

One of the academic upshots* and of one of its non academic raisons d'être:

"A map of the world without utopia on it is not worth a second glance"/ Oscar Wilde

"...Behind the picture of fresh human possibilities I have been drawing all through "The Myth of the Machine" is a profound truth to which almost a century ago William James gave expression. ".....This systematic denial on science's part of the personality as a condition of events, this rigorous belief that in its own essential and innermost nature our world is a strictly impersonal world, may conceivably, as the whirligig of time goes round, be the very defect that our descendants will be most surprised at in our boasted science, the omission that to their eyes will tend to make it look perspectiveless and short." The whirligigs of time has gone round...the next move is ours: for the gates of the technocratic prison will open automatically, despite their rusty ancient hinges, as soon as we choose to walk out."/ Lewis Mumford

"...This is not a prophecy: it is a factual description of what is already happening before our eyes, with murderous confrontations and infantile tantrums taking the place of rational demands and cooperative efforts. Yes: the physical structure of the power system was never more closely articulated: but its human supports were never more frail, more morally indecisive, more vulnerable to attack. How long, those who are now awake must ask themselves, how long can the physical structure of an advanced technology hold together when all its human foundations are crumbling away? All this has happened so suddenly that many people are hardly aware that it has happened at all: yet during the last generation the very bottom has dropped out of our life; the human institutions and moral convictions that have taken thousands of years to achieve even a minimal efficacy have disappeared before our eyes: so completely that the next generation will scarcely believe they ever existed"
Lewis Mumford ("The Pentagon of Power"***)

*"...Virtue is not a chemical product, as Taine once described it: it is a historic product, like language and literature; and this means that if we cease to care about it, cease to cultivate it, cease to transmit its funded values, a large part of it will become meaningless, like a dead language to which we have lost the key. That, I submit, is what has happened in our own lifetime." /Lewis Mumford ("Values for Survival"***)*

"Before the wig and the dress coat there were rivers, arterial rivers: there were cordilleras, jagged waves where the condor and the snow seemed immutable: there was dampness and dense growth as yet unnamed, the planetary pampas. Man was dust, earthen vase, an eyelid of tremulous loam, the shape of clay, he was Carib jug, Chibcha stone, imperial cup or Araucanian silica. Tender and bloody was he, but on the grip of his weapon of moist flint, the initials of the earth were written. No one could remember them afterwards: the wind forgot them, the language of water was buried, the keys were lost or flooded with silence or blood. Life was not lost, but like a wild rose a red drop fell into the dense growth and a lamp of earth was extinguished. I am here to tell the story...My land without name, without America, equinoctial stamen, purple lance, your aroma climbed my roots up to the glass raised to my lips, up to the most slender word as yet unborn in my mouth."
Pablo Neruda ("Canto General")

"Tho' obscur'd, this is the form of the Angelic Land"/William Blake ("America")

*Upshots are supposed to be outlines that can afford to be made only after some essential things about a course of events or about its representation have been spotted and spelled out. If a book, or e.g. a theatrical representation of a book etc, are long enough then they, too, need upshots although they, in the first place, may constitute upshots, or upshots of upshots, of other sets of ideas. The present endeavor is the (final) upshot of an account of some Lewis Mumford's ideas in terms that are fitted to the recent realities within which we all find ourselves. But the ideas of that "megathinker" (as he has been called) are upshots and representations that only efforts that can afford to be superhuman can effect: they are upshots and representations of all man's history and of all man's nature by a man that we all find hard to believe he has already existed in flesh and blood and is not the model of some future man or some abstract and merely symbolic form of historical renaissance's homo universalis or even some U-topic renaissance's analog.

