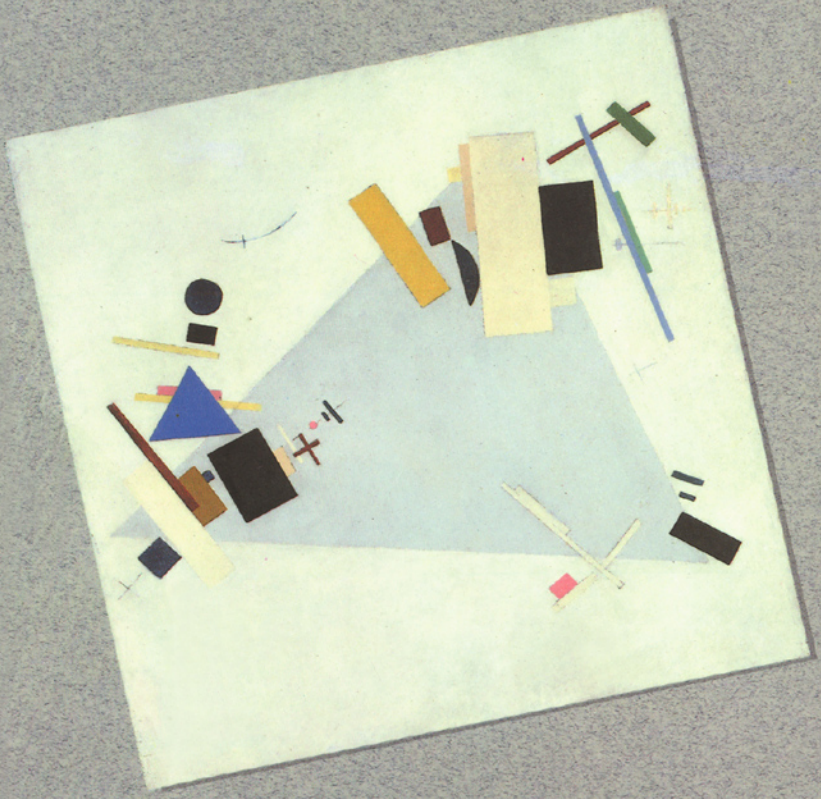
THE SCIENCE OF PLEASURE



COSMOS AND PSYCHE IN THE BOURGEOIS WORLD VIEW

HARVIE FERGUSON

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INTRODUCTION

We are all cosmologists. Few of us, of course, are scientists or can claim anything beyond the flimsiest grasp of modern physical theories of the origin and structure of the universe. We can, none the less, by virtue of our normal social activities rather than in the possession of systematic and specialized knowledge, claim to be practising cosmologists.

Such a claim, unexceptional when applied to an 'exotic' primitive society,[1] is difficult to take seriously in relation to ourselves. In our society 'everyday' social activities seem to have nothing at all to do with the abstract, technically difficult, and imaginatively esoteric speculations of the professional cosmologist. The scientist's world is highly specialized. It seems both more profound and less 'real' than the world in which we all, including the scientist, have to live.[2] If we contribute at all to the imposing edifice of modern cosmology it is surely only in the negative and uninteresting sense of sustaining in our mundane activities the social world from which it departs. We provide, in other words, the resources of time and opportunity essential to the professionalization of scientific activity. We give the cosmologist the freedom to abandon the constraints of the 'ordinary' world. Historians of science, therefore, have felt justified on 'commonsense' grounds in concentrating their efforts upon elucidating the development of modern cosmology as an 'internal' monologue. It is held, thus, that the present state of scientific theory depends entirely upon its immediately preceding state.

Appearances are deceptive. The cosmologist cannot escape, in our society any more than in any other, the imperatives of a particular way of life. Sociologists have, for the most part, accepted this proposition as an article of faith. 'Society', the paramount reality, must be rediscoverable in *any* aspect of human activity. *Its* constraints and

conventions must, as it were, reappear in the most recondite of theoretical endeavours. Such contentions have generally been couched within the framework of inclusive 'theories' of society and depend upon very general arguments. But where sociologists have taken a more particular interest in the development of science it has frequently been as part of a defensive gesture bestowed upon hostile critics. As a synthetic discipline, that is to say, sociologists ought to have something to say about science, but in defending a 'sociological' approach they have usually been satisfied with rather vague blandishments in favour of the social 'context' of scientific ideas. They have said little about the meaning of scientific ideas themselves.[3]

If, however, the contention that we are all cosmologists is taken seriously, then neither an 'internal' history nor a 'contextual' sociology will reveal the full significance of either scientific or non-scientific forms of thought in our society. The justification of any particular sociological approach in this matter is the insight which it allows into specific problems. Thus, rather than engage in another 'methodological' or 'theoretical' dispute, the argument will be developed substantively and by example.

The question is specific but daunting. It involves nothing less than a sociological analysis of the bourgeois world view. Clearly, within the limitations of a single volume justice can hardly be done to any aspect of such a question. Yet it is a question that hardly allows of a more modest approach. Some initial distinctions, if they do not make the task any the more manageable, might serve at least as guides to the argument that follows.

The bourgeois world view, approached in terms of its content rather than its form, is first of all a qualitative division between 'cosmos', as the order of the material world, and 'psyche', as the structure of experience. Neither can be fully understood when considered in isolation. And the relation between them can only be grasped as a specific social relation. Although distantly related to Greek philosophical, Christian eschatological, and Gnostic spiritual terms, the distinction between 'cosmos' and 'psyche' will refer here to the relatively recent and peculiarly western division between, on the one hand, an external and 'objective' order of the material universe (however interpreted), and, on the other, an internal and 'subjective' world of personal experience. The synthetic and necessarily vague term, 'bourgeois world view', will be used in a general and non-technical

sense to describe the cultural traditions and social relations for which this distinction was fundamental.

Although the bourgeois world view prides itself on its scientific description of the cosmos, when taken in relation to the psyche the persistence within it of other, non-rational elements become evident. These elements on closer examination suggest the coexistence, within the bourgeois world view, of four separate but related visions of reality. These distinctions can be indicated in a number of ways, but to draw particular attention to their 'deviation' from the orthodoxy of rational science 'subjective' terms have seemed the most appropriate.

Fun, the most radically 'acosmic' of these heterodox realities thus opposes, by virtue of its absolute inner freedom, all fixed and ordered relations. It challenges the very possibility that reality might be formed into a 'cosmos'. The difficult and changing relationship between bourgeois 'rationality' and the uncompromising 'irrationality' of fun is, therefore, the subject of Part One. Attempts to neutralize, by describing, this radically antinomian spirit are analysed in terms of the successive forms (childhood, lunacy, and the savage), which, as prototypes of chaos, serve to express and contain its subversive genius.

