1. Sexism and Economic Growth

Industrial society creates two myths: one about the sexual ancestry of this society and the other about its movement toward equality. Both myths are unmasked as lies of humans who belong to the “second sex.” In my analysis, I begin with women's experience and try to construct categories that allow me to speak about the present and the past in a way that is more satisfactory to me.

I oppose the regime of scarcity to the reign of gender. I argue that the loss of vernacular gender is the decisive condition for the rise of capitalism and a life-style that depends on industrially produced commodities. Gender in modern English means “... one of three grammatical kinds, corresponding more or less to distinctions of sex (or the absence of sex) into which nouns are discriminated according to the nature of the modifications they require in words syntactically associated with them.” (OED, 1932.) English nouns belong to masculine, feminine, or neuter gender. I have adopted this term to designate a distinction in behavior, a distinction universal in vernacular cultures. It distinguishes places, times, tools, tasks, forms of speech, gestures, and perceptions that are associated with men from those associated with women. This association constitutes social gender because it is specific to a time and place. I call it vernacular gender because this set of associations is as peculiar to a traditional people (in Latin, a gens) as is their vernacular speech.

I use gender, then, in a new way to designate a duality that in the past was too obvious even to be named, and is so far removed
from us today that it is often confused with sex. By “sex” I mean the result of a polarization in those common characteristics that, starting with the late eighteenth century, are attributed to all human beings. Unlike vernacular gender, which always reflects an association between a dual, local, material culture and the men and women who live under its rule, social sex is “catholic”; it polarizes the human labor force, libido, character or intelligence, and is the result of a diagnosis (in Greek, “discrimination”) of deviations from the abstract genderless norm of “the human.” Sex can be discussed in the unambiguous language of science. Gender bespeaks a complementarity that is enigmatic and asymmetrical. Only metaphor can reach for it.

The transition from the dominance of gender to that of sex constitutes a change of the human condition that is without precedent. But the fact that gender might be irrecoverable is no reason to hide its loss by imputing sex to the past, or to lie about the entirely new degradations that it has brought to the present.

I know of no industrial society where women are the economic equals of men. Of everything that economics measures, women get less. The literature dealing with this economic sexism has recently turned into a flood. It documents sexist exploitation, denounces it as an injustice, usually describes it as a new version of an age-old evil, and proposes explanatory theories with remedial strategies built in. Through the institutional sponsorship of the United Nations, the World Council of Churches, governments, and universities, the latest growth industry of career reformers thrives. First the proletariat, then the underdeveloped, and now women are the favored pets of “the concerned.” You can no longer mention sex discrimination without creating the impression that you want to contribute to the political economy of sex: Either you want to promote a “non-sexist economy,” or you are engaged in whitewashing the sexist economy we have. Although I shall build my argument on this evidence of discrimination, I do not want to do either. To me, the pursuit of a non-sexist “economy” is as absurd as a sexist one is abhorrent. Here I shall expose the intrinsically sexist nature of economics as such and clarify the sexist nature of the most basic postulates on which economics, “the science of values under the assumption of scarcity,” is built.

I shall explain how all economic growth entails the destruction of vernacular gender (chapters 3-5) and thrives on the exploitation of economic sex (chapter 2). I want to examine the economic apartheid and subordination of women and yet avoid the sociobiological and structuralist traps that explain this discrimination as “naturally” and “culturally” inevitable, respectively. As a historian, I want to trace the origins of women’s economic subservience; as an anthropologist, I want to grasp what the new gradation reveals about kinship where it occurs; as a philosopher, I want to clarify what this repetitive pattern tells us about the axioms of popular wisdom, namely, those on which the contemporary university and its social sciences rest.

