popper's: Popper refers to bucket-theories of the mind, and searchlight-theories. Heidegger's metaphor is of a clearing in the forest. Only by virtue of the clearing are the trees visible, yet the clearing is nothing except the trees and the relations between them. We are not *in* the clearing, we *are* the clearing. And this indicates that this conception is no longer on the Cartesian ground of a theory of 'mind' at all: rather, we have extended the boundaries we assign to our bodily beings: we have exosomatic parts.

Our way of being is 'Being-in-the-World', but the 'in' does not signify spatial containment: we *are* our worlds. It is not difficult to find everyday examples to make such an extended definition of our bodies plausible: we habitually regard our clothes, tools we are using, bicycles we are riding etc. as part of us. We feel the road with the wheels of the bike; the motorist refers to 'my wing' getting scratched; the victim of a burglary feels violated, even if nothing has been taken and no damage done. Also, distant objects may be existentially closer to us than spatially nearer ones: the scene I look at through the window is more 'part of me' than the window; this is a sort of 'intentional inexistence',<sup>3</sup> i.e. the scene exists in me in that I comport myself towards it; what I am being cannot be understood without reference to the scene, yet it can be fairly well understood without reference to the window, or indeed to my toenails or my appendix.



The unifying force which organises my world is my practical concern. 'My world' in this sense is unique to me; 'your world' is organised around your particular concerns, which may be quite different. Yet 'my world' is not composed of appearances, of 'things for me'. It is the real bicycle, the real road, the real sunlight that go to make up my world – and of course they may go to make up your world too. We need to clarify this point, since Heidegger's phenomenological heritage places him under suspicion of subjectivism, and at times perhaps the suspicion is well founded. But he certainly thinks that he has shown the error of idealism, in that attempts to prove the existence of the 'external world', so far from

being necessary and unsuccessful, are unnecessary and foolish, since the 'external world' is not external – and not because it is 'in our minds', but because we are 'out there' in it.

However, granted (as Heidegger grants) that we are always partly in error about the world, do not 'our worlds' come apart from 'the world' as practically determined appearances of it? May not the way things are organised in my world be unlike the way they are organised in *the* world?

Here a few remarks are in order about all those existentialist polemics against 'objectivity'. In the empiricist culture of the Anglophone world, we are accustomed to understand 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' primarily in an epistemic sense. When we hear objectivity decried, we assume that some sort of epistemological subjectivism such as Feyerabend's is being defended. I think that there is in fact scarcely a trace of such subjectivism in the works of Kierkegaard or Macmurray or Heidegger or Sartre. Rather, 'subjectivity' is taken in an ontological sense, as referring to (epistemically quite objective) realities such as emotions, beliefs, encounters, reasonings etc. Thus when R. D. Laing, for instance, under the influence of these thinkers, says 'objectively there are no intentions',<sup>4</sup> he is not saying that intentions are in the mind of the beholder, but that intentions belong to the world of 'subjectivity' that a certain kind of beholder – one in the grip of a reductive metaphysics – might miss. At this point it might look as if their anti-objectivism is no more than anti-reductivism. It does include anti-reductivism, but I think it also includes something less acceptable: resistance to a certain kind of knowledge, contrasted with the knowledge inherent in practice, and variously labelled 'objective', 'contemplative' or 'intellectual'. I shall not consider here whether there really is some dirty bathwater to be thrown out under these headings, but I do think that the existentialists have thrown out a baby in the process. That baby is *counter-phenomenal knowledge*. For the capacity of knowledge to contradict appearances is essential if knowledge is to have a *liberating* function: it is, as Marx and Freud have indicated, precisely because appearances can be false and enslaving that knowledge can be liberating.

Before discussing this matter with reference to Heidegger, it may help to clarify what is at issue if I quote and comment briefly on a passage from Macmurray's book *Interpreting the Universe*.