In addition to repressing the dangerous libertinism of fun, the bourgeois world view has to overcome a longing for *Happiness*. It attempts to do this by ascribing to the society it has overcome (feudalism) an anachronistic fascination with transcendence. Feudalism it thus regards as a symbolic reality, and this particular reconstruction of feudalism forms the subject matter of Part Two.

Scientific rationality faces challenges as it were from the future as well as the past. Modern science and modern psychology are filled with an assortment of non-classical aberrations. This new challenge to orthodoxy is all the harder to deal with in being episodic and unpredictable. Part Four, *Excitement,* attempts to pin down some of these elusive objections.

Partly for aesthetic reasons, therefore, but also to highlight a widely misconstrued relation, Part Three, which deals with the central ideas of the scientific revolution, is titled *Pleasure*.

These terms are chosen as suggestive not only of different 'subjective' dispositions but as indicative of separate formal and existential 'worlds' expressed in, and expressive of, their own social relation. They contain and reproduce a series of other distinctions. Each must be approached on its own terms. Each part

therefore tries to enter as sympathetically and completely as possible into *its* particular world. An order of *signs* is replaced by a hierarchy of *symbols,* before being reduced to a system of *causes,* which is hardly formed before dissolving into a network of *images*.

The bourgeois world view is only the 'messy' interaction of these incommensurable parts. This has the unfortunate consequence of making any attempt at comprehensive description appear 'unsystematic' and arbitrary: so much is unavoidable. To discourage the rationalizing enthusiasm of the reader the distinctive character of each irreducible element is emphasized in favour of any attempt to submerge such differences within a probably fictitious 'totality'. It may nevertheless appear as if Parts Two, Three, and Four, in forming a chronological sequence, should be read as a 'history' of the bourgeois world view, to which Part One is appended as a philosophical prelude. This is, emphatically, not the intention. For reasons that emerge in the course of the argument this is an 'interpretive' rather than an 'explanatory' work; and to the extent to which it succeeds in proposing plausible interpretations it makes explanations (historical or otherwise) less appealing if not actually superfluous.

The bourgeois world view, in other words, cannot be identified with either 'science' or 'reason' however they might be defined. Nor is it founded upon a single type of social relation. It is not possible, thus, to express it in a wholly systematic and non-contradictory manner. This might as well be admitted at the outset, and has the advantage of making the author's preference for *Excitement* (intellectual and otherwise), more obvious than it ought

Part One

FUN

The tragedy of our age is reason.
Søren Kierkegaard

In every man there is a world, a universe.
Giordano Bruno

Chapter One
THE DREAD OF CHAOS

Life in bourgeois society is contained within a series of inescapable contradictions.

No description of the human reality of capitalism can resist, nor any history of its culture avoid, the brutalizing exclusiveness engendered by almost 400 years of inconclusive struggle. Its loving polarities, subject/object, mind/matter, theory/fact, form/ content, being/nothingness, exchange/use, are so many ways of rendering experience coherent by dividing it against itself. In *its* world *all* possible phenomena are categorized through the successive invocation of a universal *Either/Or*. In this, of course, bourgeois society is not unique. 'Dual organization' is the central organizing principle of many cultures.[1] And the bourgeois world cannot be defined, therefore, solely in terms of such formalisms; it must be described by reference to the entire range of social meanings embedded in the antagonistic differences specific to its ideal order.

A direct analysis of these meanings, however, tends to reproduce rather than to interpret the very categories we wish to investigate. A cautious, elliptical approach has to be adopted. Before looking more closely into the favourite antitheses of bourgeois culture, the larger implicit distinction between the possibility of *any* such ideally ordered existence (reason) and its apparently inconceivable negation (unreason), must be examined.

Bourgeois cosmology includes, that is to say, not only the familiar, rational ordering of nature and human experience, but also and simultaneously a kind of negative image of itself. It is thus something more than that self-conscious 'world view' that generations of 'theorists' have tried to make safe for reason by assiduously excluding from it everything chaotic or frivolous. It was a process of purification

that never quite succeeded. *Fun* could not be completely excluded from the rational cosmos. It persisted in the diminishing but never-eliminated residue of 'unexplained' phenomena. Its awkward presence was felt more generally, within the literary tradition at least, as an uncomfortable intuition of cosmic disorder.[2] And it challenged, with growing confidence, a century of metaphysical radicalism with a number of rather obvious 'facts' of experience.

If bourgeois society was the realization of universal order, then human nature must be, in itself, the embodiment of reason. The evidence of history told against such a view, but for the *philosophe,* secure in the new cosmopolitan world of commerce and letters, history could be viewed (with some difficulty, it is true) as a perverse story of ignorance and error. Those obstacles removed, reason, nature, and society could be linked together in mutually reinforcing enlightenment.[3]

More recalcitrant than the broad sweep of narrative history, the spectacle of children, savages, and lunatics posed special difficulties for any comfortable theory of human self-improvement. Human, yet by no means reasonable, each existed alarmingly within self-enclosed worlds of their own. *They* did not share, it seemed, in the universe illuminated by Newton and Locke. A brief sketch of the *philosophers* response to defiant irrationality reveals the extent to which they failed to exclude from the realm of enlightenment all that was dangerously incoherent

Simplifying a good deal, we can say that throughout the eighteenth century, especially in Scotland and France, men of letters gave themselves to the task of self-examination. As rational individuals they could, in following an introspective method, recover a universal human nature. This ambition is as evident in the magisterial coolness of Hume's *Treatise on Human Natures* it is in the flamboyant emotionalism of Rousseau's *Confessions*. Both in fact sought to expose, systematically and unreservedly (one might almost say carelessly) the elements of a shared humanity. In this project reason came to play a dual role. It served to designate both the common criteria of the human as a species, and the method by which such an enquiry should be conducted.[4] Without reason we could not be human, and in the absence of reason we could not begin to describe the special character of humanity bestowed upon us by its possession.

In other words, during the period of confident capitalist expansion, reason was not simply a logical or intellectual faculty. It was that certainly, but it was also more than that. Reason was the synthetic unity

of human nature itself, and not just one of its 'powers'. It must therefore be the common property of mankind, and could not, by being made dependent upon a technical function, become a monopoly enjoyed exclusively by the educated. Reason propelling before it a spirit of democracy must constitute the very 'frame of man'.

