HUMAN AGENCY IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

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Part 1 of this essay was written before I finished Imagining India in which the issue of human agency is central. Part 2 follows and is an attempt to bring what I argued in part 1 up to date in 1995, 2005, and 2009. I have made some changes and additions to both parts.
Human Nature & Human Sciences

• Mechanical Naturalism
• Existential Humanism

Hypermodern and Hypomodern Shifts

• Electronic Naturalism
• Designer Cosmopolitanism

Conclusion

We know, or at least we have been told, a great deal about Man; that God made him a little lower than the angels; that Nature made him the offspring of apes; that he has an erect posture, to which his circulatory system is ill adapted, and four incisors in each jaw, which are less liable to decay than the rest of this teeth, but more liable to be knocked out; that he is a rational animal, a risible animal, a tool-using animal, an animal uniquely ferocious and malevolent towards his kind; that he is assured of God, freedom, and immortality, and endowed with means of grace, which he prefers to neglect, and the hope of glory, which he prefers to exchange for the fear of hell-fire; and that all his weal and all his woe is a by-product of his Oedipus-complex or, alternatively, of his ductless glands. (Collingwood 1992 [1942]: 1)

Human Nature & Human Sciences

So comments R. G. Collingwood (1889–1943) on the perennial quest of humans to define the nature of Man, to isolate some “distinguishing feature,” some “essence” that differentiates the “human” from the “animal” and forms the basis of civilization or society. It is a nature that is stable—it does not change with the passage of time—and universal—it is the same at the underlying level for all peoples, whatever their cultural differences may be. Like Collingwood, I am a confirmed nominalist and social pragmatist: human nature consists of what people have done, of their activities, and of the representations they have made of them. Neither is it an occult entity or a spiritual substance to be revealed
by theology nor is it, in its modernist recension, a genetic
code or construct knowable by the same methods used in
the natural sciences and expressible in mathematical terms.
My own position immediately brings to the fore the ques-
tion of human agency. Much of Collingwood’s work fo-
cused on the problem of constructing a theory of hu-
man agency yet until very recently this topic has been a
stepchild. Within the more important schools or practices
of social science, including anthropology itself, theories of
human agency are, of course, implicit, yet few have con-
centrated their attention on some of the major questions:
How do humans as agents articulate and modify them-
selves and their relations to other agents? Can the insti-
tutions or groups (associations, communities, businesses,
families, governments), in which numerous humans are in-
volved be thought of as compound or complex agents and
not reduced either to totalities called “societies” or the “in-
dividuals” who compose them? The very fact that “society”
rather than “polity” is the cover term we use in the social
sciences for complex agents already tells us something (as
Collingwood long ago showed). It tells us that these disci-
plines downgrade the political and historical, the conjunc-
tural and contingent quality of those agents and stress the
structural and necessary.

Recently, scholars in different disciplines have begun to
foster this stepchild. I will say more about these efforts in
my conclusion. What I would like to do now is a bit of “de-
construction” on the social sciences on the related issue of
human nature and human agency. It is an attempt on my
part at an ethnography or anthropology of the “knowing
subject.” The argument I will make is as follows: the “mod-
er” social sciences, those disciplines that have tried since
the eighteenth century to replace a transcendent God as
the Agent of the human world with a foundational reason, have rather skimpy and obscure theories of human agency. These sciences have, for the most part, constituted themselves, either wittingly or unwittingly, as discursive practices which tend to strip agency from most of the humans and human institutions that they study in the name of a universal and determinate humanity or “human nature.” As they do this, they displace it onto a “substantialized agent.” By this I mean that they imagine to exist an agent, unitary or plural, that possesses a single mind, often called “human nature” in the Anglophone world. That mind has a single purpose or goal—the salvation, liberation, or emancipation of human beings in some major respect—and is universal in its reach. The substantialized agent precedes the actions of transitory humans and remains unaffected by them though it underlies them. Standing high above or deep within the social world, that agent is itself unchanging; yet it has manifested itself more or less fully in various polities, and in differently defined periods of history or phases of human development. That agent has a double presence or incarnation which thinks and acts for it in the “modern” period. The “intellect” of that agent is the social scientist with the “right” approach. Its “will” is the sort of person or institution assumed best to exemplify the agent’s nature. As will be seen below, scholars have used metaphors to constitute these substantialized agents.

The reason why the human sciences continually concoct these metaphysical agents is embedded in the purposes of these human sciences as sciences: its practitioners want to construct a utopian world in which a science of human needs, desires, etc. will either eliminate politics or reduce it to a minimum. At the same time, they want to produce a world in which the value of the “individual” will be supreme.
They are, thus, in a bind. On the one hand they want to constitute the human sciences as determinist and predictive. On the other hand they want to constitute human beings as free individuals, enlightened subjects “emancipated” from their troublesome pasts.

It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that a crucial issue in the social or human sciences is whether social scientific knowledge should differ significantly from knowledge in the natural sciences. Those who have argued that knowledge in the social sciences should resemble knowledge in the natural sciences, such as physics and chemistry, have subscribed to “scientism” (Sorell 1991: 1–4). An older scientism, which culminated in the “scientific empiricism” of the Vienna Circle and the Unity of Science Movement, promulgated its agenda in the never completed *International Encyclopedia of Unified Science* (Sorell 1991: 4–23). A “new scientism” would not only make philosophy subservient to the natural sciences (as analytical philosophy); it would also accede to the claims of cognitive science to displace it altogether (Sorell 1991: 127–75).

Closely related to scientism in the social sciences is “naturalism” (Benton 1998), a term given many meanings. Naturalism as I use the term here is, broadly, the reductionist idea that the human world is not only part of the natural world, but can and should be studied using the methods of the natural sciences. It rejects the opposition supposed to exist between the “two cultures” postulated by C. P. Snow in 1959 (2001), the scientific and humanist. Socio-biology (Wilson 1975) is perhaps the most strident example of the naturalist colonization of the social sciences. A non-reductionist version of naturalism accepts that the human world is part of the natural world, but argues that there are different ontologically distinct levels in the natural world.
each with its own distinct but related epistemology. An exemplar of this in the field of biology, critical of the determinism and reductionism of sociobiology, is *Not in Our Genes* (Rose, Kamin, and Lewontin 1982).

Scientism and naturalism have variously hegemonized those human sciences usually referred to as the social sciences—economics, psychology, political science, sociology, anthropology, and history (sometimes grouped with the humanities). Their adherents, often unwittingly, tend to depersonalize the agents they substantialize. Instead of asking why individuals who think and act alike do so, they invoke “human nature” and instead of querying the practices whereby social classes and corporations shape themselves and the world around them, they talk about “late capitalism.” They would also speak of the actions of agents as “processes” and “forces” and of practices as “mechanisms.” They would refer to different practices that converge in their results as any number of “izations,” the most mentioned one nowadays being ‘globalization.’

Those who have opposed naturalism have tended to take a position that I shall label “humanist,” another protean term. Humanism here is the idea that there is something distinct and special about the human “mind” or “spirit” and the exercise of “free will” and the appreciation of “beauty” and that the human sciences must take that into account and not turn to the natural sciences (or, for that matter, to the erstwhile enemy of science, theology). This view has to one degree or the other hegemonized the “humanities” or “arts” disciplines—classics, literary studies, and philosophy. Scholars imbued with the views of naturalism and humanism have hegemonized theology as a contemporary academic discipline under the rubric of “religious studies” (also known as comparative religions, science of religion,
The wrangling between the advocates of these two views, complicated and confusing in itself, has been cross-cut by another great split, this between those who stress the importance of the “individual” or “personal” over the “social” or “collective”. Let us call the former position “individualist” or “atomist” and the latter position “socialist” or “holist.” We are, thus, able to identify four “tendencies” or “strains” of social scientific thinking. I present them in summary form (table 1). Each of them overlaps with the other on some points while opposing them on other points. The adherents of one position also try to hierarchize the other positions with respect to their own, accepting their “correct” points and rejecting those they declare incorrect. On occasion, holders of one view even attempt to expunge the views of their opponents from “respectable” academic discourse. That is, each of the four positions is dialectically related to the other three. I think of them more as positions in a discursive field than as slots in a taxonomy.

Each of the four positions can be seen as advocating its own view of human nature or its equivalent and as emphasizing a particular form of reason or way of thinking. Each also theorizes away the human agency of its human subjects. Implicit in each is also a view of how the human world ought to be constituted. Each of them has, to put it another way, an “ideological” aspect (including the views that claim not to have one). That is, each involves an elaborately articulated life-wish for persons and the world at large. It is precisely here, in the transposition of social scientific practice into the practices of everyday life and back again, that the penny drops with respect to human agency. Of these four positions in the social sciences, that of individualist naturalism, was the prevailing one in most British
and American departments of social science in the decade after World War II, when the period of the Cold War, of US and USSR world rule, began. So let me begin with it. After an account of the four positions in what we might call the “modern” social sciences, I then turn to a discussion of the changes that have taken place in the human sciences with the end of the Cold War. I argue that major shifts in notions of agency, which I characterize as “hypermodern” and “hypomodern,” have occurred.

Mine is clearly not the first critique of scientism, naturalism and humanism, and atomism and holism, in the social sciences. A collection of essays critical of scientism in the social sciences came out as scientism entered its heyday (Schoeck 1960). Some of the criticisms in these essays are to the point and well worth reading today, but they tend to adopt a humanist and individualist stance, thereby rescripting the oppositions that are the problem in the first place. They also tend to focus on epistemology at the expense of ontology and make the mistake of thinking that agency has been excluded altogether from the scientistic approaches. My focus here will be as much on the ontology of human agency as on the epistemology. As will be seen, God-like agents do appear in the human sciences.

**Mechanical Naturalism** The naturalists hold that there is a unity of knowledge about the world and that the knowledge that best exemplifies that unity is scientific knowledge of the “natural” world, by which they meant a world modeled after a machine (earlier a clock, in the nineteenth century, a steam engine, in this period, an internal-combustion engine, as in the automobile, or the jet engine of an airplane), the smallest unit of which was the atom. Atomic weaponry, during the Cold War, was a constant reminder of the power of this model. I have given this position the
MECHANICAL NATURALISM

A natural science is concerned solely with natural laws. The problems of all the natural sciences can be described, I think adequately and significantly, as problems of the analysis of natural systems, a natural system being a set of entities, whether events or themselves systems which in turn consist of entities of events as simpler systems. A system of this kind consists of certain units, events, or systems standing in certain relationships of interdependence with one another. A natural law may be defined as a statement of characteristics of a certain class of natural systems. I therefore hold that it is possible to reduce all the kinds of natural laws to one single class ....

When a relationship exists between two human organisms such that there is some convergence of interests, we have a relationship we can call a social relationship, distinct from all other relationships in the universe — in a system in which human beings are the units. (Radcliffe-Brown 1957 [1948]: 63, 65)

name of mechanical naturalism (page 8) (implicit in the linked quotation of the anthropologist).

For those who think in the terms of mechanical naturalism, the metaphor, the world is a machine, is operative. That being so, society is a machine and so, too, is the human being. Fritz Kahn (1888–1968), a science writer and illustrator, has left us with a classic representation of this constitutive metaphor, Man as a machine or, more precisely here, a factory (fig. 1).

The goal of science, we are told, is to formulate general laws or statements of regularities concerning events in the world so that events can be predicted and the world controlled. The method of science is to collect data through careful and objective observation and to test its theories in experiments. This idea of what science is about traces its genealogy back most directly to the French philosopher,
Figure 1: *Man as Machine/Factory* (1926)
Auguste Comte (1798–1857). It is called “positivism” after Comte’s idea that scientists should shun “metaphysical” speculation and concentrate on phenomena that could be “positively” or directly apprehended by the senses.

More immediate here were the “logical positivists” of the Vienna Circle, including Moritz Schlick (1882–1936), Rudolf Carnap (1891–1970), and Otto Neurath (1882–1945). They held that theories had to be verifiable in experience, and, after them, Karl Popper (1902–1994) (who argued that theories can be falsified but not verified) (Halfpenny 1982).

The British empiricists, John Locke (1632–1704), David Hume (1711–1776), and George Berkeley (1685–1753) can be taken as more remote ancestors of this view. According to positivists, the sciences are hierarchically related to one another. The highest science, the one with the most “complex” subject-matter, is sociology, but it has not quite yet become a positive science. The most successful science, the most positive, the most “advanced,” the “hardest,” the one that best exemplifies this kind of science is, so goes the argument, physics. And the highest expression that this scientific knowledge takes is mathematical or quantitative.

