

THE  
DIALECTIC OF SEX

*The Case for Feminist Revolution*

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*for*  
*Simone de Beauvoir*  
*who endured*

and dryness of 'objectivity.' What we shall have in the next cultural revolution is the reintegration of the Male (Technological Mode) with the Female (Aesthetic Mode), to create an androgynous culture surpassing the highs of either cultural stream, or even of the sum of their integrations. More than a marriage, rather an abolition of the cultural categories themselves, a mutual cancelation—a matter-antimatter explosion, ending with a poof! culture itself.

We shall not miss it. We shall no longer need it: by then humanity will have mastered nature totally, will have realized in *actuality* its dreams. With the full achievement of the conceivable in the actual, the surrogate of culture will no longer be necessary. The sublimation process, a detour to wish fulfillment, will give way to direct satisfaction in experience, as felt now only by children, or adults on drugs.\* (Though normal adults 'play' to varying degrees, the example that illustrates more immediately to almost everyone the intense level of this future experience, ranking zero on a scale of accomplishment—'nothing to show for it'—but nevertheless somehow always worth everyone's while, is lovemaking.) Control and delay of 'id' satisfaction by the 'ego' will be unnecessary; the *id* can live free. Enjoyment will spring directly from being and acting itself, the process of experience, rather than from the quality of achievement. When the male Technological Mode can at last produce in actuality what the female Aesthetic Mode had envisioned, we shall have eliminated the need for either.

\* Recent attempts of the youth } culture to return to this state of simplicity  
hippie }  
drug }

—even if one turns into a 'head' by artificial means of chemical stimulation—are bound to fail. People have developed layers of repression and defenses only because they *must* live in our current real world. One now can achieve at best a (mannered and self-conscious) 'direct experience' only by 'dropping out,' ignoring the real world, for example, moving to Colorado (circa 1878) with people of like mind, and hoping hard they won't bother bombing out there. This is naïve—and reactionary, regressive, ahistorical, utopian, etc.—but above all, it is ineffective.

## 10 The Ultimate Revolution: Demands and Speculations

### FEMINISM AND ECOLOGY

Empirical science left repercussions in its wake: the sharp acceleration of technology upset the natural order. But recent popular interest in ecology, the study of man's relationship to his environment, may, by 1970, have come too late. Certainly it is too late for conservationism, the attempt to *redress* natural balances. What is called for is a revolutionary ecological programme that would attempt to establish a humane artificial (man-made) balance in place of the natural one, thus also realizing the original goal of empirical science: human mastery of matter.

The best new currents in ecology and social planning agree with feminist aims. The way that these two social phenomena, feminism and revolutionary ecology, have emerged with such coincidence illustrates a historical truth: new theories and new movements do not develop in a vacuum, they arise to spearhead the necessary social solutions to contradictions in the environment. In this case, both movements have arisen in response to the same contradiction: animal life within a technology. In the case of feminism the problem is a moral one: the biological family unit has always oppressed women and children, but now, for the first time in history, technology has created real pre-conditions for overthrowing these oppressive 'natural' conditions, along with their cultural reinforcements. In the case of the new ecology, we find that independent of any moral stance, for pragmatic - survival - reasons alone, it has become necessary to free humanity from the tyranny of its biology. Humanity can no longer afford to remain in the transitional stage between

humanity  
} nature

simple animal existence and full control of nature. And we are much closer to a major evolutionary jump, indeed, to direction of our own evolution, than we are to a return to the animal kingdom through which we evolved. Thus in view of accelerating technology, a revolutionary ecological movement would have the same aim as the feminist movement: control of the new technology for humane purposes, the establishment of a new equilibrium between man and the artificial environment he is creating, to replace the destroyed 'natural' balance.

What are some of the concerns of ecology that are of direct interest to the feminist movement? I shall discuss briefly two issues of the new ecology that particularly pertain to the new feminism: reproduction and its control, including the population crisis and methods of fertility control; and cybernation, the full takeover by machines of increasingly complex functions, altering man's age-old relation to work and wages.

Previously I had taken copious notes, written whole drafts on the population explosion, quoting once again all sorts of frightening statistics about the rate of population growth. But on second thought, it seemed to me that I had heard it all before and so had everyone else. Perhaps for the purposes of this book, we would do better to discuss why these statistics are so consistently ignored. For, despite increasingly dire pronouncements from every expert in the field, few people are seriously worried. In fact, the *laissez faire* actually seems to grow in direct proportion to the urgency for immediate action.

The relation between the two situations is direct: inability to confront or deal with the problem creates a sham confidence, the extent of which is borne out by a recent Gallup poll (3 August, 1968) in which, to the question, 'What do you find to be the most pressing problem confronting the nation today?' less than 1 per cent of the national sample of adults questioned mentioned population. And yet at the very least, to quote population experts Lincoln H. Day and Alice Taylor Day, in their book *Too Many Americans*, 'To support an increase of another 180,000,000 (forty-four more years, at current rates) this country would have to undergo changes in the condition of life as radical as those that have occurred since Columbus.' This

is the most conservative estimate. The majority of demographers, biologists, and ecologists are considerably more pessimistic. Books come out all the time on the subject, each with a new slant to the terrors of the population explosion (If we had reproduced at this rate since the time of Christ, by now we would have . . . If we continue at this rate, starvation will look like . . . by the year . . . So and so many rats congested in a room produce XYZ behaviour . . .), books with such titles as *Famine, 1975*, *The Population Bomb*, and so on. Scientists themselves are in a panic: a well-known biologist at Rockefeller University is reputed to have stopped speaking to his own daughter after the birth of her third child; his students multiply at their peril.

Yet the public remains convinced that science can solve the problem. One reason the man on the street believes so ardently that 'they' can handle it - in addition to the Witchdoctor Mystique that 'they' always seem to find an answer for everything - is that information filters down so slowly from above. For example, the public began to hear about the 'green revolution' only when scientists abandoned hope in it as anything but a desperate stopgap measure to delay worldwide famine for another generation; so rather than alarming, this information acted as a bromide.

The Miracle-of-Modern-Science is only one of a whole stockpile of arguments that, no matter how often they are disproven, keep bobbing up again. There is the Food Surplus argument, the Vast-Stretches-of-Unpopulated-Land argument, the Chinese Boogy-Woogy (population increases defence strength), and many more, varying in their sophistication with the social milieu of their propounders. It is useless to argue - so I won't do it here - for it is not at all a question of correct information, or logic. There is something else underlying all these arguments. What is it?

The chauvinism that develops in the family. We have discussed some of the components of this family psychology: the patriarchal mentality concerned with its sons only in so far as they are heir and ego extension, in the private bid for immortality (why worry about the larger social good just so long as *You And Yours* are 'happy'); Us-Against-Them chauvinism (blood

is thicker); the division between the abstract and the concrete, the public and the private (what could be more abstract and public than a demographic statistic? what could be more private and concrete than one's own reproduction?); the privatization of the sex experience; the power psychology; and so on.

Leftists and revolutionaries, unfortunately, are no exception to this universal malpsychology generated by the family. They too indulge in Us-Against-Themism, though this time in reverse. If 'Us', the upper-class and highbrow intelligentsia, argues that 'We better not have a decrease in birth rates or the rabble and/or the weakminded will take over', 'Them', the 'rabble' (lately known as the 'lunatic fringe'), counters with paranoia about being birth-controlled out of existence - 'Genocide!' This fear is well-founded. However, it is also responsible for a general failure of vision on the Left to see beneath the evil uses of birth control to a genuine ecological problem which no number of fancy arguments and bogey statistics can erase. It is true that capitalist imperialist governments are only too glad to dispense birth control devices to the Third World or to Blacks and the poor in the US (particularly welfare mothers, who are often made into guinea pigs for the latest experiments), while at home they think nothing of giving a man a ten-year jail sentence for dispensing Emko Foam to a young, white, unmarried coed; it is true that a redistribution of the world's wealth and resources would greatly ease the problem - even if it could happen tomorrow. But the problem would still remain, for it exists independently of traditional politics and economics, and thus could not be solved by traditional politics and economics alone. These political and economic complications are only aggravations of a genuine problem of ecology. Once again radicals have failed to think radically enough: capitalism is not the only enemy, redistribution of wealth and resources is not the only solution, attempts to control population are not only Third World Suppression in disguise.

But often there is a more serious error: results of the misuse of technology are very often attributed to the use of technology *per se*. (But do the black militants who advocate unchecked fertility for black women allow themselves to become burdened

use vs misuse of tech.

with heavy bellies and too many mouths to feed? One gathers that they find contraception of some help in maintaining their active preaching schedules.) As was demonstrated in the case of the development of atomic energy, radicals, rather than breast-beating about the immorality of scientific research, could be much more effective by concentrating their full energies on demands for control of scientific discoveries by and for the people. For, like atomic energy, fertility control, artificial reproduction, cybernation, in themselves, are liberating - unless they are improperly used.