The divisions proper to reason (the components of human nature) underwent continuous modification throughout the eighteenth century. The simplicity of those abstract dualisms which had their origin in Descartes' project of pure thought, gave way before the claims of moral and aesthetic sensibilities.[5] Terminology varied, but some such set of distinctions, comparable to that of *intellect, emotion,* and *will,* was general. Hume's *Treatise,* for example, was divided into three books, 'Of the Understanding', 'Of the Passions', and 'Of Morals', corresponding in an approximate fashion to such a three-fold classification. The point of such schemes was to define the absolutely irreducible and 'simple' processes common to human nature; those internal 'mechanisms' which transformed the contents of a sensory manifold into perceptions of the world.

Human nature could be defined, therefore, as an internally ordered system of relations among intellect, emotion, and will. The Enlightenment might then be characterized as the choice of intellect, as the *medium* of humanity's synthetic unity. Reason progressively came to stand both for the irresistible expansion of knowledge and understanding, and for the mechanism of coherence unique to human nature.[6] It ought perhaps to be noted that there was no necessity in such a view. In principle, either emotion or will (or some more remote 'transcendental' faculty) might have furnished such a mechanism, as indeed they were subsequently held to do. Bourgeois culture, however, even at a later date when in full possession of Schopenhauer's and Freud's alternative reconstructions of the human subject (the first from 'will', the second from 'emotion'), remained remarkably faithful to its first choice; to Man as Reason, and to Reason as Thought.[7]

Socially, these internal divisions can be related to the major spheres of collective life; to circulation, to production, and to consumption. Such a connection can, for the moment, only be suggested intuitively.[8] Production and the will 'belong together' as the energy of all humanly creative processes. Consumption and emotion, dissolving into an access of pleasure or grief, are linked as the termini of processes of exchange. And circulation, especially during the eighteenth century, evidently

shares with the intellect a realm of ideal freedom. Neither in 'thought' nor in the circulation of commodities can anything be created or destroyed. Both are perfectly conserved worlds filled with objects of terrifying abstraction.[9] The epoch of merchant capital is not accidentally also the era of enlightenment.[10] Deserting systematic metaphysics, however, the *philosophe* cultivated a form of literature (varied, self-possessed, humane) that exemplified the virtues of synthetic reason rather than those of 'cold logic'.[11]

These parallel divisions allow us to grasp more securely the significance of children, lunatics, and savages as prototypically disordered lives. There was more than academic issues at stake here. It was not just a game about the limits of conceivability. It was a matter of *conduct*. Reason, it seemed, could be negated and the human world inverted. Children, lunatics, and savages were human and yet they were not rational. They were living paradoxes whose existence undermined every certainty. Each, in addition, was non-rational in a particular way, so that together they formed a strangely logical sequence; an organized multiplicity in the forms of chaos; an underground system to mock the careful elaborations of the orthodox cosmologist.[12]

Unreasonableness might be approached, then, in two rather different ways: as a 'normal' human synthesis of one or more 'inadequate' faculties, or as an inadequate synthesis of normally functioning faculties. In practice, of course, both interpretive techniques were employed in the effort to shed light on these difficult subjects.

CAPRICE

'We know nothing of childhood,' Rousseau flatly declares, setting out to exploit his own ignorance.[13] Childhood for him, as for his contemporaries, had become a cultural enigma, and children held for them all the fascination of an alien species. However exaggerated or oversimplified the claims of a generation of sociologists directly linking the 'emergence' of the modern nuclear family with the rise of the bourgeoisie may be, there seems little doubt that the image of childhood has undergone significant changes during the development of capitalism.

It was specifically in bourgeois society that an association between age and dependence was established. Aristocratic youngsters of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries could lead lives as liberated and independent as those of their parents, while during the same period

economically unfree peasants, unable to marry or to establish households of their own, were held to exhibit well into their thirties those intellectual and moral characteristics that the bourgeois age came to regard as 'childish'.[14] Liberated from the necessity of labour yet excluded from the adult social world, childhood became an increasingly puzzling phenomenon. Its sequestration was justified on the grounds of children's 'immaturity' and 'helplessness', on their evident need to be 'looked after'. Yet, as a general type, childhood could not be understood solely in terms of a 'developmental' process. The non-rationality of the child was not simply the absence of 'adult' qualities which would, in due course, make their appearance. Were they, for example, completely bereft of intellect? If so, then from what source did logical faculties subsequently spring? And what of the will? In some ways children seemed possessed of a will more highly 'developed' than that of the typical adult Clearly there was not just a change in scale here but an internal re-ordering of the basic elements of human nature.

The key to the different 'structure' of childhood subjectivity was found in the special character of the childish 'will'. This follows directly from the fact of their exclusion from the process of production, which is the social form best adapted to the expression of the will. The child's will, in being wholly 'liberated' from the necessity of labour, appears perverse, violent, unpredictable, transparent, and insincere. As a critic of bourgeois domestic indulgence as well as aristocratic indifference, therefore, Rousseau complains that 'If we did not spoil our children's wills by our blunders, their desires would be free from *caprices*'.[15] And he notes elsewhere that, more properly speaking, children cannot be said to have desires at all. They want nothing in particular, and in expressing their wishes they are subject to nothing more substantial than a whim. Children altogether lack that settled self-identity which is the precondition and consequence of the will. They can *only* wish; a free and lively mobility of feeling that is directed towards nothing but the growth of their own faculties (if they are left alone), or the borrowed vanity and presumption of their elders (if they are not).

Children's actions are remote from their 'real' needs which depend for their satisfaction upon the indulgence of adults. Wishing therefore, which is the subjective corollary to a dependent relationship, is held to be typical of their 'inner' life.[16] The 'natural' activity of children thus came to be defined as play. Locke's letters to Edward Clarke are an early recognition of this fundamental proposition. Children 'must play

and have playthings', he insists—a view echoed from a different perspective by Rousseau and every child psychologist since.[17]

Play supposes a world of Utopian abundance. As they are ignorant of the practical necessity of labour, there is no material reality to resist children's tyrannical caprice. In play all things become possible—or rather, nothing has yet become impossible. The 'object world', variously differentiated as the toys effortlessly conjured into being by the momentary exigencies of a game, is dissolved and re-formed without limit Play treats the 'objective' characteristics of the world as the paraphernalia of fun. And, since its endless metamorphoses are purely subjective, the 'laws of nature' can be ignored or contradicted. Who has not at some time swooped effortlessly over distant countryside, enraptured by the liberty of unaided flight?