It was not easy to spell out what I have to say. More than I realized when I began, the ordinary speech of the industrial age revealed itself as both genderless and sexist. I knew that gender was dual, but my thinking was constantly distorted by the genderless perspective that industrialized language necessarily enforces. I found myself caught up in a distracting web of key words. I now see that key words are a characteristic feature of modern language, but clearly distinct from technical terms. "Automobile" and "jet" are technical terms. And I have learned that such words can overwhelm the lexicon of a traditional language. When this occurs, I speak of technological creolization. A term like "transportation," however, is a key word. It does more than designate a device—it imputes a basic need.2

2 KEY WORDS

I have been led to the study of key words by Raymond Williams, *Key Words: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, pbk., 1976). This book is unlike any other "on words" that I know. Each entry conveys the surprise and passion of an aging man telling us about the inconstancy of a word on which his own integrity has rested. As a result of his guidance I have (1) ventured into the exploration of new types of key words and (2) attempted to identify the conditions under which a spider's web of key words could establish its network in everyday language. In formulating the method I use in such explanations, I have been guided by Peter Berger, Brigitte Berger, and Hansfried Kellner, *The Homeless Mind: Modernisation and Consciousness* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974). For an introduction to a characteristically German type of historical semantics, see Irmline Veit-Brause, “A Note on Begriffgeschichte” *History and Theory* 20, no. 1
An examination of modern languages shows that key words are strong, persuasive, in common usage. Some are etymologically old but have acquired a new meaning totally unlike their former intent. “Family,” “man,” “work” are familiar examples. Others are of more recent coinage but were originally conceived for specialized use alone. At a certain moment they slipped into everyday language and now denote a wide area of thought and experience. “Role,” “sex,” “energy,” “production,” “development,” “consumer” are well-known examples. In every industrialized language, these key words take on the semblance of common sense. And each modern language has its own set that provides that society’s unique perspective on the social and ideological reality of the contemporary world. The set of key words in all modern industrialized languages is homologous. The reality they interpret is everywhere fundamentally the same. The same highways leading to the same school and office buildings overshadowed by the same TV antennas transform dissimilar landscapes and societies into monotonous uniformity. In much the same way, texts dominated by key words translate easily from English into Japanese or Malay.

Universal technical terms that have become key words, such as “education,” “proletariat,” and “medicine,” mean the same thing in all modern languages. Other traditional terms with very different word fields, when used as key words, correspond almost exactly to each other across different languages. Examples are “humanity” and “Menschheit.” Therefore, the study of key words calls for some comparison between languages.3


For the comparative semantics of key words in the principal Western European languages, Johann Knobloch, et. al., eds. Europäische Schlüsselwörter, 3 vols. (Munich: Max Hübner, 1963-67).

3 WORD FIELDS

Word fields have been traced and mapped in monographs and in dictionaries. For an international critical bibliography with essay-length commentaries on word-field studies, see H. Gipper and H. Schwarz, Bibliographisches Handbuch zur Sprachinhaltsforschung: Schrifttum zur Sprachinhaltsforschung in alphabetischer Folge nach Verfassern, mit Besprechungen und Inhaltsinhalten (Cologne: Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Forschung des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen, 1961). The book is complete only to the letter L, but two thematic indices to this first half of the book have already appeared. The twentieth-century semblance of common sense, which key words reflect, transcends individual languages; research into this popular wisdom frequently requires comparisons. For the English language, the prime instrument for research is A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary, ed. R.W. Burchfield, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972). “The vocabulary treated is that which came into use during the publication of the successive sections of the main dictionary (the OED) — that is, between 1884, when the first fascicle of the letter A was published, and 1928, when the final section of the dictionary appeared, together with accessions to the English language in Britain and abroad from 1928 to the present day.” Also, William Little, H.W. Fowler, and Jessie Coulson, comp., The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, 2 vols., rev. and ed. C.T. Onions; third edition completely reset with etymologies revised by G.W.S. Friedrichsen and with revised addenda (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973). This presents in miniature all the features of the main work, including old colloquial English, obsolete, archaic, and dialectal words and uses. Always useful: H.L. Mencken, The American Language: An Enquiry into the Development of English in the United States — the fourth edition and the two abridged supplements with annotations and new material by Raven I. McDavid, Jr., with the assistance of David W. Maurer (New York: Knopf, 1980). A one-volume abridged edition in paperback also exists. For French, very handy: Paul Robert, Dictionnaire alphabétique et analytique de la langue française (Paris: Nouveau Littéra, 1967) (on the cover: Petit Robert). This is an excellent and up-to-date abridgement of the six-volume major work. An attempt is now being undertaken in France to equal the OED and its supplements with Paul Imbs, ed., Trésor de la langue française: Dictionnaire de la langue du XIXe et du XXe siècle (1789-1960) (Paris: CNRS, 1971-). However, the scope of this comprehensive, historical dictionary was reduced drastically beginning with volume three. For Spanish, I give preference to J. Corominas, Diccionario crítico etimológico de la lengua castellana (Madrid: Gredos, 1954-57). Enlarged "adiciones, restituciones e
characteristic of taught mother tongue. They are even more effective than the mere standardization of the vocabulary and grammatical rules in their repression of the vernacular because, having the appearance of a common sense, they put a pseudo-vernacular gloss on engineered reality. Key words, then, are also more important for the formation of an industrialized language than creolization by technical terms because each one denotes a perspective common to the entire set. I have found that the paramount characteristic of key words in all languages is their exclusion of gender. Therefore, an understanding of gender, and its distinction from sex (a key word), depends on the avoidance or wary use of all terms that might be key words.