**Atomic Individuals** Social scientists of the naturalist persuasion have tended to privilege what I refer to as either atomic individuals or holist societies in their work. **Atomic individualism** (Bhaskar 1986: 66, 287–88 and Strauss 2008) as a form of naturalism claims among its strongest advocates the classical and neoclassical economists from Adam Smith (1723–1790) and David Ricardo (1772–1823) to Alfred Marshall (1842–1924) and, more recently, Milton Friedman (1912–2006), transitional to the “microeconomics” of neoliberalism. Some have traced this notion to the moral and political philosophers, Thomas Hobbes
ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM

The story of the United States is the story of an economic miracle and a political miracle that was made possible by the translation into practice of two sets of ideas—both, by a curious coincidence, formulated in documents published in the same year, 1776.

One set of ideas was embodied in *The Wealth of Nations*, the masterpiece that established the Scotsman Adam Smith as the father of modern economics. It analyzed the way in which a market system could combine the freedom of individuals to pursue their own objectives with the extensive cooperation and collaboration needed in the economic field to produce our food, clothing, our housing. Adam Smith’s key insight was that both parties to an exchange can benefit and that, *so long as cooperation is strictly voluntary*, no exchange will take place unless both parties do benefit. No external force, no coercion, no violation of freedom is necessary to produce cooperation among individuals all of whom can benefit. That is why, as Adam Smith put it, a man is ‘led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interests he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good.’ (continued)

(1588–1679) and Locke (Macpherson 1962). Equally important are the utilitarians, Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), James Mill (1773–1836) and John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) with their idea that utility is what brings pleasure to the greatest number of individuals and that pleasure and, especially, pain could be quantified. Atomist or “elementalist” psychologists, the “structuralists” Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920) and his followers, “introspectionist” in their approach, and, later, those such as J. B. Watson (1878–1958) and B. F. Skinner (b. 1904), “behaviorist” in their approach, were concerned with isolating the processes by which individuals functioned and developed as conscious, rational
The second set of ideas was embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Economic freedom is an essential requisite for political freedom. By enabling people to cooperate with one another without coercion or central direction, it reduces the area over which political power is exercised. (Milton & Rose Friedman 1981: xv–xvii)

self-interested beings. The sociologist William F. Ogburn (1886–1959) and his followers, with their sample surveys and statistical analyses, were the most vocal champions of “instrumental positivism” in the US and generally came to dominate the discipline there.²

These atomic naturalists tend to make an idea of consciously held “self-interest” central to their concept of human nature. They tend to see a person as situated in an individualist, competitive, market and as always motivated by the same drives or forces no matter what the circumstances (which is why commentators sometimes describe it as “abstract”) (Luks 1973: 73–79). The person in the variant called economic individualism (page 11), often traced to Adam Smith, is thought of primarily as a buyer and seller, an owner or consumer of commodities who is striving to maximize those things which are in his or her self-interest. Some experts on Adam Smith, however, claim that economists like Friedman have misread Adam Smith (page 13). The person in political individualism was thought of primarily as a receptacle of rights and interests. He (largely subsuming she) expressed those interests, in liberal democracies, by voting at elections and a special breed of political scientists, psephologists, tabulated and analyzed individual preferences. Sociological individualism (page 14) in American sociology (also called methodological individualism) is similar. Society here was,
ADAM SMITH MISREAD

While recognising the dynamism of the new industrial capitalism of his time, Smith was also concerned about the fragility of the competitive process. The ‘invisible hand’—which appears only once in the Wealth of Nations—was less an economic than a metaphysical concept. In Smith’s view it was not so much market forces which restrained the self-interest of the entrepreneur in the collusive process, as the force of ‘sympathy’ which cemented the social and economic fabric of society and stemmed from ‘the sympathetic feelings of the impartial and well-informed spectator’. This was an ethical and moral force explained not in The Wealth of Nations (1776) but in the book which Smith himself considered more important and his greater claim to posterity—his Theory of Moral Sentiments (1759)” (Holland 1987: 28)

then, simply the byproduct of individual decisions. In so far as a state was required at all, it was needed to maintain peace and order, to keep the passions of greedy, lazy, and aggressive individuals in check.

The extension of this view to the rapidly decolonizing parts of the world came in the form of “modernization theory” (W. W. Rostow) which divided the world up into developed (modern), developing (modernizing), and undeveloped (traditional) societies, the “Third World” (Pletsch 1981). Translating atomism onto a global stage, these theorists saw nations as acquisitive individuals competing with each other for the same good, modernity, and the consumerist utopia it would bring.

The acts of persons are governed, according to individualist naturalism, by thoughts that are largely the outcome of the exercise of what I will refer to as the faculty of “practical reason” usually known simply (and reductively) as “rationality.” I will call it, for the sake of clarity, acquisitive rationality. Practical reason, as opposed to philosophical or
...the single most persistent feature of American sociology is its ‘voluntaristic nominalism’ i.e. ‘the assumption that the structure of all social groups is the consequence of the aggregate of its separate, component individuals and that social phenomena ultimately derive from the motivations of these knowing, feeling and willing individuals’ (Hinkle & Hinkle, 1654, p. v). Such an assumption suits the instrumental positivists because their prime instrument, the sample survey, promises to provide them with ample material on the attitudes and self-declared behaviour of individuals. (Bryant 1985: 140)
times called “economics imperialism,” can be seen in the rise to prominence in sociology and political science of rational choice theory, descended from social exchange theory in sociology (not to be confused with exchange theory in anthropology). One of the chief missionaries here was the University of Chicago economist and Nobel Prize winner, Gary Becker (1930–2014) (Becker 1976, Coleman 1993 and Makgetla 1992). Its proponents turned to game theory as well as neoclassical economics for their “scientific” grounding. Jonathan Elster, a Norwegian Marxist and political scientist, enthusiastically embraced rational choice theory, along with game theory, in his work (1985), but has also pointed out some of the limits to rational action (1983) and even become skeptical of the theory itself (2007). The difficulties in sustaining the assumption that the core of human action is a determinate abstract calculative rationality, led some social scientists from early on to opt for a theory of qualified rationality. The political scientist and Nobel Prize winner Herbert Simon (1916–2001), considered the pioneer in this regard, coined the terms “bounded rationality” and “satisficing” to label these qualifications (1983).

The major metaphor used here for Man as well as Society or the State (often themselves also considered metaphorically as an organism as in the “body politic” or “Leviathan”) is that of a machine or mechanism, each of the parts of which are in a determinate relation to the other. The machine and its parts can be reduced to their smallest components, the knowledge of which is all that is needed to understand the larger wholes at higher levels. The reason for this is that there is no real difference between the laws governing the movements of the smallest components and those of the larger entities to which they belong. It is, therefore, possible to understand society and its institutions by knowing
the nature of the individuals of which they are composed—acquisitive rationality. Which is to say that this brand of naturalism is also atomist in its conceptualization of the social world and quite logically reductionist in its conception of how a science or a particular scientific project should proceed.

One important variant on this atomic, mechanical naturalism used “society is an organism” as its major metaphor. The chief proponent of this view in the social sciences was, of course, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) who saw competition, the “survival of the fittest” among both individuals and societies as the “mechanism,” later misnamed Social Darwinism, which caused society to evolve in an ordered fashion (Hofstadter 1955).

One major variant, linked to psychiatry and psychotherapy at the very margins of the human sciences, is the normalized and remedicalized version of psychoanalysis founded by Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). It sees Freud as a proto-neurophysiologist (Jacoby 1983: 16–19). The Freud I read does not construe the mind as an inherently (even if minimally) conscious and rational mechanism that functions smoothly if not tampered with but as a more or less passive entity subject to contending energies or forces. At work is what Solomon calls a hydraulic model (1983: 139–149). Pre-analyzed people here have a faculty of reason, the “I” (translated from the German ich into “ego”) which is under siege, pulled in different directions by the commands of the “Above Me” (über-ich, “super-ego”) and the drives of the “It” (es, “id”). The Above-me (parents, church, civilization) of Man is locked in eternal combat with his It (biology, animality). The Freudian person is not, therefore, distinguished by his or her possession of a transparently self-evident faculty of conscious practical reason, but
rather by a self-deceptive faculty of unconscious and disorderly practical reason.

Even this, the humanist or hermeneuticist (see below) Freud is thus undercut by naturalism, never mind the normalized Freud popular in America. That Freud sees “man” as a *homo economicus* whose normally balanced mind can be thrown off course by sexual desires and by stress. The job of the analyst is to bring about a fuller understanding of man’s inner workings so that he might adjust better to his circumstances.

The metaphors of the human and society as machines became hegemonic in the twentieth century. They appear in both elite and popular representations of the robot, and the modern city, the synecdoche of modern society. Such imagery, utilizing the machine esthetics created by Futurist artists in Italy and Constructivists in the Soviet Union, made frequent appearances in science fiction films whether utopian or dystopian. One widely circulated example from films is that of the futuristic skyscraper city which gives its name to *Metropolis* (Fritz Lang., 1927) and the of the robot in it, the electro-mechanical double of the film’s human heroine, Maria. Here both the city as a machine and the human as a robot (fig. 2) can be seen in a poster for the film.\(^3\)

Insofar as rationality is a prerequisite for human agency, it is difficult to see Acquisitive Man as a human agent, for such a person cannot monitor his/her own actions. People do not have the capacity to reflect on their own circumstances and past actions or on future intentions. They are instead the victims of spatial and temporal immediacy, responding to chunks of information and bits of passion that bombard them. Able to indicate preferences but certainly not to formulate choices, they are the patients or instru-
Figure 2: City as Machine/Human as Robot (1928)
ments of a market, not its agents.

If the ordinary man or woman, the object of study in this brand of social science, was not fully rational and exercises only a reduced form of human agency, then who is rational, who was the agent of human actions? The primary and economic answer was, the Free Market and the secondary and political answer was Democracy. Welded together, these formed a *Free Nation*, the foremost example of which was, of course, the USA. The United Nations was supposed to be the postwar embodiment of these agents for the entire world. The locus of this Agent of world order was, however, neither actual markets nor democracies, never mind the United Nations. It was “human nature,” the discrete, but common property of every individual. Here, then, we have

Figure 3: **Invisible Hand** (2008)
the substantialized agent of individualist naturalism, the owner of the “invisible hand.” It is not a single, transcendent God, but a pluralized, immanent nature, incarnated under different names in different situations as the middle classes or bourgeoisie, the free market, and free nations, and, on the world stage, as America. As already indicated, the image of the invisible hand (fig. 3) as the synecdochic agent of optimal outcomes and order is the metaphor at work here. It is much-discussed and often invoked and caricatured. The “intellect” of this agent was, of course,
the social (or should I say economic?) scientist, the monetarist, market analyst or industrial psychologist, the omnipresent public opinion pollster, and the psephologist, all competing in the market place of ideas. This knowing subject had as his “will” the national businessman, financier, or manager whom he or she advised. It was this couple of social scientific expert and manager which exercised reason in its fullest and highest form, that of scientific reason, the miraculous fusion of practical and theoretical reason (albeit of a passive, empiricist sort in the latter case). Many commentators have pointed to these businessmen and the corporations and international institutions as the actual agents that fashion the “economy.” One refers to these as “visible hands” (fig. 4).^6

The ontology of these atomic individualists oscillated between conventionalist or instrumentalist and realist: theories about the world are simply useful ways of talking about it and their coherence is in the eye of the beholder—scientists are gods, creating ideas of the world at will. Or, theories correspond to the structure or essence of the atom and the individual, its nature—scientists are merely priests; a determinate nature or human nature is the god here. I refer to this ambiguous ontology and its implicit epistemology as empirical realist (Bhaskar 1986: 7 and Halfpenny 1982: 113).

This wing of naturalism dovetailed pretty well in the politics of the United States with the Republican party’s view of the world. In Britain, it was the ideology of the Liberals and, under the label of “managerial capitalism,” of many Conservatives.

A summary of atomic individualism in tabular form is provided (table 1).
HOLIST SOCIALISM

The farther back we go into history, the more the individual and, therefore, the producing individual seems to depend on and belong to a larger whole: at first it is, quite naturally, the family and the clan, which is but an enlarged family; later on, it is the community growing up in its different forms out of the clash and the amalgamation of clans. It is only in the eighteenth century, in ‘civil society’, that the different forms of social union confront the individual as a mere means to his private ends, as an external necessity. But the period in which the standpoint—that of the isolated individual—became prevalent is the very one in which the social relations of society (universal relations according to the standpoint) have reached the highest state of development. Man is in the most literal sense of the word a zoon politikon, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society—something which might happen as an exception to a civilized man who by accident got into the wilderness and already potentially possessed within himself the forces of society—is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another. (Marx, Introduction, Grundrisse, Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy, 2000 [1857]: 380–81)

We now leave the world of free institutions, the individualist construct of naturalism, and proceed to the socialist.

