MECHANISTIC INDIVIDUALISM VERSUS ORGANISMIC TOTALITARIANISM: TOWARD A NEO-CALVINIST PERSPECTIVE

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why the Study of Individualism and Totalitarianism Has Relevance for URAM Studies

The extremes of social thinking, individualism and totalitarianism, each bases itself on some idea of ultimate reality: individualism is associated with a mechanistic picture of the universe as applied to social life, and totalitarianism with an organismic picture of the universe. Such pictures become or are world views which determine and give meaning to the behaviour of persons toward aspects of the world interpreted in terms of these pictures. In other words, these pictures determine what reality 'in essence' is, in totality and in detail, even when the picture itself is acknowledged to be a metaphor.

It seems as if human beings, as beings with self-consciousness, continually return to the question of 'the meaning of life'. Why do I live at all? Why shouldn't we all commit suicide? Who am I with regard to other self-conscious beings? Why expect different behaviour from me than from lions? Pictures of the universe play an orientating role with regard to such questions: they provide metaphorical explanations of 'macrocosmic' patterns; they also provide maps which guide human beings through life, and relate the individual human being to other possible beings, giving humankind a status and some aims. They can also serve to explain the peculiarities of social structures and the relationship of the individual toward them.

1.2 Organismic and Mechanistic Pictures of the Universe

Although one can possibly picture the universe in an infinite number of ways, two pictures have dominated Western thought: an ancient one, according to which the universe
is a living being (the organismic picture); and a modern one, dating from the seventeenth century, which views the universe as a machine (the mechanistic one).

Ancient people had no other way of explaining the movements of heavenly bodies than by modelling them according to self-moving things from within their horizon of experience, i.e., living things, especially human beings. The universe thus came to be viewed as an eternal, and therefore divine, living being, populated by smaller living beings, some eternal (the heavenly bodies; the 'spirits'), some mortal or partially mortal (human beings, animals, plants; cf. Venter, 1996).

It was only after the advent of apparently lifeless robots that Western man could conceive of the dynamics of the universe in terms of a different metaphor, namely that of an automaton, with a creator god as its engineer and maintenance mechanic (Venter, 1992a, pp. 190–198; cf. also Hooykaas, 1972, pp. 61 ff; Dijksterhuis, 1950).

From a physical point of view the pictures have been functioning as models, in the sense that they are explanatory metaphorical standardizations (Santema, 1978, pp. 2–26) which serve as frames of reference for the understanding of the physical interrelationships in the universe at large. Both pictures, however, have also been functioning as suggestive metaphors, life maps and compasses, which guide individual and social praxis. They have, therefore, in fact become life-and-world views, which determine norms, values, and the structuring of social relationships, as Santema has also noticed (Ibid., 1978, 7ff). One could even say that from a scholarly point of view, they provided (seemingly) successful ways of explanation, prediction, and the determination of regularities with implicit world views, and have therefore shown the characteristics of what Kuhn called a ‘paradigm’, some of which he later included under ‘disciplinary matrix’ (Kuhn, 1975, 174ff).

It is not always easy to determine whether, for any specific adherent, the particular picture adopted functioned as only a metaphor through which the world is made intelligible and meaningful, or whether the world is supposed to be a real living organism or a real machine. There may be more mechanistic thinkers who believed their descriptions of the world (as ‘machine’, ‘mechanism’, ‘equilibrium’) to be only metaphors, while more organismal thinkers may have believed their metaphors (‘organism’, ‘organ’, ‘alive’, ‘growing’) to be factual descriptions (i.e., that the world is ‘really’ a living being). For the sake of my argument, it does not matter much whether the adherent thinks the world to be ‘really’ a machine/organism, or only ‘similar to’ an organism/machine. Once a picture functions as a life-and-world view, it provides a kind of ‘deeper understanding’ of the world, a meaning content to our behaviour (whether contemplative or active), an ‘ought’, which induces us to relate to the world as if it really ‘is’ a machine or an organism. Thus the picture itself becomes an ultimate reality, a design which is (or pretends to be) simultaneously a picture and a structuring of reality.

The two world pictures consciously or unconsciously amount to a total design of reality, and they can therefore lead to a confusion of picture (metaphor, subjective construct) with reality, in the sense that they function as hermeneutic-heuristic outlines for the (re-) construction of reality.

Although he limited his critique to the subjective rationalism of Modernity, Heidegger saw this when he stated:
Where the world becomes picture, that-which-is in its totality is determined as the intended-by-man, which he therefore accordingly wants to bring before himself, and have in front of him, and set before him. World picture (Weltbild), essentially understood, therefore does not mean a picture of the world, but the world understood as picture. That-which-is in its totality is understood in this context such that it is just and only that-which-is in as far as it has been set by the representing, re-establishing human beings. When we arrive at a world picture, an essential decision about that-which-is in its totality is executed. The being of that-which-is is sought and found in its being-represented (Heidegger, 1938, pp. 82-83, my translation - JJV; cf. also Venter, 1995, 179-190).

Keeping Heidegger in mind, world pictures could be criticised on two counts: first, on their being reductionistic constructs of total reality, and, second, on their normative social implications. I shall focus on the second, thereby tackling the metaphor from the angle of its constructed reality.

### 1.3 World Pictures as Social Models

The weakness and strengths of each of the two dominant world pictures, as social models or standards of explanation and behaviour are important and should be considered carefully. I shall take issue with the way in which these world pictures, transformed into or functioning as world views, construct (social) reality in their own terms, and the ways in which both of them determine an intellectual leadership’s thinking, and function as directive forces which cause pain and suffering. Given the fact that such world pictures vacillate in their roles from analogies (pictorial descriptions), and standards (models) of reality, to determinants of thought (paradigms or disciplinary matrices) (cf. Santema, 1978, pp. 1-26; Botha, 1986, pp. 374-383; 1992, pp. 78-115) my use of terms will move among these possibilities, as suits the context. My focus will be on the social philosophies suggested by and constructed on the basis of these world pictures.