Linguistically, then, I found myself in a double ghetto when I started to write this essay: I was unable to use words in the traditional resonance of gender, and unwilling to repeat them with their current sexist ring. I first noticed the difficulty when I tried to use earlier versions of this text in my lectures during 1980-82. Never before had so many colleagues and friends attempted to

indices’ will be found in the fourth volume of the reprint (Bern: Francke, 1979). Most entries contain a bibliography that refers to critical studies on the term. In German, Jacob & Wilhelm Grimm’s Deutsches Wörterbuch (orig. 1854-1960, 16 vols.) is now being revised but is accessible to fewer people. Instead try Hermann Paul, Deutsches Wörterbuch, 5th ed. Völlig neu bearb. und erw. Aufl. v. N. Werner Betz (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1966). Due to peculiar German interest in the history of ideas and the history of concepts, two major German reference tools have no equal in other languages, and can often be used for the study of key words in other European languages. First, there is Joachim Ritter, ed., Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie, rev. ed. (Basel: Schwabe; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1971-). Six of the planned ten volumes have appeared so far. Secondly, Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhard Koselleck, eds., Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland (Stuttgart: E. Klett, 1972-). This will comprise, when finished, 130 monographic articles on socio-political terms and concepts. For Italian, Salvatore Battaglia, Grande dizionario della lingua italiana. 8 vols., ed. Giorgio Barberi Squarotti (Turin: Unione Tipografico, 1961-). Planned on historical principles, its index gives easy access to numerous, also modern, citations. To establish the contrast between vernacular synonyms and uniquack key words, I use Carl Darling Buck, A Dictionary of Selected Synonyms in the Principal Indo-European Languages: A Contribution to the History of Ideas (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949).

dissuade me from a task on which I had embarked. Most felt that I should turn my attention to something less trivial, less ambiguous, or less scabrous; others insisted that, in the present crisis of feminism, talk about women was not for men. Listening carefully, I came to see that most of my interlocutors felt uneasy because my reasoning interfered with their dreams: with the feminist dream of a genderless economy without compulsory sex roles; with the leftist dream of a political economy whose subjects would be equally human; with the futurist dream of a modern society where people are plastic, their choices of being a dentist, a male, a Protestant, or a gene-manipulator deserving the same respect. The conclusion about economics tout court, which my perspective on sex discrimination revealed, upset each dream with equal force, since the desires that these dreams express are all made of the same stuff: genderless economics (see chapter 7).

An industrial society cannot exist unless it imposes certain unisex assumptions: the assumptions that both sexes are made for the same work, perceive the same reality, and have, with some minor cosmetic variations, the same needs. And the assumption

4 THE HUMAN

Before the eighteenth century, “humane” was the normal spelling for the main-range meanings characteristic of the human species: its members were humane, but all humans were either men or women or children. Only during the late eighteenth century did the word acquire the meaning it has today — kind, gentle, courteous, sympathetic. Humanity has had a different but related development. Since the fourteenth century, the term has meant something similar to, but not identical with, the Italian umanità and the French humanité, generally synonymous with courtesy, politeness, and a strong sense of civility. From the sixteenth century onward, it extends to kindness and generosity. The use of “humanity” to indicate, neutrally, a set of human characteristics or attributes is not common, in its abstract sense, before the eighteenth century, while today this is its first meaning. “Human” now has the same abstract sense. In addition, it indicates condoned fallibility, human error: “He has a human side to him.” Consult Williams, (op. cit., p. 121ff, FN 2). For a bibliography on the concept and term, see Michael Landmann, Philosophical Anthropology (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