That immediate knowledge of the world which is the effortless result of living in it and working with it and struggling against it has a much higher claim to be taken as the type of human knowledge than anything science either has or can make possible. For the scientist takes this immediate knowledge of the world for granted and bases himself squarely upon it by his continuous appeal to facts. His particular business is simply to interpret it, to express it in such a way that we understand what we already knew in a quite different and immediate fashion. (pp. 16–17)

The first two sentences, rightly interpreted, may be accepted; but it does not follow that the scientist 'simply' interprets pre-scientific knowledge; he or she may produce radically new knowledge, and therewith new practices; and this new knowledge may contradict the 'immediate' knowledge which preceded and gave rise to it.

In Heidegger's account of phenomenology in the introduction to *Being and Time* he distinguishes 'phenomenon' in the sense used in his version of phenomenology – 'that which shows itself' – from 'appearance' in senses in which there is a contrast with something that does not appear, i.e. firstly, from *semblance*; secondly from senses this word has in contexts where something that does not appear 'announces itself' in something that does (e.g. disease in a symptom); and thirdly from the Kantian sense,



in which an appearance is of something that can never appear (the thing-in-itself). Yet 'phenomenon' does contrast with something:

'Behind' the phenomena of phenomenology there is essentially nothing else; on the other hand, what is to become a phenomenon can be hidden. And just because the phenomena are proximally and for the most part *not* given, there is a need for phenomenology. Covered-up-ness is the counter-concept to 'phenomenon'. (p. 60)

Phenomenology then has the task of making things show themselves, which were previously covered up. That looks like counter-phenomenal knowledge – the sort of knowledge that can liberate. Yet Heidegger is reluctant to allow *science* its appearance/reality distinction. Indeed, he tends to *invert* the relation between scientific and pre-scientific knowledge, treating scientific results, despite – or perhaps because of – the fact that they are the product of a laborious work of uncovering, as merely subjective, and as tending to cover up Being, to which the knowledge implicit in everyday practice gives us genuine access.

Heidegger, in fact, sees his analysis of Being-in-the-World as, despite analysing what is closest to us, running against the difficulty that our world has been pre-interpreted to us in terms of something that is existentially further from us – i.e. the world of mechanically related objects. In the world that is closest to us – the work-world which we inhabit prior to theoretical explanations – the hammer is encountered as that with which we fix the shutter, which in turn is that with which we make a dwelling weatherproof. This world as a whole is composed of the gear that we use, and structured by its reference back to some projected being of ours. Only when the head flies off the hammer are we forced to consider it as an entity with properties other than being hammerable with. So begins objective inquiry. And we habitually misread our lived world as like the objective reality thus discovered. As so often with Heidegger, a good and a bad point are mixed up together here. There really is a Cartesian or empiricist picture of the world as composed of mutually external and independent entities, related only mechanically. Consider such ideas as: sense data, the knowledge of other minds as inferential, action as intentional muscular contraction, etc. I believe that Heidegger gives a more thorough and less obscurantist antidote to these errors than, for example, Wittgenstein. But one does not have to be an empiricist or a Cartesian in order to recognise that objective inquiry may

yield deeper knowledge of what is there than that vouchsafed by the knowledge implicit in unexamined practice; that it may contradict, correct and explain that knowledge. Indeed, since the function of objective inquiry according to Heidegger (and also to Macmurray) is to put to rights some upset which has occurred in the everyday work-world, it must be able to produce more adequate ideas than were already implicit in the understanding of that work-world, or fail in its function.

At this point, I begin the transition from Heidegger to Spinoza: implicit in *our* worlds, the worlds of our practical concern, is a set of assumptions about how *the* world is causally ordered; the elements of my body-cosmic are linked by relations of causality and dependence which I must assume in my concerned dealings with them. I may be mistaken about these relations, and the project of rectifying these mistakes is always implicit in those dealings. All this is often at an entirely unreflective level: I grasp a branch to swing across a muddy stream on; I give it a little tug before trusting my weight to it, and then swing across.

If then we distinguish the practical relations of 'in order to' and 'towards which' which organise my world as analysed by Heidegger, and the objective relations of causality and dependence which organise *the* world, we may say that the former presuppose and imply the latter, and tend to rectify themselves towards correspondence with the latter.

