

**UNITED NATIONS RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

DP 61

**ON THE SOCIAL COSTS
OF MODERNIZATION**

**SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION,
ATOMIE/ANOMIE AND
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

by Johan Galtung

UNRISD Discussion Papers are preliminary documents circulated in a limited number of copies to stimulate discussion and critical comment.

March 1995

◆ Preface

The following paper was delivered in the closing session of the international conference on **Rethinking Social Development**, held in Copenhagen on 11-12 March 1995. For this event, UNRISD invited ten outstanding social thinkers — Ralf Dahrendorf, Amitai Etzioni, Johan Galtung, Anthony Giddens, Eric Hobsbawm, Fatema Mernissi, Tetsuo Najita, Emma Rothschild, Wole Soyinka and Tatyana Tolstaya — to explore the present economic and social crisis and, if they wished, to sketch alternative scenarios for the future. The conference was designed to complement political debate, simultaneously in progress at the World Summit for Social Development, by drawing Summit participants from many walks of life into a wide-ranging discussion of current development models.

In this paper, Johan Galtung presents a provocative and pessimistic picture of the human condition. “To go straight to the issue”, the author begins, “the first thesis is simply this: many human societies (perhaps most) are in a state of advanced social disintegration at the close of the twentieth century”. At the roots of this process Galtung finds a trend toward “destruction and deculturation, heading for structurelessness and culturelessness” — or what he defines as **atomie** and **anomie**.

This is a sociological argument which is concerned in part with the changing nature and quality of the **relations** among people. To make his line of reasoning clear, Galtung briefly explains in his paper how models of social interaction have changed over the course of human history, from the earliest (primitive) societies of hunters and gatherers, through the development of traditional structures of age- or caste-based power within agricultural societies, to the modern industrial order. In this progression, relations become increasingly hierarchical and impersonal. The post-modern phase, which the current revolution in communications and robotics seems to portend, in Galtung’s view is characterized by a breakdown of human relations — a collapse and corruption of institutions, an isolation of individuals and the growing predominance of purely egotistical motivation for action.

There is also a cultural dimension to Galtung’s analysis. He criticizes sociologists and development practitioners for concentrating far too single-mindedly on **structures** of social relations without focusing sufficiently on the changing **content** of motivation and belief. Human beings need not only workable links to others, but also a set of values and explanations which give meaning to life. Here again, Galtung feels that modernization has created an increasingly untenable situation, as the advance of secular faith in reason has undermined religious belief without replacing it to an adequate extent with other, clearly binding ethical commitments.

In the concluding section of his paper, Galtung urges everyone with a concern for human development to work toward “rehumanizing” political and economic institutions, creating settings for close and co-operative personal interaction within them — not only to improve the quality of life of people, but also to strengthen and revitalize large institutions themselves. At the same time, the author believes that there is a central role to be played by religion in reversing the current slide toward anomie. In particular, he urges that we distinguish less between different formal religions and more between “hard” and “soft” variants to be found in each of these. The task, in his view, is to

replace “hard”, or intolerant, belief structures with “softer” — more tolerant, more compassionate — alternatives.

The reader will find many challenging, and often iconoclastic, interpretations of the current human predicament in the following pages. The picture drawn by Galtung of “humanity on the road from nomadism to monadism” — a state in which individuals have lost all capacity to relate to each other at all — is sufficiently dramatic to engage attention and provoke response. That in turn furthers his goal of ensuring that the future he posits will never come to pass.

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March 1995

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PART I: THREE THESES ON SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION

To go straight to the issue, the first thesis is simply this: **many human societies (perhaps most) are in a state of advanced social disintegration at the close of the twentieth century — at the threshold of the third millennium AD.** This does not mean the situation is irreparable. But it does mean that remedies have to be found and enacted quickly, partly to halt disintegration (negative social development) and partly to build more solid societies, not only integrated but less susceptible to social disintegration (positive social development). Such societies should also be capable of providing “human security”, here interpreted as satisfying basic human needs (positive human development), or at least of reversing processes of human needs degradation (negative human development). In the same vein, they should be capable of enhancing the ecosystem¹, building diversity and symbiosis (positive nature development), or at least of halting processes of ecosystem degradation (negative nature development). To this should be added a world dimension: if the world is a society of societies, that society should also be integrated (positive world development), or processes toward disintegration (negative world development) should be reversed.

Four spaces of development (Nature, Human, Society, World) and for each one a more modest negative task and a very ambitious positive task. A tall bill! In addition, these lofty goals may not even be compatible: a disintegrating society may also be more flexible, capable of meeting new challenges; and an integrated society may also be too rigid to take on new tasks creatively. But that all remains to be explored.

Dramatic, somewhat apocalyptic statements like the thesis above are frequently heard nowadays. They can be brushed away as more cases of “drama supply” to meet a perennial “drama demand”. Another, less reassuring, interpretation would be that there might be much truth to them. At this introductory phase of the story to be told in these pages, one point should be made: a thesis about social disintegration is **not** in and by itself a statement about eco-crisis (depletion, pollution, over-population or any combination of the three), about misery, unemployment, low or negative economic growth, or violence and war. The statement is about **society** as something *sui generis*, of its own kind, as sociologists have always insisted.² “Social disintegration” is an additional problem, closely related to and perhaps even more significant in its consequences than all the other global problems included under the headings of nature, human and world development. And being different, the problem will hardly yield to remedies designed for the old problems. New approaches are called for.

So let us identify **social disintegration** as a **global problem**³, among other global problems, distributed on the spaces of the human condition used above, adding the “spaces” of **time** and **culture**.

SPACE	GLOBAL PROBLEM
NATURE	<i>ecological degradation, population</i>
HUMAN	<i>poverty/misery, repression; spiritual alienation</i>
SOCIETY	<i>economic underdevelopment; social disintegration</i>
WORLD	<i>massive violence, war (inter-state/inter-nation)</i>
TIME	non-sustainability
CULTURE	inadequacy

The problems italicized above have already received general attention to the point of being the basic foci of the many endeavors by the United Nations under the headings “environment” (for nature), “human rights” and “development” (for society) and “peace” (for the world). A time dimension has been added recently: “sustainability”. Although nobody is in favor of non-sustainable solutions to the problems of environment, human rights, development and peace, this is a useful reminder of the importance of solutions being **reproducible**, if possible even self-reproducible (as opposed to stop-gap measures or measures that consume more problem-solving resources than they produce).

The other three problems on the list above have not yet entered the general discourse. There are reasons for that. The specialists on “spiritual alienation” would be religionists and psychologists; on social disintegration, social scientists in general and sociologists in particular; and on the possible inadequacy of mainstream (meaning Western) culture, religionists again, cultural anthropologists, philosophers. In other words, new expertise — so far mainly limited to UNESCO meetings. These concerns do not carry the same weight as the natural sciences, economics and security studies, which are assumed adequate for the problems discussed.

The three additional problems are also found at the core of the dominant social formation, in and of the West. They imply questioning individual internalization, social institutionalization and culture. Lives lived without meaning, societies disintegrating, cultures without answers are serious problems *sui generis*; not only side-effects or side-causes of the problems of eco-breakdown, misery and war. Moreover, all of these are strongly related.

For the second thesis we need a simple definition formula: **social = structural + cultural**. By “structure” we simply refer to “patterned interaction”, the macro, gross, general picture of “**who relates to whom, how, when and where**”. This is social traffic as seen from the top of Empire State Building, not by watching drivers from the corners of Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street in New York City. The key word is pattern, not the individual variations. There are no individual name tags. Human beings appear as “driver”, “cop”, “pedestrian”. The structure changes over time. The term is inseparable from the term “process”; there may be stability, secular trends up or down, cycles (with any period, like the cycles of 24 hours and 365 days in the example above).

By “culture” we mean the **what** and **why** of interaction; and the **what not/why not** that is important in explaining missing interaction: the structure not there, the absent link of interaction. Whereas interaction is **between** actors (and patterned interaction is the mega-version of the single inter-act), culture is **within** actors. But it may be shared: patterned culture is the mega-version of the

individual why and why not; the mutual rights and obligations of interaction, the expectations, or binding normative culture.

The second thesis can now be formulated: **at the roots of social disintegration is a twin process of destructuration and deculturation, heading for structurelessness and culturelessness.** Following Durkheim we shall refer to culturelessness as **anomie**⁴; and then introduce a neologism for structurelessness, **atomie**. Of course we have not come that far. Society is not yet a heap of mutually isolated social atoms, individuals; and there is still much binding normative culture around. But we may be on the way.

To where, to what? To a society of Leibniz' monads⁵, fully self-sufficient? Obviously not, for human individuals can hardly survive in total isolation⁶. But we can easily imagine inter-action reduced to a thin minimum, like some e-mail contact; making society a set of isolates⁷ more than a structure relating positions filled with individuals. In other words, the actor would be the isolated individual as such, not the individual as, for instance, "head" of the family, CEO ("Chief Executive Officer") or SEO ("State Executive Officer", the head of state/government). And the normative culture informing these individuals about what to do would be centered on that which serves the individual. No interacts, only acts.

In short: at the end of the road winding through history and into the future we see a social formation ("society" may no longer be the term) basically atomized into individuals, thinly and weakly related, each acting out of egocentric cost-benefit calculations. We are close to this state of atomie, but there is still some interaction left. We are also close to anomie, where the only binding normative culture left would be individualized cost-benefit analysis. Anarchy would be another term, *bellum omnium contra omnes*, *homo homini lupus*. The social fabric (*le tissu*, *el tejido*), the social body, *lo social*, falls apart.

The third thesis might read something like this: **we are at a stage in human history where the problem is not only whether interaction structures between individuals, groups and countries are right or wrong, but whether there is any structure at all; and not only whether the culture defining right or wrong is right or wrong, but whether there is any normative culture at all.**

On the road we would expect a number of social phenomena. First, **we would expect the focus of interaction to shift from "mutual rights and obligations", a reciprocal mix of egoistic and altruistic orientation, to an egoistic orientation of "what is in it for me"**. For organization members the shift is from reciprocity to "what can the organization do for me". Like predators they descend upon macro-organizations like State and Capital, preying on them for individual benefit, then withdrawing with the booty. Meso-organizations like NGOs, including parties, trade unions and churches, are used as stepping stones. Micro-organizations, like families and friends, are not spared. Spouses will demand services like sex and security, and in addition "freedom" (particularly husbands). The offspring see the family as a launching platform in life and offer little or nothing in return after — and even before — take-off.