5 GENDERLESS INDIVIDUALISM

Historians, even those who focus on the history of economic ideas, have not yet noted that the loss of gender creates the subject of formal economics. Marcel Mauss was the first to recognize that “only recently
of scarcity, which is fundamental to economics, is itself logically based on this unisex postulate. There could be no competition for "work" between men and women, unless "work" had been redefined as an activity that befits humans irrespective of their sex. The subject on which economic theory is based is just such a genderless human. Then, with scarcity accepted, the unisex have our Western societies made man into an economic animal" (1909). Westernized man is Homo oeconomicus. We call a society "Western" when its institutions are reshaped for the disembodied production of commodities that meet this being's basic needs. On this, see Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (New York: Octagon Books, 1975). On his influence: S.C. Humphreys, "History, Economics and Anthropology: The Work of Karl Polanyi," *History and Theory* 9, no. 2 (1968) 162-212. The novel definition of man as the subject and client of a "disembodied" economy has a history. As an introduction to this history, I highly recommend Louis Dumont, *From Malthus to Marx: Genesis and Triumph of Economic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977). The perception of ego as a human, and the demand that social institutions fit the ego's egalitarian human needs, represent a break with all pre-modern forms of consciousness. But to define the precise character of this radical discontinuity in consciousness remains very much a controversial issue. For one orientation on the dispute, see Marshall Sahlin, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976). Sahlin identifies the difference between then and now as a "distinctive mode of symbolic production" that is peculiar to Western civilization (p. 220). I do not quarrel with Sahlin on this point. However, in this context I argue that there is a profound discontinuity between all past forms of existence and Western individualism; and this change constitutes a fundamental rupture. It consists primarily in the loss of gender. And this loss of social gender has not yet been treated adequately in the history of individualism. A historiography of economic individualism might best begin with Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophical Radicalism* (Clifton, NJ: Kelly reprint, 1972), based on an abridged translation by M. Morris in 1952. He charts and explains in detail the highly discrepant effects Bentham had on his various disciples. He calls Bentham and his disciples "radical" because they consciously broke all ties with previous philosophical traditions. On the transformation of personality structure, at the deepest levels, that created the English working class between the years 1790 and 1830, see E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1966). Utilitarianism could produce faith in bureaucratic paternalism based on legislative intervention, or belief in anarchical individualism and laissez-faire. Halévy describes how both positions were held by Bentham's pupils. See also: Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents in Marxism: Its Rise, Growth and Dissolution.* postulate spreads. Every modern institution, from school to family and from union to courtroom, incorporates this assumption of scarcity, thereby dispersing its constituent unisex postulate throughout the society. For example, men and women have always grown up; now they need "education" to do so. In traditional societies, they matured without the conditions for growth being perceived as scarce. Now, educational institutions teach them that desirable learning and competence are scarce goods for which men and women must compete. Thus, education turns into the name for learning to live under an assumption of scarcity. But education, considered as an example of a typical modern need, entails more: It assumes the scarcity of a genderless value; it teaches that he or she who experiences its process is primarily a human being in need of genderless education. Economic institutions, then, are based on the assumption of scarcity in genderless values, equally desirable or necessary for 3 vols. (London: Oxford University Press, 1978). In the mirror of twentieth-century Marxism, the social history of this century can be read as a conflict between groups espousing these opposite policies deduced from utilitarian principles. Dumont (see above, this footnote) explores the fundamental commonality of utilitarian thought. He offers a careful and solid textual analysis of Mandeville, Locke, Smith, and Marx. Each of these thinkers conceptualizes "human" as "individual," determined by basic needs under the assumption of universal scarcity. What "individual" means is further clarified by C.B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (London: Oxford University Press, pbk., 1962) and, by the same author, *The Real World of Democracy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966) and *Democratic Theory: Essays on Retrieval* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972). He carefully substantiates his intuition that the fundamental common trait of the individual, which underlies all modern democratic thought, is its possessive quality. He shows that all humanisms of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries rest on the ultimate value of the free, self-developing, possessive individual, insofar as freedom is seen as a possession, namely a freedom from any but economic relations with others. In this present essay, I argue that a second characteristic is equally constitutive of the subject of modern social theory and practice: the possessive individual is genderless, anthropologically construed as a merely sexed neutral. Logically, as I shall argue, only the individual who is both possessive and genderless can fit the assumption of scarcity on which any political economy must rest. The institutional "identity" of Homo oeconomicus excludes gender. He is a neutrum oeconomicum. Therefore, the loss of social gender is an integral part of the history of scarcity and of the institutions that structure it.
competing neuters belonging to two biological sexes. What Karl Polanyi has called the “disembedding” of a formal market economy, I am describing, anthropologically, as the transfiguration of gender to sex.