What are the new scientific developments in the control of this dangerously prolific reproduction? Already we have more and better contraception than ever before in history.<sup>1</sup> The old spanner-in-the-works intervention against conception (diaphragms, condoms, foams, and jellies) was only the beginning. Soon we shall have a complete understanding of the entire reproductive process in all its complexity, including the subtle dynamics of hormones and their full effects on the nervous system. Present oral contraception is at only a primitive (faulty) stage, only one of many types of fertility control now under experiment. Artificial insemination and artificial inovation are already a reality. Choice of sex of the foetus, test-tube fertilization (when capacitation of sperm within the vagina is fully understood) are just around the corner. Several teams of scientists are working on the development of an artificial placenta. Even parthenogenesis - virgin birth - could be developed very soon.

Are people, even scientists themselves, culturally prepared for any of this? Decidedly not. A recent Harris poll, quoted in *Life* magazine, representing a broad sampling of Americans - including, for example, Iowa farmers - found a surprising number willing to consider the new methods. The hitch was that they would consider them only where they reinforced and furthered present values of family life and reproduction, e.g., to help a barren woman have her husband's child. Any question that

1. This chapter was written before the 'Pill Hearings', indeed before the mushrooming of the ecology movement itself. Such is the speed of modern communications - a book is outdated before it even makes it into galleys.

could be interpreted as a furthering of liberation *per se* was rejected flatly as unnatural. But note that it was not the 'test tube' baby itself that was thought unnatural (25 percent agreed off the bat that they themselves would use this method, let's say, in case the wife was barren), but the new value system, based on the elimination of male supremacy and the family.

It is clear by now that research in the area of reproduction is itself being impeded by cultural lag and sexual bias. The money allocated for specific kinds of research, the kinds of research done are only incidentally in the interests of women when at all. For example, work on the development of an artificial placenta still has to be excused on the grounds that it might save babies born prematurely. Thus, although it would be far easier technically to transfer an embryo than a nearly developed baby, all the money goes into the latter research. Or again, that women are excluded from science is directly responsible for the tabling of research on oral contraceptives for males. (Is it possible that women are thought to make better guinea pigs because they are considered by male scientists to be 'inferior'? Or is it only because male scientists worship male fertility?) There are great numbers of such examples.

Fears of new methods of reproduction are so widespread that as of the time of this writing, 1969, the subject, outside of scientific circles, is still taboo. Even many women in the women's liberation movement - perhaps especially in the women's liberation movement - are afraid to express any interest in it for fear of confirming the suspicion that they are 'unnatural', wasting a great deal of energy denying that they are anti-motherhood, pro-artificial reproduction, and so on. Let me then say it bluntly:

Pregnancy is barbaric. I do not believe, as many women are now saying, that the reason pregnancy is viewed as not beautiful is due strictly to cultural perversion. The child's first response, 'What's wrong with that Fat Lady?'; the husband's guilty waning of sexual desire; the woman's tears in front of the mirror at eight months - are all gut reactions, not to be dismissed as cultural habits. Pregnancy is the temporary deformation of the body of the individual for the sake of the species.

Moreover, childbirth hurts. And it isn't good for you. Three thousand years ago, women giving birth 'naturally' had no need to pretend that pregnancy was a real trip, some mystical orgasm (that far-away look). The Bible said it: pain and travail. The glamour was unnecessary: women had no choice. They didn't dare squawk. But at least they could scream as loudly as they wanted during their labour pains. And after it was over, even during it, they were admired in a limited way for their bravery; their valour was measured by how many children (sons) they could endure bringing into the world.

Today all this has been confused. The cult of natural childbirth itself tells us how far we've come from true oneness with nature. Natural childbirth is only one more part of the reactionary hippie-Rousseauian Return-to-Nature, and just as self-conscious. Perhaps a mystification of childbirth, true faith, makes it easier for the woman involved. Pseudo-yoga exercises, twenty pregnant women breathing deeply on the floor to the conductor's baton, may even help some women develop 'proper' attitudes (as in 'I didn't scream once'). The squirming husband at the bedside, like the empathy pains of certain tribesmen ('Just look what I go through with you, dear'), may make a woman feel less alone during her ordeal. But the fact remains: childbirth is at best necessary and tolerable. It is not fun.

(Like shitting a pumpkin, a friend of mine told me when I inquired about the Great-Experience-You're-Missing. What's-wrong-with-shitting-shitting-can-be-fun says the School of the Great Experience. It hurts, she says. What's-wrong-with-a-little-pain-as-long-as-it-doesn't-kill-you? answers the school. It is boring, she says. Pain-can-be-interesting-as-an-experience says the school. Isn't that a rather high price to pay for interesting experience? she says. But-look-you-get-a-reward, says the school: a-baby-all-your-own-to-fuck-up-as-you-please. Well, that's something, she says. But how do I know it will be male like you?)

Artificial reproduction is not inherently dehumanizing. At very least, development of the option should make possible an honest re-examination of the ancient value of motherhood. At

Against pregnancy

against natural childbirth

the present time, for a woman to come out openly against motherhood on principle is physically dangerous. She can get away with it only if she adds that she is neurotic, abnormal, child-hating, and therefore 'unfit'. ('Perhaps later . . . when I'm better prepared.') This is hardly a free atmosphere of inquiry. At least until the taboo is lifted, until the decision not to have children or to have them by artificial means is as legitimate as traditional child-bearing, women are as good as forced into their female roles.

Another scientific development that we find difficult to absorb into our traditional value system is the new science of cybernetics: machines that may soon equal or surpass man in original thinking and problem-solving. While it may be argued, as with artificial reproduction, that such machines are barely past the speculative stage, remember that it was only five to ten years ago that experts in the field were predicting that five or six computers would satisfy permanently the needs of the whole country.

Cybernetics, like birth control, can be a double-edged sword. Like artificial reproduction, to envision it in the hands of the present powers is to envision a nightmare. We need not elaborate. Everyone is familiar with Technocracy, 1984: the increased alienation of the masses, the intensified rule of the élite (now perhaps cyberneticians), baby factories, computerized government (Big Brother), and so on. In the hands of the present establishment there is no doubt that the machine could be used - is being used - to intensify the apparatus of repression and to increase established power.

But again, as in the issue of population control, misuse of science has often obscured the value of science itself. In this case, though perhaps the response may not be quite so hysterical and evasive, we still often have the same unimaginative concentration on the evils of the machine itself, rather than a recognition of its revolutionary significance. Books and research abound on how to avoid Technocracy, 1984 (e.g., Alan Weston's *Privacy and Freedom*), but there is little thought about how to deal effectively with the qualitative changes in life style that cybernation will bring.

The two issues, population control and cybernetics, produce the same nervous superficial response because in both cases the underlying problem is one for which there is no precedent: qualitative change in humanity's basic relationships to both its production and its reproduction. We will need almost overnight, in order to deal with the profound effects of fertility control and cybernation, a new culture based on a radical redefinition of human relationships and leisure for the masses. To so radically redefine our relationship to production and reproduction requires the destruction at once of the class system as well as the family. We will be beyond arguments about who is 'bringing home the bacon' - no one will be bringing it home, because no one will be 'working'. Job discrimination would no longer have any basis in a society where machines do the work better than human beings of any size or skill could. Machines thus could act as the perfect equalizer, obliterating the class system based on exploitation of labour.

What might the immediate impact of cybernation be on the position of women? Briefly, we can predict the following: (1) While at first automation will continue to provide new service jobs for women, e.g., keypunch operator, computer programmer, etc., these positions are not likely to last long (precisely why women, the transient labour force *par excellence*, are sought for them). Eventually, such simple specialized control of machines will give way to a more widespread common knowledge of their control and, at the same time, at top levels, increased specialized knowledge of their newer, more complex functions by a new élite of engineers, cyberneticians. The kinds of jobs into which women have been welcomed, the lower rung of white-collar service jobs, will be phased out. At the same time, housework also will become more cybernated, reducing women's legitimate work functions even further. (2) Erosion of the status of the 'head of the household,' particularly in the working class, may shake up family life and traditional sex roles even more profoundly. (3) Massive unrest of the young, the poor, the unemployed will increase: as jobs become more difficult to obtain, and there is no cushioning of the cultural shock by education for leisure, revolutionary ferment is likely to become a

against work  
machines  
as equalizer

respond as neutrally  
misuse the problem

cybernation  
bringing most, revolution

staple. Thus, all in all, cybernation may aggravate the frustration that women already feel in their roles, pushing them into revolution.

A feminist revolution could be the decisive factor in establishing a new ecological balance: attention drawn to the population explosion, a shifting of emphasis from reproduction to contraception, and demands for the full development of artificial reproduction would provide an alternative to the oppressions of the biological family; cybernation, by changing man's relationship to work and wages, by transforming activity from 'work' to 'play' (activity done for its own sake), would allow for a total redefinition of the economy, including the family unit in its economic capacity. The double curse that man should till the soil by the sweat of his brow and that woman should bear in pain and travail would be lifted through technology to make humane living for the first time a possibility. The feminist movement has the essential mission of creating cultural acceptance of the new ecological balance necessary for the survival of the human race in the twentieth century.

#### REVOLUTIONARY DEMANDS

Women, biologically distinguished from men, are culturally distinguished from 'human'. Nature produced the fundamental inequality - half the human race must bear and rear the children of all of them - which was later consolidated, institutionalized, in the interests of men. Reproduction of the species cost women dearly, not only emotionally, psychologically, culturally but even in strictly material (physical) terms: before recent methods of contraception, continuous childbirth led to constant 'female trouble', early ageing, and death. Women were the slave class that maintained the species in order to free the other half for the business of the world - admittedly often its drudge aspects, but certainly all its creative aspects as well.

