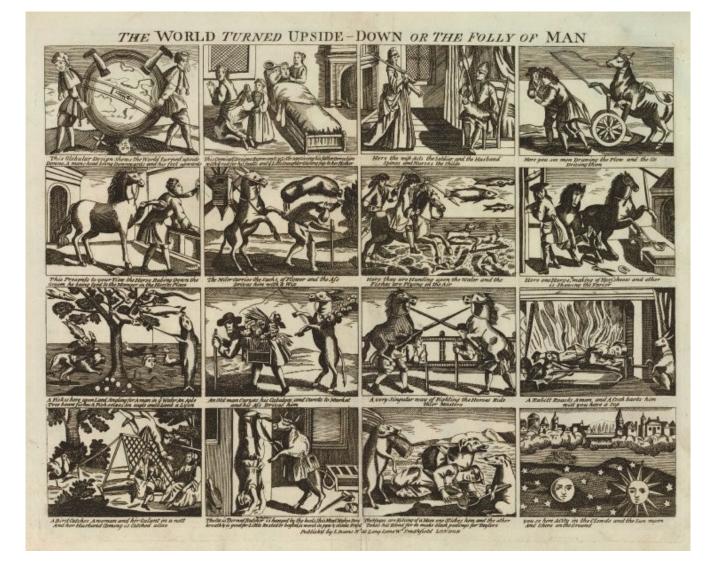# Destroying the Master's House With the Master's Tools: Some Notes on the Libertarian Theory of Ideology

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We commonly look at ideology from the perspective of the ruling class, as a legitimizing tool. But ideology serves the purposes of the ruled, as well—as a guide to action in their class interest.

The respective ideologies of rulers and ruled tend to be interdependent. The official legitimizing ideology of a ruling class appeals to standards of legitimacy that have cultural resonance with the ruled. At the same time, ideologies of resistance frequently use the ruling classes' own standards of legitimacy as weapons against them.

The latter phenomenon, the contesting or inversion of symbols from the official ideology and their use as a tool of resistance, is the theme of this paper.

James Scott: Non-State Spaces and Zomian Culture

James Scott's *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* treats Zomia—the highland areas of southeast Asia—as a paradigmatic example of what he calls "nonstate spaces."

What Scott calls "state spaces and nonstate spaces" are the central theme of *The Art of Not Being Governed*. State spaces, Scott wrote in *Seeing Like a State*, are geographical regions with high-density population and high-density grain agriculture, "producing a surplus of grain... and labor which was relatively easily appropriated by the state." The conditions of nonstate spaces were just the reverse, "thereby severely limiting the possibilities for reliable state appropriation."[1]

This might have served as the topic sentence for his next book, *The Art of Not Being Governed*. In fact, according to Scott,[2] *Seeing Like a State* was actually an offshoot of the research that eventually led to *The Art of Not Being Governed*. His original line of inquiry was "to understand why the state has always seemed to be the enemy of 'people who move around'...." In his studies of "the perennial tensions between mobile, slash-and-burn hill peoples on one hand and wet-rice, valley kingdoms on the other," along with assorted nomads and runaway slaves, Scott was diverted into a study of legibility as a motive for state policies of sedentarization. Having developed that topic, he came back to his original focus in *The Art of Not*

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1 Scott, Seeing Like a State, p. 186.
2 *Ibid*., pp. 1-2.

Being Governed.

In the latter book, Scott surveys the populations of "Zomia," the highland areas spanning the countries of Southeast Asia, which are largely outside the reach of the governments there. He suggests areas of commonality between the Zomians and people in nonstate areas around the world, upland and frontier people like the Cossacks, Highlanders and "hillbillies," nomadic peoples like the Romani and English and Irish Travelers, and runaway slave communities in inaccessible marsh regions of the American South.

States attempt to maximize the appropriability of crops and labor, designing state space so as "to guarantee the ruler a substantial and reliable surplus of manpower and grain at least cost..." This is achieved by geographical concentration of the population and the use of concentrated, high-value forms of cultivation, in order to minimize the cost of governing the area as well as the transaction costs of appropriating labor and produce.[3] State spaces tend to encompass large "core areas" of highly concentrated grain production "within a few days' march from the court center," not necessarily contiguous with the center but at least "relatively accessible to officials and soldiers from the center via trade routes or navigable waterways."[4] Governable areas are mainly areas of high-density agricultural production linked either by flat terrain or watercourses.[5]

The nonstate space is a direct inversion of the state space: it is "state repelling," i.e. "it represents an agro-ecological setting singularly unfavorable to manpower- and grain-amassing strategies of states. States "will hesitate to incorporate such areas, inasmuch as the return, in manpower and grain, is likely to be less than the administrative and military costs of appropriating it."[6]

> The greater the dispersal of the crops, the more difficult they are to collect, in the same way that a dispersed population is more difficult to grab. To the degree that such crops are part of the swiddener's portfolio, to that degree will they prove fiscally sterile to states and raiders and be

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3 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009), pp. 40-41.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 53.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 58.
6 *Ibid.*, p. 178.

deemed "not worth the trouble" or, in other words, a nonstate space.[7]

Nonstate spaces benefit from various forms of "friction" that increase the transaction costs of appropriating labor and output, and of extending the reach of the state's enforcement arm into such regions. These forms of friction include the friction of distance[8] (which amounts to a distance tax on centralized control), the friction of terrain or altitude, and the friction of seasonal weather.[9] In regard to the latter, for example, the local population might "wait for the rains, when supply lines broke down (or were easier to cut) and the garrison was faced with starvation or retreat."[10]

In Zomia, as Scott describes it:

> Virtually everything about these people's livelihoods, social organization, ideologies, ...can be read as strategic positionings designed to keep the state at arm's length. Their physical dispersion in rugged terrain, their mobility, their cropping practices, their kinship structure, their pliable ethnic identities, and their devotion to prophetic, millenarian leaders effectively serve to avoid incorporation into states and to prevent states from springing up among them.[11]

In order to avoid taxes, draft labor and conscription, they practiced "escape agriculture: forms of cultivation designed to thwart state appropriation." Their social structure, likewise, "was designed to aid dispersal and autonomy and to ward off political subordination."[12]

Zomia is one of many nonstate spaces throughout the world—whether territorial or nomadic societies—populated by secessionists voting with their feet: they include the Cossacks, Romani, English and Irish Travelers, and the "pirate utopias" and American "tri-racial isolates" described by Hakim Bey.

The latter category, unfortunately, got its name from the American eugenics movement at the turn of the 20th century. They descended from runaway black slaves, white indentured servants and Indians who formed

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7 *Ibid.*, p. 196.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 51.
9 *Ibid.*, p. 61.
10 *Ibid.*, p. 63.
11 *Ibid.*, x .
12 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

autonomous communities in swamps and other back country areas. Where native tribes were sufficient in number, they frequently retained their tribal structure and absorbed runaway blacks and whites. Elsewhere, they amalgamated into new ethnic identities. Some of the newly amalgamated groups created synthetic identities as Indian tribes or claimed to have been adopted.[13] Something like this was probably at work, as we shall see below, in the "retribalization" of the runaway Canaanite peasant population of Israel and the mythical eponymous ancestry they adopted from the sons of Jacob.

The Children of Israel. For some time it has been the consensus among historians of early Israel that the thoroughgoing conquest of Canaan and resulting tribal domains described in the Book Joshua was anachronistic—a projection onto the past of a geographical state of affairs that existed only after the monarchy had defeated the Philistines and the Israelite population had expanded from their original hill territory to the lowland areas of Canaan. The first archaelogical appearance of Israelite villages in the central highlands of Canaan was in the late 13th century BCE; these areas remained their main strongholds for some two centuries until their increased numbers and the establishment of the monarchy under David enabled them to contest control of the fertile lowlands.

Some historians, like Norman Gottwald, suggest the Israelites—rather than infiltrating Canaan from the outside—were predominantly inhabitants of Canaan itself who moved to the central highlands of Palestine for relative freedom. He originally developed this thesis—which we will consider shortly—at length, in his 1979 book *The Tribes of Yahweh: A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel 1250-1050 B.C.E.*

Canaan itself had become ethnically Hebrew over a century before Israel and the religion of Moses made their appearance in the historical record ca. 1200 BCE.[14] So the Israelites in the central Canaanite highlands were of essentially the same stock as the lowland population from which most of them fled.

The name ʿ*Abiru* ("Habiru") or ʿ*Apiru* ("Hapiru"), etymologically closely related to "Hebrew," was mentioned in royal chronicles through most of the

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13 Hakim Bey, "T. A. Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism," <http://hermetic.com/bey/taz3.html>.

14 *The Anchor Bible: Joshua.* Translation, notes by Robert Boling. Introduction by G. Ernst Wright (Doubleday, 1982), p. 330.

2nd millennium BCE throughout most of western Asia, and originally used as a general term for unruly subject populations. By the late 2nd millennium in Canaan, it had taken on a more specific ethnic connotation, being used as a derogatory term for the subject peoples—in a near-constant state of rebellion—of the Canaanite city-states and their Egyptian overlords.[15]

The Amarna letters preserve 14th century BCE correspondence between Canaanite kings and Pharaoh, which refer both to the imposition of forced labor on the Habiru and uprisings by the latter. "Let the king, my lord, learn that the chief of the Hapiru has risen (in arms) against the lands which the god of the king, my lord, gave me; but I have smitten him."[16]

Gottwald, summarizing his original thesis much more concisely twenty years later in *The Politics of Ancient Israel*, argues that the origin of Israel lay, not in an exodus from Egypt (with a subsequent return to the ancestral homeland of Palestine) per se, but rather in a revolt by peasants living in Canaan against their Egyptian overlords.

From about the late 13th century BC, and for two centuries until the founding of the monarchy, according to Gottwald,

> archeology reveals a proliferation of small agrarian/pastoral villages in the Canaanite highlands in the areas extensively referred to in the biblical traditions as settled by Israelites. While nothing in the remains "proves" that these were Israelite settlements, it is a sound inference that it was this region and its populace that formed the demographic and material resource base of the first Israelite state. The predominance of clusters of single-family dwellings, together with an absence of fortifications and public buildings, suggests local social organization intent on adaptation to a marginal environment for subsistence farming and herding.[17]

> Archaeological surveys indicate that there were rather different ecologies and settlement patterns in the central highlands of Ephraim and Manasseh, in contrast to the southern highlands of Judah. Of the two regions, Judah was more isolated topographically and had a smaller population and a stronger pastoral economy. This differentiation tends to

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15 *Ibid.*, pp. 83-84.

16 *The Anchor Bible: Judges*. Translation, notes, introduction by Robert Boling (Doubleday, 1975), p. 14.

17 Norman K. Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), p. 163.

support a number of indications in the biblical traditions that Judah stood apart from the cooperative arrangements among the other tribes until late in the tribal period or possibly even as late as the reign of Saul.[18]

The children of Israel abandoned the fertile lowland areas to evade Canaanite, Egyptian or Philistine rule and the exactions of landlords. And the technologies they adopted—contour plowing to make the most of hillside terrain and cisterns to supply irrigation water where it was not naturally plentiful—were classically Zomian. These technologies enabled the Israelites to thrive on marginal land, beyond the reach of the lowland authorities "chariots of iron." Nahum Sarna—who argues strenuously for the traditional view of Israel's origin in the conquest of Canaan from across the Jordan—nevertheless writes:

> Archaeology has certainly demonstrated that at the close of the late Bronze Age and in the early Iron Age completely new phenomena appeared in the hill country of Canaan. Hundreds of new village settlements can be identified, most of them founded in hitherto unoccupied areas. This expansive development was made possible by important technological innovations. One was the widespread use of cisterns hewed out of the rocky soil, which served to catch and collect rainwater.... The other development was the intensive farming of the sloping hillsides by means of terracing, the grading of the rugged terrain into a series of more or less level areas....

> There is no doubt that this very significant shift in the settlement pattern of Canaan is to be attributed to the arrival of newcomers.[19]

The lowland and hill populations of Canaan, respectively, are perfect illustrations of James Scott's concepts of legibility/governability and their opposite. In contrast to the lowland population of Canaan, which was subject to strong political control either by local city-states or their Egyptian overlords,

> [t]he more remote highlanders, off the main trade routes and without abundant resources, were both less attractive and less vulnerable to direct Egyptian intervention. Instead, the city-states' rulers, already prone to fighting among themselves, had a stake in dominating the

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18 *Ibid.*, p. 165.

19 Nahum Sarna, *Exploring Exodus: The Origins of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1986, 1996), xv.

highland populace that was being enlarged by people fleeing difficult conditions in the city-states. Because of their disunity, however, the city-states were limited in their efforts to pacify and impose tribute on the highland settlements. A military and political vacuum was thus created in which the highlanders might astutely cooperate to keep both the Egyptians and the city-states at bay.

From the Israelite perspective, the immediate threat from the city-states, themselves vassals of Egypt, overlapped with and was driven by the more distant threat from Egypt, inasmuch as both the city-states and Egypt pursued tribute-demanding policies that struck at the heart of the independent livelihood of free agrarians and pastoralists in the highlands. Eventually this Egyptian-Canaanite dominion was taken over by the Philistines, who came to ascendancy on the southwest Palestinian coast in the early twelfth century and extended their control over the old Canaanite city-states during the following century and a half. In a sense, then, the Israelites faced a hegemonic threat that was conceived as embracing Egyptian, Canaanite, and Philistine components, shifting variously according to the balance of power among these centralized states and city-states.[20]

The bondage-exodus theme which occupied such a central place in the Israelite religion probably involved telescoping together the oppressive authority of the native Canaanite polities and the Egyptian empire.