Holist Societies The other prevalent wing of naturalism after World War II was that of holist socialism (page 22) I use the term socialist here in a very general sense to mean those who give priority to society over the individual. Proponents of this position formulate it in contradistinction to the individualist. Indeed, by the end of this period, by around 1970, it would be fair to say that adherents of socialism had gained the edge over supporters of individualist social science. Many of socialism’s proponents took Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), the French sociologist, who formulates his idea of society against the reductive indi-
FUNCTIONALISM
In the same sense as physiology social science must concern itself ... with the function of social usages....

The proper or essential activity of a social system is (a) to provide a certain adaptation to a particular environment and (b) to provide a certain integration, i.e., a uniting of individuals into an orderly arrangement. The function of any social usage (or belief) in a given social system is the totality of the effects it has in relation to adaptation and integration. (Radcliffe-Brown 1957 [1948]: 154)

individualism of classical economics, as the more immediate founding father of this mode of social scientific thinking. (Some might look back to Jean Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and his idea of general will.) The anthropologists and sociologists known as “functionalists,” those who followed A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) in British social anthropology and Talcott Parsons (1902–1979) in American sociology subscribed to holist ideas. The assumption in this version of naturalism is that “society”—the whole—is greater than the sum of its parts—the persons or “individuals” who make it up. Society is often conceived of here as though it were a supra-personal organism, the parts of which are intrinsically connected. The parts of such an entity must function properly together—whence the name functionalism (page 23)—if it is to maintain itself in a state of “equilibrium.” The use of a seemingly organic metaphor here is highly qualified, for the disciplinary owners of the idea of animal here, that of the “homeostatic organism” in biology, themselves analogize it to a machine.

If the individualists gave a concept of conscious self-interest prime importance, the socialists accord primacy to a concept of unconsciously held culture or ingrained or habitual rules of conduct and emotionally laden “val-
ues” or “attitudes,” what we might call a form of *coordinative rationality* to distinguish it from its acquisitive sibling. And it took the perspective of institutions—families, clans, cities, businesses, government bureaucracies, the professions, and factories—to name a few, and of the “roles” or parts of persons in them rather than the perspective of the maximizing individual.

The version of socialism we have been looking at so far is the dominant one generally referred to in sociological texts as “consensual.” Its proponents assumed that the rationality of society is immediately coordinative. Their position is conventionally opposed to “conflict theory,” a euphemized representation of the *historical materialism* (page 25) of Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) in its Leninist-Stalinist variant. Here society was not conceived of as a whole made up of presumably smoothly functioning parts, but as divided into classes. These, which curiously resemble the individuals of the utilitarians and the Society of the Durkheimian or Parsonian, were construed to have “class-interests” and were in the immediate present at odds with each other. Ultimately, however, the coordinative rationality of socialism would prevail. If the ultimate focus in consensual sociology tended to be on the “cultural” or psychological, the ultimate focus of the conflict-theorist tended to be on the “material,” on the means and relations of production and their control. Man was seen here as a Worker, as a Producer, but one who was alienated from himself and society, even though he may not have known it. Two variants of historical materialism are worth noting. One, the “critical theory” of the Frankfurt school, whose major figures were Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969), Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), saw the totality of society, in both the Soviet East
HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. (continued)

and the capitalist West, as dominating and oppressive and focussed on how the “culture industry” creates and meets “false needs” thereby integrating people into society. These scholars tried to address the problem of agency – or, more appropriately, patiency—by turning to ideas of repression and sublimation in Freud. The other, the “world-systems theory” of Immanuel Wallerstein (b. 1930) criticizes modernization theorists for their atomist approach and displaces it with an extension of historical materialism, functionalist sociology, and central place theory, to the political economy of the whole world.

The major holists within psychology, opponents of the structuralists, were the founders of the Gestalt school, Max Wertheimer (1883–1943), Kurt Koffka (1886–1941), and Wolfgang Köhler (1887–1967). They argued that configurational wholes (Gestalten) took precedence over their elements in perception.

Anthropologists, charged with the study of societies in their “traditional” or “primitive” form, and especially those in the Third World, also assumed that coordinative rationality was central to them, albeit unawares to their inhabitants. As more and more of the societies previously included in European empires became independent, a notion of cultural relativism, sometimes combined with structural-
At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production, or—what is but a legal expression for the same thing—with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution. With the change of the economic foundations the entire immense superstructure is more or less rapidly transformed. In considering such transformations a distinction should always be made between the material transformation of the of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, aesthetic, or philosophic—in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as our opinion of an individual is not based on what he thinks himself, so can we not judge of such a period of transformation by its own consciousness; on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained rather from the contradictions of material life, from the existing conflict between the social productive forces and the relations of production. (Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 2000 [1859]: 425–26)

Functionalism, became prevalent within this discipline and to a considerable extent in international discourses. Cultures were, in other words, declared to be formally equal. Some continued to hold that “civilization” could be scaled across different societies, even if cultures were different. Scholars, especially in the US, soon came to use the term civilization to refer to continental or subcontinental cultures as also relative (while incoherently continuing to talk about technological or economic scaling and development)\(^7\).

Within economics, holism appeared in the form of “macroeconomics.” Based on the *General Theory* of John Maynard Keynes (1883–1946), its practitioners claimed to be able to manage the national economy as a whole, compensating for imbalances that market forces did not correct. Wel-
STRUCTURALISM in anthropology
1. If there is a meaning to be found in mythology, this cannot reside in the isolated elements which enter into the composition of a myth, but only in the way those elements are combined. 2. Although myth belongs to the same category as language, being as a matter of fact, only part of it, language in myth unveils specific properties. 3. Those properties are only to be found above the ordinary linguistic level; that is, they exhibit more complex features beside those which are to be found in any kind of linguistic expression....

Myth, like the rest of language, is made up of constituent units....

The true constituent units of a myth are not the isolated relations but bundles of such relations and it is only as bundles that these relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning.... (Lévi-Strauss 1972: 174–75)

fear economics was a specialism that tried to determine what was best for the nation as if the latter were an economic individual. The focus in political theory was on equality and distributive justice. Man has minimal needs that the coordinative rationality of Society is able to fulfill by a redistribution of goods and services through the so-called welfare state. John Rawls (1921–2002), among Anglo-American thinkers, attempted to reconcile the liberal notions of economic and political individualism with the idea of a welfare state (Rawls 1971).

Yet another variety of holist socialism is known as structuralism. The supposed founder of this branch of social science was Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), a French linguist. Its most famous proponents in the last couple of decades, also French, have probably been Claude Lévi-Strauss (b. 1908) in anthropology (page 27), J. Piaget (1896–1980) in developmental psychology, Roland Barthes
(1915–1980) in literary criticism, Louis Althusser (1918–1990) in Marxism, and Jacques Lacan (1901–1981) in psychoanalysis (page 29). Structuralists held that the minds of people unconsciously organize themselves into sets or systems of contrasting or opposed mental categories, the “binary oppositions” of kin and non-kin, wife-giver and wife-receiver, nature and culture, raw and cooked, and so on. They argued that the actual or “surface” content of a people’s literature, kinship terminology, television programs, or advertisements is not what the scientist wants to know about. What he wants to know about are the “deep” underlying structures, for these are not only simpler in their organization than the surface content, they also control it. Structuralism focused not on the institutions and actions of Society or its cultural reflection, but on the logic of the mental operations of the collective mind itself. Since that mind as instantiated in the ordinary person is dominated by an unconscious form of practical reason, it is no surprise that myth (or ideology) was taken as the defining feature of Structure Man’s nature. People are, for the structuralists, first and foremost the makers of myths. Or, as they would have put it, myths are the makers of people. Just as most people make intelligible statements (parole) without being conscious of the grammatical structure (langue) of the language they speak, so, too, they order their lives through myths largely unaware of the mental structures which shape them.

For the holist variant of naturalism, coordinative rationality is an attribute not of the members of society but of society as an “organic” whole. The agency through which it is exercised is usually the government or the state. The thoughts people themselves hold about their society are but distorted representations of its underlying reality, its
STRUCTURALISM in psychoanalysis
...what the psychoanalytic experience discovers in the unconscious is the whole structure of language. Thus from the outset we have alerted informed minds to the extent to which the notion that the unconscious is merely the seat of the instincts will have to be rethought.

This simple definition assumes that language not be confused with the diverse psychic and somatic functions which serve it in the individual speaker.

The speaking subject, if he seems to be thus a slave of language, is all the more so of a discourse in the universal moment of which he finds himself at birth, even if only by dint of his proper name.

Reference to the ‘experience of the community’ as the substance of this discourse settles nothing. For this experience has as its essential dimension the tradition which the discourse itself founds. This tradition, long before the drama of history gets written into it, creates the elementary structures of culture. And these structures reveal an ordering of possible exchanges which, even unconscious, is inconceivable outside the permutations authorized by language. (Lacan 1972: 289–90)

“true” structure. People engage in practical activities, to be sure, but they do not really know the reasons why. They are capable, for the most part, only of providing rationalizations (that is, false explanations) for their conduct. Their exercise of practical reason is, thus, unconscious, but it is nonetheless essentially logical and orderly. The reason for this is that socializing, production, or language-making is logical and orderly (even if, for Marxists, contradictory and oppressive) and innate in the human mind. Because the ordinary person or institution is unaware of his or her or its own coordinative rationality, it is as difficult to see Coordinative Man as any more of a human agent than his alter
ego, Acquisitive Man. The substantialized agent onto which the human agency of ordinary person in Durkheimian social science was displaced is nothing other than Society itself. Once again, it was the social scientist who was taken as the intellect of this Agent. It is he who exercised scientific reason, the blend of both practical and philosophical reason, only in this branch of naturalism, he is an urban sociologist, social or educational psychologist, or a professor of social services or hospital administration who advised government officials. And it was the complex of agencies making up the welfare state—the New Deal (Roosevelt) and Fair Deal (Truman), Great Society (Johnson)—that here constituted the will of Society. Crucial for Britain was the report of Sir William (Lord) Beveridge: Social Insurance and Allied Services (1942).

Whereas the atomist tended to adhere to an empirical realist ontology, the holist tended to take a position I call conceptual realism (Bhaskar 1986: 7): concepts—rational schemes that lay the universe out in a clear comprehensive order conveniently isomorphic with the human mind—exist in the form of ideas or models, heuristic devices of the knowing subject and probably also immanently, in the neurophysiology of the brain (structuralism) or in the modes of production (historical materialism). (The main difference between this position and that of objective idealism, below, is that here concepts or ideas are assumed to be immanent in the human world rather than transcendent, outside it.) If the empirical realist wanted to reduce one form of knowledge to another, the conceptual realist wanted to layer them all hierarchically.

Ideologically, consensual socialism was the strain of social scientific thought most happy with the varieties of
social democratic political parties—left liberalism of the Democrats in the United States, of the right Labour Party in Britain, or of the Socialists in France (often dubbed “neocorporatist” by critics).

For the traditional Marxist Left, the Agent onto which human agency was displaced was **Class** and its associated mode of production. The bourgeoisie would give way to the proletariat as the agent of history. The instrument of the proletariat was the Party. The intellect of this agent was the Party theoreticians, its will the Party leaders whom they advised. One important variant here was the Latin American movement articulated by G. Gutiérrez as Liberation Theology, which took in Marxist concerns.

A summary of holist socialism is provided (table 1).

One should not conclude that because the political and intellectual tendencies of atomic individualism and holist socialism are opposed to one another they do not appear together in the same works of social science. Quite often a social scientist will treat a group such as a nation or business corporation as internally organized in functionalist terms while at the same time treating the very same group as a super-individual trying to maximize its self-interest in its relations with other such groups.

**Existential Humanism** The naturalist images of man and society, both the atomist and holist, can be traced back to the so-called European Enlightenment; and one or the other of its two branches, either independently or grafted together, has dominated the practice of the social sciences down to the present. There have been, however, since the Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment around the beginning of the nineteenth century, responses to the naturalists, a kind of Loyal Opposition. I group the answers to the nat-
Hermeneuticism
Hermes transmitted the messages of the gods to the mortals, that is to say, he not only announced them verbatim but acted as an ‘interpreter’ who renders their words intelligible—and meaningful—which may require some point of clarification or other, additional, commentary. Hermeneutics is consequently engaged on two tasks: one, the ascertaining of the exact meaning-content of a word, sentence, text, etc.; two, the discovery of the instructions contained in symbolic forms. (Bleicher 1980: 11)

Naturalism of the social sciences of the postwar period under the label “existential humanism.”

Human beings are not, say the advocates of a humanist approach, to be studied as things in the natural world. Human acts cannot be explained as one would explain the formation of a geological deposit, the effect of enzymes, or the movements of the planets. Human actions call for understanding (verstehen) and not merely causal explanation (erklärung). If the social scientist is to accomplish this understanding, he or she must come to grips with the immense complexities of the mental operations and interior states of people. Crucial here is the work of Peter Winch (1958) which has spawned several conferences and edited volumes on rationality and relativism. Like the naturalists, the humanists are split roughly into two camps, the hermeneuticist and the organicist idealist. The former, the hermeneuticists, like the psychological naturalists or atomists, are individualist in their approach, while the latter, the organicist idealists, are holist.

