

VERNACULAR VALUES

*Ivan Illich**1st part : The three dimensions of social choice*

Where the war against subsistence has led can best be seen in the mirror of so-called development. During the 1960's, "development" acquired a status that ranked with "freedom" and "equality". Other peoples' development became the rich man's duty and burden. Development was described as a building program — people of all colors spoke of "nation-building" and did so without blushing. The immediate goal of this social engineering was the installation of a balanced set of equipment in a society not yet so instrumented: the building of more schools, more modern hospitals, more extensive highways, new factories, power grids, together with the creation of a population trained to staff and need them.

Today, the moral imperative of ten years ago appears naive; today, few critical thinkers would take such an instrumentalist view of the desirable society. Two reasons have changed many minds: First, *undesired externalities* exceed benefits — the tax burden of schools and hospitals is more than any economy can support; the ghost towns produced by highways impoverish the urban and rural landscape. Plastic buckets from Sao Paulo are lighter and cheaper than those made of scrap by the local tinsmith in Western Brazil. But first cheap plastic puts the tinsmith out of existence, and then the fumes of plastic leave a special trace on the environment — a new kind of ghost. The destruction of age-old competence as well as these poisons are *inevitable byproducts* and will resist all exorcisms for a long time. Cemeteries for industrial wastes simply cost too much, more than the buckets are worth. In economic jargon, the "external costs" exceed not only the profit made from plastic bucket production, but also the very salaries paid in the manufactur-

ing process.

These rising externalities, however, are only one side of the bill which development has exacted. *Counterproductivity is its reverse side*. Externalities represent costs that are "outside" the price paid by the consumer for what he wants — costs that he, others or future generations will at some point be charged. Counterproductivity, however, is a new kind of disappointment which arises "within" the very use of the good purchased. This internal counterproductivity, an inevitable component of modern institutions, has become the constant frustration of the poorer majority of each institution's clients : intensely experienced but rarely defined. Each necessarily effects the opposite of that for which it was structured. Economists, who are increasingly competent to put price tags on externalities, are unable to deal with negative internalities, and cannot measure the inherent frustration of captive clients which is something other than a cost. For most people, schooling twists genetic differences into certified degradation; the medicalization of health increases demand for services far beyond the possible and useful, and undermines that organic coping ability which common sense calls health; transportation, for the great majority bound to the rush hour, increases the time spent in the servitude to traffic, reducing both freely chosen mobility and mutual access. The development of educational, medical and other welfare agencies has actually removed most clients from the obvious purpose for which these projects were designed and financed. This institutionalized frustration, resulting from compulsory consumption, combines with the new externalities. It demands an increase in the production of scavenging and repair services to impoverish and even destroy individuals and communities, affecting them in a class-specific manner. In effect, the peculiarly modern forms of frustration and paralysis and destruction totally discredit the description of the desirable society in terms of installed production capacity.

Defense against the damages inflicted by development, rather than access to some new "satisfaction", has become the most sought after privilege. You have arrived if you can commute outside the rush hour; probably attended an elite school; if you can give birth at home; are privy to rare and special knowledge if you can bypass the physician when you are ill; are rich and lucky if you can breathe fresh air; by no means poor, if you can build your own shack. The underclasses are now made up of those who *must* consume the counterproductive packages and ministrations of their self-appointed

tutors; the privileged are those who are free to refuse them. A new attitude, then, has taken shape during these last years; the awareness that we cannot ecologically afford *equitable* development leads many to understand that, even if development in equity were possible, we would neither want more of it for ourselves, nor want to suggest it for others.

Ten years ago, we tended to distinguish social options exercised within the political sphere from technical options assigned to the expert. The former were meant to focus on goals, the latter more on means. Roughly, options about the desirable society were ranged on a spectrum that ran from right to left: here, capitalist, over there, socialist "development". The *how* was left to the experts. This one-dimensional model of politics is now passé. Today, in addition to "who gets what", two new areas of choice have become *lay* issues: the very legitimacy of lay judgment on the apt means for production, and the trade-offs between growth and freedom. As a result, three independent classes of options appear as three mutually perpendicular axes of public choice. On the x-axis I place the issues related to social hierarchy, political authority, ownership of the means of production and allocation of resources that are usually designated by the terms, right and left. On the y-axis, I place the technical choices between hard and soft, extending these terms far beyond a pro and con atomic power: not only goods, but also services are affected by the hard and soft alternatives.

A third choice falls on the z-axis. Neither privilege nor technique, but rather the nature of human satisfaction is at issue. To characterize the two extremes, I shall use terms defined by Erich Fromm. At the bottom, I place a social organization that fits the seeking of satisfaction in *having*, at the top, in *doing*. At the bottom, therefore, I place a commodity-intensive society where needs are increasingly defined in terms of packaged goods and services designed and prescribed by professionals, and produced under their control. This social ideal corresponds to the image of a humanity composed of individuals, each driven by considerations of marginal utility, the image that has developed from Mandeville via Smith and Marx to Keynes, and that Louis Dumont calls *homo economicus*. At the opposite end, at the top of the z-axis, I place — in a fan-shaped array — a great variety of societies where existence is organized around subsistence activities. In its unique way, each of these cannot but be skeptical about the claims of growth. In such new societies where contemporary tools ease the creation of

use-values, commodities and industrial production in general are deemed valuable mainly insofar as they are either resources or instruments for subsistence. Hence, the social ideal corresponds to *homo habilis*, an image which includes numerous individuals who are *differently* competent at coping with reality, the opposite of *homo economicus*, who is dependent on standardized "needs". Here, people who choose their independence and their own horizon derive more satisfaction from doing and making things for immediate use than from the products of slaves or machines. Therefore, every cultural project is necessarily modest. Here, people go as far as they can toward self-subsistence, they themselves producing what they are able, exchanging their surplus with neighbors, avoiding — insofar as possible — the products of wage labor.

The shape of contemporary society is the result of the ongoing choices along these three independent axes. And a polity's credibility today depends on the degree of public participation in each of the three option sets. The beauty of a unique, socially articulated image of each society will, hopefully, become the determining factor of its international impact. Esthetic and ethical example may replace the competition of economic indicators. Actually, no other route is open. A mode of life characterized by austerity, modesty, constructed by hard work and built on a small scale does not lend itself to propagation through marketing. For the first time in history, poor and rich societies would be effectively placed on equal terms. But for this to become true, the present perception of international north-south relations in terms of development must first be superseded.

A related high status goal of our age, full employment, must also be reviewed. Ten years ago, attitudes toward development and politics were simpler than what is possible today, attitudes toward work were sexist and naive. Work was identified with employment, and prestigious employment confined to males. The analysis of shadow work done off the job was tabu. The left referred to it as a remnant of primitive reproduction, the right, as organized consumption — all agreed that, with development, such labor would wither away. The struggle for more jobs, for equal pay for equal jobs, and more pay for every job pushed all work done off the job into a shadowed corner hidden from politics and economics. Recently, feminists, together with some economists and sociologists, looking at so-called intermediary structures, have begun to examine the unpaid contribution made to an industrial economy, a contribution

for which women are principally responsible. These persons discuss "reproduction" as the complement to production. But the stage is mostly filled with self-styled radicals who discuss new ways of creating conventional jobs, new forms of sharing available jobs and how to transform housework, education, childbearing and commuting into paid jobs. Under the pressure of such demands, the full employment goal appears as dubious as development. New actors, who question the very nature of work, advance toward the limelight. They distinguish industrially structured work, paid or unpaid, from the creation of a livelihood beyond the confines of employment and professional tutors. Their discussions raise the key issues on the vertical axis. The choice for or against the notion of man as a growth addict decides whether unemployment, that is, the effective liberty to work free from wages and/or salary, shall be viewed as sad and a curse, or as useful and a right.

In a commodity-intensive society, basic needs are met through the products of wage-labor — housing no less than education, traffic no less than the delivery of infants. The work ethic which drives such a society legitimates employment for salary or wages and degrades independent coping. But the spread of wage labor accomplishes more — it divides unpaid work into two opposite types of activities. While the loss of unpaid work through the encroachment of wage-labor has often been described, the creation of a new kind of work has been consistently ignored : the unpaid *complement* of industrial labor and services. A kind of forced labor or industrial serfdom in the service of commodity — intensive economies must be carefully distinguished from subsistence-oriented work lying outside the industrial system. Unless this distinction is classified and used when choosing options on the z-axis, unpaid work guided by professionals could spread through a repressive, ecological welfare society. Women's serfdom in the domestic sphere is the most obvious example today. Housework is not salaried. Nor it is a subsistence activity in the sense that most of the work done by women was such as when, with their menfolk, they used the entire household as the setting and the means for the creation of most of the inhabitants' livelihood. Modern housework is standardized by industrial commodities oriented towards the support of production, and exacted from women in a sex-specific way to press them into reproduction, regeneration and a motivating force for the wage-laborer. Well publicized by feminists, housework is only one expression of that extensive shadow economy which has developed everywhere in industrial societies as a necessary complement to

expanding wage labor. This shadow complement, together with the formal economy, is a constitutive element of the industrial mode of production. It has escaped economic analysis, as the wave nature of elementary particles before the Quantum Theory. And when concepts developed for the formal economic sector are applied to it, they distort what they do not simply miss. The real difference between two kinds of unpaid activity — shadow-work which complements wage-labor, and subsistence work which competes with and opposes both — is consistently missed. Then, as subsistence activities become more rare, all unpaid activities assume a structure analogous to housework. Growth-oriented work inevitably leads to the standardization and management of activities, be they paid or unpaid.

A contrary view of work prevails when a community chooses a subsistence-oriented way of life. There, the inversion of development, the replacement of consumer goods by personal action, of industrial tools by convivial tools is the goal. There, both wage-labor and shadow-work will decline since their product, goods or services, is valued primarily as a means for ever inventive activities, rather than as an end, that is, dutiful consumption. There, the guitar is valued over the record, the library over the schoolroom, the back yard garden over the supermarket selection. There, the personal control of each worker over his means of production determines the small horizon of each enterprise, a horizon which is a necessary condition for social production and the unfolding of each worker's individuality. This mode of production also exists in slavery, serfdom and other forms of dependence. But it flourishes, releases its energy, acquires its adequate and classical form *only* where the worker is the free owner of his tools and resources; only then can the artisan perform like a virtuoso. This mode of production can be maintained only within the limits that nature dictates to both production and society. There, useful unemployment is valued while wage-labor, within limits, is merely tolerated.

The development paradigm is more easily repudiated by those who were adults on January 10, 1949. That day, most of us met the term in its present meaning for the first time when President Truman announced his Point Four Program. Until then, we used "development" to refer to species, real estate and moves in chess — only thereafter to people, countries and economic strategies. Since then, we have been flooded by development theories whose concepts are now curiosities for collectors — "growth", "catching up", "moder-

nisation", "imperialism", "dualism", "dependency", "basic needs", "transfer of technology", "world system", "autochthonous "industrialization" and "temporary unlinking". Each onrush came in two waves. One carried the pragmatist who highlighted free enterprise and world markets; the other, the politicians who stressed ideology and revolution. Theorists produced mountains of prescriptions and mutual caricatures. Beneath these, the common assumptions of all were buried. Now is the time to dig out the axioms hidden in the idea of development itself.

Fundamentally, the concept implies the replacement of general competence and satisfying subsistence activities by the use and consumption of commodities; the monopoly of wage-labor over all other kinds of work; redefinition of needs in terms of goods and services mass-produced according to expert design; finally, the re-arrangement of the environment in such fashion that space, time, materials and design favor production and consumption while they degrade or paralyze use-value oriented activities that satisfy needs directly. And all such worldwide homogeneous changes and processes are valued as inevitable and good. The great Mexican muralists dramatically portrayed the typical figures before the theorists outlined the stages. On their walls, one sees the ideal type of human being as the male in overalls behind a machine or in a white coat over a microscope. He tunnels mountains, guides tractors, fuels smoking chimneys. Women give him birth, nurse and teach him. In striking contrast to Aztec subsistence, Rivera and Orozco visualize industrial work at the sole source of all the goods needed for life and its possible pleasures.

But this ideal of industrial man now dims. The tabus that protected it weaken. Slogans about the dignity and joy of wage-labor sound tinny. Unemployment, a term first introduced in 1898 to designate people without a fixed income, is now recognized as the condition in which most of the world's people live anyway — even at the height of industrial booms. In Eastern Europe especially, but also in China, people now see that, since 1950, the term, "working class", has been used mainly as a cover to claim and obtain privileges for a new bourgeoisie and its children. The "need" to create employment and stimulate growth, by which the self-appointed paladins of the poorest have so far squashed any consideration of alternatives to development, clearly appears suspect.

