SIGNS, SELF, AND FORCE

being Chapter Five of
A GENERAL THEORY OF VALUE

As its title suggests, this chapter looks at three topics that were raised in preliminary form in Chapter Four. The first concerns how a climate for felicitous exchange is established and sustained. I shall talk about *signs* as distinct from tokens, and about the complexities that the displaying and reading of signs introduce to the process. It will become clear from this discussion that "purely economic" exchange is both a welcome simplification and an obstacle to progress in understanding how real social systems and real economies work. Also, although I use the word "signs," I shall try to avoid tangling with semioticians.

The second topic concerns the idea of a *self*, that accountable free agent that goes by our name, that has an identity coincident with but not identical to our body, and that is the locus of all experience and genuine decision-making. I will argue (as have others) that selves are constructed by social exchange as much as the other way round. In the context of this book, the argument sounds a little different, though, and the consequences perhaps more surprising.

Finally, I return to amplify the stratigraphy by asking how it is that social intercourse—token exchange—is initiated. How do we induce each other, motivate each other, even compel each other, to engage in exchange? For clearly we do not always wait for others to state their needs, just as we do not often simply wait for others to produce and offer what we need. We entice, we cajole, we "mention,"...we use "force" of some sort, including, for example, the force of feigned disinterest. From this discussion we draw some conclusions about the nature of morality, power, and leadership.

I. On Signs as Distinct From Tokens

No exchange between people occurs in a social vacuum. Before any exchange begins, people "size each other up." Expectations and norms abound that set the general tone of the exchange, delimit its subject, and give its borders propriety. When a person begins with "It is my understanding that...," we know that she is uncertain as to what expectations are in place or what rules of engagement will apply.[i]

Confirmed or contravened as they may be, expectations and norms exist at varying levels of detail and specificity. For example, upon entering into a well-rehearsed ritual exchange of small value to both parties, both sides know exactly what tokens will be offered and accepted. Preliminaries are reduced to confirmations; a flurry of subtle gestures and glances will do. By contrast, upon entering into potentially high-value transactions with people one does not know (or trust), we can predict only in the most general terms what tokens will be offered and accepted and what norms will apply. Under these circumstances (and under pressure to be "cool," or at least to *start* that way), these "same" subtle gestures and glances can take on enormous cognitive weight, slowing preliminaries to a crawl.

In short, save in the most routine or ritual exchanges, some uncertainty remains as to the state of other's needs and resources, and as to what they likely will offer and accept from you.

And so one looks for *signs*: Who is this person? What do they want? What is their level of commitment? What do they have to offer? How forgiving are they likely to be? Both during the exchange and after it too, answers to these questions are checked. Are they happy? Did they get what they want? And so forth. The problem for us now is how to characterize this aspect of the proceedings in a little more detail.

The *environment* of an exchange of tokens, we might say, consists of two components: the *display* of signs and the *reading* of them. Many of these signs are literally displayed in the environment: in the architecture, the furniture, the lighting conditions, in clothing, jewelry, and the myriad accouterments around us—certificates, trophies, gadgets.[ii] These say who we are, what the occasion is, and how we want to be taken. Other signs emerge from what is said or shown for the moment. The aim of all this? Efficiency. Traders can trade more quickly if they can read each other clearly and both know the rules. The "better" displayer/reader might also gain a bargaining advantage. But the aim of sign-display and sign-reading before (or while) "getting down to brass tacks" might also have nothing to do with speed or advantage. They may be used instead to

understand the other person more fully, not only in order to feel more secure in predicting their behavior, but to enrich and increase the *lovingness* of the relationship by increasing in number both the occasions for exchange and the needs put into play (see Chapter Four, 39–45).

So far so good.

The minute we depart from these common-sense observations, however, matters become complex. For sign displays can be *intentional* or *unintentional* as well as *truthful* or *untruthful*. This gives us four combinations right off, that is, displays that are (i) intentionally truthful, (ii) intentionally untruthful, (iii) unintentionally truthful, and (iv) unintentionally untruthful. With almost perfect symmetry on the receiving end, sign readings can be *conscious* or *unconscious*, *veridical* or *mistaken*. This gives us another four combinations: readings that are (i) consciously veridical, (ii) consciously mis-taken, (iii) unconsciously veridical, and (iv) unconsciously mistaken. Table 5.1 lays out these eight combinations and gives them recognizable adjectives. There are sixteen ways, in total, of displaying-and-reading a sign: four modes of display addressing four modes of reading.

	Display		**Reading**		
	intentionally	unintentionally	consciously	unconsciously	
truthful	*sincere*	*naïve*	*faithful*	*intuitive*	veridical
untruthful	*deceptive*	*innocent*	*mischievous*	*deluded*	mistaken

TABLE 5.1

Participants in an exchange can begin with inaccurate pictures of each other, of the trading environment, and even, genuinely, of themselves. Moreover, just as participants can manipulate their displays to serve their own interests, so they can profess readings of others' displays which are defensible and useful to them, rather than true in the way they know them to be true for the displayer. These are *mischievous* readings.

When signs are intentionally untruthful—i.e. when they are *deceptive*—and the reader sees through this, and the displayer knows that the reader sees through the deception, and the reader knows....and so on *ad infinitum*, then something more than "signing" is going on. Such

"signs" are really *tokens* since they serve to demean (disapprove) and dishonor (de-legitimate) the other party. After all, we neither lie to nor deliberately misunderstand people whose goodwill we wish to cultivate; we all want our tokens to be accepted in the spirit in which they were given, and we feel diminished when they are not. To some extent, all deceptive sign-display is language-like, trying to pass off a token as a sign, a message as honest self-report.

I shall not go into all sixteen permutations that Table 5.1 generates, simple as it is. Suffice it to say that this model contrasts with the one implicitly assumed by most philosophers of language and theorists of "communications." Where the latter two tend to assume that the great majority of signs are *sincere* (i.e., intentionally truthful) and that the great majority of readings are *faithful* (i.e., consciously veridical), our scheme portrays the bulk of non-pathological communication acts as putting into play an intricate and fluid system of self-improvement and self-advancement in the light of what others are trying to do along those same lines, and only secondly, and derivatively, serving some cooperative quest for the truth. The picture suggested is far more complex than most philosophers are apt to admit. Allowing for put-ons, jibes, feints, jokes, show-downs, denials, and all kinds of "bad faith," this view of human symbolic interchange owes more to Nietzsche, Freud, and Sartre than to Saussure, Carnap, or Wittgenstein. Among anthropologists I know of only Dan Sperber—and among sociologists of only Erving Goffman—who begin to portray people's ingenuity at getting their way through signing and "signing", reading and "reading."[iii]

An exchange is about to begin. Perhaps it is underway. From out of this innuendo, duplicity, second-guessing, cleverness, maneuvering, and checking there emerge nonetheless three rather clear perceptions: (1) of one's own need-state, (2) of the need-state of the other party, and (3) of the current state of the exchange as a whole. Two people, three perceptions each: the resulting six perceptions as to the whole "state of affairs" are all ingredients in the alchemy that will be, or already is, the exchange itself.

It all seems so complicated! But so already-social is our physical existence thanks to our genetic make up, and so trained are we in society's traditions as we grow up, that, in exchanges of average importance at least, all the factors of exchange can be computed and assessed in fractions of a second. In the mind of a skilled negotiator or businessperson—or indeed, in the mind of any socially adept person regardless of education—computations of the equations of satisfaction, value, and exchange (which we will probe more closely in coming chapters) can reach dizzying speeds, and this in situations of such structural complexity that they rival the achievements of a chess master. Amazing? Not really. Catching a ball is only marginally less involved.

The dynamics of creating an interpersonal or inter-group psychological bargaining environment through the display and reading of signs also occurs in the internal psychoeconomy too, that is, during the intrapersonal process of token conversion. Here we bargain with ourselves, face internal dilemmas, and make private assessments, and so forth. We carry on a continuous internal dialog. To cut through the proliferation of options and uncertainties that such dialog quickly generates, we call into play those same adjudicatory and decisional "values" that circulate outside. These "values" enter the conversion and exchange processes in the form of *maxims*, *principles*, or *rules of thumb* passed on by authority. Religious, economic, or folkloric in origin, well-founded or not, maxims are brief, easy to remember, and quick to execute, and this is why we use them.