### 2. The Picture of a Social Structure as an Organism

An organic world picture suggests a holistic view of the internal relationships between entities: i.e., it tends to view individuals as parts of a larger whole, on which they are fully dependent for their life and well-being, in the same way that an organ or a member is dependent upon the living body of which it is a part. It cannot be taken out, exchanged or replaced at will. This suggests, therefore, that the individual is part of smaller social structures, which in turn are parts of larger ones, and that the larger ones (usually ‘states’), have rightful domination over the smaller ones. It may even suggest that an elite leadership with some special and hidden relationship to the whole rightfully occupies political power positions.

On this hypothesis, the conception of the material universe as a living being in Plato’s Timaeus provides some explanation of his totalitarian views in the Republic. Not only does he view the individual, in a certain sense, as a smaller replica of the state, but he proposes totalitarian control over religion (i.e., poetry), family life, expression, and social status by a quasi-occult communist elite. He tends to view social formations which are not related to the state, such as economic production units, religious institu-
tions, family life, and the arts, as simply parts of the political whole, to be subjected to
the normative insights of an intellectual elite. This view is still reflected in some mod­
er, 'neo-platonist', organic, political philosophies such as Fichte's.

2.1 Hobbes
Hobbes provides one of the most interesting organic approaches to questions of social
structure. What makes his viewpoint interesting has to do with its inconsistency, as well
as its explicit treatment of the relationship between 'smaller' social institutions and the
state as one of 'part' versus 'whole'.

Inconsistency emerges with his mechanistic explanation of the state of nature. Hob­
bes analyses civil society using the key anthropomorphic metaphors of the 'general
will' and 'civil person':

Now union thus made is called ... a civil person. For when there is one will of all men, it
is to be esteemed for one person; and by the word one, it is to be known and distinguished
from all particular men, as having its own rights and properties. Insomuch as neither any
one citizen, nor all of them together ... is to be accounted the city. A city therefore ... is
one person, whose will by the compact of many men, is to be received for the will of
them all; so as he may use all the power and faculties of each particular person to the
maintenance of peace, and for common defence (Hobbes, 1972a, p. 170).

The change of metaphors (projected as a change from theory to practice) is not inno­
cent. Hobbes wrote The Citizen earlier than was planned in order to influence the
debate on 'the rights of dominion and the obedience due from subjects', and to encour­
age citizens not to disturb the peace of that institution aimed at their preservation (Ibid.,
p. 103). He summarily rejected, as partial views of interest groups, the criticism that he
had allocated too much power to civil authorities, thereby taking away liberty of con­
science, and setting princes above the law (Ibid., p. 105). He proved keen to show that
the dictates of right reason, as expressed in the law of the land, actually expressed the
law of God, and were therefore in harmony with Christianity, thus neutralizing the pos­
sibility that Christians might be more obedient to God than to their government.

The metaphor is elaborated: the supreme power is like the soul, where the will has its
seat, while the council is like the head (Ibid., p. 188). Totalitarian consequences are
drawn from it: other civil persons, like merchant companies, are subject to the will of
the city, which is supreme; the laws of the land provide the correct interpretation of
rational religion. The supreme power is above the law, absolute, and cannot be dis­
solved by those who have brought it into being. To it belongs the sword of justice, as
well as of war, the legislative power, the judiciary, the naming of magistrates, and the
censure of doctrine (Ibid., p. 173). Whatever Hobbes' motives may have been, the
basic metaphor of the state as a single living person is used as the foundational 'argu­
ment' for an all-encompassing and overriding state power.

2.2 Rousseau
In his Discourse on Political Economy, Jean-Jacques Rousseau used a variety of meta-
phors from the physiological world in his analysis of government, with the same result as Hobbes. The (living machine) body politic has the sovereign as ‘head’, laws and customs as ‘brain’, commerce and industry and agriculture as ‘mouth’ and ‘stomach’, public income as ‘blood’, economy as ‘heart’, and citizens as ‘body’ and ‘members’. But it is also a moral being, possessed of a (general) will, which is the source of laws constituting justice. (Rousseau, 1916a, pp. 252–4). Rousseau anticipates Mussolini’s doctrine that the state makes the people; in fact, virtue is nothing more than the conformity of all particular wills to the general will (Ibid., pp. 259–60). In virtuous people the heroic passion of patriotism has been made subservient to public reason, and the citizens have become accustomed to viewing their ‘individuality only in its relation to the body of the state ... and to be aware of their own existence merely as part of the state’ (Ibid., 268). The state as permanent entity has the right to usurp the educational rights of the transitory institution, the family (Ibid., pp. 269), as well as to intervene in the economy, with the aim either to maintain or change property distribution (272–3).

These draconian government powers are founded on a totalitarian view of the sovereign and the constitution, as described in the Social Contract. Morality is founded in law, which implies that the state has the right to uphold morality by censorship thereby preventing the corruption of public opinion (Rousseau, 1916b, IV, vii). Rousseau wanted a civil religion based on the model of ancient pagan state religions with continued adherence enforced by the threat of capital punishment, and he rejected any claim of Christianity to fulfill this role, supposing it to be a form of spiritual slavery which would leave the state without defence and divide the loyalty of the citizen between the priest and the sovereign (ibid., p. viii). These autocratic practices were directly related to Rousseau’s basic zoetic picture of the state painted in Hobbesian colours:

Each of us puts his person and all his power in common under the supreme direction of the general will, and, in our corporate capacity, we receive each member as an invisible part of the whole. At once, in place of the individual personality of each contracting party, this act of association creates a moral and collective body, composed of as many members as the assembly contains votes, and receiving from this act its unity, its common identity, its life and its will (Rousseau, 1916b, p. 15).