The challenges to development take multiple forms. In

Germany alone, France or Italy, thousands of groups experiment, each differently, with alternatives to an industrial existence. Increasingly, more of these people come from blue-collar homes. For most of them, there is no dignity left in earning one's livelihood by a wage. They try to "unplug themselves from consumption", in the phrase of some South Chicago slum-dwellers. In the USA, at least four million people live in the core of tiny and highly differentiated communities of this kind, with at least seven times as many individually sharing their values — women seek alternatives to gynecology; parents alternatives to schools; home-builders alternatives to the flush toilet; neighborhoods alternatives to commuting; people alternatives to the shopping center. In Trivandrum, South India, I have seen one of the most successful alternatives to a special kind of commodity dependence — to instruction and certification as the privileged forms of learning. One thousand seven hundred villages have installed libraries, each containing at least a thousand titles. This is the minimum equipment they need to be full members of Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad, and they may retain their membership only as long as they loan at least three thousand volumes per year. I was immensely encouraged to see that, at least in South India, village-based and village-financed libraries have turned schools into adjuncts to libraries, while elsewhere libraries during these last ten years have become mere deposits for teaching materials used under the instruction of professional teachers. Also in Bihar, India, Medico International represents a grassroots-based attempt to demedicalize health care, without falling into the trap of the Chinese barefooted doctor. The latter has been relegated to the lowest level lackey in a national hierarchy of bio-control.

Besides taking such experiential forms, the challenge to development also uses legal and political means. In an Austrian referendum in 1979, an absolute majority refused permission to Chancellor Kreisky, politically in control of the electorate, to inaugurate a finished atomic generator. Citizens increasingly use the ballot and the courts, in addition to more traditional interest group pressures, to set negative design criteria for the technology of production. In Europe, "green" candidates begin to win elections. In America, citizen legal efforts begin to stop highways and dams. Such behavior was not predictable ten years ago — and many men in power still do not recognize it as legitimate. All these grassroots-organized lives and actions in the Metropolis challenge not only the recent concept of overseas development, but also the more fundamental and root concept of progress at home.

At this juncture, it is the task of the historian and the philosopher to clarify the sources of and disentangle the process resulting in Western needs. Only thus shall we be able to understand how such a seemingly enlightened concept produced such devastating exploitation. Progress, the notion which has characterized the West for 2000 years, and has determined its relations to outsiders since the decay of classical Rome, lies behind the belief in needs. Societies mirror themselves not only in their transcendent gods, but also in their image of the alien beyond their frontiers. The West exported a dichotomy between "us" and "them" unique to industrial society. This peculiar attitude towards self and others is now worldwide, constituting the victory of a universalist mission initiated in Europe. A redefinition of development would only reinforce the Western economic domination over the shape of formal economics by the professional colonization of the informal sector, domestic and foreign. To eschew this danger, the six-stage metamorphosis of a concept that currently appears as "development" must first be understood.

Every community has a characteristic attitude towards others. The Chinese, for example, cannot refer to the alien or his chattel without labeling them with a degrading marker. For the Greek, he is either the house guest from a neighboring polis, or the barbarian who is less than fully man. In Rome, barbarians could become members of the city, but to bring them into it was never the intent or mission of Rome. Only during late antiquity, with the Western European Church, did the alien become someone in need, someone to be brought in. This view of the alien as a burden has become constitutive for Western society; without this universal mission to the world outside, what we call the West would not have come to be.

The perception of the outsider as someone who must be helped has taken on successive forms. In late antiquity, the barbarian mutated into the pagan — the second stage toward development had begun. The pagan was defined as the unbaptized, but ordained by nature to become Christian. It was the duty of those within the Church to incorporate him by baptism into the body of Christendom. In the early Middle Ages, most people in Europe were baptized, even though they might not yet be converted. Then the Muslim appeared. Unlike Goths and Saxons, Muslims were monotheists, and obviously prayerful believers; they resisted conversion. Therefore, besides baptism, the further needs to be subjected and instructed had to be imputed. The pagan mutated into the infidel,

our third stage. By the late Middle Ages, the image of the alien mutated again. The Moors had been driven from Granada, Columbus had sailed across the ocean, and the Spanish Crown had assumed many functions of the Church. The image of the wild man who threatens the civilizing function of the humanist replaced the image of the infidel who threatens the faith. At this time also, the alien was first described in economy-related terms. From many studies on monsters, apes and wild men, we learn that the Europeans of this period saw the wild man as having no needs. This independence made him noble, but a threat to the designs of colonialism and mercantilism. To impute needs to the wild man, one had to make him over into the native, the fifth stage. Spanish courts, after long deliberation, decided that at least the wild man of the New World had a soul and was, therefore, human. In opposition to the wild man, the native has needs, but needs unlike those of civilized man. His needs are fixed by climate, race, religion and providence. Adam Smith still reflects on the elasticity of native needs. As Gunnar Myrdal has observed, the construct of distinctly native needs was necessary both to justify colonialism and to administer colonies. The provision of government, education and commerce for the natives was for four hundred years the white man's assumed burden.

Each time the West put a new mask on the alien, the old one was discarded because it was now recognized as a caricature of an abandoned self-image. The pagan with his naturally Christian soul had to give way to the stubborn infidel to allow Christendom to launch the Crusades. The wild man became necessary to justify the need for secular humanist education. The native was the crucial concept to promote self-righteous colonial rule. But by the time of the Marshall Plan, when multinational conglomerates were expanding and the ambitions of transnational pedagogues, therapists and planners knew no bounds, the natives' limited needs for goods and services thwarted growth and progress. They had to metamorphose into underdeveloped people, the sixth and present stage of the West's view of the outsider. Thus decolonization was also a process of conversion: the worldwide acceptance of the Western self-image of *homo economicus* in his most extreme form as *homo industrialis*, with all needs commodity-defined. Scarcely twenty years were enough to make two billion people define themselves as underdeveloped. I vividly remember the Rio Carnival of 1963 — the last before the Junta imposed itself. "Development" was the motif in the prize-winning samba, "development" the shout of the dancers while they jumped to the throbbing of the drums.

Development based on high per capita energy quanta and intense professional care is the most pernicious of the West's missionary efforts — a project guided by an ecologically unfeasible conception of human control over nature, and by an anthropologically vicious attempt to replace the nests and snakepits of culture by sterile wards for professional service. The hospitals that spew out the newborn and reabsorb the dying, the schools run to busy the unemployed before, between and after jobs, the apartment towers where people are stored between trips to the supermarkets, the highways connecting garages form a pattern tattooed into the landscape during the short development spree. These institutions, designed for lifelong bottle babies wheeled from medical center to school to office to stadium begin now to look as anomalous as cathedrals, albeit unredeemed by any esthetic charm.

Ecological and anthropological realism are now necessary — but with caution. The popular call for soft is ambiguous; both right and left appropriate it. On the z-axis, it equally serves a honied beehive, or the pluralism of independent actions. The soft choice easily permits a recasting of a material society at home and another metamorphosis of missionary zeal abroad. For example, Amory Lovins argues that the possibility of further growth now depends on a rapid transition to the soft path. Only in this way, he claims, can the real income of rich countries double and that of poor countries triple in this generation. Only by the transition from fossil to sun can the externalities of production be so cut that the resources now spent on making waste and hiring scavengers to remove it be turned into benefits. I agree. If growth is to be, then Lovins is right, and investments are more secure with windspinners than with oil derricks. For the traditional right *and* left, for managerial democrats *or* socialist authoritarians, soft process and energy become the necessary rationale to expand their bureaucracies and to satisfy escalating “needs” through the standardized production of goods and services.

The World Bank makes the matching argument for services. Only by choosing labor-intensive, sometimes less efficient forms of industrial production can education be incorporated in apprenticeship. More efficient plants create huge and costly externalities in the formal education they presuppose, while they cannot teach on the job.

The World Health Organization now stresses prevention and

education for self-care. Only thus can population health levels be raised, while expensive therapies — mostly of unproven effectiveness, although still the principal work of physicians — can be abandoned. The liberal egalitarian utopia of the 18th century, taken up as the ideal for industrial society by the socialists of the 19th, now seems realizable only on the soft and self-help path. On this point, right and left converge. Wolfgang Harich, a highly cultured communist, refined and steeled in his convictions by two stretches of eight years in solitary confinement — once under Hitler and once under Ulbricht — is the one East European spokesman for the soft path. But while for Lovins the transition to decentralized production depends on the market, for Harich the necessity of this transition is an argument in favor of Stalinist ecology. For right *and* left, democrats or authoritarians, soft process and energy become the necessary means to satisfy escalating “needs” through the standardized production of goods and services.

Thus, the soft path can lead either towards a convivial society where people are so equipped to do on their own whatever they judge necessary for survival and pleasure, or towards a new kind of commodity-dependent society where the goal of full employment means the political management of activities, paid or unpaid. Whether a “left” or “soft” path leads towards or away from new forms of “development” and “full employment” depends on the options taken between “having” and “being” on the third axis.

We have seen that wherever wage-labor expands, its shadow, industrial serfdom, also grows. Wage-labor, as the dominant form of production, and housework, as the ideal type of its unpaid complement, are both forms of activity without precedent in history or anthropology. They thrive only where the absolute and, later, the industrial state destroyed the social conditions for subsistence living. They spread as small-scale, diversified, vernacular communities have been made sociologically and legally impossible — into a world where individuals, throughout their lives, live only through dependence on education, health services, transportation and other packages provided through the multiple mechanical feeders of industrial institutions.

Conventional economic analysis has focused on only one of these complementary industrial age activities. Economic analysis has focused on the worker as wage-earning producer. The equally commodity-oriented activities performed by the unemployed have

remained in the shadow of the economic searchlight. What women or children do, what occupies men after "working hours", is belittled in a cavalier fashion. But this is changing rapidly. Both the weight and the nature of the contribution made by unpaid activities to the industrial system begin to be noticed. Feminist research into the history and anthropology of work has made it impossible to ignore the fact that work in an industrial society is sex-specific in a manner which cuts deeper than in any other known society. In the 19th century, women entered the wage-labor force in the "advanced" nations; they then won the franchise, non-restricted access to schooling, equal rights on the job. All these "victories" have had precisely the opposite effect from that which conventional wisdom assigns them. Paradoxically, "emancipation" has heightened the contrast between paid and unpaid work; it has severed all connections between unpaid work and subsistence. Thus, it has re-defined the structure of unpaid work so that this latter becomes a new kind of serfdom inevitably borne by women.

Gender-specific tasks are not new; all known societies assign sex-specific work roles. For example, hay may be cut by men, raked by women, gathered by men, loaded by women, carted away by men, fed to cows by women and to horses by men. But no matter how much we search other cultures, we cannot find the contemporary division between two forms of work, one paid and the other unpaid, one credited as productive and the other as concerned with reproduction and consumption, one considered heavy and the other light, one demanding special qualifications and the other not, one given high social prestige and the other relegated to "private" matters. Both are equally fundamental in the industrial mode of production. They differ in that the surplus from paid work is taxed directly by the employer, while the added value of unpaid work reaches him only via wage-work. Nowhere can we find two such distinct forms through which, in each family, surplus is created and expropriated.

This division between unpaid work off the job and paid work through employment would have been unthinkable in societies where the whole house served as a framework in which its inhabitants, to a large extent, did and made those things by which they also lived. Although we can find traces of both wage-work and its shadow in many societies, in none could either become the society's paradigm of work, not be used as the key symbol for sex-specific tasks. And since two such types of work did not exist, the family did not have

to exist to couple these kinds of opposites. Nowhere in history is the family, nuclear or extended, the instrument for linking two complementary but mutually exclusive species of work, one assigned primarily to the male, the other to the female. This symbiosis between opposite forms of activity, inseparably wedded through the family, is unique to commodity-intensive society. We now see that it is the inevitable result of the pursuit of development and full employment. And since such kinds of work did not exist, sex-roles could not be defined with such finality, distinct natures could not be attributed to male and female, families could not be transformed into a solder to weld the two together.

A feminist analysis of the history of industrial work thus removes the blindspot of economics: *homo economicus* has never been sexually neutral; *homo industrialis* appeared from the beginning in two genders: *vir laborans*, the workingman, and *femina domestica*, the hausfrau. In no society that developed toward the goal of full employment has shadow-work not grown apace with that employment. And shadow-work provided a device, effective beyond every precedent, to degrade a type of activity in which women cannot but predominate, while it supported one which privileged men.

Quite recently, the orthodox distinction between production and consumption functions ceased to hold. Suddenly, opposing interests turn the importance of unpaid work into a public issue. Economists put shadow prices on what happens in the "informal" sector: S. — the contribution that the work done by the client in choosing, paying for and carrying his cake adds to the value of the cake; G.B. — the calculus of marginal choices made in sexual activities; L. — the value of jogging over heart surgery.