### **World as Body: the Spinozan Approach**

When Spinoza writes about the human body, what does he mean? The idea that he means the body-actual has been held up to question, though finally defended, by Odegard, who considers the possibility that only the brain might be intended, since it is supposedly this that corresponds under the attribute of extension to the mind under the attribute of thought.<sup>5</sup>

However, the following points require consideration: (1) Complex bodies, for Spinoza, are relatively stable equilibrating systems composed of less complex bodies. Our bodies-actual are of course such bodies, as are some of their parts. But our bodies-actual also interact causally in relatively stable ways with the world about them, and can go on being so only so long as they do. The world in its causal interaction with my body-actual, insofar as that interaction forms a relatively stable system, constitutes a composite body: my body-cosmic, considered in its objective being. To a degree, however tiny, I interact with the whole of nature. There are degrees of causal closeness of entities with me, as they are more or less essential to the equilibrium that makes me be. But 'closeness' here does not mean proximity to my body actual – it means necessity to my body-cosmic thus constituted; I am not my body-actual, I am my body-cosmic. I may very well do without my tooth or my tonsils, but not without a roof over my head, or the sun to warm my planet.<sup>6</sup> (2) Granted that my body-cosmic is a composite body in Spinoza's terms, is it *that* composite body to which, under the attribute of extension, there corresponds my mind under the attribute of thought? Well, I certainly think more about my house and my bike and my path to work across Southampton Common than I do about my spleen or my lymph nodes. The usual reading of Spinoza is that the mind is the idea of the body-actual, entities outside of which are known only indirectly, through their effects on the body-actual; to greater clarity and knowledge there corresponds, under the attribute of extension, greater causal interaction between body-actual and world. On this reading, Spinoza is very hard to defend; my idea of the kitchen stove is not an idea of the effects of the kitchen stove on my body-actual. But suppose the mind corresponds to the body-cosmic; it is quite defensible to say that perception is the

proprioception of the body-cosmic. The clarity of that perception is certainly bound up with the degree and kind of causal interaction between the elements of the body-cosmic (and not just between the body-actual and other parts of the body-cosmic, but also between different 'external' parts of the body-cosmic, e.g. television and aerial, thermometer and atmosphere, etc.).

Insofar as we interact causally with all of nature, but to different degrees, the body-cosmic has no clear boundaries – it has the form of a cross, not a circle; but it can be said to be extended to the degree that direct and indirect causal interaction between the body-actual and its world is increased – not just *any* interaction, however, but that which serves to maintain the equilibrium of the system. The more we are sensitive to the world around us, and the more we control it, the more it is part of us. Now let us consider the implications of this for Spinoza's derivation of morality from the drive for self-advantage, the *conatus*. (3) When we hear self-advantage praised, and assessed only insofar as it is rational or irrational, we are apt to think in terms of that most irrational of human vices, 'economic rationality'. We think 'self-advantage' means increasing one's bank balance, and that it is done rationally if it is done with the minimum productive labour. But of course for Spinoza rationality is not the means to self-advantage, rationality is the definition of self-advantage. Thus at *Ethics IV*, p. 26:

What we strive for from reason is nothing but understanding; nor does the Mind, insofar as it uses reason, judge anything useful to itself except what leads to understanding. (Curley, p. 559)

Under the attribute of extension, this is matched by p. 38:

Whatever so disposes the human Body that it can be affected in a great many ways, or renders it capable of affecting external Bodies in a great many ways, is useful to man; the more it renders the Body capable of being affected in a great many ways, or of affecting other bodies, the more useful it is; on the other hand, what renders the Body less capable of these things is harmful. (Curley, p. 568)

Since this increase in understanding, equivalent to the extending of the body-cosmic, is aided not hindered by the same development in others, rational self-advantage is for Spinoza inherently a co-operative, not a competitive good.