2.3 Fascism
Since the Enlightenment, reality has become, first of all, focussed in man (man as the telos of the universe, according to Kant) and thus reality and history have become one. A living universe in this case is a homocentric universe. In the second place, since ancient times, the organismal world picture showed a tendency toward pantheism even in quasi-theistic philosophical systems like neoplatonism. This was associated with magic: being alive usually meant being ‘spiritual’, ‘divine’ or ‘demonic’, at least to some degree. Gradations of spirituality implied a hierarchy, which, on a social level, led to elitism, whether of a religious (esoteric), political (aristocratic), or gender (chauvinistic) nature. This whole cluster of ideas around the organismic picture can serve to explain, to some extent at least, the success of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes in the twentieth century.
Mussolini, interpreting Bergson’s organic approach, stressed that the conception of the state as a philosophy of life is directly associated with a biotic conception of the world (Mussolini, 1935, 7–8). The state is ‘divine’, spiritual, transcends space and time, is universal, national, permanent and moral. The materially physical is individual, transitory, subject to natural law, egocentric, and short-lived. Life finds its true expression only in the state, which is, at once, conscience, consciousness, and general will. It creates the nation (Ibid., pp. 9–12). Thus, the fascist state assumes full control of the heart of the citizen:

Fascism, in short, is not a law-giver and a founder of institutions, but an educator and a promoter of spiritual life. It aims at refashioning not only the forms of life but their content—man, his character, and his faith. To achieve this purpose it enforces discipline and uses authority, entering into the soul and ruling with undisputed sway (Ibid., p. 14).

D.H. Lawrence shared both this world picture and its widest consequences with Mussolini. Mysticism, occultism, elitism, racism, and ethnocentricism are all expressions of his pantheism in the novel, *The Plumed Serpent*. Aristocratic man, rooted in the living motherly earth with the fatherly, invisible, black sun behind the yellow sun, is here presented as divine ruler of his fellow human beings. He combines spiritualist mysticism with a ‘blood-and-soil’ ideology (Venter, 1996).

Attention may also be drawn to the theosophic origins of German Nazism which showed the same basic tendencies. This is evident, for example, in the thought of Lanz, who is supposed to have influenced Hitler (Tresmontant, 1991, pp. 268 ff).

The broad outlines of these ideologies are summarized as follows by Sternhell:

The essential element here is the linking of the human soul with its natural surroundings, with the ‘essence’ of nature, that the real and important truths are to be found beneath surface appearances. According to many Völkisch theorists, the nature of the soul of the *Volk* is determined by the nature of the landscape. Thus, the Jews, being a desert people, are regarded as shallow and dry people, devoid of profundity and totally lacking in creativity. . . . The self-same themes are to be met in the nationalist ideology of France: the Frenchman, nurtured by his soil and his dead, cannot escape the destiny shaped for him by past generations, by the landscapes of his childhood, the blood of his forebears. The nation is a living organism, and nationalism is therefore an ethic, comprising all the criteria of behaviour which the common interest calls for, and on which the will of the individual has no bearing. The duty of the individual and of society is to find out what this ethic may be, yet only those can succeed who have a share in the ‘national consciousness’... (Sternhell, 1979, pp. 337–8; italics mine—JJV).

Heidegger’s sympathies with Nazism were probably based on a shared world-picture. In his attempt to develop a pre-Christian philosophy, he embarked on a ‘neoplatonist’ search for the primitive ground of being, which finds expression in authentic existence. This search excluded the idea of a transcendent creator god from his seminarian days (Tresmontant, 1991, 460 ff.). Thus all being can be conceived of as satu-
rated with the 'divine' ground, which may be subject to forgetfulness, and therefore imposes the calling to search for it while 'remaining' where you 'are'. In his later works he identified 'essence' or 'identity', expressed in language, as this 'ground', because language constitutes the archaic word which unifies the world quaternity: heaven versus earth and divine versus mortal. The physical aspect (sound, mouth, body) of the expression of the archaic word through man, was not conceived of in terms of the meaning-sound dualism, but is considered as essential component of language, through which we are bound to region and earth:

In the tongue (dialect) every different landscape and therefore the earth speaks. The mouth is not simply a kind of organ in the body represented as organism, but body and mouth belong in the stream and growth of the earth, in which we, the mortals, flourish, from which we receive the thoroughness of a rootedness in soil. Together with the earth we also certainly loose the rootedness in soil (Heidegger, 1959, p. 205; my translation and italics - JJV).

2.4 South Africa
South African leaders, such as H.F. Verwoerd (murdered prime minister and 'architect' of apartheid), N. Diederichs (former minister of finance and state president), P.J. Meyer (who headed the South African Broadcasting Corporation), and some others who became influential professors in the social sciences in Afrikaans universities, studied in Germany during the Weimar era, where they imbibed the organismic pantheism of German nationalism, philosophically rooted in Fichte, Herder, Schelling and Boehme, and developed social theories in which the ethnic nation ('volk') was exalted as the organic unit through which institutions and individuals become human and receive their meaning (Morphew, 1989, pp. 63–80). The dispensation which they had in mind for South Africa followed this basic tenet to its ultimate consequences: every ethnic nation had to have its own piece of land, governed by its own people, and its own institutions, which could only thrive within the ambit of such nationhood. This was the rationale for the establishment of ethnic universities and schools; the banning of mixed-race marriages, and the homelands. 'Volk' and state more or less coincided, and totalitarian 'volk' became totalitarian state.