Housewives claim pay for housework at the rate for such services in motels and restaurants. Teachers transmogrify mothers into trained but unpaid supervisors of their own children's homework. Government reports recognize that basic needs as professionally defined can be met only if laymen also produce these services, with competence but without pay. If growth and full employment retain their status as goals, the management of disciplined people motivated by non-monetary rewards will open up as the latest form of "development" in the 1980's.

Rather than life in a shadow economy, I propose, on top of

the z-axis, the ideas of vernacular work : unpaid activities which provide an improve livelihood, but which are totally refractory to any analysis utilizing concepts developed in formal economics. I apply the term, "vernacular" to these activities, since there is no other current concept that allows me to make the same distinction within the domain covered by such terms as "informal sector", "use value", "social reproduction". Vernacular is a Latin term that we use in English only for the language that we have acquired without paid teachers. In Rome, it was used from 500 B.C. to 600 A.D. to designate any value that was homebred, homemade, derived from the commons, and that a person could protect and defend though he neither bought nor sold it on the market. I suggest that we restore this simple term, vernacular, to oppose to commodities and their shadow. It allows me to distinguish between the expansion of the shadow economy and its inverse — the expansion of the vernacular domain.

The tension and balance between vernacular work and industrial labor — paid and unpaid — is the key issue on the third dimension of options, distinct from political right and left and from technical soft and hard. Industrial labor, paid and otherwise exacted, will not disappear. But when development, wage-labor and its shadow encroach upon vernacular work, the relative priority of one or the other constitutes the issue. We can free to choose between hierarchically managed standardized work that may be paid or unpaid, self-selected or imposed on the one hand and, on the other, we can protect our freedom to choose ever newly invented forms of simple, integrated subsistence actions which have an outcome that is unpredictable to the bureaucrat, unmanageable by hierarchies and oriented to the values shared within a specific community.

If the economy expands, which the soft choice can permit, the shadow economy cannot but grow even faster, and the vernacular domain must further decline. In this case, with rising job scarcity, the unemployed will be integrated into newly organized useful activities in the informal sector. Unemployed men will be given the so-called privilege to engage in those production-fostering types of unpaid activity that, since their emergence as housework in the 19th century, have been considerably earmarked for the "weaker sex" — a designation that was also first used at that time, when industrial serfdom rather than subsistence was defined as the task of women. "Care" exacted for the sake of love will lose its sex-specific character, and in the process become manageable by the state.

Under *this* option, international development is here to stay. Technical aid to develop the informal sector overseas will reflect the new sexless unpaid domestication of the unemployed at home. The new experts pushing French rather than German self-help methods or windmill designs already crowd airports and conferences. The last hope of development bureaucracies lies in the development of shadow economies.

Many of the dissidents that I have mentioned take a stand against all this — against the use of soft technology to reduce the vernacular domain and to increase professional controls over informal sector activities. These new vanguards conceive technical progress as one possible instrument to support a new type of value, neither traditional nor industrial but both subsistence-oriented and rationally chosen. Their lives, with more and less success, express a critical sense of beauty, a particular experience of pleasure, a unique view of life cherished by one group, understood but not necessarily shared by the next. They have found that modern tools make it possible to subsist on activities which permit a variety of evolving life styles, and relieve much of the drudgery of old time subsistence. They struggle for the freedom to expand the vernacular domain of their lives.

Examples from Travancore to Wales may soon free those majorities who were recently captivated by the modern “demonstration model” of stupefying, sickening and paralyzing enrichment. But two conditions must be met. First, the mode of life resulting from a new relation between people and tools must be informed by the perception of man as *homo habilis* and not *homo industrialis*. Second, commodity-independent life styles must be shaped anew by each small community, and not be imposed. Communities living by predominantly vernacular values have nothing much to offer to others besides the attractiveness of their example. But the example of a poor society that enhances modern subsistence by vernacular work should be rather attractive to jobless males in a rich society now condemned, like their women to social reproduction in an expanding shadow economy. The ability, however not only to live in new ways, but to insist on this freedom demands that we clearly recognize what distinguishes the perception of *homo economicus* from all other human beings. To this end I choose the study of history as a privileged road.

2nd part : The war against subsistence

What may not be done is tabu; even more so what may not be thought. The unthinkable is a tabu of the second order. Ibn tells of a saintly Muslim who would have died rather than eat pork; he did die of hunger, with his dog watching beside him. Pork would have defiled his faith — eating the dog would have destroyed his self-image as a man. Succulent pork is forbidden; dog or clay or begonias are simply non-food. Old Mexicans, however, appreciated all three ! Watch out for your begonias if you have a Mexican peasant for tea.

Just as the environment is divided by each society differently into food, poison and what is never considered as digestible, so issues are divided by us into those which are legitimate, those one leaves to the fascists, and those which nobody raises. However, these latter are not actually illegitimate. But if you raise them, you risk being thought a fiend, or impossibly vain. The distinction between vernacular and industrial values is of this kind. With this essay, I want to draw this distinction into the realm of permissible discussion.

Since 1973, the annual commemoration of Yom Kippur reminds us of the war which triggered the energy crisis. But a more lasting effect of that war will be its impact on economic thought. Since then economists have begun to eat pork, to violate a tabu which had been implicit in formal economics. They add to the Gross National Product goods and services for which no salary is paid and to which no price tag is attached. One after another they reveal the good news that one-third, one-half or even two-thirds of all goods and services in late industrial societies are produced outside the market by housework, private study, commuting, shopping and other unpaid activities.

Economists can only deal with realms they can measure. For forays into the non-marketed, they need new sticks. To function where money is not the currency, the concepts must be *sui generis*. But to avoid splitting their science, the new tools must be consistent with the old. Pigou defined the shadow price as one such tool. It is the money needed to substitute through a good or service something which is now done without pay. The unpaid and, perhaps, even the priceless thus become consistent with the realm of commodities, enter a domain that can be operationalized, managed

and bureaucratically developed. The unpaid becomes part of a shadow economy and is related to the wares in supermarkets, classrooms, and medical clinics as the wave to the particle — electrons are not intelligible unless one examines both theories.

Close analysis reveals that this shadow economy mirrors the formal economy. The two fields are in synergy, together constituting one whole. The shadow economy developed a complete range of parallel activities, following the brightly illuminated realm where labor, prices, needs and markets were increasingly managed as industrial production increased. Thus we see that the housework of a modern woman is as radically new as the wage-labor of her husband, the replacement of home-cooked food by restaurant delivery is as new as the definition of most basic needs in terms which correspond to the outputs of modern institutions.

I argue elsewhere that the new competence of some economists, enabling them to analyze this shady area, is more than an expansion of their conventional economic analysis — it is the discovery of new land which, like the industrial market, emerged for the first time in history only during the last two centuries. I feel sorrow for such economists who do not understand what they are doing. Their destiny is as sad as that of Columbus. With the compass, the new caravel designed to follow the route the compass opened, and his own flair as a mariner, he was able to hit on unexpected land. But he died, unaware that he had chanced on a hemisphere, firmly attached to the belief that he had reached the Indies.

In an industrial world, the realm of shadow economics is comparable to the hidden side of the moon, also being explored for the first time. And the whole of this *industrial* reality is in turn complementary to a substantive domain which I call the *vernacular* reality, the domain of subsistence.

In terms of 20th century classical economics, both the shadow economy and the vernacular domain are outside the market, both are unpaid. Also, both are generally included in the so-called informal sector. And both are indistinctly viewed as contributions to “social reproduction.” But what is most confusing in the analysis is the fact that the unpaid complement of wage-labor which, in its structure, is characteristic of industrial societies only, is often completely misunderstood as the survival of subsistence activities, which are characteristic of the *vernacular* societies and which may

continue to exist in an industrial society.

Certain changes can now be discerned. The distinction between the market economy and its shadow weakens. The substitution of commodities for subsistence activities is not necessarily experienced as progress. Women ask whether the unearned consumption which accompanies homemaking is a privilege or whether they are actually forced into degrading work by the prevailing patterns of compulsory consumption. Students ask if they are in school to learn or to collaborate in their own stupefaction. Increasingly, the toil of consumption overshadows the relief consumption promised. The choice between labor-intensive consumption, perhaps less inhuman and less destructive, better organized, and modern forms of subsistence is personally known to more and more people. The choice corresponds to the difference between an expanding shadow economy and the recovery of the vernacular domain. But it is precisely this choice which is the most resistant blind spot of economics, as unpalatable as dog or clay. Perhaps the most unlikely candidate can help dispel some of the darkness. I propose to throw light on this issue through an examination of *everyday speech*. I shall proceed by contrasting the economic nature of this speech in industrial society with its counterpart in pre-industrial epochs. As I shall show, the distinction finds its origin in a little-known event which occurred at the end of the 15th century in Spain.

Columbus finds the Nightingale

Early on August 3, 1492, Christopher Columbus sailed from Palos. The neighboring and much more important Cadíz was congested that year — it was the one port from which Jews were allowed to leave. Granada had been reconquered, and Jewish service was no longer needed for a struggle with Islam. Columbus headed for Cipangu, the name for Cathay (China) during the short reign of the long dead Tamerlane. He had calculated the earth's degree as equivalent to forty-five miles. This would place Eastern Asia 2,400 miles west of the Canaries, somewhere close to the Antilles in the Saragossa Sea. He had reduced the ocean to the range of the ships he could master. Columbus had on board an Arabic interpreter to enable him to speak to the great Khan. He set out to discover a route, not new land, not a new hemisphere.

His project, however, was quite unreasonable. No learned man of the early Renaissance doubted that the earth was a globe — some

believing that it rested at the center of the universe, and some that it whirled in its sphere. But not since Eratosthenes had anyone underestimated its size as badly as Columbus. In 255, Eratosthenes of Cyrene measured the distance from the great library that he directed in Alexandria to Syene (now the site of the Aswan dam) as 500 miles. He measured the distance using the camel caravan's remarkably steady gait from sunrise to sunset as his "rod." He had observed that on the day of the summer solstice, the rays of the sun fell vertically at Syene, and seven degrees off the vertical at Alexandria. From this he calculated the earth's circumference to about 5 percent of its real dimension.

When Columbus sought Isabella's support for his venture, she asked Talavera, the sage, to evaluate its feasibility. An expert commission reported that the West-to-the-Orient project lacked a firm foundation. Educated authorities believed its goal to be uncertain or impossible. The proposed voyage would require three years; it was doubtful that even the newest kind of ship, the caravel — designed for distant explorations — could ever return. The oceans were neither as small nor as navigable as Columbus supposed. And it was hardly likely that God would have allowed any uninhabited lands of real value to be concealed from his people for so many centuries. Initially, then, the queen rejected Columbus; reason and bureaucratic expertise supported her. Later, swayed by zealous Franciscan friars, she retracted her earlier decision and signed her "stipulations" with Columbus. She, who had driven Islam from Europe, could not refuse her Admiral who wanted to plant the Cross beyond the Ocean Seas. And, as we shall see, the decision for colonial conquest overseas implied the challenge of a new war at home — the invasion of her own people's vernacular domain, the opening of a five-century war against vernacular subsistence, the ravages of which we now begin to fathom.

For five weeks Columbus sailed well-known waters. He put in at the Canary Islands to repair the rudder of the *Pinta*, to replace the lateen sail of the *Niña*, and to pursue a mysterious affair with Dona Beatriz de Peraza. Only on September 10, two days out of the Canaries, he picked up the Easterlies, tradewinds on which he chanced, and which carried him rapidly across the ocean. In October, he came upon land that neither he nor the queen's counselors had expected. In his diary entry for October 13, 1492, he beautifully described the song of the nightingale that welcomed him on Santo Domingo, though such birds never lived there. Columbus was and

remained *gran marinero y mediocre cosmógrafo*. To the end of his life he remained convinced of having found what he had sought — a Spanish nightingale on the shores of China.

Nebrija engineers the artifact : August 18, 1492

Let me now move from the reasonably well known to the unreasonably overlooked — from Columbus, immediately associated with 1492, to Elio Antonio de Nebrija, outside of Spain almost forgotten. During the time Columbus cruised southwest through recognizable Portuguese waters and harbors, in Spain the fundamental engineering of a new social reality was proposed to the queen. While Columbus sailed for foreign lands to seek the familiar — gold, subjects, nightingales — in Spain Nebrija advocates the reduction of the queen's subjects to an entirely new type of dependence. He presents her with a new weapon, grammar, to be wielded by a new kind of mecenary, the *letrado*.

I was deeply moved when I felt Nebrija's *Gramática Castellana* in my hands — a quarto volume of five signatures set in Gothic letters. The epigraphy is printed in red, and a blank page precedes the Introduction :

A la muy alta e assi esclarecida princesa dona Isabela la tercera deste nombre Reina i senora natural de espana e las islas de nuestro mar. Comienza la gramática que nuevamenta hizo el maestro Antonio de Nebrija sobre la lengua castellana, e pone primero el prólogo. Léelo en buena hora.