The play world completely absorbs the child. Within it nothing is difficult. Rousseau noticed that, while playing, children frequently 'endure without complaint, hardships they would not submit to otherwise without floods of tears'.[18] Fatigue is alien to its spirit of continuous originality. Even a simple repetitive game is never tedious; the hundredth bounce and catch of a ball is as fresh and lively as the first The child thus engaged is unaware of our world surrounding and threatening his own.

This subjective freedom is neither private nor egoistic. It cannot be 'planned' or deliberately invoked. It has merely to be granted its own possibility to 'happen'. And if it does not 'come off', children complain of 'boredom' and ask in bewilderment, 'What shall we play?'[19]

Such a world is sensed rather than conceptualized. The child's first mental experiences are purely affective, she or he is only aware of pleasure and pain', claims Rousseau, anticipating Freud, and goes on to suggest that the child takes, 'a long time to acquire the definite sensations which show him things outside himself'.[20] The senses, indeed, are originally undifferentiated, 'in the imperfect state of his sense organs he does not distinguish their several impressions; all ills produce one feeling of sorrow'.[21]

The child's wishfulness is part of a general physical, moral, and emotional mobility. Children are never still, their lives oscillate wildly between extremes that we find difficult to comprehend. Seemingly incapable of the stoicism espoused by Hume or Ferguson, 'A child has only two distinct feelings, he laughs or he cries. The child's unreasonableness is dangerously radical, his "ideas", if he has any at

all, are without order or connection. It is a veritable "sleep of reason", that function of the mind which "compounded" of the rest of our faculties "is the last and choicest growth".'[22] We cannot therefore infer from speech or action anything about the 'state of mind' of the child, 'the child's sayings do not mean to him what they mean to us, the ideas he attaches to them are different'.[23]

'Who of us is philosopher enough to be able to put himself in the child's place?' asks our celebrated author, discreetly proposing himself for the honour. But if Rousseau could celebrate the absolute inner freedom contained within the bourgeois image of childhood, others (almost all others), less secure in their possession of adult reason, were more ambivalent Viewing *caprice* (mistakenly) as recalcitrant will, they set about breaking its resistance. Ideologically opposed to personal submissiveness, the bourgeois parent none the less recognized the necessity of imposing authority upon the child. It was no longer a matter of extracting tokens of obedience or affection, but of disciplining the anarchic playfulness to which children seemed naturally disposed.[24] If children were not to be forced to work, neither could they be permitted an unlimited licence to play. Schooling, therefore, was as much a means of 'rationalizing' play as it was of 'disciplining' work.[25]

The unreasonableness of children, that is to say, consisted in a perversity of the will, so their 'education' had to take the form of 'training'. No abstract pedagogic procedure could impart to the unreasoning child the correctness of conventional behaviour, nor any system of rules be made to appear to him as a logical necessity derived from some general principle. The child could not be 'reasoned' with. The benefits of enlightenment, which was the goal of the educational process, had to be held in trust by adults rather than explicitly invoked. It was a goal reached only by way of a long detour through mindless obedience. This was a view espoused by 'progressive' educators, who sought to subvert the natural process of play in order to harness it to rational ends, as well as by the traditionally brutish.[26]

Reason was introduced to the child, in fact, not through personal example or intellectual precept, but in the organization of the classroom. The classroom operated as a small, enclosed market Each of its members, initially regarded as equal, was differentiated through a process of exchange (marks for exercises) which established a 'rational' order among them. Differences were instituted and reinforced through continuous measurement of 'abilities', in seating arrangements, in the

allocation of tasks, in the ritual of punishment.[27] A 'universal' code of rules gave rise to the distinctions of individuality, and to inequalities justifiable by an appeal to a general principle of justice (reward for effort).

The practical schooling of children was inaugurated well before the practice of developmental psychology. The separate 'reality' of childhood was given recognition directly in response to the moral and political problems that it posed. It was only much later that such a reality became the object of 'scientific' interest and the literary imagination. Bourgeois society's 'serious' interest in childhood, its fascination with the dangerous romance of play, only developed with the adoption by adult society of 'civilized' manners.[28] The peculiar status of the child became marked by the domestic boundaries of separate mealtimes and special foods;[29] a particular geography and architecture (nursery and school); and by the emergence of 'experts' (governesses, teachers, doctors) who patrolled the ambiguous boundaries of the rational world.[30] Children were dressed with sumptuary precision in clothes suddenly appropriate to their years, and encouraged to enjoy the 'freedom' of approved games. Outside the classroom, the 'official' life of the child became in practice a heavily censored version of Europe's pre-industrial popular culture. The carnival, ruthlessly suppressed by the demands of the new rationalism, thus survived in a degraded form as the variety of 'childish amusements'.[31]

The emergence of the bourgeois family, with its internal non-market relationships of affection (however idealized a picture that might be), could appear at times to threaten the coherence of the society instituted on its behalf. Might not such a family become excessively introverted and, coming to dote too much upon its offspring, forget the larger world? The bourgeois individual's double role as man and citizen created a painful conflict As a private individual he was indulgent and loving towards his children, but as a citizen he realized the necessity of education outside the protection of the family. This conflict, a version of the more pervasive but less well-defined contest between the freedom of play and the necessity of work, was resolved in favour of the latter. Childhood became a phase. A short, disorderly period safely contained within the categorical divisions of the domestic life-cycle.

Childhood, one prototype of the world of fun, could not however be completely annihilated. For a somewhat later period (though Rousseau

once again anticipates the general tendency), childhood and its play world came to hold a somewhat different significance. Everyone after all has been a child, and though fortunately we cannot accurately or completely recall the experience, its presence as unreliable recollections preserves within us an unacknowledged residue of disorder. The more the bourgeois rationalist heaped upon childhood the degraded forms of subjectivity for which he no longer had any legitimate use, the more certainly he gave way to its caprice and the more intimate he became with its image of careless freedom. Hence the fascinating ambivalence of childhood as a suppressed but unconquered 'cosmology', as a way of seeing the world so radically opposed to reason that we cannot any longer remember what it is like.

Hence, too, the emergence of the autobiographical and confessional genre that became so much a feature of post-Renaissance European literature.[32] Rousseau is better known still for his *Confessions* than for *Emile*. It is the childhood of the author, as the hidden source of his creative inspiration, that interests us. Yet even the *Confessions* would have lost their savour if they had served only to 'explain' the artistic accomplishments of their mature author, or conveyed in the process nothing but gossip that has long since lost its value as scandal. We need share nothing of the author's immediate social world, however, to remain enthralled. What we share with him, which is much more important, is the longing to rediscover a primordial experience of ourselves, and to sense the richness of the world, sensuous, unbounded, and playful, which has slipped from us. The charm, similarly, of *Swann's Way* is the glimpse it offers of our own, rather than its author's, childhood.