In terms of the formation of early Israelite tradition, what appears to have happened is that all these hostile relations with Egypt and Egyptian surrogates *in Canaan* were condensed and projected into the paradigm of a single mass deliverance *from Egypt*. Admittedly, this hypothesis about the generative matrix for the bondage-exodus themes does not exclude the possibility that some group or groups within Israel had been in Egypt. It is rather to say that the formulation of the themes need not have been dependent on any actual Israelite presence in Egypt, which in any case continues to be undemonstrable.[21]

We can see the same kind telescoping behind the geneological treatment of Canaan as the son of Ham, likely reflecting the hegemonic position of Egypt in Canaan at the time of the source tradition's origin. And it's entirely

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20 Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel*, pp. 166-167.
21 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

plausible that the Exodus scenario's identification of the oppressive authority from which the children of Israel had escaped with Egypt was heavily colored by Egypt's military involvement upholding its rule in Canaan. The Merneptah stele mentions a campaign in which that pharaoh, faced with local revolts that threatened Egyptian rule in Canaan, defeated the forces of Ashkalon, Gezer, Yanoam and Israel.[22]

Gottwald's description of the "counter-society," or "more egalitarian free peasant society," that emerged in the highlands of Canaan sounds a lot like James Scott's description of Zomian society:

> ...an alternative society of independent farmers, pastoral nomads, artisans, and priestly "intellectuals" who were free from the political domination and interference of the hierarchic city-states that held the upper hand in Canaan.... This counter-society had to provide for political self-rule, economic self-help, military self-defense, and cultural self-definition, which gave to its religion... a very prominent role as an alternative ideology for understanding the legitimacy and efficacy of its revolution.[23]

It was a society with no king, no landed nobility, and no tax collectors, in which "they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid...."

The Israelite confederacy was probably drawn from a diverse population of runaway peasants and slaves in the Canaanite lowlands and assorted tribal elements (nomadic and otherwise) from across the Jordan. There are, for example, hints of Midianite or Edomite origins either for the tribe of Judah or for the cult of Yahweh, including Moses' conversion by Jethro, the high priest of Yahweh in Midian. Caleb, Josha's co-commander from the tribe of Judah, is described as a Kenezite—i.e., a member of a clan listed among the eponymous descendants of Edom in Genesis. The term "Benjaminites" was apparently used as a synonym for "Bedouin" by states throughout the Levant in the 2nd millennium.

The Israelite foundational myth, in which the Israelites and other Greater Hebrew peoples (Moabites, Edomites, etc.) shared a common descent from

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22 "Merneptah Stele," *Wikipedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Merneptah_Stele>. Accessed October 2, 2013.

23 Gottwald, "Two Models for the Origins of Ancient Israel: Social Revolution or Frontier Development," in *The Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall*, ed. H. Huffmon et al. (Winona Lake, Ind. Eisenbrauns, 1983), pp. 6-7.

Eber, but themselves comprised a confederacy of tribes descended from twelve eponymous sons of Israel, is fairly typical among tribal confederacies in non-state spaces that share common cultural roots with neighbors in lowland states.

> The legends, rituals, and politics of hill societies can be usefully read as a contentious dialogue with the valley state that looms largest in its imagination. The closer and larger that state, the more of the conversation it will usurp. Most of the origin myths of hill societies assert a hybridity or connection that implies kinship. In some cases a stranger/foreigner arrives and forms a union with an autochthonous woman. Their joint progeny are this hill people. In other legends, hill and valley people are hatched from different eggs—of the same parentage— and are, hence, brother and sister. Already, a certain original equality between highland and lowland becomes part of the narrative.[24]

The Miao Rebellion of Guizhou province in the 19th century involved a broad coalition of oppressed elements among the settled state population and stateless populations in marginal areas, united by a millenarian religious ideology. It was probably about half ethnically Han (including disgraced Han officials and other dissident elements of the settled population) and ethnic hill minorities.[25] In the Dieu-python Rebellion of the Vietnamese Central Highlands in 1937, likewise,

> [w]hat took the French utterly by surprise was the pronounced multiethnic character of the uprising and its shared cosmology. Colonial ethnographers had invested great effort in cataloguing the different "tribes" of the Central Highlands, and the idea that these disparate peoples (some of whom were nominally Catholic!) would actually share a mobilizing cosmology was both astounding and troubling.[26]

The Israelite tribal confederacy and the myth of eponymous founders constructed around it are thus examples, in Gottwald's terminology, of "retribalization." The Canaanite highlands, settled by a disparate population of refugees from the lowland city-states, "did not have a single preexistent social organization but developed their own by building on the kinship ties of various immigrant groups and improvising additional social networks as

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24 James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 305.

25 *Ibid.*, p. 316.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 316.

needed."[27] Gottwald draws parallels to other "improvised" or "jerry-built" tribal confederacies like

> the improvisational social organization of the Plains Indians, who formed "composite tribes" out of peoples of diverse backgrounds, though sometimes of the same linguistic stock, who migrated from the eastern woodlands and the western Great Basin in order to develop an equestrian bison-hunting political economy that reached its peak from 1750 to 1850. Although weak in clan and lineage structure in some instances, these tribes were bound by ceremonial, social, and military sodalities and led by shifting chieftainships.[28]

(It's worth noting in passing that the Lakota and Oglala, who basically moved to marginal areas in the Plains and adopted equestrian bison-hunting after getting their butts kicked in the Great Lakes area, are themselves an excellent example of a Zomian people.)

Put all this together, and we have an early Israelite religion which amounts to an inversion of the lowland Canaanite religion and reconstruction of it around the themes—naturally enough for a marginal population composed largely of runaway slaves, serfs and debtors—of bondage and exodus.

The fundamental substratum of the Israelite religion was the Canaanitic El cultus, with El as the patriarch of a pantheon of gods. El—the generic Ugaritic-Hebrew term for "god," converted into a proper name—remained the name for the Israelite god in the E Document, along with many of the same epithets (most notably El Shaddai[29]) and holy sites (e.g. Bethel and its bull cult[30] and the El Berit—"God of the Covenant"—cult at Shechem[31]) associated with him in the original Canaanite religion. El was also traditionally depicted as seated on a cherubim throne, which should strike a familiar chord with students of the Bible,[32] and is frequently also depicted as dwelling in tents or tabernacles, presiding over assemblies of the Gods (any similarity to the opening scene in the Book of Job is purely coincidental, of course).[33] The Israelite polity that emerged from 1200 BCE

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27 Gottwald, *The Politics of Ancient Israel*, p. 170.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 300n.

29 Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Mass., 1973), p. 59.

30 *Ibid.*, pp. 74. The house of Aaron (who fashioned the Golden Calf) was closely associated with Bethel. *Ibid.* p. 199.

31 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 35.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

on was an amphictyony (a league or federation of tribes sharing a common religion and participating in periodic rituals at common holy sites, like the Delphic amphictyony in Greece) centered on the Israelite version of the El cultus, sharing many of the same holy places (again most notably Bethel and Shechem, with the addition of Shiloh as the preeminent rendezvous point for the league's religious functions) as its original Canaanitic counterpart.

The origin and significance of the Yahweh cultus are controversial. Frank Moore Cross finds the origins of the name itself in an Ugaritic ephithet of El meaning "to cause to be," "to create," or "to procreate," and likely starting out as a cult phrase "I AM that I AM" used in the worship of El.[34] The worship of Yahweh, as an epithet of El, may have originated among Midianite El-worshipers (El was worshipped as the chief god far to the south, in ethnically Canaanitic or Hebrew areas like Sinai).[35] This dovetails nicely with the fact that Moses was introduced to the worship of Yahweh by his future father-in-law Jethro, the High Priest of The LORD in Midian. The name Yahweh first appears, in written history, in Egyptian records and pottery fragments associated with Midian and Edom.[36] It first appeared as an independent name, rather than an epithet of El, in 14th and 13th century BCE lists of Edomite (south Palestinian) place names.[37]

Not controversial, however, is the basic consensus that he was grafted onto the earlier El worship and equated to El is not. And it's telling that when the northern tribes revolted against the House of David, they endowed shrines to Yahweh with golden bull calves at Bethel and Dan.[38]

The social institutions of the Israelite society, as it emerged in marginal areas beyond the conrol of the Canaanite authorities, were in many ways an egalitarian peasant inversion of the lowland class system. In *The Tribes of Yahweh*, Gottwald originally stressed the origins of Israel in a straightforward peasant revolution and the egalitarianism of the society in areas of Israelite control. He later qualified these broad strokes, but kept the essence. Writing twenty years after the book's first publication, he said:

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34 *Ibid.*, pp. 65-66, 68.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

36 *The Anchor Bible: Joshua*, pp. 119-120.

37 Cross, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

38 Martin Smith, *Palestinian Parties and Politics that Shaped the Old Testament* (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 22-23.

My argument for the social equality of Israelites was muddled and imprecise, since there is evidence of status and wealth differentials, but the society was clearly less hierarchical than in the surrounding states and it provided extended family and clan-based "social safety nets" for those in greatest need. I have since come to speak of Israel's tribal society as "communitarian". Setting aside the mistaken notion that a peasant revolution is a dramatic one-shot event that succeeds or fails in one stroke, it may be reaffirmed that Israel was a peasant movement cast in opposition to city-state hierarchy and struggling for independence from outside control. The extent to which the social and political difference between Israel and it city-state neighbors can be called "revolutionary" depends, I believe, on how intentional the Israelite peasants were in pursuing and exploiting their independent manner of life. A great deal hinges on the extent to which the tribes of Israel were simply the haphazard result of a breakdown in dominant Canaanite institutions and the extent to which the tribes of Israel were consciously formed or shaped as an alternative to oppressive social and political institutions. My own belief is that there was both a breakdown and an intentional movement of peasants in the midst of that breakdown. Alternatively, the tribal system of early Israel may be conceived as a "devolution" from hierarchic society, facing *backwards* to a pre-state mode of life, or it can be conceived as both an "evolution" and a "revolution," facing *forwards* in anticipation of modes of social and political freedom that were not yet realizable or sustainable under the conditions of antiquity.[39]

Zomias Everywhere. The Icelandic Commonwealth, settled disproportionately by small holders fleeing the growing impositions of the king and nobility, was a Zomian population many libertarians are familiar with. The Icelandic settlements recounted in the Sagas took place at a time when kings on the Scandinavian mainland "were enlarging their authority at the expense of the traditional rights of free farmers."[40] King Harald Fairhair, for example, imposed taxes on previously allodial land, with the *jarls* under him keeping a share of the tax revenues for themselves.[41] The families who fled the continent consciously structured the new society along comparatively egalitarian lines to avoid such evils.[42]

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39 Gottwald, "Revisting The Tribes of Yahweh" (1999) <http://www.servicioskoinonia.org/relat/374e.htm#_ftn1>.
40 Jesse Byock, *Viking Age Iceland* (Penguin, 2001), p. 65.
41 *Ibid.*, p. 83.
42 *Ibid.*, p. 84.

According to Kropotkin, medieval towns—and the entire country of Switzerland, for that matter—were such areas, made up of runaway serfs and other populations attracted to territories with a prohibitive cost of governance. Paralleling the towns' building of fortifications, federation and revolt against the authority of feudal lords, in many places villages federated together to resist their feudal lords. In most cases, lacking the protection of walls or defensible terrain, they were quickly defeated. But in favorable defensive terrain like the Alps, "such peasant republics became independent units of the Swiss Confederation."[43]

James Scott Contra Constructivist Theories of Ideology

This paper considers, more specifically, liberatory or nonstate ideology as a weapon against power and exploitation. As described by Scott, Zomian religion frequently borrows from the same pool of myths and cultural themes as the dominant religion in state spaces. But it recuperates them—in a classic example of "using the master's tools to tear down the master's house"—inverting the state religion and standing on its head. Scott, in the context of his discussion of "great traditions" vs. "little traditions," writes: "In this 'counterpoint to the leading melody,' as Wertheim has described it, many of the central values of elite culture are symbolically rejected or stood on their head."[44] The religion of the lower orders frequently reflects "the appropriation of religious symbolism in the service of class interests.... Little tradition syncretism... represents a reworking, a selective appropriation, of those elements of a religious doctrine that answer the needs of a subordinate class."[45]

Scott takes issue especially with the assumption that ideological hegemony necessarily leads to a loss of agency by subordinate groups—"that the ideological incorporation of subordinate groups will necessarily diminish social conflict."

> And yet, we know that any ideology which makes a claim to hegemony must, in effect, make promises to subordinate groups by way of explaining *why* a particular social order is also in their best interests. Once such promises are extended, the way is open to social conflict. How

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43 Pyotr Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (New York: Doubleday, Page & Company, 1909), pp. 206-207.

44 Scott, "Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition, Part I," *Theory and Society* 4 (1977) No. 1, pp. 16-17.

45 Scott, "Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition, Part II," *Theory and Society* 4 (1977) No. 2, p. 226.

are these promises to be understood, have they been carried out, were they made in good faith, who is to enforce them? Without elaborating, it is reasonably clear that some of the most striking episodes of violent conflict have occurred between a dominant elite and a rank-and-file mass of subordinates seeking objectives that could, in principle, be accommodated within the prevailing social order.[46]

In fact the great mass of popular demands, in the periods of radicalization immediately preceding revolutions, have typically been reformist. The factory committees that spontaneously emerged in Russia in early 1917 were overwhelmingly concerned with wages, hours, accommodations like toilet facilities, grievance procedures, etc. But that did not stop them from rapidly evolving into tools of direct self-management, as the crisis progressed.