Hermeneutic Subjects The individualist humanists traced one line of descent to Germany and to the sociologist, Max Weber (1864–1920) (Schutz 1967). Affiliates in philosophy were Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), consid-
ered the leading hermeneuticist of recent times, or Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), the phenomenologist who also had connection with the organicists, and going back to his predecessor, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), who coined the term *Geisteswissenschaft*, and Immanuel Kant (1724–1804). The French existentialist, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–80) and phenomenologists Maurice Merlau-Ponty (1908–61) and Paul Ricouer (1913–2005) were also important in creating this position. I should mention here dissident existential psychologists, Rollo May (b. 1909) and Carl Rogers (1902–87) and the humanistic psychologist, Abraham Maslow (1908–70). Most historians of religion, for example, Mircea Eliade (1907–86), also belong here. Some American sociologists, those often known as “symbolic interactionists,” can also trace a line of descent back to the American pragmatists, William James (1842–1910), Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), John Dewey (1859–1952), and George Herbert Mead (1863–1931). Among the later sociologists one might name here are Erving Goffman (1922–1982) (1959) and the team of Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1971), and among anthropologists, Clifford Geertz (1926–2006). Here also I would place the humanist Freud.

The position of the individualist humanists, stated once again too crudely and briefly, was that actions are motivated by intentions, but that these are not always conscious and transparent (as they are in the naturalist strains of thought). People’s acts may have multiple meanings. Hence, they have continually to find out what each other’s intentions are in order to carry out their lives. They need constantly to engage in interpretations of one another’s activities. Because of this emphasis on interpretation I take hermeneuticism (page 32) as the position of these social
scientists.
Central to human nature here was a concept of “meaning” (whence the term “semiotic”) or of “symbol” (whence the term “symbolic interactionist”). Human action, social life, is constituted and reconstituted by the meanings or symbolic significations that people attach to things and actions. The form of reason emphasized here is a conscious form of philosophical reason, imaginative and creative, definitely tempered by the emotions, but not driven or dominated by them (except possibly for psychoanalysis, especially in the case of “neurosis” or worse. It is the complement or even the replacement for the practical reason of the individual naturalists. Man (sic) here was seen as an interpreter, as a manager and manipulator, as an actor and calculator. Hence I call this notion of reasoning interpretative rationality.

Unlike their naturalist colleagues, individual humanists did not accord the social scientist the privileged and exclusive access to true scientific knowledge of the society under study. They rather stressed the intersubjectivity, the empathy and shared feeling of the scientist and the people whom they study. They are also seen as cultural relativists, arguing against the universality of a single rationality. Evans-Pritchard’s account of magic among the Azande (1937) can be taken as an early example of anthropological hermeneuticism (page 35), though in the last instant, he reverted to the functionalism more prevalent in his day. Similarly, the later Geertz, apparently following Weber, tended to juxtapose hermeneuticism and positivism or functionalism.

The agent here might seem to be the hermeneutic subject, but this is not quite the case. It is a transcendental mind. It is not the acquisitive mind of the mechanical world of free markets nor is it the unitary absolute mind of organicism.
ANTHROPOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICISM

The concept of culture I espouse ...is essentially a semiotic one. Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning. It is explication I am after, construing social expressions on their surface enigmatical. But this pronouncement, a doctrine in a clause, demands itself some explication. (Geertz 1973: 5)

(discussed below). Rather it is a plural, shifting and restless mentality, ever trying to rationalize events around it, always driven to impose meaning on a disenchanted world. The ontology (and epistemology) of this hermeneuticist approach can perhaps best be characterized by the somewhat problematic term realist idealism: true knowledge originates with the mind of the knowing subject, the ultimate reality, which can interpret, can impose meaning on the lower reality of an increasingly disenchanted, mechanical world. That mind consisted neither of the hard-headed worldly atomism of the economists nor of the clear and systematic intellectual holism of the structuralists in the mechanical naturalist strain of the human sciences. The essence of the human here seems to consist of an elusive mental process of signification, emotionally charged and varying from one individual to another while standing above the natural world. There is a close connection here with Romanticism, a movement that arose as a response to the hegemony of the mechanical cosmos presupposed by the atomic individualists.

The intellect of this hermeneutic mind among the social scientists, was first and foremost the cultural or interpretative anthropologist working with “area studies” specialists. Its
“will” was the politically liberal development agency that wished to aid and modernize the other without being seen to step on his or her cultural toes.

Beyond the social sciences and even within them one could argue that the stance of the hermeneuticist was, by and large, anti-political. It linked up much more closely with the concern for individual life-styles, personality development, Jungian psychoanalysis, meditation, yoga, alternate medicine, and with cultural expression. It tended toward subjectivism and escapism. Although there were claims made here about advancing theories of human agency/action, by and large nothing actually happens here, for human actions have been stripped in advance of any causation. The background metaphor here sometimes seemed to be the reading of a novel. People and their actions are imaginative and the act of reading itself has no consequence beyond itself apart from esthetic effect. I have said that this position claimed no political affiliation, but that doesn’t mean it has none. Quite often, there is a close but unperceived relationship of complementation with either the individualist or socialist brand of naturalism. That organizes the public realm of work, while this organizes the private realm of the self, an upper middle-class subject with a liberal arts degree and a profession.

One-off here are the novels, *Fountainhead* (1943) and *Atlas Shrugged* (1957), and the school of philosophy, Objectivism, of the Russia-born Ayn Rand (1905–1982), a strong proponent of individualism and free-market capitalism, a humanist version of conceptual realism and a transcendent individualism. Libertarians continue to accord her work scriptural status, but the academic world affords her work little space.

A summary of hermeneuticism is provided (table 1).
Organicist Ideas & States The fourth position is something of a problem. When I first started working with this scheme, it was relatively easy to assign brands of social science to the other three positions. When I came to this, the fourth logical possibility, however, I hesitated. Is there actually some patch of ontological ground left unoccupied by the social sciences? After a while, it occurred to me that my own preconceptions were getting in my way. Perhaps if one brought in the humanities, candidates would appear. They did, in the form of “cultural history” (Kulturgeschichte) or the “history of ideas” (Geistesgeschichte). The most important practitioner of the former was probably Jakob Burckhardt (1818–1897). His intellectual heirs continue their work at such places as the Warburg Institute (formerly named Die Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg). Arthur O. Lovejoy (1873–1962), The Great Chain of Being (1936), was one of the leading figures in the recent past, in the history of ideas.

Many of these historians would, without a doubt, take Hegel as their philosophic founder although some in the Anglo-Saxon world might also make a strong case in political philosophy for Edmund Burke (1729–1797). I am thinking here in particular of the antebellum ideology of the South in the United States. The idea here is that Mind or Spirit (Geist) in the form of Reason underlies all man’s actions. It drives them from one form to its opposite and then to a synthesis of the two ever reaching newer and giddier heights of rationality. The reason man deploys here is not practical reason, in the form of a conscious acquisitive rationality, as among the utilitarians and other atomists; nor is it practical reason in the form of the unconscious coordinative rationality that drives the people constructed by the sociologicist naturalists. Nor is it, yet again philosophical reason
in the form of the conscious interpretative rationality of the heremeneuticists, the kind which stands back and continually asks, “What does it mean?” Here we have another permutation, that of philosophic reason operating in an unconscious form, that is, what seem to be irrational acts. I refer to it as superconnective rationality, because it is a form of reasoning that is supposed to transcend positive knowledge and views human actions through the cunning of its reason as ideal wholes.

The ontology here is similar to the conceptual realism of the holist socialists with the difference that ideas here and Reason itself, like the God of Christian theology, are transcendent. They stand outside the human world as an integrated whole while also operating in it. I refer to this position under the rubric of organicist idealism (page 39).

We might distinguish two tendencies among political parties and movements. One, the statist, because it saw Reason working in the world through the state, is embodied in the work of Giovanni Gentile (1875–1944) and has been accused of leading up to National Socialism (Fascism and Nazism). The proponents of these varieties of organicist idealism displace human agency not onto the acquisitive human nature of the atomic individuals or the cooperative society of the holist socialists, but onto a hierarchic Idea, embodied in the State (or a Master “People” or Race), the essence of which was “freedom” or “virtue.”

The other wing of idealism, an aestheticist school, looking back to Benedetto Croce (1866-1952), tried to differentiate itself from the other by focusing on cultural or intellectual rather than political history, seeing the Idea in the “sublime.” So thoroughly discredited were Hegel and those of the statist position within academic circles after World War II that people did not recognize the admittedly dwin-
Virtue in **ORGANICIST IDEALISM**

...Strauss argued against what he called the ‘moderns’ in favor of the ‘ancients.’ He believed that truth and virtue are prior to history, rather than unfolding through time. By virtue he meant a harmonious balance within society, achieved by a higher morality promoted by the state. Monarchy could be as just as a republic if it promoted virtue, and it could be more just than" a republic that produced folly. By virtue he meant a a natural law independent of any ephemeral circumstances. The undermining of virtue, according to Strauss, began with that devilish diagnostician Machiavelli, whose realistic depiction of the mechanics of power stripped it of a loftier justification. Machiavelli and his gimlet-eyed successor, Thomas Hobbes, paved the way for liberalism, ‘that political doctrine which regards as the fundamental fact the rights as distinguished from the duties of man and which identifies the function of the state with the protection or safeguarding of those rights....’ Where rights begin, virtue may end.” (Blumenthal 1988: 151)

As I said earlier, naturalism in both its wings has predominated over humanism in the social sciences, although it has seemed at times as if the humanists might prevail (as in World War II). There was, in fact, a fundamental asymmetry between the two tendencies. It was only naturalism, whether individualist or socialist, that offered up more or less comprehensive views of and programs for organizing the social world. They alone could be said to link up in a substantial way with the platforms, right and left, of political parties of the Cold War period. The two strains of humanism—I have already referred to them as the Loyal...
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<th><strong>ATOMIC INDIVIDUALIST</strong></th>
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<td><strong>NATURALISM</strong></td>
<td><strong>HUMANISM</strong></td>
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<td>(Determinism)</td>
<td>(Free Will)</td>
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<td>Hermeneutics/Phenomenology</td>
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<td>Symbolic interactionism</td>
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<td>Behaviorism</td>
<td>Symbolic anthropology</td>
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<td>Neoclassical economics</td>
<td>Jungian analysis</td>
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<td>Psephology</td>
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<td><strong>Movements/Parties:</strong></td>
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<td>Economic liberalism</td>
<td>Estheticism</td>
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<td>Republicans/Liberals</td>
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<td>Free individuals/nations</td>
<td>Transcendental Mind</td>
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<td>Superconnective</td>
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<td>History of ideas</td>
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<td>Historical materialism</td>
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<td>World-systems theory</td>
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<td><strong>Movements/Parties:</strong></td>
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<td>Welfare state</td>
<td>Neoconservatives</td>
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<td>Democrats/Labour</td>
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<td>Liberation theology</td>
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Table 1: *Agency in the Modern Human Sciences*
Opposition—are best seen as attempts either to correct or supplement the two branches of naturalism. Political leaders and intellectuals succeeded in eliminating or marginalizing the one humanist tendency that had threatened to prevail after the Great War and the Great Depression, the organicist idealism of Fascism and Nazism. As a result, hermeneuticists, with whom the Straussites shared some epistemological ground, came to rule the roost. We must, according to the hermeneuticists, not only inquire into human nature as determined by conscious self-interest or by an unconscious totalizing structure. We must also see human nature as providing conscious meaning to life or as the emotionally reassuring and reordering an increasingly rational, “disenchanted” world.

A summary of organicism is provided (table 1).

**Hypermodern and Hypomodern Shifts**

Over the past thirty years or so, people of diverse persuasions have undertaken to criticize one or more of the major assumptions or presuppositions on which the notions of agency in the social sciences depended in the decades after World War II. They have argued that the entities theorized by the earlier social scientists, the rational individual and the nation-state, existed or at least seemed more plausible in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries. Increasingly, however, these agents of what commentators now characterize as “modernity,” seem out of date. We are entered into what these thinkers call, with varying degrees of disdain or enthusiasm, a “postmodern” period. Myself, I prefer to refer to most of the notions of agency that emerged since 1975 as either “hypermodern” or “hypomodern.” I take the idea of the present-day world as hypermodern rather than postmodern from Gilles Lipovetsky.
GLOBAL VILLAGE
After three thousand years of explosion, by means of fragmentary and mechanical technologies, the Western world is imploding. During the mechanical ages we had extended our bodies in space. Today, after more than a century of electric technology, we have extended our central nervous system itself in a global embrace, abolishing both space and time as far as our planet is concerned....As electrically contracted, the globe is no more than a village. (McLuhan 1967: 11, 12–13)

(2004). Far from having moved beyond a modernity of individualism, consumerism, and hedonism, we have entered a world where these ingredients of agency are heightened. The idea of a hypomodern is mine. Dialectically related to the hypermodern, I use it to characterize the agency of the adherents of religious organizations and movements dubbed “fundamentalist,” those who have adopted some elements of modernity in certain respects opted for a lessened modernity and have largely rejected most aspects of hypermodernity.