In Chapter Four I also remarked that one of the hazards of habitual token conversion is dissociation from the external economy. For if tokens are to be internally converted with any frequency, then the individual must take care that two accounts of her needs and her needs' satisfactions are kept: one that describes her to herself, and one that describes her to others. Considerable cognitive load is involved in devising the necessary deceptive signs: it is no small task to keep things straight, to decrease the risk that things will go awry when would-be exchange partners intuit the discrepancy between the displayed need-state and the genuine need-state, or when the individual who is displaying gives herself away unwittingly. If the other party is also engaged in untruthful displays and not even attempting veridical readings, the complexity and hazards of the whole trading environment can escalate dramatically…

And so, as I suggested, most people opt for minimizing conversion, for attempting instead to influence others to offer them the tokens they want and need in the first place. They also prefer sincerity to the other modes of display as a matter of policy. They read signs faithfully and expect others to do likewise; and they try to forestall misconstruals by repetitions, clarifications, threats, and various other means. Lionel Trilling, in *Sincerity and Authenticity*, takes us through some of the thinking on this matter historically in the field of literature and manners. Erving Goffman, in a number of works, gives a complementary overview from the sociological point of view.[iv]

Now an interesting question presents itself: how can any individual, while striving for freedom, *in principle* maximize the frequency and felicity and value of the tokens offered to him

with minimum fuss and maximum reliability? One answer is clear: by encouraging and training others to behave to his or her advantage. And what better, long-term training of others is there than to convey to them a holistic picture of one's strengths and needs, one's preferences and principles? This picture, to be effective, must not be too complicated or wavering. It is best, in fact, as an algorithm, a program, a working model of you that when set into different environments, like a stage character put into different dramatic situations, produces different and yet gratifyingly predictable results.

In short, what better method is there for eliciting felicitous tokens reliably from others than to construct on their behalf—and, not incidentally, for oneself thereby—a "self," an "ego," a persistent and imageable "personality"?

II. On the Evolution/construction of the Self

Much has been written about the "social construction of the self" since George Herbert Mead and Lev Vygotsky explicitly explored the idea in the 1930s.[v] Today, drawn chiefly from the legacy of psychoanalysis, it is a recurrent theme in poststructuralist and feminist cultural criticism. It is beyond the scope of this book to review these bodies of thought or to engage them point by point at a theoretical level. Here, only an alternative, economic (and psychoeconomic) perspective is offered on what it means to have a self and to construct, or rather to *evolve*, an ego socially. Beyond merely invoking the relationship of "modeling" between internal and external economies as I did in Chapter Four, it is a perspective that seems to me to offer certain insights into both human nature and the nature of value. What these insights will converge to is this: that it is simply ecologically, economically, and psychologically necessary that we should each have an individual "self," "ego," "identity," and perhaps even a "soul," if we are to have a society at all; and this precisely because it is upon the feasibility of *efficient—indeed economic and profitable—token exchange* that society's evolution depends.

If we can assume that the individual desire to satisfy needs and to be happy in a social context is universal, we might ask, quite unrhetorically, what *alternatives* are there to constructing and putting forward that imageable ghost, that coherent agent, manager, spokesman, and accountant of our needs we call our *self*? Given the potential complexity of human affairs, I can see none, and many contemporary thinkers are more or less independently coming to agreement.[vi]

Inside each of us there is a miasma of uncertainty as to what is going on, a dark traffic of impulses that we can neither watch nor control and yet which we are desperate to understand. Freud called it the Unconscious, home of the *id*, and proposed the science of psychoanalysis as the way to penetrate its mysteries.[vii] *Know thyself,* enjoined the Delphic Oracle, in spite of the fact that the truth of the activity within us, in its full complexity, cannot be known by us or anyone else, psychoanalysis and modern neuroscience notwithstanding. What better, what else, can be done but to allow others to report what they can see in us and of us, and to test their reports against how actions predicated upon their truthfulness please or displease the teeming darkness within? We *learn* to have selves that are not too dissimilar from the ones we make up for others.[viii] Not for nothing is almost every adolescent's favorite topic of discussion his or her own actually-emerging, but presented as fully-formed, personal preferences and character(istics). Not for nothing are social comparisons endless at this age as well as gossip, and affiliations powerful but mercurial. And not for nothing do most film stars and music stars have to remain "true to type" if they wish to be successful—indeed, truer to type than you or I have to be.[ix]

The Maslovian need for *self-actualization*—the desire "to be all you can be"—has this intrinsic limit: that the *you*, the subject of the "actualization," is a construct far simpler than we (constructs) like to believe, especially when measured against our actual biological and psychological complexity. Set aside cultural differences. So evolved and complex are humans biologically that we differ from each other throughout, in physicality and age, in temperament and "character," in appearance and substance. Unlike ants, no two of us are genetically identical.[x] Grant this inherent variation, and now add each individual's unique history of personal experience, family life, education, cultural training, and so on. We cannot predict from naked introspection of our selves what, exactly, others will want at a given time or how to satisfy them. In the pressure and friction of living together, "selves" are co-constructed for the collective benefit. For the reductive construct of a self, of a model, provides both the consistency that is required from one exchange to the next just to get along, as well the framework for constrained change that we need to operate efficiently: a way to organize complexity.

In short, having "a self" makes one more predictable to others. And, strangely, it makes one more predictable to oneself too. A society of *selves* is thus simpler for everyone, and more organizable, than a society of massively complex, unique organisms interacting with each other "raw," nerve-ending to nerve-ending, molecule by molecule. Selves, egos, and perhaps even souls, are the action of organization, R : life lowering its actual complexity, C, relative to its potential complexity, C_{pot}, across the broadest front.[xi]

Selves make society possible, but first society makes selves necessary. The "social contract" creates its signatories.[xii]

III. On "Force"

In the psychological economy, tokens are never exchanged freely, if by "freely" one means without regard to history, futurity, or the balance of advantage embedded in the current trading environment. With regard to the latter, for example, there are apt to be imbalances in the degree of resoluteness of the parties. For in any exchange, one party is likely to be the initiator and the other a respondent, and the initiator is likely to be more insistent on his terms.[xiii]

One kind of sign stands out from the others, therefore, and that is the sign given to indicate the level of determination of one party to initiate and carry through a certain exchange at what may seem to the other like any cost to himself. Here one party persuades or coerces, or in any case induces, the other party to participate in an exchange that may or may not be very, or clearly, advantageous to them. The second party—more circumspect, less needy perhaps, or simply less confident about the benefit of exchange—goes ahead with it anyway.

It is a matter of debate as to whether *any* real exchange happens without some measurable amount of force, however small. Perhaps a small, precipitative amount of force is always needed, as though to overcome a friction which is initially a little higher than it will be once the exchange process—the "motion"—is in progress. Certainly, some individuals are more ambitious, more creative, more impatient, or more "leaderly" than others. For better or for worse, these individuals "make the world go around" a little faster, and it is simply the case that they are apt to use force to get things moving and/or to get their own way.

But before we denigrate *force*, let us look at what we mean by it. Within the vocabulary of near-synonyms—"influence," "effect," "precipitate," "induce," "cause," "make"—we readily discern the names of various common modes or manifestations of force, and many of these turn out—happily, if roughly—to correspond to our stratigraphy of needs. For example, one exchange might happen "by (dint or force of) *flattery,*" another "by (force of) *authority*," yet another exchange "by (force of) *violence*," or by the threat against our security, which is *power*. (As the saying goes: "Authority is given; power is taken.") Free and confident individuals prefer to influence each other only by force of *example* or *encouragement*. And so on. Thus:

NEED	Associated "Force"
Freedom	*Example*
Confidence	*Encouragement*
Approval	*Flattery*
Legitimacy	*Authority*
Security	*Power*
Survival	*Violence*

The upper three kinds of force are *persuasive*, the lower three *coercive*.

Now, one could choose different words, here and there, for our six kinds of force. Here are some examples. We are apt to call flattery we choose not to notice *charm*, and if it won't stop, *cajolery*. Somewhere between encouraging others directly and influencing them by example lies the making of *suggestions* and *proposals*. Among persuasive strategies there is *coaxing* and *wheedling,* among the coercive strategies *terrifying*, *saving*, *commanding*. One might feel *moved* by a story, *swayed* or *compelled* by an argument, *influenced* by the opinions or others. And so on. The English language is rich in words that render nuances in the strength and gravity of the motivational force we apply to each other. But all these various terms, I would claim, once we looked into the specifics of the exchanges that they are appropriately used to describe, would be translatable without much loss into the overall, six-term, stratigraphy of forces I propose, and as naturally grouped into an upper and lower set of three, i.e., persuasive and coercive respectively.

Also, the five states-of-mind of we call *fear*, *respect*, *liking*, *trust*, and *admiration* seem to fit nicely into the stratigraphy's five *gaps*, as it were—i.e., lying *between* the six strata of needs and their associated forces and marking the felt transition from one kind of force to the next higher or next lower other.