But on the basis of my interpretation of the human body as the body-cosmic, we can take Spinoza's system even further away from egoism than he wants to go. For I take it that Spinoza recognises the existence of part-conatuses (conatuses of parts of the body-actual) which, while they may be harmful if they override the conatus of the individual as a whole, have legitimate claims to balanced satisfaction within that conatus. But if the conatus of the individual as a whole is not that of the body-actual but of the body-cosmic, then conatuses of parts of the body-cosmic, whether or not within the body-actual, can enter their claims. Not only those of other people (for other people are included in anyone's body-cosmic), but of animate and inanimate parts of our civic and natural environment. So that, to the extent that my active and passive powers are increased, *the world* becomes to a greater degree *my world* – more of the universe becomes more closely incorporated into my body-cosmic; correspondingly, its claims on me are greater. The limit of this process – approached from an infinite distance – would be the identity of the personal conatus with that 'providence' which preserves the whole universe in its complex interaction (or to translate into Freudian, of libido with Eros).

As an interpretation of Spinoza, this would be far-fetched, for he is undeniably anthropocentric:

Apart from men [*homines*] we know no singular thing in nature whose Mind we can enjoy, and which we can join to ourselves in friendship, or some kind of association. And so, whatever there is in nature apart from men, the principle of seeking our own advantage does not demand that we preserve it. Instead, it teaches us to preserve or destroy it according to its use, or to adapt it to our use in any way whatsoever. (IV Appendix XXVI, Curley, p. 592)



(So far as his theory of perception is concerned, on the other hand, it cries out to be interpreted in terms of the body-cosmic – as do the more 'mystical' parts of his thought, if they are to be given any rational sense.)

Nevertheless, I don't think the idea of a conatus of the body-cosmic is an implausible view of human motivation. Our attitude to death bears witness to that. We fear the dissolution of our world, rather than of our body actual. We care what happens to its components after our death: 'to part is to die a little'; that is not a metaphor, but a literal truth: to die is to part altogether. On the positive side, not only love but such things as intellectual curiosity and the love of beauty fit better with this hypothesis than with many others. And I don't think there is anything utopian about it. It is not, for instance, a claim that we are 'naturally altruistic', but that the ontology on which the egoism/altruism dichotomy makes sense is a false one.

### **Freedom in the Common World**

This conception of our place in the world has several consequences for our thinking about freedom. In the first place, it commits us to an 'in gear' rather than an 'out of gear' conception of freedom: a freedom that pre-supposes that we interact causally with the world, and a freedom which is enhanced as our active and passive powers in that interaction are increased – i.e. our powers on the one hand to affect the world in various ways, and on the other, to be affected by more of the world in more ways. Causal laws, while they constrain what we can do, also enable us to do what we can do; we could not act at all where they did not operate. More or less freedom, then, means more or less effective interaction in one's world – not disengagement from the causal processes operative in the 'outside world', as in Cynic, Stoic and Kantian ethics, and in Cartesian, Kantian and Sartrean metaphysics. Since causal laws are a function of the structures that exist in the world, and there are alternative possible structures in some aspects of the world (e.g. economic structures), more or less freedom may also

involve more or less congenial structures. But more freedom never involves escaping causal interaction, freewheeling.

Secondly, the conception of the inorganic body, and hence the non-privacy of the body, undermines the idea that individual rights or freedoms could have some 'natural' basis in an ontological boundary between individuals. There is no such boundary. The world is a common world. Even the body-actual of each is part of the body-cosmic of all, and thus others may in principle have some legitimate claim over it. If there are boundaries within which an individual may do as they please, these are socially demarked boundaries. They may differ in different societies, and, though one way of drawing them may be better or worse than another, none are 'natural' or 'unnatural'.

So, thirdly, all freedom, as freedom to interact with and hence change the world – which is never just 'my' world but everyone's world – all freedom, I say, is to a greater or lesser degree *freedom to transform the common world*. It is important to note that this is to a greater or lesser degree. Certainly, I am more causally enmeshed with some parts of the world than with others. My body-actual has a unique part in determining how close a part of me (i.e. of my body-cosmic) any given entity is. But it does not follow that nothing outside by body-actual can be closer to me than my body-actual. I am far more causally dependent for my existence and essence on some beings outside of my body-actual – including some other people – than I am on some parts of my body-actual. The causal/existential 'closeness' or 'distance' of various things is relevant when we come to decide where to draw the lines between people's freedoms, which powers to prioritise, and so on. Nevertheless, that which we are apportioning in such line-drawing is always power to transform the common world. And so it is always pertinent to ask whether a given exercise of freedom – a given transformation of the common world – is with or without common consent.

