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Organic Communities, Atomistic Societies and Loneliness*

According to Aristotle, philosophy begins with a search for the various first principles of each science, including sociology and “politics”. “Hence, it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and then man is by nature a political animal”.¹ In the animal kingdom, the only creature that is capable of formulating judgments concerning human values is man. Metaphysical materialism reduces its twin first principles into the *primary* quantitative measurements of matter *plus* motion. In turn, empiricism reduces its cognitions to the causal interplay between the primary quantities of matter and the impinging *secondary*, subjective qualitative appearances of sensations and feelings, thereby reducing – indeed virtually eliminating – all human values to feelings of pleasure and pain. But it is man alone of all the animals, who is capable of formulating *tertiary* principles and therefore evaluative cognitive judgments, values of goodness and evil; beauty and plainness; wisdom and ignorance; loneliness and intimacy; and so on. Regarding the paramount hu-

* The article is an expanded and completed version of that originally appeared in the *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare* 19(2) (1992): 147–164.

¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, in: Aristotle, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Basic Books, 1941), 1253a.

man issue of determining how to avoid loneliness and secure intimacy, a critical question centers on the decision in committing to either one of two first principles – or paradigms – of human association. The existential choice lies between seeking a sense of “organic” belonging – often religious or political – or atomistic freedom.

The present essay distinguishes two models of sociological organization: the organic community and the atomistic society. It maintains that the organic paradigm stresses:

1. the ideal unity of “the whole”, the “Universal” (Hegel);
2. internal human relations;
3. inter-dependent functioning, e. g., the organs and limbs of the human body working in unison;
4. teleological or dialectical processes;
5. role-orientations with social class prescribed duties and synchronicity; and
6. freedom is defined as doing as you should.

By contrast, the atomistic model stresses:

1. the independence of the individual, “the parts” (Rousseau);
2. external, contractual, legal, or artificial relations;
3. mechanistic, causal, or behavioral interactions;
4. the sanctity of personal decisions, independent functioning, and inviolable autonomy;
5. competitive social choices, “that government is best which governs least”; and
6. freedom is defined as doing as you please.

The danger to the individual in the organic model is through forced conformity to the interests of the whole and to a suppression of the individual’s freedom of expression, punishment for non-conformism to the ideals of the whole, while the risk in the atomistic paradigm is anarchy, unbridled autonomy, and a complete disregard for the convictions and feelings of others.

In previous writings, I have focused primarily on cognitive philosophical and motivational psychological theories of consciousness in relation to human loneliness. In the following I want to explore the more sociological dimensions concerned with the dynamics of loneliness. My reason for proceeding in this manner is twofold. First, I believe that the dual principles or paradigms described above are important because of their effects on issues regarding loneliness and intimacy; and second,

I believe that by contrasting the two, it will demonstrate what is at stake in making the choice between them in terms of avoiding loneliness and securing intimacy. These dichotomies of value continually abound in our daily human experience. For example, Isaiah Berlin distinguishes two different principles of engagement in our intellectual and artistic enterprises based on an ancient saying of Archilochus, the Greek poet, splitting mankind's values into two opposing tendencies: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing".²

Scholars have differed about the correct interpretation of these dark words, which may mean no more than that the fox, for all his cunning, is defeated by the hedgehog's one defense. But taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and it may be, human beings in general. For there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more consistent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel – a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance – and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected if at all, only in some *de facto* way for some psychological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these lead lives that are centrifugal rather than centripetal.³

In my writings, I have argued in defense of my twinly-related universal principles motivating all mankind as seeking to avoid loneliness and secure intimacy. Why and how as individuals we are forced to consider relating to our fellow man, whether organically or atomistically is a critical decision. This difference, this existential choice is not only descriptive but even more importantly it tells us something about each author's intellectual and artistic values. In what follows, I wish to do the same by demonstrating the radical difference in how we address the sentence of our lifelong loneliness and our constant efforts in escaping to a state of intimacy. How one deals with their loneliness depends on their commitment to the values they choose. This difference confronts us continuously as we stand on the precipice of choosing (a) our friends and (b) our supportive environments, be they organic or atomistic relations; religious or humanistic; aesthetic or practical; white collar or blue

² See: Cecil Maurice Bowra, "The Fox and the Hedgehog", *Classical Quarterly* 34 (1940): 26–29 (see 26).

³ Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History* (New York: New American Library, 1957).

collar; conservative or adventuresome; marriage or celibacy; other-oriented or self-oriented; etc. The first option is merely one – but an important one – among many others.

How does one determine a first principle? According to Pascal, “The heart has its reasons which reason knows nothing of”;⁴ or Fichte, “Reason provides no principle of choice... Hence the choice is governed by caprice, and since even a capricious decision must have some source, it is governed by inclination and interest,”⁵ or William James, “not only as a matter of fact do we find our passionate nature influencing us in our opinions, but that there are some options between opinions in which this influence must be regarded both as an inevitable and as a lawful determinant of our choice.”⁶

The German sociologist, Ferdinand Tönnies, distinguished two basic forms of social organization and interaction, the organic community and the contractual or atomistic society.⁷ In the following article I wish to reformulate Tönnies’ models for my own purposes by relating them to a discussion of human loneliness and the sense of belonging and intimacy. What is at stake in this distinction is how the choice of either of these *values* enhances or impedes our therapeutic process, whether other- or self-oriented therapy.

Originally, the organic model is first instituted in Plato’s *Republic*, in his assumption that virtue and wisdom are intrinsically related. This leads to his theory of eugenics, in his promotion that philosopher kings and queens should mate but that their offspring would be anonymously raised communally because loyalty to the unity of the whole, the polis, must be preserved at all costs even above the values of the family.⁸ It can also lead to the censure of the poets and the sentence of death for religious heresy in the *Laws*.⁹ But as an example of an anarchic state, perhaps

⁴ Blaise Pascal, *Thoughts (Pensées)*, transl. William Finlayson Trotter (New York: P F Collier & Son, 1910), sect. 4, no. 277: 99.

⁵ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Science of Knowledge*, transl. Peter Heath, John Lachs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 14–15.

⁶ William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (London–Bombay–Calcutta: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), paragraph 8: 19.

⁷ Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, transl. Charles Loomis (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1957).

⁸ Plato, “The Republic”, in: Plato, *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, transl. Georges Maximilien Antoine Grube, rev. Charles David C. Reeve (Indianapolis–Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), V 457B–466B, 1085–1093.

⁹ Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, vol. 1: *The Spell of Plato* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1945).

Hegel's reading of the of the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror is a good example of untethered volatile political forces: "Universal freedom, therefore can produce neither a positive work nor a deed; there is left for it only *negative* action; it is merely the *fury* of destruction".¹⁰

But before we start, it should be noted that currently, at the macro-level of large social and political units, these two conflicting paradigms of social and individual interaction no longer occur in their undiluted theoretical forms. For example, presently incorporated within Russian Communism, there is a significant degree of economic capitalism, while in the United States, prevailing within the unequal distribution of private property and wealth, there is a considerable amount of social reform and welfare. Accordingly, within the contexts I intend to pursue, I will be describing *ideal* types, which do not necessarily currently exist in any contemporary form on a grand scale. Nevertheless, the respective principles and models (I use these terms interchangeably) will serve as goals in guiding the adherents and aspirants toward their preferred sociological group or individual modes of seeking help according to their personal value systems. Accordingly, these different paradigms constitute powerful conflicting sociological dynamics leading in diametrically opposite directions. The first dynamic promotes the self's search for a sense of unity and belonging within bonding social institutions, often religious or political, while the second dynamic seeks for protections of the self from a sense of alienation from its fellows. For example, let us analyze a description of a sociological organic ideal.

Egoistic suicide results from the fact that society is not sufficiently integrated at all points to keep all its members under its control. If it increases inordinately, therefore, it is because the State on which it depends has itself excessively expanded; it is because society, weak and disturbed, lets too many persons escape too completely from its influence. Thus, the only remedy for the ill is to retore enough consistency to social groups for them to obtain a former grip on the individual, and for him to feel himself bound to them. He must feel within himself for more solidarity with a collective existence which precedes him in time, which survives him, and which encompasses him at all points. If this occurs, he will no longer find the only aim of his conduct in himself, and in understanding that *he is the instrument of a purpose greater than himself*, he will see that he is not without significance. Life will resume meaning in his eyes because it will recover its natural aim and orientation. But what groups are best calculated constantly to reimpress on man this salutary sentiment of solidarity? Not political Society. Especially today,

¹⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, transl. Arnold Vincent Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), section 589: 359.

in our great modern States, it is too far removed from the individual to affect him uninterruptedly and with sufficient force. Whatever connection there may be between our daily tasks and the whole of public life, it is too indirect for us to feel it keenly and constantly (*italics mine*).¹¹

It is difficult to read this passage without noticing that *objectively* that the *substance* of the State is primary and the “individual” is secondary; that the objective purpose is greater and transcendent to the value of the individual. It also inclines us historically to think back to an Age of Nations with its internecine competing values and goals of greatness, global dominance, to the realms of conquest during the time of Queen Victoria’s reign and the period of George V of Britain, Wilhelm of Germany, and Alexander I of Russia, which includes the First World War. *Le Suicide* was published in 1897 with its strong undercurrents of Hegel’s Nation State. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel dialectically unfolds the formation of the modern state, as it ponderously moves sociologically from the categories of the immediacy of feelings of unity in the Family, to the fragmentary atomistic mediacy of Civil Society, while finally dialectically concluding in the unified organic whole of the German Nation State.¹² Durkheim’s and Hegel’s assumption are the same, a commitment to something greater than the person. It was a time when nations not only enjoyed a distinct identity, but they also sought to aggressively and colonially expand it, the British Raj, the Belgian Congo (Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*),¹³ the Spanish Americas, the French Indies, and so on. Democratic principles were conveniently put aside.