**Subtitle to the 2nd vol. of the "The Myth of the Machine" from which the previous excerpt is also taken.

***Written just after the 2nd World War.

Frequently in history, even the spirits that we usually consider as archetypes of wisdom and of love of man and of peace or even of divinity, and as helpers, or even saviors, of God and of Life, have wondered, or even marveled, at the paradox of how civilization and the creation of man and man's person can be subject to age old maxims about war-like types of strife being capable of fathering such things, too. In our days, in which the elucidations made by science are enough to teach even ten year old kids, about cells, viruses, bacteria, decomposers, and the like, and days in which Darwin, or even Nietzsche, would marvel at, or even would despise and would sarcastically laugh at, whoever among the neocons were the ones that ever conceived the notion that their type of "creative chaos" and their policy of "not having to be too reality based because leading powers create their own realities", OK, in our days, even before science affords to take the step of better harmonizing physics and biology that some feel as a link still missing, all agree that we can with certainty tell both the ten year olds and ourselves, the following: Regarding the war-peace-civilization paradox, it can't be that the evolution of life up to the proliferation and optimization of forms, that we all witness, has taken place through just a competition in how to perfect weaponry for strife in order to prevail. If this was the case life would not have gone past the level of viruses, on which there is even no unanimity on whether they're living organisms or just lifeless mechanisms that just replicate themselves through just killing; actually it would not even have reached virus level since viruses, like permanent war economies and stock markets, do not develop their own energy production mechanisms, but confiscate the ones of the cells on which they parasitize and then kill in order to multiply themselves. Viruses are not to be confused with the decomposers that are living mechanisms, cells too, through which life reduces dead organisms to inorganic materials to be recycled into life, like culture itself too has creative mechanisms through which it reduces dead and non functioning meanings and values, or even whole civilizations, back to their basic elements which, when recomposed and rewoven into new contexts, can function in the new life forms or new civilizations in the pattern of dismemberment and re-membering that mythologies reserve for this instance too. Maybe, as some pacifists insist, the characterization as "sons of vipers" by Christ was exaggerated and too virulent on Christ's part even for Pharisees to whom it was addressed; but one wouldn't deprive of the neocons the potentiality, or some actuality, of personhood, if he called people like Perle, or Bush or Rumsfeld, "servants of lifeless megaviruses like arms industries and lethal monetary funds". All the above is so plain and certain that it does not constitute brainwash to even ten year olds to whom it is also as understandable as explanations about ozone hole, greenhouse effect and GM food (OK make it fourteen to fifteen year olds to know they have all sure listened to some things about DNA, not only for "gene stuff in the cell nucleus"). On the contrary it might be non-understandable to fifty year olds who have been brainwashed by the archetype jugglers of Hollywood into thinking that what a wise man like Tolkien wrote (long before it would be urgently needed like the foresight and even fore-hindsight of wise men leads them to write) was not a kids' tale to wake even kids to the need of disarmament but something that became also a grownups' tale to put to sleep even them while sounding like "waking" or "alerting" them to the need of more armament because an "axis of evil" between some gnomes under earth were perfecting weapons to attack our oasis of "western civilization" (a concept that for Gandhi was still waiting to be born as a non-oxymoron) whereas those gnomes are not in Iraq nor in Iran but only in the pixel made world of US's versions of Tolkien and of the "300"* and in the factual think-tanks of US arms industries. (By the way, like compliments by stupid and cheap persons are always an insult, the valor of Spartans as presented in "300" is an insult to the concept of valor. The restitution of the insult and of the misunderstanding of the concept is in the discussions about the 300 between the samurai and Tom Cruise in "The Last Samurai"). In this upshot-oriented section let's also repeat, in a nutshell, the thoughts of Lewis Mumford expounded in the main part: He examined in a unified way the collective USA's capitalist and the collective USSR's communist, by seeing the former as man's effort to realize on earth some of man's noblest Utopic projects by leaving behind Europe's closed horizons and persecution of new ideas to go to a vast land virgin and full of resources, and by seeing the latter as man's effort to realize on earth the old dream of having philosophers rule (Hegel-Marx-Lenin); he didn't disdain Utopias, on the contrary he did like Oscar Wylde's line "A map without utopia on it is not worth a second glance" and considered that all serious progress on earth has always been made through visionaries able to look in that land through man's faculty called imagination; but he considered that both experiments were failures due to their blindness to man's history and to man's psychology, which led both experiments to absolute violence: the former to genocide against the natives (the vast land was not virgin and uninhabited, so the newcomers were not as innocent as Adam and Eve before the original sin but sinful genocides from the outset), the latter to making the country a huge Nazi-like concentration camp for dissidents. He

*Right after seeing a TV advertisement of which, we decided to add the present upshot.