The attractive naïvety as well as the infuriating temper of children consisted primarily in the spectacle of unformed will. Subject to the uncontrollable perversity of wishes, they were absorbed in restless fluctuations of mood and behaviour. Their 'intellect' could be no more than an amorphous pre-conceptual 'mind', incapable of those acts of discrimination and synthesis in which genuine reason existed. Childhood existed as a perpetual wish, yet the nature of the world and of man was ordered by a rational will. In a deep and perplexing sense, then, the world of childhood must be illusory; it was at any rate an object lesson in the shortcomings of any simplistic empiricist psychology.[33]

Childhood with its play world, in knowing nothing of nature, was reason's most unselfconsciously hostile critic. It was not, however, its only critic.

BEWILDERMENT

Pre-capitalist Europe was conscious of its long history of contact with 'alien' peoples.[34] The philosophical problems posed by the 'savage' were contained, however, for some time at least, within a generous view of of human universality. The plenitude of creation demanded nothing less than the existence of all *possible* variants of human being. The variety of the savage, thus, constituted for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries so many marvels of nature: exotic phenomena to be collected and displayed in the *cabinets de curiosités* encouraged by amateur enthusiasm for the inductive sciences. They belonged with the newly founded botanical collections and zoological gardens as evidence of God's providential abundance.[35]

Problems appeared when the variety of customs and diversity of manners seemed to outrun any credible definition of human nature. Could the brethren of Noah, within such a short period, come to live so differently? Was it simply the case that, forgetful of religion, some had fallen into barbarism?[36] More serious still, for the eighteenth-century humanist, the savage manifestly lacked reason. And, as reason and human nature were mutually defining, the common-sense approach was to regard the savage as a literally inhuman or non-human creature.

Even among the *philosophes* such a view became popular. Lord Monboddo became prominent in the wide-ranging, serious, and inconclusive debates over the precise nature of recently discovered *orang-utangs*.[37] The idea that they might be a specific subspecies of the human seemed plausible to those who held it to have been already adequately demonstrated that in the same area there lived tribes bereft of all the 'arts of life: lacking in speech, the social conventions of marriage, domestic settlement, the rudiments of cooking, or the most primitive forms of exchange'.[38] In such a condition, regulated only by the periodic fluctuations of natural appetites, no moral or aesthetic distinctions were possible and *a fortiori* no form of reason could be sustained. Cannibalism, for example, existed among such peoples because no action had yet been defined as disgusting.

More moderate commentators agreed that savages lived in a state of perpetual intellectual confusion. Lord Kames, for example, who enjoyed considerable authority upon such matters, believed all savages 'capable of higher powers', and detected in reports of their customs a kind of rudimentary religion, a 'sense of Deity'. Yet so impoverished were their mental faculties that, lacking a sufficiently developed language, they were incapable of giving shape, in the form of explicit 'beliefs', to their diffuse feelings. About nature they were, not surprisingly, held to be 'grossly ignorant of cause and effect'.[39]

The savage lacked the most rudimentary of *concepts*. His language being restricted to the names of concrete and particular things, he was unable to carry out the elementary operations of comparison, generalization, or analysis.[40] As a consequence, he remained innocent of himself as an individual and as a moral being. His behaviour was inconsistent, his actions unreliable. The initial friendliness, for example, with which Columbus was met by the Caribs turned quickly and inexplicably to hostility. The treachery of the savage became legendary. It was not, however, malice (a rationally comprehensible motive) but thoughtlessness that made them wholly untrustworthy.

Savages had not really succeeded in separating themselves from nature, which was the first step in bringing life under the control of intellect Their instincts, which were in the circumstances more or less adequate to the purpose, guided all their behaviour. Indeed, they had survived only by a quirk of nature. Living in lands of natural abundance they had no need to labour to procure their daily subsistence. That 'We possess already all that is necessary for our existence' points out the Tahitian native.[41] Unmoved by necessity, they could not make the initial effort of the mind which subsequently revealed itself as the first stage in the progress of the arts and sciences; the foundation of all human self-improvement

Unresponsive to the prompting of reason the savage could be enslaved but not employed.[42] He might even be domesticated and, with training, become a loyal servant; but he could not, given his lack of calculative ability and insecure self-identity, survive if released on to the market-place. To become the beneficiary of reason the savage must therefore, first of all, be deprived of his natural livelihood. The colonial trader and the missionary justified one another.[43] In introducing the savage to the life of reason he must first be made to feel the necessity of work and the exchange of commodities.

Throughout the eighteenth century, innumerable tours were also conducted to imaginary islands whose fabulous inhabitants satisfied an insatiable demand for the exotic and threw into yet bolder relief the technical, moral, and commercial advantages of civilized life.[44]

The simplicity and brutishness of savages prompted, in addition, a number of conjectural 'histories' of the development of the civilized state. The authors of the best-known of such accounts divided man's putative history into 'epochs', arranged chronologically and systematically (narrative and system happily coinciding) according to the relative 'progress' of reason which was the accomplishment of each.[45] And even those scorning complacent histories, such as Rousseau in his prize-winning *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts,* or those, such as Swift and Diderot, who used their hypothetical voyages of discovery as vehicles for satirical and critical intentions, concurred in viewing the savage as a 'natural' and *therefore* thoughtless being.

Rousseau subsequently developed his ideas on the nature of savage man in his important essay, *A Discourse on Inequality*. This is not an attempt to write an empirical history of human society; such an undertaking would be impossible if for no other reason than the absence of the materials upon which it might be based. It is, rather, an analytic description, suggested by the spectacle of contemporary savage life, of man's 'original' condition.

His method, he feels, avoids the major difficulty of the well-known 'contract' school who, in invoking a 'state of nature', succeed only in hypostatizing the less visible but no less conventional institutions of their own society: 'All those philosophers talking ceaselessly of need, greed, oppression, desire and pride have transported into a state of nature concepts formed in society.'[46] As clearly as he had seen the difficulty in describing the real experience of childhood, Rousseau takes seriously the gulf between ourselves and a presumptive 'original' state of man. Society (Reason) cannot be deduced from itself; it must spring from something other than itself. Rousseau therefore suggests a 'mechanism' through which society might have come into existence. This hinges on two related principles whose interaction led 'blindly' to the establishment of social life. 'The first gives us an ardent interest in our own wellbeing and our own preservation, the second inspires in us a natural aversion to seeing any other sentient being perish or suffer, especially if it is of our own kind.'[47] From these principles, which Rousseau takes to be self-evident, he deduces the possibility, though not

the necessity, of private property, the division of labour, the development of language, and the birth of reason. 'In this way we are not obliged', he comments, 'to make a man a philosopher before we can make him a man.'[48] Reason does not 'develop' of its own accord as if by some inner necessity, it springs to life as an adjunct of passion: 'we seek to know only because we desire to enjoy; and it is impossible to conceive a man who had neither desires nor fears giving himself the trouble of reasoning.'[49] In spite of its heretical implication (that civilized man tended to an 'unnatural' suppression of passion in favour of intellect), Rousseau's vision of original man enjoying a 'solitary and idle' existence that demanded nothing of him beyond instinctual responses, seemed far from implausible.