> The point is simply that the subordinate classes to be found at the base of what we historically call revolutionary movements are typically seeking goals well within their understanding of the ruling ideology. "Falsely conscious" subjects are quite capable, it seems, of taking revolutionary action.[47]

Scott interprets Gramsci's analysis of hegemony as working "primarily at the level of thought as distinct from the level of action."

> The anomaly, which the revolutionary party and its intelligentsia will hopefully resolve, is that the working class under capitalism is involved in concrete struggles with revolutionary implications but, because it is in the thrall of hegemonic social thought, is unable to draw revolutionary conclusions from its actions. It is this dominated consciousness that, Gramsci claims, has prevented the working class from drawing the radical consequences inherent in much of its action:

> *The active man-in-the-mass has a practical activity, but has no clear theoretical consciousness of his practical activity.... His theoretical consciousness can indeed be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his fellow-workers in the practical*

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46 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. 77.
47 *Ibid.*, pp. 77-78.

transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit or verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. But this verbal conception of not without consequences... the contradictory state of consciousness does [often] not permit of any action, any decision, or any choice, and produces a condition of moral and political passivity.

We have explored, however, something of the imaginative capacity of subordinate groups to reverse or negate dominant ideologies. So common is this pattern that it is plausible to consider it part and parcel of the religiopolitical equipment of historically disadvantaged groups. Other things equal, it is therefore more accurate to consider subordinate classes *less* constrained at the level of thought and ideology, since they can in secluded settings speak with comparative safety, and *more* constrained at the level of political action and struggle, where the daily exercise of power sharply limits the options available to them. To put it crudely, it would ordinarily be suicide for serfs to set about to murder their lords and abolish the seigneurial regime; it is, however, plausible for them to imagine and talk about such aspirations providing they are discreet about it.[48]

Despite Orwell's rhetorical excesses regarding the Eleventh Edition of the *Newspeak Dictionary* in *1984*, it is impossible to prune language of concepts in such a way as to render a subordinate class incapable of articulating criticism of a dominant ideology. Concepts are far too easily adapted.

Official ideologies can, in fact, very easily be stood on their heads and turned into weapons of radical opposition to the existing social order. A good example is the popular Russian belief in the Tsar-Deliverer, who would save his people from oppression. In the standard form of the myth, the good Tsar was held captive by wicked counselors and officials who kept him in ignorance of the true suffering of his people. Sometimes the myth went so far as to postulate that the throne had been usurped by a false Tsar. Either way, the Little Father circumvented the captivity of the unjust regime and traveled in disguise as a pilgrim among his people, where he witnessed first-hand their suffering at the hands of wicked officials and landlords. At a climactic point, the Little Father reveals himself as Tsar, reclaims the throne, punishes his wicked counselors, and institutes justice for the peasantry. This recurring myth was at the heart of the major serf uprisings in Russia,

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48 *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

with the peasants either resisting rents and corvees in the name of a secret *ukaz* from the Little Father which had been suppressed by wicked officials, or rising in support of a pretender who claimed to be the true Tsar. As late as 1902, Ukrainian rebels defended themselves before a magistrate by claiming to act in obedience to an ukaz by the Tsar which authorized them to requisition grain from the gentry.[49]

> In a form of symbolic jiujitsu, an apparently conservative myth counseling passivity becomes a basis for defiance and rebellion that is, in turn, publicly justified by faithful allegiance to the monarch!... As Field concludes, "Naive or not, the peasants professed their faith in the Tsar in forms, *and only in those forms*, that corresponded to their interests. Peasant leaders, finding the myth ready to hand in its folkloric expressions, used it to arouse, galvanize, and unify other peasants."[50]

Ruled populations can challenge the hegemonic ideology with a counter-ideology by an expedient as simple as standing it on its head. Scott objects to the assumption that a hegemonic ideology, by suppressing knowledge of other possible social arrangements, "normalizes" an existing system of power and makes its replacement unimaginable.

> It is... mistaken in assuming that the absence of actual knowledge of alternative social arrangements produces automatically the naturalization of the present, however hated that present may be. Consider two small feats of imagination that countless numbers of subordinate groups have historically performed. First, while the serf, the slave, and the untouchable may have difficulty imagining other arrangements than serfdom, slavery, and the caste system, they will certainly have no trouble imagining a total reversal of the existing distribution of status and rewards. The millennial theme of a world turned upside down, a world in which the last shall be first and the first last, can be found in nearly every major cultural tradition in which inequalities of power, wealth, and status have been pronounced.... These collective hidden transcripts from the fantasy life of subordinate groups are not merely abstract exercises. They are embedded... in innumerable ritual practices (for example, carnival in Catholic countries, the Feast of Krishna in India, the Saturnalia in classical Rome, the water festival in Buddhist Southeast Asia), and they have provided the ideological basis of many revolts.

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49 *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.
50 *Ibid.*, p. 98.

The second historical achievement of popular imagination is to negate the existing social order. Without ever having set foot outside a stratified society, subordinate groups can, and have, imagined the absence of the distinctions they find so erroneous. The famous ditty that comes to us from the English Peasants' Revolt of 1381, "When Adam delved and Eve span, who was then the gentleman," was imagining a world without aristocrats or gentry. In the fifteenth century the Taborites anticipated both a radical equality and the labor theory of value: "Princes, ecclesiastical and secular alike, and counts and knights should only possess as much as common folk, then everyone would have enough. The time will come when princes and lords will work for their daily bread".... Most traditional utopian beliefs can, in fact, be understood as a more or less systematic negation of an existing pattern of exploitation and status degradation as it is experienced by subordinate groups. If the peasantry is beset by officials collecting taxes, by lords collecting crops and labor dues, by priests collecting tithes, and by poor crops, their utopia is likely to envision a life without taxes and duties and tithes, and with an abundant, self-yielding nature. Utopian thought of this kind has typically been cast in disguised or allegorical forms in part because its open declaration would be considered revolutionary. What is beyond doubt is that millennial beliefs and expectations have often provided, before the modern era, a most important set of mobilizing ideas behind large-scale rebellions when they did occur.[51]

In class societies throughout history—even comparatively stable ones—the idea of a "world turned upside down" has persisted among the peasantry. Jubilee year, both in origins as practice of communal peasant society with Open Fields, and its persistence (much like the Good Laws of King Alfred and the myth of the Norman Yoke) as the basis of an insurrectionist ideology long after it had ceased to have any effect.

This inversion was at the heart of such things as Fools Day (something very like it was probably the ancestor of Greek comedy). And the inversion, once conceived of as an occasional phenomenon, could be extrapolated into the permanent basis of society:

> ...foolery had a function in medieval society. There was a convention that on certain set occasions—Shrove Tuesday, the Feasts of Fools, All

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51 *Ibid.*, pp. 80-81.

Fools Day and others—the social hierarchy and the social decencies could be turned upside.down. It was a safety-valve: social tensions were released by the occasional *bouleversement*; the social order seemed perhaps that much more tolerable. What was new in the seventeenth century was the idea that the world might be *permanently* turned upside down: that the dream world of the Land of Cockayne or the kingdom of heaven might be attainable on earth now.[52]

For our purposes, what is most interesting about carnival is the way it allows certain things to be said, certain forms of social power to be exercised that are muted or suppressed outside this ritual sphere....

...Much of the social aggression within carnival is directed at dominant figures, if for no other reason than the fact that such figures are, by virtue of their power, virtually immune from open criticism at other times.... Institutions as well as persons came under attack. The church, in particular, was an integral part of the ritual mockery of carnival. In fact, every conceivable sacred rite had its counterpart in a carnival parody.... Here was something of an open dialogue, suitably elusive, between a heterodox popular religion and an official hierarchy of piety....

As one might reasonably expect, class and political antagonisms could also be aired through carnival techniques. David Gilmore's account of how the growing animosity in twentieth-century Andalusia between agricultural laborers and landowners affected carnival is instructive. Initially, both classes participated in carnival, the landowners tolerating the ridicule and satirical verses sung to them. As agrarian conditions worsened, the abuse and threats drove the landowners to withdraw and watch carnival from their balconies. For some time now the landowners actually leave town for the duration of carnival, abandoning it to their antagonists.[53]

Structuralists tend to dismiss things like carnival as "safety valves" that preserve the system by diverting popular resentment into symbolic displays without altering the real structure of power. James Scott devotes a considerable amount of effort to countering the argument that "the offstage discourse of the powerless is either empty posturing or, worse, a substitute

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52 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Penguin Books, 1972), pp. 16-17.
53 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, pp. 173-174.

for real resistance.[54]

But in fact carnival itself was seized on as a weapon for real struggle in times of heightened class tension, as the example above of Andalusia indicates. In fact it would defy common sense if such institutions weren't pushed in a revolutionary direction in times of extraordinary discontent.

> Carnival, in its ritual structure and anonymity, gives a privileged place to normally suppressed speech and aggression. It was, in many societies, virtually the only time during the year when the lower classes were permitted to assemble in unprecedented numbers behind masks and make threatening gestures toward those who ruled in daily life. Given this unique opportunity and the world-upside-down symbolism associated with carnival, it is hardly surprising that it would frequently spill over its ritual banks into violent conflict. And if one were, in fact, planning a rebellion or protest, the legitimate cover of anonymous assembly provided by carnival might suggest itself as a likely venue.... It is why actual rebels mimic carnival—they dress as women or mask themselves when breaking machinery or making political demands; their threats use the figure and symbolism of carnival; they extort cash and employment concessions in the manner of crowds expecting gifts during carnival....[55]

Norman Solomon, in *The Trouble With Dilbert*, dismissed Scott Adams' popular comic strip on the grounds that it let disgruntled cubicle drones blow off steam making fun of middle management while largely failing to address the nature of corporate power.

But Dilbert is very much an inversion or recuperation of the official corporate ideology, with the cubicle drones using management's own "efficiency" legitimizing rhetoric against it. Any ruling class is limited and made vulnerable by its choice of legitimizing rhetoric.

James Scott finds the safety valve thesis implausible on the grounds that it requires the assumption that the safe expression of anger through fantasy is a satisfactory substitute for "direct aggression against the object of frustration." In fact, though, people who "are thwarted unjustly experience little or no reduction in the level of their frustration and anger unless they

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54 *Ibid.*, p. 184.
55 *Ibid.*, p. 181.

are able to directly injure the frustrating agent." What's more, engaging in such fantasy expression may actually work people up into the mood for the real thing. "...[T]here is much experimental evidence that aggressive play and fantasy increase rather than decrease the likelihood of actual aggression." It makes sense to think of so-called "safety valve" expressions of anger as preparations or rehearsals, rather than substitutes, for the real thing. It's worth noting how many "revolts by slaves, peasants, and serfs [have] begun precisely during such seasonal rituals..."[56]

And "safety-valve" ideologies that undermine the legitimacy of the official ideology are themselves frequently used to legitimize covert action in defiance of the ruling class: "any argument which assumes that disguised ideological dissent or aggression operates as a safety-valve to weaken 'real' resistance ignores the paramount fact that such ideological dissent is virtually always expressed in practices that aim at an unobtrusive renegotiation of power relations."[57]

And the cumulative effect of such "petty" individual resistance can amount to vast structural significance. Scott quotes Milovan Djilas observation that "slow, unproductive work of disinterested millions... is the calculable, invisible, and gigantic waste which no communist regime has been able to avoid." And, Scott adds, "[p]oaching and squatting on a large scale can restructure the control of property.[58] Going slow or "going canny" on the job, historically, has played a central role in defining the normal pace of labor in the workplace.

When hill societies "come to embrace the 'world religion of their valley neighbors, they are likely to do so with a degree of heterodoxy and millenarian fervor that valley elites find more threatening than reassuring."[59] Generally speaking, when hill populations share a major religion with state spaces in the lowlands, their clergy tend to be more irregular and prone to forming schismatic sects. In addition, schismatic sects in the valleys were likely to see the less governable valleys as a place of refuge to flee persecution by the official religious establishment.[60] "The pluralism expelled from the valleys can be found in profusion in the hills— shards that tell us what the lowland kingdoms drummed out of the

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56 *Ibid.*, pp. 186-187.
57 *Ibid.*, p. 190.
58 *Ibid.*, p. 192.
59 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 21.
60 *Ibid.*, p. 156.

valley...."[61]

The variety of Hinduism practiced in the Tengger hills of Java, for example, has dispensed with the caste system, and maintains a form of Hindu priesthood that reflects the culture's values of egalitarianism and self-reliance rather than the lowlands' attachment to social status and rank.[62]

The same is true of populations in marginal or non-state areas around the world.

> The frequency with which peripheries—mountains, deserts, dense forests—have been strongly associated with religious dissent is too common to be overlooked. The Cossack frontier of tsarist Russia was notable not only for its egalitarian social structure but also for being a bastion of Old Believers whose doctrines played an important role in both the massive Razin and Pugachev peasant revolts. Switzerland was long marked by egalitarianism and by religious heterodoxy. The Alps generally were seen by the Vatican as a cradle of heresy. The Waldensians found refuge there, and, when threatened with forced conversion by the duke of Savoy in the mid-seventeenth century, they moved to the highest valleys.[63]

When the Roman Empire (and with it the province of Africa) became Christianized, the Berbers also adopted Christianity—but the Arian or Donatist version of it. When north Africa fell to the Islamic Caliphate, the Berbers converted to Islam—but to the Kharijite heresy. The hill people of Afghanistan, similarly, adhere to the Shia Imami sect or Ismailism rather than the Sunnism of the valley people.[64]

The most important point is that "much of the same cosmological raw material" goes into the variants of a major religion shared by state and non-state territories.[65] The religions of non-state spaces include "a mimicry of lowland-state institutional forms [that] can be reshaped so as to oppose lowland agendas."[66]

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61 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
62 *Ibid.*, pp.. 134-135.
63 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
64 *Ibid.*, p. 158.
65 *Ibid.*, p. 157.
66 *Ibid.*, p. 289.