But today in the United States, the only modern country successfully steeped in slavery and racial prejudice, now splits the nation today into an unabated conflict, which continues unrepentant since its initial beginning in the Civil War (1861–1865) to the present.

For Kant, personal identity is grounded in his subjective idealism, in his transcendental synthetic *a priori* reflexive self-conscious unification of the self with the concept of the object within consciousness.¹⁴ By contrast, for Hegel’s objective idealism, the self is socially developed in the Lordship and Bondage dialectic in the *Phenomenology*, which pregnantly

¹¹ Émile Durkheim, *Suicide. A Study in Sociology*, transl. John A. Spaulding, George Simpson (London–New York: Routledge, 2002) 341.

¹² Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Section 586, 357–358.

¹³ Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. Owen Knowles, Allan H. Simmons (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, transl. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1929), 139–140.

anticipates conflicts which are readily broadened into Hobbesian wars with other aspiring nations.¹⁵ And of course, both Catholicism and Protestantism as well as religious and monastic orders in general support an organic emphasis.

But currently we notice numerous nations closing ranks and electing to prevent outsiders from participating in their national values as the “specter” of narcissistic ethnicity rears its ugly head.

Currently in terms of loneliness, empirically both forms of human existence, group oriented or solitary, organic or atomistic, however, are easily identifiable on a micro-level or reduced scale. For instance, when a homeless, unemployed, and transient individuals are considered, it is easy to see the sense of psychological isolation, abandonment, despair, and the emotional desolation permeating their lives. These solitary recluses clearly function as atomistic individuals existing virtually unrelated in any truly human fashion within the larger framework of our society as they are peripherally connected to it. By contrast, when small groups of socially interacting members are considered, the difference in their style of life, as opposed to the previous form of existence just described, is quite apparent when, for example, we view an extended, self-sufficient rural family, a contemporary hippie commune, or an enclave of religiously committed initiates, as they constitute an organic communal structure. Studied through these more manageable conceptual perspectives and lenses, both models of human existence can be seen to represent current sociological realities and their study is highly instructive because they reflect far-reaching consequences, which not only determine the social or unsocial dynamics of their respective paradigms but also because it can be shown how they express their varying senses of belonging and their protective measures against loneliness.

Classic examples of philosophers who have adopted the organic model would include Aristotle, Hegel, and Marx. But the earliest and the clearest formulation of the paradigm originates in Plato, who begins by emphasizing that in order to understand the psychological and the ethical makeup of the individual, we must first view it in its larger sociological manifestation, the city-state where its “spirit is writ large”. According to the *Republic*, the structure of the three classes of citizens within the ideal *polis* should (1) reflect a positive separation of functions without any of the elements usurping the role of the others (the principle of justice); but at the same time, although separate, the diverse func-

¹⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Section 178, 111–112.

tions also should (2) operate harmoniously in a well-integrated fashion within the state as a unified whole as it conducts its various but coordinated activities (the principle of temperance or moderation). Thus, the state should exhibit a cooperative inter-dependence between the three autochthonous classes of citizens comprising it: (a) the farmers, artisans, merchants; and even playwrights; (b) the military and police force protecting it from external and internal enemies; and (c) the wise legislators and rulers, who guide and formulate governmental policy. Analogously the individual psyche should be constituted by the separate but again actively coordinated functions of the soul, which likewise consists of three "elements" or more properly members: (a) our appetitive and desiderative motivations; (b) our spirited and courageous impulses; and (c) our rational faculties as functioning together in a coordinated fashion corresponding to the larger activities within the *polis* just cited.

Consonant with this organic paradigm of cooperation, indeed it is a direct consequence of it, is the conviction that each person should function and behave in a prescribed, inter-dependent manner relative to the other members within the unit. Implicit in the paradigm is the concept that together various roles are required in defining the well-being of the whole and that if any one role should fail to operate adequately, then the entire organism is transformed in a deficient manner. Consequently, the organic model incorporates a terminology which is distinctive in emphasizing metaphors of function, role, member, unity, whole, etc. In further extending the metaphor, it is just as a living animal is healthy when its various organs, limbs, and faculties are coordinated in such a manner as to perform smoothly according to their diverse functions, just so the *polis* consists of different but reciprocally coordinated operations. Just as in a healthy individual, all five senses must work together in maximizing the effectiveness of the whole, just so the tri-partite soul must function in like fashion. For Plato, this means that there is a natural division of labor and qualitative factors are stressed. And if a single member or an entire class seeks to usurp or invade the functions or services, which naturally and intrinsically belong to another element, the organism will be deficient and perform poorly.¹⁶

A further sociological implication of this model is that meaningful relations and activities are essentially internal, intrinsically related to each other, so to speak, since they are reciprocally defined and circumscribed by the other elements within the organic whole. Thus, they are

¹⁶ Plato, "The Republic".

often described in such terms as living, dynamic, and/or dialectical, as they pursue and exhibit a common teleological (as opposed to mechanistic) goal. It follows that no individual is self-sufficient. Not only is one born within a family and therefore the group is primary, but the whole defines the individual and the individual could not exist apart from it or at least could not fully develop apart from the context of the whole, either apart from the family or the community. But more than that, it implies that the well-being or the happiness of the individual cannot exist independently from others (e.g., Plato, Aristotle, Christianity, Hegel). The individual not only needs the group to live productively but s/he also requires its mutual support in attaining wellbeing and a virtuous life, which for Aristotle is the same thing. This is what The Philosopher means when he declares that men are by nature political or social animals; their happiness lies in the *polis*; and a man desiring to subsist apart from his community is either a beast or a god, but he is not a man, he is not a human being.

The proof that the State is a creation of nature prior to the individual is that the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficient; and therefore he is like a member in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of the State. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature.¹⁷

Hence, individual well-being and the maximization of their full potential fulfillment (their entelechy) can only transpire within the context of a healthy and supportive community. The virtuous man can only exist if the state or *polis*, as a whole, is good. This is simply another way of saying that the value of the person cannot be separated from his teleological purpose in relation to the other members of the group or community. Duties only have meaning in the context of an organic unity. Community is defined as a sense of belonging, of unity, and an identity based on a principle of reciprocal sharing – friends sharing things and values in common. Sharing and participating is natural to man, an expression of his nature, his inner essence. Consequently, one's social actions, their doing, their *praxis* is determined by fulfilling their specified role and freedom consists in doing as they should in order to promote the general welfare, the good of the entire community. Each person has a special and unique role to fulfill. Social duties prevail over individual rights. All this obviously dictates a sociological approach – as distinguished from

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics* 1253a 1–4, 25–31: 1129–1130.

a psychological perspective – in understanding human beings through their relations, obligations, and interactions with each other.

Inevitably such organic communities are hierarchically structured and display a strong tendency toward a natural division of labor. The small family unit consisting of a father, mother, and children; Plato's ideal city-state; the medieval Catholic Church; the feudal manor; Hegel's nation-state; and even Marx's "classless" community after the world revolution with its end of class wars are all examples of such organic wholes. But sometimes the hierarchic principle is theoretically violated as in Marx's concept of the temporary institution of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat.

For some proponents of the model, most notably Plato and Rousseau, a strong suggestion is also promoted that the ideal organic unity contains an optimum numerical population. It should be sufficiently large to carry on its diverse practical activities – sustenance, protection, even entertainment – but not so extensive that all the members do not know, or at least they know *of*, each other. Thus, for instance, at Socrates' trial every Athenian citizen could serve as a juror and vote. Each member knew Socrates either personally or by reputation. (Unfortunately, what condemned Socrates to death was the atomistic principle of democracy. Neither Plato nor Aristotle had much regard for the majority). In Rousseau, the desideratum of restricted citizenship means the *direct* participation by the citizens in the life of the community, the political organism.¹⁸ We notice for example the problem recently encountered in the US presidential elections when the electoral college elected Mr. Trump over the three million single voters.