The Conqueror of Granada receives a petition, similar to many others. But unlike the request of Columbus, who wanted resources to establish a new route to the China of Marco Polo, that of Nebrija urges the queen to invade a new domain at home. He offers Isabella a tool to colonize the language spoken by her own subjects; he wants her to replace the people's speech by the imposition of the queen's *lengua* — her language, her tongue.

Empire needs "language" as consort

I shall translate and comment on sections of the six-page introduction to Nebrija's grammar. Remember, then, that the colophon of the *Gramática Castellana* notes that it came off the press in Salamanca on the 18th of August, just fifteen days after Columbus

had sailed.

My Illustrious Queen. Whenever I ponder over the tokens of the past that have been preserved in writing, I am forced to the very same conclusion. Language has always been the consort of empire, and forever shall remain its mate. Together they come into being, together they grow and flower, and together they decline.

To understand what *la lengua*, "language," meant for Nebrija, it is necessary to know who he was. Antonio Martinez de la Cala, a *converso*, descendant of Jewish converts, had decided at age nineteen that Latin, at least on the Iberian peninsula, had become so corrupted that one could say it had died of neglect. Thus Spain was left without a language (*une lingua*) worthy of the name. The *languages* of Scripture — Greek, Latin, Hebrew — clearly were something other than the *speech* of the people. Nebrija then went to Italy where, in his opinion, Latin was least corrupted. When he returned to Spain, his contemporary Hernán Nunez wrote that it was like Orpheus bringing Euridice back from Hades. During the next twenty years, Nebrija dedicated himself to the renewal of classical grammar and rhetoric. The first full book printed in Salamanca was his Latin grammar (1482).

When he reached his forties and began to age — as he puts it — he discovered that he could make a language out of the speech forms he daily encountered in Spain — to engineer, to synthesize chemically, a language. He then wrote his Spanish grammar, the first in any modern European tongue. The *converso* uses his classical formation to extend the juridic category of *consuetudo hispaniae* to the realm of language. Throughout the Iberian peninsula, crowds speaking various languages gather for pogroms against the Jewish outsider at the very moment when the cosmopolitan *converso* offers his services to the Crown — the creation of one language suitable for use wherever the sword could carry it.

Nebrija created two rule books, both at the service of the queen's regime. First, he wrote a grammar. Now grammars were not new. The most perfect of them, unknown to Nebrija, was already two thousand years old — Panini's grammar of Sanskrit. This was an attempt to describe a dead language, to be taught only to a very few. This is the goal pursued by Prakrit grammarians in India, and Latin or Greek grammarians in the West. Nebrija's work, however, was

written as a tool for conquest abroad and a weapon to suppress untutored speech at home.

While he worked on his grammar, Nebrija also wrote a dictionary that, to this day, remains the single best source on Old Spanish. The two attempts made in our lifetime to supersede him both failed. Gili Gaya's *Tesouro Lexicográfico*, begun in 1947, foundered on the letter E, and R.S. Boggs (*Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish*) remains, since 1946, an often copied draft. Nebrija's dictionary appeared the year after his grammar, and already contained evidence of the New World — the first Americanism, *canoa* (canoe), appeared.

Castilian passes through its infancy

Now note what Nebrija thinks about Castilian.

Castilian went through its infancy at the time of the judges... it waxed in strength under Alfonso the Learned. It was he who collected law and history books in Greek and Latin and had them translated.

Indeed, Alfonso (1221—1284) was the first European monarch to use the vulgar or vernacular tongue of the scribes as his chancery language. His intent was to demonstrate that he was not one of the Latin kings. Like a caliph, he ordered his courtiers to undertake pilgrimages through Muslim and Christian books, and transform them into treasures that, because of their very language, would be a valuable inheritance to leave his kingdom. Incidentally, most of his translators were Jews from Toledo. And these Jews — whose own language was Old Castilian — preferred to translate the oriental languages into the vernacular rather than into Latin, the sacred language of the Church.

Nebrija points out to the queen that Alfonso had left solid tokens of Old Spanish; in addition, he had worked toward the transformation of vernacular speech into language proper through using it to make laws, to record history, and to translate from the classics.

He continues :

This our language followed our soldiers whom we sent abroad to rule. It spread to Aragon, to Navarra, even to Italy ... the

scattered bits and pieces of Spain were thus gathered and joined into one single kingdom.

Nebrija here reminds the queen of the new pact possible between sword and book. He proposes a covenant between two spheres, both within the secular realm of the Crown, a covenant distinct from the medieval pact between Emperor and Pope, which had been a covenant bridging the secular and the sacred. He proposes a pact, not of sword and cloth — each sovereign in its own sphere — but of sword and expertise, encompassing the engine of conquest abroad and a system of scientific control of diversity within the entire kingdom. And he knows well whom he addresses : the wife of Ferdinand of Aragon, a woman he once praised as the most enlightened of all men (sic). He is aware that she reads Cicero, Seneca, and Livy in the original for her own pleasure, and that she possesses a sensibility that unites the physical and spiritual into what she herself called “good taste”. Indeed, historians claim that she is the first to use this expression. Together with Ferdinand, she was trying to give shape to the chaotic Castile they had inherited; together they were creating Renaissance institutions of government, institutions apt for the making of a modern state, and yet, something better than a nation of lawyers. Nebrija calls to their minds a concept that, to this day, is powerful in Spanish — *armas y letras*. He speaks about the marriage of empire and language, addressing the sovereign who had just recently — and for a painfully short time — seized from the Church the Inquisition, in order to use it as a secular instrument of royal power. The monarchy used it to gain economic control of the *grandees*, and to replace noblemen by the *letrados* of Nebrija on the governing councils of the kingdom. This was the monarchy that transformed the older advisory bodies into bureaucratic organizations of civil servants, institutions fit only for the execution of royal policies. These secretaries or ministries of “experts”, under the court ceremonial of the Hapsburgs, were later assigned a ritual role in processions and receptions incomparable to any other secular bureaucracy since the times of Byzantium.

Language now needs tutors

Very astutely, Nebrija’s argument reminds the queen that a new union of *armas y letras*, complementary to that of church and state, was essential to gather and join the scattered pieces of Spain into a single absolute kingdom.

This unified and sovereign body will be of such shape and inner cohesion that centuries will be unable to undo it. Now that the church has been purified, and we are thus reconciled to God (does he think of the work of his contemporary, Torquemada?), now that the enemies of the Faith have been subdued by our arms (he refers to the apogee of the *Reconquista*), now that just laws are being enforced, enabling all of us to live as equals (perhaps having in mind the *Hermandades*), what else remains but the flowering of the peaceful arts. And among the arts, foremost are those of language, which sets us apart from wild animals, language, which is the unique distinction of man, the means for the kind of understanding which can be surpassed only by contemplation.

Here, we distinctly hear the appeal of the humanist to the prince, requesting him to defend the realm of civilized Christians against the domain of the wild. "The wild man's inability to speak is part of the Wild Man Myth whenever we meet him during the middle ages ... in a morally ordered world, to be wild is to be incoherent mute... sinful and accursed." Formerly, the heathen was to be brought into the fold through baptism; henceforth, through language. Language now needs tutors.

A loose and unruly language

Nebrija then points out :

So far, this our language has been left loose and unruly and, therefore, in just a few centuries this language has changed beyond recognition. If we were to compare what we speak today with the language spoken five hundred years ago, we would notice a difference and a diversity that could not be any greater if these were two alien tongues.

Nebrija describes the evolution and extension of vernacular tongues, of the *lengua vulgar*, through time. He refers to the un-tutored speech of Castile — different from that of Aragon and Navarra, regions where soldiers had recently introduced Castilian — but a speech also different from the older Castilian into which Alfonso's monks and Jews had translated the Greek classics from their Arabic versions. In the fifteenth century people felt and lived their languages otherwise than we do today. The study of Columbus' language made by Menendez Pidal helps us to understand this.

Columbus, originally a cloth merchant from Genoa, had as his first language Genovese, a dialect still not standardized today. He learned to write business letters in Latin, albeit a barbarous variety. After being shipwrecked in Portugal, he married a Portuguese and probably forgot most of his Italian. He spoke, but never wrote a word of Portuguese. During his nine years in Lisbon, he took up writing in Spanish. But he never used his brilliant mind to learn Spanish well, and always wrote it in a hybrid, Portuguese-mannered style. His Spanish is not Castilian but is rich in simple words picked up all over the peninsula. In spite of some syntactical monstrosities, he handles this language in a lively, expressive, and precise fashion. Columbus, then, wrote in two languages he did not speak, and spoke several. None of this seems to have been problematic for his contemporaries. However, it is also true that none of these were languages in the eyes of Nebrija.

Unbound and ungoverned speech finds a new ally in printing...

Continuing to develop his petition, he introduces *the* crucial element of his argument. *La lengua suelta y fuera de regla*, the unbound and ungoverned speech in which people actually live and manage their lives, has become a challenge to the Crown. He now interprets an unproblematic historical fact as a problem for the architects of a new kind of polity — the modern state.

Your Majesty, it has been my constant desire to see our nation become great, and to provide the men of my tongue with books worthy of their leisure. Presently, they waste their time on novels and fancy stories full of lies.

Nebrija proposes to regularize language to stop people from wasting time on frivolous reading, "*quando la emprenta aun no informaba la lengua de los libros.*" And Nebrija is not the only late fifteenth-century person concerned with the "waste" of leisure time made possible through the inventions of paper and movable type. Ignatius of Loyola, twenty-nine years later, while convalescing in Pamplona with a leg shattered by a cannonball, came to believe that he had disastrously wasted his youth. At thirty, he looked back on his life as one filled with "the vanities of the world...", whose leisure had included the reading of vernacular trash.

... and must be repressed

Nebrija argues for standardizing a living language for the benefit of its printed form. This argument is also made in our generation, but the end now is different. Our contemporaries believe that standardized language is a necessary condition to teach people to read, indispensable for the distribution of printed books. The argument in 1492 is the opposite: Nebrija is upset because people who speak in dozens of distinct vernacular tongues have become the victims of a reading epidemic. They waste their leisure, throwing away their time on books that circulate outside of any possible bureaucratic control. A manuscript was so precious and rare that authorities could often suppress the work of an author by literally seizing *all* the copies. Manuscripts could sometimes be extirpated by the roots. Not so books. Even with the small editions of two hundred to less than a thousand copies — typical for the first generation of print — it would never be possible to confiscate an entire run. Printed books called for the exercise of censorship through an *Index of Forbidden Books*. Books could only be proscribed, not destroyed. But Nebrija's proposal appeared more than fifty years before the *Index* was published in 1559. And he wishes to achieve control over the printed word on a much deeper level than what the Church later attempted through proscription. He wants to replace the people's vernacular by the grammarian's language. The humanist proposes the standardization of colloquial language to remove the new technology of printing from the vernacular domain — to prevent people from printing and reading in the various languages that, up to that time, they had only spoken. By this monopoly over an official and taught language, he proposes to suppress wild, untaught vernacular reading.

Vernacular allied to printing would challenge the nation state

To grasp the full significance of Nebrija's argument — the argument that compulsory education in a standardized national tongue is necessary to stop people from wanton reading that gives them an easy pleasure — one must remember the status of print at that time. Nebrija was born before the appearance of movable type. He was thirteen when the first movable stock came into use. His conscious adult life coincides with the Incunabula. When printing was in its twenty-fifth year, he published his Latin grammar; when it was in its thirty-fifth year, his Spanish grammar. Nebrija could recall the time before print, as I can the time before television. Nebrija's text, on which I am commenting, was by coincidence published the year

Thomas Caxton died. And Caxton's work itself furthers our understanding of the *vernacular* book.

Thomas Caxton was an English cloth merchant living in the Netherlands. He took up translating, and then apprenticed himself to a printer. After publishing a few books in English, he took his press to England in 1476. By the time he died (1491), he had published forty translations into English, and nearly everything available in English vernacular literature, with the notable exception of William Langland's *Piers Plowman*. I have often wondered if he left this important work off his list because of the challenge it might present to one of his best sellers - *The Art and Crafte to Knowe Well to Dye*. This volume of his Westminster Press belongs to the first series of self-help books. Whatever would train for a society well informed and well mannered, whatever would lead to behavior gentle and devout, was gathered in small folios and quartos of neat Gothic print — instructions on everything from manipulating a knife to conducting a conversation, from the art of weeping to the art of playing chess to that of dying. Before 1500, no less than 100 editions of this last book appeared. It is a self-instruction manual, showing one how to prepare to die with dignity and without the intervention of physician or clergy.