> Religious heterodoxy and prophetism with millenarian overtones are, historically at least, as common in the lowlands and within populations already part of lowland states as they are in the hills. In fact... the millenarian ideas circulating in the hills are, for the most part, assembled from fragments that have been imported from valley states.[67]

If the central theme of the state or ruling class religion is legitimacy—be in subjection to the higher authorities; the ruler does not wield the sword in vain; as above so below; etc.—the central theme of religion in nonstate spaces is just the opposite: the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; the mighty shall be brought low; woe to the downpressor; etc. Scott refers to this as "[t]he pervasive idea of a reversal of fortunes, of a world turned upside down...."[68] Millenarianism "represents an audacious poaching of the lowland ideological structure to fashion movements that aim at warding off or destroying the states from which they are poached."

> Hill people have, in a sense, seized whatever ideological materials were available to them to make their claims and take their distance from the lowland states. At first, the raw materials were confined to their own legends and deities, on the one hand, and, on the other, the emancipatory messages they could make out in the lowland religions, especially Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism.[69]

This general phenomenon also seems relevant to Israel, to which we paid so much attention in the introduction, since the Israelite amphictyony sort of took the Canaanitic El pantheon and turned that aristocratic religion on its head, and attached its own significance to Canaanite holy places like Bethel. According to Gottwald, the

> emergence of Israel out of a Canaanite milieu is analogous in some ways to the continuities and discontinuities evident in the emergence of early Christianity out of proto-Judaism and to the development of Protestantism out of Roman Catholicism.[70]

The official Davidic theology, most clearly expressed in the Psalms, was essentially a return to the cosmological religion of other Near Eastern

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67 *Ibid.*, pp. 298-299.
68 *Ibid.*, p. 287.
69 *Ibid.*, p. 322.
70 Gottwald, "Revisiting The Tribes of Yahweh."

states. As in other such religions, there was a close parallel between the heavenly and earthly order. The heavenly order was established by El (or Yahweh) defeating the forces of primordial chaos (represented by water or by a dragon), enthroning himself, fathering a dynasty of gods, and creating heaven and earth. This was followed by the creation of an earthly order corresponding to the heavenly one, with the descent of kingship to humankind and the establishment of the house of El's (or Yahweh's) chosen king at the center of a human hierarchy directly mirroring the divine pantheon. Cultic reenactments of the defeat of Egypt and triumphal march to Zion, portrayed it in symbolic terms closely resembling El's defeat of the primordial serpent or waters—followed by the establishment of the line of David ("which shall have no end.").[71]Consider the stock form of many of the Psalms of David, typified by Psalm 29: 1) The Divine Warrior goes to battle against chaos; 2) nature convulses under the Warrior's wrath; 3) the Warrior God returns to become king of the gods, and is enthroned on the holy mountain; 4) the Divine Warrior utters a voice from the temple, nature responds, the heavens fertilize the earth, and animals writhe in giving birth.[72]

The emergence of the prophetic movement as a liberatory counterweight to the official Davidic theology of the monarchy, and its reworking and revival of persistent underground elements from the older Israelite tradition preserved in Judges and Kings, overlaps to a considerable extent with Jaspers' Axial Period, Nietzsche's "slave revolt in morality" described in *The Genealogy of Morals*, and Voegelin's transition from cosmological to universal religions (see Appendix). In place of a static-cyclical earthly order which mirrored the order of heaven (as above, so below), and earthly kingship which mirrored the pantheon of Yahweh as originally conceived, they believed they were called into a linear, historical relationship with a transcendent, universal God.

Religion as Part of a Larger Phenomenon: Ideology. Stepping back again and taking a more panoramic view, the religious case is part of an even larger phenomenon: the recuperation of the symbols and values of the ruling class's legitimizing ideology, and the inversion of the dominant ideology as a weapon against the existing system of power.

When a ruling class creates a legitimizing ideology, it thereby—much like a

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71 Cross, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.
72 *Ibid.*, pp. 162-163.

supernatural being which is bound by the limitations of the physical form it takes on—gives its subjects a form of leverage against it. "For it is largely by reference to its contribution to group welfare that power seeks to become authority—i.e., to legitimate itself.... The process by which power is rationalized thus inevitably creates general moral principles of performance by which it may be judged and found wanting."[73]

If, however, this flattering self-portrait is to have any rhetorical force among subordinates, it necessarily involves some concessions to their presumed interests. That is, rulers who aspire to hegemony in the Gramscian sense of that term must make out an ideological case that they rule, to some degree, on behalf of their subjects. This claim, in turn, is always highly tendentious but seldom completely without resonance among subordinates.[74]

Any ruling group, in the course of justifying the principles of social inequality on which it bases its claim to power, makes itself vulnerable to a particular line of criticism. Inasmuch as these principles of inequality unavoidably claim that the ruling stratum performs some valuable social function, its members open themselves to attack for the failure to perform these functions honorably or equitably. The basis of the claim to privilege and power creates, as it were, the groundwork for a blistering critique of domination on the terms invoked by the elite. Such a critique from within the ruling discourse is the ideological equivalent of being hoisted on one's own petard. For any particular form of domination one may specify the claims to legitimacy it makes, the discursive affirmations it stages for the public transcript, the aspects of power relations that it will seek to hide (its dirty linen), the acts and gestures that will undermine its claims to legitimacy, the critiques that are possible within its frame of reference, and, finally, the ideas and actions that will represent a repudiation or profanation of the form of domination in its entirety. [75]

...[T]he official transcript helps... to define which of the practices that compose the inevitable dirty work of power must be screened from public view. The very operation of a rationale for inequality creates a

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73 Scott, "Protest and Profanation: Agrarian Revolt and the Little Tradition, Part I," *Theory and Society* 4 (1977), pp. 14-15.

74 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), p. 18.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 103.

potential zone of dirty linen that, if exposed, would contradict the pretensions of legitimate domination. A ruling stratum whose claim to authority rests on the provision of institutionalized justice under law with honest judges will have to go to exceptional lengths to hide its thugs, its hired assassins, its secret police, and its use of intimidation. An elite that bases its power on its self-sacrificing, public-spirited probity will be damaged more by an expose of corruption in high places than one based on a patronage machine. Every publicly given justification for inequality thus marks out a kind of symbolic Achilles heel where the elite is especially vulnerable.

Attacks that focus on this symbolic Achilles heel may be termed critiques within the hegemony. One reason they are particularly hard to deflect is simply because they begin by adopting the ideological terms of reference of the elite.... Having formulated the very terms of the argument and propagated them, the ruling stratum can hardly decline to defend itself on this terrain of its own choosing.... Any dominant group is, in this respect, least able to take liberties with those symbols in which they are most heavily invested.

Perhaps for this reason..., so many radical attacks originate in critiques within the hegemony—in taking the values of ruling elites seriously, while claiming that they (the elites) do not. To launch an attack in these terms is to, in effect, call upon the elite to take its own rhetoric seriously. Not only is such an attack a legitimate critique by definition, but it always threatens to appeal to sincere members of the elite in a way that an attack from outside their values could not.[76]

Hence the argument of Soviet dissident Vladimir Voinovich that the greatest danger to the regime came from earnest young students of the theoretical foundations of communism, who took the regime's ideological self-justifications seriously.[77] It's no accident that so many national uprisings against Soviet power in Eastern Europe after WWII took the form of heretical variants of Marxism developed within the national communist parties, or that the grass-roots resistance relied so heavily on workers' councils, factory committees, and other libertarian communist organizational precedents.

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76 *Ibid.*, pp. 105-106.
77 *Ibid.*, p. 106.

As Scott argues himself, the hill people's inversions of the symbols of the official religions of lowland states is not a phenomenon limited to non-state spaces—at least if we equate "non-state spaces" to broad geographical areas outside the state's governance. They do, of course, tend to predominate in areas that are opaque to the state, even within the state's area of governance: "unauthorized and unmentioned secret assemblies of subordinates," like Lollardry in "the pastoral, forest, moorland, and fen areas, where the social control of the church and the squirearchy did not effectively penetrate."[78] E.P. Thompson, writing of England three centuries later, said that "free intellectual life and democratic experiments" tended to proliferate in "the chapel, the tavern, and the home...."[79] And these places "were seen by secular authorities and by the church as places of subversion."[80]

> The importance of the tavern or its equivalent as a site of antihegemonic discourse lay less in the drinking it fostered or in its relative insulation from surveillance than in the fact that it was the main point of unauthorized assembly for lower-class neighbors and workers. Along with the market, which was larger and more anonymous, the tavern was the closest thign to a neighborhood meeting of subordinates....
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> The reasons the more unmediated versions of the hidden transcripts should be encountered in taverns, alehouses, at the marketplace, during carnival, and at night in secluded spots are instructive. A dissident subculture "invests the weak points in a chain of socialization."[81]

The typical response of those in authority is panopticism: "a hopelessly utopian (a master's utopia, to be sure) project of eliminating any and all protected communication among slaves."[82] According to Foucault, the central principle of Bentham's Panopticon was individualization, isolation, and the elimination of horizontal ties:

> ...a supervision that was both general and individual: to observe the worker's presence and application, and the quality of his work; to compare workers with one another, to classify them according to skill

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78 *Ibid.*, p. 121.
79 E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, pp. 51-52, quoted in *Ibid.* p. 121.
80 Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, p. 121.
81 *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123; material in quotes is from Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (Hutchinson, 1976).
82 *Ibid.* p. 127.

and speed; to follow the successive stages of the production process. All these serializations formed a permanent grid: confusion was eliminated: that is to say, production was divided up and the labour process was articulated, on the one hand, according to its stages or elementary operations, and, on the other hand, according to the individuals, the particular bodies, that carried it out: each variable of this force—strength, promptness, skill, constancy—would be observed, and therefore categorized, assessed, computed and related to the individual who was its particular agent. Thus, spread out in a perfectly legible way over the whole series of individual bodies, the work force may be analysed in individual units. At the emergence of large- scale industry, one finds, beneath the division of the production process, the individualizing fragmentation of labour power; the distributions of the disciplinary space often assured both .[83]

...permit an internal, articulated and detailed control..., to render visible those who are inside it; in more general terms, an architecture that would operate to transform individuals: to act on those it shelters, to provide a hold on their conduct, to carry the effects of power right to them, to make it possible to know them, to alter them.[84]

To enforce effective control and minimize subversion of the official narrative, authority must isolate the individual in order to exact agreement and compliance from her in isolation, and prevent any communication that might undermine her sense of powerlessness and atomized responsibility by creating feelings of solidarity. Conversely, horizontality is key to challenging the official narrative.

It's probably no coincidence that the lowest levels of compliance in the Stanford Prison Experiment occurred when subjects were allowed to talk to one another.

It's impossible to overestimate the anti-authoritarian effects of replacing the old broadcast communications system (with its unidirectional, hub-and-spoke architecture where one person at the center spoke and many at isolated endpoints listened) with a networked system that permitted horizontal communication. *The Cluetrain Manifesto* had a lot to say about the ability of people to talk to each other, as undermining the ability of

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83 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Translated by Alan Sheridan 1977. Second Vintage Edition (New York: Vintage Press, 1995), p. 145.
84 *Ibid.*, p. 152.

marketing departments to control a message unilaterally through one-directional broadcast culture. When the audience viewing the official message are free to talk to one another, it ceases to be a one-way communication to the audience members and instead becomes the subject matter of their communications with one another—like the crappy movies mocked by Joel and the bots on *MST3K*.

Imagine for a moment: millions of people sitting in their shuttered homes at night, bathed in that ghostly blue television aura. They're passive, yeah, but more than that: they're isolated from each other.

> Now imagine another magic wire strung from house to house, hooking all these poor bastards up. They're still watching the same old crap. Then, during the touching love scene, some joker lobs an off-color aside — and everybody hears it. Whoa! What was that? People are rolling on the floor laughing. And it begins to happen so often, it gets abbreviated: ROTFL. The audience is suddenly connected to itself.
>
> What was once The Show, the hypnotic focus and tee-vee advertising carrier wave, becomes in the context of the Internet a sort of reverse new-media McGuffin — an excuse to get together rather than an excuse not to. Think of Joel and the 'bots on Mystery Science Theater 3000. The point is not to watch the film, but to outdo each other making fun of it.[85]

It's probably no coincidence that the lowest levels of compliance in the Stanford Prison Experiment occurred when subjects were allowed to talk to one another.

Of course people have always been able to mock politicians' speeches and network news talking heads in bars and in their living rooms, making snide remarks to one another as they watch the show. But with the emergence of a many-to-many medium, the comparative ubiquity of the official version of reality versus the self-organized version has suffered a serious decline. In the old days of broadcast culture, the mockery was marginalized by the very fact of being something that was heard only in tiny islands of physical space occupied by a few other physically present listeners. The private reality of mockery was an isolated phenomenon in a larger "public" reality defined by official hierarchies. Official reality, as defined by the President's

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85 Christopher Locke, "Waiting for Joe Six-Pack," *The Cluetrain Manifesto* <http://www.doesntsuck.com/projects/cluetrain/reorg/joe6pack.html>

press conferences and Walter Cronkite, was a pervasive normative ground, a background against which dissenting opinion stood out as a heretical exception. Mockery and criticism were relegated to the "private" realm.