But should the political unit increase beyond certain naturally imposed limitations and proportions, then the organism becomes transformed into an unnatural and monstrous creature; it becomes essentially unmanageable. The empires of Alexander the Great and the Roman Empire – as opposed to the Republic – in its declining stages were precisely such macro-social entities, too large to functionally incorporate diverse populations, languages, laws, institutions, and sociological cultures under the same aegis even when its proposed participants were offered equal citizenship. For Hegel, for instance, the guiding principle of an organic unity lies in a communal or national self-consciousness, a spiritual realization of shared cultural values, including the same language,

¹⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, transl. George Douglas Howard Cole (London-Toronto: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. / New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1920).

laws, and institutions. Thus, the state must be grounded in a rational awareness, in turn guided by a dialectical vision and insight into the historical processes, which have brought about precisely those “forms of life” commonly shared by all the members within the state.¹⁹ Hegel expressed this controlling value in the following terms:

[...] the Eastern nations [e.g., Persia – add. B. L. M.] knew only that *one* is free; the Greek and Roman world only that *some* are free; while *we* [Germans and Protestants – add. B. L. M.] know [self-consciously] that all men are absolutely (man *as man*) are free—supplies us with the natural division of Universal History and suggests the mode of its discussion.²⁰

What stands out in this passage is the declaration of a sociological Hegel’s first principle in the guise of an ethical principle. Obviously, if one adheres to this “moral command”, it will directly impact their approach in dealing with their loneliness and/or their sense of belonging.

For Marx, this translates into the “consciousness of a classless society”, which commands participation from each member according to his abilities and to each according his needs. Idealistically, Marx envisioned that after the revolution, man “would create according to the laws of beauty” and in the interests of the whole. Unalienated, i.e., free labor is aesthetic labor.

Animals only produce themselves, while man produces the whole of nature. The products of animal production belong directly to their physical bodies, while man is free in face of his product. Animals construct only in accordance with the standards and needs of the species to which they belong, while man [self-consciously] knows how to produce in accordance with the standards of every species and knows how to apply the appropriate standard to the object. Thus man constructs also in accordance to the laws of beauty.²¹

Historical and sociological examples applicable to the principle of an organic paradigm of social organization are as abundant as they are varied. Sparta during the Peloponnesian wars, the Roman Republic, the early Christian communities, monasteries in the middle ages, Robert Owens’ New Lanark in the United States, the contemporary Japanese factory, peasant villages in Asia, the extended and extensive family and

¹⁹ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

²⁰ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, transl. John Sibree (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1956), “Introduction”, 19.

²¹ Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, transl. Tom B. Bottomore (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1963), 73–74.

kinship system in Africa, aboriginal tribes, rural enclaves, etc. are alike committed and embedded in organically structured associations.

As previously, stated, the guiding beacon determining the value of the organic community and the criterion of success applied to the social organization exemplifying it lies in its expression of unity. It follows that the good of the whole is above the value of the individual person. This is both its strength and its weakness, the latter consisting in its greatest danger. As Hegel warns us, it may be necessary for the State "to crush many an innocent flower" as the World Spirit traverses its historical path.²² In certain contexts, the whole is everything, the unit nothing. Accordingly, when this archetype of social organization deteriorates, it tends toward totalitarianism and despotism, it engenders the claim that the rulers know what is best for others and that the party in power should "force men to be free" despite of their wishes and inclinations. "Whoever refuses to obey the general will shall be compelled to do so by the whole [political – add. B. L. M.] body. This means nothing less than that he will be forced to be free".²³

The negative utopia depicted in Orwell's *1984* is a prime example of this form of totalitarianism.²⁴ During this state of affairs communication breaks down, the sense of belonging deteriorates, mutual trust and sharing disappear, and an extreme sense of alienation is generated in those who are judged as deviant or who happen to be perceived as acting against the interests and values instituted by the rulers in power. A clear example of this precedent is discovered in the practice of ostracism or "shunning" by the Mormon Church against its non-conformist members.

By contrast, in the contractual or atomistic society, the social body is composed of individual separate "parts" rather than intertwined "members". While Plato is the symbolic patron of the organic community, Epicurus represents the advocate for the positive aspects of individualism, for atomistic self-sufficiency. Whereas the organic community reflects qualitative and functional differences among its three classes – bronze, silver, and gold—the contractual society displays primarily quantitative differences – the parts are regarded as homogeneous, equal, and interchangeable; one part is very much like any other. In an atomistic society, then, the political entity or organization is made up of a combination of smaller or a larger numbers/units – it does not matter which. It is a col-

²² Hegel, *The Philosophy of History*, 32.

²³ Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, 18.

²⁴ George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, Inc., 1949).

lection, an aggregation of qualitatively identical units; each unit is sufficient unto itself. Some collections or aggregates are small while some are large but there is no inherent limit to the size of the society. Thomas Hobbes' paradigm, described in the *Leviathan*,²⁵ represents a classic example of this conception centering on the intrinsic atomicity and separation parts in civil society.

From this equality of ability, ariseth equality of hope in the attaining of our ends. And therefore if any two men desire the same thing, which nevertheless they cannot both enjoy, they become enemies, and in the way to their end, which is principally their own conservation, and sometimes their delectation only, endeavor to destroy, or subdue one another. And from hence it comes to pass, that where an invader hath no more to fear another man's single power, if one plant, sow, build, or possess a convenient seat, others may be expected to come prepared with forces united to dispossess and deprive him not only of the fruit of his labor, but also for his life or liberty.

Other defenders of the atomistic society are the social contract theorists in general, the earliest of which would include Glaucon in Plato's *Republic*,²⁶ Spinoza,²⁷ Locke,²⁸ Rousseau,²⁹ the latter who is inconsistent in this regard, since he paradoxically argues both in behalf of the principles of atomicity and organicity in his *Social Contract* "that men may be ordered to be free", and also Kant in *Perpetual Peace*.³⁰

In the atomistic configuration, relations are essentially regarded as contractual, legalistic, or formal. Whereas the organic concept stresses *functional* roles, the contractual one emphasizes conventional, artificial rules in order to insure forced cooperation. The advocates for the atomistic principle regard the individual as theoretically self-sufficient and capable of surviving apart from others, even in a "state of nature" (Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau), where the laws of civil society and the commands of ethics are both suspended (Hobbes). But because there is no impartial judge in the state of nature (Locke), or because within that condition man

²⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd. / New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. Inc., 1914).

²⁶ Plato, "The Republic", Book 2, 357a–367e, 998–1007.

²⁷ Benedict de (Baruch) Spinoza, *Theological-Political Treatise*, transl. Robert Harvey Monro Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1951).

²⁸ John Locke, *The Second Treatise on Civil Government*, ed. John Wiedhofft Gough (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946).

²⁹ Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*.

³⁰ John Wiedhofft Gough, *The Social Contract: A Historical Study of Its Development* (New York: Clarendon Press, 1957).

exists psychologically alone, and the life of man is “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short”, and thus “a war as is of every man against every man” persists,³¹ in such a situation, men are forced to combine with others and form mutually supportive contracts for the sake of security and protection *from each other*. This compact or agreement is thoroughly artificial (as opposed to “natural”) but in a significant sense it is forced upon us because of our deep narcissistic inclinations, which makes each man a threat to every other. What one would really like to do is injure others with impunity; what one fears most, however, is to be injured without the power of retaliation. Thus, one compromises and “promises” not to hurt others if they agree or contract to do the same. Each then turns over his individual strength to a common force empowered with the ability to enforce peace and security amongst themselves. Society, then, is the result of a compelled and artificial agreement, a contract that only holds us together only so long as there is a sufficient force to impose the power necessary to protect us from each other (Glaucón’s speech in Plato’s *Republic*).³² Man’s tendency in civil society is “centrifugal”, radiating away from other selves, while his predisposition in the organic community is “centripetal”, a tendency leading toward a central unity.

In effect, for Glaucón, society is unnatural; what is natural is to act as one likes; freedom is doing as you please. One of the benefits, however, is that during times of relative peace, one will be allowed to pursue one’s desires and self-interests as much and as fully as possible without interference and therefore “that government is best which governs least” over the individual’s “rights”, i.e., his egoistic impulses. Obviously, in the atomistic society, personal rights are emphasized against one’s duties; not unexpectedly, competition and aggression are often rewarded. Marx’s criticism of economic capitalism directly derives from his reading of Hobbes’ description of man in the state of nature. It is here that Marx absorbed his poisonous evaluation concerning the destructive tendencies of economic capitalism.³³

Whereas in the organic community the “ethical” *person* can only meaningfully act on the condition that the community *as a whole* is good,

³¹ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chapter 19: 102.