Second, **we would expect increasing corruption at all levels of social organization.**⁸ By “corruption” we mean a way of using organizations for egoistic purposes, influencing decisions by injecting resources (money, sex) into the process; corruptor or corruptee acting out of egoistic cost-benefit analyses.

Third, with social **nets** — organizations — decreasing in significance and social **knots** — individuals — on the increase⁹, **we would expect increasing mobility out of nets, relations and organizations**, indicating that they have been used. After exit there may be entry into new ones, or into individual monads. People will vacate bonds between spouses, parents and children, siblings, friends, neighbors and colleagues, frequently and easily. New relations may become increasingly thin, shallow.

Fourth, **we would expect increasing violence at all levels of social organization.** There would be no absolute, binding norms standing in the way, no *homo res sacra hominibus*. Other human beings inside the organizations will be seen as substitutable — the relationship being so thin anyhow — and hence as expendable. Outside the organizations they will be seen as resources. The utility supposedly accruing from violent acts will be weighed against the disutility of punishment and the probability of detection/punishment. As violence becomes pandemic, the latter probability will tend to zero given the asymmetry between the ease of committing a crime and the difficulty of detecting it.

Fifth, **we would expect increasing mental disorder**, assuming that human beings are not made for high levels of atomie/anomie but for interactive human togetherness, guided by mutual rights and obligations, in thin **and** thick human relations, definitely including the latter. Types of conduct indicative of mental disorders, such as drug consumption, alcoholism, sexoholic and workaholic behavior, perverse physical and verbal violence, are also efforts to find identity in tighter and thicker human interaction and in the deeper recesses of the Self. They are outer and inner journeys. When such efforts fail, suicide is a possible way out; not only out of despair, but also as the ultimate act of egoism.

Summarizing, this is a fairly bleak — some would say far too dark — image of human society today. But the problem right now is to understand these processes in order to arrive at some idea of where we are right now; *où en sommes-nous*. For that, we need some kind of macro-historical perspective, with all the shortcomings of abstracting and generalizing from a super-complex reality.

PART II: A MACRO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: STRUCTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

Imagine that we now divide human history into four phases, calling them “primitive”, “traditional”, “modern” and “post-modern”.¹⁰ In other words, “modernity” is not seen as the end of history and certainly not as global market economy *cum* democratic polity — a social formation seen here as highly unstable. The fourth phase, the phase that comes after modernity, as the Middle Ages come between antiquity and modernity and “metaphysics” comes above or after physics, is the post-modern phase. The term is frequently used; the following is an effort to give it a richer connotation.

“Primitive” will be identified with mobile hunter-gatherers and nomadic pastoralists; “traditional” with sedentary, local agriculture and the emergence of classes and castes that do not have to engage in manual work for a living; “modern” with the large-scale organizations of State, Capital and Media, building state, regional and world bureaucracies, markets and meanings; and “post-modern” with the destructure and deculturation alluded to above. The post-modern society is seen as essentially chaotic and anarchic for reasons to be given in more detail below. In other words, it is not seen as a global version of modernity but as its antithesis, or as one of several antitheses.

The story to be told here, reduced to a brutally simplistic formula, is **the story of humanity on its way from nomads to monadism**. For that social story to be told we shall proceed on the two parallel tracks above; one structural and one cultural. To do this some concepts are indispensable.

Above some references have been made to **thick vs. thin** interactive relations. Let us now shift to **primary and secondary** relations, defining primary (in the Weber-Tönnies-Sorokin-Parsons tradition) as “diffuse” (“thick”) and particularistic, meaning relating to that particular Other, not to anyone of the same kind (in other words, the relation is non-substitutable). The definition of “secondary” would be based on the opposite pair: “specific” (“thin”) and universalistic, meaning treating everybody of the same kind, who embodies the same (low) number of characteristics, the same way. The classical examples of primary relations would involve close relatives; the more remote (cousins four or more times removed, for instance) being treated the same; and friends. And enemies. But it would also include colleagues and neighbors, work places and voluntary organizations. In short, **kinship** and **friendship**, **vicinity** (also community) and **affinity**, **workship** (also school) and **worship**. High interaction frequencies will rub off; over time small-and-thin relations will be thicker and less standardized. For all six cases some collective Self is defined, offering identity and some security in return for some altruism.

Let us then introduce another variable, so often missing in social analysis: **size**, the sheer number of people involved. Let us divide organizations into “small” and “big”, the dividing line being roughly the upper limit to the number of people a human being can identify, and relate to, positively and negatively.¹¹ The order of magnitude would be 10^2 to 10^3 . Since primary relations are based on identification, we arrive at the simple conclusion that **big-and-thick is impossible**. Secondary relations will tend to be big (and vice versa); only when small can they be primary.

Thus human interaction structures come in two basic modes: **thin-and-big** and **thick-and-small**. Let us call them **Alpha**, the **pyramid**, and **Beta**, the **wheel**¹². In modern societies Alpha is organized by the three pillars of society, State,

Capital and Civil Society, in the form of huge bureaucracies (including armies and universities), corporations and people organizations. But inside Alpha, small informal Beta structures of people with primary relations, such as colleagues who become friends, or enemies, would be nesting; growing in cafeterias, over repeated encounters in lifts, some evolving into super-Beta relations known as love. Seen from Alpha they all introduce personal and subjective elements in the impersonal, objective atmosphere of a perfectly constructed Alpha, with everybody substitutable, even if this means alienated.¹³ Alpha people are right: those who spy on Alpha centers for state and corporate secrets often use Beta networks, including love relations, to get access, like the classical secretary making extra photocopies for a friend.¹⁴

Let us then introduce a third variable, **vertical versus horizontal**, here seen as relational, not only relative, and as exploitative — grossly asymmetric in terms of net benefits.¹⁵ Why do people enter such vertical, exploitative relations? Because, forced by coercion or tradition, they may have no choice. The alternative to exploitation may be starvation (Marx on capitalism). The result is vast action spaces for people on top, strait-jackets at the bottom; material enrichment on top, impoverishment lower down.¹⁶ Challenges on top, routines at the bottom. In horizontal relations this is better distributed; gross asymmetries lead to break-ups in thin relations.¹⁷

Alpha tends to be vertical. Layer can be added to layer, in principle covering all of humankind through processes of globalization in one big pyramid or hierarchy with a single apex. This projection of the State would be known as World Government and the corresponding projection of Capital as the World Market. The present G-7 has aspects of both. But so far Alphaization is clearly more pronounced at the regional than at the world level, the European Union — as seen in the Maastricht Treaty — being one example. (The Soviet Union was another, but State and Capital were more clearly merged into one pyramid than in the European Union or the United States).

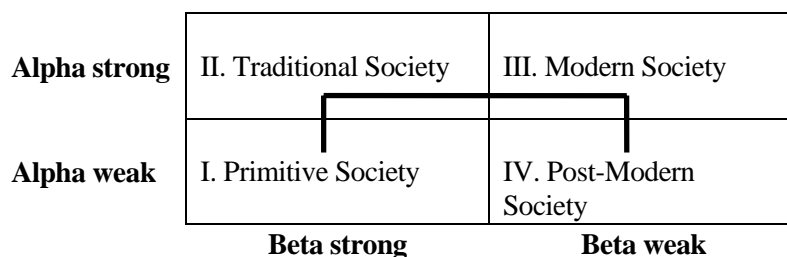
Beta can be both vertical and horizontal (Gamma). A tribe run by chiefs and shamans, villages run by Big Men and land-owning families, families run by a *pater familias*, marital relations under conditions of patriarchy (and the infrequently found matriarchies), or the small farm/firm with very tight and very authoritarian relations under the “boss” are thick and small and also vertical. And they can be horizontal, as in kinship and friendship/enmity groups, among neighbors and colleagues; with other human beings in general, in worship and workship.

Horizontal Alpha structures can also be imagined (Delta).¹⁸ At present electronic communication, like Internet, may serve as an example, as long as the information superhighway has a topography without centers and peripheries. Transportation superhighways tend to be rooted in big urban centers reaching into the peripheries. However, peripheries could be connected, leveling the center-periphery gradients. In the same vein, the information super-highway will probably develop even steep gradients (like toll gates); and we are back to traditional Alpha.

As pointed out repeatedly, societies, or social formations more generally, as we know them, are mixes of Alpha and Beta. The question is how strongly either

one is articulated. So let us answer that question in terms of “strong” and “weak” for both, giving four combinations. (Alpha/Beta is not a dichotomy.)

Figure 1
Human social (trans)formations: Structural macro-history



The story, as reported here, follows the heavy line and starts in the bottom left box: a humanity divided into small mobile groups, clans, lineages, small enough to be “in-groups”, with primary relations dominating, essentially kinship.¹⁹ A tight net of mutual rights and obligations is spun inside the group, possibly with negative or no relations at all toward the out-groups they would encounter on their wanderings. They, precisely **they**, would probably be conceived of as categories of people, not even with the *differentiae specifica*e given to them by Alpha logic in terms of their social positions and their qualifications for being allocated to such positions. The in-group would be too small to develop layers of verticality beyond gender/generation and for that reason it would be well integrated socially and humanly. The weak point would be not only the thin or empty relation to other groups, but also that integration may be too tight, “suffocating”.

With sedentary ways of producing for a livelihood and a higher level of agricultural productivity — one family working on the land producing enough surplus for 1.1, even 1.25, families — the material basis was laid for the classical caste systems:

Figure 2
Castes: Four systems

	Europe	India	China	Japan
First	clergy	Brahmin clergy	Shi'h bureaucrats, intellectuals	Shi (samurai)
Second	aristocracy	Kshatriya warriors	Nung farmers	No
Third	merchants	Vaishya merchants	Kung artisans	Ko
Fourth	workers	Shudra workers	Shang merchants	Sho
Fifth	outcasts women children	outcasts women children	outcasts women children	outcasts women children

The history of traditional society becomes to a large extent the history of the relative power of the upper layers in what has to be an Alpha structure, unless the unit (e.g., the village) is small. One possibility is the ranking order indicated above; with the European and Indian systems being quite similar, and the

Chinese and Japanese also quite similar (thus formulas like “Indo-European” and “Sino-Japanese” apply not only to languages). Another possibility, as pointed out by Sarkar, is a circulation of castes, in the order **Kshatriya-Brahmin-Vaishya-Shudra** (the **Kshatriya** enter to create order after the people have had their say, but they are culturally so primitive that the **Brahmins** enter to restore culture, but they are economically so amateurish that the **Vaishya** have to put the economy in order, but they are so exploitative that the **Shudra** people make revolts and so on...).