This natural division of labour was continued only at great cultural sacrifice: men and women developed only half of themselves. The division of the psyche into male and female to better reinforce the reproductive division was tragic: the hyper-

trophy in men of rationalism, aggressive drive, the atrophy of their emotional sensitivity, was a physical (war) as well as a cultural disaster. The emotionalism and passivity of women increased their suffering (we cannot speak of them in a symmetrical way, since they were victimized as a class by the division). Sexually men and women were channelled into a highly ordered - time, place, procedure, even dialogue - heterosexuality restricted to the genitals, rather than diffused over the entire physical being.

I submit, then, that the first demand for any alternative system must be:

(1) *The freeing of women from the tyranny of reproduction by every means possible, and the diffusion of the child-rearing role to the society as a whole, men as well as women.*

There are many degrees of this. Already we have a (hard-won) acceptance of 'family planning', if not contraception for its own sake. Proposals are imminent for day-care centres, perhaps even twenty-four-hour child-care centres staffed by men as well as women. But this, in my opinion, is timid if not entirely worthless as a transition. We're talking about radical change. And though indeed it cannot come all at once, radical goals must be kept in sight at all times. Day-care centres buy women off. They ease the immediate pressure without asking why that pressure is on women.

At the other extreme there are the more distant solutions based on the potentials of modern embryology, that is, artificial reproduction, possibilities still so frightening that they are seldom discussed seriously. We have seen that the fear is to some extent justified: in the hands of our current society and under the direction of current scientists (few of whom are female or even feminist), any attempted use of technology to 'free' anybody is suspect. But we are speculating about post-revolutionary systems, and for the purposes of our discussion we shall assume flexibility and good intentions in those working out the change.

To free women thus from their biology would be to threaten the social unit that is organized around biological reproduction and the subjection of women to their biological destiny, the



family. Our second demand also will come as a basic contradiction to the family, this time the family as an *economic unit*.

(2) *The political autonomy, based on economic independence, of both women and children.*

To achieve this goal would require revolutionary changes in our social and economic structure. That is why we must talk about, in addition to radically new forms of breeding, a cybernetic communism. For without advanced technology, even eliminating capitalism, we could withstand only a marginal integration of women into the labour force. Margaret Benston has pointed out the importance of distinguishing between the industrial economy based on commodity production, and the pre-industrial economy of the family, production for immediate use: because the work of women is not part of the modern economy, its function as the very basis of that economy is easily overlooked. Talk of drafting women *en masse* into the super-structure economy thus fails to deal with the tremendous amount of labour of the more traditional kind that – prior to full cybernation – still must be done. Who will do it?

Even paying the masses of women for doing this labour, could we swing it – multiply the 99.6 woman-hours per week (conservatively estimated by the Chase Manhattan Bank) by even a minimum hourly wage, times half the (previously slave) population, and you are calculating the overthrow of capitalism – would constitute only a reform in revolutionary feminist terms, for it does not begin to challenge the root division of labour and thus could never eradicate its disastrous psycho-cultural consequences.

As for the independence of children, that is really a pipe dream, realized as yet nowhere in the world. For, in the case of children, too, we are talking about more than a fair integration into the labour force; we are talking about the obsolescence of the labour force itself through cybernation, the radical restructuring of the economy to make 'work', i.e. compulsory labour, particularly alienated 'wage' labour, no longer necessary.

We have now attacked the family on a double front, challenging that around which it is organized: reproduction of the species by females and its outgrowth, the dependence of women

and children. To eliminate these would be enough to destroy the family, which breeds the psychology of power. However, we will break it down still further.

(3) *The complete integration of women and children into society.*

All institutions that segregate the sexes, or bar children from adult society, must be destroyed. (Down with school!)

And if male/female-adult/child cultural distinctions are destroyed, we will no longer need the sexual repression that maintains these unequal classes, uncovering for the first time natural sexual freedom. Thus we arrive at:

(4) *The sexual freedom of all women and children.* Now they can do whatever they wish to do sexually. There will no longer be any reason *not* to. Past reasons: full sexuality threatened the continuous reproduction necessary for human survival, and thus, through religion and other cultural institutions, sexuality had to be restricted to reproductive purposes, all non-reproductive sex pleasure considered deviation or worse: the sexual freedom of women would call into question the fatherhood of the child, thus threatening patrimony; child sexuality had to be repressed by means of the incest taboo because it was a threat to the precarious internal balance of the family. These sexual repressions increased proportionately to the degree of cultural exaggeration of the biological family.

But in our new society, humanity could finally revert to its natural polymorphous sexuality – all forms of sexuality would be allowed and indulged. The fully sexuate mind, realized in the past in only a few individuals (survivors), would become universal. Artificial cultural achievement would no longer be the only avenue to sexuate self-realization: one could now realize oneself fully, simply in the process of being and acting.

Sexual  
liberation

### THREE FAILED EXPERIMENTS

These structural imperatives must form the basis of any more specific radical feminist programme. But our revolutionary demands are likely to meet anything from mild balking ('utopian ... unrealistic ... farfetched ... too far in the future ...

impossible . . . so, the system stinks, but you haven't got anything better . . .') to hysteria ('inhuman . . . unnatural . . . sick . . . perverted . . . communistic . . . 1984 . . . what? creative motherhood destroyed for babies in glass tubes, monsters made by scientists?, etc.'). But we have seen that such defensive reactions on the contrary may signify how close we are hitting: revolutionary feminism is the only radical programme that immediately cracks through to the emotional strata underlying 'serious' politics, thus reintegrating the personal with the public, the subjective with the objective, the emotional with the rational - the female principle with the male.

What are some of the prime components of this resistance that is keeping people from experimenting with alternatives to the family, and where does it come from? We are all familiar with the details of Brave New World: cold collectives, with individualism abolished, sex reduced to a mechanical act, children become robots, Big Brother intruding into every aspect of private life, rows of babies fed by impersonal machines, eugenics manipulated by the state, genocide of cripples and retards for the sake of a super-race created by white-coated technicians, all emotion considered weakness, love destroyed, and so on. The family (which, despite its oppressiveness, is now the last refuge from the encroaching power of the state, a shelter that provides the little emotional warmth, privacy, and individual comfort now available) would be destroyed, letting this horror penetrate indoors.

Ironically, one reason for the continual recurrence of '1984' so frequently is that it grows directly out of, signifying an exaggeration of, the evils of our present male-supremacist culture. For example, many of its visual details are lifted directly from our orphanages and state-run institutions for children.<sup>2</sup> This is

2. Though it is true that children in orphanages do not get even the warmth and attention that parents give a child, with crippling results - tests have shown IQ's of children in institutions to be lower, emotional maladjustment higher, and even, as in the famous experiment with monkeys deprived of motherly care, sexual functioning to be crippled or destroyed - those who quote these statistics so triumphantly to discredit radical alternatives do not recognize that the orphanage is the antithesis of a radical alternative, that in fact it is an *outgrowth of what we are trying to correct.*

The orphanage is the underside of the family, just as prostitution is the

a vision of a society in which women have become like men, crippled in the identical way, thus destroying a delicate balance of interlocking dependencies.

However, we are suggesting the opposite: rather than the concentration of the female principle into a 'private' retreat, into which men can periodically duck for relief, we want to rediffuse it - for the first time truly creating society from the bottom up. Man's difficult triumph over Nature has made it possible to restore the truly natural: he could undo both his own and Eve's curse, to re-establish the earthly Garden of Eden. But in his long toil his imagination has been stifled: he fears rather the enlargement of his drudgery, the addition of Eve's curse to his own.

But there is a more concrete reason why this subliminal horror image operates to destroy serious consideration of feminism: the failure of past social experiments. Radical experiments, when they have solved problems at all, have created an entirely new - and not necessarily improved - set of problems in their place. Let us look briefly at some of these radical experiments to determine the causes of their failure - for I believe that in no case was

*direct result of the institution of patriarchal marriage. In the same sense as prostitution complements marriage, the orphanage is the necessary complementary evil of a society in which the majority of children live under a system of patronage by genetic parents. In the one case, because women exist under patronage, unclaimed women pay a special price; in the other, because children are possessions of specific individuals rather than free members of the society, unclaimed children suffer.*

Orphans are those unfortunate children who have no parents at all in a society that dictates that all children *must* have parents to survive. When all adults are monopolized by their genetic children, there is no one left to care about the unclaimed. However, if *no one* had exclusive relationships with children, then *everyone* would be free for *all* children. The natural interest in children would be diffused over all children rather than narrowly concentrated on one's own.

The evils of this orphanage system, the barracks-like existence, the impersonality, the anonymity, arise because these institutions are *dumping grounds* for the rejected in an exclusive family system; whereas we want to spread family emotions over the whole society. Thus child institutions and their consequences are at the furthest remove from revolutionary alternatives because they violate almost all of our essential postulates: the integration of children into the total society, and the granting of full economic and sexual freedoms.

failed radicalisms

the failure surprising given the original postulates of the experiment, within its particular social context. We can then use this information as another valuable negative guideline, teaching us what most to avoid in our own programme.