³² Plato, *The Republic*, transl. Francis MacDonald Cornford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955), Part 2, Book 2, Chapter 5: 357–362: 41–46. Or the same see in: Plato, “The Republic”, Book 2, 357–362: 998–1002.

³³ Ben L. Mijuskovic, “Marx and Engels on Materialism and Idealism”, *Journal of Thought* 9(3) (1974): 157–168; John Plamenatz, *Man and Society. A Critical Examination of Some Important Social and Political Theories from Machiavelli to Marx*, vol. 1 (London: Longmans Press, 1963).

hence Plato's goal to reform, i.e., *educate* the members of the city-state, "Virtue is knowledge of the Good". We recall that the sentence of death to Socrates was implemented by an atomistic democracy. By contrast, in the atomistic model, the moral value of the *individual* is distinct or separable from the quality of the surrounding aggregation. For example, the over-riding value of the ideal atomistic society consists in guaranteeing the maximum of economic opportunities for the individual³⁴ or the enhancement of individual freedom in the context of social expression as the highest utilitarian benefit that the society can bestow upon its constituents.³⁵ The criterion of success is expressed in terms of measurable *quantitative* consequences: the greatest happiness of the greatest number, the assumption being that quantitative factors, i.e., actual numbers can be assigned to physical pleasures and pains (Bentham, 1789)³⁶ or to Mill's mental happiness and unhappiness. Accordingly, this pragmatic (as opposed to ethical) *criterion* of value may be applied, i.e., measured in various instances, levels, as well as in the evaluation of diverse institutions.

In a religious context, the individualistic spirit is grounded in the Lutheran Protestant Reformation principle that each person's subjective *conscience* is alone permitted to dictate an individual's religious faith. Thus, Kierkegaard's existential mode of Protestantism describes a highly passionate path toward personal salvation, although it is one in which the greatest anguish is generated by fears of being estranged from God.³⁷ Once more, one is reminded of Durkheim's sociological study, which stresses that Protestants, without the mediating support of Catholicism's hierarchy of priests, bishops, cardinals, and the Pope; and without Judaism's social support system, are much more likely to commit suicide. Correspondingly in economics it is exhibited in Adam Smith's *laissez faire* policies; in political thought it is exemplified in Locke's tolerant liberalism; and in a social perspective it is instantiated in Mill's principle of self-regarding conduct promoting the individual's rights of freedom of speech, religion, and association, as well as the right to non-conformist

³⁴ Adam Smith. *The Wealth of Nations* (New York: Simon & Brown, 2012).

³⁵ John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty*, ed. Elizabeth Rapaport (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1981).

³⁶ Jeremy Bentham, *An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907).

³⁷ Søren Kierkegaard, "Fear and Trembling", in: Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and The Sickness Unto Death*, transl. Walter Lowrie (Princeton-Oxford: Princeton University Press).

behavior as long as it does not physically harm others.³⁸ The rights of the individual are always paramount. In Aristotle, the least desirable of the three “virtuous” forms of government is democracy, because its doctrine of freedom consists of doing as one pleases which intrinsically leads to anarchy.

When Locke proposes that men may return to the condition of the state of nature when the terms of the civil contract are violated, he clearly has in mind the genuine possibility of solitary men physically immigrating to the New World and forming a different society.

On the grand scale of the largest of all economic movements, the atomistic society is obviously manifest throughout the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth century in England, France, Germany, and later in the United States. It is from this seething swamp of economic discontent and misery that Marx formulates his concept of the social alienation of the worker, of his poverty and exploitation and his struggle against the forces of the Lords of Industry and the Manor, the land owners, the battle between the haves and the have-nots. As Marx points out, it is clearly to the advantage of the owners of factories not only to exploit labor for profit but indeed to set workers up in competition with each other in order to reduce their wages. Innumerable sociological tracts have depended on illuminating the economic plight of the isolated individual, which we have been tracking. Without fear of exaggeration, we may conclude that Max Weber’s³⁹; Durkheim’s *Suicide*;⁴⁰ Riesmann, Denney, and Glazer’s *The Lonely Crowd* (especially the concept of “the inner-directed man”;⁴¹ Erich Fromm’s *Escape from Freedom*;⁴² Berdyaev’s *Solitude and Society*;⁴³ and all rely on portraying the plight of the atomistic individual as we have described him. For Marx, it is a condition of such precarious survival for the individual that the state of nature is indistinguishable from civil, i.e., capitalist society.

Like the organic paradigm, the atomistic principle similarly exhibits its own peculiar brand of horror. When this form of social associa-

³⁸ Mill, *On Liberty*.

³⁹ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, transl. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons / London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1950).

⁴⁰ Durkheim, *Suicide*.

⁴¹ David Riesman, Reuel Denney, Nathan Glazer, *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958).

⁴² Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon Books, 1965).

⁴³ Nicolas Berdyaev, *Solitude and Society*, transl. George Reavey (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976).

tion tends toward disruption, dysfunction, and corruption, it surfaces in the more virulent forms and aspects of capitalism, through unbridled economic competition, intransigent political anarchy, and social Darwinism, the latter under the aegis of the financial survival of the fittest; every man for himself; a Hobbesian war of all against all.⁴⁴ The numerous examples of civil disobedience and civil war which dominate our contemporary international landscape serve as dramatic and tragic instances of this attitude toward human existence and the unchecked narcissistic survival and aggrandizement of the dominant individual.

As previously intimated, these opposing models, the organic and the atomistic respectively, have far reaching implications in relation to the sense of belonging *versus* the feeling of loneliness involved in these contrasting paradigms. In the context of religion, as we have seen, within the organic model, the tendency is toward lesser loneliness for the member because of the assurance of a spiritual (Catholic) or social (Jewish) sense of belonging and unity. There is a natural interdependence, albeit a hierarchical one among the members, in a reciprocal support system, which encourages powerful feelings of belonging to a Being or to a social value greater or nobler than our selves. Nevertheless, as previously suggested, if a single individual does not conform to the values of the whole, then frequently s/he is punished, often quite simply by being excluded from the cohesive life of the community. Exile, ostracism, excommunication, or merely ignoring the outcaste can serve as a very efficient means of punishment. We might recall in this context that Socrates himself refused to choose life if it meant banishment from Athens. Closer to our own time, Thomas Szasz introduced an analogy between former and more recent times and argued that during the Middle Ages, the Age of Faith, priests had the authority to condemn religious “deviants” as heretics whereas today he argues that psychiatrists exhibit a similar power to label social non-conformists as mentally ill.⁴⁵ The point being that although there is usually less loneliness—and more of a sense of belonging and sharing – in the organic family, tribe, or community, still, when there is an enforced separation, an alienation of the individual from the unit. It is more extreme precisely because of the sentence of the absolute isolation from the communal life of the whole. An example of

⁴⁴ William Graham Sumner, *Folkways. A Study of the Sociological Importance of Usages, Manners, Customs, Mores, and Morals* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1906).

⁴⁵ Thomas Szasz, *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of Personal Conduct* (New York: Harbor Perrenial, 2010).

these exclusionary tactics is offered by James J. Lynch in his discussion of voodoo deaths in the Caribbean. When a person is expelled from the activities of the tribe or village, the enforced isolation frequently leads to death.⁴⁶

By contrast, in the atomistic society, since everyone is expected to be relatively more self-sufficient, loneliness may be experienced as less severe simply because a solitary state is more common and consequently the individual is better prepared to psychologically and pragmatically “go it alone”. In this respect, the individual often does not feel so different from others in similar situations. In the 1920s and 1930s in the US, the “hobo culture” was commonplace. Frequently “loners” garner consolation by congregating together and drinking or sharing street drugs during brief and sporadic interludes. Nevertheless, the individualistic social structure intrinsically generates the most intensive and powerful feelings of isolation among individuals. As we have already indicated, a number of diverse factors contribute to this sense of alienation. The political theories of the social contract philosophers and the economic free enterprise system of capitalism have already been mentioned. But beyond or beneath all this there is something more subtle as well and perhaps it is (unfortunately) inherent in the very nature of our democratic social organizations and political institutions. It is something which Alexis de Tocqueville realized as a necessary element within democratic societies. Describing his impressions upon visiting America in the 1830s, he declared that:

In ages of equality all men are independent of each other and isolated and weak. One must admit that [democratic – add. B. L. M.] equality, while it brings great benefits to mankind... opens the door... to very dangerous instincts. It tends to isolate men from each other so that each thinks only of himself.⁴⁷

In aristocratic [and hence hierarchically and organically structured] ages [and class organizations] each man is always bound by close ties to many of his fellow citizens, so that he cannot be attacked without the others coming to his help. In times of equality each man is naturally isolated. He can call on no hereditary friends for help or any class whose

⁴⁶ James J. Lynch, *The Broken Heart. The Medical Consequences of Loneliness* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

⁴⁷ Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 2, The Mayer edited English translation, transl. George Lawrence. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), I, 5: 444.

sympathy for him is assured. He can easily be set upon alone and trodden underfoot. Equality weakens men... Equality deprives each individual of the help of his neighbors.⁴⁸

No wonder the American Rifle Association is so strong in the US!