The contemporary savage can be understood, then, not as an 'original' man, but as a being none the less in many ways closer to that primordial condition than that of civilized man. His intellect is little developed, and the urge to self-improvement has not yet taken hold of his passions. His needs are simple, his wants easily satisfied. He lives *immediately,* incapable of the act of abstraction which so complicates our relation to the world: 'his soul, which nothing disturbs, dwells only in the sensation of its present existence'.[50] He cannot envisage anything beyond the 'end of the day', which is the 'extent of the foresight of the Caribbean Indian'.[51]

Sunk within himself, as absorbed as the child at play, 'everything appears to remove the savage man both from the temptation to quit the savage condition and from the means of doing so'.[52] The original impersonal 'happiness' of man is something unrecognizable to us; it is a world anterior to the metaphysical niceties upon which our own particular existence has been stretched.

Rejecting Rousseau's method of reconstruction, Adam Ferguson, at almost the same time, described the society of 'rude nations' in rather similar terms. A sober and reserved *philosophy* he also rejected Monboddo's popular natural history. 'Men have always appeared among animals as a distinct and superior race', he notes, 'he is, in short a man in every condition; and we can learn nothing of his nature from the analogy of other animals.'[53] The distinctions among men are exclusively social and cultural, but between man in a 'rude' condition and the more developed 'barbarian' there is what amounts to a qualitative distinction, a classificatory difference even more evident in

the later emergence of 'civil society' as a uniquely sophisticated way of life.

The social relations of the savage resemble 'more the suggestion of instinct, than the invention of reason'. And while the condition of 'rudeness' is not to be taken for a 'state of nature', it recalls the 'nascent society' to which some of the most imaginative pages of *A Discourse on Inequality* had been devoted.

Drawing on somewhat unreliable accounts of North American and Caribbean Indians, Ferguson tried to establish the general characteristics of those societies in which there is 'little attention to property'. Subsistence is there a daily renewed process of hunting and gathering. It is the difficulty rather than the ease in securing a livelihood directly from the wild that, he argues, prevents the emergence of the institution of private property and the intellectual elaboration that goes with it The savage acts in direct response to his appetite, without calculation or co-operation. And since property depends upon a 'method of defining possession' and a 'habit of acting with a view to distant objects', he concurs with Rousseau in describing the savage world as an immediate and overwhelming reality confined within a timeless present.[54]

Knowing nothing of the exchange of goods (or the circulation of ideas), savage relations are formed from the 'commerce of affection'. Incapable of the intellectual detachment of cynicism or hypocrisy, their sentiments are open and honest. A gift, for example, is always the expression of a pure act of kindness: 'they delight in them, but do not consider them as a matter of obligation'.[55] Ferguson's admiration of their benevolence, fortitude, and skill in warfare does not blind him, however, to the 'childish imbecility', of their 'grovelling and mean superstition'.[56] Prompted by appetite alone they 'go in pursuit of no general principles',[57] are incapable of understanding their own surroundings, and fall victim to groundless fears.

The intellectual feebleness of the savage is the most striking feature of his unreasonableness. His will, in consequence, is weak and amorphous. When not pressed by an immediate need, savages do not even exercise themselves in play. 'Their aversion to every sort of employment', remarks Ferguson, 'makes them pass a great part of their time in idleness or sleep.'[58]

Neither children nor savages, it was held, have the possibility of *mastering* themselves. They were beyond reason. The former, in being

excluded from labour, acted wishfully; the latter, subsisting directly from nature without labour, existed in a state of bewilderment.

DERANGEMENT

The nearness of lunacy made the *philosophe* uneasy. The child and savage could be excused on the grounds of 'immaturity' from the responsibilities of reason. But the adult who became a lunatic did so in open defiance of his already established nature. In turning his back on reason the madman created a glaring contradiction. Nature could not act against itself.[59] No self-possessed individual could deny himself by plunging voluntarily into the abyss of chaos; yet madness could not be other than unreasonable.

This had not always been the case any more than it had always been the case that children or savages had been seen in the image of disorder. Foucault's pioneering work draws attention to the inconspicuous origins of such an image and, in charting the emergence of new visions of lunacy, reveals the history also of a specific conception of reason.[60] The antithesis of reason and madness, Foucault argues, is founded upon the imperative order of the market conceived as a set of *logical* relations. The mad 'distinguished themselves by their inability to work and to follow the rhythms of collective life'.[61] The ability to labour becomes a badge of reasonableness. Those unable or unwilling to work are absorbed into the residual category of unreason and consigned to the safety of the asylum.

The seductive rationalism of the market is not restricted, however, to the organization of work; it embraces the social process as a whole. Foucault imputes to eighteenth-century writers a view of madness (as disordered intellect), which is characteristic in fact of a somewhat later period.[62] The *philosophe* viewed madness, first and foremost, as *derangement* of the affections or passions. This was a view quite consistent with the significance they accorded the passions in the 'moral economy' of human nature.[63] There were other and better examples of intellectual confusion and perverse will. The character of madness, then, should be sought first in the sphere of consumption (the social domain of the affections), rather than in that of production or circulation.

Diderot, one of the supreme polymaths of the century, provides for us in *Rameau's Nephew* a portrait of the contemporary madman.[64] Its

central character is more than eccentric but is clearly not without intellectual gifts. His conversation indeed sparkles with cleverness. What is immediately striking, however, is his physical appearance and manner: 'At times he is gaunt like somebody in the last stages of consumption…. A month later he is sleek and plump.'[65] This variability is not the outcome of confusion or personal neglect, for he 'thinks of nothing but himself, and like a savage 'lives for the day'.[66] His behaviour is disconnected from the rhythm of nature felt by normal people as the regular periodicity of appetites. A chaos of wants is evident in his completely unpredictable behaviour. Unkempt one day, he appears luxuriously attired the next He hardly sleeps twice in the same place. He pays no attention to the *value* of things. And beyond himself, 'the rest of the world is not worth a pin'.[67] It is a form of irrationality which begins, in other words, with disordered consumption, in a superficial and accidental relation to the object world.