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Of all the modern social experiments the most important failure was that of the Russian communes. (The failure of the Russian Revolution in general is a thorn in every radical's side; but its direct relation to the failure of the communes is seldom noted.) It led, ironically, to the assumption of a causal connection between the abolition of the family and the development of a totalitarian state. In this view, the later Russian reinstatement of the nuclear family system is seen as a last-ditch attempt to salvage humanist values – privacy, individualism, love, etc., by then rapidly disappearing.

But it is the reverse: *the failure of the Russian Revolution to achieve the classless society is traceable to its half-hearted attempts to eliminate the family and sexual repression.* This failure, in turn, was due to the limitations of a male-biased revolutionary analysis based on economic class alone, one that failed to take the family fully into account even in its function as an economic unit. By the same token, *all socialist revolutions to date have been or will be failures for precisely these reasons.* Any initial liberation under current socialism must always revert back to repression, because the family structure is the *source* of psychological, economic, and political oppression. Socialist attempts to soften the structure of power within the family by incorporating women into the labour force or army are only reformist. Thus it is no surprise that socialism as it is now constituted in the various parts of the world is not only no improvement on capitalism, but often worse.

This develops a major component of 1984: the destruction of the family as the last refuge for intimacy, comfort, privacy, individualism, etc., and the complete encroachment of the superstructure economy into all aspects of life, the drafting of women into a *male* world, rather than the elimination of sex class distinction altogether. Because no provision has been made

to re-establish the female element in the outside world, to incorporate the 'personal' into the 'public', because the female principle has been minimized or obliterated rather than diffused to humanize the larger society, the result is a horror.

Wilhelm Reich in *The Sexual Revolution* summarized the specific objective reasons for the failure of the Russian communes in the best analysis to date:

- (1) Confusion of the leadership and evasion of the problem.
- (2) The laborious task of reconstruction in general given the cultural backwardness of Old Russia, the war, and famine.
- (3) Lack of theory. The Russian Revolution was the first of its kind. No attempt had been made to deal with emotional-sexual-familial problems in the formulation of basic revolutionary theory. (Or, in our terms, there had been a lack of 'consciousness raising' about female/child oppression and a lack of radical feminist analysis prior to the revolution itself.)
- (4) The sex-negative psychological structure of the individual, created and reinforced throughout history by the family, hindered the individual's liberation from this very structure. As Reich puts it: 'It must be remembered that human beings have a tremendous fear of just that kind of life for which they long so much but which is at variance with their own structure.'
- (5) The explosive concrete complexities of sexuality.

In the picture that Reich draws of the time, one senses the immense frustration of people trying to liberate themselves without having a well-thought-out ideology to guide them. In the end, that they attempted so much without adequate preparation made their failure even more extreme: *To destroy the balance of sexual polarization without entirely eliminating it was worse than nothing at all.*

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Another experimental communal system, widely touted, is the kibbutz in Israel. Here, though, the failure is not extreme: the most common criticism is that children of the kibbutz lack individualism, that there is a 'groupiness' in their psychology that is the price of elimination of the family. ('And if you want to pay the price . . . well . . .') Here, though there are many

studies of the effects of kibbutz life, I prefer to present my own experience.

The division of labour remains. In my short stay, I observed the following: an American registered nurse could not land a job in the infirmary – because all women were needed in the kitchen. A job in the sandal shop was given to a boy apprentice, rather than a woman skilled in leatherwork. Only foreign girls were so naive as to question why women aren't out in the fields, but instead confined to the laundry, the sewing room, or at best, the chicken house. (One woman explained to me that driving a tractor is apt to ruin a woman's complexion.)

Children identify strongly with their genetic parents (one hears over and over again the words *Ema Sheli, Abba Sheli*, 'My mother, My father,' in the same tone as every child on every block in the US says, 'If you don't do it I'll tell my Dad', or 'My moma's gona beat your ass'). Family ties remain strong, even if their worst consequences have been avoided.

Above all, children are still segregated into their own special facilities and programmes: miniature animal farms, special mealtimes, etc. Schooling follows the European model, even if some of its worst aspects, such as 'grades', have been eliminated: the classroom continues, with its twenty-to-one ratio, adult approval still the final goal rather than learning for its own sake.

Sex role models are fostered, sexegration not eliminated (there are different bathrooms for male and female), and homo- or bi-sexuality so unheard of that when I brought it up several women walked out of the room in protest. All rumours to the contrary, the kibbutz is increasingly conservative sexually (if it is embarrassing for a single woman to ask for birth control pills, VD is a disgrace), and any alliance other than a long-term one with a socially approved partner is frowned upon. Sexuality on the kibbutz remains conventionally organized, little different from the sexuality of the larger society. The incest taboo with all its repressive consequences has simply been extended from the family to the peer group.

In fact the kibbutz is no radical experiment, but a limited communalism instituted to further specific agricultural aims. The kibbutz is nothing more than a community of farming

pioneers temporarily forced to sacrifice traditional social structures to better adjust to a peculiar set of national conditions. If and when these conditions change, the kibbutz reverts to 'normal'. For example, women on the far left kibbutz at which I stayed were concerned with demanding private kitchens in addition to the communal one from which meals were served six times a day. They were still cast in the role of Gracious Wife, but had been denied the proper equipment to play the part. Their interest in clothing, fashion, makeup, glamour, not easy to indulge, resembled, indeed *was*, the longing of the farm girl for the vices of the big city – the more as intense in fantasy as it was difficult to achieve in practice. Or, going through the residential section of the kibbutz in the early evening, I could easily imagine that I was walking through a small town or a quiet suburbia in the USA: the matchbox homes were cared for with the attention to private property of any petit bourgeois, the decoration of apartments just as devoted. (The reversion back to property was explained to me as 'only realistic'. Formerly kibbutzniks had shared even personal clothing, but soon got sick of this.) Property is still the necessary extension of a deficient self – because children are still property. The line of Little Ones following Big Mama out of the House of Children looks like that of any kindergarten anywhere. Children are still oppressed.

What is remarkable is that despite the lack of depth in the kibbutz experiment it turned out as well as it did. The proportionate results of even a weakening of the division of labour, the nuclear family and the resulting of sex repression, property mentality, etc., are spectacular. My impression was that the children were healthier physically, mentally, and emotionally than their counterparts in the American family structure; that they were friendlier and more generous, with great curiosity about the world outside; that their parents were not so nervous and hassled, and thus were able to maintain better relationships with them; and that their creativity and individuality were encouraged as much as the community could afford.

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Summerhill

Another limited but much-touted experiment which has produced disproportionately good results is A. S. Neill's Summerhill. In the famous book about his small experimental school in England, *Summerhill: A Radical Approach to Childrearing* (a book on the shelf of every self-respecting liberal, radical, Bohemian, and/or academic parent in the country), he describes the transition of normal children into 'free' self-regulating children. But Summerhill is no 'radical' approach to child-rearing - it is a liberal one. Neill, an educational innovation rather than a true revolutionary,<sup>3</sup> has set up a small retreat for those victims of our present system whose parents have the money and liberal views to send them there. Within this retreat children are spared the more harmful effects of the authoritarianism inherent in the family; equality is encouraged by those who govern the place, an obvious contradiction (Neill's vote counts as only one, though I imagine that in real crisis, the decision does not come up for vote. In any case, children always know who's boss, benevolent though he might be), and compulsory education is relaxed: children learn only when they want to. However, the structure of the class, if loosened, remains unchanged. Or, another example, though masturbation is not frowned on, sexual intercourse is definitely not encouraged (after all, Neill remembers, 'they' can close down the school). What's worse, sex roles have not begun to be eliminated,<sup>4</sup> something beyond the scope of such an

3. Neill says of himself: 'Although I write and say what I think of society, if I tried to reform society *by action*, society would kill me as a public danger. . . . [I realize] that my primary job is not the reformation of society, but the bringing of happiness to some few children.'

4. Indeed, Neill and his wife Ena act as the role models, though for a rather extended family. Neill, baffled but nevertheless accepting comments on the recurrence of sex roles:

'On a good day you may not see the boy gangsters [?] of Summerhill. They are in far corners intent on their *deeds of derring-do*. But you will see the girls. They are in or near the house, and never far away from the *grown-ups*.

You will often find the Art Room full of girls painting and making things with fabrics. In the main, however, I think that the small boys are more creative; at least I never hear a boy say he is bored because he doesn't know what to do, whereas I sometimes hear girls say that.

Possibly I find the boys more creative than the girls because the school may be better equipped for boys than for girls. Girls of ten or over have little use for a workshop with iron and wood . . . They have their art work,

experiment, since children are already psychosexually formed by the family by the time they come in, at five or over. In all respects then - psychologically, sexually, educationally - we have only a softening of some of the harshest aspects of the system.

Clearly the problem has not been attacked at the roots. Legally children are still under the jurisdiction of parents. (And kids can't mail away for the sort of parents who will send them to Summerhill.) Neill continually complains of parents, who can undo all his work in one vacation, or drag the child away the minute the worst effects of the victimization have disappeared. He is afraid of their power over him. After all, he is at their service: if they are not satisfied with the product, the shadowy 'they' will have the final say. Even when the parents are devoted followers of the Summerhill philosophy,<sup>5</sup> they are a nuisance with their constant visits and questions. Between the two, admiring visitors and dubious investigators (including a whole array of official ones), the children must get accustomed to living in a zoo, hardly much of an improvement on their usual status as 'precious' object.