Relentlessly, economic institutions transform the two culturally embedded genders into something new, into economic

6 INVIDIAOUS INDIVIDUALISM

The contemporary, genderless, possessive individual, the subject of the economy, lives by decisions based on considerations of marginal utility. Every economic decision is embedded in a sense of scarcity, and thus tends toward a kind of envy unknown to the past. Modern productive institutions at the same time foster and mask invidious individualism, something the subsistence-oriented institutions of all past ages were designed to reduce and to expose. This is the argument of Paul Dumouchel and Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *L'enfer des choses: René Girard et la logique de l'économie* (Paris: Seuil, 1979). The authors attempt to clarify the typological contrast between modern institutions, which generate and then disguise envy, and those that had the inverse function and were replaced. In independent essays, the two authors apply to economics the results reached through literary analysis by René Girard, *Deceit, Desire and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, pbk., 1976). Also see R. Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). Girard finds in the nineteenth-century novel a source of evidence for a historic transformation of desire: the evolution of “needs” based on invidious comparison with the other’s aspirations. Rather than analyzing Dostoyevsky’s figures through Freudian categories, he demystifies Freud by looking at him through the eyes of the brothers Karamazov. In this perspective, what is considered economic progress appears as the institutional spread of triangular, or “mimetic,” desire. The history of economic individualism coincides with the modernization of envy. In this essay, I discuss the appearance of a new kind of envy, characteristic of the relations between the sexes, one that arises only as gender fades from a society. I do not find an explicit history-of-envy treatment of this theme in the available literature. Fundamental for the anthropology of envy remains George M. Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67, no. 2 (April 1965): 293-315 and, by the same author, "The Anatomy of Envy: A Study in Symbolic Behavior," *Current Anthropology* 13, no. 2 (April 1972): 165-202. "Sensing the ever-present threat of envy to himself and to his society, man fears: He fears the consequences of his own envy, and he fears the consequences of the envy of others. As a result, in every society people use symbolic and non-symbolic cultural forms whose function is to neutralize or reduce or


7 SEX AND SEXISM

The word "sex" is derived from the Latin *sexus* and is related to *sec-, a root for division: seg-ment. Grammatically, the word must
my argument. And if this is true – namely, that economic growth is intrinsically and irremediably gender-destructive, that is, sexist – the sexism can be reduced only at the “cost” of economic shrinkage. Further, the decline of sexism requires as a necessary, albeit insufficient, condition the contraction of the cash nexus

always be accompanied by either virile (male) or multibre (female). During the Enlightenment, while “the human” took form as an ideal, the French use of the term was restricted to the segregation of women. “Le sexe” merits ten lines in Diderot’s Encyclopédie: “Le sexe absolument parlant, ou plutôt le beau sexe, est l’épithète qu’on donne aux femmes … les plus chères délices du citoyen paisible … [dont] l’heureuse fécondité perpétue les amours et les grâces …” Only in the last quarter of the nineteenth century did the term come to mean something common to both men and women, although its weight, shape, and significance were posited as different in the two. For both, however, it meant a kind of plumbing system channeling a genderless force that, by the end of the century, Freud called “libido.” The new, genderless meaning of the modern “sex” appears clearly in such terms as “sexuality.” When functioning as a key word, sex is paradoxically genderless. And the formation of genderless sexuality is one of the necessary prerequisites for the appearance of Homo oeconomicus. For this reason I oppose economic sex to vernacular gender. By the former, I designate a complementary duality; by the second, the polarization of a common characteristic. Both gender and sex are social realities with only a tenuous connection to anatomy. Individualized economic sex is all that is left of social gender in the self-conscious pseudo-gender of the contemporary well-sexed human. Gender just cannot thrive in an environment shaped by economics. However, the background condition for this transformation, the despoliation of a social environment suitable for vernacular gender, is a subject so far ignored by ecologists. Obviously, I am using gender and sex as ideal types in the sense of Max Weber, *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and ed. E.A. Shils (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949): 93ff. An ideal type is a conceptual construct (*ein Gedankenbild*), which is neither historical reality nor even “true” reality. It is even less fit to serve as a schema under which a real situation or action is to be subsumed as one item. An ideal type has the significance of a purely ideal, limiting concept with which the real situation or action is compared and surveyed for the explication of certain of its significant components. For me, gender and sex are ideal, limiting concepts to designate a polarity: the industrial transformation of society from a “gendering” into a “sexing” system. For both, for gender and for sex, anatomy is but the raw material. Both gender and sex transform the genital organs into a social reality. Gender transforms the penis into innumerable types of phalluses; sex only produces the one, international, threatening, enviable “penis”. (On the analogous homogenization of