Four categories of books first appeared in the peoples' languages : vernacular, native literature; translations from French and Latin; devotional books; and already there were the how-to-do-it manuals that made teachers unnecessary. Printed books in Latin were of a different sort, comprising textbooks, rituals, and lawbooks — books at the service of professional clergymen and teachers. From the very beginning, printed books were of two kinds : those which readers independently chose for their pleasure, and those professionally prescribed for the reader's own good. It is estimated that before 1500, more than seventeen hundred presses in almost three hundred European towns had produced one or more books. Almost forty thousand editions were published during the fifteenth century, comprising somewhere between fifteen and twenty million copies. About one-third of these were published in the various vernacular languages of Europe. This portion of printed books is the source of Nebrija's concern.

Books henceforth shall be seen and not heard

To appreciate more fully his worry about the freedom to read,

one must remember that reading in his time was not silent. Silent reading is a recent invention. Augustine was already a great author and the Bishop of Hippo when he found that it could be done. In his *Confessions*, he describes the discovery. During the night, charity forbade him to disturb his fellow monks with noises he made while reading. But curiosity impelled him to pick up a book. So, he learned to read in silence, an art that he had observed in only one man, his teacher, Ambrose of Milan. Ambrose practiced the art of silent reading because otherwise people would have gathered around him and would have interrupted him with their queries on the text. Loud reading was the link between classical learning and popular culture.

Habitual reading in a loud voice produces social effects. It is an extraordinarily effective way of teaching the art to those who look over the reader's shoulder; rather than being confined to a sublime or sublimated form of self-satisfaction, it promotes community intercourse; it actively leads to common digestion of and comment on the passages read. In most of the languages of India, the verb that translates into "reading" has a meaning close to "sounding". The same verb makes the book and the vina sound. To read and to play a musical instrument are perceived as parallel activities. The current, simpleminded, internationally accepted definition of literacy obscures an alternate approach to book, print, and reading. If reading were conceived primarily as a social activity as, for example, competence in playing the guitar, fewer readers could mean a much broader access to books and literature.

Reading aloud was common in Europe before Nebrija's time. Print multiplied and spread opportunities for this infectious reading in an epidemic manner. Further, the line between literature and illiterate was different from what we recognize now. Literate was he who had been taught Latin. The great mass of people, thoroughly conversant with the vernacular literature of their region, either did not know how to read and write, had picked it up on their own, had been instructed as accountants, had left the clergy or, even if they knew it, hardly used their Latin. This held true for the poor and for many nobles, especially women. And we sometimes forget that even today the rich, many professionals, and high-level bureaucrats have assistants report a verbal digest of documents and information, while they call on secretaries to write what they dictate.

To the queen, Nebrija's proposed enterprise must have seemed

even more improbable than Columbus' project. But, ultimately, it turned out to be more fundamental than the New World for the rise of the Hapsburg Empire. Nebrija clearly showed the way to prevent the free and anarchic development of printing technology, and exactly how to transform it into the evolving national state's instrument of bureaucratic control.

At the queen's service, synthetic Castilian shall replace the people's speech

Today, we generally act on the assumption that books could not be printed and would not be read in any number if they were written in a vernacular language free from the constraints of an official grammar. Equally, we assume that people could not learn to read and write their own tongue unless they are taught in the same manner as students were traditionally taught Latin. Let us listen again to Nebrija.

By means of my grammar, they shall learn artificial Castilian, not difficult to do, since it is built up on the base of a language they know; and, then, Latin will come easily...

Nebrija already considers the vernacular as a raw material from which his Castilian art can be produced, a resource to be mined, not unlike the Brazilwood and human chattel that, Columbus sadly concluded, were the only resources of value or importance in Cuba.

Speech nurtured from roots is replaced by language dispensed from the crown

Nebrija does not seek to teach grammar that people learn to read. Rather, he implores Isabella to give him the power and authority to stem the anarchic spread of reading by the use of his grammar.

Presently, they waste their leisure on novels and fancy stories full of lies. I have decided, therefore, that my most urgent task is to transform Castilian speech into an artifact so that whatever henceforth shall be written in this language may be of one standard tenor.

Nebrija frankly states what he wants to do and even provides the outline of his incredible project. He deliberately turns the mate

of empire into its slave. Here the first modern language expert advises the Crown on the way to make, out of a people's speech and lives, tools that befit the state and its pursuits. Nebrija's grammar is conceived by him as a pillar of the nation-state. Through it, the state is seen, from its very beginning, as an aggressively productive agency. The new state takes from people the words on which they subsist, and transforms them into the standardized language which henceforth they are compelled to use, each one at the level of education that has been institutionally imputed to him. Henceforth, people will have to rely on the language they receive from above, rather than to develop a tongue in common with one another. The switch from the vernacular to an officially taught mother tongue is perhaps the most significant — and, therefore, least researched — event in the coming of a commodity-intensive society. The radical change from the vernacular to taught language foreshadows the switch from breast to bottle, from subsistence to welfare, from production for use to production for market, from expectations divided between state and church to a world where the Church is marginal, religion is privatized, and the state assumes the maternal functions heretofore claimed only by the Church. Formerly, there had been no salvation outside the Church; now, there would be no reading, no writing — if possible, no speaking — outside the educational sphere. People would have to be reborn out of the monarch's womb, and be nourished at her breast. Both the citizen of the modern state and his state-provided language come into being for the first time — both are without precedent anywhere in history.

The bosom of Alma Mater

But dependence on a formal, bureaucratic institution to obtain for every individual a service that is as necessary as breast milk for human subsistence, while radically new and without parallel outside of Europe, was not a break with Europe's past. Rather, this was a logical step forward — a process first legitimated in the Christian Church evolved into an accepted and expected temporal function of the secular state. Institutional maternity has a unique European history since the third century. In this sense it is indeed true that Europe is the Church and the Church is Europe. Nebrija and universal education in the modern state cannot be understood without a close knowledge of the Church, insofar as this institution is represented as a mother.

From the very earliest days, the Church is called "mother".

Marcion the Gnostic uses this designation in 144. At first, the community of the faithful is meant to be mother to the new members whom communion, that is, the fact of celebrating community, engenders. Soon, however, the Church becomes a mother outside of whose bosom it is hardly worthwhile to be called human or to be alive. But the origins of the Church's self-understanding as mother have been little researched. One can often find comments about the role of mother goddesses in the various religions scattered throughout the Roman Empire at the time Christianity began to spread. But the fact that no previous community had ever been called mother has yet to be noticed and studied. We know that the image of the Church as mother comes from Syria, and that it flourished in the third century in North Africa. On a beautiful mosaic near Tripoli, where the claim is first expressed, both the invisible community and the visible building are represented as mother. And Rome is the last place where the metaphor is applied to the Church. The female personification of an institution did not fit the Roman style; the idea is first taken up only late in the fourth century in a poem by Pope Damasus.

This early Christian notion of the Church as mother has no historical precedent. No direct gnostic or pagan influence, nor any direct relationship to the Roman mother cult has thus far been proven. The description of the Church's maternity is, however, quite explicit. The Church conceives, bears, and gives birth to her sons and daughters. She may have a miscarriage. She raises her children to her breast to nourish them with the milk of faith. In this early period, the institutional trait is clearly present, but the maternal authority exercised by the Church through her bishops and the ritual treatment of the Church building as a female entity are still balanced by the insistence on the motherly quality of God's love, and of the mutual love of His children in baptism. Later, the image of the Church as a prototype of the authoritarian and possessive mother becomes dominant in the middle ages. The popes then insist on an understanding of the Church as *Mater*, *Magistra*, and *Domina* — mother, authoritative teacher, sovereign. Thus Gregory VII (1073—1085) names her in the struggle with the emperor Henry IV.

Nebrija's introduction is addressed to a queen intent on building a modern state. And his argument implies that, institutionally, the state must now assume the universally maternal functions heretofore claimed only by the Church. *Educatio*, as a function first institutionalized at the bosom of Mother Church, becomes a function

of the Crown in the process of the modern state's formation.

Educatio prolis is a term that in Latin grammar calls for a female subject. It designates the feeding and nurturing in which mothers engage, be they bitch, sow, or woman. Among humans only women educate. And they educate only infants, which etymologically means those who are yet without speech. To educate has etymologically nothing to do with "drawing out" as pedagogical folklore would have it. Pestalozzi should have needed Cicero : *educit obstetrix* — *educat nutrix* : the midwife draws — the nurse nurtures, because men do neither in Latin. They engage in *docentia* (teaching) and *instructio* (instruction). The first men who attributed to themselves educational functions were early bishops who led their flocks to the *alma ubera* (milk-brimming breasts) of Mother Church from which they were never to be weaned. This is why they, like their secular successors, call the faithful *alumni* — which means sucklings or suckers, and nothing else. It is this transfer of woman's functions to specialized institutional spheres governed by clergies that Nebrija helped to bring about. In the process the state acquired the function of a many-uddered provider of distinct forms of sustenance, each corresponding to a separate basic need, and each guarded and managed by the clergy, always male in the higher reaches of the hierarchy.

Bureaucratic control as the stone of wisdom

Actually, when Nebrija proposes to transform Castilian into an artifact, as necessary for the queen's subjects as faith for the Christian, he appeals to the hermetic tradition. In the language of his time, the two words he uses — *reducir* and *artificio* — have both an ordinary and a technical meaning. In the latter case, they belong to a language of alchemy.

According to Nebrija's own dictionary, *reducir* in fifteenth-century Spanish means "to change", "to bring into obeisance", and "to civilize". In this last sense, the Jesuits later understood the *Reducciones de Paraguay*. In addition, *reductio* — throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — means one of the seven stages by which ordinary elements of nature are transmuted into the philosopher's stone, into the panacea that, by touch, turns everything into gold. Here, *reductio* designates the fourth of seven grades of sublimation. It designates the crucial test that must be passed by grey matter to be promoted from the primary to the secondary grades of

enlightenment. In the first four grades, raw nature is successively liquefied, purified, and evaporated. In the fourth grade, that of *reductio*, it is nourished on philosopher's milk. If it takes to this substance, which will occur only if the first three processes have completely voided its unruly and raw nature, the chrysoperm, the sperm of gold hidden in its depth, can be brought forth. This is *educatio*. During the following three stages, the alchemist can coagulate his *alumnus* — the substance he has fed with his milk — into the philosopher's stone. The precise language used here is a bit posterior to Nebrija. It is taken almost literally from Paracelsus, another man born with a year of the publication of the *Gramatica Castellana*.

The Expert needed by the Crown

Now let us return to the text. Nebrija develops his argument :

I have decided to transform Castilian into an artifact so that whatever shall be written henceforth in this language shall be of one standard tenor, one coinage that can outlast the times. Greek and Latin have been governed by art, and thus have kept their uniformity throughout the ages. Unless the like of this be done for our language, in vain Your Majesty's chroniclers... shall praise your deeds. Your labor will not last more than a few years, and we shall continue to feed on Castilian translations of foreign tales about our own kings. Either your feats will fade with the language or they will roam among aliens abroad, homeless, without a dwelling in which they can settle.

The Roman Empire could be governed through the Latin of its elite. But the traditional, separate elite language used in former empires for keeping records, maintaining international relations, and advancing learning — like Persian, Arabic, Latin, or Frankish — is insufficient to realize the aspirations of nationalistic monarchies. The modern European state cannot function in the world of the vernacular. The new national state needs an *artificio*, unlike the perennial Latin of diplomacy and the perishable Castilian of Alfonso the Learned. This kind of polity requires a standard language understood by all those subject to its laws and for whom the tales written at the monarch's behest (that is, propaganda) are destined.

Social status from taught language rather than blood

However, Nebrija does not suggest that Latin be abandoned. On the contrary, the neo-Latin renaissance in Spain owed its existence largely to his grammar, dictionary, and textbooks. But his important innovation was to lay the foundation for a linguistic ideal without precedent : the creation of a society in which the universal ruler's bureaucrats, soldiers, merchants, and peasants all pretend to speak one language, a language the poor are presumed to understand and to obey. Nebrija established the notion of a kind of ordinary language that itself is sufficient to place each man in his assigned place on the pyramid that education in a mother tongue necessarily constructs. In his argument, he insists that Isabella's claim to historical fame depends on forging a language of propaganda — universal and fixed like Latin, yet capable of penetrating every village and farm, to reduce subjects into modern citizens.

How times had changed since Dante ! For Dante, a language that had to be learned, to be spoken according to a grammar, was inevitably a dead tongue. For him, such a language was fit only for schoolmen, whom he cynically called *inventores grammaticae facultatis*. What for Dante was dead and useless, Nebrija recommends as a tool. One was interested in vital exchange, the other in universal conquest, in a language that by rule would coin words as incorruptible as the stones of a palace :

Your Majesty, I want to lay the foundations for the dwelling in which your fame can settle. I want to do for our language what Zeno has done for Greek, and Crates for Latin. I do not doubt that their betters have come to succeed them. But the fact that their pupils have improved on them does not detract from their or, I should say, from our glory — to be the inventors of a necessary craft just when the time for such invention was ripe. Trust me, Your Majesty, no craft has ever arrived more timely than grammar for the Castilian tongue at this time.