Now let us consider a few commonplace examples: the question of 'passive smoking' for instance. The anti-no-smoking lobby typically uses libertarian language, as if, whatever might be said for 'no smoking' it is unambiguously a restraint on freedom, and not an increment of freedom. Another example is that I am free to walk a dog on Southampton Common, but not free to take my child for a picnic there without risk of his being frightened by dogs, or infected with toxicaria from dogs' turds. Most people's assumption is that the former freedom is a straightforward freedom, the latter something else. In these cases there is a little more awareness now, in reaction against the 'libertarian' culture of Thatcher's Britain, that the freedoms from smoke and uncontrolled dogs are real cases of freedom. But it is still taken for granted that the onus is on the advocates of these freedoms to prove their case; the smokers' and dog-walkers' freedoms are treated as the obvious ones. The cards are stacked against freedoms to live in a congenial common world, and for freedoms to transform the common world without common consent. And this bias is not just a matter of custom, it is backed up by liberal political philosophy, and the whole ontology of the isolated but mobile individual that underlies it.

Motor traffic is a similar, and more far-reaching, case. Restraints on motorists' freedom are deeply resented, yet nothing transforms our common urban world more (aside from wider planetary effects), and this transformation is the effect of thousands of unconnected decisions, plus the public authorities' adaptation to them. It is not a *common* decision, even in a purely aggregative sense, for each individual's decision to buy a car or use it on a given occasion is made in the absence of the alternative option (a communal transport policy) which could only be made available by a common political decision. Were the same individuals to make a common decision, and hence have the alternative before them, the result might be quite different. My case is not just

that there should be no absolute freedom to transform the common world without common consent, but that there should be much more freedom to transform the common world *with* and *by* common consent.

Here I come to the ambiguity of freedom referred to in the title; many political issues concern the area of conflict between two sets of freedoms: in political terms, we may distinguish *market freedom*, which is the power money gives its possessor to transform the common world without common consent (this I call *dispersed freedom*); and *civic freedom*, i.e. the freedom to co-determine with one's fellow-citizens a common project for the common world – whether a project of conservation or of transformation. This I call *gathered freedom*. In calling market freedom dispersed, I mean in the first place that power, though inherently social, is assigned to individuals to use without regard for others affected. But there is more to it than that. Actions the effects of which loom large in the worlds of their agents and small in the common world (decorating one's house, for instance) may well be best dispersed in this sense. But here the claim to take *that particular* power out of the remit of common agreement is dependent upon the closeness to the individual of this bit of their world, its marginality to any other individual. Money-power, however, is dispersed in another sense too. It is unconnected with the particularity of the one who possesses it; it may equally well be power over their own or somebody else's house, their cup of tea or a tea plantation on the other side of the earth, time on TV or time at a private clinic. Finally, it is dispersed in that it escapes even its possessor as the market constrains their decisions and transforms the consequences of those decisions.