And how could it be otherwise? Summerhill is an insulated refuge in which children are more - not less - segregated from adults, even from the ordinary life of the town. And the school owes its very existence to 'parents' and liberal donors. It is hardly a self-sufficient community with its own economy, and thus it is prone to become a year-round camp for disturbed

which includes pottery, cutting linoleum blocks and painting, and sewing work, but for some that is not enough . . .

The girls take a less active part in school meetings than the boys do, and I have no ready explanation for this fact.' (Italics mine)

5. If the isolated Summerhill school experiment works to a limited degree the Summerhill 'home' fails resoundingly. There is nothing as sad as the spectacle of parents trying to initiate their own private version of Summerhill into their family life, never realizing the deep contradiction between the nuclear family and true child freedom. I have been in homes in which mothers were reduced to begging children to stop hitting guests (me) - they didn't dare use the power that the child, at least, *knows* is there and, in fact, is provoking; there are other families where children are dragged off to family councils periodically; and so on. But nevertheless, despite all these progressive measures, children instinctively know - and act on this knowledge - that any real decisions will be controlled by the parents, *who hold the power*.

children, whose parents have been backed into liberalism as a last resort. Because children far outnumber the adults, and justify the project, their wishes and opinions are observed and 'respected' more than in most places in the world, but it is an artificial respect not based on a true integration into a real community.

And if, with only these superficial reforms, children illustrate remarkably improved behaviour, their aggression, repression, and hostility replaced by authentic courtesy, psychological breadth, and honesty, then think what we might expect under truly revolutionary conditions.

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A detailed study of these and other social experiments from the radical feminist viewpoint would be a valuable contribution to feminist theory. We have been brief: we have discussed some of the more important modern social experiments primarily to show that they do not fulfil our four conditions for feminist revolution.

Let us summarize the causes of failure:

(1) The biological ties of women to reproduction (and thence child-rearing), leading to unequal division of labour, class based on sex, the psychology of power, and other evils, were never severed. The female role was extended rather than eliminated: some women were merely granted a new job to add to their old one. Thus although women may have been (partially) drafted into the superstructure male economy, usually only to fill a transient labour need, never has the female role been diffused throughout the larger society.

(2) In some cases, such as Summerhill, the experiment was dependent on the economy – and the good will – of a larger (and more repressive) community, and thus was parasitic, unsound at its foundations. However, in those communities with socialism at the origins of the experiment, this was not so much the problem. Children of the communes and the kibbutz feel as dependent on the community as a whole as they do on any specific person; often they even share in the productive work. Only in the division of labour are these experiments still (in economic terms) at fault, and that, we know, develops for other reasons.

(3) Continued segregation of children and a failure to do away with or at least radically restructure school. The methods of segregation have varied, ranging from the extreme of the barracks-like orphanage to the more liberal camp setting of a Summerhill, or the *Beit Yeladim* of the kibbutz. But though its destructive impact may have been cushioned, in no case has the concept of childhood itself been questioned, or the apparatus of childhood (the elementary school, special literature, 'toys', etc.) discarded altogether.

(4) Sexual repression continues, partly as the result of the failure to sever the umbilical-cord-tying special connection between women and children and partly because the pioneers were unable to overcome their own 'sex-negative' structures.<sup>6</sup>

I shall add a fifth cause of failure:

(5) There was no development of a feminist consciousness and analysis prior to the initiation of the experiment. The best example of this failing is our current American communal experiments, which merely extend the family structure to include a larger number of people. The division of labour remains, because woman's role in (child) bed or kitchen has not been questioned, nor male the role of provider. And since the mother/child symbiosis remains intact, it is no wonder that when the commune breaks up, all the 'godparents' disappear, as well as the genetic father himself, leaving the mother stuck – without even the protection of an ordinary marriage.

Thus never has there been a true instance of full membership of women and children in the larger society. The modern social experiment, like the matriarchal stage of human history, signifies only a relative loosening within the consolidation of male supremacy through history. It never altered the fundamental condition of sex oppression. Any benefits that accrued to women and children were *incidental* to other social objectives – which themselves were obstructed by the vast, unrecognized substratum of sex oppression. Because their ideology was not founded on the minimal feminist premises above, these experiments never

6. Wilhelm Reich discusses the Russian inability to handle the first signs of a free child sexuality: child sex was interpreted in Puritan terms as the sign of moral breakdown, rather than as the first stage of the reversion to a natural sexuality.

achieved even the more limited democratic goals their (male) theorists and leaders had predicted. However, their success within narrow spheres shows that the biological family unit is amenable to change. But we would have to discard it totally before we could hope to eliminate the oppression altogether.

However – to be fair – it is only recently, in the most technologically advanced countries, that genuine preconditions for feminist revolution have begun to exist. For the first time it is becoming possible to attack the family not only on moral grounds – in that it reinforces biologically-based sex class, promoting adult males (who are then divided further among themselves by race and class privilege) over females of all ages and male children – but also on functional grounds: it is no longer necessary or most effective as the basic social unit for reproduction/production. Cybernetics, in questioning not only man's relation to work but the value of work itself, will eventually strip the division of labour at the root of the family of any remaining practical value; and as for reproduction, we no longer need universal reproduction, even if the development of artificial reproduction does not soon place biological reproduction itself in question.

#### THE SLOW DEATH OF THE FAMILY

The increasing erosion of the functions of the family by modern technology should, by now, have caused some signs of its weakening. However, this is not clearly the case. Though the institution is archaic, artificial cultural reinforcements have been imported to bolster it: sentimental sermons, manuals of guidance, daily columns in newspapers and magazines, special courses, services, and institutions for professional couples, parents, and teachers, nostalgia, warnings to individuals who question or evade it, and finally, if the number of dropouts becomes a serious threat, a real backlash, including outright persecution of nonconformists. The last has not happened perhaps only because it is not yet necessary.

Marriage is in the same state as the Church: both are becoming functionally defunct, as their preachers go about heralding

a revival, eagerly chalking up converts in the day of dread. And just as God has been pronounced dead quite often but has this sneaky way of resurrecting himself, so everyone debunks marriage, yet ends up married.<sup>7</sup>

What is keeping marriage so alive? I have pointed out some of the cultural bulwarks of marriage in the twentieth century. We have seen how the romantic tradition of nonmarital love, the hetairism that was the necessary adjunct to monogamic marriage, has been purposely confused with that most pragmatic of institutions, to render it more appealing – thus restraining people from experimenting with other social forms that could satisfy their emotional needs as well or better.

Under increasing pressure, with the pragmatic bases of the marriage institution blurred, sex roles relaxed to a degree that would have disgraced a Victorian. *He* had no crippling doubts about his role, nor about the function and value of marriage. To him it was simply an economic arrangement of some selfish benefit, one that would most easily satisfy his physical needs and reproduce his heirs. His wife, too, was clear about her duties and rewards: ownership of herself and of her full sexual, psychological, and housekeeping services for a lifetime, in return for long-term patronage and protection by a member of the ruling class, and – in her turn – limited control over the children until they reached a certain age. Today this contract based on divided roles has been so disguised by sentiment that it goes completely unrecognized by millions of newly-weds, and even by most older married couples.

But this blurring of the economic contract, and the resulting confusion of sex roles, has not significantly eased woman's oppression. In many cases it has put her in only a more vulnerable position. With the clear-cut arrangement of matches by parents all but abolished, a woman, still part of an underclass, must now, in order to gain the indispensable male patronage and protection, play a desperate game, hunting down bored males while yet appearing cool. And even once she is married, any

7. Ninety-five per cent of all American women still marry and 90 per cent bear children, most often more than two. Families with children in the median range (two to four) still predominate, no longer attributable to the postwar baby boom.

overlap of roles generally takes place on the wife's side, not on the husband's: the 'cherish and protect' clause is the first thing forgotten – while the wife has gained the privilege of going to work to 'help out', even of putting her husband through school. More than ever she shoulders the brunt of the marriage, not only emotionally, but now also in its more practical aspects. She has simply added his job to hers.

A second cultural prop to the outmoded institution is the privatization of the marriage experience: each partner enters marriage convinced that what happened to his parents, what happened to his friends can never happen to him. Though Wrecked Marriage has become a national hobby, a universal obsession – as witnessed by the booming business of guidebooks to marriage and divorce, the women's magazine industry, an affluent class of marriage counsellors and shrinks, whole repertoires of Ball-and-Chain jokes and gimmicks, and cultural products such as soap opera, the marriage-and-family genre on TV, e.g., *I Love Lucy* or *Father Knows Best*, films and plays like Cassavetes's *Faces* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* – still one encounters everywhere a defiant 'We're different' brand of optimism in which the one good (outwardly exemplary, anyway) marriage in the community is habitually cited to prove that *it* is possible.