In such a society, the only recourse to injuries or threats lies in the impersonal arm of the law and de Tocqueville perspicaciously points out that America is quite unusual in being a country where each person aspires to understand and master the law. But the law, we must recognize, is an impersonal and abstract – as opposed to a human – system of rules and regulations. Nevertheless, the Americans, as de Tocqueville declares, are much more concerned with being conversant with their laws as opposed to being familiar with their Scriptures. They perceive the dangers from without rather than console themselves with a peace from within.

Contemporary American society is primarily and overwhelmingly organized along atomistic, legalistic, and contractual principles. Relations between husband and wife, teacher and student, employer and employee, lender and borrower, landlord and tenant, doctor and patient, therapist and client are all fundamentally constituted and embedded in formal, legal, rule-oriented language and documentation. And these are all essentially artificial and conventional in form; in short they are relative, since they vary from culture to culture and from age to age. Today, for example, social workers are expected to contract with their charges both for services and treatments rendered.⁴⁹ Treatment plans/contracts are drawn up with goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART). Psychiatric medication regimens are usually incorporated in the treatment plans, formally instituted, and rigorously monitored by nurses according to the “doctor’s orders”. Failure to follow through constitutes non-compliance. Is it any surprise then that we are a detached and lonely society, that we feel removed from the agents and agencies that dispense our “care” and treatment?

When we have domestic difficulties, we take our spouses to court and file for divorce; we initiate “dissolution” proceedings. Recently there was a court case in which a child sought to divorce his parents. When children are abused or neglected we use legal means to remove them from parental custody. When we experience employment disputes, we sue our employers. Labor Unions draft Memorandums of Understand-

⁴⁸ Ibidem, 439, 697.

⁴⁹ Charles D. Garvin, Brett A. Seabury, *Interpersonal Practice in Social Work* (Englewood Cliffs, New York: Prentice-Hall, 1984).

ing and seek arbitration against management. When our neighbors have loud parties, we call the police. Whether these remedial methods are harmful or beneficial, useless or necessary I cannot say but my point is that they are *different* and consequently we need to evaluate them much more carefully in terms of their overall and long-range consequences. Rules applied without sufficient insight can be dangerous and harmful. Implementation without consideration of possible alternatives is short-sighted at best and dogmatic at worst.

Our current social structures in the US encourage separation and therefore greater loneliness. The “extended” family is extended if at all by cell phones; once a year we phone each of our estranged divorced parents to wish them well; our elementary and high school teachers no longer live in the areas they service; doctors no longer make house calls; we hardly recognize our neighbors let alone say hello to them; computers send out bills; nowadays no one marries the boy or girl next door; no one goes into their father’s business; we leave home to go away to college; we get jobs in cities we have never seen; we get promotions only if we are willing to relocate; our neighbors do not help parent our children as before; in our ambition to be upwardly mobile, the emphasis is on mobility, constant, rootless movement. The average person goes through eight jobs in their lifetime. The identifying symbol of the independent American is the automobile – the latest model. There are no more neighborhoods, only housing developments. We no longer sit on our front porches and greet pedestrians as they pass of home; they do not leave their calling cards if we are not at home. The old ethnic neighborhoods are now ghettos.

Children are sent to day care centers so that both parents can work and be more financially “independent”, i.e., free of their children. As both parents insist on working so that they can ostensibly provide a “higher quality of life” for their children, their offspring are left to their own devices by parenting themselves. In the Hispanic families I serve, the phenomenon of the “parentified child” is a commonplace. Already the parents have bought into the American Dream of an “aristocracy” by wealth and monetary independence, what Aristotle designated as an oligarchy.

Sociologically much of this evolved during World War Two when women trained in factories developed into a powerful and efficient work force as they supported the war effort and they realized they could be economically self-sufficient, independent. It did not take long before women also discovered they could control not only their own paychecks but indeed their own lives as well. As divorce became in-

creasingly accepted as an institution, single parent households have proliferated and they have become increasingly prevalent. The result is greater individual freedom and greater loneliness since we have as a consequence *produced*, virtually manufactured, an entire society of fragmented youth, latchkey kids, runaway kids, and throwaway kids; we have substituted day care centers and nurseries in place of parents. We have replaced natural parents with foster parents as social service agencies have increasingly removed children from parental custody. In years long gone by, parents shunned divorce if there were children involved; now we rush to court and Solomon-like the judge awards dual "custody" rights. In short, we split the child in half emotionally. I hasten to add, I am not advocating that abused and unhappy women should not leave abusive, boring, and unresponsive husbands; but I am saying that couples should look hard and long before they decide to have children. More than any other creature in the animal kingdom, the human infant requires the longest nurturance and the deepest care. The strongest bond in the human kingdom is between the mother and her child. If we weaken or sever that relationship, then may the gods or God help us. Unfortunately, I have listened all too often to children and adult clients tell me, "I never asked to be born".

Corporate attorneys and businessmen would prefer to be at work with their colleagues instead of at home with their wives and children. Many of us have dogs and pets so that when we arrive home from work we have the joy of this poor emotionally starved animal go crazy at our arrival. It makes us feel so appreciated and loved. The "crisis of middle age" is really about whether I could have done something more earlier on in order to be less lonely?

Emotionally disenfranchised children in alarming and increasing numbers are turning to drugs and alcohol dependency and why? Because the initial stage of trust, developmentally a state of utter dependence on the mother, which represents Erikson's first and most critical developmental stage, is often left interrupted and therefore unresolved. When infants and children are not carefully weaned from dependency toward emotional and intellectual independence, the child will seek and learn to depend on something it can more readily secure, a substance that is more accessible and more certain in the comfort that it will provide, an antidote to loneliness. If the child cannot depend on the mother's breast, on the mother's emotional nurturance, it will suckle a bottle. When it is older, it will turn to oral substances. Drug dependency means precisely what it says: a dependency on drugs as opposed to a dependency on a parent, a friend, or the community. And all the while

we wonder what is wrong with our children? The answer is loneliness.⁵⁰ And as the children of divorced parents mature and marry and have offspring of their own, they will frequently repeat the same pattern as their parents.⁵¹ We have polluted our social environment and the poisons will plague us for generations to follow. In our American society all we share in common is our sense of separation and loneliness. Many years ago, Rachel Carson warned about the long-term dangers of DDT and other insecticides as they seeped into the soil, the streams, and the rivers of our country.⁵² We are polluting our social and human environment and the result is the withered fruit of loneliness.

Elsewhere I have argued that loneliness – or more specifically the fear and the desire to avoid it – serves as the universal motivational drive in all human beings (Mijuskovic, 1977; 2012).⁵³ Accordingly, the fundamental problem constituting human existence is grounded in our individual sense of social isolation, estrangement, and alienation. The ultimate source of human discontent is loneliness whether it is due to social, religious, or economic factors. But loneliness is innate; it dwells in the very activities and structures of human self-consciousness. We may be able to manipulate to a certain extent the principles and paradigms of the organic community and the atomistic society to our advantage but make no mistake about it, we will never be able to eliminate loneliness in the human *psyche*, soul, self, mind, or ego.

Within a sociological context, we are able to graphically illustrate just how loneliness may occur by considering the following “case study” example. In many neighborhoods in Southern California, Hispanic children, including undocumented ones, attend elementary school with relative ease, even when there is a language difficulty, and their

⁵⁰ R. Gordon Bell, “Alcohol and Loneliness”, *Journal of Social Therapy* 2 (1965): 171–181; Ben L. Mijuskovic, “Loneliness and Narcissism”, *Psychoanalytic Review* 66 (1980): 479–492; Idem, “Loneliness, Anxiety, Hostility, and Communication”, *Child Study Journal* 16(3) (1986): 227–240; Idem, “Loneliness and Counseling Adolescents”, *Adolescence* 21(84) (1986): 941–951; Idem, “Loneliness and Adolescent Alcoholism”, *Adolescence* 23(86) (1988): 503–517.

⁵¹ James J. Lynch, *The Broken Heart. The Medical Consequences of Loneliness* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 69–86.

⁵² Rachel Carson, *The Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Company, 1990).