At this point solid vertical distinctions between people and élites have emerged. Alpha structures, mainly local, are being articulated. Modernity brings that process further in Alpha *strictu sensu*: country-wide, hierarchical, with a well-defined specificity in social relations stipulated in written contracts and a universalism opening the positions in the structure for citizens satisfying well-defined, explicit qualifiers. Diffuse, particularistic relations have to be weeded out from the Alpha garden, ultimately to look like the orderly French gardens that emerged at about the same time (not baroque!). For Beta relations, please use time after working hours and weekends.

As Alpha becomes more dominant, Beta not only becomes recessive, but starts disintegrating. One reason is simple: individual time budgets. Alpha requires full attention, because the jobs provided by Alpha are full time jobs and because the occupants of Alpha positions are not supposed to think Beta thoughts. Some Beta structures have to go, starting with such old work structures as extended families and traditional villages.

Cities are to Alpha what villages are to Beta: liberating people from the stranglehold of very tight human relations in a village, then suspending them in the thin air of urban anonymity. Cities provide more space for Beta structures than villages for modern Alpha structures. However, these Beta structures are decreasingly related to work and increasingly to leisure, leading to the well-known pattern in many modernized countries today: villages gradually being converted from sites of agricultural production to sites of weekend leisure, and to some primary and tertiary production, plantation and tourism, for far-away buyers.

We now have to introduce a thesis, or rather a hypothesis, important for what follows: **A Beta structure is natural to the point of being indispensable for human beings**. Only Beta-type relations cater to the whole person and give the person a sense of belonging. This should not be confused with identity or sense of meaning of life; that can be enjoyed also in an Alpha structure, even in a non-structure (formation IV). To belong is to have a home, somebody to relate to, somebody who knows more of the story than any bureaucracy can. The argument is not in favor of joint or nuclear families, different sex or same sex unions, those with or without children. The argument favors **some** Beta unit, thick-and-small, with more total relations.

Objection: If Beta is the natural structural environment, how is it possible for Alpha to expand at the expense of Beta?

Answer: Because Alpha has much to offer in the short run. For those on top, Alpha offers the material fruits of verticality — power, challenges. For those lower down, the gains may turn into losses, but the costs of being marginalized

may be still higher. The Alpha lure — **you are in it!**, even as a peon in the post office in a village in East Bihar or as a second speed EU member — is there. For Alpha holds out a reward for good behavior unknown to Beta: upward mobility, if not for you, maybe for your offspring. In Beta there is always room to improve the relation, to become a better friend, a better neighbor. But if an attraction of Beta is precisely its horizontality, then there is no way up. Nor is there any way down. There is a way out: if you do not behave. The problems, and the attractions, in Alpha are vertical. In Beta, they are horizontal: belonging versus loneliness.

One formula often used for modern society is **Alpha for production, Beta for reproduction**. From Alpha the work output may be considerable. In Beta human beings are repaired, maintained, sustained.

Formation I would show high levels of stability, keeping humans intact, leaving few traces on nature as the work output is negligible and the consumption of natural resources likewise. Formation II leaves more traces. There will be monuments to the glory of the upper castes: temples (mosques, churches) for the clergy; forts for the warriors; market-places, banks and so forth for the merchants; poverty for the people; all wrapped together in cities. But even if human beings are exploited and repressed, they still belong somewhere — sustained and repaired. Reproduced.

In formation III, however, production starts outstripping reproduction. The output is phenomenal. Alphas of all kinds get deeper roots and expand geographically and socially, covering ever larger territories, not only countries governed by states, but empires governed by mega-states. The production of goods/bads and (dis)services outstrips what anyone might have imagined. But Betas are disintegrating, and not only the extended family and the traditional villages. The nuclear family splits not only between husband and wife, but also between parents and children, and among siblings. Neighborhoods break down when people move geographically too frequently to sustain relations based on vicinity. Invariably the same will apply to friendship and to affinity: neither can survive the high levels of social mobility — sideward, upward, downward — of modern society. Worship under the same God may still remain. (About God, however, see next section.)

The transition from primitive to traditional was made possible by **the agricultural revolution**, growing plants and breeding cattle in a relatively sedentary, basically Beta way. The transition from traditional to modern was made possible by **the industrial revolution** providing the goods, **the scientific revolution** providing the knowledge and **the transportation-communication revolution** extending Alpha reach.

But how about the transition from modern to post-modern? As we are talking about destructurement, anything removing human beings from direct interaction would count. A key word is **tele**. Direct interaction is multi-sensorial; no telecommunication so far goes beyond the auditive and visual. Interaction is still there, but it is trimmed down, stripped, more naked. As anyone talking over the telephone without watching the facial expression and the body language knows, information gets lost in the process. And as anyone comparing telefax to telephone knows, the tone of voice may say more than the words. So the term “information revolution” will not be used, not for the obvious reason that what

is conveyed is often disinformation, but because of the high level of **de-information** when so much quality is lost. Information retrieved from an encyclopedia or CD-ROM is not the same as information conveyed by a loving parent or concerned teacher (but the two obviously do not exclude each other).

Symbolic interaction via words or other symbols, whether arriving on ordinary or information highways, substitutes for direct human interaction²⁰. The term is **symbolic revolution**, from proclamation of edicts via modern media to automation-robotization. Alpha is there. But human relations are not.²¹

An image: Los Angeles, 1992. Certain parts of the once magnificent city are wastelands. There are streets and buildings, even shops. But waste is piling up all over, the buildings are derelict and the shops are barricaded. More importantly, they are all disconnected from each other, there is not even a concept of neighborhood. Nobody knows who is next door, nor do they care. People come, goods and services are peddled, they disappear. At night everything is locked up, dark, desolate.

And that is when the marauding gangs take over. They are the new nomads; the city-scape is their resource. Unable to survive in nature, they know how to survive as hunter-gatherers in the urban wastelands; hunting cars, gathering their contents. They are the products of formation IV, crystallized as a new formation I, preying on the wasteland, fighting rival tribes, including a police tribe hunting and gathering gangs, the LAPD.²² Strong Beta structures re-emerging. Ready for a second cycle?

There is a logic to this. Alpha has not disappeared, but has become very lean and mean, devoid of human content (thus, in figure 1 we are talking about “weak”, not “zero” Alpha). There is work output, although some quality may get lost in this dehumanization process.²³ Much more disturbing is the question often raised by the ultimate stage of dehumanization: not only is the interaction symbolic rather than direct, but the receiver, and sometimes also the sender, is even a non-human, a robot. And robots do not crave Beta groups, they are custom-tailored for a high Alpha life expectancy. So the disturbing question is obvious: if robots do so much better, for what purpose do we have human beings at all?

The first answer is obvious: even if robots are better at production, humans are better at consumption; in fact, the whole purpose of the exercise is to liberate human beings from dirty and dangerous, humiliating and boring work, leaving all of that to robots so that human beings can concentrate on creative and non-programmable tasks and enjoy the fruits, as consumers.

The second answer would be more reflective, taking into account that robots also have to be reproduced, sustained with energy and spare parts inputs, and perhaps also with reprogramming. The total cost-benefits, even done in the most naked economic way, may turn out to be less obvious with the destructure bill added in.

The third answer may point out that not so much is lost anyhow. With the symbolic revolution, not only can production be carried out in loneliness; the same applies to consumption. There is a neat isomorphism between assembly line production (in series) and bureaucratic production (in parallel), on the one

hand, and a magazine circulating in an office (in series) and a family consuming TV programmes next to each other (in parallel) on the other. All four cases are based on action (like turning nuts in assembly lines or zapping TV at home), not on interaction.

The sum total is not only Alpha but perverted Alpha. If now the thesis of a human need for Beta as something natural is correct, we would expect Beta to be sprouting. But what kind of Beta? Alpha supplies all goods and services, leaving few opportunities for green production on the side. If Alpha is dehumanized anyhow, then why not treat it as such? To whom do you feel more attachment, to your fellow corruptor/corruptee, perpetrator/victim, or to an abstract, symbolic structure?

Let us summarize some of the points made:

Figure 3
Structural dynamics of formations: Some basic factors

	Primitive	Traditional	Modern	Post-Modern
Alpha	weak	strong	strong	weak
Beta	strong	strong	weak	weak
Growth	low	high	high	low
Exploitation	low	high	high	low
Alienation	low	low	high	high

Why do human beings engage in such exercises? Because the grass is greener on the other side. We seem to be fascinated with what is missing and to take what we have for granted, assuming it will remain there forever and not be eroded by the relentless search for the new. Until we end with a very bad deal indeed.

Of course, Primitive Man becomes fascinated with the growth and with the glory produced by traditional society. So, as Ibn Khaldun points out, the desert tribes knock down the gates and storm the city, sharing in the power and the glory, ultimately running it down for lack of *asabiyah*, solidarity (a premonition of the theory underlying the present paper). And in the same vein Traditional Man becomes fascinated with the tremendous growth and power — with the national, regional and global reach — achieved by modern society. He no longer knocks down any gates, but he joins as a humble immigrant, at the margin of the host country Alpha structures, contributing to destructure in both places. He came from reproduction without production and enters production without reproduction. He participates in building **The Wealth of Nations** at the expense of **The Moral Sentiments** — the point-counterpoint in Adam Smith's brilliant reflections.

PART III: A MACRO-HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS

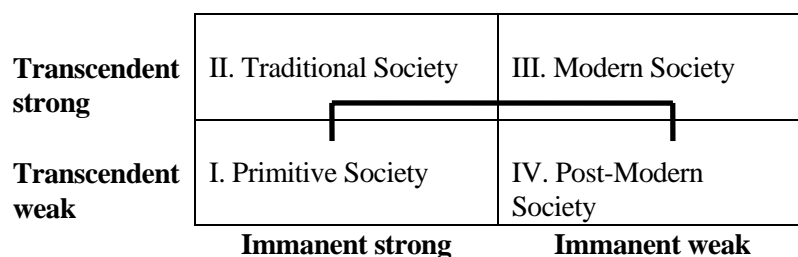
Let us now try the same story from a cultural point of view, focusing on binding normative culture, and particularly on the source of normative culture, religion and such secular successors as national-ism, state-ism, capital-ism, science-ism. Religion contrasts the sacred and the secular: the awe-inspiring, that which cannot be touched, and the ordinary, the profane. In many religions there is also a third category: the evil, to be feared, to be avoided and, if possible, destroyed. Obviously, people are not born with, but into, a religion. There may be a basis for religious belief in the physiology of the brain (and elsewhere). But details are learned.