Sex privatism is exposed in comments like, 'Well, I know I'd make a great mother.' It is useless to point out that *everyone* says that, that the very parents or friends now dismissed as 'bad' parents and 'poor' marital partners all began marriage and parenthood in exactly the same spirit. After all, does anyone *choose* to have a 'bad' marriage? Does anyone *choose* to be a 'bad' mother? And even if it were a question of 'good' vs. 'bad' marital partners or parents, there will always be as many of the latter as the former; under the present system of universal marriage and parenthood just as many spouses and children must pull a bad lot as a good one; in fact any classes of 'good' and 'bad' are bound to recreate themselves in identical proportion.<sup>8</sup> Thus the privatization process functions to keep people

8. But what does this dichotomy good/bad really mean? Perhaps after all, it is only a euphemistic class distinction: sensitive and open, as opposed to harassed and stultified. But even though a child born to educated or upper-

blaming themselves, rather than the institution, for its failure: though the institution consistently proves itself unsatisfactory, even rotten, the blinkers they wear allow them to believe that somehow their own case will be different.

Warnings can have no effect, because logic has nothing to do with why people get married. Everyone has eyes of his own, parents of his own. If she chooses to block all evidence, it is because she must. In a world out of control, the only institutions that grant the individual an *illusion* of control, that seem to offer any safety, shelter or warmth, are the 'private' institutions: religion, marriage/family, and, most recently, psychoanalytic therapy. But, as we have seen, the family is neither private nor a refuge, but is directly connected to – is even the cause of – the ills of the larger society which the individual is no longer able to confront.

But the cultural bulwarks we have just discussed – the confusion of romance with marriage, blurring its original functions and the sex roles necessary to maintain them; the illusions of control and refuge, sex privatism, all of which exploit the fears of the contemporary person living within an increasingly hostile environment – still are not the whole answer to why the institution of marriage continues to thrive. It would be facile to attribute the continuation of the family solely to reaction, but such negatives alone could never maintain the family as a vital institution. No, I am afraid we shall find, in measuring marriage against our four minimal feminist demands, that it fulfils (in its own miserable way) at least a portion of the requirements at least as well as or better than did most of the social experiments we have discussed.

(1) Freedom of women from the tyranny of reproduction and child-bearing is hardly fulfilled. However, women are often relieved of its worst strains by a servant class (that is, some slaves are given others as personal servants) – and in the modern marriage, by gynaecology, 'family planning', and the increasing

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class parents is luckier in every respect, and is apt to receive a fair number of privileges by virtue of his class, name, and the property he is due to inherit, children are born equal among all classes – if indeed children born to the unfortunate do not outnumber the others – in this way reproducing in exact proportions the original inequality.



takeover, by the school, day-care centres, and the like, of the child-rearing function.

(2) Though financial *independence* of women and children is not generally granted, there is a substitute: physical *security*.

(3) Women and children, segregated from the larger society, are integrated within the family unit, the only place where this occurs. That the little interplay between men, women, and children is concentrated in one social unit makes that unit all the more difficult to renounce.

(4) Though the family is the source of sexual repression, it guarantees the conjugal couple a steady, if not satisfactory, sex supply, and provides the others with 'aim-inhibited' relationships, which are, in many cases, the only long-term relationships these individuals will ever have.

Thus there are practical assets of marriage to which people cling. It is not all a cultural sales job. On a scale of percentages, marriage - at least in its desperate liberalized version - would fare as well as most of the experimental alternatives thus far tried, which, as we have seen, also fulfilled some of the stipulations and not others, or only partially fulfilled all of them. And marriage has the added advantage of being a known quantity.

And yet marriage in its very definition will never be able to fulfil the needs of its participants, for it was organized around, and reinforces, a fundamentally oppressive biological condition that we only now have the skill to correct. As long as we have the institution we shall have the oppressive conditions built into it. We need to start talking about new alternatives that will satisfy the emotional and psychological needs that marriage, archaic as it is, still satisfies, but that will satisfy them better. But in any proposal we shall have to do at least one better than marriage on our feminist scale, or despite all warnings people will stay hooked - in the hope that just this once, just for them, marriage will come across.

#### ALTERNATIVES

The classic trap for any revolutionary is always, 'What's your alternative?' But even if you *could* provide the interrogator with a blueprint, this does not mean he would use it: in most cases he

utopia

is not sincere in wanting to know. In fact this is a common offensive, a technique to deflect revolutionary anger and turn it against itself. Moreover, the oppressed have no job to convince all people. All *they* need know is that the present system is destroying them.

But though any specific direction must arise organically out of the revolutionary action itself, still I feel tempted here to make some 'dangerously utopian' concrete proposals - both in sympathy for my own pre-radical days when the Not-Responsible-For-Blueprint Line perplexed me, and also because I am aware of the political dangers in the peculiar failure of imagination concerning alternatives to the family. There are, as we have seen, several good reasons for this failure. First, there are no precedents in history for feminist revolution - there have been women revolutionaries, certainly, but they have been used by male revolutionaries, who seldom gave even lip service to equality for women, let alone to a radical feminist restructuring of society. Moreover, we haven't even a literary image of this future society; there is not even a utopian feminist literature yet in existence. Thirdly, the nature of the family unit is such that it penetrates the individual more deeply than any other social organization we have: it literally gets him 'where he lives'. I have shown how the family shapes his psyche to its structure - until ultimately, he imagines it absolute, talk of anything else striking him as perverted. Finally, most alternatives suggest a loss of even the little emotional warmth provided by the family, throwing him into a panic. The model that I shall now draw up is subject to the limitations of any plan laid out on paper by a solitary individual. Keep in mind that these are not meant as final answers, that in fact the reader could probably draw up another plan that would satisfy as well or better the four structural imperatives laid out above. The following proposals, then, will be sketchy, meant to stimulate thinking in fresh areas rather than to dictate the action.

(1970)

What is the alternative to 1984 if we could have our demands acted on in time?

The most important characteristic to be maintained in any revolution is *flexibility*. I will propose, then, a programme of

multiple options to exist simultaneously, interweaving with each other, some transitional, others far in the future. An individual may choose one 'life style' for one decade, and prefer another at another period.

(1) *Single professions.* A single life organized around the demands of a chosen profession, satisfying the individual's social and emotional needs through its own particular occupational structure, might be an appealing solution for many individuals, especially in the transitional period.

Single professions have practically vanished, despite the fact that the encouragement of reproduction is no longer a valid social concern. The old single roles, such as the celibate religious life, court roles – jester, musician, page, knight, and loyal squire – cowboys, sailors, firemen, cross-country truck drivers, detectives, pilots had a prestige all their own: there was no stigma attached to being professionally single. Unfortunately, these roles seldom were open to women. Most single female roles (such as spinster aunt, nun, or courtesan) were still defined by their sexual nature.

Many social scientists are now proposing as a solution to the population problem the encouragement of 'deviant life styles' that by definition imply nonfertility. Richard Meier suggests that glamorous single professions previously assigned only to men should now be opened to women as well, for example, 'astronaut'. He notes that where these occupations exist for women, e.g., stewardess, they are based on the sex appeal of a young woman, and thus can be only limited way stations on the way to a better job or marriage. And, he adds, 'so many limitations are imposed [on women's work outside the home] . . . that one suspects the existence of a culture-wide conspiracy which makes the occupational role sufficiently unpleasant that 90 per cent or more would choose homemaking as a superior alternative'. With the extension of whatever single roles still exist in our culture to include women, the creation of more such roles, and a programme of incentives to make these professions rewarding, we could, painlessly, reduce the number of people interested in parenthood at all.

(2) 'Living together.' Practised at first only in Bohemian or intellectual circles and now increasingly in the population at

large – especially by metropolitan youth – 'living together' is becoming a common social practice. 'Living together' is the loose social form in which two or more partners, of whatever sex, enter a non-legal sex/companionate arrangement the duration of which varies with the internal dynamics of the relationship. Their contract is only with each other; society has no interest, since neither reproduction nor production – dependencies of one party on the other – is involved. This flexible non-form could be expanded to become the standard unit in which most people would live for most of their lives.

At first, in the transitional period, sexual relationships would probably be monogamous (single standard, female-style, this time around), even if the couple chose to live with others. We might even see the continuation of strictly non-sexual group living arrangements ('roommates'). However, after several generations of non-family living, our psychosexual structures may become altered so radically that the monogamous couple, or the 'aim-inhibited' relationship, would become obsolescent. We can only guess what might replace it – perhaps true 'group marriages', trans-sexual group marriages which also involved older children? We don't know.

The two options we have suggested so far – single professions and 'living together' – already exist, but only outside the mainstream of our society, or for brief periods in the life of the normal individual. We want to *broaden* these options to include many more people for longer periods of their lives, to transfer here instead all the cultural incentives now supporting marriage – making these alternatives, finally, as common and acceptable as marriage is today.

But what about children? Doesn't everyone want children some time in their lives? There is no denying that people now feel a genuine desire to have children. But we don't know how much of this is the product of an authentic liking for children, and how much is a displacement of other needs. We have seen that parental satisfaction is obtainable only through crippling the child: the attempted extension of ego through one's children – in the case of the man, the 'immortalizing' of name, property, class, and ethnic identification, and in the case of the woman, motherhood as the justification of her existence, the resulting

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attempt to live through the child, child-as-project – in the end damages or destroys either the child or the parent, or both when neither wins, as the case may be. Perhaps when we strip parenthood of these other functions, we will find a real instinct for parenthood even on the part of men, a simple physical desire to associate with the young. But then we have lost nothing, for a basic demand of our alternative system is some form of intimate interaction with children. If a parenthood instinct does in fact exist, it will be allowed to operate even more freely, having shed the practical burdens of parenthood that now make it such an anguished hell.