But as the counter-reality becomes more ubiquitous, as it challenges official statements wherever they appear, as it becomes universally accessible to enormous audiences communicating with each other and hyperlinking the official statement for relentless mockery, the old official reality loses its perceived privileged status as consensus reality. The counter-reality becomes as pervasive as official reality in the public space, and contests it for perceived legitimacy.

> The Facebook groups, the Wikileaks cables, the blogs all show that any one person is not alone in a particular set of beliefs about the regime. Another form of common knowledge is allowed to take hold. It is not indubitable, and it may have been infiltrated, manipulated and it may in time be switched off—as has happened in Egypt. But the reality of the critique of the regime is believed to be commonly shared.[86]

At any rate, the subversive use of the dominant religion's content is shared by ideologies of rebellion among the people of the state spaces themselves.

> When it comes to cosmology and religion in particular, there would seem to be a plausible connection between dissident, charismatic religious movements in the hills and the disprivileged strata within state populations.... [S]omething of a continuum between symbolic dissent by subaltern state populations and relatively independent hill societies emerges. It is among these peoples, dispossessed and marginal, respectively, that the more revolutionary, "world-upside-down" prophetic message makes its greatest appeal. And of course, it is with the fringes of the valley population that hill peoples are likely to have most contact. Arriving in the valleys for trade and work, hill visitors are in closest contact with the bottom of the valley social hierarchy. The lower echelons of the valley population, along with the "lumpen intelligentsia" of monks and hermits, are also the most likely to drift into the hills. Thus, in terms of structural position as well as of social contact, we should probably treat radical valley religious movements as different in

86 Tony Curzon Price, "Cupid's freedom: how the web sharpens the democratic revolution," *openDemocracy*, January 31, 2011 <http://www.opendemocracy.net/openeconomy/tony-curzon-price/cupids-freedom-how-web-sharpens-democratic-revolution>.

degree but not in kind from hill prophetic movements.[87]

This "lumpen intelligentsia" of dissident clergy from the valley-state religions, as Scott argues, forms a class of "organic intellectuals" (in Gramsci's words) for the insurrectionist ideology.

> ...monks, ex-seminarians, catechists, healers, traders, and peripheral local clergy are vastly overrepresented in the ranks of prophets. They are, in the Gramscian sense, the organic intellectuals of the dispossessed and marginal in the premarginal world. This too, as a generalization, travels well. Marc Bloch notes the prominent role of the country priests in peasant uprisings in medieval Europe. Their "plight was often no better than that of their parishioners but [their] minds could better encompass the idea that their miseries were part of a general ill, [they were] men well-fitted to play the time-honoured role of the intellectual." Max Weber termed this class "pariah intellectuals" and noted that it stood "on the point of Archimedes in relation to social convention... and was capable of an original attitude toward the meaning of the cosmos." In the highlands such religious figures play much the same role, articulating the aspirations of the community and, at the same time, able to command, or at least neutralize, the symbolic technology of the state.[88]

The pool of symbols and memes that have popular resonance in any culture is appropriated in different directions by contending classes, as a weapon of class struggle. This shared pool within a given culture is what Gramsci called "common sense," and he argued that a revolutionary ideology must take symbols from the existing pool of common sense—which in many cases resonate powerfully among the population—and organize them in a new configuration. As Roger Simon explained:

> Ideologies are not individual fancies, rather, they are embodied in communal modes of living and acting. In order to understand the relation between an ideology and the individuals who are influenced by it Gramsci starts with what he calls *common sense*, the uncritical and largely unconscious way in which a person perceives the world, often confused and contradictory, and compounded of folklore, myths and popular experience. (He is of course giving the term a special meaning,

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87 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 306-307.
88 *Ibid.*, p. 310.

quite different from the usual one, somewhat akin to the English terms 'conventional wisdom' or 'received opinion'.) The task for Marxism is to be a criticism of common sense, and to enable people to develop its positive nucleus--which he calls good sense--into a more coherent outlook.[89]

Thus the nature of ideological struggle is not to make a completely fresh start. Rather, it is a process of transformation in which some of the elements are rearranged and combined in a different way with a new nucleus or central principle. A process of this kind is necessary because, if the old ideological system was a genuinely popular one, then the elements (or at least some of them) to which this popularity was due, need to be preserved in the new system even if their relative weight] [and some of their content is changed. The unity of the new ideological system will stem from its nucleus or central unifying principle.[90]

Another illustration from Britain is the way in which the shift to the right in the Conservative Party... was able to make use of the popular hostility to many of the activities of the state, to its bureaucracy and to the continual growth in the burden of taxation. The Tory Party posed as the champion of individual liberty against the state, proposing to cut down taxation, encourage personal initiatives, and reduce the role of government. The Tories were therefore aiming to appropriate popular sentiments of resentment against bureaucratic injustices and inefficiencies, and integrate these sentiments into an ideological system centred on the virtues of private enterprise.[91]

The task for Marxist theory is to be a criticism of common sense, and to enable people to develop its positive nucleus—which Gramsci called good sense—into a more coherent outlook. And he emphasised that 'it is not a question of introducing from scratch a scientific form of thought into everyone's life, but of renovating and making critical an already existing activity'....

In discussing the nature of ideological struggle we said above that a class advancing towards hegemony does not have to make a clean sweep of the opposing ideological systems; rather, it is a matter of transforming existing ideologies by preserving and rearranging some of

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89 Roger Simon. *Gramsci's Political Thought: An Introduction* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1982), pp. 25-26.
90 *Ibid.*, pp. 60-62.
91 *Ibid.*, p. 62.

the most durable elements in a new system.[92]

Scott argues that the themes of background cultures have an invisible hand effect on the messages of charismatic prophets who found millennarian movements.

It is the society within which a successful prophet appears that, in effect, lays down the basic script that shapes the prophet's repertoire.... How this process of reciprocal influence might work can be likened to the influence that an audience might have on a medieval bard. Let us imagine a bard who lives exclusively by the voluntary contributions of ordinary people in the marketplace. And let us assume, for the sake of argument, that each of those who like what he sings gives him an identical small "copper." Having conjured up a bard who wants to please a large audience, let us further imagine that this bard has a repertoire of, say, a thousand songs and stories from which to select. Assuming that his audience has definite tastes, I imagine that, little by little, as the bard comes to know his audience, the actual songs he sings in the market square... will come to more closely approximate the distribution of tastes among his audience....

Like any analogy, this one has its limitations. It allows too little for the creativity of the prophet and his capacity to add to the repertoire and to change tastes... Nonetheless, the analogy does demonstrate the way in which the cultural expectations and historical understanding of a charismatic public... can play a decisive role in influencing the script of a successful prophet. This stochastic process of successful adjustment is familiar enough; it is the stock in trade of most successful politicians and preachers.[93]

A major reason ruling ideologies are so vulnerable to such jiu-jitsu is that they use, as basic building blocks, basic conceptions of reciprocal and distributive justice that are universal and intuitive. An unjust order can only legitimize itself by appealing to ideals of genuine justice, however it misapplies them.

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92 *Ibid.*, p. 64.
93 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, pp. 296-297.

The Parasitism of Official Ideology on the Beliefs of the Ruled

Scott does not go far enough, however. He goes too far in stressing the dependence of ideologies of resistance on recuperated content from ideologies of domination, and then neglects the reverse.

> By definition, we have made the public transcript of domination ontologically prior to the hidden, offstage transcript. The result of proceeding in this fashion is to emphasize the reflexive quality of the hidden transcript as a labor of neutralization and negation. If we think, in schematic terms, of public transcript as comprising a domain of material appropriation..., a domain of public mastery and subordination..., and, finally, a domain of ideological justification for inequalities..., then we may perhaps think of the hidden transcript as comprising the offstage responses and rejoinders to that public transcript.[94]

But opposition movements do not merely recuperate the symbols and values of the ruling ideology as a weapon against the system of power. The ruling ideology itself was created, in the first place, by appealing to pre-existing symbols and values which possessed resonance in the larger culture.

A good example is the way in which Federalist literature and polemics during the ratification debates over the proposed U.S. Constitution in 1787-1788 attempted to sell it to a skeptical public in terms of the prevailing anglo-republican value system.

James Scott argues that one reason for Marxism's rapid inroads among the 19th century working class was its powerful resonance with this earlier Judaeo-Christian vision of history:

> It is impossible to read the *Communist Manifesto* without being struck by how much it owes, normatively and structurally, to Christian eschatological thinking: a debased world of oppression and sin, a deepening crisis, a final clash between good and evil, the triumph of good, the perfect society, and the end of history. In this context, the appeal of socialism to the Western working class must have rested, in some part, on how neatly it tracked the millennarian narrative of

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94 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. 111.

Christianity they were already familiar with.[95]

The Wobblies, likewise, probably owed a considerable amount of their rapid spread to the adoption of a propaganda style much like that of the Salvation Army, based on street corner bands and soapbox speeches; many Wobbly organizing songs were deliberate parodies of Salvation Army hymns.

Historical Examples.   Scott argues that the popular religion—or "folk Catholicism"—of Christian Europe,

> far from serving ruling interests, was practiced and interpreted in ways that often defended peasant property rights, contested large differences in wealth, and even provided something of a millennial ideology with revolutionary import. Rather than being a "general anesthesia," folk Catholicism was a provocation—one that, together with its adherents in the lower clergy, provided the ideological underpinnings for countless rebellions against seigneurial authority.[96]

As the Catholic church developed into a conservative institution—especially after it was established under Constantine—it shifted away from the earlier millenarianism that had predominated in Christian thought in the first two or three centuries. This shift included the growing dominance of Origen's spiritualization of eschatology as a matter of individual salvation, and the Augustinian view of the Millennium and Kingdom of God at historically realized in the Church.

> The third century saw the first attempt to discredit millenarianism, when Origen, perhaps the most influential of all the theologians of the ancient Church, began to present the Kingdom as an event which would take place not in space or time but only in the souls of believers. For a collective, millenarian eschatology Origen substituted an eschatology of the individual soul.... Such a shift in interest was indeed admirably suited to what was now an organized Church, enjoying almost uninterrupted peace and an acknowledged position in the world. When in the fourth century Christianity attained a position of supremacy in the Mediterranean world and became the official religion of the Empire, ecclesiastical disapproval of millenarianism became emphatic. The

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95 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 400n.
96 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. 68.

Catholic Church was now a powerful and prosperous institution, functioning according to a well-established routine; and the men responsible for governing it had no wish to see Christians clinging to outdated and inappropriate dreams of a new earthly Paradise. Early in the fifth century St Augustine propounded the doctrine which the new conditions demanded. According to *The City of God* the Book of Revelation was to be understood as a spiritual allegory; as for the Millennium, that had begun with the birth of Christianity and was fully realized in the Church. This at once became orthodox doctrine.[97]

Nevertheless millenarianism persisted, underground, as a central component of popular religion in Christian Europe, an alternative version of the official ideology which provided a reservoir of ideas to be used against the established Church and state and their legitimacy claims. The apocalyptic tradition appealed to two great bodies of symbolism: popular exegesis of the Revelation of St. John and the Sybilline prophecies.[98]

This millenarianism tended to be combined with a radical critique of the institutional Church as part of the worldly power structure, and a contrasting ideal based on (variously) the Garden of Eden, the "primitive communism" of the Church described in the Acts of the Apostles, and personal saintliness as exemplified by the monastic movement as well as assorted freelance hermits and wandering lay preachers (what Cohn calls "the ideal of the apostolic life"). The monastic ideal itself, as exemplified by the Benedictine Rule's provision that monks "live by the labor of their hands," was inspired by the example of St. Paul working as a tent-maker to support himself and of the persecuted Christians in Acts sharing all that they had.[99]

When all these elements were combined in a single instance, usually in times of secular turmoil, the popular religion emerged from underground as a full-blown counter-ideology that stood orthodox Christianity on its head. The same recurring themes cropped up, again and again: an attack on corruption within the body of the Church, a call to replace the hierarchy with an egalitarian ecclesiastical polity dominated by ordinary Christians, a repudiation of tithes and a denial of the authority of the sacramental priesthood. This was accompanied by a critique of secular power—

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97 Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, 1970), p. 29.
98 Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 30, 33.
99 *Ibid.*, pp. 37-39.

particularly that of the landed classes to whom the peasants paid rent or provided labor in kind—and a call for return to a primitive state of nature in which all things (particularly land) were held in common, as God originally intended.[100]

These themes surfaced, especially, during upheavals like the Jacquerie in France, John Ball's revolt in England, the German Peasants' War and Munster Commune, and the assorted forms of radicalism associated with the English Civil War and Interregnum.

In Germany, events culminating in the Munster Commune were heavily influenced by the millenarianism and antinomianism of the Anabaptists. Although Luther weakened the Roman Church's bonds of orthodoxy, his teaching by itself lacked something in its appeal to many of the common people. The result was Anabaptism, which barely qualified as a sect, given that it "was not a homogenous movement and it never was centrally organized." There were around forty independent Anabaptist sects, generally clandestine and "each grouped around a leader who claimed to be a divinely inspired prophet or apostle," scattered throughout the German-speaking areas of central Europe.[101] Their theology was mostly indefinite, aside from an emphasis on the sole authority of Scripture, a symbolic interpretation of the sacraments, a mandate to rebaptise converts and a belief in congregational church government. But their social attitudes were definitely unfriendly to the powers that be.

> These sectarians tended to be uneasy about private property and to accept community of goods as an ideal. If in most of the groups little attempt was made to introduce common ownership, Anabaptists certainly did take seriously the obligations of charitable dealing and generous mutual aid.... In particular, Anabaptists regarded the state with suspicion....[102]

In the period after the Peasants' War and subsequent repression, some militant subgroups of Anabaptists—for the most part otherwise peaceful and quietist towards the authorities—turned increasingly to millenarian fantasies of war by the Saints against worldly wealth and authority.[103]

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100 *Ibid.*, p. 193.
101 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
102 *Ibid.*, p. 253.
103 *Ibid.*, p. 254.