The expert is always in a hurry, but his belief in progress gives him the language of humility. The academic adventurer pushes his government to adopt his idea now, under threat of failure to achieve its imperial designs. This is the time !

Our language has indeed just now reached a height from which we must fear more that we sink, than we can ever hope to rise.

The expert as tutor of the subject's interest

Nebrija's last paragraph in the introduction exudes eloquence. Evidently the teacher of rhetoric knew what he taught. Nebrija has explained his project; given the queen logical reasons to accept it; frightened her with what would happen if she were not to heed him; now, finally, like Columbus, he appeals to her sense of a manifest destiny.

Now, Your Majesty, let me come to the last advantage that you shall gain from my grammar. For the purpose, recall the time when I presented you with a draft of this book earlier this year in Salamanca. At this time, you asked me what end such a grammar could possibly serve. Upon this, the Bishop of Avila interrupted to answer in my stead. What he said was this: "Soon Your Majesty will have placed her yoke upon many barbarians who speak outlandish tongues. By this, your victory, these people shall stand in a new need; the need for the laws the victor owes to the vanquished, and the need for the language we shall bring with us." My grammar shall serve to impart to them the Castilian tongue, as we have used grammar to teach Latin to our young.

Nebrija's project scandalizes Her Majesty

We can attempt a reconstruction of what happened at Salamanca when Nebrija handed the queen a draft of his forthcoming book. The queen praised the humanist for having provided the Castilian tongue with what had been reserved to the languages of Scripture — Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. (It is surprising and significant that the *converso*, in the year of Granada, does not mention the Arabic of the Koran!) But while Isabella was able to grasp the achievement of her *letrado* — the description of a living tongue as rules of grammar — she was unable to see any practical purpose in such an undertaking. For her, grammar was an instrument designed solely for use by teachers. She believed, however, that the vernacular simply could not be taught. In her royal view of linguistics, every subject of her many kingdoms was so made by nature that during his lifetime he would reach perfect dominion over his tongue *on his own*. In this version of "majestic linguistics", the vernacular is the subject's domain. By the very nature of things, the vernacular is beyond the reach of the Spanish Monarch's authority. But the ruler forging the nation state is unable to see the logic inherent in

the project. Isabella's initial rejection underscores the originality of Nebrija's proposal.

This discussion of Nebrija's draft about the need for instruction to speak one's mother tongue must have taken place in the months around March, 1492, the same time Columbus argued his project with the queen. At first, Isabella refused Columbus on the advice of technical counsel — he had miscalculated the circumference of the globe. But Nebrija's proposal she rejected out of a different motive : from royal respect for the autonomy of her subject's tongues. This respect of the Crown for the juridic autonomy of each village, of the *fuero del pueblo*, the judgment by peers, was perceived by people and sovereign as the fundamental freedom of Christians engaged in the reconquest of Spain. Nebrija argues against this traditional and typically Iberic prejudice of Isabella — the notion that the Crown cannot encroach on the variety of customs in the kingdoms — and calls up the image of a new, universal mission for a *modern* Crown.

Ultimately, Columbus won out because his Franciscan friends presented him to the queen as a man driven by God to serve her mystical mission. Nebrija proceeds in the same fashion. First, he argues that the vernacular must be replaced by an *artificio* to give the monarch's power increased range and duration; then, to cultivate the arts by decision of the court; also, to guard the established order against the threat presented by wanton reading and printing. But he concludes his petition with an appeal to "the Grace of Granada" — the queen's destiny, not just to conquer, but to civilize the whole world.

Both Columbus and Nebrija offer their services to a new kind of empire builder. But Columbus proposes only to use the recently created caravels to the limit of their range for the expansion of royal power in what would become New Spain. Nebrija is more basic — he argues the use of his grammar for the expansion of the queen's power in a totally new sphere : state control over the shape of people's everyday subsistence. In effect, Nebrija drafts the declaration of war against subsistence which the new state was organizing to fight. He intends the teaching of a mother tongue — the first invented part of universal education.

3rd part : The imposition of taught mother tongue

Historians have chosen Columbus' voyage from Palos as a date

convenient for marking the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times, a point useful for changing editors of textbooks. But the world of Ptolemy did not become the world of Mercator in one year, not did the world of the vernacular become the age of education overnight. Rather, traditional cosmography was gradually adjusted in the light of widening experience. Columbus was followed by Cortéz, Copernicus by Kepler, Nebrija by Comenius. Unlike personal insight, the change in world view that generated our dependence on goods and services took 500 years.

The rise of commodity-intensive society

How often the hand of the clock advances depends on the language of the ciphers on the quadrant. The Chinese speak of five stages in sprouting, and dawn approaches in seven steps for the Arabs. If I were to describe the evolution of *homo economicus* from Mandeville to Marx or Galbraith, I would come to a different view of epochs than if I had a mind to outline the stages in which the ideology of *homo educandus* developed from Nebrija through Radke to Comenius. And again, within this same paradigm, a different set of turning points would best describe the decay of untutored learning and the route toward the inescapable miseducation that educational institutions necessarily dispense. It took a good decade to recognize that Columbus had found a new hemisphere, not just a new route. It took much longer to invent the concept "New World" for the continent whose existence he had denied.

A full century and a half separated the claim of Nebrija — in the queen's service he *had* to teach all her subjects to speak — and the claim of John Amos Comenius — the possession of a method by which an army of schoolteachers would teach everybody everything perfectly.

By the time of Comenius (1592 — 1670), the ruling groups of both the Old and New Worlds were deeply convinced of the need for such a method. An incident in the history of Harvard College aptly illustrates the point. On the one hundred and fiftieth birthday of Nebrija's grammar, John Winthrop, Jr., was on his way to Europe searching for a theologian and educator to accept the presidency of Harvard. One of the first persons he approached was the Czech Comenius, leader and last bishop of the Moravian Church. Winthrop found him in London, where he was organizing the Royal Society and advising the government on public schools. In *Magna Didactica*,

vel Ars Omnibus Omnia Omnino Docendi, Comenius had succinctly defined the goals of his profession. Education begins in the womb, and does not end until death. Whatever is worth knowing is worth teaching by a special method appropriate to the subject. The preferred world is the one so organized that it functions as a school for all. Only if learning is the result of teaching can individuals be raised to the fullness of their humanity. People who learn without being taught are more like animals than men. And the school system must be so organized that all, old and young, rich and poor, noble and low, men and women, be taught effectively, not just symbolically and ostentatiously.

These are the thoughts written by the potential president of Harvard. But he never crossed the Atlantic. By the time Winthrop met him, he had already accepted the invitation of the Swedish government to organize a national system of schools for Queen Christina. Unlike Nebrija, he never had to argue the need for his services — they were always in great demand. The domain of the vernacular, considered untouchable by Isabella, had become the hunting ground for job-seeking Spanish *letrados*, Jesuits, and Massachusetts divines. A sphere of formal education had been disembedded. Formally taught mother tongue professionally handled according to abstract rules had begun to compare with and encroach upon the vernacular. This gradual replacement and degradation of the vernacular by its costly counterfeit heralds the coming of the market-intensive society in which we now live.

The decline of vernacular values

Vernacular comes from an Indo-Germanic root that implies “rootedness” and “abode”. *Vernaculum* as a Latin word was used for whatever was homebred, homespun, homegrown, homemade, as opposed to what was obtained in formal exchange. The child of one’s slave and of one’s wife, the donkey born of one’s own beast, were vernacular beings, as was the staple that came from the garden or the commons. If Karl Polanyi had adverted to this fact, he might have used the term in the meaning accepted by the ancient Romans: sustenance derived from reciprocity patterns imbedded in every aspect of life, as distinguished from sustenance that comes from exchange or from vertical distribution.

Vernacular was used in this general sense from preclassical times down to the technical formulations found in the Codex of Theodo-

sius. It was Varro who picked the term to introduce the same distinction in language. For him, vernacular speech is made up of the words and patterns grown on the speaker's own ground, as opposed to what is grown elsewhere and then transported. And since Varro's authority was widely recognized, his definition stuck. He was the librarian of both Caesar and Augustus and the first Roman to attempt a thorough and critical study of the Latin language. His *Lingua Latina* was a basic reference book for centuries. Quintillian admired him as the most learned of all Romans. And Quintillian, the Spanish-born drill master for the future senators of Rome, is always proposed to normal students as one of the founders of their profession. But neither can be compared to Nebrija. Both Varro and Quintillian were concerned with shaping the speech of senators and scribes, the speech of the forum; Nebrija with the language of the common man who could read and listen to readings. Simply, Nebrija proposed to substitute a mother tongue for the vernacular.

Vernacular came into English in the one restricted sense to which Varro had confined its meaning. Just now, I would like to resuscitate some of its old breath. We need a simple, straightforward word to designate the activities of people when they are not motivated by thoughts of exchange, a word that denotes autonomous, non-market related actions through which people satisfy everyday needs — the actions that by their very nature escape bureaucratic control, satisfying needs to which, in the very process, they give specific shape. Vernacular seems a good old word for this purpose, and should be acceptable to many contemporaries. There are technical words that designate the satisfaction of needs that economists do not or cannot measure — social production as opposed to economic production, the generation of use-values as opposed to the production of commodities, household economics as opposed to market economics. But these terms are specialized, tainted with some ideological prejudice, and each, in a different way, badly limps. Each contrasting pair of terms, in its own way, also fosters the confusion that assigns vernacular undertakings to unpaid, standardized, formalized activities. It is this kind of confusion I wish to clarify. We need a simple adjective to name those acts of competence, lust, or concern that we want to defend from measurement or manipulation by Chicago Boys and Socialist Commissars. The term must be broad enough to fit the preparation of food and the shaping of language, childbirth, and recreation, without implying either a privatized activity akin to the housework of modern women, a hobby or an irrational and primitive procedure. Such an adjective

is not at hand. But vernacular might serve. By speaking about vernacular language and the possibility of its recuperation, I am trying to bring into awareness and discussion the existence of a vernacular mode of being, doing, and making that in a desirable future society might again expand in all aspects of life.

Mother tongue, since the term was first used, has never meant the vernacular, but rather its contrary. The term was first used by Catholic monks to designate a particular language they used, instead of Latin, when speaking from the pulpit. No Indo-Germanic culture before had used the term. The word was introduced into Sanskrit in the eighteenth century as a translation from the English. The term has no roots in the other major language families now spoken on which I could check. The only classical people who viewed their homeland as a kind of mother were the Cretans. Bachofen suggests that memories of an old matriarchal order still lingered in their culture. But even in Crete, there was no equivalent to "mother" tongue. To trace the association which led to the term *mother tongue*, I shall first have to look at what happened at the court of Charlemagne, and then what happened later in the Abbey of Gorz.

The first universal need for professional service

The idea that humans are born in such fashion that they need institutional service from professional agents in order to reach that humanity for which by birth all people are destined can be traced down to Carolingian times. It was then that, for the first time in history, it was discovered that there are certain basic needs, needs that are universal to mankind and that cry out for satisfaction in a standard fashion that cannot be met in a vernacular way. The discovery is perhaps best associated with the Church reform that took place in the eighth century. The Scottish monk Alcuin, the former chancellor of York University who became the court philosopher of Charles the Great, played a prominent role in this reform. Up to that time the Church had considered its ministers primarily as priests, that is, as men selected and invested with special powers to meet communitary, liturgical, public needs. They were engaged in preaching at ritual occasions and had to preside at functions. They acted as public officials, analogous to those others through whom the state provided for the administration of justice, or, in Roman times, for public work. To think of these kinds of magistrates as if they were "service professionals" would be an anachronistic projection of our contemporary categories.

But then, from the eighth century on, the classical priest rooted in Roman and Hellenistic models began to be transmogrified into the precursor of the service professional: the teacher, social worker, or educator. Church ministers began to cater to the personal needs of parishioners, and to equip themselves with a sacramental and pastoral theology that defined and established these needs for their regular service. The institutionally defined care of the individual, the family, the village community, acquires unprecedented prominence. The term "holy mother the church" ceases almost totally to mean the actual assembly of the faithful whose love, under the impulse of the Holy Spirit, engenders new life in the very act of meeting. The term *mother* henceforth refers to an invisible, mystical reality from which alone those services absolutely necessary for salvation can be obtained. Henceforth, access to the good graces of this mother on whom universally necessary salvation depends is entirely controlled by a hierarchy of ordained males. This gender-specific mythology of male hierarchies mediating access to the institutional source of life is without precedent. From the ninth to the eleventh century, the idea took shape that there are some needs common to all human beings that can be satisfied only through service from professional agents. Thus the definition of needs in terms of professionally defined commodities in the service sector precedes by a millennium the industrial production of universally needed basic goods.