Electronic Naturalism The model of the modern world that predominated in peoples’ usages during the Cold War period was mechanical. The model of the world that predominates in the hypermodern world is electrical. We move in the electronic age from a world of pistons, cylinders, cogs and wheels, to a world of circuits, channels, waves, flows or currents, switches, wires and cables. According to one of the earlier commentators, Marshall McLuhan (1911–80), this entailed great consequences: the transformation of the world into a global village (page 42).

Early on in the electronic age, the metaphor of the mind as a telephonic switchboard (fig. 5) became widespread in the social sciences.9
BIT
A bit has no color, size, or weight, and it can travel at the speed of light. It is the smallest atomic element in the DNA of information. It is a state of being: on or off, true or false, up or down, in or out, black or white. For practical purposes we consider a bit to be a 1 or a 0. (Negroponte 1996: 14)

INFORMATION
Some theorists consider that nature is more than matter and energy: ‘To the powerful theories of chemistry and physics must be added a late arrival: the theory of information. Nature must be interpreted as matter, energy, and information’ (Campbell 1992: 16). In this broad sense, information is a ‘code’ shared by matter, energy, genes, living systems, and both natural and artificial forms of language. (McArthur 1992: 517)

The shift from mechanical to electrical devices was also, later, a shift from mechanical to digital devices. The basic unit in this world is, thus, no longer the atom, but either the electron or the bit (page 43) of information. Nicholas Negroponte, computer guru, declares that this “change from atoms to bits is irrevocable and unstoppable” (Negroponte 1996: 4).

Associated with this double shift is increased emphasis on “information.” We are now no longer living in an “industrial” society but in an “information” or “high-tech” society. One long-time commentator refers to it as “postcapitalist” (Drucker 1993). Most experts, not to mention lay people, have taken information (page 43) simply to mean knowledge, but some have taken it to mean the use of digital processing in the production, storage, and retrieval of material or even the theory of probability behind it.

The media, which were instruments for the broadcasting and reinforcement of national ways during the postwar
decades, have now become, for many who represent our age as an electronic or information age, agents in their own right. Built around digitization and the use of the computer, the media have become constitutive of the new utopia we are entering.
TOTAL ECONOMIC INDIVIDUALISM
A society of autonomous individuals is the natural condition of mankind.... The idea of the state of nature, so beloved of 18th-century, so beloved of 18th-century political theorists, is a historical myth, but like many myths it expresses an important truth which is not clearly expressed in any other way: that men have certain characteristics which are 'natural' in the sense that they have those characteristics whether they live under governments or not.

Men are so constituted that it is natural to them to pursue private rather than public ends. This is a simple matter of observation. The duty of governments is to accommodate themselves to this immutable fact about human nature. Their object (and one must assume the original purpose for which they were created) is merely to avoid the inconveniences which attend the uncontrolled pursuit by private individuals of private ends. ...Men have a natural right to their ambitions because it was not for the purpose of abolishing competitiveness that they submitted to government; it was for the purpose of regulating competitiveness and preventing it from taking violent, fraudulent or anti-social forms. (Sir Keith Joseph, Eccleshall 2003: 56)

Totalizing Individuals How does one characterize the rearticulation of the worlds nations, economies, and ruling classes that has occurred in the past twenty years? Starting with the position of atomic individualism in its naturalist rendering, we find a resurgence of neoclassical economics, this time going back from its most ardent spokesman, the monetarist, Milton Friedman of the “Chicago” school through F. A. von Hayek. (1899–1992) to the Austrian economists. Among political philosophers, the libertarian, Robert Nozick (1938–2002) is probably the most extreme and widely known spokesman for this position in the Anglo-American world. Sir Keith Joseph (1918–1994) was probably the foremost translator of neoliberalism and its absolute or total economic individualism (page 45) into
government policy in Britain. What distinguishes this neoliberalism from its ancestor is not just its implacable hostility to the welfare state, but its free market utopianism. The human world is truly based on economic individualism alone. To recognize this and act upon it will eventually bring about a consumerist paradise on earth. Government has no role to play in countering market forces. It is not to engage in the practice of distributive justice. Rather government is to be the instrument of the entrepreneurial manager and the market. We have here, then, a form of hypermodernism. Free marketeers take one part of the modernist complex of interrelated and sometimes contradictory principles and practices and reduce them to just one, a principle that becomes total. (Neoliberals are also fundamentalist in that they claim simply to be reasserting a fundamental truth from which people, deluded by welfare liberals, have departed). Economic individualism is no longer the basis of or partner of political individualism. The latter is reduced to the former. Liberal democracy is nothing but a free market economy ratified in elections and citizens are turned into customers and consumers.

Business leaders and scholars represented the manager of the postwar period as fitting smoothly into large corporate structures. The new entrepreneurial manager, however, is supposed to be enterprising, not just as a company man in certain situations (negotiating a deal with a manager from another firm over a three-martini lunch), but in virtually every situation, both in the company and without, both intellectually and emotionally as well as practically. His organization is not the corporate hierarchy but the ever-shifting, single-purpose “team” within the company and a shifting “network” of colleagues across firms. Jet aeroplanes, smart
phones, the laptop computer, and touchscreen tablet, help give this new hero of capitalism, rightly called a “techno-entrepreneur,” the feeling that he and, increasingly, she is virtually omnipresent. These machines are, so to speak, the prosthetic limbs of the aggrandizing individual.

We have here, then, an individualism that is no longer simply the basis of the social but which, at its effective best, overrides and destabilizes existing organizations, causing them to adapt to an ever-changing set of circumstances in an increasingly “globalized” economy. I call this hypermodern version of the human being totalizing or aggrandizing individualism.

I refer to the rationality of this totalizing individual not just as acquisitive as I did in the case of the earlier atomic individual, but as overacquisitive because it is supposed to be unhindered by any other rationalities. As will be seen momentarily, this hypercompetitive individualism is made possible by the data acquisition and processing of information technology, about which more below. The on-

Figure 6: Network & Hierarchy (Nervous System Blog)
NETWORK vs HIERARCHY

The idea of networks serves both as a model with which to view the world and an organizational principle. I was first introduced to subject by Waldrop’s Complexity which covers some of the early scientific work defining the field and focuses on networks and dynamic systems. The scientific community was the first to realize the importance of networks as they proved a constructive way to view many phenomena.

The business world followed science’s lead adopting networks and complexity as a new business principle. Terms like self-organizing and horizontal structure quickly became buzz words. Some businesses are considering replacing rigid chains of command with models that allow independence and natural synergy to encourage innovation. In such systems, individuals have more freedom and can better use their creative energy as a productive force. (Nervous System, Blog)

tology of this individualism is a calculative realism: the world of profit-making computational projections, simulations, and models is more real than the messy world around us. The substantialized agent at work here, the incarnation of overacquisitive rationality has as its intellect the neoliberal economists and myriad consultants. Its will can be variously described as computing and competing entrepreneurs, the techno-entrepreneurial class, or, most decisively, as a network of these.

The network (page 48) in globalist discourse is supposed to replace the older principle of hierarchy (the ordering principle in out-of-date institutions like the state and the business corporation) for bringing about order and multiplying creativity in the world. Sociologists (such as Castells, below) were quick to latch onto this newly found “ont” and even global historians have caught network fever (Ferguson 2014).

One might think that if this agent had its way, all exist-
FREE MARKET HOMEOSTASIS
one can absolutely say logically and empirically that asset-market crashes diminish inequality. They are a natural mechanism for this, and a cathartic response to central banks’ manipulation of interest rates and resulting asset-market inflation, as well as other government bailouts, that so amplify inequality in the first place. So crashes are capitalism’s homeostatic mechanism at work to right a distorted system. (Mark Spitznagel 2014)

ing institutions would be reduced to rubble before its interlinking acquisitive onslaught. Strangely enough, however, order and well-being for all are supposed to emerge (“trickle down”). Hayek had argued that markets formed a catallaxy, a superset of the economies formed by families, businesses, and other organizations, in which order results spontaneously (that is, without central planning) or “equilibrium” is reached from the reconciliation of different interests. This is ironically a variant on the homeostatic organism that underlies much of social scientific thinking, only here it is an atomized acquisitive rationality, incarnated as a free market of networked entrepreneurs, that brings order and prosperity and not coordinative rationality embodied in a central government, never mind the party representing an international proletariat. One intellectual-entrepreneur even goes so far as to argue that the failure of markets to self-regulate is itself a homeostatic mechanism (page 49) so long as government does not interfere.

Now, it is not too difficult to see the rise of free-market economics and the neoliberal politics of the US Republicans and the British Conservatives as a simple recuperation of earlier free-market discourse. Their attempts to recapture the life of the midwestern town in America and Victorian values of Dickens’ England, free of central government
“interference,” are, however, not only fanciful but harmful. They distract from their globalism, their promotion of the interests of the new entrepreneur at home and abroad. Less clearly recognized is the New Right’s recuperation of the Old Left’s idea of a world ruling class. Just as the old left envisaged the eventual triumph of a world-wide proletariat working through an omnipresent party, so the New Right foresees the triumph of a transcendent global class of techno-entrepreneurs operating through transnational corporations.

Some free-market economists may revel in the success of their scientific discipline, but the source of their celebration is misplaced. Economic historians trace the shifting of production to different countries by multinational corporations to the 1970s. It occurred in conjunction with the rise of neoliberal economics, a response to higher labor costs and increased union power (Steger 2003: 37–55). The impetus for the large-scale growth of world markets that came to be called “globalization” lies, however, not in the return to universal truths about *homo economicus*, but elsewhere, in the realm of technology and the phenomenal growth in the importance of computers and of telecommunications, and more generally, of the electronic media.
MECHANICAL ECONOMICS
Economists see the world as a machine. A very complicated one perhaps, but nevertheless a machine, whose workings can be understood by putting together carefully and meticulously its component parts. The behaviour of the system as a whole can be deduced from a simple aggregation of these components. A lever pulled in a certain part of the machine with a certain strength will have regular and predictable outcomes elsewhere in the machine.

In the basement of the London School of Economics lives a wondrous object. In the 1950s, Bill Phillips, an engineer turned economist, built a machine to teach his students the workings of the economy. Levers are pulled, buttons pressed. Sluice gates open, and liquids of different colours rush round the tubes of the system in a controlled way. This marvellous machine still survives, the very embodiment of the economist's view of the world. (Ormerod 1994: 36–37)

Engineering developments in military and industrial electronics—the shift from vacuum tubes to cheaper, more reliable solid-state devices, most notably the microchip, a wafer of silicon semiconductor capable of holding integrated circuits consisting of thousands of transistors—made possible the miniaturization of electronic devices and the use of microprocessors, microchips with logic and memory circuits. Combined with the application of information theory, these made possible the introduction of digital microcomputers. It has been the use of microprocessors that has made possible the interweaving of national markets into the global market for which some free-market economists wish to take full credit. Or, to put it too simply, it is the rapid spread of practices involving digital information processing (page 50) and their articulation with other business practices (for example, flexible production and automation) that lies at the heart of the present-day economy, a situation that business gurus such as Kenichi Ohmae now
took for granted.
Economists, far from being able to deal usefully with this emerging world of digital electronics, seem trapped in the earlier world of mechanical economics (page 51). As one internal critic, Paul Ormerod, has argued, the revival of general equilibrium theory, the core of free-market economics, is out of touch with reality (1994: 48–66). Furthermore, he points out, the “tiger economies” of Asia, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, often pointed to as free-market success stories, have all involved a wide range of government “interventions,” albeit it in different ways (63–65).