2.5 Totalitarian Consequences of the Organismic Picture
The thematic similarities among the twentieth century authors are clear. They tend to relate human beings to one another in terms of organically conceived social institutions such as the 'nation', the 'state', and the 'volk'. In this respect they continue the basic approaches of Hobbes' and Rousseau's organismic metaphor of the society, and the totalitarian consequences are undeniable. Twentieth century authors, however, go further, or rather, revive ancient mythological modes of thought such as the rootedness in a motherly earth, the blood-and-spiritual bond with the forebears, and elitism based in the 'occult' capabilities of the aristocracy. These are all reminiscent not only of Greek organismic thinking, but also of pre-Hellenic Egyptian and Babylonian 'political' theogonies.
3. INDIVIDUALS AS PARTS OF MACHINES

The mechanistic world picture initially served to explain the dynamics of the physical universe on the basis of a cultural product, the machine. Very soon, however, the picture was transferred to other areas: first, to explain physiological processes, and, later, social processes (Venter, 1992a, pp. 191-8). This world picture significantly differed from the organismic one in its suggestions with regard to the part-whole relationship: with relative ease the parts of a machine can be removed, repaired, replaced, or used as spare parts for other machines. The second metaphor thus suggested a relative independence of the part from the whole as compared to an organ or member in the organismic picture, and an all-embracing view of the whole as a collectivity, especially when it concerned social institutions. God can be viewed as both engineer and mechanic in Christian terms, or as only the engineer in Deism.

After the initial metaphor had been articulated, the clock was replaced by the Newtonian concept of gravitational equilibrium, a process-feature which could be introduced into the picture. ‘Machines’ could now be seen both as aggregates of balancing and dislocating forces. This disclosed important possibilities for describing the history of reality and the body politic in the eighteenth century. Autonomous individual citizens each took care of his or her own interest, while the aggregate still functioned according to strict natural laws of progress by virtue of a competition tending towards equilibrium.

3.1 Hobbes

Hobbes (1588–1679) was too early to profit from a metaphorising of Newton’s (1642–1727) theory of gravitation (published 1687) for his mechanistic explanation of the state of nature. In spite of his organismic picture of the civil state, his conclusions about the state of nature are the results of an analysis of the civil state as an existing whole, viewed as a ‘watch or some such small engine’ to be taken apart (Hobbes, 1972a, p. 99). This discrepancy can probably be explained by his motive of instilling obedience in rebellious citizens by providing scientifically indisputable arguments proving (Venter, 1994, pp. 37-41) the horrors of living in a state of nature in comparison to the security provided by the civil state (Hobbes, 1972b, pp. 41–2).

This mechanistic and metaphorical dissolving of the whole into its generative constituent parts produced a picture of the state of nature in which individuals, who were equal in right to everything, followed their conflicting appetites rather than reason. They strove, as well, for self-preservation, and were in constant competition or conflict with one another. But these premises also necessarily implied that such individuals would move into a civil state by contract aimed at self-preservation through the formation of alliances (Ibid., pp. 115–8). The compact being made, a living being, the body politic, came into being, with all the totalitarian consequences that followed. The alternatives, therefore, were the following: either bellum omnium contra omnes (war of all against all), or a totalitarian and authoritarian security state. The first disjunct was supposed to eliminate itself, but could reappear if citizens become disobedient.
3.2 Bernard Mandeville (1670–1733) and Adam Smith (1723–1790)

Bernard Mandeville transformed civil society itself into the Hobbesian state of nature, suggesting that society flourished as a result of egoism (including crime), and that intervention, even in the form of charitable schooling of children, would be detrimental to its well-being.

It was probably Adam Smith who first saw the applicability of the equilibrium metaphor to the human mind (Smith, 1980), moral life (Ibid., 1976), and economic processes (Ibid., 1950). Both Adam Smith and Immanuel Kant shuttled between the organismic and the mechanistic world pictures. They could not afford to finally let go of the former, but they shared the Enlightenment’s faith in progress. For this reason they presupposed a homocentric teleology of nature, which worked in and through man, and used as its instrument the supposedly mechanical process of competition amongst individuals and groups. The second metaphor became the dominant one, for ‘God’s’ teleology can only be approached through the analysis of human efficient causality, taken here in a fairly literal mechanistic sense.

Smith viewed all social relationships in terms of the market as model or standard. This presupposed that the individual human naturally related to others in a contractual (bartering) way:

Society may subsist among men, as among different merchants, from a sense of its utility, without any mutual love and affection; and though no man in it be bound in gratitude to any other, it may still be upheld by a mercenary exchange of good offices according to an agreed valuation (Ibid., p. 86).

But such a utility-based social order was ‘futuristic’ in Smith’s view, since utility could only be recognized by a mature, rational, humanity. For the time being humankind was still in the emulation phase, in which the passion for outshining others was dominant (Ibid., p. 16, pp. 41ff, pp. 114ff, pp. 145ff). But even in the passionate emulation phase, progress was served by self-interest, ‘intuited’ by a hedonistically conceived sense of agreeability or disagreeableness. In the face of Mandeville’s cynical acceptance of self-interest, Smith elevated it to the motor of welfare, at a level situated somewhere between the social and the unsocial passions. Self-interest was moderated by the judgment of the impartial spectator who was supposedly objective and who executed judgement under the guidance of agreeability, according to the rules of prudence (long-term self-interest) and justice (social interest). In this way Smith hoped to avoid conventionalism (accepting that the individual becomes a moral creature only through society), as well as arbitrary, individualistic sentimentalism (Ibid., pp. 130–150).