⁵³ Ben L. Mijuskovic, “Loneliness: An Interdisciplinary Approach”, *Psychiatry* 40 (1977): 113–132. Reprinted in: *The Anatomy of Loneliness*, eds. Joseph Hartog, J. Ralph Audi, Yehudi A. Cohen (New York: International Universities Press, 1980), 65–95; Idem, *Loneliness in Philosophy, Psychology, and Literature* (Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2012).

parents encourage them to learn English as quickly as they can. From the barrios the children walk to school with the same friends year after year; they share lunches together and enjoy a strong sense of identity, which derives from their Hispanic communities' backgrounds in which they live. Their social existence is derived and expressed through their organic relationships. By the time they have reached high school, something has happened. Few are left and even fewer finish. Many of the young girls are pregnant and others are already mothers. In 1995, California's Governor Pete Wilson put aside twenty million dollars in funding in order to counsel young Hispanic girls and for pregnant women to be provided with abortions if they wished. At the time I was working at Harbor-UCLA Hospital in LA and I was put in charge of assessing the pregnant women.

Meanwhile, what happened to the Hispanic school children? Instead of cooperation they face competition. If they do not know the answer to the teacher's question, someone else will blurt it out. In addition, their culture encourages team work rather than individual accomplishments. That is a natural implication of the extended family. But the atomistic system measures success entirely in terms of individual grades and personal accomplishments. There are individual honors and criteria for popularity. While Hispanic children are nurtured within an environment of organic cooperation, their Anglo counterparts are forged in the crucible of competition.

Many years ago when youngsters played sandlot baseball, they played with the same kids year after year; everyone played whether there were ten or twenty participants, they traded positions, and they hardly kept score. Now when the boys join organized sports, like Little League baseball, there is a male coach who consistently exhorts the children to "Be aggressive!"; generally the team manager is one of the player's mother; some players sit on the bench more than others; they are assigned to their best position by talent not by choice; there are tournaments and trophies; and the next year they are on a new team with different players. What is the difference? What has happened? Something has happened indeed. What has occurred is that the children are transitioning from organic neighborhoods to the atomistic society, to the dominant infrastructure of the American middle class currently infecting American culture. The bureaucratic organization of the sport and all its administrative procedures are imposed externally by adults. And no one sufficiently prepared the children, Hispanic or Anglo, for what was going to happen. If one wishes to understand American society, one only needs to look at the National Football League. Every year there are thirty-one losing teams and only one

winner. And even on the winning team there are only a few “real winners”. They are easily recognized and called “free agents” because they enjoy the individual “freedom” to sign a new contract to play for more money on another team with players they have never met. In the 1950s, any fan of professional baseball knew exactly where his favorite player was going to be the next year and until they retired. Now any player can play on any number of teams throughout his career. They are under contract initially but after the contract expires, they can negotiate with any other team and they can be traded.

Leaving aside psychiatric medication as a “solution” for loneliness, what can we do in our respective capacities as parents, teachers, coaches, ministers, priests, social workers, and psychologists about the situation I have outlined? Perhaps we can *try to balance* the unifying virtues the organic model while yet allowing for individual freedom of expression.⁵⁴ To be sure, as we have already emphasized, there are real and serious dangers in the model of the organic community; but there are great benefits as well and we have essentially disregarded the advantages in preparing our children to be “independent”. To be absolutely independent is to be absolutely alone. You do not have to be an existentialist to be aware of that. By nature all human beings are *in essence* co-dependent and ideally inter-dependent. Negative co-dependency occurs when two individuals mutually re-enforce the weaknesses of the other self, as when an abused woman aids and abets her mate’s alcoholism in a desperate effort to maintain their relation of companionship thereby making each other weaker rather than stronger. By contrast positive co-dependency occurs when each partner makes the other stronger than they would be without the other. It is called “support” and it consists in an essential organic bond. It consists in a mutual sense of belonging. Intimacy is grounded in mutual trust, respect (age appropriate), and affection, in a mutual sharing of feelings, meanings, and values.

Assuming that the foregoing conceptual and historical, albeit essentially negative, analysis of contemporary American society is correct, what are the possible remedies? What sort of principle and paradigm might guide us?

In order to address this social issue, let us consider the following case and generalize its positive lessons. Five decades ago, public welfare services operated with social workers who divided their time and

⁵⁴ Andrew J. Cherlin, “Family Policy and Family Professionals”, *Journal of Family Issues* (1984) 5(2): 155–159; Theodora Ooms, “The Necessity of a Family Perspective”, *Journal of Family Issues* 5(2) (1984): 160–181.

energies between visiting the homes and apartments of the poor and working directly on the budgets of their constituents. For example in Chicago, as an ADC (Aid to Dependent Children) as a welfare worker, I would spend two days in the field making home visits, seeing families, determining that the financially supported children were actually in the home ("redetermination visits"), and checking on their wellbeing and educational progress. The remaining three days were occupied with administering fund allocations, handling crises like evictions, making referrals, and filling out forms, mailing "disbursement checks" directly to the landlord guaranteeing payments, sometimes for rent, sometimes for furniture, or other necessities, making sure medical needs were readily accessible for the children or the mother if needed. There was a genuine albeit limited attempt to personalize and "humanize" the services, the "process". Indeed, some "recipients" were under the mistaken impression that the caseworkers personally wrote out the checks. The qualitative "feel" of the interventions was more humane and supportive and less investigative in nature. It was not unusual for caseworkers to get involved in tenant-landlord disputes, evictions, and re-locations. Once upon a time, doctors made house calls. Now everyone goes to a clinic and takes a number. I am not naïve enough to imagine we can turn the clock back but I think the current reality underscores a major difference in lost human relationships.

By contrast, today the funding grants for welfare recipients are administered impersonally by an Eligibility Technician and it is a much more standardized, computer-driven system. In addition, the overwhelming majority of public social workers are representatives or agents of Child Protective Services. Their current role is primarily investigative and often subsequently regulative as instruments of the Children's Court when a child is removed from parental custody. In effect, the State through its social workers and agencies has effectively become the parent. Through judicial procedures, social workers have the legal authority to remove children from their natural parents and from their homes when it is determined that there is a "preponderance of evidence" of serious sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect and the worker is empowered to take the parent to court and formulate a re-unification contract as a condition for the children's return. Till then, the children are placed in foster homes and "freed" for adoption within eighteen months if the parent is not compliant with the reunification plan. Protection and safety of the child takes precedence over helping the family as a whole, as an organic unit. Whether voluntary (e.g. Dependency Diversion) or court ordered (e.g. Family Reunification) services are provided;

in either event contracts are formulated and enforced. The clients agree to “follow through” on certain behaviors in order to comply with the Court’s directives in maintaining or returning the custody of the child to the parent. The contract is based on behavior modification, compliance with treatment plans, monitoring whether the parent has followed through on random drug screenings, parenting classes, and unfunded therapy. Meanwhile, the public mental health system declines to provide official reports to the Children’s Courts, because of confidentiality rights, and the judges are unable to authorize the removal of the child from the home. Assuming the child is removed from parental custody, contractual implementations are authorized: reunification plans, seeing the parents with their children; obtaining school reports; etc. In effect, it creates a dysfunctional relation between public agencies, which presumably serve the same goal – what is to the best interest of the child – but with all three facing each other but all three – Children’s Services, Mental Health, and the School – poised in frozen immobility. I am not proposing that children be left in danger but rather I am trying to show how an organic situation – the parental care of a child – can clash with the individual rights to (absolute) privacy. Parent(s) and children and the methods implemented to help them should be organically structured within the community as a whole for the benefit of both. When they are not, it directly leads to loneliness in both the child and the parent.

One of the saddest incidents I remember occurred during the time I was a CPS worker in San Diego County. It involved a situation on the Viejas Indian Reservation, in which a young boy, about six or seven years old (not my case), had crawled below the space under his house trailer and was bitten by a rattlesnake. He was treated at the Reservation’s clinic and the nurse reported it to protective services for child endangerment. The Court order stipulated that the mother had to relocate to a trailer that was flush to ground level, which she did, but she failed to report it properly. When the date of the contract expired, along with another worker, we were directed to drive out and take the child into custody. We first contacted the Indian police officers on the reservation because the mother spoke no English, we were concerned about the tribe’s reaction, and there were no streets or roads and we would never find the trailer without their help. When we arrived at the trailer, we tried to explain to the mother *why* we were there and *what* she had to do and *how*. I might as well have asked her to decipher the Rosetta Stone. It was clear she had absolutely no comprehension of what we were talking about and the officers were also unable to clarify the situation. As we drove away with her child, I looked back and saw her just standing

there stoically with a forlorn look and I thought she must be thinking that we were transporting her son to a foreign universe and that he was gone forever.