But what, on the other hand, if we find that there is no parenthood instinct after all? Perhaps all this time society has persuaded the individual to have children only by imposing on parenthood ego concerns that had no proper outlet. This may have been unavoidable in the past – but perhaps it's now time to start more directly satisfying those ego needs. As long as natural reproduction is still necessary, we can devise less destructive cultural inducements. But it is likely that, once the ego investments in parenthood are removed, artificial reproduction will be developed and widely accepted.

(3) *Households*. I shall now outline a system that I believe will satisfy any remaining needs for children after ego concerns are no longer part of our motivations. Suppose a person or a couple at some point in their lives desire to live around children in a family-size unit. While we will no longer have reproduction as the life goal of the normal individual – we have seen how single and group non-reproductive life styles could be enlarged to become satisfactory for many people for their whole lifetimes and for others, for good portions of their lifetime – certain people may still prefer community-style group living permanently, and other people may want to experience it at some time in their lives, especially during early childhood.

Thus at any given time a proportion of the population will want to live in reproductive social structures. Correspondingly, the society in general will still need reproduction, though reduced, if only to create a new generation.

The proportion of the population will be automatically a select group with a predictably higher rate of stability, because

they will have had a freedom of choice now generally unavailable. Today those who do not marry and have children by a certain age are penalized: they find themselves alone, excluded, and miserable, on the margins of a society in which everyone else is compartmentalized into lifetime generational families, chauvinism and exclusiveness their chief characteristic. (Only in Manhattan is single living even tolerable, and that can be debated.) Most people are still forced into marriage by family pressure, the 'shotgun', economic considerations, and other reasons that have nothing to do with choice of life style. In our new reproductive unit, however, with the limited contract (see below), child-rearing so diffused as to be practically eliminated, economic considerations nonexistent, and all participating members having entered only on the basis of personal preference, 'unstable' reproductive social structures will have disappeared.

This unit I shall call a *household* rather than an extended family. The distinction is important: the word *family* implies biological reproduction and some degree of division of labour by sex, and thus the traditional dependencies and resulting power relations, extended over generations; though the size of the family – in this case, the larger numbers of the 'extended' family – may affect the strength of this hierarchy, it does not change its structural definition. 'Household', however, connotes only a large grouping of people living together for an unspecified time, and with no specified set of interpersonal relations.

How would a 'household' operate?

*Limited Contract*. If the household replaced marriage perhaps we would at first legalize it in the same way – if this is necessary at all. A group of ten or so consenting adults of varying ages<sup>9</sup> could apply for a licence as a group in much the same way as a young couple today applies for a marriage licence, perhaps even undergoing some form of ritual ceremony, and then might proceed in the same way to set up house. The household licence would, however, apply only for a given period, perhaps seven to ten years, or whatever was decided on as the minimal time in which children needed a stable structure in which to grow

9. An added advantage of the household is that it allows older people past their fertile years to share fully in parenthood when they so desire.

up – but probably a much shorter period than we now imagine. If at the end of this period the group decided to stay together, it could always get a renewal. However, no single individual would be contracted to stay after this period, and perhaps some members of the unit might transfer out, or new members come in. Or, the unit could disband altogether.

There are many advantages to short-term households, stable compositional units lasting for only about a decade: the end of family chauvinism, built up over generations, of prejudices passed down from one generation to the next, the inclusion of people of all ages in the child-rearing process, the integration of many age groups into one social unit, the breadth of personality that comes from exposure to many rather than to (the idiosyncrasies of) a few, and so on.

*Children.* A regulated percentage of each household – say one third – would be children. But whether, at first, genetic children created by couples within the household, or at some future time – after a few generations of household living had severed the special connection of adults with ‘their’ children – children were produced artificially, or adopted, would not matter: (minimal) responsibility for the early physical dependence of children would be evenly diffused among all members of the household.

But though it would still be structurally sound, we must be aware that as long as we use natural childbirth methods, the ‘household’ could never be a totally liberating social form. A mother who undergoes a nine-month pregnancy is likely to feel that the product of all that pain and discomfort ‘belongs’ to her (‘To think of what I went through to have you!’). But we want to destroy this possessiveness along with its cultural reinforcements so that no one child will be *a priori* favoured over another, so that children will be loved for their own sake.

But what if there is an instinct for pregnancy? I doubt it. Once we have sloughed off cultural superstructures, we may uncover a sex instinct, the normal consequences of which lead to pregnancy. And perhaps there is also an instinct to care for the young once they arrive. But an instinct for pregnancy itself would be superfluous – could nature anticipate humanity’s mastery of reproduction? And what if, once the false motivations for pregnancy had been shed, women no longer wanted to ‘have’

children at all? Might this not be a disaster, given that artificial reproduction is not yet perfected? But women have no special reproductive *obligation* to the species. If they are no longer willing, then artificial methods will have to be developed hurriedly, or, at the very least, satisfactory compensations – other than destructive ego investments – would have to be supplied to make it worth their while.

Adults and older children would take care of babies for as long as they needed it, but since there would be many adults and older children sharing the responsibility – as in the extended family – no one person would ever be involuntarily stuck with it.

Adult/child relationships would develop just as do the best relationships today: some adults might prefer certain children over others, just as some children might prefer certain adults over others – these might become lifelong attachments in which the individuals concerned mutually agreed to stay together, perhaps to form some kind of non-reproductive unit. Thus all relationships would be based on love alone, uncorrupted by dependencies and resulting class inequalities. Enduring relationships between people of widely divergent ages would become common.

*Legal Rights and Transfers.* With the weakening and severance of the blood ties, the power hierarchy of the family would break down. The legal structure – as long as it is still necessary – would reflect this democracy at the roots of our society. Women would be identical under the law with men. Children would no longer be ‘minors’, under the patronage of ‘parents’ – they would have full rights. Remaining physical inequalities could be legally compensated for: for example, if a child were beaten, perhaps he could report it to a special simplified ‘household’ court where he would be granted instant legal redress.

Another special right of children would be the right of immediate transfer: if the child for any reason did not like the household into which he had been born so arbitrarily, he would be helped to transfer out. An adult on the other hand – one who had lived one span in a household (seven to ten years) – might have to present his case to the court, which would then decide, as do divorce courts today, whether he had adequate grounds for breaking his contract. A certain number of transfers within the

seven-year period might be necessary for the smooth functioning of the household, and would not be injurious to its stability as a unit so long as a core remained. (In fact, new people now and then might be a refreshing change.) However, the unit, for its own best economy, might have to place a ceiling on the number of transfers in or out, to avoid depletion, excessive growth, and/or friction.

*Chores.* As for housework: the larger family-sized group (twelve to fifteen people) would be more practical – the waste and repetition of the duplicate nuclear family unit would be avoided, e.g., as in shopping or cooking for three or four people, without the loss of intimacy of the larger communal experiment. In the interim, any housework would have to be rotated equitably; but eventually cyberspace would take care of most domestic chores.

*City Planning.* City planning, architecture, furnishings, all would be altered to reflect the new social structure. The trend towards mass-produced housing would probably continue, but the housing might be designed and even built (perhaps out of prefabricated components) by the people living there to suit their own needs and tastes. Privacy could be built in: either through private rooms in every household, or with 'retreats' within the larger city to be shared by people of other households, or both. The whole might form a complex the size of a small town or a large campus. Perhaps campus is the clearer image: we could have small units of self-determined housing – prefabricated component parts set up or dismantled easily and quickly to suit the needs of the limited contract – as well as central permanent buildings to fill the needs of the community as a whole, i.e. perhaps the equivalent of a 'student union' for socializing, restaurants, a large computer bank, a modern communications centre, a computerized library and film centre, 'learning centres' devoted to various specialized interests, and whatever else might be necessary in a cybernetic community.

*The Economy.* The end of the family would require corresponding changes in the larger economy. Not only would reproduction be qualitatively different, so would production: just as we have had to purify the relation to children of all considerations of need we would first have to have, to be entirely successful in our goals, the socialism of a cybernetic economy, aiming

first to redistribute drudgery equitably, but eventually to eliminate it altogether. With the further development and wise use of machines, people could be freed from toil, 'work' divorced from wages and redefined: now adults as well as children could indulge in serious 'play' as much as they wanted.

In the socialist transition, while we still had a money economy, people might receive a guaranteed annual income from the state to take care of basic physical needs. These incomes, if distributed equitably to men, women, and children, regardless of age, work, prestige, birth, could in themselves equalize in one blow the economic class system.

*Activity.* What would people do in this utopia? I don't think that will present a problem. If we truly had abolished all unpleasant work, people would have the time and the energy to develop healthy interests of their own. What is now found only among the élite, the pursuit of specialized interests for their own sake, would probably become the norm.