Thirty-five years ago, Lewis Mumford tried to make this point. When I first read his statement that the monastic reform of the ninth century created some of the basic assumptions on which the industrial system is founded. I could not be convinced by something I considered more of an intuition than a proof. In the meantime, though, I have found a host of converging arguments — most of which Mumford does not seem to suspect — for rooting the ideologies of the industrial age in the earlier Carolingian Renaissance. The idea that there is no salvation without *personal services* provided by professionals in the name of an institutional Mother Church is one of these formerly unnoticed developments without which, again, our own age would be unthinkable. True, it took five hundred years of medieval theology to elaborate on this concept. Only by the end of the Middle Ages would the *pastoral* self-image of the Church be fully rounded. And only in the Council of Trent (1545) would this self-image of the Church as a mother milked by clerical hierarchies become formally defined. Then, in the *Constitution* of the Second Vatican Council (1964), the Catholic Church, which had

served in the past as the prime model for the evolution of secular service organizations, aligns itself explicitly in the image of its secular imitations.

Professional control over the nature of needed service

The important point here is the notion that the clergy can define its services as needs of human nature, and make this service-commodity the kind of necessity that cannot be forgone without jeopardy to eternal life. It is in this ability of a nonhereditary elite that we ought to locate the foundation without which the contemporary service of welfare state would not be conceivable. Surprisingly little research has been done on the religious concepts that fundamentally distinguish the industrial age from all other epochs. The official decline of the vernacular conception of Christian life in favor of one organized around pastoral care is complex and drawn-out process constituting the background for a set of consistent shifts in the language and institutional development of the West.

The origins of "mother tongue"

When Europe first began to take shape as an idea and as a political reality, between Merovingian times and the High Middle Ages, what people spoke was unproblematic. It was called "romance" or "theodise" — peoplish. Only somewhat later, *lingua vulgaris* became the common denominator distinguishing popular speech from the Latin of administration and doctrine. Since Roman times, a person's first language was the *patrius sermo*, the language of the male head of the household. Each such *sermo* or speech was perceived as a separate language. Neither in ancient Greece nor in the Middle Ages did people make the modern distinction between mutually understandable dialects and different languages. The same holds true today, for example, at the grass roots in India. What we know today as monolingual communities were and, in fact, are exceptions. From the Balkans to Indochina's western frontiers, it is still rare to find a village in which one cannot get along in more than two or three tongues. While it is assumed that each person has his *patrius sermo*, it is equally taken for granted that most persons speak several "vulgar" tongues, each in a vernacular, untaught way. Thus the vernacular, in opposition to specialized, learned language — Latin for the Church, Frankish for the Court — was as obvious in its variety as the taste of local wines and food, as the shapes of house and hoe, down to the eleventh century. It is at this moment, quite

suddenly, that the term *mother tongue* appears. It shows up in the sermons of some monks from the Abbey of Gorz. The process by which this phenomenon turns vernacular speech into a moral issue can only be touched upon here.

Gorz was a mother abbey in Lorraine, not far from Verdun. Benedictine monks had founded the monastery in the eighth century, around bones believed to belong to Saint Gorgonius. During the ninth century, a time of widespread decay in ecclesiastical discipline. Gorz, too, suffered a notorious decline. But only three generations after such scandalous dissolution Gorz became the center of monastic reform in the Germanic areas of the Empire. Its reinvigoration of Cistercian life paralleled the work of the reform abbey of Cluny. Within a century, 160 daughter abbeys throughout the northeastern parts of central Europe were established from Gorz.

It seems quite probable that Gorz was then at the centers of the diffusion of a new technology that was crucial for the later imperial expansion of the European powers : the transformation of the horse into the tractor of choice. Four Asiatic inventions — the horseshoe, the fixed saddle and stirrup, the bit, and the cummett (the collar resting on the shoulder) — permitted important and extensive changes. One horse could replace six oxen. While supplying the same traction, and more speed, a horse could be fed on the acreage needed for one yoke of oxen. Because of its speed, the horse permitted a more extensive cultivation of the wet, northern soils, in spite of the short summers. Also, greater rotation of crops was possible. But even more importantly, the peasant could now tend fields twice as far away from his dwelling. A new pattern of life became possible. Formerly, people had lived in clusters of homesteads; now they could form villages large enough to support a parish and, later, a school. Through dozens of abbeys, monastic learning and discipline, together with the reorganization of settlement patterns, spread throughout this part of Europe.

Gorz lies close to the line that divides Frankish from Romance types of vernacular, and some monks from Cluny began to cross this line. In these circumstances, the monks of Gorz made language, vernacular language, into an issue to defend their territorial claims. The monks began to preach in Frankish, and spoke specifically about the value of the Frankish tongue. They began to use the pulpit as a forum to stress the importance of language itself, perhaps even to teach it. From the little we know, they used at least two approaches.

First, Frankish was the language spoken by the women, even in those areas where the men were already beginning to use a Romance vernacular. Second, it was the language now used by Mother Church.

How charged with sacred meanings motherhood was in the religiosity of the twelfth century one can grasp through contemplating the contemporary statues of the Virgin Mary, or from reading the liturgical Sequences, the poetry of the time. The term mother tongue, from its very first use, instrumentalizes everyday language in the service of an institutional cause. The word was translated from Frankish into Latin. Then, as a rare Latin term, it incubated for several centuries. In the decades before Luther, quite suddenly and dramatically, mother tongue acquired a strong meaning. It came to mean the language created by Luther in order to translate the Hebrew Bible, the language taught by schoolmasters to read that book, and then the language that justified the existence of nation states.

The age of commodity-defined needs

Today, "mother tongue" means several things: the first language learned by the child, and the language which the authorities of the state have decided ought to be one's first language. Thus, mother tongue can mean the first language picked up at random, generally a very different speech than the one taught by paid educators and by parents who act as if they were such educators. We see, then, that people are considered as creatures who need to be taught to speak properly in order "to communicate" in the modern world — as they need to be wheeled about in motorized carriages in order to move in modern landscapes — their feet no longer fit. Dependence on taught mother tongue can be taken as the paradigm of all other dependencies typical of humans in an age of commodity-defined needs. And the ideology of this dependence was formulated by Nebrija. The ideology which claims that human mobility depends not on feet and open frontiers, but on the availability of "transportation" is only slightly more than a hundred years old. Language teaching created employment long ago; macadam and the suspended coach made the conveyance of people a big business only from about the middle of the 18th century.

The cost of taught mother tongue

As language teaching has become a job, it has begun to cost a

lot of money. Words are now one of the two largest categories of marketed values that make up the gross national product (GNP). Money decides what shall be said, who shall say it, when and what kind of people shall be targeted for the messages. The higher the cost of each uttered word, the more determined the echo demanded. In schools people learn to speak as they should. Money is spent to make the poor speak more like the wealthy, the sick more like the healthy, and the minority more like the majority. We pay to improve, correct, enrich, update the language of children and of their teachers. We spend more on the professional jargons that are taught in college, and more yet in high schools to give teenagers a smattering of these jargons; but just enough to make them feel dependent on the psychologist, druggist, or librarian who is fluent in some special kind of English. We go even further : we first allow standard language to degrade ethnic, black, or hillbilly language, and then spend money to teach their counterfeits as academic subjects. Administrators and entertainers, admen and newsmen, ethnic politicians and "radical" professionals, form powerful interest groups, each fighting for a larger slice of the language pie.

I do not really know how much is spent in the United States to make words. But soon someone will provide us with the necessary statistical tables. Ten years ago, energy accounting was almost unthinkable. Now it has become an established practice. Today you can easily look up how many "energy units" have gone into growing, harvesting, packaging, transporting, and merchandising one edible calory of bread. The difference between the bread produced and eaten in a village in Greece and that found in an American supermarket is enormous — about forty times more energy units are contained in each edible calory of the latter. Bicycle traffic in cities permits one to move four times as fast as on foot for one-fourth of the energy expended — while cars, for the same progress, need 150 times as many calories per passenger mile. Information of this kind was available ten years ago, but no one thought about it. Today, it is recorded and will soon lead to a change in people's outlook on the need for fuels. It would now be interesting to know what language accounting looks like, since the linguistic analysis of contemporary language is certainly not complete, unless for each group of speakers we know the amount of money spent on shaping the speech of the average person. Just as social energy accounts are only approximate and at best allow us to identify the orders of magnitude within which the relative values are found, so language accounting would provide us with data on the relative prevalence of

standardized, taught language in a population — sufficient, however, for the argument I want to make.

Class-specific destruction of vernacular speech

But mere per capita expenditure employed to mold the language of a group of speakers does not tell us enough. No doubt we would learn that each paid word addressed to the rich costs, per capita, much more than words addressed to the poor. Watts are actually more democratic than words. But taught language comes in a vast range of qualities. The poor, for instance, are much more blared at than the rich, who can buy tutoring and, what is more precious, hedge on their own high class vernacular by purchasing science. The educator, politician and entertainer now come with a loudspeaker to Oaxaca, to Travancore, to the Chinese commune, and the poor immediately forfeit the claim to that indispensable luxury, the silence out of which vernacular language arises.

The “production” of mother tongue

Yet even without putting a price tag on silence, even without the more detailed language economics on which I would like to draw, I can still estimate that the dollars spent to power any nation’s motors pale before those that are now expended on prostituting speech in the mouth of paid speakers. In rich nations, language has become incredibly spongy, absorbing huge investments. High expenditures to cultivate the language of the mandarin, the author, the actor, or the charmer have always been a mark of high civilization. But these were efforts to teach elites special codes. Even the cost of making some people learn secret languages in traditional societies is incomparably lower than the capitalization of language in industrial societies.

In poor countries today, people still speak to each other without the experience of capitalized language, although such countries always contain a tiny elite who manage very well to allocate a larger proportion of the national income for their prestige language. Let me ask : What is different in the everyday speech of groups whose language has received — or shall I say absorbed ? resisted ? survived ? suffered ? enjoyed ? — huge investments, and the speech of people whose language has remained outside the market ? Comparing these two worlds of language, I want to focus my curiosity on just one issue that arises in this context. Does the

structure and function of the language itself change with the rate of investment? Are these alterations such that all languages that absorb funds show changes in the same direction? In this introductory exploration of the subject, I cannot demonstrate that this is the case. But I do believe my arguments make both propositions highly probable, and show that structurally oriented language economics are worth exploring.

Taught everyday language is without precedent in preindustrial cultures. The current dependence on paid teachers and models of ordinary speech is just as much a unique characteristic of industrial economies as dependence on fossil fuels. The need for taught mother tongue was discovered four centuries earlier, but only in our generation have both language and energy been effectively treated as worldwide needs to be satisfied for all people by planned, programmed production and distribution. Because, unlike the vernacular of capitalized language we can reasonably say that it results from *production*.

Vernacular learning as subsistence activity

Traditional cultures subsisted on sunshine, which was captured mostly through agriculture. The hoe, the ditch, the yoke, were basic means to harness the sun. Large sails or waterwheels were known, but rare. These cultures that lived mostly on the sun subsisted basically on vernacular values. In such societies, tools were essentially the prolongation of arms, fingers, and legs. There was no need for the production of power in centralized plants and its distant distribution to clients. Equally, in these essentially sun-powered cultures, there was no need for language production. Language was drawn by each one from the cultural environment, learned from the encounter with people whom the learner could smell and touch, love or hate. The vernacular spread just as most things and services were shared, namely, by multiple forms of mutual reciprocity, rather than clientage to the appointed teacher or professional. Just as fuel was not delivered, so the vernacular was never taught. Taught tongues did exist, but they were rare, as rare as sails and sills. In most cultures, we know that speech resulted from conversation embedded in everyday life, from listening to fights and lullabies, gossip, stories, and dreams. Even today, the majority of people in poor countries learn all their language skills without any paid tutorship, without any attempt whatsoever to teach them how to speak. And they learn to speak in a way that nowhere compares with the selfconscious, self-

important, colorless mumbling that, after a long stay in villages in South America and Southeast Asia, always shocks me when I visit an American college. I feel sorrow for those students whom education has made tone deaf; they have lost the faculty for hearing the difference between the dessicated utterance of standard television English and the living speech of the unschooled. What else can I expect, though, from people who are not brought up at a mother's breast, but on formula? — on tinned milk, if they are from poor families, and on a brew prepared under the nose of Ralph Nader if they are born among the enlightened? For people trained to choose between packaged formulas, mother's breast appears as just one more option. And in the same way, for people who were intentionally *taught* to listen and to speak, untutored vernacular seems just like another, albeit less developed, model among many.