But what would correspond to Alpha and Beta? There is the theological distinction between the sacred as **immanent**, inside human beings and nature, and as **transcendent**, in a God residing outside the planet, above. That God may be a Mother God (as in Japan) or a Father God; but in the Occident (as defined by the abrahamic religions, Judaism-Christianity-Islam), this takes the form of Father-Sky, the Father in the Sky. The opposite would be Mother-Earth: the Earth that gives birth to our livelihood, the Earth that nourishes us and ultimately receives us upon death.

Immanent religion is more horizontal, transcendent religion more vertical. But rather than dividing religions into immanent and transcendent it might be more fruitful to talk about immanent and transcendent aspects of religions. In the three occidental religions the transcendent aspect is dominant; in addition there is Evil, presided over by Satan. Prayer and submission to God are the adequate approaches. In immanent religions meditation in Self and compassion with Other may play similar roles.

However, immanent religion has a dark side, tending to be particularist rather than universalist. The sacred nature of Other may apply to the in-group only, not to the out-group. The message of transcendent religions like Christianity and Islam (but not Judaism and Shinto) would be that you are all in it, all protected from above. The condition is that you submit and pray.

Figure 4
Human social (trans)formations: Cultural macro-history



The story, then, would run approximately as follows:

Primitive society would be protected by strong in-group norms, being tight and co-operative. Out-groups may prove friendly but also may not; so any notion of the sacred would not *a priori* extend to Other. They would have to prove themselves, not by submitting to the same Father-Sky, but by relating co-operatively. They become human by being accepted parts of the social network, not by any abstract human-ness (that is probably Occidental).

Traditional society might also need some transcendent deities, particularly protective of the upper layers of society and more accessible to them than to common people. Religious relations have to mirror social relations. But the social unit is still small. Transcendence and immanence can be combined.

Modern society is almost inconceivable without transcendent religion, sacred or secular; a *deus* in the *rex gratia dei*. There has to be an authority beyond the apex of the Alpha pyramid as there is so much power to legitimize. Father Sky supplies the authority, not Mother Earth — she is too close to everybody. And just as imperialism established the first global super-Alphas — imperial rule and trade companies — missionaryism established the homologue supremacy of universal, transcendent religion. This holds for Islamic as well as for Christian imperialism.

Immanent religion was considered pagan and particularistic, standing in the way of a universal God in need of (more than willing) missionaries and colonizers to bring the message. Imperialism and transcendent religion came hand-in-hand, one as the condition for the other. Indigenous Beta and immanent religion could then be eliminated together, as pagan, archaic.²⁴

Objection: how about the Enlightenment and secularism in general; does this picture not paint the Occident as too religious?

Answer: Islamic colonialism/missionarism started right after the inception of Islam (+622) and had the foundation of the Sultanate of Delhi in +1192 as one crowning achievement. From there it went eastward, stopping at the southern end of the Philippines. Christian imperialism (if we disregard the Roman Empire which was not Christian in its expansionist period) started for real in the 1490s, expanding westward (Columbus) and eastward (Vasco da Gama). The pattern was set under religious auspices. Enlightenment came to Christianity much later; to Islam (perhaps) not yet. Needed was a universal, overarching God/Allah whose commands would be binding on all believing imperial subjects.

Enlightenment and secularization (in the West) set in somewhere on the transition from formation II to formation III. The functions of universalist/singularist religions with Chosen Peoples still had to be fulfilled; and universally valid science claiming to represent the only possible truth, with scientists of various kinds as the Chosen People, fit the bill. Alpha construction could now be made in the name of the three modernizations (state logic, capital logic and scientific logic) rather than religion, with Ratio — rationality — as the overriding theme. The project is still on now, under the heading of “development assistance”.

But what happened to the Church as the Alpha prototype? The role as representative on earth of the omni-present, omniscient and omnipotent *causa sua* God went to the three pillars of power in modern society: State, Capital and the Media — the carriers of state logic, capital logic and reality representation of modern society. Underlying that, a new ethos took shape: **nationalism**, providing large parts of the world with national statism, national capitalism and national media, along with the disequilibria that this leads to when the territories covered by state jurisdiction, capital penetration and national settlements do not coincide.

Of course, to some extent posited against State and Capital is Civil Society, with a contract (rule of law/democracy/human rights) with the State and no contract, only a market-place, with Capital and Media. And new priesthoods emerged as carriers of the new faiths: jurists for the State; economists for Capital; journalists for the Media; political ideologists for Civil Society and nationalists for the Nations.

In short, the structure of the transcendent God, chosen by people as object of worship, remained intact. The places of worship were different, the content of the prayers varied, but the submissiveness remained. For top positions in Alpha new faiths were needed, such as allegiance to the new priesthoods, meaning concretely faith in the human Ratio and such products as jurisprudence and mainstream economics²⁵. In addition comes faith in the (virtual) reality images produced by the Media, and in nationalism. Modern society has been labouring under such formulas for some centuries now.

Thus, human beings were almost deprived of immanent religion through the missionary activities of the religions of the imperial powers. But with that project still on, the second project of the West, secularism, started undermining transcendent religion, leaving human beings deprived of Father-Sky, with no Mother-Earth as alternative, and only small groups (Quakers, Buddhists) still insisting on the sacred nature of life, particularly human life. And this is exactly formation IV; for secularism, in the shape of humanist ethics, has not been capable of producing binding norms for human behavior. Why shall you not commit adultery, kill, steal and lie when other humans are mere objects and there is no accountability to higher forces as there is no transcendent God anyhow?

The final result is the total anomie of formation IV, with human beings left with the only normative guidance that always survives: egocentric cost-benefit analysis. The point is not normlessness, the point is that norms are not binding. That is the meaning of culturelessness. The process has gone quite far.

PART IV: ATOMIE AND ANOMIE IN DOMESTIC SOCIETY: SOME IMPLICATIONS

In figures 1 and 4, two processes have been indicated through four social formations. How far concrete societies, groups or individuals have come along these trajectories can only be decided through empirical studies. But one interesting point emerges: the more modernized society becomes, the further advanced it will be along this trajectory, since by “modernization” we mean precisely the triumph of Alpha over Beta as dominant social formation, and the triumph of Ratio over the Sacred as dominant moral guidance. What was not taken into consideration was that human beings may need **both** Beta (for their personal sustenance) and the sacred (for life to have a meaning and their action to be guided). Alpha alone, and Ratio alone, have provided us with material abundance and impressive control and co-ordination structures (in need of the counterforces generated by Civil Society, though, and with the Media oscillating in their loyalties to State, Capital and Civil Society). But deep sustenance and guidance they cannot offer.

Then two things went wrong, both basically unintended. Together they catapult us into formation IV, *atomie cum anomie*.

First, Alpha became more and more naked, stripped of human content, as Ratio provided Alpha with its many gadgets. Take only one example: automated telephone systems, not only bypassing the switchboard lady through direct dialing, but then landing the caller with “if you want ..., push 1”, some canned music and finally a recorded response. Whether done to save labour expenses (and time), to standardize responses, or to save the recipient from any further argument, the net result is deconstruction as there is no (or very little) direct human interaction involved.

Second, the hope must have been that Ratio, seen by the great Western philosophers as essentially universal, would provide a basis for a binding ethic. The problem is not that Ratio may be less universal and more a product of the general code of the many human cultures, but that Ratio does not generate sufficient ethical commitment.

At this point the synergy between the two trajectories heading for **atomie** and for anomie is set. Alpha, in the shape of a modern educational system, is very good at schooling people in the products of Ratio, at the level of primary, secondary and tertiary education. The two not only fit each other by being standardized up to the country and regional levels, or the levels of the nation and the super-nation (an example of the latter would be the European Union); they are designed for each other.

But binding norms seem to become rooted in human beings through Beta, through G. H. Mead’s **Significant Others**, maybe particularly the mother. If now Betas crumble all over the place, down to the nuclear family, even to the mother-child bond, leaving more and more of the raising of children not even to the school where the single class still may have some Beta character, but to the media, parking the children in front of the TV/video, then it would be a miracle if binding and positive norms became internalized. Adding to this the well-known content of the media,²⁶ the general picture becomes even worse.

At least for the “advanced countries”,²⁷ one reasonable hypothesis would be that there is a certain synchrony between the processes of deconstruction and

deculturation. For other countries there may be important asynchronies²⁸ to explore.

We would expect a general sense of pessimism to prevail as Beta crumbles. And that is exactly the general finding that emerged from a major comparative 10-nation study, **Images of the World in the Year 2000**²⁹: the more economically advanced the country, the more pessimistic in general terms the inhabitants. A premonition? Of course, with Betas crumbling all around them, people may easily become very lonely. Add to this the alienation at all levels of Alpha due to the strong rules of substitutability, and the exploitation lower down, and the lack of any other moral guidance than individual cost-benefit analysis. How would we expect people to react?

Basically, in the way indicated by the five theses in the introduction. But the latter already presuppose a weakening of Alpha, not only the alienation and exploitation/repression of formations II and III. Under the conditions of modern society as such (not yet post-modern), people might react to Alpha as such. And if we assume those on top basically to be content, wanting to hang on, then the reaction will mainly come from people lower down.

Two formulas: revolt and apathy, boiling and freezing. Who chooses what, both or neither is an interesting problem of social psychology. From a more sociological point of view, these are mass phenomena and solid indicators of malfunctioning, which is in no way to say that revolts may not be justified. However, if there is something humankind should have learned during the twentieth century, it would be this: a revolution substituting one Alpha for the other, changing priesthood, may not change much.

But political violence, today referred to as “terrorism”, may be a problem of structures/cultures partly of the past. Today the problem may be that there is no structure/culture at all and that violence, hurting and harming, is erupting all over as a consequence of social disorganization. Here is a typology of eight forms of violence:

1. Violence against Nature (ecological crimes)
2. Violence against Self (alcohol/drugs/tobacco, stress, suicide)
3. Violence against Family (child abuse, physical/verbal violence)
4. Violence against Individuals (robbery, assault, rape, homicide)
5. Violence against Organizations (corruption)
6. Violence against Groups (inter-class, inter-nation violence)
7. Violence against Societies (inter-state violence)
8. Violence against Other Worlds (inter-planetary violence)

Types 3, 4 and 5 are today referred to as crimes³⁰, and types 6 and 7 as wars. For a peace researcher they are all violence. The arenas differ from one type to the other: all over Nature (as in the rain forests); at home; on the streets; in offices; within a country (internal wars); within the world (external wars); between worlds (so far only as science fiction). But the net result is the same: life is being caused to suffer, being hurt and harmed and traumatized, even ceasing.