Among them was the Drummer of Niklashausen. The church where the young Drummer, Boheim, denounced the clergy was transformed into a shrine and became a site of pilgrimage. His prophetic vision included a proclamation that the sacrifice of Christ had redeemed all of humanity—including serfs!—from all forms of bondage.[104]

Hans Hut, a Thuringian disciple of Muntzer who claimed prophetic authority and announced Christ's imminent return at Whitsuntide 1528, taught that

> Christ will give the sword and revenge to them, the Anabaptists, to punish all sins, stamp out all governments, communize all property and slay those who do not permit themselves to be rebaptised.[105]

In the early days of Bernt Rothmann's communist sermons in Munster, the Anabaptist enthusiasts streaming into the town had no little Zomian or Croatanian character:

> 'And so they came,' remarks one observer, 'the Dutch and the Frisians and scoundrels from all parts, who had never settled anywhere: they flocked to Munster and collected there.' Other sources refer to 'fugitives, exiles, criminals'...[106]

The reign of terror introduced by Matthys, Rothmann and Jan Bockelson later in the decade was an attempt to realize, in full, the communism both of the Golden Age before Nimrod and the primitive Church.[107]

Like the heterodox variants of Buddhism in Scott's Zomian highlands, heterodox variants of Christianity in England had been propagated by radical preachers on the margins of society from the time of the Lollards through the English Revolution.

> What we do not know, and probably shall never know fully, is how much continuity of underground radical use of the Bible there was from Lollards through Foxe's martyrs down to the apparently sudden appearance of Biblical radicalism in the 1640s. I gave some evidence in 'From Lollards to Levellers' for continuity in certain geographical areas, and in certain subjects—use of the Bible to criticize the sacraments and

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104 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. 125.
105 Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 255.
106 *Ibid.*, p. 259.
107 *Ibid.*, pp. 264 *et seq.*

ceremonies of the church, denunciations of idolatry and encouragement of iconoclasm, millenarianism, the saints to judge the world, perfection in this life, the idea that all men and women may be saved, lay mechanic preaching, Biblical criticism; and for recurrent heresies—mortalism, anti-Trinitarianism, scepticism about the existence of heaven, hell, the devil and sin, rejection of church marriage. Thomas Nashe speaks of a variety of sects already existing in the 1590s, with their own 'mechanic preachers'.

Whether there was continuity of radical ideas or not, there can be no doubt about the wealth of unorthodox theories, some of them fairly sophisticated, which surfaced after the breakdown of censorship [in the 1640s].[108]

Elsewhere, Hill writes of the "tradition of plebeian anti-clericalism and irreligion:

To go no further back, the Lollards carried a popular version of John Wyclif's heresies into the sixteenth century. Professor A.G. Dickens has shown how Lollard influence survived in a popular materialist scepticism which makes one 'feel appreciably nearer to the age of Voltaire than is normal in the 16th century'. A carpenter in 1491 rejected transubstantiation, baptism, confession, and said men would not be damned for sin; in 1512 a Wakefield man said 'that if a calf were upon the altar I would rather worship that than the... holy sacrament... The date was past that God determined him to be in form of bread.' The clergy, an earlier Lollard had declared, were worse than Judas, who sold Christ for thirty pence, while priests sold masses for a halfpenny. The commons, said another, 'would never be well until they had stricken off all the priests' heads'. 'There was a saying in the country,' a north Yorkshireman pleaded in 1542, 'that a man might lift up his heart and confess himself to God Almighty and needed not to be confessed at a priest.' A shearman of Dewsbury elaborated on this point: he would not confess his offences with a woman to a priest, 'for the priest would be as ready within two or three days after to use her as he'.

Although the idea of a past Golden Age "without distinctions of status or wealth" resonated with the English peasantry at all times, in times of

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108 Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, pp. 197-198.

political and social upheaval it became a hope for the immediate future.[109] In the peasant revolt of the 1380s, the dissident cleric John Ball preached a sermon to the peasant army, using as his text the old proverb "When Adam delved and Eve span/ Who was then a gentleman?" It was probably something like this, if we can believe Froissart's rendition of a typical John Ball sermon:

> And if we are all descended from one father and one mother, how can the lords say or prove that they are more lords than we are—save that they make us dig and till the ground so that they can squander what we produce? They are clad in velvet and satin, set off with squirrel fur, while we are dressed in poor cloth. They have wines and spices and fine bread, and we have only rye and spoilt flour and straw, and only water to drink. They have beautiful residences and manors, while we have the trouble and the work, always in the fields under rain and snow. But it is from us and our labour that everything comes with which they maintain their pomp.
>
> Good folk, things cannot go well in England nor ever shall until all things are in common and there is neither villein nor noble, but all of us are of one condition.[110]

And according to another contemporary chronicler, Thomas Walsingham, Ball contended that, although the human race had for a time departed from God's law in allowing propertied classes to engross the earth for themselves, the time was soon coming when the people would once again cast off their yoke:

> Therefore they should be of good heart and conduct themselves like the wise husbandman in the Scriptures who gathered the wheat into his barn, but uprooted and burned the tares which had almost choked the good train; for harvest-time was come. The tares were the great lords, the judges and the lawyers.[111]

The ideology of the peasant revolt was closely associated with Lollardry and the teaching of John Wyclif. Wyclif himself, in teaching that God had given the earth to humanity in common, "never intended this theory to be applied in practice to secular society." In fact he said it only once, in Latin, and added the qualification that the righteous must "acquiesce to inequalities and injustices and leave the unrighteous in possession of their wealth and

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109 Cohn, *op. cit.*, p. 198.
110 *Ibid.*, p. 199.
111 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

power." Apparently, however, some of the radical students in his lectures at Oxford attached more significance to his statement than he did—and it didn't take it long to filter down to the popularized variant of Lollardry that came out in John Ball's sermons (the role of millennarian ideology in the peasant uprising should hardly be surprising, given the role lower clergy played in it).[112]

Such populist sentiments were expressed in literary form in Langland's *Piers Plowman*, with Piers the righteous plowman as a Christ-figure tearing down the authority of the rich and powerful and doing justice to the poor and simple. The coming apocalypse was to be "a final battle between the poor, seen as the hosts of God, and their oppressors, seen as the hosts of Satan."[113]

The Lollard tradition survived the defeat of Ball and Tyler, surviving underground and emerging above-ground during the English Revolution of the 1640s in the complex of religious ideas exemplified by the Familists, Ranters, Quakers, Baptists, Levellers, etc.

> Lollardry was, given the circumstances, a fugitive and underground sect with no means to enforce an orthodoxy on those who believed. It can be glimpsed in reports of illegal preaching, in occasional anticlerical incidents, and in some radically democratic readings of the Scriptures later echoed by the Baptists and Quakers. We do know they preached the refusal of both "hat honor" and the use of honorifics in address, that they believed as early as the fifteenth century in direct confession to God and in the abolition of tithes for all those poorer than the priest, and that, like the Familists, Ranters, and Levellers, they would preach in the taverns or in the open air. They thrived best in those areas where surveillance was least—the pastoral, moorland, and forest areas with few squires or clergy.

Their "subterranean history" emerged as a "public, open explosion of radical heterodoxy" in the English Civil War.[114]

The Lollards had mined the English Bible as a source of subversive ideas.

For more than a century before Henry VIII's reign Lollards had been

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112 *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201, 203-204.
113 *Ibid.*, p. 203.
114 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. 88.

circulating manuscript versions of the Scriptures. They found profoundly subversive messages in the Bible. Lowly social elements gathered furtively in illegal groups to hear the vernacular Bible read and discussed.[115]

Both the assorted Puritan sects and full-blown antinomians used language—centering on a spiritual understanding of the sacraments, an emphasis on the priestly power of the laity, and local congregations as voluntary associations of baptized adult converts—virtually indistinguishable from the Lollards.[116] Further Left, Christopher Hill argues, we find Winstanley and the Diggers, who saw the Holy Spirit as something to be realized in human history and whose idea of the gospel was hard to distinguish from peasant communism:

> ...for Winsanley 'the word of righteousness', 'the gospel', meant communism, subversion of the existing social order. 'If you would find true majesty indeed, go among the poor despised ones of the earth... These great ones are too stately houses for Christ to dwell in; he takes up his abode in a manger, in and amongst the poor in spirit and despised ones of the earth.[117]

Communist ideas, associated with the Continental anabaptists and denounced in the Established Church's Thirty-Nine Articles, were not limited to the Diggers; they were found, to a greater or lesser extent, among many of the radical sects. They had probably remained dormant for decades in many localities, as a legacy of Lollardry, and been reactivated when New Model Army troops or itinerant preachers came along.[118]

As described by Christopher Hill,

> ...in the turmoil of the seventeenth century, the Bible became a sword to divide, or rather an armoury from which all parties selected weapons to meet their needs. And what an armoury! The great advantage of the Bible was that it could be quoted to make unorthodox or unpopular points.... [And unlike the Greco-Roman classics] the Bible in the vernacular was open to all, even the lower classes, to pillage and utilize.

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115 Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 10.

116 Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 26-27, 35.

117 *Ibid.*, p. 38.

118 *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.

> In seventeenth century England, a century of revolution and civil war, all parties appealed to the Bible for support... Seventeenth-century radicals claimed to find their ideas in the Bible. And they were right. All heresy originates from the Bible, because the Bible itself is a compilation, a compromise; orthodoxy changes as it incorporates or over-reacts against a heresy—which itself originated from the Biblical text.[119]

> The agrarian changes of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, enclosure and evictions, the revolts of 1535, 1549, 1607 (in which the names of Digger and Leveller were used), 1628-31—all these and many lesser disturbances witnessed to social tensions that expressed themselves in class theories of politics of which the Norman Yoke was one variant. 'When Adam delved and Eve span/Who then was the gentleman?' was a Biblical version. The Bible gave confidence and reassurance to men and women who badly needed it. Their times were out of joint; unprecedented things were happening to their world and their lives, apparently beyond human control. Some of the more daring of them came to conceive of solutions which were so novel that they could only be contemplated if they were envisaged as a return to purer Biblical days. God was at work in the world, overturning in order to transform; where but in his Word should we look for explanations of his mysterious actions and intentions, and guidance as to his wishes.

Hill compares the subversive uses of the Bible, by those paying lip-service to official orthodoxy, to the "Aesopian language" used in the communist regimes of the 20th century.

> Once we get behind the screen of loyal verbiage, it becomes clear that there were fundamental disagreements of principle at stake among the rulers as well as between rulers and ruled.... We must distinguish between the way in which men felt able to express themselves, their conventionally loyal language, on the one hand, and their actions on the other. Their language was often Aesopian, conveying messages different from what appears on the surface. To convince oneself of this possibility does not call for great intellectual or imaginative effort. A glance at the history of eastern Europe over the past decade might help.

> The Bible facilitated this double-talk. Men knew their Bible very well in the seventeenth century, and could convey messages through allusions

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119 *Ibid.*, p. 6.

to it which are lost on a godless age. The Romanian priest Laszlo Tokes was able under Ceausescu to get political messages across to his congregation by preaching on Nebuchadnezzar and other wicked rulers.[120]

The common language and symbolism was adopted by all parties to political and religious dispute, but supplied with idiosyncratic content by the respective parties.

> The words of the Bible limited the way in which men thought about society and its institutions. Hence the fierce quarrels during the Reformation about whether 'church' meant a national or international organization, or a local congregation.... If concepts changed, the Bible's words could not be replaced: their meanings had to be altered.

> So the Bible became a battle-field. For those who knew it well, judicious selection could turn up the desired answers to most problems. You could find defences of the *status quo*—'t'he powers that be are ordained of God' (Romans XIII.1); but you could also find severe criticism of kings, defences of the rights of the poor, attacks on usury....

> The Bible could offer codes by which novel or unpopular ideas might be communicated with less risk.... In 1648 the author of *Persecutio Undecima* wrote of Puritans 'They took up a canting language to themselves... abusing phrases of Scripture, thereby to understand one another'. New allegorical significance could be given familiar stories. ...Cain and Abel, Antichrist and Samson, could convey very different meanings to different people, different groups. Some nonconformists had agreed alternative meanings to those accepted by the state church....[121]

The popular use of the English Bible was widely understood, as suggested by statements from prominent Levellers and Diggers, to be a circumvention of the official apparatus for ideological propagation.

> William Walwyn, in the mock confession which he attributed to Thomas Edwards, made that great persecutor admit to 'base fear that plain unlearned men should seek for knowledge any other way than as they

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120 *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.
121 *Ibid.*, pp. 51-53.

are directed by us that are learned'. For 'if they should fall to teach one another, ...we should lose our domination in being sole judges of doctrine and discipline'. Radicals like Winstanley and Coppe did not fail to emphasize and enlarge on such texts. 'I command thee, to let Israel go free'. 'As the Scriptures threaten misery to rich men... surely all those threatenings shall be materially fulfilled, for they shall be turned out of all'. 'As when the sun riseth with heat, then the grass withereth, and his flower falleth away; ...even so shall the rich man wither away' (James I.9-11)....

Levellers and other radicals opposed 'servile tenures' like copyhold, which they tried to get abolished, and the custom of primogeniture, which led to consolidation of estates in the hands of a few at the expense of the many. The words 'birthright' and 'inheritance', which figure largely in the story of Esau and Jacob, were associated in the seventeenth century with land.[122]

As might be expected, radical lay readings of the Bible tended to reflect the economic and political issues they brought with them: "...in the forties uneducated men and women read back into the Bible themselves and their problems, and the problems of their communities, and found Biblical answers there, which they could discuss with others who shared the same problems."[123]

As also might be expected, the Biblical raw material of the Jubilee year and the Millennium were put to radical uses in 17th century England.