Whenever opposing first principles are in conflict, it is not so much that the two clash with each other but rather that they argue *past* each other, each asserting what the other denies. As Hegel suggests, in his discussion of Sophocles' *Antigone*, tragedies are grounded when both moral principles are right.⁵⁵

But as I have indicated in prior publications, child abuse and neglect derive from parents who themselves suffer from loneliness, anxiety, and hostility. They have failed to developmentally resolve their own sense of abandonment, betrayal, alienation, and separation anxiety issues. Abusive parents are themselves usually "dependent personalities" as defined by the *Diagnostic Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders*, the official catalogue of "psychiatric" dysfunctions.⁵⁶ They desperately require human interventions as opposed to external, behavioral, contractual directives. Both parties, parents and workers, need to bond around their common goal; to unify their methods of assistance in furthering the interests of the child rather than being controlled and manipulated by an impersonal system. One does not have to be a child psychologist in order to realize that the Welfare and Child Protective Services systems as they presently operate alienate the mother from the child and the family from society. Beyond that, to expect un-nurtured parents to improve by forcing external, artificial strategies is unrealistic precisely because these parents have not reached their own developmental stage of autonomy sufficiently at which time contracts are meaningful to them.⁵⁷ Psychologically they are much more inclined to turn in bewilderment and "depend" on drugs and alcohol than they are on impersonal contracts and standardized and sterile treatment plans. Frequently in 1965, in the Black neighborhoods of Chicago, the male parent was unemployed because of racial discrimination. This meant that the single mother, saddled with as many as eight or ten children was forced to physically discipline the child. One has to realize that sociologically when slavery invaded the US, the black family was destroyed in the interests

⁵⁵ Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Section 437: 261–262; Section 457: 274–275; Section 470: 284; Section 712: 431; Section 437: 550.

⁵⁶ Ben L. Mijuskovic, "Child Abuse, Neglect, Dependent Personalities, and Loneliness", *Psychology: A Journal for the Study of Human Behavior* 27(1) (1990): 1–10.

⁵⁷ Eric Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1963).

of controlling the slaves. In the 1950s, the fathers of the ADC children in Chicago were not allowed in the home. It was simply assumed to be welfare fraud. That meant the mother was left alone to discipline the multiple children. Meanwhile her Baptist minister advised in church that “to spare the rod is to spoil the child”. As a society we need to be more aware of the human history of these developments.

Social workers often incorrectly assume their clients lack knowledge and that it is their job as professionals to provide them with facts, information, and resources on how to get things done and where the resources are and how to access them. But dysfunctional parents already know what has to be done and how; the difficulty is that they do not care enough. They have given up. Dependent personalities lack motivation, not knowledge; they feel abandoned, deserted, and lonely. They are passively dependent and hence abstract, impersonal, contractual systems, which presuppose client autonomy, fail to work precisely because this “target” population – which makes it sound as if we are at war with them – requires *human* and *not* contractual attachments. If we can reduce their loneliness, we will at the same time improve their motivation. As Aristotle remarked, “Thought by itself moves nothing; what moves us is goal-directed thought concerned with action. [...] That is why decision is either understanding combined with desire or desire combined with thought [...]”.⁵⁸ True choice is a combination of deliberation and desire. The issue of loneliness is not about knowledge; it concerns feelings and motivations.

Six decades ago, Michael Harrington’s influential study, *The Other America*,⁵⁹ documented the dire poverty of the economically and culturally disenfranchised peoples of the United States, from the Appalachian Mountains to the urban ghettos, which led to President Johnson’s War on Poverty. It initiated an organically-devised, comprehensive (as opposed to a fragmented and selective) approach to the problems of the poor. It strove to coordinate a balanced effort in addressing housing, employment, education, health, and welfare concerns. The program wisely recognized that solving the housing problem alone, through federally subsidized housing projects, could not succeed unless comparable accomplishments were matched in the other spheres as well. The War on

⁵⁸ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. Terence Irwin, 2nd ed. (Indianapolis–Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc.), Book VI, Chapter 3, § 5, 1139b 1, 5: 87.

⁵⁹ Michael Harrington, *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962).

Poverty was a sincere effort to promote self-esteem for its participants because it encouraged the poor to operate their own programs for themselves in their own neighborhoods through the enfolding arms of their local Urban Progress Centers. The principle was to *engage* the poor in solving their own problems internally. The strong indigenous thrust of the War on Poverty was in principle organic; it visualized different spheres of activity among inter-dependent “members” of a complete and unified functioning whole. It advocated a definite and genuine sense of togetherness and belonging. We recall the opposite of loneliness is belonging, a psychological sense of intimacy. And most importantly, it avoided the illusion of quick fixes and impersonal bureaucratic rules. It was literally designed for the poor to help the poor. And it provided real paying jobs and security. During that particular period of my life, I was a caseworker for the Cook County Department of Public Aid and subsequently a Head Start Social Worker on Chicago’s Southside.

The environment I served was tragically impoverished. Some of the families had been evicted from the Chicago housing projects. The port of entry for Southern blacks was the Greyhound bus depot on 63rd St. and Stony Island Avenue two blocks from my caseload. Many of the black immigrants heading north from the south did not get much farther either in terms distance or life. The caseload I serviced consisted of slum housing and within two blocks there were 500 children none of which would finish high school. The El-train tracks ran parallel along 63rd and at night when the evictions occurred and the family’s belongings were put out on the street by the bailiffs, I recall sitting in the upstairs unfurnished apartments looking out on the street and watching the El-train going by. Down below men urinated and even defecated in the downstairs halls and staircases. I remember one woman delivering her baby all by herself because she did not want to bother anyone.

Probably one of the most successful programs funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity was Head Start. It was designed to teach disadvantaged children the value and pleasures of learning through sharing and co-operation. It gave them an early sense of positive belonging at a critical stage in their development. The children, as young as ages 2–3, came to school with their mothers; they were fed; any medical problems were immediately addressed; and adequate clothing was provided when lacking. Often the school facilities were in the local Baptist churches. Child Protective Services were non-existent. That came much later. Caring emotional nurturance was provided by neighborhood teachers and parental aides. The kids knew each other and lived within easy walking distance of each other’s homes. They were taught

to feel and think that their class was a little community. Years later, when researchers evaluated the program, they discovered that it was not so much that the children were doing better intellectually than their current academic peers in school, since the other children caught up academically to their Head Start counterparts, but rather that the drop-out rate of the Head Start children was very low. They had truly experienced a sense of belonging physically with each other, emotionally to each other, as well as established a spiritual connection to something *beyond* themselves. School was a nurturing place and the sadness and deprivation of their economically impoverished environment could never diminish the warmth of their initial experiences nor dull their future enthusiasm. The low rate of high school dropouts was much reduced by their Head Start experience.

Unfortunately, in 1968, the exigencies of another war, this one a conflict in a foreign land, ended this magnificent social experiment and the funding all but disappeared.

The disastrous tendency to substitute scientific and technological procedures for human attachments and quick fixes for painstaking care also appeared in the field of mental health. About the same period of time, early in the 1960s our society moved toward a de-institutionalization of mental patients from the state hospitals. Medication was invoked by the American Psychiatric Association as the magical key to solve the problems of the psychotically ill and to “liberate” them through the large portal gates of their institutions and “return” them to the community. The same principle followed for the mentally ill. After all, the brain is a physical organ composed of chemical compounds and the medications are chemical compounds as well. The problem is simple. Find the chemical imbalance, add a little here, subtract a little there, and voila like magic you have a functional patient ready to be a productive unit of society. Psychoanalysis and “talk therapy” took forever; it was too mental and subjective. It was costly and the treatments interminable. It was not sufficiently scientific. There was no such entity as the Freud’s unconscious. It was a way of indulging clients. Several competent nurses under the direction of a single psychiatrist could do much more quickly and cheaply than an entire staff of Freudian therapists. Human beings, after all, are merely intricate machines and the “mind” so-called is simply dependent upon, reducible to, or identical with the brain and the central nervous system. Chemical solutions can always be found for “mental” problems. Essentially loneliness is like any other disease or ill-

ness and very similar to depression. But what if loneliness is the innate human condition of each of us alone?

I was employed at Fairview Developmental Hospital in 1994 when the deinstitutionalization of developmentally delayed patients was being instituted by Court order. Alarmed, the elderly parents, the Friends of Fairview, the fathers and mothers and siblings of their now-adult children, banded together in an effort to block the discharges by being awarded legal conservatorship. Originally, they had been promised by the State of California that their loved ones would be cared for life and that it was too great a burden for them to bear. Imagine the parents of a young child, a near drowning victim, with severe brain damage, now thirty years old, being placed in a group home. That was then and this is now. The big state hospitals are now ghost towns: Metropolitan State, Fairview, Camarillo, etc. are all closed. They were communities of 5,000 patients each.

And now, where are we? Countless of thousands of homeless veterans with PTSD, unemployed individuals, drug addicts, and even families wander aimlessly on the periphery of our society collecting aluminum cans and sleeping under bridges. These are the lonely ones, estranged from others and alienated from each other; they are no longer even part of an impersonal system. Their numbers are ever increasing as our atomistic orientation has progressively failed to secure them within our present system. The lost ones have seeped through the net of human concern and care into the abyss of an abandoned existence. If they threaten us, the criminal system will deal with them. The Los Angeles County jail is reputed to be the largest mental health facility in the country. But if they are only a danger to themselves, we can safely ignore them. They stand self-condemned for refusing to take their medicine.