It is a variety of psychology rather than economics that comes to prevail in the configuration of academic disciplines in the information age. The name for this new alignment is “cognitive science.” At the core of this science is “cognitive psychology.” Descended from its behaviorist parent, it takes up the pragmatist concept of the individual as problem-solver and learner and has, therefore, a more “constructive” concept of practical reason than does the behaviorist, with his passive notion of stimulus and response. Those who work on cognitive processes (rather than their development) are inspired by the possible analogies of human mental processes with the operations of the computer. Cognitive psychologists manage to shear off the practical reason of utilitarian man from his/her passions, leaving the processor of the mind-as-computer as a pristine globule of pure rational choice. What’s more, this mind is purged of everything unconscious. All of its operations are specified or potentially specifiable. They can all be translated into program language. In its more empiricist form, this science is, if not based on atoms, atomist (breaking experience and knowledge down into bits and “bytes”). It focuses on one
problem and solves it alone, with absolutely no reference to anything else in the universe. In its more rationalist aspect, however, when it has resort to “systems theory,” it can easily be seen as holistic. All of human knowledge is reduced to mutually exclusive binary oppositions and algorithms—“information”—and then ordered in vast hierarchies and interlinked networks (2001). The ontology at work here is what one commentator calls info-computational naturalism (Vallverdú 2010: 43–44).

One does not have to look far to see claims made that the entire universe is a computer simulation, the premise of the film trilogy, The Matrix (Wachowski brothers). According to one science reporter, “the biggest thinkers are starting to come to terms with an extraordinary idea. The universe, they say, behaves exactly like a computer, processing and generating information. In this scenario, we, by our conscious and unconscious actions, are playing the role of that computer’s programmers.” This idea, adumbrated by Isaac Asimov in his short story, “The Last Question” (1956), was played out in Douglas Adams’s BBC TV comedy series, The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy (1978): Brooks, Michael, “Five insights challenging science’s unshakable ‘truths’,” The Observer (June 28, 2014). If physicists are the programmers of the universe, then social scientists become the programmers of society, an update of social engineering.

Although its roots lie in the aftermath of World War II, the emergence of cognitive psychology as an autonomous sub-discipline can probably best be dated to the 1967 book, Cognitive Psychology, by Ulric Neisser (1928–2012) (1967), and the journal of the same name, started in 1970 (Anderson 1985: 9). Cognitive science is, however, much broader. Its advocates claim that it includes or overlaps with “computer science,” especially research on “AI” (artificial intelli-
gence), linguistics, impinging on neuropsychology, philosophy, and anthropology (Gardiner 1985: 35–38). Its arrival as the new, self-proclaimed centerpiece of the social sciences can also be dated to the founding of the journal, *Cognitive Science* in 1976 (Anderson 1985: 9). *Wired*, started in 1993, is its “interface” with the larger public.

The intellectual basis for cognitive science was the “cybernetics” of Norbert Wiener (1894–1964) and “information theory” of Claude Shannon (1916–2001). Crucial here was the idea of an algorithm (named after the 9th century Persian mathematician al-Khwārizmī), a mathematical method for the encoding, here electronically, of human speech and brought into one field of study the electronic machine and the nervous system of the organism, especially the human brain. Like it, this machine could receive “feedback” from its environment and modify its behavior. Their work gave birth to communication studies in the US. Later practitioners of “general system theory” such as the biologist Ludwig Bertalanffy (1901–72) are also implicated. William Ross Ashby (1903–1972) another founder of cybernetics, built a machine in 1948, a “synthetic brain” that could adapt on its own to changes in its environment and called it a homeostat (*The W. Ross Ashby Digital Archive*).

The calculative rationality at the core of totalizing individualism has met with criticism which either tries to shore it up or explain away the difficulties. Instead of questioning their basic assumptions or presuppositions, however, the new leaders of the social sciences have combined neoliberal economics, already hegemonic in the social sciences, with cognitive psychology and AI in order extend a totalizing individualism, to colonize areas normally kept distinct from economics and bring them into it. The field of “behavioral economics,” descended from Herbert Simon, among oth-
ers, is the disciplinary home of this convergence. Its practitioners study the “choices” made by people in experiments where they are subjected to stimuli. The leading figures here are Daniel Kahneman, an Israeli-American psychologist, and Richard Thaler, an economist (Kahneman 2011 and Thaler 2008).

Two related examples explicitly aimed at fusing the mechanical and the human are “quantum psychology” (Wilson 1990) and the specialism, “fuzzy logic”, the latter of which invokes Eastern, especially Buddhist, forms of reasoning as ancestral to it (Kosko 1994). Perhaps the cyborg, today’s update of Descarte’s automaton, most dramatically summarizes these attempts to fuse the natural and human, the electrical machine and biological organism (Gray and Figueroa-Sarriera 1995), and to make the techno-entrepreneur omnipotent.

The social scientists concerned with communication and media studies have been quick to refocus, reinventing their disciplines as “interactive,” “digital,” or simply “new” media studies (Wardrip-Fruin, Noah & Nick Montfort 2003 and Mandiberg 2012).

Spinning out of, into, and around such new sciences is a congeries of practices having to do with computers, and especially the personal computer. The Internet or World Wide Web is probably the best-known exemplification of this mode of knowing. It is the technological objectification of the totalizing individual’s mind. Interactivity, the main feature which differentiates the media of the new age—and especially now the social media—from the old is so important in the eyes of some experts on computers that its use is actually leading to the formation of a new class, the digital nation (page 56).
“...the young people who form the heart of the digital world are creating a new political ideology. The machinery of the Internet is being wielded to create an environment in which the digital nation can become a political entity in its own right.” “The Digital nation constitutes a new social class. Its citizens are young, educated, affluent. They inhabit wired institutions and industries—universities, computer and telecom companies, Wall Street and financial outfits, the media. They live everywhere, of course, but are most visible in forward-looking, technologically advanced communities: New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Boston, Minneapolis, Austin, Raleigh. They are predominantly male, although female citizens are joining in enormous—and increasingly equal—numbers.

“...they are richer, better educated, and disproportionately white....they have almost unhindered access to much of the world’s information....the ideas of the postpolitical young remain fluid.

“They embrace interactivity—the right to shape and participate in their media. They have little experience with passively reading newspapers or watching newscasts delivered by anchors” (Katz 1997).

The next or “fifth generation” of computers is one project. Reagan’s Star Wars, in some ways the last gasp of the Cold War, was another. Baudrillard’s notion of the hyperreal, of a reality that experts bring into reality in accord with a computer model or simulation of what they desire (rather than of what exists) is apposite here (and the basis of what I call the hypermodern). “Virtual reality” is but the most obvious example of Baudrillard’s hyperreality (Baudrillard 1994). It is the product of the calculative realist metaphysics that pervades the thinking of the totalizing individual.

More down to earth are the claims made by specialists in “artificial intelligence” and their implications for automation or robotization, an endless source of interest to sci-
ence fiction novels and films. The use of complex databases and projections (e.g., the World Economic Outlook (WEO) database of the International Monetary Fund) in financial markets may be less exciting to the public imagination, but they are closer to the core of acquisitive rationality in actual business practices.

The new world order that is emerging in this version of globalization is, then, grounded in the practices having to do with computers and the cognitive sciences. Free markets and the economists who speak for them, have, to be sure, taken advantage of the info-computational naturalism and hyperrealism of cognitive science and its allies, fusing them with their notion of transcendental competitiveness to form its ontology of calculative realism, but they did not invent them.

Many politicians of the New Right are open advocates of this totalizing individualism while those who are more reluctant on the center and left disingenuously claim to be simply carrying out the will of a global, computerized financial market.

Because the notion of individualism at work in the emerging ruling society that practices it does not depend on the older division of labor and claims to authorize itself by way of the free-market principle alone, it is no longer possible to speak of it as forming an alliance with the professions or of having a symbiotic relationship with an autonomous class of intellectuals. The intellectuals organic to this new class are themselves working members of it, high-powered consultants in business and technology such as Tom Peters, Kenichi Ohmae, and Peter Senge.

The free market of atomic individuals, of the middle classes or the bourgeoisie, of the free nations, as a substantialized
agent has here not been abandoned, but made absolute and overdetermined. Deregulation has removed impediments to its functioning and the uptake of digital or information technology has extended its reach and quickened its pace. The result is the transcendent class of techno-entrepreneurs and its hypermodern globalizing economy. The triumph of this hypermodernity will, the globalists claim, bring—is already bringing—about an informed market utopia beyond the imaginings of science fiction writers of a generation ago. Although I have focused on the
DIGITALIZED INFORMATION
According to Louis Rossetto, founder and editor of Wired, it “is launching the ‘digital revolution,’ the ‘creation and implementation of’ the new electronic technology, what it means to our lives, and how it will change everything: business, politics, culture, education, art and personal relationships.”

The computers and the international networks, Rossetto believes, are media with such powerful messages that in a generation, the world will be a different place. Digitally doomed are mammoth corporations, political parties, the conventional school, the commute to the workplace, orthodox finances including national budgets, and popular entertainment – your television will not screen what ‘broadcasters’ provide, but what its ‘broadcatchers’ (you) choose from vastly diverse multimedia. Even the family will change. (Christopher Reed, “Inter next world,” Guardian, Monday March 20, 1995)

techno-entrepreneur and his political counterparts on the New Right as the actual agents of the free market, its proponents like to represent the “customer” and ultimately the globally available information to which he has access as the agent of change. Digitalized information (page 59), mobilized through computer technology, is the substantialized agent of the futurist human world. The idea of a human nature returns here in the oft-stated claim that the mind is a computer (fig. 7) or that the computer is a mind (Gigerenzer & Goldstein 1996), implemented in biological rather than machine form.10

A summary of totalizing individualism is provided (table 2).

Clearly scholars on the political right and in the disciplines of neoliberal economics and cognitive science were able to seize the enunciative function from the older liberals and Marxists when it came to narratives about world history. One neoconservative political scientist, Francis Fukuyama
(1992) wrote that history in the sense of a grand dialectic between universal ideologies had ended, with liberalism (i.e., neoliberalism) the winner.

**Fragmenting, Globalizing Societies** The holist socialists had come to a position of parity if not of prevalence in relation to the atomic individualists by around 1970. They have, however, been in retreat since. Major changes in computing and economic practices, disarray among those supporting the project of the unity of science, and the political successes of the New Right and the weakening and collapse of the Soviet Bloc have, either directly or indirectly, prompted much internal criticism. Many who have participated in this shift and its accompanying loss of power look at the social wholes which they once confidently assumed split and fracture. On the one hand, they see themselves compelled to think of the human world as now consisting of fragments of former wholes. On the other, they have attempted to recuperate some sort of new holism around the multifarious ideas of globalization and cosmopolitanism.

One response, which came to be called “postmodern,” ignoring the rise of the universally triumphalist narratives of neoliberal economists and cognitive scientists, argued that the grand narratives of modernity, both liberal and Marxist, were no longer valid and that there was no replacement, because the conditions for such a narrative no longer obtained (Lyotard 1984).

Poststructuralists, we read, have attacked the notion of a centered, unitary and rational “subject” that they see as assumed in structuralism. That is, they have argued that what I would call the substantialized agent of the wholes in which structuralism trades—language, culture, society, etc. have never really existed as such. The human world is
defined by differences that do not really form unified systems built around the binary opposition. Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) shows this through his method for the “deconstruction” of texts and philosophies. He converts the essentialist, self-centered subject of Western philosophy into a decentered or displaced subject (1978). Michel Foucault (1926–1984) did similar critical work on the discourses of modern disciplinary practices—prisons, medicine, sexuality, the military, administration—showing that they are neither as internally coherent as their practitioners have represented them nor integrated into some rational totality, the state (Sheridan 1980). Foucault produces contesting, willing, self-undermining “discourses” as the fractures of that substantialized agent, the state or economy. Poststructuralist readings of Lacan’s reading of Freud, displaying frustrated and displaced desires at every turn, have also been important in literary and film studies (Homi Bhabha, Slavoj Zizek).

Representations of selves and others were integral to the critical work of the postmodernists. So it is no surprise that European and American representations of non-Western parts of the world came under scrutiny, most notably, Edward Said (1935–3003) in his critique of Middle Eastern studies (Said 1979).

Some post-Marxists, Paul Q. Hirst (1946–2003) in particular, an Althusserian, have rendered incoherent the idea of the succession of modes of production crucial to historical materialism (Hirst and Hindess 1975); or, in the case of Ernesto Laclau (1935–2014), attacked its economism and the notion of total, sudden revolution as the necessary starting point for socialism (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe 1985). For this project, readings of the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) on hegemony, war of position, and
passive revolution have been vital. First made available in English in 1971, representations of Gramsci’s ideas have been accorded a status to the left of the political center paralleling that accorded to Weber on the right of it in the ’50s and ’60s (Gramsci 1971). Studies begun by Ranajit Guha (b. 1922) of those, especially peasants, who acted against the colonial state and were also non-nationalist, known as “subalterns” supposedly after Gramsci’s use of the term, are an example often pointed to as bringing about a convergence of European and Third World intellectual projects here (Guha 1982 and 1983).