examined the feature “of being scientific” that the free market prided itself on sharing with the recently born mathematical physics and, along with the debunking of the myth of its freedom through what even kids know today (that in recent history the advanced nations first worked with rules quite unlike free market’s and only after they took the lead they imposed these rules to lethally strangle nations that could not compete and catch up with them under those rules; also that freedom from state’s intervention ended up meaning protected from state’s penalizing criminal exploitation etc. and that freedom from state was progressive only when state had ended up as corrupted, as now freedom of market is) he also pointed out that essentially the analogy with science is the ravingly ridiculous pseudo-argument going “free competition of extreme individualistic goals, only seemingly is chaotic because, as statistical physics shows, order of bigger patterns comes out of such small scale disorder, and thus in real fact, in the case in hand, such free competition optimizes development because the execrable conditions we see in the world is actually optimal since if state had intervened the condition would be still worse”*. He studied, and gave a bird’s eye-view, in the best sense of this expression, of man’s history since tens of thousands of years, using as anthropological data for the ages when no way existed to have left signs or archives, the extrapolations one can make back from the nature of man’s first and most perfect tool, language, and the fact that this tool can exist at all and that it creates man’s world; and coming to nearer ages he used, as two optical angles from which to see and understand history in general and history of war in particular, the creation of cities (and of walled cell-nucleus-like and Pentagon-Kremlin-like citadels inside them, and of protecting/confining walls around them) and the creation of machines and megamachines (the first machine being the bow and arrow, the chord of the latter also being the first musical instrument; the first megamachines being the ones that left no trace because their parts were the perishable bodies of people massively coordinated to build huge towers and pyramids, either as workers, or as architects, and higher officials); passing at “Koyaanisqatsi speeds” (but not with Koyaanisqatsi-like lack of rational connection of images and, thus, not with impressions as evaporating as those) through the birth and death and decomposition and rebirth of cities (e.g. Rome) and civilizations and coming to our still nearer ages of “etherialized” walls (e.g. mental borders between nations) and “etherialized” energy/mail roads (e.g. cables) and then, even nearer, to 2nd World War, to the development and use, on civilians, of weapons of “cosmic violence” scales, and to the advances of biology and towards artificial intelligence right after the war, he concluded that the worst threat to life on earth and to man as we have known him in history is post-historic man, i.e. the man who will not hesitate to affect biological evolution of both man and all living matter and will employ for this criteria for optimalization that will be dictated by the rules of free market, and will feel fewer and fewer hesitations to kill and less and less of even an instinct of self preservation since his criteria of what is live and sentient and intelligent will have to be “scientific” and will thus have to imitate artificial intelligence, thus to be as lifeless as a computer**. To make even clearer one component of this point of

*And even if a part of the grotesqueness of this absurdity could be removed by saying that statistical physics at some point seriously claimed (at most) half of the above (obviously the half not involving the value judgments and option choices involved in the word “optimal”) the only real analogy with quantitative science that these economists can claim, Mumford pointed out, is that sometimes scientists analyze some toy models not for being realistic, let alone optimizing, but just for being solvable (and then their results are publishable even if moronic, or even catastrophic, to apply). The only reason to adopt a solvable system by a decision maker is to be able to predict, dictate and control some things until reality gets out of control, usually at the expense of the advised, not of the advising team.

** Unless scientists manage to develop a paradigm of organic physics merging physics and biology as convincingly as needed to displace the current one (whose deficiencies are only visible to much less than the critical mass of scientists needed for massive mistrust in paradigm. Old paradigms usually are mistrusted only after they are replaced by already created ones (and not without reluctance even then). Mumford did not count on such results coming soon enough to arrest disastrous developments on time and tried arguments that did not have as a prerequisite the working out of conjectures like e.g. Penrose’s (see e.g. “The Emperor’s New Mind” and “Shadows of Mind”) which, anyway, had not yet been formulated in the times of Mumford’s books referred to, that started in the early ’50s) Are there now already developments like the pessimist ones (1. material and 2. cultural)? Yes: 1: e.g. GM food 2: Serious scientists not only sharing the over-concern with our fate after the billions of years it will take for the sun to be extinguished, at the cost of concern with much more serious dangers, but also adding a component like being, through intellectual emancipation, personally content to survive in the form of information replicated on microchips saved in space-analogs of Noah’s ark (projects that Mumford had characterized as analogs of Pharaohs’ trip to mummified immortality in crypts at tops of pyramids like our space capsules on tops of fuel rockets). The contemporary religious fanatics’ version of the above two parallels is the indifference to nuclear or greenhouse holocaust by waiting to be saved on a platform of God for the righteous (who sets up the name list? Some Perle-like Princeton alumni?)