One of the things that our scheme throws into relief are mis- or cross-applications of kinds of force. Each cross-application has its own peculiar dissonance. For example, while one can be *encouraged* to survive, while one can *exemplify* legitimacy, *command* confidence (i.e. use *power*), *buy* citizenship[xiv] (which is legitimacy) or "*win*" approval with *authority,* and while one can even be *forced* to be free (as Rousseau in his 1762 *Social Contract* famously put it: "it may be

necessary to compel a man to be free"), in general it is odd, if moral, to rely on *persuasive* strategies to win legitimacy, security, and survival, and odd, if *im*moral, to use *coercive* strategies to win approval, confidence, or freedom. These cross-applications of kinds of force, these miscegenations, do happen, of course. Some are merely figures of speech, euphemisms or hyperboles as the case may be. But, as one might expect from the stratigraphy, they most likely happen when the exchange is not between partners equal in fortune, intelligence, or ambition. Think of the countless novels, operas, and soap operas that depend on the drama of finding out that eminent people—that is, people who are respected, confident, and free—are still motivated by, and thus can be dragged down to, working out their claims to security and survival with acts of *power* and *violence*. As the drama unfolds, it is with great satisfaction that we find out just whose feelings of freedom, confidence, approval, and even legitimacy were poorly founded and whose were not, that we find out who will recover from ruination by finding their deeper motivational roots still healthy and warranted and who will have to start over with nothing but their biological survival and having to work their way back up the stratigraphy (but this time—oh yes!—deserving and earning everything they get, like *we* must do).

Ethnologists struggle to make a clean distinction between *custom* and *law* in a given society. Although the difference remains ambiguous in certain pre-literate societies, in the civil, bureaucratized societies of the modern world the distinction is fairly clear and maps well on to our scheme: infractions of *custom* are prevented by *dissuasion* and punished by *disapproval* (e.g. ostracism, insult, unflattering gossip), while *laws*, when broken, provoke litigation as a first step to the reduction of the law-breaker's *authority*, leading perhaps to the (state-authorized) use of *power* and perhaps *violence*.[xv]

Recall that every token has its *warrant*. All "forcing strategies" therefore, whether coercive or persuasive, also deal ultimately in these warrants and their producibility. Indeed, the impetus of force itself is engaged precisely at the transition from the consideration of tokens *per se* to consideration of their warrants. How is this done? With...

Promises and threats.

What is a promise? A promise is itself a positive token that commits the offerer to making another sure-to-be-positively-valued offer at some later time, to undertake some sure- to-be-beneficial physical action, or at least *not* to make some sure-to-be-negatively-valued token

offers or carry out actions deleterious to the receiver. A *threat*, conversely, is a token that commits the threatener to making another sure-to-be-negatively-valued offer at some later time..and so on.

On these definitions, both promises and threats can be a part of both coercive and persuasive strategies. This conclusion seems to run counter to intuition. Because promises are "nicer," we might intuitively feel more comfortable (as theorists) with having "promises" be associated with the three higher needs and their corresponding persuasive strategies, and "threats," because they are somehow darker, be associated with the three lower needs and their corresponding coercive strategies. But this intuition ought to be resisted. For if they are not already in the realm of coercion, it is the *direction* of threats—which must sooner or later take us down the stratigraphy toward the forces of coercion—that lends them their "darkness," their weight. Similarly, it is the *direction* of promises—which is towards greater satisfaction and therefore *up* the stratigraphy even when they begin in lower needs—that lends them their brightness, their buoyancy. For example, you can promise me more security, just as you can threaten my confidence. But I can also threaten your freedom, or promise you more authority "in return."

One may increase the buoyancy of a promise by "upgrading" a stratum or two—e.g. from the promise of one or more confidence tokens in the future to the promise of one or more freedom tokens—just as one can increase the gravity of a threat by dropping down a stratum or two, for example, from the threat of *dis*approval, say, to the threat of *de*-legitimation or of physical harm. But in either case, without plausible further warrantability, both "carrot" and "stick" have reduced force. When we observe that "might makes right," we are talking about the warrant which *power* provides to legitimacy and its proper force, *authority,* and power's basis in the threat of violence. Going in the other direction: laws, we say, are effective only when they are *enforceable*. We now know more precisely what "enforceability" means—it means (the enforcer) being willing and able to "offer" tokens at a lower stratum yet, and as conditional upon the enforcee's next action.[xvi] We also know that what gives the tokens of *all* strata their warrant is not so much their actual enforcement as the belief in their enforce*ability* .

Promises alone may not satisfy us, but they are intrinsically cheering, as I have said. Indeed, one can achieve a certain amount of satisfaction from anticipation itself, as we will study in the next chapter. Happiness results from any motion up the stratigraphy, and promises both constitute and hold out progress in just that direction—upward. Conversely, threats are

intrinsically distressing. They always point downward in value. They are also apt to be more motivating than promises, this for reasons that follow from our analysis so far: threats tend to drive one into deeper territories of the psyche, to places where questions of survival loom larger, tokens have more value, and the need to test a token's warrant, its enforceability, in terms of survival dominates. But the effectiveness of threats shows up in far more pleasant circumstances too, if in shadow form. For example, perhaps the most consistent "irrationality" in economic behavior is the systematic inequality that exists between buying and selling prices for the same item in situations in which there is no profit motive. Research has shown, for example, that most people would not re-sell a concert ticket that they had already bought for less than *twice* the price at which they would buy the ticket if they had not already bought it.[xvii] Insurance company advertising depends on the same psychological fact: to wit, that under threat of loss or even the thought of the definite *possibility* of loss, we tend to overestimate the value of what we have. At any rate, one is frequently sadder now to lose *x* than one was happy once to acquire it, i.e. before one knew what one *had*. And this is one more reason why threats are generally more effective—in the short run at least—than promises.

When a promise is made by one party to lower his or her *own* satisfaction level or token-dealing stratum in order that the other party may elevate theirs, we call it (self-) *sacrifice*.[xviii] Sacrifices preempt threats; just as playing it cool preempts promises. ("Cashing in" one's tokens preempts both.) Promises and threats can be generated at any stratum of need and take on the character of that stratum. Because they refer to, and to some extent determine, the nature of one's overall need-state in the future, token exchanges in the face of uncertainty are made more viable now, at whatever stratum. They also provide much of the mechanism of "mobility" between token-strata, especially under conditions of forcing. Promises and threats are rough equivalents to loans and debts in the way they introduce into the exchange system a necessary measure of capacitance and delay, as we shall see more formally in the Chapter Seven.

In general, the lower the stratum one is trading in, the greater the element of *fear*. Indeed, we might fairly ask: what is perfect freedom but perfect fearlessness? *Apprehension* is often defined as mild fear, and *anxiety* as apprehension without a conscious or clear object. Both are but fear's "higher" forms. Tell me how much fear you feel, and I will tell you where on the stratigraphy your under-satisfied or threatened needs lie. Because freedom-from-fear, amongst other things, characterizes freedom itself, there will always be a market for artificial ways of subduing feelings of fear at their neurological nexus—I refer to such drugs as alcohol and cocaine—the more so as freedom, culturally, is the supreme value.

Almost as effective are the doctrines that support martyrdom, such as glory in death, reward in the life hereafter, and so on.

The moral use of force

Now, between families, tribes, and companies, just as between friends, enemies, and lovers, the kind of force used in an exchange of tokens always begins, morally, at the top of the stratigraphy with persuasion by *example*. Only if this attempt is unsuccessful does the kind of force justifiably begin to descend. Thus: if and only if (iff) example does not work may you try encouragement; iff that does not work may you try flattery; iff flattery does not work may you try authority; iff authority does not work may you try power; and iff power does not work may you try violence. With civility eroding at every failure to persuade, successively lower and "heavier" strata of force are brought into play. As the stratigraphy is dismantled or undermined, social capital crumbles.

Persuasive strategies morally trump coercive ones, and this might be because human history has deposited them in the reverse order. Persuasion requires greater social complexity-and-organization in order to be effective than does coercion. Promises are morally preferable to threats, and promises are "properly" offered before threats. Inducing survival-level fear is rarely moral: as common wisdom has it, violence should be used only in the last resort.

But why? Whence, suddenly, all this "morality"?

The rule of "starting at the top" of the stratigraphy with the tenderest variety of force—i.e. with one's own example without didactic accompaniment—gives the other the benefit of the doubt as to their own standing, their "evolvedness."[xix] It leaves them the freest. It honors them first, which is in itself a persuasive strategy. For in general it is both more effective and more moral to attribute *higher* levels of complexity-and-organization to those who might turn out to be lower on the scale of complexity-and-organization—to treat, say, the inanimate as animate, the animal as human, the foolish as wise, the child as a young adult, and so on—than to do the reverse, i.e., to attribute or assume *lower* levels of consciousness or evolvedness than might be the case. It is also more moral—not to say more polite (and what is politeness but morality's outer and most delicate garb?)—to begin an interchange as though the other were as *little* needy as could reasonably be construed.[xx]

Our moral sense, then, tells us not only to strive upwards on the stratigraphy from wherever we may be, but also, when in any doubt, to *presume* others' elevation on the stratigraphy and to descend its rungs in our relations with them only with reluctance. Persuasion always before coercion, and the higher forms of each before the lower.