All over the world, people are in shock after reading, listening to, viewing, the media. The world seems to be coming apart. Each nation wants its state.

Weapons of all kinds are available everywhere. Big blocs are taking shape at the world level. Rich countries are set against Poor as much as, or more than, ever; the Rich in North America, Western Europe and East Asia are pitted against each other; there are new military alliances; culture, and particularly religion, come up against secularized élites capable only of uttering the standard curse: “fundamentalism”. *Homo homini lupus, bellum omnium contra omnes*; everybody for himself; apparently out of control, unrestrained. Disintegration.

One common reflection today is that violence has become more domestic, less global, worldwide. In terms of the above typology that means more violence of types 1-6 (but type 1 is also global!) and less of type 7. It may be too early to judge; the data indicate constancy rather than decline in the level of inter-country violence. There is a perception of decreased threat of a nuclear East-West holocaust in Europe, possibly due to an over-estimation of that danger during the Cold War **and** an under-estimation of that danger within the Catholic-Protestant/Latin-Germanic vs. Orthodox/Slav vs. Muslim/Turkish triangle taking shape in Europe. At any rate, with that danger removed, the world system (in the Northern part of the world) looks to many rather peaceful. But not domestic society, with nations pitted against each other all over and types 1-5 apparently on the increase in most societies.

The hope of people working for peace has for a long time been to have the world system catch up with the best social systems in controlling violence, for instance by establishing a binding rule-of-law system. The problem, as usually pointed out, is that such rules are not easily internalized in an anarchic system with everybody (meaning the states) out for themselves and nobody really functioning as a Significant Other, a nursing mother.³¹ And they are not easily institutionalized either. There are mutual rights and obligations. But if A's right becomes B's obligation and there is no reciprocity, the mechanisms for handling the conflict (the World Court, the Security Council) are imperfect to say the least. Neither rewards nor punishment (positive and negative sanctions) are impressive. What then happens is often hierarchic intervention by big powers.

People may develop all kinds of Beta, not to mention Alpha, structures across borders, but the inter-state structures are thin (this is where anarchy enters) and vertical (this is where hierarchy enters). Is the structure also big? With 184 members of the United Nations and 184 ambassadors, the structure is not larger than what many individuals can handle, fitting nicely into their lists of addresses and telephone numbers. Being thin and vertical it could easily become Alpha by adding more members (such as NGOs, or direct relations to the many nations of the world). But it could not easily become Beta. In that case it would more likely be Gamma, with the permanent Security Council members *in loco parentis* of that extended family. Feudal and paternalistic, in other words, and even so the webs of interaction will have to be spun much more densely.

The basic point here, however, is that far from the world system catching up with the better cases of the social systems, it is the other way round: the social systems are “catching down” with the world system. Read this way, formation IV, replete with atomie and anomie, is a rather adequate image of world society: vertical, with symbolic, abstract relations rather than direct interaction, short on binding norms and altruistic orientation and long on egoistic cost-benefit orientation. There are some Beta structures, as among the Nordic, the European Union and the ASEAN countries. But the formation IV structure is very

evident. And the consequence is obvious: instead of efforts at peaceful conflict solution, violence is used, respecting neither common values nor any inner voice of conscience, nor the threat of punishment.

PART V: FROM NOMADS TO MONADISM: SOME *FORCES MOTRICES*

The following is not a theory to account for this rather gigantic change in the human condition. Rather than a macro-history, it is simply a catalogue of twelve factors often mentioned in this connection, an annotated list so to speak, even alphabetized to make its atheoretical character more obvious (if not necessarily acceptable) to the reader.

Capitalism — The reason why capitalism tends to become not only Alpha but Super-Alpha in its basic structure, even if much is happening within, is the verticality of power that follows when high-quality production factors (nature, labour, capital, technology and management) are monetized, marketed and mobile. As they have to be put together for production, they tend to flow together — or at least to be controlled together — from a Centre.

The Centre uses high-quality factors for high-quality products, in exchange for lower quality factors and products from the Periphery. Capital is supposed to beget more capital, either directly in the finance economy (speculation) or indirectly when invested in production factors used to produce goods and services in the real economy (production). Much begets more, which does not mean that little begets less; the cake may expand, but then often at the expense of the external proletariat, nature and/or future generations. What was new about capitalism was not that the economy had a peaked structure. What was new was the mobility, not only into the Centre by investing some initial capital, much hard work, saving, greed and inconsideration, but also out of the Centre through bankruptcy or lack of dynamism. The result was an anti-feudal revolution. For the continuation, see Socialism.

Democracy — Of course elections are one way of ensuring not only rule by the consent of the ruled, but also nonviolent transition from one set of rulers to the next, if they respect the secret ballot. The problem is the Alpha nature of that type of democracy; a relation between a Center of contending Rulers and a Periphery of the Ruled, turning the pyramid upside-down once every four years (or so). This Alpha shape of modern democracy, Democracy II, differs from the Beta shape of a more primordial Democracy I: a group (a small company, a small community or a neighborhood, a family or a group of friends, the elders in a tribe) dialoguing over issues until consensus is obtained. In the latter case, the relation is horizontal, everybody can address everybody's concern, the outcome is unknown in advance, there is neither winner nor loser — and in good dialogues, only winners.

Differentiation — Another term is “division of labour”, seen in a long social philosophy tradition (Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Tönnies, Max Weber) as a basic condition for social progress and economic growth in particular. The total human activity called Work is not only subdivided into tasks and sub-tasks, but new tasks are continuously created. As in production of goods and services so also in the production of knowledge: undifferentiated Philosophy is subdivided into disciplines and sub-disciplines that in addition are hyphenated into cross-disciplines. The structure of the sets of Tasks and disciplines is highly complex, but the general idea is differentiation, and with it fragmentation, atomization of the individuals having these tasks and disciplines as their job. A book, **Limits to Differentiation**, is crying to be written.

Economic Growth — The process is almost inconceivable without a culture accommodating not only hard work and saving, but also greed and inconsideration. Systems may differ as to whether the pressure is put on the internal or external proletariats; on nature, self or the future. But something has to be moved, or transformed, or both (see Capitalism); and in the process organic relations of people to others — or of raw materials to surrounding nature — will be cut or at least transformed. The open wounds in quarries and mines have their counterparts in the open wounds in souls detached from each other through excessive mobility and transformation. Inconsideration means insensitivity to wounds in Self, Other and Nature. Beta structures break down; partly dehumanized Alpha structures are poor substitutes.

Economism — The term is interpreted here as a state of mind, not to be confused with the economy (the cycles linking Nature, Production and Consumption) or economics (the science about these cycles, today essentially a description and theory of one particular economic system, capitalism, hence a science that more properly should be called “capitalistics”). Economics, or the culture of *homo economicus*, can be conceived of as a syndrome:

- a focus on material/somatic satisfaction by goods and services;
- a focus on the human individual as the unit to be satisfied;
- a focus on cost-benefit analysis to guide individual choices.

The syndrome not only detaches individuals from each other by making the single individual the supreme decision-maker (egocentrism), but also detaches satisfiers (goods/services) from each other as objects to be possessed and consumed one by one. Costs and benefits are then used to establish preferences. There are severe problems with this syndrome/mind-set:

- in practice only a limited number of satisfiers can be used, by definition excluding the externalities of economic action;
- absolute values (with infinite positive or negative utilities) will be excluded or relativized since they will overrule others;
- individual preferences are not easily reconciled collectively.

Destructuration and deculturation are the costs — considerable — of the breakdown of the holism of the actors in collectivities, the holism of the object-world, and of absolute values. These costs are also built into the technique used: product-sum maximization, which becomes very unwieldy for collectivities of non-harmonized actors and high numbers of satisfiers, and useless for absolutes.

The result is even more atomization, destructure and the deculturation implicit in rejecting absolute values. Thus economism becomes the ultimate consequence of Roman Law.³²

Gender — Just to pick up one factor, how the genders seem to differ in their preference for Alpha (male) and Beta (female) and No (male) structures, assuming that women prefer to relate and network — not to be isolated in loneliness, nor to be isolated at the top of a hierarchy. Thus a major force behind the drive toward Alphaization, and then toward monadism, from formation I to II, II to III and on to IV, would be patriarchy: the leading structure is the structure of the leading class. And that should also apply to culture: male preference for deductive thinking and submission to first principle is compatible with a transcendent God; less compatible with immanence. But that also opens up the possibility for a major therapy: parity instead of patriarchy — provided women have not become clones of men in the process.

Globalization — If this term stands for global mobility of production factors and products, with more standardization of structures and cultures, then the consequence is to speed up the transition into formations III/IV. Larger domains for structures and cultural meanings imply thinner scopes and more reliance on least common denominators, with structural and cultural specifics receding into the background. Given the variety of idioms around the world, super-super-Alphas with truly global reach will be symbolic — based on mathematics, computer language, body language (sport as a universal idiom) and/or on concrete objects, **goods**, like people with no common idiom pointing and touching. “Here are no Greeks, no Jews; no women, no men: we are all one in Coca-Cola” is reality, not a bad joke or blasphemy.

And the same goes for structures: no cohesive Alpha has so far emerged covering 6 billion human beings except one: global television. There are two layers: one sender, billions of receivers. No horizontal interaction; they relate via the apex.

Will this structure endure? Probably not. Sooner or later it will go the way of all Alphas: small Beta groups take shape. Like guerrillas, they will relate, unite and revolt. The condition is their ability, underestimated by Marx, to overcome structural, cultural and geographical divides. But the global market prophets may have underestimated the fact that in its wake will follow globalized worker/trade union and consumer movements. **“Proletarians (and consumers) all over the world, unite!”** may have a reincarnation. Consumer sovereignty, if exercised on a truly global basis, may become a major force at the same time as nation state democracies crumble under the weight of global forces beyond their control.

Actually, globalization may also run into another problem of an equally or more serious nature. Competition has kept capitalism innovative: not only the micro-competition from other firms in the same branch (BMW versus Mercedes) nor the meso-competition from another country (Germany versus the United Kingdom), but the macro-competition from other civilizations with other capitalisms (Buddhist-Confucian versus Judeo-Christian). Globalization will keep the micro and meso challenges but may strive to iron out the macro differences through homogenization into a global business culture. This means a severe reduction of the Toynbee factor of challenge followed by the creative

response that presumably keeps minorities in power. And Alpha is, by the very definition built into its pyramidal shape, run by a small minority (relative to the other layers) in need of constant renewal of personnel and ideas. Globalization means mono-culture, less diversity, less symbiosis, less resilience.