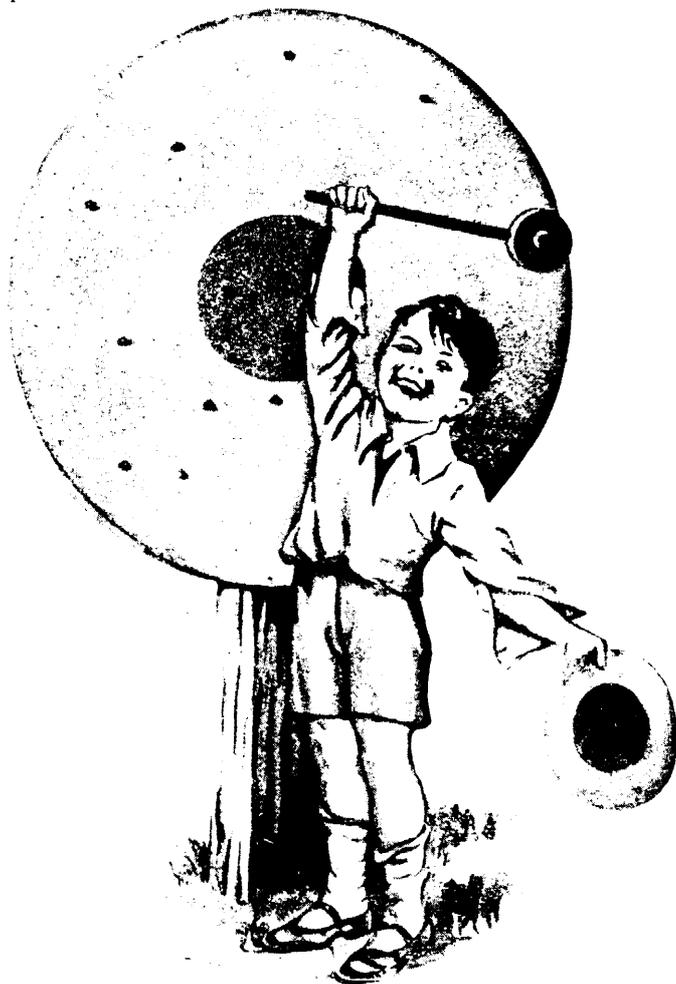
Hence it may be said to be dispersed in three dimensions: socially, in that social power is exercised by individual agents in separation; temporally, in that it is power to get what one wants now, but not to plan for a congenial world in which to live out one's days; and spatially, in that it is dislocated from the agents' place in the world. Gathered freedom, by contrast, is gathered socially, in that common decisions are made about the common world; spatially, in that a community exercises its common power over *its* common world, i.e. the world from its perspective, the parts of the world that are existentially/causally closest to it. And temporally in that it is exercised with consideration for the past and future of a community, not only for some instant gain.

Perhaps a simple example will clarify the contrasts between gatheredness and dispersedness in the spatial and temporal dimensions (I assume it is clear enough in the social dimension). Suppose a firm of developers buys a part of a street in order to develop it for different – more profitable, obviously – uses. The other residents object, since the character of their street will be ruined. But since the boundaries of their properties will not be



transgressed by the developers, their plea is treated as unreasonable; the space in which they live is treated as dispersed into proprietary plots. As a result of this pre-supposition that the only freedom worth having is dispersed freedom, it is impossible for anyone settling in a neighbourhood to do so (with any degree of confidence) as part of a project of their life as a whole, since the power to transform or conserve the material character of the neighbourhood is not with them and their neighbours, but at the caprice of the market. So one's freedom to live as one chooses is short term, and in any case not freedom to live in a congenial world one has collaboratively chosen, but freedom to move about an alien world in pursuit of congenial bits.

Having sketched the ambiguity of freedom, I can perhaps make it sharper, and at the same time remove the grounds for some objections. My view that we are all, even in our bodies-actual, parts (to a greater or lesser degree) of the bodies-cosmic of all, might suggest the Sadean slogan 'everyone belongs to everyone else', which of course in the Sadean context means that everyone has the right of use and abuse over the bodies-actual of everyone else. That Sadean Republic is not viable because it squanders its most precious resource: the bodies-actual of its citizens. The freedom in Sade's republic is dispersed freedom, in just the sense that market freedom is, but extended to the world of bodily encounter, sexual and/or violent. The *gathered* exercise of our mutual ownership is something quite different: the sort of mutual care and common responsibility of all for the well-being of the body-actual of each, suggested by St Paul's 'we are members one of another'. This does commit us to what Mill described as a monstrous principle: that which 'ascribes to all mankind a vested interest in each other's moral, intellectual, and even physical perfection'.<sup>8</sup>



Now I would like to conclude by working out more explicitly the difference between gathered and dispersed freedom with reference to the production and use of common resources, 'political economy'. It is well known that one of the contrasts in Marx's work is that between the production of exchange-value and the production of use-value. I think that both Marxists and ecological critics of Marxism have underestimated the radical nature of the difference between the dispersed economic rationality that governs exchange-value production, and the gathered economic rationality that would govern use-value production.