A parallel move, in Britain, has attempted to historicize the study of “popular” culture at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham, under the direction of Stuart Hall (1932–2014) from 1969. He and his associates, partly drawing on the work of their predecessors, the sociologists Richard Hoggart (1918–2014) and Raymond Williams (1921–1988), attempted to shift the study away from the economic reductionism of classical historical materialism and the privileging of abstract system in structuralism. At the same time they also wanted to avoid the position of the Frankfurt school which sees a totalizing, unitary late capitalism as the agent of an ever-deceiving mass culture (Turner 1990).

Feminists, both in the First and Third Worlds, have gone beyond pointing to the exclusion of women from privileges enjoyed by men and the oppression of women by men. Scholars such as G. Lloyd (1986) and E. Keller (1985) have shown how notions of masculinity are deeply embedded in the notion of the transcendent knowing subject, the competitive, aggressive, and ever adventuring and conquering “individual” of European discourses on the growth and expansion of the West, and on Man mastering Nature. Schol-
For some time now, sexual theory has been preoccupied with a debate between “essentialism” and “constructionism.” “Essentialists” treat sexuality as a biological force and consider sexual identities to be cognitive realizations of genuine, underlying difference; “constructionists,” on the other hand, stress that sexuality, and sexual identities, are social constructions, and belong to the world of culture and meaning, not biology. In the first case, there is considered to be some “essences” within homosexuals that makes them homosexual—some gay “core” of their being, or their psyche, or their genetic make-up. In the second case, “homosexual,” “gay,” and “lesbian” are just labels, created by cultures and applied to the self. (Epstein 1998 [1987]: 135)

Scholarship on sexual orientation, on homosexuality and lesbianism, has, since Foucault’s controversial History of Sexuality, questioned the naturalness of heterosexuality as a discursive object in the sciences. Like many feminists, Jeffrey Weeks and others have argued (against biological realists or “essentialists”) that sexual practices and identities are “socially constructed” and not simply given in nature (Weeks 2009 and, earlier, 1971). Some, on both the right and left and both within and outside gay movements, have countered this social constructionism (page 63) with arguments from sociobiology or genetics. Some, unwittingly adopting a linguistic idealist position, have argued that everything, including the theories of the natural sciences are
social constructs (Hacking 1999).
On the whole, I would argue, we can see the effects of
the arguments that the postmodernists, poststructuralists,
and post-Marxists have made as fragmentative; they break
up the wholes of the earlier social theorists, but without
yet moving to a new theoretical stance. There are at least
two major ways in which one can assess these fragment-
ing moves. One would see them as steps in the direc-
tion of formulating a more comprehensive theory of agency
that displaces the quest for underlying structures knowable
through natural scientific methods.
A second response within sociology and anthropology has
been to try and suture the knowing subject of a modernist
social science back in place. Certain sociologists, worried
about the weakness of “structure” as a naturalist prin-
ciple of explanation, have tried to reconcile it with a hu-
manist notion of agency. Possibly the most important of
these within the social sciences is the sociologist, Anthony
Giddens (b. 1938) (1984), following social theorist, Jürgen
Habermas (b. 1929) (Habermas [1981) and philosopher of
science, Roy Bhaskar (b. 1944). The result of Gidden’s
“synthesis” is what he calls “structuration” (Giddens 1984).
Less ambitious but perhaps more satisfying on the topic of
agency, but only as a capacity of the self, is the work of the
philosopher Charles Taylor (1985), starting from a human-
ist position.
If anthropologists purveying a combination of cultural rel-
ativism and hermeneutics saw their heyday in the period of
decolonization, they have fallen on rather hard times. On
the one hand, criticisms of representations of the West’s
others called into question the objectivity of anthropol-
ogists (and all those in “area studies”) and the timelessness
of ethnographic accounts. One of the first efforts to
reconcile agency and structure within anthropology, under the rubric of practice, is that of the poststructural Marxist, Pierre Bourdieu (1977). Some anthropologists have tried to respond to these criticisms with self-examinations and attempts to restore a critical edge to their discipline while also giving more of a voice to those they study (Marcus & Fischer 1986). Others have tried to combine cultural theory with Gramscian political theory (Comaroff & Comaroff 1993).

Reality, however, seems to outstrip these efforts. With the integration of formerly remote cultures into a world which claims to be dominated by cosmopolitan entrepreneurs and corporations, the conventional subject-matter of anthropology vanishes. Culture has, thus, shifted. Once it was the opaque and inaccessible property of others; now it is a knowable, accessible property, a product or commodity to be mobilized by the self through air travel, the media (especially the Internet), and a culturally sensitive global market that provides Peruvian serapes, Indonesian sarongs, and Indian dhooories through mail-order and authentic cuisines at nearby posh restaurants. One anthropologist wants to see this new ruling class of techno-entrepreneurs as “cosmopolitan,” as multinlingual and bringing together elements from different cultures (Hannerz 1990), a point to which I return below.

The increasing awareness of the importance of language practices in making the human world has also had the effect of shifting the enunciative function with respect to the study of culture away from naturalist social scientists to humanists. Scholars such as Fredric Jameson, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and Homi Bhabha in departments of literature (mostly English, especially in the US) were eager to seize this function and became major figures. Many
of these and other scholars in the humanities have called themselves or been referred to as proponents of postcolonial theory and criticism. Drawing heavily on postructuralist and allied Marxist thinking, its practitioners claim to expose the agendas of colonially produced forms of knowledge and attempt to move beyond them. Anthropologists no longer have the leading role they claimed for themselves in the early ’70s.

The main point here is that coordinative rationality, overcome by the overacquisitive rationality of neoliberalism, has given way to what we might call a **disjunctive rationality**: the different and antagonistic “identities” that now make up the social world each possess a rationality that disconnects it from any presumably unified whole (Appadurai 1990). The conceptual realism of the social sciences in earlier times has given way to what can probably best be characterized as the opposite of the new hyperrealism, an extreme form of **social constructionism**: the social entities formerly theorized by structuralists and historical materialists did not actually exist as such; they were constructs. The disjunctive rationality of the postmodernists is incarnated not in a single substantialized agent, but in a number of **disjointed identities**.

As can be seen here, the direction of these fragmenting socialists is more or less opposed to that of the totalizing individualists. Since I refer to the former as “hypermodern” I shall refer to the later as “hypomodern.” Whereas the totalizing individualists are arguing for a modernity more aggressive in its individualism, the fragmenting socialists have been forced to give up their earlier, more aggressive vision of a universal modernity and settle for more qualified, lesser modernities or even to concede that the world we are living in is “postmodern.”
Social scientists—sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, and historians—found themselves in an academic world where neoliberal economists on the one hand and literary scholars and critical philosophers on the other exercise hegemony. The main way in which they have tried to find their way is to reframe what they do under the rubric of “globalization.” A new discipline called “globalization/global studies” has emerged on campuses that attempts to make sense of the changes outlined above in a spate of monographs and articles on the topic (Scholte 2005). Another field that has emerged is “international” studies. Breaking away from the older study of international relations, it variously joins forces with neoclassical economics, rational choice theorists, and political neorealists on the right.

Crucially, scholars of globalization have moved away from the reticent and confused cover term of postmodernism and have attempted, in varying ways and to varying extents, to reinstate something like a great explanatory framework and grand narrative, and this has been welcomed as such (Murphy 2004). There has been, accordingly, a revival of interest in “world history,” but one that is no longer Eurocentric (Bentley 2004). Not surprisingly, then, many of these globalization studies can be seen as having a family resemblance to Hegelian or Marxian philosophies of history (Dorfman 2005). Some of the social scientists doing this new multi-centered world history have turned to the new scientism mentioned above, one claiming to use “complex systems analysis” (Wilkinson 2006), another, “computational” methods and models (Cioffi-Revilla 2006).

As of this writing, the most widely sold author representing globalization as desirable and inexorable with the metaphor “the world is flat” is the New York times column-
nist, Thomas Friedman (2007). He tries to pack the differing academic arguments into his metaphor. One economist gently points out in a review that this leads to a certain incoherence (Leamer 2007).

The substantialized agent in globalization discourse is hard to pin down, not only because there is no agreement among scholars about the nature of the phenomenon but also because many of those involved are aware of the doubts raised by postmodernists and poststructuralist about the grounding of knowledge in a preordered external reality. Nonetheless we see “disorganized” or “transnational capitalism” (John Urry, Scott Lash, and Claus Offe; Leslie Sklair and William Robinson), or, simply, the “global market,” all the successors of “late capitalism” in modernist discourse, appearing again and again as the main impersonal actors at work. Alternatively or additionally, we see the electronic and digital network as the agent. The sociological study of relatively small-scale social networks, often using graph theory, was a minor specialization. With the turn to globalization as a topic, network analysis has now become a major focus. Ever-ramifying electronic and digital networks, together with rapid transportation, have formed a global “space of flows.” The world in the “information age” has now become a “network society” (Castells 2010). The promise here, already encountered, is that networks are liberating and egalitarian and will break the hold of older hierarchic organizations (never mind the fact that most networks are primarily “star” rather than “mesh” networks and, hence, hierarchic).

One of the founders of the field of global studies himself attempted to avoid the reductionism often involved in presupposing the existence of a single substantialized agent. He takes what I would call a cosmological approach, looking
at the differing and successive views of world order and at the specific institutions working to bring it about (Robertson 1992). More recently, some sociologists argue that the social sciences of the new century should theorize globalization as cosmopolitanism and should focus on that as they had in the past on individualism and the nation-state (Beck & Sznaider 2006).

Globalization discourse itself, despite its efforts to transcend the hypermodern approaches of neoliberal economics and cognitive science on the one hand and the postmodern or hypomodern stance of cultural studies and its allies on the other, remains caught between them. One way to escape this bind has been to focus not on the totalizing individual as entrepreneur, customer or consumer but as the “transnational” corporation and on its attempts to monopolize the technologies that bring about the time-space “compression” on which the “global village” depends. Another has been to assume some sort of digital public sphere is the emergent agent of a hybridized cultural globalization that would empower disjointed identities (Papacharissi 2010). So if globalization can be said to have a will, it is to these that we would have to look.

Globalization remains difficult to pin down in social science discourse. The differences between the neoliberal and postmodernist approaches is not as great as it might seem, however, for both alike presuppose that the agent of their version of globalization is electronic and digital. Scholars and advocates on both sides of the political divide, neoliberals as well as neo-Marxists, constitute globalization with terms such as “flow” and “network” drawn more or less directly from engineering. They also argue or simply assume that, like some cosmic force, it is inevitable and irreversible. Human agents, whether institutions or individuals, are not
the cause of globalization. They might try to stand in the way but will eventually be swept aside. So they need to adapt to this force of nature and try to harness it for their benefit (Steger 2003: 99–103). As one commentator aptly points out, “Politically, leaving the term vague and ghostly permits its conversion to something with a life of its own, making it a force, fetishizing it as something that has an existence independent of the will of human beings, inevitable and irresistible” (Marcuse 2000).

There are skeptics who are critical not only of the promoters of globalism but of the very concept of globalization (Hirst & Thompson 1996) and some who even claim that it is a spent force (Gray 2001, James 2002, and Saul 2005). There is also something of a consensus, the flat-earth metaphor notwithstanding, that the “trickle down” of globalization’s benefits (hardly possible on a flat earth) has not (yet) happened. Instead, according to some critics led by one of the intellectuals of globalism, a Nobel laureate in economics who has broken ranks, the divide between the emergent techno-entrepreneurial elite and the mass of the world’s population has widened (Joseph Stiglitz 2014). One critic sees the growing divide as a congeries of expulsions, the more or less forcible displacement of people from their livelihoods and homes (Sassen 2014).

Perhaps the best audiovisual representation of the results of globalization to be found in the feature film *Elysium* (Neill Blomkamp, 2013). It is 2154 and the world is radically divided. The Earth that we know is overpopulated and ruinous, turned into a terrestrial hell (fig. 8). Represented by a ravaged Los Angeles, it is the world of the masses policed by robots. Transcending that is the elysium that provides the name of the film, a celestial paradise (fig. 9), not the one built by God, but by people in the future on a radial
torus ring, a huge machine that revolves around the Earth. Looking like Malibu, this is the world of the super-elite.

**Designer Cosmopolitanism** Existential humanism in the postwar configuration was quite distinct from mechanical naturalism, especially in its atomic individualist form. Its more radical proponents pitched their practices against
the depersonalizing bureaucracy of business and government. More middle-of-the-road humanists saw both the consumerism and the mass culture that came with it as progressive so long as it was familial rather than personal. The humanism that is emerging after the Cold War, while a continuation if its immediate ancestor, seems to have given up its oppositional stance. The totalizing individual of electrical naturalism is also a humanist, but this a humanism to which he or she gains access largely through markets. Hence I call it designer cosmopolitanism. Not everyone is happy with this cosmopolitanism. Ultranationalists and theist fundamentalists are probably the foremost opponents of it, but for different reasons.