and the expansion of non-market-related, non-economic forms of subsistence.

Up to now, two major motifs have emerged that impel us to adopt negative growth policies: environmental degradation and paradoxical counterproductivity. Now a third urges us: Negative

womb and vagina, see FN 87, 90). Gayle Rubin (cf. FN 22, 76) underscores the fact that among human groups the existence of gender systems is universal, although the configuration of these systems varies widely. However, regardless of its unique content, each society exhibits an ideology that presents gender categories as unalterable. I agree, but further argue that a sexed society exhibits an ideology that presents gender as irrevocably passé. (On patriarchy vs. sexism, see FN 21). On the subtle range of variation of gender symbols, see FNs 116, 117, as well as L. Kriss-Rettenbeck, “Feige”, *Wort, Gebärde, Amulett* (Munich, 1955) and M.L. Wagner, “Phallus, Horn und Fisch. Lebendige und verschüttete Vorstellungen und Symbole, vornehmlich im Bereich des Mittelmeerebeckens,” *Domus Natalicia* (Zurich: Carol Jaberg, 1973): 77-130. Also see FN 118.

8 ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

Here I refer to the growing recognition of limits that change the fundamental assumptions of political economy. Though ecology (as science and as belief system) has only a short history, it is now moving toward maturity. The mark of a maturing discipline is its growing reference to its own history. The term *Oekologie* was first coined 1866 by E. Haeckler, relating animal morphology to Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution. Robert P. McIntosh, “Towards a Theoretical Ecology,” *Synthèse* 43 (1980): 195-255, provides a critical and analytic historiography of ecology in the bio-sciences. Ecology as a political science is of much more recent origin. For an introduction to present issues, see William Ophuls, *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity: Prologue to a Political Theory of Steady State* (New York: W.H. Freeman, 1977). In my opinion, political ecology cannot mature unless it incorporates two distinctions, now neglected: first, the juristic distinction between the commons and productive resources (see FN 10) and, second, the distinction between complementary domains and genderless space (see text pp. 105ff). See also FNs 78, 79, 84-87.

9 COUNTERPRODUCTIVITY

Counterproductivity is a social indicator that measures a group- or classespecific frustration resulting from the obligatory consumption of a good or service. Time loss through the acceleration of traffic patterns, medicine that makes one sick rather than well, stultification by
growth is necessary to reduce sexism. This proposition is hard to accept for the well-meaning critics who have tried during the past year to divert me from my present line of argument; they feared either that I would make a fool of myself or that their dreams of growth with equality would appear to be fantasies. I believe, however, that this is the time to turn social strategies topsy-turvy, to recognize that peace between men and women, whatever form it might take, depends on economic contraction and not on economic expansion. Up to now, no goodwill and no struggle, no legislation and no technique, have reduced the sexist exploitation characteristic of industrial society. As I shall show, the interpretation of this economic degradation by sex as just more machismo under market conditions will not wash. Up to now, wherever equal rights were legally enacted and enforced,