For, if the goal of production is to bring into being things or states of affairs useful to people, then in the first place, not just the 'product' in the narrow sense – that which, in exchange-value production, is to be sold – has to be considered, but also every effect that the production process has – including effects on the workers' health and state of mind, the environment, and so on. Many of these 'products' will have a negative use value. For exchange-value production, whatever is inessential to the realisation of exchange-value is left out of account, but in use-value terms, there could be no rational justification for such tunnel vision. Secondly, use-values have no common quantitative measure. *Calculation* could therefore have no place in deciding between different production projects. The community would have to decide what to produce and how without any quantifiable grounds for the decision. This does not of course mean that their decision would be arbitrary. They would have to ask themselves the question: what sort of world do we want to live in as a result of our productive activities? The desires and self-understanding and information of the community concerned will determine the answer. That is far from arbitrary. But no sort of quantitative 'cost-benefit analysis', even if spiked with a few imponderables and restyled 'comprehensive weighing', can help.

It is curious that the apparent 'objectivity' of exchange-value calculation – which is nothing but the structurally rooted denial of the people's power to choose their conditions of life – has attracted some who believe themselves to be democrats. For instance:

With no objective criterion by which to judge the merit of competing economic alternatives, the determinant necessarily becomes the subjective preference of those who hold power. (Nigel Swain, 'Hungary's socialist Project in Crisis', *New Left Review* 176, 1989)

But that is not, as he suggests, undemocratic. It is one necessary condition of economic democracy. The other is that 'those who hold power' should be answerable to the people. If the people prefer to bow before an 'objective' measure, that is simply abdicating their power and responsibility – like tossing a coin. For what is measured by the objective measure is something quite other than the people's wellbeing. In a bureaucratic command economy at least *someone* is deciding; to make that decision process democratic is one thing; to abdicate it in favour of market forces and the sort of calculability that only makes sense under conditions of the alienation of human powers into market forces, is something different.<sup>9</sup>

Use-value planning then is an exercise in gathered freedom in the threefold sense (social, environmental, temporal) – a community deciding the future of its material environment. Insofar as each person is asking themselves, not 'what can I get?', but 'what sort of world do I want to live in?' and hence 'how shall we care for our inorganic body?', our self-understanding as beneficiaries of the productive process is not as *consumers*, but as *dwellers in the world as transformed by our labour*.

This in turn has consequences for the controversy about 'growth'. Marxist theory has a concept of technical progress, e.g.

the shortening of necessary labour time; more specifically, in its analysis of capitalism, it has the concept of the increasing organic composition of capital; but 'growth' in the usual, consumer-oriented sense has no equivalent in Marxist science. In exchange-value terms, there can of course be no overall growth, since exchange-values express fractions of the total social labour, so that the total exchange-value produced, by definition = 1. In use-value terms, one could speak of growth unambiguously only if more of some kinds of use-value were produced without any reduction in other kinds, or any increase in negative use-values. But in practice, there is always gain and loss, and no commensurability between them. However, one specific combination of use-values may be more congenial for the people who live with them than another. The nearest we can get to a synonym for 'growth' in a socialist economy would be something like 'making the world a more congenial home for people'.<sup>10</sup>

Am I jettisoning exact ideas in favour of vague ones? In some cases, yes; exact but false for vague but true ones. The concept of a *consumer*, for instance, may be exact enough in its place: we consume bread and cheese and tea and beer. But it is simply inapplicable to such 'products' as education, health care and the environment. Whatever could be the product and whoever could be the consumer of schooling, for example? There is no answer which is not both misleading and offensive. Yet this language is in increasingly common use, obscuring such facts as that schooling takes up a large part of people's lives, that it can be inherently rewarding or frustrating, that it starts when we are relatively dependent and finishes when we are relatively independent.