Health — The concern for health fits into the general picture of secularization in two important ways: as focus on the body rather than on the state of the mind and the spirit; and the translation of eternal life/salvation into high life expectancy. Of course modern man enjoys lower morbidity and mortality. But there are no gains without some price to be paid, and the price is in the cultural rather than structural sector. Could it be that the healthy body is less able to share the suffering of others at the same time as health — one's own and that of others — is taken for granted, being no source of shared joy either? Could it be that health leads neither to a culture of compassion nor to a culture of submission (following in its wake), but to a culture of egocentrism?

Human Rights — In principle human rights protect exposed individuals, emphasizing the privacy of the individual human body, of the individual human soul/mind/spirit and the equality of all categories of humans relative to the law. Human rights soften relations between the Centre (the state) and a Periphery of individualized citizens, which is good. But the doctrine can also emphasize reliance on a protective, soft Centre rather than human reliance on each other — an ethics of Alpha submission rather than Beta compassion, designed to soften (not weaken) the strong Alphas of formations II and III, in ways leading to formation IV.

Industrialization — No doubt this was a major factor in the transition from formation II to III and leads to well-known problems of vertical division of labour (exploitation) within the company, between employers and employees; within the country, between raw materials and industrial goods producing districts; and also between countries according to degree of processing. The organization at all three levels was Alpha, with a plethora of Beta groups flourishing at all levels, from boys' clubs of employers to workers' collectivities (not the same as Alpha-type trade unions) controlling the level of commitment to the firm. So industrialization has been accompanied by anti-Alpha revolts of all kinds — from sabotage, work slowdowns and company strikes to general strikes, and anti-colonial and anti-neo-colonial movements. The struggle is still on. But the focus here is more on a robotized, automated, symbolic interaction pattern than on industrialization, if that is still the word. From the perspective of destructured and decultured post-modernism, symbolized by robotization, labour and Third World struggles look almost utopian: people still relate to each other.

Literacy — Literacy can only be understood in terms of its alternatives: orality on one hand and picturacy on the other. Orality has as a necessary condition memory, stored in the brain. Does it not stand to reason that what has to be memorized often is more easily remembered, recalled, related to others in Beta-type relations (rather than the Alpha-type relation of readers to authors) and for that reason may be more compelling? The decalogue can be retrieved from books and computers. But does that have the same binding quality as moral commands committed to the individual memory? If not, is literacy, however precious, not also paving the way from formation II into numbers III and IV?

Picturacy (TV, video) in principle mirrors reality and in practice constitutes a virtual reality, an “as if” (*als ob, comme si*) reality. The choice has been made for the viewer, as subjectively as any choice. Synchronic perception complements the diachrony of orality and literacy, but is also more easily confused with reality “out there”. This, then, adds to detachment in dehumanized structures and relativized cultures.

Migration — Whatever the reason, massive migration across borders, which often also means across cultures, will considerably speed up transitions to formation IV, even to the new formation I of the Los Angeles metaphor. Thus a person, with or without friends and family, detached from the structures of the country of origin, arrives in the host country, presumably with his/her culture more or less intact. There has to be some attachment to a new Alpha structure, relating to the new State (permits, etc.), the new Capital (job, etc.) and maybe also some footholds in the new Civil Society.

However, the cultural idiom will be thin indeed. The host culture is not easily internalized. A likely result is a tightly spun Beta group of immigrants suspected of being predators rather than prey (or, often, both): Los Angeles. This should not be confused with colonialist transfers of total societies, with the host population marginalized or exterminated.

Poverty — Of course, poverty is important as a problem of all formations, when instead of looking at structures and cultures we focus on basic human needs and their satisfaction. But from a structural point of view poverty does not necessarily lead to atomie. It can also lead to tightly woven Beta groups fighting poverty together.³³ And it does not have to lead to anomie. It can also lead to the famous culture of poverty of the *favela* which may sustain rather than negate poverty, but also make it more bearable. The worst poverty would be needs-deprivation combined with atomie and anomie, in other words the poverty of formation IV. And this may very well be the condition under which Los Angeles is no longer a metaphor, but a world reality.

Another, updated perspective on poverty might bring in the jobless growth characteristic of the present world economy. Nevertheless, the distinction between employed and unemployed is too sharp. More typical are underemployment and underpayment, in the sense that the concept of the breadwinner able to feed a whole family (“one job-one family”) is disappearing. In principle this should force a number of people, in a family or another kinship unit, or in a neighborhood or a commune, to join their incomes so that all can live from it, thereby fostering Beta restructuring and solidarity.

Roman Law — It was all pre-programmed in Roman Law, if the following reading of that law or basic philosophy is accepted.³⁴ In what we generally assume to be true about primitive societies, **holism** is a basic figure of thought, both for **Humans** and for **Nature**, although in practice this applies mainly to the near-Humans, meaning the in-group, and the near-Nature, meaning this side of the horizon, which for a nomadic people is considerable. This is very far from a basic figure of thought in Roman Law, which is *dominio* or individual ownership. The ownership or use concept of primitive peoples is a coupling of two holisms: we as a group use, with care, what we find in Nature. To go from that figure of thought to the Roman holisms must yield to atomism. **Humans** must be subdivided into persons capable of ownership, an example being the

pater familias, another the emperor; and **Nature** subdivided into entities capable of being owned, as land, plots and minerals, plants, animals, slaves/women/children. Obviously, for this a census, the sciences of geometry, geology, botany and zoology gradually had to take shape. But once the subdivision was done on both sides of the **Humans-Nature** divide, with the holisms broken, the totality could be sewn together again, the Roman (to become the Western) way: through a one-one mapping of juridical persons on objects, the *dominio*. What belonged to everybody would then belong to nobody; *res communis, res nullius*. For the non-Western world, ownership was acquired by applying the “first come, first see, first own” principle: through “discoveries”. There were transitional formulas: the Emperor is the only juridical person, like the *pater familias* for the family, assuming *dominio* of everything — in the West scorned as “Oriental despotism”.

Socialism — We know it in its Stalinist and post-Stalinist configuration as super-Alpha with, say, 400 people planning for 400 million in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (about the same structure as regional television). Means of production were collectivized — but not at the level of communes as communism but at the level of the state, as state-ism (*étatisme*). Revolts were inevitable, not only because of the brutality and repression of (post-)Stalinist countries. Planning made people passive, expropriating from them not only the right to plan their own production, but even to plan their own consumption and the economy of their own household, restricting the range of what was available. Then people demanded their right to be subjects of their own economic fate. For the continuation, see Capitalism.

Urbanization — The city is a giant Alpha in administrative and often economic terms. But it is also better suited to host countless rich, diverse, shifting and symbiotic Betas than any other human habitat, if for no other reason than simply because it combines size and proximity into propinquity. It has other problems, such as slum formation and the alienation of those who are marginalized. The young, the old and women are often excluded from the rich Beta variety of bars and clubs. Moreover, modern cities are better designed for cars than for people, eliminating many good meeting places such as parks, open land, old buildings. Like industrialization, urbanization played a key role on the way from formation II to formation III. But even if very dramatic in many places, these are the problems of yesteryear. The problem now and in the future is to ensure that the solutions to these problems not carry the stamp of formation IV.

PART VI: TWO THESES ON SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

No surprises for the reader in these two theses on social development as the antidote to social disintegration.

The first thesis reads: **Create strong Alpha and strong Beta structures, to promote structuration and reverse destructure.**

The second thesis reads: **Promote immanent and transcendent religion, to promote cultururation and to reverse decultururation.**

If enacted this would place us in formation II, which has been called “traditional society”, referring to that cycle of human history. But the definitions of these formations transcend the concreteness of the travel from nomads to monadism. We also have a future, and the hunch derived from these deliberations is that we need both Alpha (because “some big is necessary”) and Beta (because “small is beautiful”). This in no way means moving backward in history (which would be impossible anyhow), but trying to create a new cycle. A not-very-promising beginning has already been indicated, not only the tribal warfare in the wastelands of Los Angeles, but also the warfare in Ulster, ex-Yugoslavia, ex-Soviet Union and Turkey in Europe; Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia and Sierra Leone in Africa; Guatemala and Mexico in Latin America; Myanmar, Indonesia and Cambodia in Asia, to give some examples. Strong on Beta, weak on Alpha — and very violent.

One still-positive example of formation II comes to mind: Japan. Betas in the form of cohorts are incorporated into the Alphas of bureaucracies and corporations by way of **lifelong employment** (so that people stay together inside the organization) and **seniority promotion** (so that people stay at the same level for some time, being promoted together at least to start with).³⁵

But at the same time Japan also benefits from the co-existence, in one society, of transcendent religion (State Shinto), immanent religion (Folk Shinto, Buddhism) and secularism (Confucianism). In principle, a Japanese not only lives both in Alpha and in Beta, but may also pay allegiance to all three systems of faith at the same time (and, in addition, to Christianity and Rationalism). Thus we would expect a certain resilience in Japan, being both structurally and culturally intact, playing on both structures and both cultures. This might look like redundancy, but the key to resilience is exactly that, redundancy to be on the safe side. Hence we would expect relatively low disintegration rates of the usual kind, adding divorce to the typology of violence.

Japan is exposed today to tremendous pressure both from the outside, particularly from the United States, and from the inside, maybe particularly from bureaucrats, businessmen and scholars who have been to the United States and found the society liberating. As mentioned above, Beta and immanent religion can be confining; Alpha and transcendent religion both open up grand vistas. But the conclusion from these deliberations is to be very careful: the costs of that type of modernization are enormous and the remedies not very

clear, as moving backward, recreating past structures and cultures, may be impossible. To pressure Japan into policies that will have moves toward formation IV as a likely consequence should be classified as some kind of social crime, structurocide *cum* culturocide.

Which does not mean that Japan and Japan-similar countries are perfect. With more emphasis on social growth and costs, and less on economic growth and costs, good policies should emerge.

In general, the first thesis would have two sub-theses: to recreate Beta and to rehumanize Alpha. One way of doing this is found all over in Western countries: create Beta inside Alpha of any kind — bureaucratic, corporate, academic. Individualism being so basic to Western cosmology, the Japanese way of tying people to the same organization for life will almost have a taste of imprisonment, and parallel promotion would disregard differences in individual potential and merit. But Beta integration does not have to be based on cohorts (i.e., generations); it can also be work-related. The problem with experiments in team work and team teaching would be the scarcity of compelling indicators of the value of social integration when there are few, no or even negative economic gains. At present the significance of social integration must come as a credo.