**Possessing Spirits** The advocates of existential humanism saw religion, esthetic practices, and familial consumption as the private or personal supplements or even antidotes to their public, corporate lives. Similarly, they saw the cultures of foreign countries and especially of the First and Third Worlds as not only distinct, but even opposed. The culture of the former was modern and progressive, the latter traditional and backward. Underdeveloped countries may have provided raw materials—coffee, tea, and jute—to the developed, but they did not supply their cultures (except on an occasional and isolated item-by-item basis, to be assimilated into the culture of the West). The tendency on the part of the new entrepreneur, as represented in the literature, is to conflate both the public and personal, the natural and humanist, the prosaic modern and the exotic traditional or, rather, to synergize himself by combining them in ever-new forms. On the one hand, we get “Zen” and “Japanese Management.” On the other hand, we find personalized “religion,” in the form of World Music, meaning music from the Third World, and Gregorian chant, Gorecki
or Pärt, and the Kronos Quartet, all available on compact disc, reproduced on a multimedia computer, or an iPod (or other MP3 Player). World Literature, that is, literature from the Third World, provides the ontology for this transformed humanism—**magic realism**. On the one hand, this tendency to appropriate articles and modes from other cultures, extended to clothing, interior decoration, and travel, turns into a designer consumerism. On the other hand, it turns into a quest for super self-empowerment, as in video gaming for the young and, for adults, High Tech architecture, Pop Art, acupuncture or New Age practices, including alternative or holist medicine, or the turn to Shamanism, Kabbalah, Ayurveda, and Zen and Tibetan Buddhism. The result is the emergence of what I am calling designer cosmopolitanism. Central here is some sort of secret **over-meditative rationality** that supplements and perhaps even coalesces with the overacquisitive rationality of the totalizing individual. Instead of Meaning, people now seek access to **hidden spiritual forces**. Whereas meaning was distinctly human, these spiritual forces are to be found not only in humans but dispersed throughout the natural world as well (whence the renewed interest in astrology). These fads have found their way into the human sciences—medical anthropology, comparative literature, Buddhist studies, to name a few.

**Defensive Nations, Avenging Religions** We come, finally, to the positional successors of the organicists, the advocates of an ultranationalism and of religious fundamentalism, and the disciplines that are associated with them. The more zealous spokesmen for globalization claimed that their world-wide transcendent markets and the totalizing individuals (read corporations) acting in them, would displace if not entirely replace the nation-state. People would
become more rational and presumably secular and cosmopolitan. Instead, many people and political parties have responded to the push for globalization and cosmopolitanism with a turn to extreme forms of nationalism and a return to supposedly originary and authentic forms of the conventional religions. The main form that the representation of these shifts has taken in the academy is the discourse of a conservative political scientist that predicted a “clash of civilizations” and, more pointedly, a clash of civilization and barbarism. Handily, the use of the term civilization covered both ultranationalist and fundamentalist movements and the conflicts motivated by them. Many commentators claimed that the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, and the “war on terror,” deterritorialized or globalized like markets, were evidence of this (Huntington 1993 and 1996 and Dunn 2006–2007). Political scientists soon brought their naturalist toolkit to a new specialization, terrorism studies, in both military and civil academic institutions (Lemann 2010).

The nationalism at issue here was and is populist and defensive. It aims to defend the ordinary people of the country from global or regional institutions such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (Frente para la Victoria, Argentina) and in Europe from the European Union (National Front, France, UKIP, Britain, Freedom Party, Netherlands, Austria) and in Russia from the encroachment of the US-led NATO. While it is problematic for these parties to openly oppose global corporate interests, it is not so difficult to defend the country against immigrants, in Europe, Muslims, in the US, Mexicans. Immigrants in any number of countries are seen as maintaining their identities and hence as unassimilable. So they must be deported.

When it comes to terrorist attacks, retaliation is the ac-
tion to be taken. Intellectuals connected with the Neo-conservative movement in the US, mentioned above, and, following them, the Tea Party have promoted their aggressive and deceptive version of ultranationalism. They have done this under the rubric of American exceptionalism, the hegemonic view of America’s position in the world in the US. Assumed here is what one commentator calls “civilizational realism” (Slater 2003). Civilizations, the substantialized agents of the present-day world, are inherently power-seeking, desirous of converting others to their “universal” values.

The nation-states of the era of globalization, the instruments of these civilizations, are no longer the modernizing, freedom-seeking entities of the past, but the vengeful, punitive states intent on defending their homelands. The leading nation here is, of course, the US, with its vast security apparatus. The rationality at work in the government of the US and other nations is punitive. As one scholar shows, vengeance on the international scene for the US has a domestic dimension and historical precedence (Sherry 2005). The advocates of religious nationalism and universalism, often called fundamentalists, have a complicated relationship with their secular equivalents, the ultranationalists and the cosmopolitan globalists, but are almost always openly hostile to fundamentalist of other faiths. These are a variety of movements—the New Christian Right in the US, the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, al-Qaeda in the Arab world, the Taliban (Afghanistan), the Jama’at-i Islami in Pakistan and Bangladesh, and the Bharatiya Janata Party in India—whose intellectuals have had only marginal positions in the social science disciplines, those usually labelled fundamentalists. The intellectuals of these theist fundamentalists (I call them theist to distinguish them from
those one might want to consider as secularist fundamentalists) are the TV evangelists (US), sheikhs or emirs (“mullahs”) (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Pakistan), ayatollahs (Iran), and acharyas (India). Not all of these movements are on what most would consider to be the political right. The Latin American movement articulated by G. Gutiérrez as Liberation Theology, which takes in Marxist concerns, is an example on the left. Nor is it clear that the Unification Church or Scientology, which I would place here, are necessarily fundamentalist. Among the counter-disciplines that have emerged here, all of which draw on the epistemology of Baconian science and even Darwinian evolution, are literalist or inerrantist scriptural studies (as opposed to the critical and historical study of scriptural texts) (Bucaille 1979), creation science (aimed at evolutionism) (Numbers 2006), Islamic economics (Al-Sadr 1982), and Vedic science (Brown 2012). Proponents of these fundamentalist “sciences” have made attempts to insert them into the secular disciplines wherever possible (e.g., the Durham Centre for Islamic Economics and Finance, Durham University and, in India, Nanda 2004).

Environmentalist reworkings of the social sciences in the form of environmental studies have attempted to question theories of infinite growth based solely on utility and requiring Man’s domination of Nature. Various ecological movements ranging from Greenpeace through Friends of the Earth and various Green political parties have advocated policies of “sustainable growth” and “biodiversity” as replacements for those that prevailed without question until around 1980. They have problematized the assumption that the earth is simply a place and a resource for an ever-expanding modernity. James Lovelock’s “Gaia hypothesis,” for example, turned the naturalism and holism of the
social sciences back on them, asserting that the entire mass of living matter on Earth is a homeostatic superorganism. Here, of course, the substantialized agent of history is none other than the passive-aggressive God variously represented by fundamentalists (Gaia for some environmentalists). The essence of this vengeful God is a **retributive rationality** (notice how it echoes the punitive rationality of the ultranationalists). This is a form of reason concerned with the how and why of retaliation against its enemies, both now, in the shape of a crusade or jihad against apostates, homosexuals, loose women, and the like, and in the future, with the second coming and final judgment (Jones 2010, Strozier 2010, and Khosrokhavar 2010). God’s reasoning is not directly knowable. It can only be had from scriptures and those authorities who (somehow) claim to know what they say. The discourses and narratives about god, his disciples, and his activities to be found in these texts are not to be read symbolically as historians of religion and modern liberal church leaders would argue from a hermeneuticist position. Hence the fundamentalists are neither subjective nor objective idealists, but rather **theistic realists**.

A summary of fragmenting societies is provided (table 2).

**Conclusion**

Some social scientists, responding to the postmodern critiques of their discipline, have taken up the issue of scientism and the “two cultures” in the human sciences. Immanuel Wallerstein, the historical sociologist, has taken social scientists to task for adhering to naturalism that is not only counterproductive but out of date (cf. the Ormerod criticism of economics above). He has called for sociologists to look to the new “sciences of complexity” and to
American cultural studies, which has rejected the universal estheticism once central to the humanities (Wallerstein 2004: 157–159). As already noted, Giddens, considered a major figure in sociology, tries to recuperate agency without however giving up the substantialized agency covered by the term “structure.”

Of the thinkers from this postmodern period, I would argue that Laclau is the one who comes closest to dealing with the issue of unitary, substantialized, agency in the human sciences and the political discourses that deploy it. He, more than anyone else, criticizes the ontology as well as the epistemology, as, for example, when he takes on the universalism of the human sciences and liberalism:

A historicist recasting of universalism has, I would think, two main political advantages over its metaphysical version, and these, far from weakening it, help to reinforce and to radicalize it. The first is that it has a liberating effect: human beings will begin seeing themselves more and more as the exclusive authors of their world. The historicity of being will become more apparent. If people think that God or nature have made the world as it is, they will tend to think their fate inevitable. But if the being of the world which they inhabit is only the result of the contingent discourses and vocabularies that constitute it, they will tolerate their fate with less patience and will stand a better chance of becoming political ‘strong poets’. (Laclau 1996)

To a large extent I start where some of the poststructuralists and post-Marxists do. I accept the notion that knowledges in the human sciences are themselves not only plural but historically and politically situated; and I accept that the linguistic forms those knowledges take and have taken are constitutive of those knowledges. We have, therefore, to give up the notion of the human sciences as universal, absolute and objective sciences and the related idea of a utopian nonpolitical society of free individuals not just as a counsel of perfection but as a desirable goal altogether.
We would have to see our sciences as situated *practices*, as themselves the product of human actions. If we do this we can, I believe, pick up the fragile and disconnected threads of what I would call “pretheories” of human agency that are to be found in the human sciences and begin to radically rearticulate them. We would want especially to focus on ideas of complex agents that will go beyond the available critiques of structure. These critiques have largely been content to leave their readers with the idea that the best we can do is talk about fragments of the earlier foundational Agent in disconnected narratives. I believe that is quite possible to talk about historically transient complex agents and to produce alternate accounts.
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<td><strong>Movements/Parties:</strong></td>
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Table 2: Agency in the Hyper- & Hypomodern Human Sciences
NOTES


2 It “is instrumental insofar as it confines social research to only such questions as the limitation of current research instruments allow, and it is positivist insofar as this self-imposed constraint is indicative of a determination on the part of sociologists to submit to rigours comparable to those they attribute to natural science....” (Bryant 1985: 133). Among recent examples of instrumental positivism are Laumann, Gagnon, & Michael (1995) and Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata (1995) and, for critical commentary, Lewontin (1995).

3 City as machine and human as robot, Metropolis, poster, Boris Bilinsky (1900–1948), 1928. (University of Wollongong, Metropolis: Boris Bilinsky French Metropolis Posters & Montages 1927, compiled by Michael Organ and René Clémenti-Bilinsky).


5 Baylor Professor Paul Froese, one of the co-authors of a survey on Americans' views of economics told USA Today, “They say the invisible hand of the free market is really God at work,” adding “They think the economy works because God wants it to work. It’s a new religious economic idealism.”: Sam Ro, “22% Of Americans Want God’s ‘Invisible Hand’ To Guide The Economy” Business Insider online (September 21, 2011).

6 An excerpt from an uncited article in The Economist (February 1, 2005) reveals to its readers that “three of the most important prices in the world economy—the price of oil, the price of capital and the price of the dollar—are nudged this way or that by the very visible hands of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the Federal Reserve and the G7.”

7 The anthropologist Robert Redfield (1897–1958) argued that villages in complex societies and the little and great traditions, the civilizations, to which they belonged should be objects of anthropological study as small-scale cultures were (Redfield 1956).

8 It is not clear how much if any of the organicist idealist ontology some of the current descendants of the National Socialists such as the Aryan Nation (US) or the British National Party or the neoconservatives who would become associated with the Bush administration retain.

9 The impressions the mind received were electrical and the switchboard directed them to the right place—the motion telephone exchange and thence to the limbs or to the will and the exchanges of the glands and muscles. Mind as a switchboard, Fritz Kahn & F. Schüler, Das Leben des Menschen; eine volkstümliche Anatomie, Biologie, Physiologie und Entwick-lungs-geschichte des Menschen. Stuttgart: Kosmos, 1922–31. 4 vols. 3 (1926) Muskel- und Klingelleitung in ihrer fünfteiligen Übereinstimmung; tr. as Man in Structure and Function. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, 1943. 2 vols. (NIH, Images from the History of Medicine (IHM), U. S. National Library of Medicine, National Institute of Health). The nerve center in
Kahn’s image of the human body as a factory is a switchboard, so this is a close-up.

10 The brain as a computer (Worth1000).

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