Preachers of Fast Sermons also accepted the connection of the Jubilee with the millennium. The Scot George Gillespie, preaching to the House of Commons on 27 March 1644, spoke of 'the acceptable year of Israel's jubilee, and the day of vengeance upon Antichrist', which was 'now coming and is not far off'.... In February 1649-50 Vavasor Powell declared that 'this year 1650... is to be the saints' year of jubilee', according to the interpretation of 'most godly writers upon Daniel'. Bunyan appears to equate the Jubilee with the day of Judgment, which he expected in the near future.

In what appears to be a rather liberal interpretation of Leviticus XXV, the

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122 *Ibid.*, pp. 163-164.
123 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

near-Digger pamphlet *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (December 1648) declared that 'in Israel, if a man were poor, then a public maintenance and stock was to be provided to raise him again. So would all bishops' lands, forest lands and crown lands do in our land, which the apostate Parliament men give to one another, and to maintain the needless thing called a King. And every seven years the whole land was for the poor, the fatherless, widows and strangers, and at every crop a portion allowed them'. William Aspinwall in 1656 called for the cancellation of debts after seven years, in accordance with Old Testament law, which would be the only authority in the millennium.[124]

It's important to remember that, for the people making such appeals to Scripture, they were not "merely playful, poetic analogies." As Hill argues,

> They are serious, because of their sacred origin. To say that Cain is in all great landlords is a declaration of war. To compare the last Levellers shot (at Burford) with Abel amounts to saying that the generals are like Cain, beyond the pale of humanity....
>
> After 1640 the collapse of censorship and the incursion of 'illiterate' radicals into politics ensured a more direct approach, a sharper tone. Biblical myths were put to new uses. Cain and Abel, Esau and Jacob, no longer merely illustrated the workings of God's will in predestining some to eternal life and others to reprobation. Abel and Jacob now represented the common people. Cain and Esau were their oppressors, here and now.[125]

To put things in Scott's terms, there is a close parallel between the legible forms of organization in both church and state; and the social strata drawn to the radical sects had a large whiff of Zomianism to them.

> A quite different sort of masterless men were the protestant sectaries. These had as it were chosen the condition of masterlessness by opting out of the state church, so closely modelled on the hierarchical structure of society, so tightly controlled by parson and squire. Sects were strongest in the towns, where they created hospitable communities for men, often immigrants, who aspired to keep themselves above the level of casual labor and pauperism....[126]

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124 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
125 *Ibid.*, pp. 245-246.
126 Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, p. 41.

The rural counterparts of the London poor were the "cottagers and squatters on the commons, wastes and in forests," living on the margins of the agricultural economy and outside the control of the landed classes. These were the people "idealized in the ballads of Robin Hood."[127] Itinerant craftsmen, traveling from village to village in search of work and spreading their heresies as they went, round out the picture.[128] The moors and fens swarmed with radical puritans, witches, Levellers and Quakers.[129]

> Beneath the surface stability of rural England…, the vast placid open fields which catch the eye, was the seething mobility of forest squatters, itinerant craftsmen and building laborers, unemployed men and women seeking work, strolling players, minstrels and jugglers, pedlars and quack doctors, gipsies, vagabonds, tramps; congregated especially in London and the big cities, but also with footholds wherever newly-squatted areas escaped from the machinery of the parish or in old-squatted areas where labour was in demand….
>
> The eternally unsuccessful quest by J.P.s to suppress unlicensed ale-houses was in part aimed at controlling these mobile masses, which might contain disaffected elements, separatists, itinerant preachers.[130]

Enclosure and drainage, like the "strategic hamlets" in South Vietnam, was a deliberate ploy to render this mobile, marginal population legible to the state and the landed classes who desired to extract a surplus from them with greater ease.[131]

The religious concepts of the superior classes were appropriated and recuperated by the lower classes even *within* the English Revolution. Although they made it clear they intended them to be of limited application ("When we mention the people…, we do not mean the confused promiscuous body of the people"), the ideas of popular sovereignty were originally used by the Presbyterian and Independent parties of the gentry to undermine the king's claim of divine right were quickly adapted by the lower classes—like Leveller agitators in the army and in London—for use

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127 *Ibid.*, p. 43.
128 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
129 *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
130 *Ibid.*, p. 49.
131 *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

against the gentry.[132] The myth of a pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon idyll, likewise used by the anti-royalist gentry for very limited purposes, was also used to much more radical effect by the lower orders.[133]

> The concept of social revolution also emerged in the forties and fifties, in Biblical phrases like 'the world turned upside down' and Ezekiel's 'overturn, overturn, overturn'. Thomas Manton in 1648 recognized that 'the levelling humour is no new thing in the Church of God', instancing the rising of Korah, Dathan and Abiram against Moses (Numbers XVI.3). 'Thus the wicked reason against God's ordinance', the Geneva margin commented on this passage. Quakers and William Aspinwall applied to their own activities the phrase 'the world turned upside down'. Such phrases normally sounded hostile in the mouths of the respectable. James I, for instance, had used 'leveller' in the sense of 'anti-monarchist'. Ballads on 'The World Turned Upside Down' depicted it as a nonsensical inversion of deferential normality. But George Wither saw Habakkuk and Ezekiel as predecessors of the Quakers.[134]

The Leveller Winstanley used the Biblical story of Esau and Jacob as a prooftext for agrarian reform:

> 'The earth', declared Winstanley, 'was never made by God that the younger brother should not live upon the earth unless he would work for and pay his elder brother rent for the earth.... England cannot be a free commonwealth till this bondage be taken away'. Monarchy and the House of Lords have been abolished: 'now step two steps further, and take away the power of lords of manors and of tithing priests'. Land is 'everyone's birthright' said Winstanley in *The Law of Freedom*.... 'Kingly government', under which the 'younger brother's creation birthright is taken from him, 'may well be called the government of highwaymen'. It 'makes one brother a lord and another a servant while they are in their mother's womb'. The doctrine of rewards and punishments after death is a way of terrifying the younger brother into letting go 'his hold in the earth' and submitting 'to be a slave to his brother for fear of damnation in hell after death'. Those who preach such doctrines aim only 'to hinder Christ from rising, and to keep Jacob under to make him a slave to the man of the flesh'.[135]

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132 *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
133 *Ibid.*, p. 66.
134 Hill, *The English Bible in the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, p. 201.
135 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

He was echoed by other Digger pamphleteers, like the author of this 1650 broadside in Buckinghamshire: "Cain is still alive in all great landlords.... The Lord hath set Cain's mark upon lords of manors for their oppressions, cheating and robbery'.[136] Radicals also made widespread use of Nimrod Ahab, Rehoboam, and other tyrants as types for all kings and landlords.[137]

The Lollard appropriation of concepts continued to resonate with radical movements into the 18th and 19th centuries. Many are familiar with the Jubilee reference ("Proclaim liberty throughout the land...") on the Liberty Bell. In the 19th century,

> 'Jubilee' was used by William Benbow for a national strike, 'a grand national holiday'. 'Sir William Courtenay', leader of 'the last agricultural labourers' rising' in 1838, told his followers that 'the great jubilee was to come, and we must be with 'em'.[138]

It's as good a time as any, here in the context of Christopher Hill, to remark on the imperative of avoiding condescension when comparing "religious" ideologies of liberation to the "scientific" or "politicial" ideologies of the post-Enlightenment era. James Scott, in the context of Zomian religion, argues against "exoticizing" prophetic rebellions and treating them as somehow less rational or otherwise fundamentally different in kind from Western revolutionary movements:

> ...virtually all popular struggles for power that today would qualify as "revolutionary" were, before the last quarter of the eighteenth century, generally understood in a religious idiom. Popular mass politics was religion, and religion was political. To paraphrase Marc Bloch, millennial revolt was as natural to the seigneurial (feudal) world as strikes, let us say, are to large-scale capitalism. Before the first two avowedly secular revolutions in North America and France in 1776 and 1789, virtually all mass political movements expressed their aspirations in religious terms. Ideas of justice and of rights and, indeed, what we might today call "class consciousness" were religiously phrased.[139]

> ...Commonly,   [prophetic]   movements   are   often   treated   as   a

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136 *Ibid.*, p. 210.
137 *Ibid.*, pp. 218-219.
138 Hill, *The English Bible in the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*, p. 167.
139 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 294.

phenomenon sui generis, a radical break with normal reasoning and action and therefore suggestive of a kind of collective derangement, if not psychopathology. This is unfortunate for two reasons. ...[I]t ignores the rich history of millenarian movements in the West that continue to this day. [140]

As Hill argued, newly literate or illiterate laborers, in the flourishing of debate after the lapse in censorship and the availability of cheap Bibles, were grappling seriously with social problems using the only conceptual tools at their disposal.

> Take a young Welshman like Arise Evans, who came to London in 1629. He tells us how his attitude towards the Bible changed in the decade before the Revolution. 'Afore I looked upon the Scripture as a history of things that passed in other countries, pertaining to other persons; but now I looked upon it as a mystery to be opened at this time, belonging also to us.' This attitude must have been shared by many of the victims of economic and political crisis who turned to the Bible for guidance in those perplexing years. The 1640s and 50s were indeed the great age of 'mechanick preachers'—laymen like Bunyan interpreting the Bible according to their untutored lights with all the confidence and excitement of a new discovery....
>
> The Bible was the accepted source of all true knowledge. Everybody cited its texts to prove an argument, including men like Hobbes and Winstanley, who *illustrated* from the Bible conclusions at which they had arrived by rational means. The difference in the case of simpler men like Arise Evans is that they believed the Bible to be divinely inspired, and applied its texts directly to problems of their own world and time, with no idea of the difficulties of translation, nor of the historical understanding required.... But these untrained minds included a George Fox and a John Bunyan. They were grappling with the problems of their society, problems which called urgently for solution, and they were using the best tools they knew of.[141]

The use of religious conceptual building blocks by revolutionary ideologies is not at all "primitive" or "irrational." The conceptual tools of both official state legitimizing ideologies and ideologies of rebellion were alike religious.

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140 *Ibid.*, p. 311.
141 Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 93-94.

Human beings use and adapt the conceptual tools that are available. Alchemy, for example, was a set of conceptual tools for explaining empirical observations and controlling the world. Consider how many of the founders of scientific method in the early modern period started out as alchemists.

Magic, likewise, is to a considerable extent a body of empirical, inductive observation and praxis using an alien (to most people reading this) conceptual vocabulary. Using "spiritual" terminology to denote the hypothetical mechanism behind observed phenomena is no more irrational than Greek physicians using the term "humors." In both cases, the chosen term was in effect assigned to a black box. Our very word "atom" was originally a metaphysical term adopted by Ionian philosophers, and only far later found to loosely correspond with the findings of modern experimental science. Even distinguishing Epicurus' "natural" atoms from a shaman's "supernatural" spirits is imposing an anachronistic distinction on people who were just trying to find patterns of regularity in observed reality.

In Poul Anderson's novel *Brain Wave*, life on Earth had evolved for millions of years as the planet passed through a vast energy field which slightly dampened electro-chemical activity like that of neurons. As the Earth passed out of this field, every species with a central nervous system experienced an abrupt increase in intelligence of several hundred percent. In one of his vignettes Wato, a West African shaman, spontaneously began reinventing Aristotle's Organon using conceptual building blocks from his own magical vocabulary: "—the law of similarity, that like causes like, may be expressed in the form ya or not-ya, thus showing that this form of magic obeys the rule of universal causality. But how to fit in the law of contagion —?"[142]

More recently, we see the same phenomenon—the drawing of ideological symbolism from a common cultural pool by contending class interests—in the American political struggles leading up to the Revolution. The Federalists, essentially a court party that wanted to replicate the Walpolean system without Britain, nevertheless used the symbolism of Anglo-Republicanism (Cato's Letters, Harrington, etc.) to buttress their arguments for a centralizing, aristocratic Constitution.

The Christianity of black slaves in the southern United States was

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142 Poul Anderson, *Brain Wave* (1954) <http://arthursbookshelf.com/sci-fi/anderson/poul%20anderson%20-%20brain%20wave.pdf>, p. 32.

essentially a millenarian, libertarian inversion of their masters' religion.

> Preachers with the interest of the masters at heart would emphasize New Testament passages about meekness, turning the other cheek, walking the extra mile, and texts like the following (from Ephesians 6:5-9), which, paraphrased, also appeared in a catechism for "Colored Persons": "Servant, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; not with eye service, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." In contrast to this plea for a sincere official transcript from slaves, the offstage Christianity… stressed the themes of deliverance and redemption, Moses and the Promised Land, the Egyptian captivity, and emancipation. The Land of Canaan, as Frederick Douglass noted, was taken to mean the North and freedom. When they could safely boycott or leave sermons that condemned theft, flight, negligent work, and insolence, the slaves did just that…. There is little doubt… that their religious beliefs were often a negation of the humility and forbearance preached to them by whites. Ex-slave Charles Ball noted that heaven for blacks was a place where they could be avenged of their enemies, and that the "cornerstone" of black religion was the "idea of a revolution in the conditions of the white and blacks."[143]

James Scott quotes an angry outburst by Aggy, a house slave, provoked by the master's beating of her daughter. "Thar's a day a-comin'!" she cried, a day of rumbling chariots, flashing guns, flowing blood and retribution for all the blows and humiliations inflicted by whites. Scott comments:

> What is particularly striking is that this is anything but an inchoate scream of rage; it is a finely drawn and highly visual image of an apocalypse, a day of revenge and triumph, a world turned upside down using the cultural raw materials of the white man's religion. Can we conceive of such an elaborate vision rising spontaneously to her lips without the beliefs and practice of slave Christianity having prepared the way carefully?[144]

Ideological Warfare: Lessons For Us. James Scott describes the general phenomenon as "symbolic jiujitsu." Prophetic rebellious movements in non-

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143 James Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 116-117.
144 *Ibid.*, p. 8.

state spaces "appropriate the power, magic, regalia, and institutional charisma of the valley state in a kind of symbolic jiujitsu in order to attack it."[145]

And symbolic jiujitsu has become especially important in the ideological wars of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Every major popular uprising against a pro-Soviet regime in Eastern Europe after World War II framed itself in Marxist ideological terms, and adopted basically libertarian communist organizational forms. The East Germans in 1953, Hungarians in 1956, Czechs in 1968 and Poles in 1981 organized workers' councils in the factories and put themselves forward as a socialist movement—a movement fighting for genuine workers' power over state and economy—contending against a state capitalist ruling class.