As a society, we feel a certain responsibility to our children. Once they have reached eighteen years of age, however, if they have not been integrated into the machinery of our economic world, then they will become the homeless, those whose issues are no longer addressed, if for no other reason than it is economically prohibitive. These separated, unrelated atomic individuals are no longer part of the "functional" atomistic body of our nation. Like malignant cells they have been excised from the body of the state.

I wish to close now with a brief discussion of the American system by comparing the negative realities of today with the more hopeful values of an earlier time.

Our society primarily exhibits a scientific and technological outlook. Consequently, we rely on a criterion of success that is materialistic, individualistic, and based on consumerism.⁶⁰ But as David Hume announced as early as 1740, in *A Treatise of Human Nature*,⁶¹ one cannot derive an Ought from an Is, a Value from a Fact. Science and ethics are two distinct and separate spheres of human activity and therefore one cannot move from the one to the other (Mijuskovic, 2005).⁶² Science can tell us how to make an atomic bomb but not how or when to use it. That is a moral issue not a technological one. The American value system, however, assumes that those who are prospering financially are in some significant sense favored in a moral sense. Hence to do well economically is not only a token of deserved wellbeing but indeed also a sign of moral superiority as well, a left-over from the Calvinist doctrine of “the elect”. Individual freedom and property rights are held as sacred and often expressed at the expense of social duties. Competition is encouraged and rewarded especially when successful.

But let us peer through the telescope of history for a moment and view what might be learned. Shortly after the Korean War ended, as a college education became increasingly important, students incorporated a sense of value in regard to the intrinsic worth of intellectual pursuits along with an accompanying intellectual honesty and pride. It was 1955. There was actually an honor code against cheating on exams. Liberal Arts were highly valued and flourished. Formal education incorporated strong productive goals directed toward society. Economically America was the “bread-basket of the world”. This was also the time when virtually every automobile in the world was produced in Detroit and Labor Unions ruled both production and compensation. John Kenneth Galbraith’s theory of “countervailing powers” balanced between government, labor, and the public equally dominated; the labor Unions, the government, and the public at large held equal sway. Babies were booming! Optimism suffused the atmosphere of America. Times were good. The guiding principles were education and social and political balancing. And although we were economically strong, there was an increasing value placed on a liberal education as opposed to specialization. The Ivory League universities were now forced to compete for the

⁶⁰ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*; Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Macmillan, 1912).

⁶¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955).

⁶² Ben L. Mijuskovic, “Ethical Principles, Criteria, and the Meaning of Life”, *Journal of Thought* 40(4) (2005): 67–88.

best students with the large state universities. The aristocracy of intellectualism at Harvard, Yale, Princeton, et al was forced to give ground to an equality of opportunity for bright students countrywide. The Korean War was over, the domino theory upheld, and it was the 1950s and early 1960s. Peace, plenty, and infinite opportunities prevailed. It was the era of the "inner-directed" individual. College students had a limitless future. It was assumed that armed with a Liberal Arts education one was virtually omniscient.

As mentioned, Michael Harrington's *The Other America: Poverty in the United States* was published,⁶³ which motivated President Johnson to initiate a genuine moral War on Poverty. At the same time, the atmosphere at colleges and universities and the prevailing attitude of the students radically changed during the middle and late 1960s as the Viet Nam conflict continued. College and university students perceived themselves as a moral force and academic subjects had to be "ethically relevant". Students regarded themselves as moral agents of change – virtually a cultural revolution – and challenged the authority of the "military-industrial complex". While their peers and friends died in a foreign war, they protested the moral foundations of that war and took over university administrative offices with their demands for more "relevant" courses. Jane Fonda went to North Vietnam and sat on an enemy tank. Without a stick of historical knowledge about World War Two, students regarded themselves as an influential moral force and they imagined they should and could redirect the entire ethical and political course of the nation. They were not as interested so much in an education as they viewed their academic work as an interruption of their primary purpose, which was politically and morally reformative. Academic subjects rapidly favoring technology and specialization were put aside for the moment in deference to moral issues. Meanwhile by 1974, the news media was busy bringing down the incumbent President of the United States for what was by any reasonable ethical standard a relatively minor infraction compared to what others in power had done throughout political and military history. This was the heralded entry in the field of battle of the "other-directed", ever-popular, ever-ready individual to lead the moral way for all others to follow. Political protest was fashionable and extremely popular.

The third wave of students in the early- and mid-1980s dismissed Liberal Arts studies as virtually irrelevant and business and law schools

⁶³ Harrington, *The Other America*.

proliferated; professionalism assumed the ascendancy and purely economic considerations prevailed. Classes had to be economically relevant, pragmatically-oriented, and all sorts of technology and specialization majors flourished and exploded. This was the “me generation” of students. The expectation was that along with the college degree immediate gratification would soon arrive in the form of rewards, lucrative jobs, a house, two-and-a-half children, two cars, a dog (maybe two so it would not be lonely), and long vacations to exotic lands. Both credited and un-accredited “universities” grew like giant mushrooms, many of them devoid of nutritional and educational value. The criterion of success was simple: Who earns the most? Who owns the most? The age of Veblen’s “conspicuous consumption” had arrived with a vengeance. The guiding principle was – and is – wealth, consumerism, especially possession of the latest model of the most powerful and the most complicated phone, all strong status symbols of successful competition.. The old local markets had long ago given way to shopping malls readily accessible by at least several freeways. Meanwhile currently the university businesses continue to competitively mass produce their product – degrees – without any concern whether all these matriculated students would be able to find employment in their fields of “choice” as they struggle against their strangling school loans. We have reverted once more toward the era of the “inner-directed individual” but this time around its not intellectual pursuits that are the gold standard of achievement but rather something gaudily narcissistic.

I have introduced these perspectives on three historical subcultures in order to emphasize how their various prevailing attitudes, with their consequent social atmospheres, can so easily determine different approaches in dealing with *either* the senses of loneliness *or* belonging. The point is simply that these paradigm shifts from the mid-1950s to the present demonstrate that our attitudes and commitments to organic values or atomistic principles are not out of our control. They are a matter of choice based on insight.

Something has gone wrong with our ethical principles, our moral values. And in order to correct it, we must reinvest in a humanistic and organic ideal of an “identity through unity in difference”. As the members of a functional family express different talents and yet they can each and all share in a common goal without losing their singular uniqueness, just so we must strive towards an ennobling vision of togetherness. The guiding principle would then lie in a sense of multiplicity in identity through a shared sense of belonging.

In the end, it is a question of values and what we care about: individual achievement or social sharing? Competition or cooperation? Egoism or altruism? Narcissism or intimacy?

Either for a family, a polis, a nation, or a culture it is the case that true freedom is grounded in both rational knowledge and an expression of virtue within a differentiated whole; a unity in multiplicity. It is based in the knowledge that both the family and the state develop dialectically from (a) a universal feeling of undifferentiated unity among the members to (b) the condition of civil society, of fragmented particularity with each person following their own interest, *but* finally evolving into (c) a reunification and resolution in the whole of the culture. The alternatives then lie between (a) belonging and sharing with others; or (b) isolation and lonely self-preservation. It is Auguste Comte, the “father of sociology” who coins the term “altruism” and preaches the religion of humanity.

Conclusion. I have tried to factor in how sociological values, e.g., religious, political, aesthetic, educational, economic, athletic, professional, environmental, etc. values impact our individual sense of loneliness and belonging and I would urge their assessment whenever one deals with the dynamics of human isolation and intimacy. But the critical point is that one cannot separate the issues of qualitative values in our judgments and appraisals of loneliness in relation to human intimacy.

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Summary

The article distinguishes two models of human organization: the organic community and the atomistic society. It maintains that the organic paradigm stresses (a) the ideal unity of the whole; (b) internal relations; (c) teleological or dialectical processes; (d) co- or inter-dependent members (e. g. the human body or face); (e) a role-orientation; (f) living functions; (g) freedom defined as doing as you should; and (h) qualitative factors prevail. By contrast, the atomistic model emphasizes (a) the value of individual freedom; (b) external relations; (c) mechanical or causal explanations; (d) separate "parts"(e.g. a machine); (e) a rule orientation; (f) formal, legal, or artificial frameworks; (g) freedom defined as doing as you please; and (h) quantitative factors prevail. The article contends that the sense of individual loneliness or alienation experienced is generally much greater in the atomistic society. And since both the American family and its surrounding society are, in the main, atomistically-structured, it follows that loneliness is more pronounced and prevalent in American society. The article concludes by offering some programmatic ideals and measures to reverse and mitigate the present tendency toward increasing loneliness in the United States.

Keywords: Organic Community, atomistic society, loneliness, alienation, freedom, American society