In the context of economics, Smith determined the basis of self-interest by the Enlightenment historiographical method of retrospective extrapolation based on the law of progress, and by extrapolating to what man ‘originally’ (or ‘naturally’) was: a farming barterer who owns the full product of his labour. The amount of labour time invested in a product will therefore form the basis of bartering negotiations; historical developments added the rent price of land and the profits of stock to this base (Ibid., 1950, 49–50). Individuals therefore in this ‘original’ sense took care of their own inter-
ests in terms of the value of their labour, and this provided the balancing forces which would move the market price in the direction of the 'natural' (equilibrium) price:

The natural price, therefore, is, as it were, the central price, to which the prices of commodities are continually gravitating. Different accidents may sometimes keep them suspended a good deal above it, and sometimes force them down even somewhat below it. But whatever may be the obstacles which hinder them from settling in this centre of repose and continuance, they are constantly tending towards it (ibid., 1950, p. 60; my italics).

Smith was as devoted to contract social theory as Hobbes and Rousseau; yet his view of society as a totality differed radically from theirs. The market metaphor, which for him was probably more than a metaphor, implied that society was in a process of continuously contracting individuals. The state was relegated to the status of a protective framework for this process.

3.3 Kant
Kant used metaphors reminiscent of those of Adam Smith in his analysis of historical social formations under the guidance of the teleology of nature. Using the same retrospective extrapolation method, he uncovered the development of reason as freedom in the individual (Kant, 1975a; cf. also Venter, 1992b, 33–8), which practically meant a quasi-Hobbesian natural state of unsociability (Kant, 1975b, pp. 38–40). Conflict and competition were, as in Hobbes, the forces which necessitated the establishment of human communities, and, in the end, of a world community or league of nations in which rationality and eternal peace would reign. Kant’s view of social history was an explicit formulation of the doctrine of the balance of power, starting with autonomous individuals, through smaller communities and national states, to end up with the league of nations:

All wars are, therefore, so many attempts (truly not in the intentions of the people but in those of nature), to establish new relationships among states ... until in the end, in part by the structuring of the best possible legal order, in part by communal external agreement and legislation, a situation is established which maintains itself analogously to civil society, just like an automaton. The barbarous freedom of the already established states ... necessitates that our species find, in addition to the in itself salutary resistance of many states, a law of equilibrium ... (Kant, 1975b, p. 44).

‘Automaton’ here takes the function of a model or a pictorial standard; but this is a strongly representative model, intended to express what, for Kant, was an undeniable reality: history is subject to mechanical, causal laws.

3.4 Malthus (1766–1834), Ricardo (1772–1823), and Darwin 1809–1882
The views regarding society of Malthus, Ricardo, and Darwin followed the same metaphorical pattern, based on the same mechanistic picture of the world (cf. Venter, 1994,
Darwin transferred the competition-equilibrium matrix, implied in the metaphor of 'natural selection' (and he explicitly acknowledges it to be a metaphor), to the study of nature in *The Origin of the Species* (Young, 1988; Venter, 1996, pp. 13ff). He also used this metaphor in a normative sense, as a policy proposal regarding human population development, opposing family planning schemes, so as to ensure the continued progress of humankind through the competition of individuals. For the moral and legal sphere, however, he moderated the demands of health and vigour in the individual (*vis à vis* social well-being), by presupposing another balancing process, namely that between altruistic and egocentric instincts (Darwin, 1906, 194, 945–6). He thus avoided the 'social Darwinist' consequence of summarily characterizing the competitively successful as the 'civilized', 'hard-working', or 'morally good' (as was done by Sumner, 1934).

One should not arbitrarily conclude that all of these thinkers were in fact insensitive to the 'immoral' and/or 'anarchic' implications of the egocentric individualism they were preaching. They rather trusted the automatism of the equilibrium process to take care of the interests of 'justice', 'sobriety', and 'honesty' on the basis of real 'merit'.

3.5 Neo-Classical Economics and Monetarism

These innovations have not totally eliminated the competition-equilibrium matrix from the realm of economics. In New Classical economics and in Monetarism it still holds sway.

To keep the competition-equilibrium structure workable as a standard approach which was supposed to provide economists with predictive laws, some very 'unrealistic' assumptions had to be made, such as the availability of perfect information (on costs, tastes, alternatives for both producers and consumers), perfect competition, and a perfect market. As irrationalism grew and the organismic picture regained some foothold, these assumptions have been challenged in different ways.

In Keynesian economics uncertainty plays a pivotal role, and therefore the expectation of equilibrium becomes problematic (Keynes, 1936; Torr, 1988, pp. 39–50). And, according to Von Hayek, the assumptions express no more than the *à priori* possibilities open to an individual in the market; it provided no analysis of real competition processes, which were clouded by uncertainty, and, at most, tended to coordinate the economic and social actions of individuals. Von Hayek, however, retained the market metaphor for all of society in terms of a 'methodological' (i.e., not: ontological) individualism, according to which the market functioned as a hermeneutical process (cf. Von Hayek, 1949, pp. 33–54; 93 ff; Venter, 1996, pp. 27ff).

In Friedman's version of Monetarism, general equilibrium analysis is partitioned into different analyses of specific problems, while the New Classicals tend to believe that everything depends on everything, and that therefore the partitioning of problems is invalid. They share, however, the basic tenets that economic agents are, to the limits of their information, consistent and successful optimizers insofar as they make the most of their opportunities and are therefore in equilibrium; and that agents hold rational expec-
tations (i.e., they make no systematic errors in evaluating the economic environment, Hoover, 1988, pp. 182-193). These tenets express the classical competition-equilibrium matrix in an irrationalist context: individuals act optimally for their own benefit, and what they do expect is what they should expect. In the New Classical School the automatism is so strong that institutional analysis of even the business enterprise itself is rejected in favour of treating it as a causal link between the actions of individuals and price changes (Machlup, 1967, p. 9).