Thus in any trend to abolish assembly lines in favor of teams assembling a product together, there is a clear potential for some Beta growth and some Alpha decline. The same applies to modern office landscapes with a high level of mutual visibility, easily organized tasks, grouping together those who should work together. The contrast would be the one person-one office structure, an architectural recipe for fragmentation, with the lunch, the coffee-break and the water-cooler as the only alternatives. And they are not so likely to be well suited for production-oriented Betas, with the exception of the “business lunch”. But what, then, happens to reproduction-oriented Betas?

At the universities this would point to the colloquium as a fine Beta structure, for professors **and** for students. In the United States these structures are remarkably infrequent.

In banking this might point to the interesting lead by the Grameen Bank introduced in Bangladesh. Really poor people do not have equity for bank loans; if they did, the loan might not have been needed. Instead ten persons guarantee one tenth each and together they constitute a Beta group around the debtor.

This reminds us of the famous Zehnergruppen, groups of ten people working together, introduced in economic organizations in the former East Germany to increase production and productivity. As such, they may have failed; but as Beta groups they seem to be much missed. Of course, Western capitalist society has much to offer in terms of voluntary organizations (although they often acquire Alpha character, becoming big and formalized). But they are usually not directly work-related.

Another interesting Beta innovation is, of course, what in German is called the WG — the Wohngemeinschaft, the “commune” of like-minded people living and to some extent consuming together, sharing all the work of the household;

an extended family except for the kinship factor. Of course this illustrates a longing for Beta in a society where even nuclear families collapse. It should not be judged by the ability or wish of the members to stay together as “real” family members; the socio-logic is different. It may also be a major way of internalizing conviviality norms.

In order to rehumanize Alpha, simply ban all automated responses, let people have a chance to put their questions to a human being and get human answers — however fallible — back. The social costs of not doing so will by far outweigh the economic costs of employing more people in the services. Moreover, such positions do not have to be full-time jobs. What is needed is humanity.

Then some points on culture, in the narrow sense used here of binding ethical rules. In the choice between an ethics of compassion and an ethics of submission, between a religion of meditation and one of prayer, the answer might be to choose both, with an important proviso to be spelled out shortly. There is much to build on; rich religious experience to draw upon. There is also room for secular approaches, perhaps not the Enlightenment cult of Ratio so much as the general wisdom of “reciprocal rights and obligations”, found all over the world, with at least some ethical inspiration to be derived from its moral basis, the *lex talionis*, both in its negative and positive formulations.

But there is another distinction that may be more important than the sacred-secular and immanent-transcendent: hard vs. soft. The word religion comes from *religare*, to relink, reconnect with that out there, the holy, the sacred. Union of some kind is the goal of all religions, union with Others (past-present-future) through immersing oneself fully in the net of compassion with all life, with God and others in the afterlife, and submitting to His commands. In mysticism this experience probably becomes like a light so strong that everything else loses its contours.

Imagine now a circle around this epicenter of religious experience, divided into sectors for each religion. The notion of religion as linking, connecting, unifying is still there. Religion is not used to draw lines between the adherents of this or that religion, nor between the righteous and the sinners. A religion is seen more like a language, an idiom in which religious experience is expressed. This is the soft circle, perhaps found more in religions of compassion than of submission.

Outside this circle comes the circle for hard religion. The names of the sectors for the religions are the same, but the message changes character. The focus is on what divides rather than on what unifies. Other religions are denounced as pagan, or even worse, as heresy. The sinners are in for very harsh treatment; even hell, the torture chamber of hard religion, is invoked for their afterlife. The righteous (from the right religion) are seen as Chosen Persons in the eyes of God and some nations are often seen as closer to God than others, including the sinners and the non-believers. Naturally, hard religions of that type can be well suited as state religions, mirroring in religious terms the struggle among states in world politics.

So an elaboration of the second thesis for social development would be to promote the softer aspects of the religions and try to demote the harder (harsher) aspects. Thus the most important struggle in the religio-scape — the religious

landscape of the world — is not the traditional struggle among religions as to which one is most suited to carry humanity forward, but the inner struggle between the unifying and the divisive forces. “Soft religionists of the world unite, you have only your harder brother and sisters to lose”? Not quite, because that would draw a too-hard line between soft and hard. The important point is that the struggle is within rather than between and that each religion has this struggle on its agenda. Moreover, the harder aspects (Inquisition, witch-burning) have no doubt contributed to giving religion a bad name. Quakers and Sufis, Buddhists and Baha’is offer much softer approaches.³⁶ But none of them would be entirely free from the harder aspects.

For humanists this would imply a softening of the line they sometimes draw between themselves and the religionists, following the tradition of eighteenth century Europe. In short, there is a message to everybody in the word that is No. 1 in the vocabulary of the present Dalai Lama: **compassion**.

Do these two theses add up to the standard conservative message of family and Christianity? No, but that message is not rejected either. “Family” is taken in a much broader sense, Beta. Moreover, attention is paid to how to soften, humanize, the other major structural type, Alpha. And instead of Christianity we are of course speaking about all religions, sacred and secular (civil), but limited again to the softer aspects. Nevertheless, conservatives have probably diagnosed the present situation better than many liberals/Marxists/greens, by focusing on one structural and one cultural component. People on the left tend to be almost obsessively focused on some kind of Alpha, its proper design, function and structure; its distribution of rights and duties, power and privilege, at the expense of Beta (except for the greens) and culture, ethos. However that may be, the present paper tries to give something to both, perhaps with the strong admonition to the left of taking culture, ethos, religion more seriously, getting out of the habit of seeing them as “superstructure” or “opium”.

None of this will emerge automatically and in crises people may also turn to the harder aspects of the religions with divisive messages and Alpha organization. But just as we postulate a normal human Beta drive for the small and tight, why not also dare postulate a corresponding religious inclination?

And that brings us to the end of this narrative, with a short excursion into a very uncertain future. With structural and cultural ties being dissolved, we are in the — some would say absurd — situation that the most modern and economic/technically developed have become, socially-speaking, perhaps the least developed, or **de-developed**. Obviously, we are then not talking about the relative presence of social services (per 1,000 inhabitants, etc.) but of something held to be much more basic: structuration and cultururation. Social services may be a part of the problem rather than the solution to the extent that they are operated through increasingly dehumanized Alpha structures. With atomie/anomie being the basic social price paid for modernization because people have taken for granted that society is solid and can be drawn upon for any purpose, the more and most developed have suddenly become the less and least developed.

Does that mean that the economically/technically least developed are the socially most developed? Not necessarily. Some very poor Third World countries have been ravaged by unspeakable violence between classes, nations

and clans, with the rest of the world often siding with one against the other(s). Some of this violence may be attributable to atomie/anomie and there are signs that it has reached the micro level of social organization, with family members butchering each other — in other words, total violence.

However, much is intact — in Southern and Eastern Europe more than in North-Western Europe, in Central and South America more than in North America. One day the present First world may ask the present Third World for advice about social development. If that happens, the world will have taken a major step forward.

◆ Endnotes

1. As used here, the “ecosystem”, or nature, includes the homosphere (humans and the “man-made environment”). The word “environment” is avoided because it draws a misleading line between the human and the non-human.

2. Thus, sociology is not aggregate psychology, nor aggregate social psychology. The conceptual building bloc of sociology, the atom so to speak, would be interaction, the interact, between at least two actors. The sum total of zillions of patterned interacts constitutes a **structure**, a molecule of interacts often of high complexity (like a protein molecule in chemistry, one reason why organic chemistry may be a useful metaphor for sociology; see Johan Galtung, “Structural Analysis and Chemical Models”, in **Methodology and Ideology**, Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1978, ch. 6, pp. 160-189). These interacts have to be filled with concrete human beings (at least in a human society), and with human beings come their personalities with their various layers shaping their concrete life with themselves (psychology) and with others (social psychology). Society may generate such structures according to some common mould (like pyramid structures, wheel structures), referred to as “deep structures”.

Human beings are steered, to a large extent, by the structures in which they are embedded. But they are also steered by their **culture**, the symbolic, meaning-giving aspect of the human condition, particularly by the normative, valuative part. Values may be conscious or subconscious, and individually or collectively held. The category “collective subconscious” may be referred to as “deep culture”, seen here as generating conscious and/or individual values — but always with significant variations.

In sociology as a science, “structure” is more emphasized than “culture”, as any cursory perusal of a journal of sociology will show. But structural analysis without culture reduces human beings to robots, programmed with no consciousness of their programming and no access to changing their programmes. And cultural analysis without structure elevates human beings to a freedom which is not ours.

3. The term “global problem” is very frequently used, probably to call the attention (of policy makers, of people with money) to the gravity of the problem. Three uses can be distinguished:

- “global” in the sense of “worldwide”, being shared by a high number of societies;
- “global” in the sense of “world-interconnected”, with causal loops spanning the whole world;
- “global” in the sense of “world-system”, applying to world society as such.

Social disintegration as a “global problem” would cover all three uses.

4. Independently of the present paper, Durkheim’s concept of anomie (also used extensively by Merton) has recently been taken up by the Swiss Academy for Development as a major research focus, inspired by the World Summit for Social Development. See **Needed: A New Anomie Concept for Development to Reduce Global Destabilization**, Chairman’s Report to the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995).

5. Leibniz’ “monadology” constructs human beings not as individuals in interaction, but as basically self-sufficient units, in need of no help from others. The monads are without windows since there is no need to engage in what sociologists refer to as “complementary role-expectations” (I expect you to do A if I do B; and since I want you to do A, I’ll do B). The strong unit is in no need of others. This all promotes the best of all conceivable worlds because of a pre-established harmony (by God). The monads will not collide; they are steered, not by mutual rights and obligations, but from above, like driverless cars or planes on pre-programmed autopilots in need of no human intervention; very different from his contemporary Spinoza to whom friendship was a basic concept, and also from Martin Luther’s focus on the strong individual, *hier steh’ich, ich kann nicht anders* (Leibniz was a Catholic). I am indebted to the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss, in a private communication, for this interpretation of Leibniz. The Scandinavian will be reminded of Strindberg’s *ködets lust och själens obotliga ensamhet* (the lust of the flesh and the incurable loneliness of the spirit), although Leibniz seems mainly to pick up the latter point.