educational curricula or news, dependence induced through political or social guidance – all are examples. The phenomenon can be viewed as measuring the intensity with which a modern institution, by technical necessity, denies a majority of its clients the purported benefit for which one of its characteristics – for example, speed in transportation – was originally engineered and publicly financed. Counterproductivity is not congestion, a frustration that results simply from the fact that commodities of the same kind get into each other's way, be these cars, curricula, or therapies. In my opinion, counterproductivity is the result of a radical monopoly of commodities over vernacular values, which I still called use values in Ivan Illich, Tools for Conviviality (New York: Harper and Row; London: Marion Boyars, 1971), esp. chapter 3, part 2, and Ivan Illich, "Energy and Equity" in Toward a History of Needs (New York: Pantheon, 1977): 110-43. This radical monopoly stems ultimately from the transformation of the commons – for instance, those regulated by traditional laws on the right of way for pedestrians – into public utilities necessary for the production or circulation of commodities. Ivan Illich, Medical Nemesis (London: Marion Boyars, 1975; New York: Pantheon, 1976) was written to illustrate how counterproductivity works specifically on the levels of technique, social structure, and cultural symbols. Jean-Pierre Dupuy, Valeur sociale et encroûtement du temps: Monographie du séminaire d'écométrie (Paris: CNRS, 1975), and Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Jean Robert, "La trahison de l'opulence" (Paris: PUF, 1976) clarify that counterproductivity is not a measure of individual impediments that can be overcome by political or technical means but is ultimately a social indicator that reflects technological characteristics. A brilliant and vivid outline for public discussion on the issue is Wolfgang Sachs, "Are Energy-Intensive Life Images Fading? The Cultural Meaning of the Automobile in Transition" (Berlin: [ms.] Technische Universität, 10/1981). See also FNs 60, 112.

wherever partnership between the sexes became stylish, these innovations gave a sense of accomplishment to the elites who proposed and obtained them, but left the majority of women untouched, if not worse off than before.

The ideal of unisex economic equality is now dying, much like the ideal of growth leading to a convergence of GNP north and south of the equator is. However, it is now possible to invert the issue. Instead of clinging to the dream of anti-discriminatory growth, it appears more sensible to pursue economic shrinkage as the policy along which a non-sexist or, at least, a less sexist society can come into being. Upon reflection, I now see that an industrial economy without a sexist hierarchy is as far fetched as that of a pre-industrial society without gender; that is, without a clear division between what men and what women do, say, and see. Both are pipe dreams, regardless of the sex of the dreamer. But the reduction of the cash nexus, that is, of both commodity production and commodity dependence, is not in the realm of fantasy. Such a cutback, however, means the repudiation of everyday expectations and habits now thought "natural to man." Many people, including some who know that rollback is the necessary alternative to horror, view the choice as impossible. But a rapidly growing number of experienced people, together with an increasing number of experts (some convinced and others opportunistic), agree that cutting back is the wise choice. Subsistence that is based on a progressive unplugging from the cash nexus now appears to be a condition for survival. Without negative growth, it is impossible to maintain an ecological balance, achieve justice among regions, or foster people's peace. And the policy must, of course, be implemented in rich countries at a much higher rate than in poor ones. Perhaps the maximum anyone can reasonably hope for is equal access to the world's scarce resources at the level currently typical for the poorest nations. The translation of such a proposition into specific action would require a multi-faceted alliance of many diverse groups and interests that pursues the recovery of the commons, what I call "radical political ecology." To bring those aggrieved by the loss of gender into this alliance, I shall here establish the linkage

10 THE RECOVERY OF THE COMMONS

"Commons" is an old English word. Almende and Gemeinheit are corresponding German terms [see Ivan Illich, Das Recht auf Gemeinheit.
between shift from production to subsistence and the reduction of sexism.

To demonstrate that this kind of relationship between sexism and economics does indeed exist, I must construct a theory. This theory is a prerequisite for a history of scarcity.\footnote{Hamburg: Rowohl, 1981, introduction. The Italian term is gli usi civici. “Commons” referred to that part of the environment that lay beyond a person’s own threshold and outside his own possession, but to which, however, that person had a recognized claim of usage — not to produce commodities but to provide for the subsistence of kin. Neither wilderness nor home is commons, but that part of the environment for which customary law exacts specific forms of community respect. I will discuss the degradation of the commons through its transformation into a productive resource in Vernacular Values (op. cit. FN 1). Those who struggle to preserve the biosphere, and those who oppose a style of life characterized by a monopoly of commodities over activities, by reclaiming in bits and pieces the ability to exist outside the market’s regime of scarcity, have recently begun to coalesce in a new alliance. The one value shared by all currents within this alliance is the attempt to recover and enlarge, in some way, the commons. This emerging and converging social reality has been called the ‘archipelago of conviviality’ by André Gorz. The key instrument for mapping this new world is Valentina Borremans, Reference Guide to Convivial Tools Special Report no. 13 (New York: Library Journal 1980), a critical guide to over a thousand bibliographies, catalogues, journals, etc. Periodical information and bibliographies on the struggle for a new commons can be found in such journals as: TRANET: Trans-National Network for Appropriate Alternative Technology, P.O. Box 567, Rangeley, ME 04980; CoEvolution Quarterly. Steward Brand, ed., P.O. Box 428, Sausalito, CA 94965.