It is important to underline that in the Monetarist case the validity of these tenets is not limited to economics. The Monetarist, Karl Brunner, explicitly rejected a multidisciplinary approach to economic problems (including, as he called it, the Keynesian ‘sociological perceptions of non-market situations’), and wanted to apply the basic principles of Monetarism to other social disciplines, as if economics provided the only valid social scientific approach (Klamer, 1985, p. 183):

We reject, on the other hand, an escape into sociology which offers no relevant analytic framework. We maintain that socio-political institutions are the proper subject of economic analysis. This entails an entirely different view of the political institutions and their operation. The sociological view typically supports a goodwill theory of government and yields conclusions favouring a large and essentially unlimited government. An application of economic analysis, in contrast, alerts us to the fact that politicians and bureaucrats are entrepreneurs in the political market. They pursue their own interests and try to find optimal strategies attending to their interests. And what is optimal for them is hardly ever optimal for ‘public interest’ (Brunner in Klamer, 1985, p. 186).

Friedman provides us with a simple exemplary analysis of political markets versus economic markets, in an attempt to show that the political market is actually a less efficient system of coordinating individual self-interest, which will take away our individual freedoms, the more we put our trust in it. According to him, the accepted distinction between the economic market as aimed at self-interest and the political system as directed at public interest is a myth. The latter actually only serves the self-interest of the public servant because to be human is to pursue self-interest. Second, exchange in the political market does not take place on the basis of ‘one man one vote’, for it actually functions on the basis of weighted votes of small interest groups, which determine a whole package to be voted for on a ‘yes/no’ basis, whereas the economic market provides for a much freer and more equitable proportional voting system (‘one man one dollar’), in which you get what you vote for by voting for every item separately. The essence of a political arrangement is coercion; that of a market arrangement is voluntary cooperation between people (Friedman, 1976, pp. 6 ff).

Friedman views the equilibrating forces as moving parallel to another. If government spending increases on the insistence of the electorate, without taxes increasing too (i.e., money is created ahead of production), then this is balanced by a hidden tax increase called inflation (Ibid., pp. 11 ff). Increased government spending is also accompanied by increased government controls and security provisions of all kinds, which are balanced by decreasing efficiency and freedom and increasing collectivism (Ibid.).
Friedman is prepared to invert this causal chain. Any increase of private, free enterprise capitalism is accompanied by an increase in political freedom. In fact, individualistic free enterprise capitalism is a sine qua non for a free political system. Even social welfare in its broadest sense (‘eleemosynary activity’ – the establishment of nonprofit institutions like universities, libraries, and hospitals) flourishes during periods of decreasing government controls and increasing free enterprise, Friedman postulates, on the basis of what he sees as the results of 19th century laissez-faire policies (Ibid., pp. 25 ff). Although Friedman seems to provide us with a strictly ‘positive’ (rather than a ‘normative’) analysis of the economic-social reality, his analysis is clearly aimed at promoting ‘freedom’, and is therefore normative in spite of its pretences.

These parallels show the grip which mechanistic thinking has on Friedman. Von Hayek could not find an automatic correlation between individual freedom and social equity. In fact, he accepts a trade off between the two as unavoidable (Von Hayek, 1949, p. 30; cf. also Venter, 1996, p. 39). And this is despite the fact that he takes an anti-mechanistic approach to economics.

3.6 Competitive Individualism and Nationalism

In spite of the central role of ‘competition’ in the deterministic general equilibrium approaches, these same approaches have been criticized for eliminating real competitiveness from their theory. This is a fair criticism. There is irony here because as the representations of the competition-equilibrium matrix became more overtly mechanistic, their power to explain or describe the economic and/or social processes, qua processes, decreased. Under such theoretically ideal conditions as represented under the ‘perfect’ assumptions, the balance of powers becomes immediate or permanent (or, more technically, takes place in mathematical time rather than Bergsonian durée), while in reality, ‘to compete’ involves surprise, novelty, innovation, and even dissembling over time (cf. Addleson, 1988, pp. 462–3).

It is, however, noteworthy that the principle of competitiveness has been well established in Western culture, in the analysis of social processes as well as in economics. Competitive individualism has been transferred to competitive nationalism, and it seems as if competition is no longer simply a means, as in the eighteenth century, but rather something like a norm or an end. The ‘winning nations’ are to be taken as a norm by the ‘losers’ in the Third World. The GATT agreement opened up ‘free trade’ all over the world; ‘competitiveness’ is the supposed answer for a country’s industries. At school, winning, whether in sports or in intellectual pursuits, counts, and coming second doesn’t. ‘Publish or perish’ in the academic world is only an expression of the competition motive as the norm and necessary road to ‘quality’ or ‘excellence’.

There are serious problems connected with this competitiveness run amok. Countries are flooding each other’s markets with more or less the same products; third world countries are forced to compete on an unequal footing with first world countries, and become more and more indebted to them; the accentuation of individual and particular interests tends to strengthen selfishness, and can be detrimental to creativity; human lives are losing their value as self-interest in the context of a collapse of values turns into outright egoism.
4. A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

4.1 Totalitarianism

The organismic world picture promotes a ‘whole’ versus ‘part’ approach in the analysis of social structures and processes. The interests of the ‘whole’ take precedence over those of the ‘parts’. In other words, organismic thinking implies ‘holism’. It is not clear which criteria are used to identify important ‘wholes’ (usually states, tribes, or ethnic groups or even ‘society’) – it seems that cultural, racial, power, and geographical considerations are taken into account without much critical investigation. Whatever differences there may be between ‘parts’ and their ‘whole’ are easily forgotten as smaller institutions are usurped by the interests of larger or stronger ones. The consequences are not only almost complete control over the lives of individuals, but also of associations which differ in their primary aims (or functions) from the primary aims (or functions) of the ‘whole’.