Two other metaphors may be useful as well. There is the case of the noble gases in chemistry (argon, helium, neon, krypton, xenon, radon), which are said to be “noble” because, since they are not ionized, they do not connect with any other elements to form compounds. A set of monads, or hermits, would be like a noble gas with no compounds; they would certainly be nothing like a protein — a compound of compounds (amino acids) that might serve as an image of a society (the amino acid being, for instance, the family).

Then there is the idea of the human being as a world of cells, connecting colonies of cells of the same kind. Cells relate, they communicate, e.g. through sodium channels. They even relate by committing suicide, offering themselves up to each other (apoptosis). And they die (necrosis). If they did not relate to each other, then the body would die; the whole body derives life from the change within and the exchange between cells. We use many expressions drawn from the metaphor — *le tissu social*, for example

6. Some recent data on the size of households may be of interest in this connection. Thus, 40 per cent of the households in Sweden consist of one person. Often this one person, very likely an elderly woman, will live in an **apart-ment**, somewhat akin to a Leibnizian monad, with windows not to other people as persons, but to a “view”. Of course, a single person in an apartment is not self-sufficient. But if the paycheck from the welfare state, the neighborhood supermarket and the urban services (such as water, electricity and sewage) are included, then we are close to the monad. The harmony may not be divine, but established by the joint action of State and Capital, with the Media thrown in for the human mind — again with no need to meet anybody in direct human interaction.

7. I do not say “individuals” on purpose, as that term is meaningful in a social context emphasizing individual differences; and differences can only come to the fore in a social context of interaction. Individualism, in the sense of self-differentiation from others and self-assertion, is only meaningful when there are others around to compare with or to interact with. Collectivism differs from this only at one point: the “self” above is a collective Self, such as “my group” or “both of us”. Isolates neither differentiate nor assert themselves this way or that; the social context is irrelevant.

8. Transparency International (TI), in Berlin, is the organization concerned with corruption, as Amnesty International is concerned with human rights in general, and political prisoners and torture in particular. For an analysis of corruption from a TI point of view see Fredrik Galtung, (ed.), **Korruption**, Berlin: Lamuv, 1994.

9. The net-knot metaphor is taken from the writings of the Indian-Catalunyan-American philosopher Raimundo Panikkar.

10. For my own first effort to do so, see Johan Galtung, “On the Future of the International System”, **Essays in Peace Research, Vol. IV**, Copenhagen: Ejlers, 1980, pp. 615-644. In that paper, from 1967, I used the term “neo-modern”, not “post-modern”, since I think it is “modernity” extrapolated rather than some new paradigm. However, the term “post-modern” is now so frequently used that it is hard to avoid.

11. If we have N actors (persons in a social system, societies in a world system), then the minimum number of links needed to connect them is N-1. Each actor, except those at the end, is connected to two others in a hierarchy with an apex, connecting downwards to two others, or in a chain. There is no limit to size; the pyramid can have any number of layers, the chain is endless and may even become a circle. But if the rule is that each actor shall relate to everybody else, then everybody with no exception (there is no longer anybody “at the end”) has N-1 links to manage and the total number of links is $N(N-1)/2$, in other words N/2 times more:

	Alpha	Beta
N	N-1	$N(N-1)/2$
2	1	1
3	2	3
4	3	6
5	4	10
6	5	15
7	6	21
8	7	28
9	8	36
10	9	45

With increasing size there is no load increase for each actor in Alpha and the total interaction increase is very slow. For each actor in Beta there is an increase (like relating to 9 friends in a group of 10) and the total interaction increase is much quicker. Obviously, there is an upper limit to how much interaction a human being can handle.

12. For a first publication on this, see Johan Galtung, “Alfa y Beta y sus muchas combinaciones”, in Johan Galtung and Eleonora Masini (eds.), **Visiones de sociedades deseables**, Mexico: CEESTEM, 1979.

13. And the argument here is precisely that substitutability is the structural basis for alienation, making people detachable from their work product, from others and ultimately from themselves — like anything else in throw-away society.

14. As one example, see Dieter Haase, **Mein Name ist Haase**, Celle: VDS Verlag, 1993.

15. This theme has also been conspicuously absent from many paradigms in US sociology.

16. Another metaphor: a normative, iron strait-jacket at the bottom, a rubber suit to grow and expand in at the top.

17. Two implications of this are very well known. First, in order to make break-ups (such as strikes, lock-outs, firing people, making them “redundant”) less costly in human terms, relations are thin. A social distance is kept between employees and employers. Second, if relations are thick, (as in a marriage) break-up becomes extremely time-consuming and costly in human terms. Thus one obvious strategy to protect oneself against such costs is to keep relations thin, as in “affairs”, a term hinting at business-type relationships.

18. With thin-thick, big-small and vertical-horizontal, we get eight possibilities, even if for present analytical purposes we do not need to make use of all of them. For reference, here they are (two stable, two unstable and four highly unstable):

Alpha:	thin	big	vertical	bureaucracies, corporations
Beta:	thick	small	horizontal	friendship groups
Gamma:	thick	small	vertical	patriarchal families
Delta:	thin	big	horizontal	electronic/urban networks
	thin	small	vertical	unstable; will become big
	thick	big	horizontal	unstable; will become small
	thick	big	vertical	unstable; will become thin
	thin	small	horizontal	unstable; will become thick

The logic is simple. Alpha and Beta are the two prototypes for human interaction structures. The former a pyramid, the latter a wheel (with all points connected to each other). But Beta can also be small (Gamma), although the hypothesis will be that members will tend to escape, children by leaving, spouses by splitting up, or even through homicide and suicide. And Alpha can become horizontal (Delta), as in vast networks, although the hypothesis will be that gradients will tend to build up.

The remaining four cases have not even been given names, as they are seen as highly unstable, tending toward the two prototypes. With two out of three characteristics shared with the prototypes, the hypothesis is simply that the third will have to yield, through processes like adding layers; shedding some members; making interaction more specific, less diffuse. Examples of such processes abound. The reader is invited to supply her/his own.

19. Robert Redfield’s classic, **The Primitive World and Its Transformations**, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953, particularly chapter 1, and the books by V. Gordon Childe provide fascinating images.

20. Thus there is a human content in a garage owner’s shouting his orders at mechanics, sometimes from another nation; but not in a big bureaucracy where problems arrive in In-trays and are transformed in loneliness to solutions in Out-trays. To the objection that a really big bureaucracy cannot function like a small garage, the answer would take the form of two questions: “Are you prepared to pay the costs in terms of atomie?” and “Are you sure it has to be that big?”

21. If we now define human existence not physiologically, in terms of a body with vital signs, nor spiritually in terms of a soul, but in terms of social networks, of the quantity and quality of human interaction, then the net conclusion of all of this is that formation IV consists of dying and dead human beings. Social death = physical death according to that formula; it is not only a **forerunner** of physiological death, as in the Western construction of life-cycles [the Childhood-Education-Work-Retirement (CEWR) syndrome]. The only comfort is spiritual survival for those who believe in that.

22. Los Angeles Police Department, of Gates/Rodney King/O.J. Simpson fame.

23. Thus the Japanese seem to divide their production (say, for example, of cars) into three phases: an artisanal production of parts in very small, Beta-type family firms; then assembly in giant, Alpha-type factories, to a large extent done by robots; and then a testing through dis-assembly and re-assembly by hand in small groups of highly experienced workers. Not only are human relations kept, but they are even to a large extent Beta, with a dehumanized, robotized segment in-between.

24. That extermination project is still on, for instance in the Amazonas, Chiapas, Guatemala.

25. Both of them are, like theology, deductively constructed — based on a number of hypotheses or rather axioms (like the Enlightenment faith in human “rationality”) that gives them an apodictic character. But since they were secular substitutes for religion, their dogmatism (even to the point of *credo quia absurdum*) is not criticized. Their basic credos (rational human beings with knowledge of the law will be law-abiding; rational human beings act so as to maximize their utilities) are unfalsifiable, meaning that no empirical evidence can be used to unseat the new high priests.

26. Figures often repeated in the US press compare the 15,000 hours of schooling of an average US 18-year-old with 18,000 hours of television viewing, involving an average of one murder per hour, and 340,000 commercials. The point about commercials is not only the idiotizing level of the message, devoid of any intellectual or moral content, but the training in one-way communication: there is no way of talking back, even of asking questions. The only choices are in terms of buying/not buying and viewing/switching off.

27. Meaning both advanced in terms of modernization (including economic growth) and advanced in atomie/anomie.

28. One hypothesis might be that deculturation is more advanced due to the cultural penetration from the West. This was prepared through evangelical work during centuries of colonialism, to the extent that the recipients were stranded on a cultural dialectic no longer their own, ready to accept the anti-evangelical content of secularism, partly because it took on the same form as secular evangelism. If they are in a state of anomie, but not (yet) of atomie, then we would expect exactly the brutality with which dowry is exacted in some parts of India today. The opposite syndrome, atomie (lots of marginalized, fragmented youths) without anomie (because there is still strong faith in received religion) might predispose for what in the West is called “fundamentalism”. (The operational meaning of that term is probably any faith that stands in the way of Western penetration.)

29. Helmut Ornauer, Håkan Wiberg, Andrej Sicinski and Johan Galtung, (eds.), The Hague: Mouton, 1976, 729 pp.

30. But type 4 is the classical crime, the crime in public space, in the streets, on the roads. What people did inside their homes (type 3) and in organizations (type 5) was seen as outside the public realm, even as private, to be dealt with by internal justice (meaning the *pater familias* and the chief executive officer, themselves often the offenders).

31. In the self-image of the colonial countries, often referring to themselves as “mother countries”, that may be what they hoped to do. But mothers with that kind of record would hardly serve as moral models at the social level; and at the world level relations are, in addition, remote.

32. See the excellent work by Susan George on the World Bank as a religion. The combination of male, mainstream economist and (probably) Protestant extraction is not very promising.

33. This, of course, is the major theme of the Oscar Lewis tradition in this field, *la cultura de pobreza*, today often seen as an obstacle to growth because potential entrepreneurs are locked into Beta-type solidarity. The free float upwards by their own buoyancy.

34. See, for instance, A. Santos Justo, **Fases do desenvolvimento do direto romano**, Coimbra, 1994.

35. However, the flip side of this “workshop” Beta structure may be an absence of Beta in other contexts, such as neighborhoods.

36. By and large this has not only theological implications, like the Quaker saying, “there is that of God in everybody”, but also sociological implications: a flatter, more horizontal structure. Thus the usual relation between steep hierarchy and violence ordered from the top (who may bless rather than participate in the action) does not obtain.