Marx took a much dimmer view of the use of force in general. In *Grundrisse,* he heaped scorn on Adam Smith's rather cheerful view (expressed mainly in the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*) that marketplace exchanges freely entered into were always to the benefit of both parties. Not so, said Marx, who saw coercion in almost every exchange, and especially in those between capitalists and workers. Workers were that much closer to issues of survival and security than their employers. Hence, where Smith saw an "invisible hand" shaping a multitude of mutually beneficial and fair exchanges into a productive and just society, Marx's saw intrinsically unfair exchanges leading to the exploitation of one whole sector of society by the other, with the exploiters also monopolizing the very explanations of things (the "invisible hand" being one such self-serving explanation). Under Smith's theory, according to Marx, all exchanges, exchange *itself*, and even the very *possibility* of exchange, surreptitiously became the model and *definition* of freedom, and did this by overlooking the inequalities and applications of force always involved.[xxi]

An ordering of varieties of force such as ours, based on the stratigraphy of needs, might throw some light on how to determine when force is moral and when it is to be expected. Thus, one can agree with Marx that the exploitative capitalist *coerces* exchanges with low-paid workers since, with their wages workers gain only the tokens and warrants of survival (and perhaps security), while the capitalist, his lower needs met, gains in confidence and freedom.[xxii]

One must also leave room, however, for the whole gamut of lesser inequalities and lesser forces that ordinarily exist in exchanges between people, as we shall see in Chapter Seven. Indeed, the process of replacing coercive strategies with persuasive ones wherever possible (and, within this binary distinction, lower forms of coercion with higher forms of coercion and lower forms of persuasion with higher forms of persuasion) constitutes a singular moral imperative—and provides a lot of worthwhile work. *The imperative both gives rise to and results from people on the whole becoming more satisfied in their needs*. The changing definition of rape, from the use of physical violence only to the (illegitimate) application of authority, and indeed the increasing sensitivity to sexual harassment in the workplace, is but a sign of our commitment to moral development in the

abstract, a commitment which some commentators see as being peculiarly American and late twentieth century.[xxiii]

Another illustration. Around 40% of Americans participate in church-, work-, institution- or privately-sponsored psychotherapeutic support groups. These groups are designed to address almost every conceivable identity, addiction, or victimization problem. As social mechanisms, they are well suited to promoting the growth and welfare of an individualistic people whose lower needs are largely satisfied. Meeting generally once a week, support groups

> ...nurture our self esteem, at least in small ways, because the other people in the group take us seriously. They listen, they accept, they empathize, they support. They give us all the things we never find in everyday life. Why? Because they are not everyday life. They are not the source of our employment. We don't share bank accounts. We don't share mutual responsibility for the welfare of our children.[xxiv]

The "support" offered, in other words, consists of *encouragement*, *example*, and the opportunity to *flatter* and be *flattered* by others. Correspondingly, as tokens of confidence, freedom, and approval circulate between members, these are the forces working to change participants' behavior and feelings. Legitimacy and security questions, notice, are "off-limits," and this restricts, in turn, such groups' effectiveness in fostering deep mutual commitments between members, or of having real consequentiality. People can leave the group at any time. Promises need not be kept. But all this, we should remember, is by design.

We should also not be blind to the fact that the principle of "starting at the top" is not just a moral imperative but also one that usually serves our own best interests. After all, the other party is likely to respond in kind—that is, to reciprocate with tokens belonging to the same stratum at which we made our offer. He meets force with matching force, or, if he is annoyed, with greater force and with tokens probably lower on the stratigraphy.

Think of a business as an entity, as a crude or proto-*self*.[xxv] Businesses are happiest with the security provided by "market power," with the legitimacy provided by society's structures of *authority* such as government and law, and with the survival guaranteed by both of these. Left to themselves, coercion would be their chosen mode of operation, with state-sanctioned monopoly as their ultimate goal. In a free-enterprise economy, however, which is governed by laws shot through will ethico-religious sentiment, businesses must compete for customers and suppliers largely by persuasion. They must limit themselves to the force that can be applied by *example* and

encouragement and *flattery,* and are regarded with suspicion when they use *authority* to enforce the structures of legitimacy and security on people who are not their employees or under legal contract. Consider the dubious power of shopping mall owners to exclude "undesirables" from their ostensibly public malls, and the curious standing of private security guards, mall-police, with regard to law enforcement. In their external economies, then, businesses must limit themselves to the persuasive strategies only…or they must *appear to*.

And herein lies the suspicion with which we regard both business friendliness and business-based friendship. After all, when a business goes out of business, it *dies*. This is a matter of some urgency to all involved with it, internally and often externally. Moreover, because businesses constitutionally need to provide their members only with the *basis* for the pursuit of their higher needs (e.g. profit, a decent paycheck) and not with a full and rewarding life itself, all that is required of any business *qua* business *is* to survive and be secure. It is understandable, then, that businesses, in their urgency to survive "organismically," cover their essential and natural predilection for coercion with the mask of persuasion.

If the resulting social tension is often palpable, the direction nonetheless is moral. Businesses of the future may well evolve into *genuine* dealings with the higher needs. What was once the pretense of "higher consciousness" and the stuff of advertising (think of Saturn ads) will become authentic, this almost naturally as the economy as a whole—and the psychoeconomy with it—complexifies and organizes itself at ever higher levels.[xxvi]

With our "stratigraphy of forces" in hand we can also begin to see some regularity in the actions of roused, long-oppressed minorities—people, that is, for whom the prevailing order did not and still does not provide sufficient freedom, confidence, approval, or even legitimacy. For these oppressed groups the loss of security and survival is that much closer a threat. Often, by the time such feelings of dissatisfaction have developed to the point of finding voice in a charismatic leader, the search for approval tokens from the oppressor is foregone or deferred. Rather, the avowed aim, the felt necessity, is to re-found and reconstitute the group's legitimacy: as a tribe, a nation, a culture, a people, a community, a religious order, or whatever. This naturally requires a repudiation of the legitimacy-token-conferring apparatus of the larger, enveloping society. The repudiation begins in a symbolic confrontation with the ruling order's officialdom, i.e. the holders and purveyors of its laws and authority. From here it progresses to acts of civil disobedience, to propagating beliefs about the corruption and/or inherent injustice of The System, and to (re)writing

history in order to undermine the dominating culture's claims to legitimacy on yet higher authority (usually God, Justice, or an earlier, mutually-revered civilization). The threat posed is to engage in token-exchange activity that is one or more strata lower on the stratigraphy than those at which the dominant society is willing to engage—for example, to resort to the economy of tokens of security (with its corresponding "language" of *power*) and thence perhaps to *violence*—rather than to seek approval or qualification for positions in the social status quo that "legitimately" wields *authority*. The cry for "freedom" under these circumstances is somewhat inaccurate. The cry is really for legitimacy, for recognition, for civil liberties, which are the *bases* for freedom.[xxvii]

The difference in strategy between Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X during the 1960s comes to mind here. King took the "high road" in the pursuit of legitimacy and approval for African-Americans. Strategically, he avoided making whites feel insecure when he foreswore *violence*. In our terms, his rhetoric operated by looking "up" the stratigraphy, and forward to a future when there would be "adequate supplies" of approval, confidence, and freedom tokens for all. He expressed himself in promises rather than in threats. He used—and induced others to use—the forces of flattery, encouragement, and example rather than of authority, power, and violence to achieve the goals of racial justice.[xxviii]

Malcolm X, on the other hand, played with the bigger chips that are found at the central and lower levels of the stratigraphy—those zones of the psychoeconomy where feelings run deep and actions based on them are more apt to be dire. The force of his rhetoric was contained in threats, those "negative promises" that foreshadow exchange relations lower on the stratigraphy. Malcolm X's *metier* was scorn, skepticism, and corrosive humor. His challenge was to the self-aggrandizing institutions of Christianity and of White civilization itself. His aim was the creation of a new Black nation under Islam, with its own internal economies of approval and freedom and its own mechanisms of legitimation. Although he stopped short of advocating violence against whites, he would not rule it out either. Herein lay the weight of his words, the force of his tokens.

None of this is to cast aspersions upon Malcolm X's character or methods, however. It is simply to attempt usefully to classify them. Although King's methods were more palatable to whites, the relatively deteriorating lot of African-Americans in North America may well have justified—at least in the eyes of African-Americans—just the sort of deep re-structuring of the general psychological economy that Malcolm X was after. A revised formal economy, of goods and services, would soon follow.