For a more limited but lively survey, see George McRobie, *Small Is Possible* (London: Intermediate Technology Publications, 1981) and, more political, Harry Boyte, *The Backyard Revolution* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980). A major intellectual obstacle to the common formulation of the new claim on the commons is the consistent tendency among philosophers, jurists, and social critics to confuse the commons with industrial-age public utilities. I argue that the commons, which were protected by legal precedents prior to industrialization, were in fact gendered domains (cf. FN 79).}

II SCARCITY

In this essay, the theoretical argument is frequently highlighted with examples, rather than massively encumbered with data. The former are inserted in order to illustrate the theory and stimulate research, and the latter — when they exist — are integrated into the thematic footnotes. Because of the newness of this theoretical outlook and the paucity of empirical studies from this perspective, I occasionally found it necessary to use new language. Whenever possible, however, I used old words in new ways to say precisely what both the theory and the evidence demanded.

[The text continues with further discussion on economics and scarcity, including a note on the history of scarcity and its relation to gender and economics.]
My theory allows me to oppose two modes of existence, which I call the reign of vernacular gender and the regime of economic sex. The terms themselves indicate that both forms of being are dual and that the two dualities are very different in kind. By social gender I mean the eminently local and timebound duality that sets off men and women under circumstances and conditions that prevent them from saying, doing, desiring, or perceiving "the same thing." By economic, or social, sex I mean the duality that stretches toward the illusory goal of economic, political, legal, or social equality between women and men. Under this second construction of reality, as I shall show, equality is mostly fanciful.

12 DUALITY

It is conventional to use some kind of duality in sociological analysis. The duality I propose is not related to any of those I know. In the duality I propose, the asymmetric complementarity of gender is opposed to the polarization of homogeneous characteristics that constitutes social sex. If I were addressing mathematicians, I would be tempted to speak about homomorphic pairs of domains, taken from heterogeneous spaces. For an orientation to the complexities of the issue, consult Lynda M. Glennon, *Women and Dualism: A Sociology of Knowledge Analysis* (New York: Longman, pbk., 1979). By using content analysis of feminist literature, the author shows how feminists have recently questioned the logic of duality, thereby challenging the "laws" of sociological conventions that relate a large number of analytic dualities to gender. She focuses primarily on dichotomized typologies since Ferdinand Tönnies, barely mentioning earlier types. For her it was Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), who watered the soil from which other modern dualities grew: Maine's status society and contract society; Spencer's militant and industrial forms; Ratzenhofer's conquest state and culture state; Wundt's natural and cultural polarity; Durkheim's mechanical and organic solidarity; Cooley's primary and secondary (implicit) groups; Maclver's communal and associational relation; Zimmerman's localistic and cosmopolitan communities; Odum's folk state pair; Redfield's folk urban continuum; Sorokin's familialistic and contractual relations; Bercker's sacred and secular societies...just as he did for other dualities less tied to particular names, such as primitive-civilized; literate-non-literate; rural-urban; developed-underdeveloped; or prevalence of the public and the private, matriarchal/patriarchal (see also FN). In this essay I oppose gender and sex. I try to introduce the opposition of two dualities into social analysis: Gender stands for one, sex for the other. Besides indicating duality and a more or less explicit reference to genital difference, the two social pairs have little in common.

The essay, then, is cast in the form of an epilogue on the industrial age and its chimeras. Through writing it, I came to understand in a new way - beyond what I had seen in *Tools for Conviviality* (1971) - what this age has irredeemably destroyed. Only the transmogrification of the commons into resources can be compared to that of gender into sex. I describe this from the perspective of the past. About the future, I know and say nothing.