At Center for a Stateless Society, we make similar use of free market concepts as an ideological weapon against corporate power. Classical liberalism and classical political economy were originally, to a great extent, attacks on the established class interests of the Whig landed magnates and mercantilists of early industrial Britain. It was only after the rising industrial capitalists had won their victory over the older agrarian-mercantile capitalist establishment and established themselves as a part of the ruling class that "free market" ideology became a conservative apologetic for ruling class interests ("hired prize-fighters" and "vulgar political economists," in Marx's colorful terminology).

But even in the time since, there has never ceased to be a genuinely radical free market critique of capitalism. It has been expressed in the thought of Thomas Hodgskin, Herbert Spencer at his more radical, the American individualist anarchists (the "Boston Anarchists"), and Henry George and radical Georgist critics of capitalism like Bolton Hall, Franz Oppenheimer and Ralph Borsodi.

We at C4SS are very much in this tradition. One of the most powerful weapons against neoliberalism and corporate rule is to demonize big business interests in terms of their own "free market" rhetoric. Dean Baker does this regularly. Baker skewers the "free trade" rhetoric of Tom Friedman by pointing out the real mercantilist nature of phony "free trade agreements," in which so-called "intellectual property" plays the same

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145 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, p. 307.

protectionist role for transnational corporations as tariffs did for the old national industrial trusts. RFK Jr. regularly points out that all the "free market" rhetoric conceals a real-world practice of externalizing costs on the taxpayer. And we on the libertarian left, who really believe in free markets, are doing this kind of thing every day.

According to Bryan Register, "the maintenance of state power requires that the populace acquiesce in state actions. This requires the development of hegemony in civil society."[146]

One of the most powerful weapons in our arsenal is the ideology of the ruling class. Almost nothing is as brutally effective as contrasting the reality of their power to the pretensions of their legitimizing rhetoric.

> The cynicism of the taped Oval Office conversations in the Nixon White House was a devastating blow to the public transcript claim to legality and high mindedness. Similarly, the poorly concealed existence of special shops and hospitals for the party elites in the socialist bloc profoundly undercut the ruling party's public claim to rule on behalf of the working class.[147]

The most efficient system of power is one in which the actual exercise of power approaches most closely to invisibility. The ideal is for the system of power to appear to its subjects as little like a system of power at all—in the sense of a system requiring deliberate human design and intervention—but rather as spontaneous or natural. That's especially true of the traditional American ideology of "Free Enterprise," which—as Jurgen Habermas describes it—requires capitalism to appear to have an "unplanned, nature-like" character. This is undermined, in late capitalism, by the increased need for state involvement for the realization of capital to occur, and for state involvement to become progressively more direct and visible.

> To the extent that the class relationship itself has been repoliticized and the state has taken over market-replacing as well as market-supplementing tasks..., class domination can no longer take the anonymous form of the law of value. Instead, it now depends on factual constellations of power whether, and how, production of surplus value can be guaranteed through the public sector, and how the terms of the

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146 Bryan Register, "Class, Hegemony, and Ideology: A Libertarian Approach," POP Culture: Premises of Post-Objectivism (2001) <http://folk.uio.no/thomas/po/class-hegemony-ideology-lib.html>.
147 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, p. 11.

class compromise look. With this development, crisis tendencies shift, of course, from the economic into the administrative system.[148]

The more visible force becomes, the more the system is seen as an extension of the will of those who govern it, the more its legitimacy is undermined in the view of the public. And as James Scott notes, the more a system is compelled to resort to open force in order to secure obedience, rather than eliciting obedience as a response to a natural state of affairs, the less the values of the system are internalized—and hence the more dependent the system becomes on open coercion and intimidation for its stability.[149]

A system that depends on open shows of force or constant surveillance to coerce obedience from a population that does not recognize its legitimacy is an extremely costly and inefficient system. That's why slavery was such an inefficient method for extracting surplus labor. In the American south, "the semiclandestine culture of the slaves encouraged and celebrated theft from the masters and morally reproved any slave who would dare expose such a theft...."[150]

And when such deligitimization and consequent increased need for surveillance is *combined with* increased opacity to surveillance, the situation for the ruling class becomes *very dangerous indeed*.

When the legitimating ideology serves to maintain ruling class morale and *espirit de corps*, such contrast may undermine their own cohesion. Vinay Gupta has argued that the capitalist security state cannot afford to be honest with itself—to operate in the full knowledge of what its real goals are —because the true nature of those goals is too abhorrent. As a result, most subordinates within the state repression apparatus operate with the protective blinders of cognitive dissonance, relying on official doctrines about promoting "peace and freedom" around the world to conceal the truth of enforcing global corporate rule through drone assassinations, repressive states and death squads. An evil cause will be weakened by cognitive dissonance among its functionaries.

By stripping away this protective cover, and confronting lower-level state functionaries with the real nature of the system of power they serve, we

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148 Jurgen Habermas, *Legitimation Crisis* (Polity Press, 1988), p. 68.
149 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, pp. 109-110.
150 *Ibid.*, p. 188.

can undermine the security state's morale and cohesion.

The Bolshevik victory in Petrograd was sealed when the Winter Palace Guards defected. Throughout its history, the U.S. military has been plagued by soldiers firing over the heads of their enemies. Even firing squads must be issued one blank round so each member can reassure himself it wasn't him that killed the prisoner.This isn't just history. As you may recall, a fairly large number of NYPD officers called in sick on the day "Bloomberg's army" shut down the Zuccotti Park encampment. We see a proliferation of groups like Oath-Keepers and Occupy Police whose members are clearly less than single-minded in their allegiance to the regime.

Our side can make use of our full potential because we can trust our members to use their own judgment without permission. We can act with our eyes open and in full awareness of the real situation, because we are not serving an evil cause that requires us to conceal the truth from ourselves. Our enemies, on the other hand, cannot. Let's exploit these advantages for all they're worth. To quote Gupta:

> The implication is that a moral side – even a smaller one – could out-compete the Great Powers because moral ground = intellectual clarity. The strategic advantage of a moral war is the ability to think clearly about the ends required to meet a genuinely justified end....

> This is important, even though it seems simple, because it's a *moral asymmetry in warfare* – it's a reason to believe the good guys do win. In a conflict, the side which can bear to define it's goals clearly can then plot a strategy to attain them. It can win. You can't win a war who's purpose you cannot bear to define: the Americans in Iraq defined fighting with their eyes closed: empire narrative.[151]

If anything, the official ideology is probably more important in justifying the ruling class's power in its own eyes than in those of the ruled. Scott refers favorably to arguments that

> the ideological effect of Catholicism was... to help unify the feudal ruling class, define its purpose, and create a family mortality [sic] that would hold property together....

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151 Kevin Carson, "Vinay Gupta: The Authoritarian Cause Will Be Defeated by Its Own Cognitive Dissonance," *P2P Foundation Blog*, January 17, 2012 <http://blog.p2pfoundation.net/vinay-gupta-the-authoritarian-cause-will-be-defeated-by-its-own-cognitive-dissonance/2012/01/17>.

The importance of the dominant ideology and its manifestations for the elite would surely help explain political ceremony that is not even intended for nonelite consumption.[152]

Appendix: The Axial Period

Karl Jaspers coined the term "Axial Age" to describe a widespread, fundamental shift in ethical values that occurred in a number of societies in the mid-1st millennium BCE. It included the rise of Greek philosophy, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and the prophetic movement of Judah and Israel. All these developments were characterized by a shift from aristocratic values to democratic and universal ones that applied equally to all human beings regardless of social status.

It essentially overlapped with what Nietzsche called the "slave revolt in morality" in *The Genealogy of Morals*. For Nietzsche, the essence of this "slave revolt" was a shift from values based on "High" and "Low" or "Good" and "Bad" (with "good" being defined largely in terms of aristocratic values) to values based on "Good" and "Evil" (with both good and evil being universal moral values of justice by which the high could be judged for their treatment of the low).

This shift was in many cases was accompanied by a shift in the view of the afterlife, typified by that within the Jewish prophetic movement. In the older understanding, for the vast majority of human beings the afterlife was synonymous with the grave (e.g. Hebrew Sheol and Greek Hades), a "land of dust and darkness" in the words of the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, in which human souls survived only as dim shades with no memories of their lives on Earth. Paradise was the habitation only of the blessed gods, accompanied— perhaps—by a handful of human beings who had somehow earned the privilege of dwelling with the gods by some extraordinary feat of heroism or renown. In other words, the afterlife was reserved exclusively for the High. The Axial Age religions, on the other hand, took a much more democratic view of the afterlife. In place of Paradise and Hades, there were Heaven and Hell—places of reward and punishment, respectively—and the entire human race was to be assigned to one or the other after death, based not on social status or aristocratic standards of heroism but on moral character.

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152 Scott, *Domination and the Art of Resistance*, pp. 68-69.

Both the Axial Age and "slave revolt in morality" coincide to some extent with the phase transition, in Eric Voegelin's schema (presented in the multi-volume *Order and History* series), from cosmological civilizations to universal moralities.

Examples of cosmological civilizations, in Voegelin's framework, were the early civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, China and Mesoamerica. The universal moralities that succeeded them—Greek philosophy and post-Exilic prophets—were largely the same as Jaspers' Axial Age exemplars.

The morality of a cosmological civilization is authoritarian: "as above, so below." The arrangement of hierarchical authority on earth—the order of king, priests and nobles—is a mirror of the order of Heaven (the pantheon of gods under some chief god). And, as observed by Voegelin, the universal religions or ideologies tend to be associated with the idea of history. Cosmological civilizations are static or cyclical, with the human order mirroring the cosmic order of recurring seasons.

In particular the Jewish prophetic movement, and the Deuteronomic school of history which edited the books of Deuteronomy through Kings into their final form, saw Israel as having been called out "from among the nations," out of the "flesh pots of Egypt," into a special relationship with a transcendent God. For them history was a linear process, in relation to a transcendent God, culminating in some sort of fulfillment.

The royal Davidic ideology of the early monarchy, found in its most undiluted form in the Psalms, is a classical cosmological system, with symbolism comparable to that of other societies in the fertile crescent. The first god defeats the primeval chaos (represented by a serpent, a dragon, or the waters), sires a pantheon of gods, founds a heavenly dynasty, and creates the universe and humanity. Then kingship descends among men, reproducing the heavenly order on earth. And from that point the human order, once established, follows a static course of perfection modeled on the heavenly order.

The Davidic ideology, to a large extent, was an exercise in reimposing a conventional structure on the liberatory religion of the Israelite "Zomians," which was an egalitarian religion of runaway serfs and slaves. The older themes, still preserved in bits and pieces in such forms as the Mosaic Law's Jubilee year, provided raw material for the later prophetic movement, which

—coinciding with the Axial Period—juxtaposed a universalistic moral religion against the older David interpretation of Judaism. Hence the condemnation of land enclosure by the prophets, like Isaiah in this passage: "Woe unto them who join house to house, who lay field to field, till there is no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth!" (Isaiah 5:8)

The Hebrew prophets of the exilic and post-exilic period—one of Jaspers' chief examples of the Axial movement, along with Greek philosophy, Zoroastrianism and Buddhism—replaced this cosmological ideology with the idea of human history as something linear, with a beginning and an end, something subject to time under the transcendent rule of God and proceeding toward some final goal. The surviving remnants of the earlier cosmological civilization only show through here and there, in a Bible almost completely reworked by redactors from the prophetic movement.

The cosmological religion of the early Israelite monarchy, like the neighboring civilization of Mesopotamia, was thoroughly aristocratic. There was a Paradise, inhabited by Yahweh and his pantheon, and—at best—a handful of kings and heroes like Enoch and Elijah who had been caught up alive into Paradise. And then there was Sheol where the entire human race was destined to go. In their place the prophetic religion created Heaven and Hell, both of them open to both high and low, depending on their adherence to ethical norms.

The slave revolt in morality was frequently associated with dying god cults (Dumuzi, Osiris and Dionysos, as well as Christ) in which the god descended into human form, experienced the suffering of humanity, died a horrific death and was resurrected—in the process redeeming the poor and weak and elevating them to his level. The apotheosis of this egalitarian dying god was "Christ, and him crucified," with the "scandal of the Cross" juxtaposed against the Olympian gods—lounging about, fornicating, and drinking nectar.

When combined with the idea of history, as in the Jewish prophetic tradition and Christianity, the messianic idea led to apocalyptic visions in which history culminated in a New Heaven and a New Earth, transformed to reflect transcendent ideals of justice.

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