Similar analyses, I believe, could be carried out on the ideologies of other prominent reformers on behalf of the oppressed and dispossessed, reformers such as Mohandas K. Gandhi,

Nelson Mandela, Archbishop Romero, Martin Luther, even Jesus Christ and Mohammed. My purpose here is not to advocate *explaining* such people and their strategies with psychoeconomic theory. Far less is it to explain them *away*. Rather, it is to suggest how useful the stratigraphy of needs and its associated structure of "forcing strategies" might be as a framework for investigating the nature of social change and its agents.

When we think of the kinds of attachment that exist between people, as well as between people and certain things or places, we find that we can arrange some of them—say, "preference," "affection," "loyalty," and "solidarity"—alongside the stratigraphy of needs neatly in order of their *strength*. Thus: the weakest, *preference*, operates over the strata of freedom and confidence. *Affection* concentrates at the stratum of approval. *Loyalty* works chiefly at stratum of legitimacy, while the strongest attachment, *solidarity*, ranges over the strata of security and survival. Preferences, therefore, are always "mere" in this sense, and it is no wonder that they tend to be valorized in countries largely at peace with themselves and that have well-established consumer markets and democratic institutions. Here, much to the derision and envy of other nations, people define themselves predominantly by their preferences in "trivial" things: clothes, music, movies, and so forth. Friendliness, civility, tolerance, and etiquette are apt to be seen as serious matters. And so they are. Why? Because, according to our stratigraphy, they indeed undergird the play of individual preference which is freedom.

In the Eastern Europe of the 1990s by contrast, or indeed in any country still negotiating its power structure from the ground up, one is apt to hear talk of "identity" that is not really about self-expression or (mere) consumer choice but about social affiliation, about "brotherhood." Similarly, one is apt to hear talk of affection and friendship that is really about loyalty and honor, and talk of loyalty and honor that is really about solidarity with political, racial, and nationalistic movements—about fealty. And *these* bonds are expected to hold to the point of self-sacrifice.[xxix]

Ironic, but perhaps to be expected, is how a life of strong feelings, of consequential actions, is the envy of well-fed and free Western artists, not to mention their audiences. The experiences audiences want, of course, are vicarious ones, safe ones. But for some artists, the desire to live dangerously, to deal genuinely in the lower regions of the stratigraphy, takes over. Consider how many novelists, filmmakers and journalists have put themselves in harm's way, have visited poverty, or have adventured to unstable parts of the world in order to lend their work urgency and give their lives "authenticity."

Be this as it may, neither cries for "freedom!" from some quarters and "order!" from others are intended to persuade; they are intended to coerce. For the freedom being called for, let us note again, is not the freedom that lies at the top of the stratigraphy. What is being demanded, rather, is *liberty*.[xxx] For their part, those who call for *order* (an old or new order) know that the deeper equanimity provided smoothly-running markets in security- and legitimacy-tokens is essential to both liberty and freedom (albeit, often, only their *own* liberty and freedom). Both factions can be morally motivated, of course. Greater potential complexity, actual complexity, *and* organization are always needed, and people may rationally differ as to which should come first, where, and for whom.

Remarks on how some practices perpetuate, and on leadership

One imagines that in a perfect world cultural practices such as religions, social roles, and jobs would reproduce themselves on their own merits. Every generation would freely choose the most suitable and promising beliefs and practices for itself, would drop or neglect others, and would invent new ones as needed. Groups would have no members who did not *want* to be members. All devotion, all dedication, all commitment would stem from an original position of total freedom and would then be periodically refreshed. There would be little or no force in play below the force of *example*.

This, of course, does not describe life as we know it. Most practices and beliefs are not freely chosen. We grow up with them; we find we have them; we are often loathe to change them. And they are propagated most often by the application of forces far less gentle than example. Moreover, many beliefs and practices have evolved in such a way that *their propagation is built into the very belief or practice being propagated*. This last factor is what I want to look into.

Consider, for clarity, this extreme case: A roving band of killers gives everyone it meets a choice: join us or be killed. What does it mean to "join" this group? It means that one must commit to deliver, upon pain of death, the same ultimatum to others: i.e. "join us or be killed!" Without a moral maxim in place (such as "It is better to be killed than to kill"), such a roving band of killers would likely grow in size, every member a coward, until eventually—logically—it consumed itself or gave up its mission.[xxxi]

This scenario is grim, and, fortunately, it occurs only very rarely. But notice that the same, self-perpetuating *pattern* operates all around us, in everyday life, using forces higher on the

stratigraphy than violence. The pattern comes in two forms, the threat-form ("Become one of us or lose satisfaction of *L*"), and the promise-form ("Become one of us and gain satisfaction of *L*"), where *L* is one of the six needs, *and where, in both cases, membership critically involves making the same threat or promise to non-members*.

Sometimes *L* is legitimacy; the very legitimacy that being a member of that group offers. In this case, expanding the size of the group—getting new members to join—becomes the very source and support for continuing as a legitimate member. One example is the Amway company, whose distributors do best, both financially and prestige-wise, when they sign on other distributors. The growth of certain evangelical religious groups depends the same tactic.

Sometimes *L* is *freedom* through money made or saved. My gym offers six month free membership if I sign on another member. Many online sellers have "affiliate programs": in return for advertising the seller's products on their website with a click-though banner, affiliates get a percentage of the profits of all sales that come through that click. Some affiliates are authorized to persuade others to become affiliates too, and take a cut of whatever these second-tier affiliates earn. And so on. These are all quasi-pyramid schemes, chain-letters of a sort. And they are not always easy to spot. For example, there is a sense in which Ivy-league universities follow the same pattern, since their teachers are rewarded (if indirectly) for recruiting and producing graduates who will maintain that an Ivy-league education is the best there is—and, not incidentally, who will maintain that *teaching* at an Ivy-league school is the most desirable of academic careers. Self-perpetuation. In the same way, artistic and intellectual "schools" rarely coalesce spontaneously through some amazing coincidental agreement of independent minds, or even through awareness of one another's work through mass media or by rumor. Rather, clubs and institutes are consciously founded: associations, salons, conferences, fellowships, and so forth that have leaders, that one can be a member of or not, and that grow by recruiting ("accepting") members who will recruit ("elect") others.[xxxii] Clearly, this applies to Schools named by historians long after the artists (scientists, architects, or writers) in question have died, but one is often struck to discover just how organized at the time, for example, were the Surrealists of the 1930s, the Futurists, the Fauvists, the Impressionists, and so on, and how aware the members were of their membership even as, typically, they individually exempted *themselves* from the label.

Finally, consider how many groups, from families on up, are held together by the threat to a member's rights, privileges, and sense of recognition *should they leave*. The one who dares leave would be *cut off*, not just financially but socially—excommunicated. Rewarded by the group instead are the ones who will expand its size and influence.

In all these cases, if the reproductive fitness of the group *as a group* is the measure of "more life," then the strategy of making success-at-increasing-membership itself a condition of membership must, when successful, be judged good. This is the criterion by which evolutionary biologists judge bacteria, locusts, and rabbits the most successful species and their "methods" good too (at least for *them*). But if one changes the locus of the more-life measure to individuals, or to *all* groups, and if one pays attention to the *quality* and *duration* of such entity's lives not just to their total mass or number, then the strategy may or may not be good at all.[xxxiii]

An important topic follows naturally from the above, and indeed from the subjects opened up by this chapter: and that is the topic of *leadership*. How is it that certain people become leaders? What does it mean to have "leadership qualities?"

Leaders are often thought to *project power* in some mysterious way. Leaders inspire confidence by the way they look, dress, walk, talk. They offer to protect us and have reputations for doing so. They reward personal loyalty and yet they understand and advance the interests of the group as a group. They seem to see further and think faster than those they lead. They have high ideals (about freedom for example), and at the same time seem more willing to sink lower to achieve them, i.e. to traffic in the lower need-strata.

Leadership is thus a complex character trait. Can it be cultivated in the young? Can it be taught? Some would argue it long has been taught: to children in the royal or Old Money courts of power, at elite schools, in the armed forces, and so on. Indeed, a huge literature has grown up around the question of what leadership most essentially consists in, and therefore how best to inculcate it young or under-ambitious people. What more can we add from our theoretical perspective? Most fundamentally, this: that leaders are people who are particularly adept at the deployment of force—and not always moral force—in the exchange of tokens. They are also people who, in confusing times, are able to *simplify* the world for their followers, reducing its complexity, C, so that they can cope. Better, though, are leaders who, rather than simplify, can organize that complexity or find what organization, R, there already is in the world and make it count. But best of all are leaders who not only accept life's inevitable complexification but help it along by finding new complexity—new opportunities and combinations—for their followers, and thus push back the frontier of C_{pot} for all. They can see the best way up the slope of the Ω-surface, and they can induce their followers to take that path using the least forceful means, which is to say, first by his or her own example, second by encouragement (and discouragement), third by flattery

(and derogation), rarely by the use of threats or the exercise of authority, and never by recourse to power or violence.