Samuel Johnson provides a comparable and equally lucid exposition in his biography of that 'strange, gifted psychopath', Richard Savage.[68] 'His mind was in an uncommon degree vigorous and active', we are told, 'his judgment was accurate, his apprehension quick.'[69] The madness that afflicted him had nothing to do with perturbed thought, his intellectual powers were acute, and 'his attention never deserted him'.[70] It was, rather, 'an irregular and dissipated manner of life', already indicative of unruly appetites, that led him to become the 'slave to every passion that happened to be excited by the presence of its object'.[71]

Professional observers adopted a similar standpoint. Tuke, for example, went so far as to 'conceive that mind is incapable of injury or destruction',[72] claiming with Pinel that 'passions are the most frequent causes of mental aberrations'.[73] Affections as the 'inwardness' of acts of consumption might logically be disordered in two rather different ways. This gives to lunacy its basic division between melancholia, a disease of under-consumption, and mania, the frenzy of excess.

The melancholic suffers from passivity, lassitude, and lack of interest in the world. Since Elizabethan times, melancholia had been the affliction of the sensitive, the cultivated, and the scholarly. As a 'character type', it already enjoyed a rich cultural heritage, which Burton was able to draw upon in fashioning his medico-philosophical *Anatomy*.[74] The old humoral psychology, however, had undergone a profound change. It was replaced first by vague 'animal spirits' flowing

through fine channels in the nerves, and subsequently by a more strictly mechanical image of organic fibres vibrating under various states of 'tension'. The melancholic are, literally, too relaxed: their nervous fibres, weak and flaccid, refuse the stimulation of the senses. The outside world, in consequence, is rendered vague and insignificant

The nerve fibres of the maniac, on the contrary, stretched to breaking point, are set violently in motion at the slightest external stimulus. The delirium typical of the maniac is a consequence of the distorting and magnifying effects of these taut, vibrating nerves.[75] The tension of the nerves regulates appetite. Nervous afflictions could be treated, therefore, by physical means. This had been the orthodox view since Thomas Willis had linked hysteria to disturbances in the brain and 'nervous stock'.[76] The melancholic requires the world to be brought close to him, he needs the 'stimulation' of physical extremes. Alternating hot and cold baths was a good starting point. He could also benefit from a rich diet, narcotic tonics, and the distraction of music and lively company.[77] The violent gyrations imparted by a variety of specially designed pieces of apparatus might also prove beneficial. The 'raving' lunatic, conversely, needs to be constrained, secluded, isolated, and calmed. The 'vice or fault of the brain' was difficult to control and much ingenuity was spent in pursuit of effective measures. In this regard 'management did much more than medicine', and a period of calm allowing the 'natural' tension of the nerve fibres to be restored: 'confinement alone is often times sufficient'.[78]

There was no question here of 'suppressing' the emotions or affections. Each 'faculty' contributed to human nature its essential element The emotional life, therefore, required cultivation rather than simple restraint. The significance of aesthetics in the Scottish Enlightenment finds its counterpart here in the adoption of specific codes of civilized 'manners'. The mode of experiencing bodily sensations itself became an aspect of 'cultivated' feelings.[79] And it is in just those forms (ordered, calm, predictable, friendly, and in everything moderate) that we discover the civic virtues of consumer rationality.

In setting the boundaries of rational consumption, melancholia and mania were, for the most part, associated with different ranks of men.[80] Melancholia remained an affliction of the privileged. Their material wants satisfied, they withdrew from society and enjoyed the company of their own imagination. Johnson, continually struggling against the temptation to melancholia, was saved by the insecurity of having to earn

a living.[81] Mania, as an uncouth display of emotionality, correspondingly found its place among the pauper lunatics who came to litter the asylums of the nineteenth century. There were of course exceptions. Waves of a more fashionable frenzy swept the bourgeoisie from time to time. Hale, writing in 1720 and commenting on the consequences of the South Sea Bubble, draws attention to the numerous respectable people 'whose heads were turned by the immense riches which fortune had suddenly thrown their way', releasing in them a 'force of insatiable avarice' that quickly succeeded in 'destroying the rational faculties'.[82] A loss of cultivation was alluded to more cryptically by Pinel, who notes that 'The storms of the revolution stirred up corresponding tempests in the passions of men.'

Madness was not a matter of quantitative extremes alone. The affections were perverse as well as inflamed or flaccid. The lunatic consumes, immoderately, things that are worthless. Johnson, fearing that 'all power of fancy over reason is a degree of insanity',[83] conceives of a melancholic as a person who consumes only himself emotionally, who lives upon 'fancy'. Then, 'fictions begin to operate as realities, false opinions fasten upon the mind, and life passes in dreams of rapture and anguish'.[84] The maniac, on the other hand, has no emotional interior, he is completely 'open' and unmannered. His extravagant passions, expressing unbounded appetite, betray a complete lack of discrimination. He tries to consume the entire world, bewildered, his rage can only alight upon a succession of trivialities.[85]

Self-control was admittedly difficult to achieve. Madness, an ever-present possibility to us all, could be tolerated only by being confined. A hundred years of profiteering demonstrated the superior efficiency of a system of 'moral management' within the asylum.[86] The introduction of 'enlightened' treatment was little more in fact than a technical improvement in the art of incarceration. 'Therapy' was slow to be introduced and was rarely practised with conviction. The minute regulation of daily life within the safety of a 'retreat' ideally provided a Sallean 'schooling' of the passions. But while the child had first to submit to the authority of a master as a precondition of instruction, the doctor ought to forge a relationship of equality with his patient. He must trust in the humanity of the madman. This was an 'extreme' but consistent view, most frequently practised by way of some 'safe' and tentative gesture.[87]

During the eighteenth century, the prototypes of unreason were organized conceptually as caprice, bewilderment, and derangement; politically as education, slavery, and confinement; commercially as the school, the plantation, and the asylum. Each excluded from the general social process those incapable of acting in conformity with reason. And each was defined by inadequacy or perversion in one of those specific faculties whose synthesis normally constituted human nature. An imperfection in one faculty thus corrupted the others. The child was, to a degree, bewildered and deranged as well as capricious; but he was so *because* of his overwhelming propensity to playfulness. The general unreasonableness of the savage and lunatic stemmed similarly from their particular and respective deficiencies.