Taught mother tongue as a commodity

But this is simply false. Language exempt from rational tutorage is a different kind of social phenomenon from language that is purposefully taught. Where untutored language is the predominant marker of a shared world, a sense of power within the group exists, and this sense cannot be duplicated by language that is delivered. One way this difference shows is the sense of power over language itself, over its acquisition. Even today, the poor in nonindustrial countries all over the world are polyglot. My friend, the goldsmith in Timbuktu, speaks Songhay at home, listens to Bambara on the radio, devotedly and with some understanding says his prayers five times a day in Arabic, gets along in two trade languages on the Souk, converses in passable French that he picked up in the army — and none of these languages was formally taught him. He did not set out to learn these tongues, each is one style in which he remembers a peculiar set of experiences that fits into the frame of that language. Communities in which monolingual people prevail are rare except in three kinds of settings: tribal communities that have not really experienced the late neolithic, communities that for a long time lived through exceptional forms of discrimination, and among the citizens of nation-states that, for several generations, have enjoyed the benefits of compulsory schooling. To take it for granted that most people are monolingual is typical of the members of the middle class. Admiration for the vernacular polyglot unfailingly exposes the social climber.

Vernacular culture enhanced by taught language

Throughout history, untutored language was prevalent, but hardly ever the only kind of language known. Just as in traditional cultures some energy was captured through windmills and canals, and those who had large boats or those who cornered the right spot on the brook could use their tool for a net transfer of power to their own advantage, so some people have always used a taught language to corner some privilege. But such additional codes remained either rare and special, or served very narrow purposes. The ordinary language, until Nebrija, was prevalently vernacular. And this vernacular, be it the ordinary colloquial, a trade idiom, the language of prayer, the craft jargon, the language of basic accounts, the language of ventry or of age (for example, baby talk) was learned on the side, as part of meaningful everyday life. Of course, Latin or Sanskrit were formally taught to the priest, court languages such as Frankish or Persian or Turkish were taught to the future scribe. Neophytes were formally initiated into the language of astronomy, alchemy, or late masonry. And, clearly, the knowledge of such formally taught languages raised a man above others, somewhat like the saddle lifts the free man above the serf in the infantry, or the bridge lifts the captain above the crew. But even when access to some elite language was unlocked by a formal initiation, it did not necessarily mean that language was being taught. Quite frequently, the process of formal initiation did not transfer to the initiate a new language skill, but simply exempted him henceforth from a tabu that forbade others to use certain words, or to speak out on certain occasions. Male initiation in the language of the hunt or of sex is probably the most widespread example of such a ritually selective language detabuization.

But, in traditional societies, no matter how much or how little language was taught, the taught language rarely rubbed off on vernacular speech. Neither the existence of some language teaching at all times nor the spread of some language through professional preachers or comedians weakens my main point: Outside of those societies that we now call Modern European, no attempt was made to impose on entire populations an everyday language that would be subject to the control of paid teachers or announcers. Everyday language, until recently, was nowhere the product of design, it was nowhere paid for and delivered like a commodity. And while every historian who deals with the origins of nation-states pays attention to the imposition of a national tongue, economists generally

overlook the fact that this taught mother tongue is the earliest of specifically modern commodities, the model of all "basic needs" to come.

Counterfeit vernacular and other deceptions

Before I can go on to contrast taught colloquial speech and vernacular speech, costly language and that which comes at no cost, I must clarify one more distinction. Between taught mother tongue and the vernacular I draw the line of demarcation somewhere else than linguists when they distinguish the high language of an elite from the dialect spoken in lower classes, somewhere other than the frontier that separates regional and superregional languages, somewhere else than restricted and corrected code, and somewhere else than at the line between the language of the literate and the illiterate. No matter how restricted within geographic boundaries, no matter how distinctive for a social level, no matter how specialized for one sex role or one caste, language can be either vernacular (in the sense in which I here use the term) or of the taught variety. Elite language, trade language, second language, local idiom, are nothing new. But each of these can be formally taught and the taught counterfeit of the vernacular comes as a commodity and is something entirely new.

The contrast between these two complementary forms is most marked and important in taught everyday language, that is, taught colloquial, taught standardized everyday speech. But here again we must avoid confusion. Not all standard language is either grammar-ridden or taught. In all of history, one mutually understandable dialect has tended toward predominance in a given region. This kind of principal dialect was often accepted as the standard form. It was indeed written more frequently than other dialects, but not, for that reason, was it taught. Rather, diffusion occurred through a much more complex and subtle process. Midland English, for example, slowly emerged as that second, common style in which people born into any English dialect could also speak their own tongue. Quite suddenly, the language of Mogul hordes (Urdu) came into being in northern India. Within two generations, it became the standard in Hindustan, the trade language in a vast area, and the medium for exquisite poetry written in the Arabic and Sanskrit alphabets. Not only was this language not taught for several generations, but poets who wanted to perfect their competence explicitly avoided the study of Hindy-Urdu; they explored the Persian, Arabic, or Sanskrit

sources that had originally contributed to its being. In Indonesia, in half a generation of resistance to Japanese and Dutch, the militant fraternal and combative slogans, posters, and secret radios of the freedom struggle spread Malay competence into every village, and did so much more effectively than the later efforts of the ministry of Language Control that was established after independence.

Technical innovation and the vernacular

It is true that the dominant position of elite or standard language was always bolstered by the technique of writing. Printing enormously enhanced the colonizing power of elite language. But to say that because printing was invented elite language is destined to supplant vernacular variety results from a debilitated imagination — like saying that after the atom bomb only super powers shall be sovereign. The historical monopoly of educational bureaucracies over the printing press is no argument that printing techniques cannot be used to give new vitality to written expression and new literary opportunity to thousands of vernacular forms. The fact that the printing press could augment the extent and power of ungovernable vernacular readings was the source of Nebrija's greatest concern and of his argument *against* the vernacular. The fact that printing was used since the early 16th century (but not during the first forty years of its existence) primarily for the imposition of standard colloquials does not mean that printed language must always be a taught form. The commercial status of taught mother tongue, call it national language, literary standard, or television language, rests largely on unexamined axioms, some of which I have already mentioned : that printing implies standardized composition, that books written in the standard language could not be easily read by people who have not been schooled in that tongue; that reading is by its very nature a silent activity that usually should be conducted in private; that enforcing a universal ability to read a few sentences and then copy them in writing increases the access of a population to the content of libraries : these and other such illusions are used to enhance the standing of teachers, the sale of rotary presses, the grading of people according to their language code and, up to now, an increase in the GNP.

The radical monopoly of taught mother tongue

Vernacular spreads by practical use; it is learned from people who mean what they say and who say what they mean to the person

they address in the context of everyday life. This is not so in taught language. With taught language, the one from whom I learn is not a person whom I care for or dislike, but a professional speaker. The model for taught colloquial is somebody who does not say what he means, but who recites what others have contrived. In this sense, a street vendor announcing his wares in ritual language is not a professional speaker, while the king's herald or the clown on television are the prototypes. Taught colloquial is the language of the announcer who follows the script that an editor was told by a publicist that a board of directors had decided should be said. Taught colloquial is the dead, impersonal rhetoric of people paid to declaim with phony conviction texts composed by others, who themselves are usually paid only for *designing* the text. People who speak taught language imitate the announcer of news, the comedian of gag writers, the instructor following the teacher's manual to explain the textbook, the songster of engineered rhymes, or the ghost-written president. This is language that implicitly lies when I use it to say something to your face; it is meant for the spectator who watches the scene. It is the language of farce, not of theater, the language of the hack, not of the true performer. The language of media always seeks the appropriate audience profile that the sponsor tries to hit and to hit hard. While the vernacular is engendered in me by the intercourse between complete persons locked in conversation with each other, taught language is syntonic with loud speakers whose assigned job is gab.

The vernacular and taught mother tongue are like the two extremes on the spectrum of the colloquial. Language would be totally inhuman if it were totally taught. That is what Humboldt meant when he said that real language is speech that can only be fostered, never taught like mathematics. Speech is much more than communication, and only machines can communicate without reference to vernacular roots. Their chatter with one another in New York now takes up about three-quarters of the lines that the telephone company operates under a franchise that guarantees access by people. This is an obvious perversion of a legal privilege that results from political aggrandizement and the degradation of vernacular domains to second-class commodities. But even more embarrassing and depressing than this abuse of a forum of free speech by robots is the incidence of robot-like stock phrases that blight the remaining lines on which people presumably "speak" to each other. A growing percentage of speech has become mere formula in content and style. In this way, the colloquial moves on the spectrum of language in-

creasingly from vernacular to capital-intensive "communication", as if it were nothing more than the human variety of the exchange that also goes on between bees, whales, and computers. True, some vernacular elements or aspects always survive — but that is true even for most computer programs. I do not claim that the vernacular dies; only that it withers. The American, French, or German colloquials have become composites made up of two kinds of language: commoditylike taught unquack and a limping, ragged, jerky vernacular struggling to survive. Taught mother tongue has established a radical monopoly over speech, just as transportation has over mobility or, more generally, commodity over vernacular values.

Tabus

A resistance, sometimes as strong as a sacred tabu, prevents people shaped by life in industrial society from recognizing the difference with which we are dealing — the difference between capitalized language and the vernacular, which comes at no economically measurable cost. It is the same kind of inhibition that makes it difficult for those who are brought up within the industrial system to sense the fundamental distinction between nurture from the breast and feeling by bottle, between literature and textbook, between a mile moved on my own and a passenger mile — areas where I have discussed this issue over the past years.

Most people would probably be willing to admit that there is a huge difference in taste, meaning, and satisfaction between a home-cooked meal and a TV dinner. But the examination and understanding of this difference can be easily blocked, especially among those committed to equal rights, equity and service to the poor. They know how many mothers have no milk in their breasts, how many children in the South Bronx suffer protein deficiencies, how many Mexicans — surrounded by fruit trees — are crippled by vitamin deficits. As soon as I raise the distinction between vernacular values and values susceptible of economic measurement and, therefore, of being administered, some self-appointed tutor of the so-called proletariat will tell me that I am avoiding the critical issue by giving importance to noneconomic niceties. Should we not seek first the just distribution of commodities that correlate to basic needs? Poetry and fishing shall then be added without more thought or effort. So goes the reading of Marx and the Gospel of St. Matthew as interpreted by the theology of liberation.

A laudable intention here attempts an argument that should have been recognized as illogical in the nineteenth century, and that countless experiences have shown false in the twentieth. So far, every single attempt to substitute a universal commodity for a vernacular value has led, not to equality, but to a hierarchical modernization of poverty. In the new dispensation, the poor are no longer those who survive by their vernacular activities because they have only marginal or no access to the market. No, the modernized poor are those whose vernacular domain, in speech and in action, is most restricted — those who get least satisfaction out of the few vernacular activities in which they can still engage.

The mushrooming shadow economy

The second level tabu which I have set out to violate is not constituted by the distinction between the vernacular and taught mother tongue, nor by the destruction of the vernacular through the radical monopoly of taught mother tongue over speech, nor even by the class-biased intensity of this vernacular paralysis. Although these three matters are far from being clearly understood today, they have been widely discussed in the recent past. The point at issue which is sedulously overlooked is quite other: Mother tongue is taught increasingly, not by paid agents, but by unpaid parents. These latter deprive their own children of the last opportunity to listen to adults who have something to say to each other. This was brought home to me clearly, some time ago, while back in New York City in an area that a few decades earlier I had known quite well, the South Bronx. I went there at the request of a young college teacher, married to a colleague. This man wanted my signature on a petition for compensatory prekindergarten language training for the inhabitants of a partially burnt-out, highrise slum. Twice already, quite decidedly and yet with deep embarrassment, I had refused. To overcome my resistance against this expansion of educational services, he took me on visits to brown, white, black, mostly single-parent so-called households. I saw dozens of children dashing through uninhabitable cement corridors, exposed all day to blaring television and radio in English, Spanish and even Yiddish. They seemed equally lost in language and landscape. As my friend pressed for my signature, I tried to argue for the protection of these children against further castration and inclusion in the educational sphere. We talked at cross-purposes, unable to meet. And then, in the evening, at dinner in my friend's home, I suddenly understood why. This man, whom I viewed with awe because he had chosen to live in this hell, had

ceased to be a parent and had become a total teacher. In front of their own children this couple stood *in loco magistri*. Their children had to grow up without parents, because these two adults, in every word they addressed to their two sons and one daughter, were "educating" them — they were at dinner constantly conscious that they were modeling the speech of their children, and asked me to do the same.

For the professional parent who engenders children as a professional lover, who volunteers his semi-professional counselling skills for neighborhood organizations, the distinction between his unpaid contribution to the managed society and what could be, in contrast, the recovery of vernacular domains, remains meaningless. He is fit prey for a new type of growth-oriented ideology — the planning and organization of an expanding shadow economy, the last frontier of arrogance which *homo economicus* faces.

Center for Intercultural Documentation, Cuernavaca, Mexico