This leaves only the extraordinary readiness of all effective leaders, at critical moments for the group, to risk the satisfaction of their own lowest needs without coercing others to do the same. We call it courage. Courage is a trait all leaders share, both ones we admire and ones we don't for whatever other reason. The admirable ones preempt threats by strategic self-sacrifice rather than by posing greater counter-threats. They also preempt empty promises by selectively being "cool"—seeming un-needy—rather than by making demands (showing need) and threatening punishment if disappointed.

Here I must let the topic of leadership lie and hope that others will be interested in taking this needs-based, psychoeconomic approach further.

We turn instead to two chapters of more basic analysis: first of the hows and whys of the need-satisfaction process itself, and then to the logic of exchange. We will then be able to examine how the concept of value, explored so far in bio-evolutionary, psychological, and sociological terms, appears in the marketplace and in the discipline that once called itself "the science of value:" economics.

NOTES to Chapter Five: *Signs, Self and Force*

[i] For readers concerned that this subject has nothing to do with real economics:

> Nothing is easier than predicting the future course of scientific development—and nothing is more likely to be wrong. Nevertheless, let me rush in where angels fear to tread. In all likelihood, the human capital research program will never die but it will gradually fade away to be swallowed up by the new theory of signaling, the theory of how teachers and students, employers and employees, and indeed all buyers and sellers select each other when their personal attributes matter for the purpose of completing a transaction, but when information about these attributes is subject to uncertainty.
>
> Mark Blaug, *The Methodology of Economics,* 2nd ed., (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 218.

[ii] Trophies have an interesting history. In ancient Greece, trophies (*tropaion*) were sacred "scarecrows" dressed in the armor and weaponry of the vanquished enemy and left on the field of battle as sign of victory, as an insult and deterrent to reprisal. In Roman times the practice evolved into bringing that scarecrow (Latin: *trophaeon*) home to show/prove victory. Today, a trophy is something awarded by authority, and therefore a token of legitimacy, for a competitive victory, and then put on show, where it becomes a *sign* of legitimacy.

Signs of security include identification of ethnic identity (e.g. Rwandan identity cards identifying Hutus and Tutsis, the yellow star for Jews in Germany in the 1930s), blood ties, and so on. Signs of approval and confidence are given (away) by facial expressions and "body language."

[iii] See for example, Dan Sperber: *Rethinking Symbolism*, transl. Alice L. Morton (London: Cambridge University Press, 1975); with Dierdre Wilson, *Relevance: Communication and Cognition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), and "Apparently Rational Beliefs," in Hollis and Dukes, eds., *Rationality and Relativism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). Also in contrast to most academically respectable language theory, the scheme proposed here aims to cover nonverbal forms of communication.

[iv] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), and *Frame Analysis: an essay on the organization of experience* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974). Lionel Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

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[v] See Charles W. Morris, ed., *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1934); also Anselm Strauss, ed., *The Social Psychology of George Herbert Mead* (Chicago:The University of Chicago Press, 1956), and James V. Wertsch, *Vygotsky and the Social Formation of Mind* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). Josiah Royce in *The Problem of Christianity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968 [1913]) also makes a great deal of the idea that the personal identity—the self—depends for its very existence and consistency on dealing with the equally personal identities—the selves—of others. Charles Hartshorne made this idea the very cornerstone of his theology: God Himself was socially constituted.

Of course the problem of *personal* identity in philosophy goes back to classical antiquity, and was revived by Locke, Hume, Kant. and in this century, Royce, Hartshorne, Strawson and many others. One of the bones of contention is whether personal identity is sufficiently given by the constraint of logical consistency upon personal experience, combined with memory. Mead is asking: What is it that is experienced if not, in large part, other identities, i.e. *other people*? Is the self not "always-already" social?

[vi] I have in mind: Daniel Dennett, "The Origins of Selves," *Cogito* 2 (1989): 163–173, N. Humphrey and D. Dennett, "Speaking for Ourselves," *Raritan* 9 (1989): 69–98, and Owen Flanagan, *Consciousness Reconsidered* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 193ff.

[vii] "Normally there is nothing of which we are more certain than the feeling of ourself, of having an ego, " writes Freud, echoing Descartes' *cogito*. He goes on:

> This ego appears to us as something autonomous and unitary, marked off distinctly from everything else. That such an appearance is deceptive, and that on the contrary the ego is continued inward without any sharp delimitation into an unconscious mental entity which we designate as the id and for which it serves as a kind of facade—this was a discovery first made by

psycho-analytic research, which should still have much more to tell us about the relation of the ego to the id. But toward the outside, at any rate, the ego seems to maintain clear and sharp lines of demarcation.

Freud is here getting ready to describe the mystical-religious feeling of unity with God as a sort of pathology of ego-boundary maintenance toward the outside. The excerpt is from Sigmund Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents*, transl. James Strachey, is found in Edward T. Oakes, ed., *German Essays on Religion* (New York: Continuum, 1994), 120.

[viii] A personal anecdote: In 1975, as a graduate student at Yale, my long-time interest in Zen Buddhism was peaking. I was actively reading Zen texts, practicing za-zen (i.e. "sitting-zen" or meditation), and trying to practice Zen's precepts of spontaneity, naturalness, non-verbal expression, and especially of self- or ego-lessness.

One day a famed Zen master from Japan visited the campus (I cannot remember his name). He was a modest and graceful person of uncertain age, wearing a simple black robe, and accompanied by two aides who acted as translators. After addressing a room full of enthusiasts on the topic of Zen practice, he accepted questions from the audience. Through his translators I asked him the following:

"Master, how can I *lose* my self, or not *have* a self, if everywhere I am asked 'how are you?' 'what do you think?' 'how do you feel?' 'will you be responsible for (this or that)?', and so on. It seems that others *insist* that I have an 'I,' even though I may not want one, and this makes ego-lessness difficult."

I was sure that the Master would swiftly and delightedly bring out the logical circularity in my statements. Following Zen tradition, he would raise the stakes and provoke a crisis with something like "And who is this '*I*' that wishes to lose itself?" or "You cannot be spoken to!" Or perhaps he would just laugh out loud, or put his sandals on his head, or do something equally *non sequitur*…as also is the Zen tradition for provoking enlightenment.

After much translation and nodding and smiling between him and the interpreter, my answer came back:

"Yes," he said, "*it is difficult*."

Indeed. It is easier to let go of ego-construction and ego defence in a well-run monastery, or in solitude as a hermit, or in the single-minded practice of a solitary art like painting. Not for nothing does one begin there, and only there, to lose one's self, and to develop that improbable combination of alertness, imperturbability, and efficiency that characterizes the mystically enlightened.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, in *Finding Flow: The Psychology of Engagement with Everyday Life* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997) argues his way to a similar conclusion from a Western perspective. For all that has been written since about it, the best introduction to Zen Buddhism may still be Alan Watts' *The Way of Zen* (New York, Vintage Books, 1957), deepened by D. T. Suzuki's three volume *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (London: Luzac and Company, 1927, 1933, 1934) republished in the U.S. in the 1960s.

[ix] Talent agencies, publicity agencies, literary agents and publishers (not to mention novelists, playwrights, reporters, and biographers) are very much in the business of creating appealing and memorable "characters" out of much more complex and ambiguous material. My point: are we not all engaged in this business? Even John Keats referred to his poetry as "soul making."

Opera star Luciano Pavarotti is a "big man" who "loves life." He can no more lose weight or become morose than stop singing. Audiences knew exactly what to expect from John Wayne and Humphrey Bogart, from Marilyn Munroe and Lana Turner. The studios managed their every appearance; they controlled every line their stars could utter and every situation they were permitted to portray. Today's actors are freer to be sure, but in experimenting with roles in order to "grow," show off their acting skills, or reach new audiences, today's stars break character at considerable risk to their careers. (On the waning and rising fortunes of several movie stars in this regard, see Bernard Weinraub "The Elusive Rules of Becoming Boffo," *The New York Times,* October 29, 1995, p. E5.)

My claim that announcements and comparisons of personal preferences are the currency of most identity-politics among teenagers must be qualified: this is true in the main of the young of prosperous cultures and communities. The children of nations and even neighborhoods that are in trouble—perhaps at war, perhaps in poverty—may be far more serious than this. These young men and women establish their identities not by which colors and rock-bands they prefer, but by which political and religious beliefs they hold to, which gangs they are members of, i.e., tokens far lower on the stratigraphy.

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[x] It is sometimes supposed that if egos and selves are socially constructed, then ants, termites, bees and other social insects that live in large and complex social systems ought to have egos and selves too. However, for all their size in terms of population and, therefore, complexity by virtue of slightly asynchronous individual activity, ant colonies, bee hives, and so on are not *that* complex. This is because individual insects, within a few rigid "classes," are genetically identical. Their needs are evident to each other, and the variety of tokens (chemical messages) available for exchange between them is small even if we were to assume that each insect had to "decide" what to do next. The spatiotemporal range of these messages is very small, too. Individual ants *need* no selves, and thus *have* no selves. They are closer to cellular automata than to little persons.