This paper has been guided by the belief that differences about values are at bottom differences about ontology – not as a technical philosophical discipline, but as the ontology implicit in everyone's 'commonsense'. That the free market seems acceptable to so many people today indicates that freedom is spontaneously identified with dispersed freedoms, and the lost possibilities of gathered freedom are not taken into account. That this is so indicates the prevalence of a number of atomisms (social, temporal, spatial: the atomisms that make dispersedness in these dimensions appear the norm) in 'commonsense' ontology. I am proposing the foregrounding of the notion of the inorganic body, the body-cosmic, as the alternative to those atomisms.

## Notes

- 1 In German: 'Sie entfremdet dem Menschen seinem eignen Leib, wie die Natur ausser ihm, wie sein geistiges Wesen, sein menschliches Wesen.' *Marx Engels Werke, Ergänzungsband, Schriften bis 1844, Erster Teil*, p. 517.
- 2 I adopt this phrase from Mesmer Partridge's narrative in Michael Westlake's novel *The Utopian*. It refers to the body as that enclosed by one's skin. I contrast it with the 'body-cosmic', as I prefer to call the inorganic body, since it is not entirely inorganic. I hope it goes without saying that 'cosmic' is simply a way of forming an adjective from 'world', and has no occult meaning.  
On the 'objective/subjective' issue, I take it that the parts of a person's body-cosmic exist objectively and have mutual causal relations, for the most part independently of that person's existence; they are parts of his or her body-cosmic to the extent that their causal interaction with each other and his or her body-actual is constitutive of his or her being.
- 3 This is the term that Brentano adopted from Aquinas to denote the relation of the mind's objects to the mind. When as a student I attended Hidé Ishiguro's lectures on this topic, she warned us against thinking that 'inexistence' was a negative concept, like 'non-existence'. At the time, we all thought the warning unne-

cessary to native English speakers, but I rather think that a recent semantic shift has made it necessary.

- 4 *The Voice of Experience* (Pelican, 1983), p. 28.
- 5 Douglas Odegard, 'The Body Identical with the Human Mind: A Problem in Spinoza's Philosophy', in *Spinoza: Essays in Interpretation*, eds. Mandelbaum and Freeman (Open Court, 1975).
- 6 Cf. Heidegger's notion of our spatiality as 'making the farness vanish – that is, making the remoteness of something disappear, bringing it close.' *Being and Time*, p. 139. When we see something distant, by virtue of our seeing it we make our own being partly constituted by it; it becomes part of us, not by anything we do to it – it remains unchanged – but by becoming part of the world that the perceiver is.
- 7 The feeling that a customary freedom is more sacrosanct than a new freedom is one which should be respected. But this distinction is not the same as the one I am making. The 'obvious' (dispersed) freedoms are not always the customary ones. The motorist's freedom, for example, violates countless customary freedoms.
- 8 See 'On Liberty', in *Utilitarianism* (Fontana, 1962), p. 222.
- 9 I am not making any 'existentialist' point against the objectivity of grounds for choice. We may have – and may reason about – objective grounds for choosing one 'possible world' rather than another. The point is that there will be a number of competing alternatives, each with their objective grounds, and no mathematical aids to the choice between them.
- 10 Pre-capitalist societies have both an immensely slower rate of technical progress, and much less tendency to insist on 'maximum efficiency' in the use of labour than capitalist ones. It is not obvious that these are disadvantages, whatever other disadvantages such societies had relative to capitalism. The obsolescence of still-working equipment, whether in production or 'consumer durables', is one form of waste attendant upon too-fast progress; redundancy of human skills is another. It might well be rational for a socialist community to take it easy where innovation is concerned. Likewise, 'overstaffing' in e.g. a hospital may make for a much higher level of friendliness and good humour and willingness to do favours, and hence of healing care, than time-and-motion-studied efficiency. One should always be suspicious of talk about 'disguised unemployment', whether this refers to the leisure of the Athenian citizen to attend the theatre and the assembly, or that of the modern worker to chat at work. Such talk pre-supposes an idea of efficiency that makes no sense unless one assumes that work is nothing but an unwanted means to an external end, and has no effects other than the production of that end.

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