This is totalitarianism. It can be of a ‘majoritarian’ orientation, like that of Rousseau, or more authoritarian, as in Fascist or Nazi elitism. Neither version has any patience with religious, educational, artistic, or athletic institutions which might view their roles as different from the aim of the ‘whole’.

The mechanistic picture rejects dominance by a supposed social ‘whole’. Mechanists tend to view the encompassing, and powerful, institutions as collections of individuals. This arises because, within this second picture, there is a relative independence of a machine part from its machine whole. This made it possible to combine individual autonomy with a deterministic view of historical progress, in which justice, peace, and moral decency could all be seen as the balanced product of the opposing ‘gravitational’ forces of self-interest. This world picture allows for much patience with the differences in role of smaller and less powerful associations, and wishes to reduce the powers and functions of the strongest one, the state. It assumes, however, a market totalitarianism, and trusts the ‘market’ (i.e., the competition-equilibrium matrix) to solve the problems of justice, morality, peace, and social welfare. Efficiently successful ‘trading’ is supposed to (always) leave the barterers better off than before! This trust discloses the capitalist values hidden behind the mechanistic metaphors and analytical patterns. Since it is economic in its orientation, its analytical approach obstructs any sense of institutional differentiation. We are therefore unable to get from it a clear picture of the ethical role of the family, or the primarily regulatory aims of the state, vis à vis the profit aims of the business enterprise. Thus all other institutions become progressively disempowered with regard to self-interest as such, and egoism becomes the norm.

4.2 Is There a Way Out of this Impasse?

Is there a way out of this impasse? Can any liberating mediation between the two world views be effected? Or do they possibly include some valuable elements which could orient us in a direction away from both of them?

The organismic picture seems to recognize the different functions of various social institutions, but sublates these into the aims and interests of the whole. The adherents of the mechanistic picture try to avoid the totalitarianism and authoritarianism which we
have found associated with the organismal approach, and allow for much more freedom of the individual members of 'society' and for the freedom of weaker institutions. Yet the mechanists are no more able than the organicists to outline clearly the pluriformity of social relationships, and permit them the freedom to function as social units. This is because it represents 'society' as a number of configurations of forces with self-interest as the real motor, all the while neglecting the question of 'power' inequalities behind these forces, as well as the differences in social context in which these 'forces' operate.

4.3 Pictures as Norms: Integrationalism Versus Isolationism

Once any single picture is used to explain all of reality and to give meaning to life, that is, when a world picture is transformed into a world view, regardless of whether it functions for its author in a 'real' or in a 'metaphorical' sense, it fulfills both a 'factual' and 'normative' role. In other words, it encompasses both a factual 'is' as well as an ethical 'ought'. In the present case this means that for both pictures the world is similar to an organism or a machine, and ought to be treated as similar to an organism or a machine. Thus the organismic world-view is holistic both in a factual and in a normative sense. It contends that individuals and smaller institutions are (similar to) the organs of an organic whole, and that it is wrong or evil for us not to live up to our 'part' as 'organs' of the 'organism'. This perspective cannot but react negatively in response to any claims that a smaller/weaker social institution, such as a school, might opt to follow aims differing from those of 'society'. Nationalist political authorities are especially unreasonable in their demands that all institutions fall in line with 'national' aims. But churches, sporting bodies, and academic associations need not, for example, limit their spheres of influence to national boundaries. In terms of its normative implications, the organismic world view tends to enforce integrationism.

Equally, the mechanistic world-view zigzags between 'is' and 'ought'. The representation of the world as (similar to) a machine/automaton incorporates a characteristic of modern technology, namely the abstraction from a specific solution to a specific problem by using 'neutral' modular components which, though limited by the purpose of the particular machine, still have 'a certain artificial independence' (Schuurman, 1980, p. 15). Thus society is represented as consisting factually of an aggregate of self-interested forces. This is dialectically switched into promoting self-interest as the basic norm for all social functioning. In contrast (and sometimes clearly in reaction) to organismic holism, it takes an isolationist stance, promoting a 'private sector', individualistic approach with a strong economic slant to it. There is some recognition of the right to freedom of non-state institutions, but no thoroughgoing analysis of their different institutional functions seems to emerge after fragmentation of 'society' into the neutral components of a machine (Venter, 1996, p. 236).

4.4 Alternatives to the Two Pictures

We must first enquire whether the two world pictures really cover the whole field of experience, as they pretend to, and whether they really, and in 'principle', form alternatives to be expressed in an exclusive disjunction. This difficulty is probably rooted in the fact that the two pictures have become world-views. Their limitations as only meta-
phors have been forgotten, and they have acquired authority beyond their legitimate applicability.

One can, of course, model many aspects of 'ultimate reality' in terms of mechanical metaphors such as the movement of limbs in a body. The very existence of organic chemistry and biochemistry tells us, however, that such metaphor-making must have limitations. In the same way we can use biotic metaphors to express ourselves about non-biotic matters, such as the 'growth' of the money supply, yet realize all the while that the applicability of this metaphor is limited by the fact that human persons make decisions about the increase in the quantity of money, while this is clearly not the case with the growth of an organism. Similarly one can also draw metaphors from other fields of experience. Darwin's metaphor of 'natural selection' was, by his own admission, drawn from the selection practices of breeders; he had to supplement its lack of a selection agent by metaphorising 'competition' into a natural process, (an approach ridiculed by Marx as transferring the British economy into nature). Thomas Kuhn (Op. Cit., 1975) used the metaphor of 'conversion' from the field of religion to describe the social behaviour of the adherents of a 'paradigm', another metaphor drawn from grammar.

The plurality of possible metaphors itself points to something beyond language, namely the plurality of possible relationships between human beings and their environment (Von Hayek, 1952, pp. 17ff; Venter, 1996). Every human entity, from the moment of conception, exists in a plurality of relationships. The Hobbesian 'state of nature' as a state of isolated individuals was the product of abstractive projection. This was recognized by Hobbes himself, but forgotten by Rousseau.