[xi] Remembering Figure 2.10 and looking at the discussion in Appendix Three, we might say this: that our selves exist in the *window of comprehension*, while our reality dwells well outside of it.

[xii] Daniel Dennett, cited by Flanagan, *Consciousness Reconsidered*, p. 202):

> There is in every country on earth a Head of State... That is not to say that a nation lacking such a figurehead would cease to function day to day. But it is to say that in the longer term it may function much better if it has one... The drift of the analogy is obvious. In short, a human being too may need a figurehead—especially given the complexities of human social life.

The self, I am saying, is a figurehead in Dennett's sense. Plato would agree.

One might also explore, as I have elswhere, analogies between the self and a business enterprise. It seems a short stretch to see how, in the psychological economy, the self advertises itself, positions itself, cuts its costs, invests, tries to grow, serves its "customers," flatters "suppliers," produces things of value, makes and diverts profits, pays "taxes" to the common weal. The self also has front-offices and backrooms, is held liable for its actions, depends on good-will, accumulates capital, comes to terms, pays dues, and "buys" insurance. Sometimes it acts irrationally in the short term in order to make a point, a point that is useful in the long term. And so on. But especially interesting is how the self is objectively *there* for others to grasp, as an entity, just as a business enterprise is there to do commerce with and add value to the world with a name...and yet remains, itself, a curiously abstract object…an "incorporation" not wholly unlike our individual social selves.

[xiii] In many cases, of course, the respondent seizes the power to dictate the terms under which he will participate in the initiator's exchange-offer at all. But even here, I would claim, the initiator has the slight advantage because it is what *he* envisages or wants in the first place that is under discussion. He sets the agenda.

[xiv] With money, that is—which is, I hope to show, a token of freedom.

> Struggling to attract foreign investment...Peru will soon begin selling what many (in Peru) consider an inappropriate item for free market commerce: Peruvian citizenship. The price will be $25,000 for the head of a family and $2,000 each for immediate family members. This is considered remarkably low by some Government officials....
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> Nathaniel C. Nash, "Peru, Hoping to Lure Investors Offers Citizenship for $25,000," *New York Times,* May 9, 1993, A4.

The practice of selling positions of authority, citizenship, passports, and other valuable legitimacy and security tokens for money, of course, also has a long history in the underground economy. The practice flourishes in times of national economic distress. What is remarkable here, in Mr. Nash's article, is the official endorsement. In Chile, permanent residency is open to those with capital and technical training. In Mexico, permanent residence status costs $160,000, and citizenship this plus five years residence. Canada asks for $500,000 and the United States $1,000,000 for permanent residence status. Singapore offers the same to Hong Kong Chinese for $500,000, while Taiwan offers them the same merely for buying property in Taiwan. What the buyer of citizenship *gets* in the exchange is legal access to the markets, labor, resources in the host country; to lower tax rates; to the security apparatus; and to certain political activities. What he gives up is money of low marginal utility—surplus money, if you will—in the form of the freedom to spend or invest that money in other ways.

[xv] Using our terms can also shed some light, I submit, on the logic of how we treat the offense of rape. Indeed, the current interest in defining rape (as versus sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or misbehavior) can be seen as the problem of determining what stratum of force may acceptably be brought to bear by one person on another in order to precipitate sexual congress.

Briefly: historically, only the credible threat or actual use of *violence* by one party upon the other has qualified a sex act as rape. But at the time of this writing all three forms of coercion, as we have listed them, are coming under consideration as qualifying rape, that is, *authority* and *power* as well as violence. For example, sex between professor and student or between employer and employee which is instigated by virtue of the former's authority over the latter can today be counted as "sexual harassment" if not rape. In 1997, a rash of cases of sex between male Army drill sergeants and female trainees who did not explicitly object *or* consent to sex at the time, nicely located where the military courts, at least, placed the crossover point from persuasion to coercion and from sexual harassment to rape. Material to the judgment in these cases was the all-but-complete *authority* that drill sergeants are routinely granted over almost every aspect of their trainees' lives. This *authority* is close indeed to pure *power*, as our stratigraphy of forces shows.

(For legal arguments not unlike the one I have just developed, see, for example, "Citing Sergeant's Power, Judge Refuses to Drop Rape Charges," *The New York Times*, April 19, 1997, A4. This from *CNN Interactive* (http://www.cnn.com/US/9704/29/army.sex.pm/), April 29, 1997 after the conviction of Staff Sgt. Delmar Simpson of 18 rapes:

> Military law states that physical force isn't required to prove rape; "constructive force," including threats or intimidation, is sufficient. In a key ruling, the judge, Col. Paul Johnston, said drill sergeants command so much authority over trainees—telling them where to eat and sleep and how to act —that they are like parents. Because of that authority, Johnston said, drill sergeants do not need to use a weapon or threats of harm to fit the definition of "constructive force" necessary for a rape conviction. "This is a case of the accused using his power, his easy access and his ability to control—an unscrupulous drill sergeant grossly misusing his position to force his sexual attentions on trainees," prosecutor Capt. Theresa Gallagher said in closing arguments.

The drill sergeant in question ultimately received a sentence of 25 years imprisonment.

Not surprisingly, the sternness of the punishment varies with the gravity of the force used. Sexual *misbehavior* is usually punished by social ostracism, criticism, or private "dressing down" by peers and superiors. That is, the punishment varies from light to severe disapproval. Sexual *harassment* is punished by these and/or institutional sanctions (e.g. firing, demotion, or non-promotion), while *rape* is usually punished by all of the above plus violence, either violence by the state, as in the case of forcible arrest and imprisonment, or by individuals, as in revenge injuries, murders, and the like. Would-be Don Juan's, alarmed at the modern trend to define ever-gentler, unilaterally-offered inducements to the bedroom as "rape" or "sexual harassment" are fond of predicting, ruefully, where the trend must lead: it must lead ultimately to the criminalization of *all* seduction strategies, all forces, all "moves" and "come-ons," including the offering of drinks, compliments, encouragements, promises of happiness, or, finally, even heading "innocently" over to the sofa (which amounts to persuasion by *example*).

I discuss rape not to contribute to the legal or clinical debates about the nature, causes, and just punishment of rape, which is a vastly complicated issue. Nor do I claim to offer a once-and-for-all definition of rape. I want only to test our stratigraphy of forces for applicability to the real world. Does it or does it not outline how we try to deal rationally with rape and sexual harassment? I think it does.

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[xvi] Of course, I am ignoring here the more mechanical aspects of (law) enforceability, e.g., the ability to detect transgressions in the first place, suffient physical resources to apprehend transgressors, to apply sanctions and punishments, and so forth.

[xvii] For a summary discussion of the phenomena of "loss aversion" and "the endowment effect" see Richard Thaler *The Winner's Curse: Paradoxes and Anomalies in Economic Life*, (New York: The Free Press, 1992), 63–78.

[xviii] The psychoeconomic opposite of self-sacrifice, I propose, is *spite*: that is, when a "promise" is made by one party to raise his or her own satisfaction level or token-dealing stratum at the other's expense, i.e., with the effect that the other party will have to lower theirs.

[xix] Robert Kane refers to our "beginning at the top" principle as the mandate to *use minimum force* to "restore the moral sphere".

[xx] In this light, the Golden Rule "do unto others as you would have others do unto you" presumes that one imagines oneself to be in relatively high standing in the psychoeconomy—or that one deserves to be. Masochism originates precisely in the lack of such self-regard, as does sadism. Although they usually are associated with the lower strata—at least symbolically—of survival and *violence*, neither sadism nor masochism need be manifest only there: their logic can be felt throughout the psychoeconomy, at all strata of the stratigraphy. (More about this in Chapter Seven.)

In this light, President Richard Nixon's variation on the "do unto others..." maxim is revealing. He said "My rule in international affairs is 'Do unto others *as they would do* unto you.'" Unless one believes that others, like oneself, are altruistically inclined, how could Nixon's maxim produce anything but escalating paranoia and sadism, even without Kissinger's addendum to the rule "…Plus 10 percent!"? See Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992) cited in the *New York Times Book Review*, September 6, 1992, 21).

Factoid: by the criteria of a 1992 Gallup poll, 13% of Americans are saints. Who are the most numerous members of this group? Non-white women who grew up in the South and earn less than $10,000 a year. Some of our least empowered citizens, it seems, are the ones we are most likely to find morally good. (Reported by Ari Goldman, "Religion Notes", *New York Times,* July 11, 1992, A9.) And this from artist/composer/singer Laurie Anderson:

> *When love is gone, there's always justice.*
> *And when justice is gone, there's always force.*
> *And when force is gone, there's always Mom.*
> *Hi, Mom!*

[xxi] I explore the unfairness of exchange in general at some length in Chapter Seven, and of market exchange

in particular in Chapter Eight, pp. 36–40.