Within their secure enclosures the unreasonable were made the subjects of small Utopian societies.[88] Sheltered from the harsher reality of capitalism, they enjoyed a special kind of 'humanitarian' protection. The slave and the madman, like the child, was sufficiently 'helpless' to require constant supervision. They needed the perpetual care of professional custodians. It was an ideological opportunity that proved irresistible.[89]

They were contained but not forgotten. The fascination with unruly passion and the exotic, disordered intellect was undiminished by the growth of 'enlightenment'. Bedlam, for over a century, was a place of popular entertainment, an attraction as popular as any literary Bougainville and as morally ambiguous as the growth of a sentimental attachment to childhood.[90]

United as it was in the acceptance of the commercial world and the image of man's rational nature it supported, the enlightened bourgeoisie could not suppress an urge to look upon the world in its primordial nakedness. There was something of a sense of loss in their relation to the varieties of unreason, a hint of regret that gradually intensified into a longing, infrequently and timidly expressed, to renounce civilization. *Fun,* as reason's antithesis, became the subject matter of the new sciences of child psychology, anthropology, and psychiatry. It was through them that reason could be cleansed of its impurities, but it was also through them that a *frisson* of contact with the cosmology of fun could still be felt.[91]

Chapter Two
THE FEARFUL COSMOGRAPHER

The close and difficult relationship between Hume and Rousseau exposes the inherent instability of reason in the Age of Enlightenment.[1] Aspiring to the broadest freedom within the republic of letters, they pushed beyond the boundaries that more cautious *philosophes* had accepted as the limits recommended by nature to human conduct. But while Hume remained secure and at ease within an everyday world that his intellect had time and again completely undermined, Rousseau, the less radical metaphysician, could not resist the temptation to experience directly, as will and passion, the world's unreasonable aspect. Rousseau's emotionalism, his 'terrifying eloquence', testify to an existence just beyond the reach of conventional reason; an existence Hume could only grasp intellectually. Each clinging to the conventions discarded by the other, their mutual admiration as writers could not withstand the shock of a personal encounter.

Rousseau and Hume, in fact, from the perspective of a later period, become twin critics of the Enlightenment.[2] If reason were a genuine synthesis of human faculties, then it must be a goal beyond the reach of practical life. Most people, however, including most *philosophes,* were less exacting and less disturbed. The harmonious interrelation of will, intellect, and emotion was largely taken for granted. The subversive genius at the heart of the Enlightenment was ignored, and their writings, during the nineteenth century, became unfashionable.

The distinction between reason and unreason became simplified in accordance with new social imperatives. Reason, at once more specific and more practical, became defined as an exclusively intellectual function. It was not, however, simply another term for the intellect. Reason was the *instrumental* use of intellect; a practical intelligence. It was only in pursuit of a practical goal that thought became reason. More

specifically, it was the form given to thought in the process of our gaining mastery over the natural and social world. Reason was both the precondition and consequence of our power to subdue nature; a power represented primarily by science.[3]

In this context the shrinkage in the scope of reason is associated with a growing awareness of the underlying productive mechanism of social life.[4] Capitalism is viewed more as the *means* of producing commodities and less as the universal system of their exchange. Reason, modelled upon this process of production, becomes the most general 'means' at our disposal. Distinguishing itself from the complex of 'civic virtues', it takes on a hard, unyielding aspect. As the social logic of production, it reduces all forms of unreasonableness to equivalent instances of the irrational. Thus, while many eighteenth-century writers might for the sake of literary embellishment draw comparisons between, say, children and savages, nineteenth-century scientists saw the development of child psychology, anthropology, and psychiatry as genuinely cognate disciplines.

This was given formal and somewhat belated recognition in Ernst Haeckel's 'biogenetic law'.[5] The conceptual condensation which allowed madness, for example, to be viewed as ontogenetic and phylogenetic 'regression', however, had taken place a good deal earlier. And, more generally, the theory of 'development' of which such views were a part was enunciated well in advance of Darwin's demonstration of its specific scientific validity.

Auguste Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* might be taken, then, as one of the earliest, and certainly the most systematically ambitious, expressions of the new point of view.[6] It remains the most comprehensive attempt to render history intelligible through the use of 'intellectual evolution as the preponderant principle'.[7] Written during the 1830s, and delivered first in the form of private lectures, Comte assembled what he took to be the materials requisite to an inductive demonstration of his celebrated 'law' of the three stages. At the outset, he makes explicit the assumption which justifies merging into a single category of the irrational all previous varieties of the unreasonable. 'The point of departure of the individual and of the race being the same', he claims, 'the phases of the mind of man correspond to the epochs of the mind of the race.'[8] Both are to be measured and judged by the standard of the 'positive sciences'.

It is a standard established by the totality of human historical development. In opposition, therefore, to his Enlightenment predecessors, Comte insists upon the inherently progressive character of religion. The 'theological stage' through which all forms of thought must pass is not viewed negatively. It is not simply an obstacle to the attainment of a rational truth but a necessary stage in the development of a science that will ultimately free itself from finalistic prejudices. There is indeed nothing in the past which is not in some sense 'progressive'. This dogmatism is a consequence of Comte's conviction that sociology, in becoming a positive science, can express the entire history of humanity in terms of invariable laws. All discernible differences in modes of thought and ways of living must be reducible to elements within an unbroken series. All events must find an appropriate place within the continuous process that finally delivers reason into the world.[9]

In resting his entire 'philosophy' upon an historical classification of the sciences, Comte forcefully expresses the intellectualist vision that was to dominate the rest of the century. He insists that, even at the earliest stages of development, man requires the world to be conceptually ordered. And, in constructing such an order, Comte assumes the primitive 'must begin by supposing himself to be the centre of all things'.[10] Bewildered by the world of appearances, archaic man can organize the world only upon the basis of his own inner experience. His knowledge is exclusively knowledge of himself. It is his internal states and feelings, particularly the fear generated by his impotence in the face of nature, that prompts his first stumbling efforts in conceptualization. The most primitive form of thought is thus a direct projection of subjectivity upon the external world. This fetishism is the initial disposition towards the world of things.[11] Behind every natural phenomenon, each event or occurrence, there is held to stand some spiritual entity as its 'cause'. Fetishism 'allowed free exercise to the tendency of our nature by which Man conceives of all external bodies as animated by a life, analogous to his own, with differences of mere intensity'.[12] Subjective 'feelings', in other words, were held to account (directly) for human experience and (projectively) for the natural world.

The fundamental difference, therefore, between the savage and ourselves is not that we possess reason where he has none, but that our reason has been 'liberated' from the feelings in which it was originally