The differences among these relationships disclose the possibility that they may be structured into different institutional forms. A group of persons playing football may found a club as an institutional form. The club will need capital assets, such as a playing field. It will have to establish itself as a 'legal person' and will therefore need a slate of officers including a chairperson, and secretary, as well as a team leadership, and a trainer. A drama reading group, on the other hand, may be able to get along by using a member's living room and kitchen facilities, taking turns in organizing meetings, but cannot get along without some intellectually developed minds. A state needs elaborate mechanisms for the protection of its citizens' rights; a school needs only an organized teaching staff, children who want to learn, and a minimum of administrative and physical infrastructure.

Once a single metaphor is used to explain the functioning and interrelationships of all entities, sensitivity for the differences among social relationships as well as the peculiar forms of institutionalizing which they may assume, is lost. Whether intended as 'reality' or as 'only metaphor', both the mechanistic and the organismic world-views are reductionistic in their representations of social reality.

The secret is to find a theoretical way of limiting the expansion of such metaphors. For example the misleading 'is-ought' metaphors might be bridged through the pain/suffering indicator. Accepting that the direct move from 'is' to 'ought' is invalid, it can still be argued that an indirect movement is possible via the pain/suffering indicator.

'Suffering' implies 'pain', whether we use these words metaphorically or literally;
but 'pain' does not necessarily imply 'suffering'. 'Pain' belongs to life's warning systems. When I touch a hot object, the pain I feel warns me to pull my hand away before serious damage is done, that is, before an antinomic situation replaces the regular one. Acceptable punishment would then rather belong to the category of pain than of suffering. Suffering may be described as the pain caused by a serious and long-term antinomic situation.

Thus, whenever a supposedly normative social metaphor is seen to cause pain, we have an indication of an antinomic situation present or approaching. Since I cannot feel the other's pain, therefore I have to take his/her/their communication of pain seriously as an indicator that the 'oughts' which govern my behaviour need adjustment. Undeniably Christ's maxim of doing unto others as you would have them do unto you, opens up a world of possibilities of imagining the consequences in terms of pain and suffering so as to discover when a situation may be or become antinomic.

How many millions have died at the hands of totalitarian regimes based on an organismic picture of social life? How many may have starved or have been marginalised (and still are), under the assumption that a free market will automatically provide for justice?

5. DIFFERENTIATION AND INTEGRATION

Thus, over against the totalitarianistic holism of the organismic world view, I would offer the neo-Calvinistic tradition [A. Kuyper (1880), H. Dooyeweerd (1957), D. H. Th. Vollenhoven (1964)], and plead for the acceptance of the norm of societal differentiation and juxtaposition, which is usually called 'sovereignty in its own sphere'.

The mechanists are right. Social differentiation is normative. But one can only avoid an isolationist, or even disintegrationist, concept of differentiation if the principles of differentiation are not located via self-interest, but rather through a thoroughgoing analysis of the possible forms the different human relationships may assume, determined by all the possibilities of interacting with, or undertaking responsibilities and tasks in, the 'world' as environment.

Differentiation, in fact, implies an involving self-assertion, and not at all a separation of institutional forms. Social institutions speak, each in its own way, to humankind. Academics produce intellectual ideas about the world at large in a scholarly way, and in fact need their academic freedom and institutional autonomy for responsible involvement conforming to the demands of scholarly work.

The economic situation in a neighbourhood will find expression not only in the facilities available in the neighbourhood school, but also in the attitude which the school has towards the neighbourhood and to other institutions in it. A school in a poor neighbourhood might search for creative ways of teaching with minimal means, or involve the parents in the physical upkeep of their school instead of asking for more tuition fees. It might focus in its teaching on the transfer of skills which may prepare the children for early entry into the job market. It might even provide adult education programmes to improve parents' chances to find work. But if it wants to keep up the pretence of being a school, it cannot give up teaching children well, and it should resist attempts from
other institutions to instrumentalise it for job creation, or to preach a national ideal, even the ideal to care for the poor. Yet it cannot and should not go about its educational task in isolation.

Social institutions should constructively ask themselves how does the full human problematic of their environment, which may be a Heideggerian 'nearness' rather than only a physical neighbourhood, reflect itself within their specific and differentiated task and what constructive demands does this make on the execution of their daily task? Should an institution neglect this norm, it would surely create tensions and suffering in its own membership.

For example, the capitalist ethic privileges winning as an indication of 'excellence'. For the travelling salesman this may mean being compelled 'voluntarily' to remain on the road away from wife and children. It seems to be in his interest to submit voluntarily to the interest of his employer. This is an isolationist (even disintegrationist) institutionalized demand, which causes suffering because it does not lead to integration. And the insensitivity is not something additional or accidental to it, but is built into its very institutional form, which does not set fair standards for a good day's work, but leaves them to the subjective forces of competition. No wonder the pendulum presently seems to swing in the direction of integrationist holism!

The principle of 'sovereignty in its own sphere' simply appeals for stability in disclosing the potential of creation, for recognition of human limitations as creatures coram Deo (face to face with God), and for recognition that the powerful institutions are not better equipped to handle the affairs of the non-powerful institutions; on the contrary, they will tend to use the less powerful for their own interests. This is what the norm of differentiation actually wants to express.

Finally, the norm of differentiation and the norm of integration are not in dialectical tension with each other. Differentiation simply means that the institution recognizes its own specific task in a network of relationships and continuously adjusts its institutional form to improve the execution of that task. Integration means the execution of this task in a way which is sensitive to the specific contents of the relationships in the network. And this will surely be expressed in terms of a multiplicity of metaphors, of which the metaphorical limitations have to be recognized.

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