Actually, Smith himself had admitted that the market was founded on persuasive strategies for initiating and carrying through exchanges. The invisible hand had fingers, as it were, and *we* were those fingers. Smith also objected to coercive strategies—strategies based on authority, power, and violence—and it was these that he sought to eradicate by allowing the free play of inter-human persuasive strategies, i.e. persuasion itself, encouragement, and example. In a lecture on March 30, 1763, put it thus:

> If we should inquire into the principle in the human mind on which this disposition of trucking is founded, it is clearly on the natural inclination everyone has to persuade. The offering of a shilling...is in reality offering an argument to persuade one to [exchange, and that] to do so...is for his interest. Men always endeavor to persuade others to be of their opinion, even when the matter is of no consequence to them.
>
> Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978 [1896]), p. 352.

For Marx, one supposes, even persuasion was too coercive: he drew the line between them much higher on the stratigraphy. And perhaps here's why. It may be the case that, in the state of well-founded freedom, all kinds of force except *example*, which now lie "beneath" one, might *look like* coercion. In the socialist society Marx was idealizing, all men were well-foundedly free, and would thus find all exchange prompted by anything other voluntary emulation or acceptance of invitation coercive, and likely unfair. We might generalize with this hypothesis: that the defining line between "coercion" and "persuasion" might ride up and down with each individual's dominant need-state—like a horizon line that is always level with his or her own "elevation" or presumotion of other's. If this were so, then, by my earlier definition of threats and promises, all threats would be coercive and all promises persuasive. My own locating of the line between "persuasive" and "coercive" strategies at the divide between legitimacy-*authority* and approval-*persuasion* might reflect nothing more than the judgment, on *my* part, that the median dominant need-state of the general population exists here. (Another reason, of course, is aesthetic: i.e. its diagrammatic symmetry.)

[xxii] "The worker's life depends on his selling his labor-power, the capitalist-employer's does not." This is from John Hobson's calm and yet searing analysis of the asymmetry in bargaining power between capitalist employers and labor-employees in his *Economics and Ethics* (New York: D. C. Heath and Co., 1929), especially pp. 207–210. Today we would simply point to an asymmetry in the negative value to the average worker of being dismissed from his job versus the negative value to the firm of losing the marginal efforts of the worker. For all but the most mission-critical of workers, and even if the labor market were such that both firm and worker had many alternatives (to work for someone else/to hire someone else), the cost of changing jobs and/or moving to the worker are apt to be much greater, relative to his total means, than the costs to the firm are for the labor lost, or for replacing the worker, relative to the firm's total means. Hence labor unions.

For a far-reaching contemporary analysis of the power asymmetry between employers and the employed, see Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis, "Contested Exchange: New Microfoundations for the Political Economy of Capitalism," *Politics and Society* 18 (1990), 165–222. Psychological asymmetries during exchange are very much part of the analysis of the "logic of exchange" that I explore in Chapter Seven of this book.

[xxiii] On the changing definition of rape, see Note 15 above.

[xxiv] Robert Wuthnow, *Sharing the Journey* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), quoted by Ann Swindler in the *New York Times Book Review*, March 20, 1994, 12. Some of the observations here are Ms. Swindler's.

[xxv] Note the implication that the kind of self a cooperating group has—be it a family, tribe, team, band, business, battalion, or nation—does *not* emerge as something more evolved, something higher in value or complexity-and-organization than its components. As I have remarked several times, the group-mind concept is fallacious, attractive as it is today especially when computers and telecommunications can be claimed to be creating a global brain, the very "noösphere" predicted by Teilhard de Chardin! (Cf. the end of Chapter Three). Social structures evolve before selves do, or rather, *as* selves do. Note, though, that it is in only in the brains of creatures that participate in fluid social structures that consciousness, sensations, thoughts, volition, feelings, conscience, etc., arise—creatures that must view their own roles, positions, opportunities, and constraints in terms of *others'* roles, positions, opportunities, and constraints. As life becomes more complicated in this way, it is in each individual's brain/mind that this "complication" is contained and reflected. Like mountains, which are pushed up from below, *individual*s are pushed up by social geology, as it were, to reach the heights of Ω required for self-awareness as a social actor.

[xxvi] On how businesses of the future will (have to) become more personal—and more *genuinely* personal—in this sense, see Faith Popcorn, *The Popcorn Report* (New York: Doubleday, 1991). See also my remarks on the "experience economy" in the Coda to this book.

The strategies used by professional persuaders such as marketers, salesmen, fund-raisers, speech- and ad-writers (not to mention politicians, administrators, you, me, and everyone else) are nicely analyzed by psychologist Robert Caldiani (see "The Science of Persuasion," *Scientific American*, February 2001, pp. 76–81, and *Influence: Science and Practice*, Fourth Edition [Allyn & Bacon, 2001]). Caldiani identifies six human tendencies: the felt obligation (1) to reciprocate other's offers and favors, (2) to behave in a self-consistent manner, and (3) to seek social validation through conformity, as well as (4) wanting to be liked, (5) being impressed by authority, and (6) being sensitive to (news of) impending shortages. Each of these evolutionarily-adaptive tendencies in human nature, Caldiani shows, are readily exploited by determined persuaders. And each is translatable into the needs of our stratigraphy and their associated "forces". (In the *Scientific American* article, Caldiani also reports empirical research by Stanford researchers that finds cultural differences in which of the six tendencies is most effective at exerting persuasive force. When asked for "voluntary" compliance to a request for help in the workplace, Americans are most sensitive to the need for reciprocation [*example*], the Chinese to appeals to *authority*, the Spanish to the liking of their friends [*approval, confidence*], and Germans to consistency with the official rules of the organization [*power/security* and *authority*). See also *www.influenceatwork.com*.)

[xxvii] Isaiah Berlin makes the same point in "Two Concepts of Liberty," in his *Four Essays on Liberty* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). See also our discussion of the differences between liberty and freedom in Chapter Four.

[xxviii] American have a rather sanitized view of Martin Luther King. In his later years especially, he had been mixing more radical views into his otherwise reassuring and high-minded speeches and statements. See Michael Eric Dyson, *I May Not Get There With You: The True Martin Luther King Jr*. (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

[xxix] A related topic, which cannot really been gone into here, is the U.S.A.'s penchant for exporting its democracy to foreign countries (e.g. Russia, Rwanda, Haiti, Cambodia, South Africa, Bosnia...), a process which is too often thought to have succeeded with the holding of free elections of government officials. True, elections and voting are the most central ritual and feature of democracy. But also true is that most of the rituals of multi-party democracy (which operate at the strata of confidence, legitimacy, and approval) depend on the prior existence of a rule of law, on the existence of some functional and honest bureaucratic infrastructure, of a system of taxation that raises government revenues for politicians to allocate, and, in general, on the existence of a society in which most of the problems of security and of the means of survival are largely, if not yet perfectly, solved. To install the *procedures* of democracy without these rudiments in place first is simply to force others to engage in a charade useful only for securing philanthropic financial aid from Western democracies. This charade bound to unravel in fairly short order unless that aid is quickly turned to providing the foundations for genuine and viable democracy—foundations that should have been there in the first place, of course, such as survival-, security- and legitimacy-providing educational, industrial, legal, and agricultural reform, some wealth redistribution, sound physical and informational infrastructure, and so forth, all of which, ironically, *could have been more quickly and earlier put in place by a sympathetic* non-*democratic regime*.

[xxx] Cf. Note 26 above.

[xxxi] Compare the response of a person who believes that his personal identity will survive his initiation into the band to the response of a person who believes that, once he joins, he will have a new identity and no memory of his former self. The second is more likely to join, even when the demand made is otherwise unacceptable; which I think explains the prevalence in terrorist organizations of code names, new names, false papers, the use of masks, and such. They are as much to elude pangs of conscience as to elude capture.

The threat "kill that person over there and become (or remain) one of us, or we will kill that person and a dozen more" was one used by the Nazis in Jewish ghettoes, with the first "kill" command replaced by "inform on" (which soon enough amounted to the same thing as "kill"). The threat was directed to the *Judenrat*, or Jewish ghetto police, who again and again were placed in the position of believing they were *saving* lives by cooperating, not the least of those lives being their own and their family's.

[xxxii] For a more comprehensive discussion of self-perputating memes such as the ones we have been discussing, see Aaron Lynch, *Thought Contagion: How Belief Spreads Through Society* (New York: Basic Books/Harper Collins, 1996).

[xxxiii] See Chapter One, p. 19, for a discussion of the various kinds of efficiency that evolutionary success can be measured by. In Chapter Six, p. 26ff., I will discuss the "quality and duration" of a life as its *plenitude*.