As for our educational institutions: the irrelevancy of the school system practically guarantees its breakdown in the near future. Perhaps we could replace it with non-compulsory 'learning centres,' which would combine both the minimally necessary functions of our elementary educational institutions, the teaching of rudimentary skills, with those of the higher, the expansion of knowledge, including everyone of any age or level, children and adults.

Yes, but what about basic skills? How, for example, could a child with no formal sequential training enter an advanced curriculum like architecture? But traditional book learning, the memorizing of facts, which forms the most substantial portion of the curriculum of our elementary schools, will be radically altered under the impact of cybernetics – a qualitative difference, to the apparatus of culture at least as significant a change as was the printing press, even as important as the alphabet. McLuhan pointed out the beginning of a reversal from literary to visual means of absorbing knowledge. We can expect the escalation of this and other effects with the further development of modern media for the rapid transmittal of information. And the amount of rote knowledge necessary either for children or adults will itself be vastly reduced, for we shall have computer banks within

computer memory

easy reach. After all, why store facts in one's head when computer banks could supply more comprehensive information instantaneously? (Already yesterday's children wondered why they must learn multiplication tables rather than the operation of an adding machine.) Whatever mental storing of basic facts is still necessary can be quickly accomplished through new mechanical methods, teaching machines, records and tapes, and so on, which, when they become readily available, would allow the abolition of compulsory schooling for basic skills. Like foreign students in the pursuit of a specialized profession, the child can pick up any necessary basic 'language' on the side, through these supplementary machine methods. But it is more likely that the fundamental skills and knowledge necessary will be the same for adults as for children: skill in operating new machines. Programming skills may become universally required, but rather than through years of nine-to-five memorizing, they could be absorbed instantly, only when required by a specific discipline.

As for 'career indecision': those people today whose initial 'hobby' has survived intact from childhood to become their adult 'profession' will most often tell you they developed it before the age of nine.<sup>10</sup> As long as specialized professions still existed, they could be changed as often as adults change majors or professions today. But if choice of profession had no superimposed motives, if they were based only on interest in the subject itself, switches in mid-course would probably be far fewer. Inability to develop strong interests is today mostly the result of the corruption of culture and its institutions.

Thus the new conception of work and education would resemble the medieval system of apprenticeship, people of all ages participating at all levels. As in academia today, the internal dynamics of the various disciplines would foster their own social organization, providing a means for meeting other people of like interests, and of sharing the intellectual and aesthetic pursuits now available only to a select few, the intelligentsia. The kind of social environment now found only in the best departments of the best colleges might become the life style of the masses,

10. If children today were given a realistic idea of the professions available - not just fireman/nurse - they might arrive at a special interest even sooner.

academic model



212 individual reserve/field w/

freed to develop their potential from the start: Whereas now only the lucky or persevering ones ever arrive at (usually only professing to) 'doing their thing', then everyone would have the opportunity to develop to his/her full potential.

Or not develop if she so chose - but this seems unlikely, since every child at first exhibits curiosity about people, things, the world in general and what makes it tick. It is only because unpleasant reality dampens his curiosity that the child learns to scale down his interests, thus becoming the average bland adult. But if we should remove these obstructions, then all people would develop as fully as only the greatest and wealthiest classes, and a few isolated 'geniuses', have been able to. Each individual would contribute to the society as a whole, not for wages or other incentives of prestige and power, but because the work he chose to do interested him in itself, and perhaps only incidentally because it had a social value for others (as healthily selfish as is only Art today). Work that had only social value and no personal value would have been eliminated by the machine.

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Thus, in the larger context of a cybernetic communism, the establishment of the household as the alternative to the family for reproduction of children, combined with every imaginable life style for those who chose to live singly or in non-reproductive units, would resolve all the basic dilemmas that now arise from the family to obstruct human happiness. Let us go over our four minimal demands to see how our imaginary construction would fare.

(1) The freeing of women from the tyranny of reproduction by every means possible, and the diffusion of child-rearing to the society as a whole, to men and other children as well as women. This has been corrected. Child-bearing could be taken over by technology, and if this proved too much against our past tradition and psychic structure (as it certainly would at first) then adequate incentives and compensations would have to be developed - other than the ego rewards of possessing the child - to reward women for their special social contribution of pregnancy and childbirth. Most of child-rearing, as we have seen, has to do with the maintaining of power relations, forced internalization of

family values, and many other ego concerns that war with the happiness of the individual child. This repressive socialization process would now be unnecessary in a society in which the interests of the individual coincided with those of the larger society. Any child-rearing responsibility left would be diffused to include men and other children equally with women. In addition, new methods of instant communication would lessen the child's reliance on even this egalitarian primary unit.

(2) *The economic independence and self-determination of all.* Under a cybernetic communism, even during the socialist transition, work would be divorced from wages, the ownership of the means of production in the hands of all the people, and wealth distributed on the basis of need, independent of the social value of the individual's contribution to society. We would aim to eliminate the dependence of women and children on the labour of men, as well as all other types of labour exploitation. Each person could choose his life style freely, changing it to suit his tastes without seriously inconveniencing anyone else; no one would be bound into any social structure against his will, for each person would be totally self-governing as soon as she was physically able.

(3) *The complete integration of women and children into the larger society.* Fulfilled: the concept of childhood has been abolished, children having full political, economic, and sexual rights, their educational/work activities no different from those of adults. During the few years of their infancy we have replaced the psychologically destructive genetic 'parenthood' of one or two arbitrary adults with a diffusion of the responsibility for physical welfare over a larger number of people. The child would still form intimate love relationships, but instead of developing close ties with a decreed 'mother' and 'father', the child might now form those ties with people of his own choosing, of whatever age or sex. Thus all adult-child relationships will have been mutually chosen - equal, intimate relationships free of material dependencies. Correspondingly, though children would be fewer, they would not be monopolized, but would mingle freely throughout the society to the benefit of all, thus satisfying that legitimate curiosity about the young which is often called the reproductive 'instinct'.

of Tilton

(4) *Sexual freedom, love, etc.* So far we have not said much of love and sexual freedom because there is no reason for it to present a problem: there would be nothing obstructing it. With full liberty human relationships eventually would be redefined for the better. If a child does not know his own mother, or at least does not attach a special value to her over others, it is unlikely that he would choose her as his first love object, only to have to develop inhibitions on this love. It is possible that the child might form his first close physical relationships with people his own size out of sheer physical convenience, just as men and women, all else being equal, might prefer each other over those of the same sex for sheer physical fit. But if not, if he should choose to relate sexuality to adults, even if he should happen to pick his own genetic mother, there would be no *a priori* reasons for her to reject his sexual advances, because the incest taboo would have lost its function. The 'household', a transient social form, would not be subject to the dangers of inbreeding.

Thus, without the incest taboo, adults might return within a few generations to a more natural polymorphous sexuality, the concentration on genital sex and orgasmic pleasure giving way to total physical/emotional relationships that included that. Relations with children would include as much genital sex as the child was capable of - probably considerably more than we now believe - but because genital sex would no longer be the central focus of the relationship, lack of orgasm would not present a serious problem. Age-ist and homosexual sex taboos would disappear, as well as non-sexual friendship (Freud's 'aim-inhibited' love). All close relationships would include the physical, our concept of exclusive physical partnerships (monogamy) disappearing from our psychic structure, as well as the construct of a Lover Ideal. But how long it would take for these changes to occur, and in what forms they would appear, remains conjecture. The specifics need not concern us here. We need only set up the preconditions for a free sexuality: whatever forms it took would be assuredly an improvement on what we have now, 'natural' in the truest sense.

In the transitional phase, adult genital sex and the exclusiveness of couples within the household might have to be maintained in order for the unit to be able to function smoothly, with

most adults? child

a minimum of internal tension caused by sexual frictions. It is unrealistic to impose theories of what *ought* to be on a psyche already fundamentally organized around specific emotional needs. And this is why individual attempts to eliminate sexual possessiveness are now always inauthentic. We would do much better to concentrate on overthrowing the institutions that have produced this psychical organization, making possible the eventual – if not in our lifetime – fundamental restructuring (or should I say destructuring?) of our psychosexuality.

Above, I have drawn up only a very rough plan in order to make the general direction of a feminist revolution more vivid: reproduction and production would both be, simultaneously, reorganized in a non-repressive way. The birth of children to a unit which disbanded or recomposed as soon as children were physically independent, one that was meant to serve immediate needs rather than to pass on power and privilege (the basis of patriarchy is the inheritance of property gained through labour) would eliminate the psychology of power, sexual repression, and cultural sublimation. Family chauvinism, class privilege based on birth, would wither away. The blood tie of the mother to the child would eventually be severed – if male jealousy of ‘creative’ childbirth actually exists, we shall soon have the means to create life independently of sex – so that pregnancy, now freely acknowledged as clumsy, inefficient, and painful, would be indulged in, if at all, only as a tongue-in-cheek archaism, just as already women today wear virginal white to their weddings. A cybernetic communism would abolish economic classes, and all forms of labour exploitation, by granting all people a livelihood based only on material needs. Eventually work (drudge jobs) would be eliminated in favour of (complex) play, activity done for its own sake, by adults as well as children. With the disappearance of motherhood, and the obstructing incest taboo, sexuality would be re-integrated, allowing love to flow unimpeded.