Something, possibly more widespread in Mumford’s time, was the fashion of altered consciousness states used as

cont’d in bottom of next page

Mumford's let's remember a well known film, "2001 A.D. Space Odyssey" and its less well known sequel about "2010 A.D...". A computer, named Hal, started and went on killing the astronauts of a scientific mission on their way to Jupiter, until the leader of the mission disrupted some of its functions and neutralized him; (the complete explanation of what had happened was in the sequel book, "2010 A.D."). "Ghost in the machine"? Not exactly: Hal had been programmed to intervene and neutralize even dangers to the mission that the astronauts themselves had not yet perceived, e.g. to take the helm to avoid meteorites that the astronauts had not seen or the trajectories of which they had not calculated as dangerous. But through this program, and through the fact that he was taking orders from the astronauts through voice recognition etc, he could well hear them and analyze what they were saying, and if what they were saying had, in some time depth, implications endangering the mission, then Hal figured it out before they did, like chess playing computers try many more moves than humans do, and then neutralized the astronauts as he would neutralize potential dangers (with the same logic, something like that could happen in earthly analogs, and not just in space, through nuclear war alarm-automations; the essence of the mechanism leading to self-destruction as described was not based on the sci-fi or the future-technology part of the plot but to the part perfectly feasible since long; and not only feasible but having already gone off towards a catastrophe that was only averted by Stanislav Petrov in the magnificent incident of "man against machine" that we saw). More generally, if at some stage of our knowledge we consider that we already know enough about what is the desired course of our society, our economy, our biology, our psychology etc and if we consult a computer programmed on the basis of that state of our knowledge and if we then follow it blindly with respect to some decisions needing the analysis of parameters that are too many for us to analyze at lightning speed as might be needed in cases of emergency or of other extenuating circumstances, then another possible extenuating circumstance (which we might not even consider as such), whether emergency or not, is that if we had programmed it on the basis of an imperfect, or even defective, model of our society, our economy, our biology, our psychology etc then we would have started blindly obeying and blindly imitating an imperfect model and image of us. A similar, but less abrupt and extreme and more massive and sweetly imbibed, mechanism is the imitation of non-working models about human nature and human behavior propagated by being played and replayed on the media for specific ends (attraction to stupid dreams of fulfillment, sales through cultivation of consumerism, public consent to inhuman acts, distractions as diversions from unpopular decisions or plans etc. etc). Thus, although at the outset the computer would be a construct of us, we would eventually become its constructs; more precisely, through imitation we would become, especially if it included interventions in our genome, eternal solidifications of an imperfect state of our knowledge, and even if we built into its program some free improvisation margins they would not lead us out of solidification but it (e.g. it would have the concerns of the self constructing automata for energy and self duplication, whether compatible or incompatible with ours; and we would not even have the masochistic consolation that our marginalization or liquidation by it was a self sacrifice for a worthy evolutionary improvement of life or being, because its only relation with "being" would be that it was exactly as little existent as when it was a thought in the designs and programs of beings in the imperfect state of knowledge equating themselves with self constructing automata. Of course this analysis begs the question, since no one has proved that the artificial intelligence model will never work; and as Cheney said "how can anybody now prove that Saddam's weapons of mass destruction will not be discovered two hundred years from now?", an argument as convincing as any argument of artificial intelligence adherents in favor of their conjectures when they at all realize they are conjectures and tacit assumptions and not plausible or even proved or even self evident truths). In that sense the ultimate megamachine, the "cybernetic deity" is a megavirus attacking all life and replicates lifeless "simulations of us" at our cost and detriment even with our help, if we believe that it even saves us by immortalizing us, or with our incapacitation if we are mesmerized by the impression that objections are not scientific or rational or sane before we can answer what exactly is our difference from machine and why exactly the burden of proof does not rest with us only but with the machine's faithful too; as mesmerized as Sphinx's victims must have stood in front of her trying to answer her question (the modern Sphinx's analog doesn't cannibalize us (westerners) by gory bites at our guts but by just making our guts really become as mechanical as hers when, unable to answer her, we imitate her. Any way out? cont'd from bottom of previous page: travel agency ticket and mechanical aid to mind expansion, awareness, sexual pleasure, religious experience etc (which Mumford had commented as "opium is the religion of the people"). The good news is that it is now less widespread and the bad news is that the experience gained with those states (especially experience in sensory deprivation) is used in Guantanamo etc.

Concerning the issue of whether freedom of will is an illusion that robots have about themselves and of whether one first needs additional data for the conclusion of the debate between the mechanical and some organic position or one can base himself on data created by states and deeds arousing freedom in us before the end of the scientific debate, a grandpa who fought in the war would say “responsible people make themselves data; by fighting; not waiting for others to become data, before deciding”. Maybe even in the absence of the fears or horrors associated with fighting, fewer and fewer persons—among either the educated within the mechanical paradigm or the uneducated but raised in the brainstorming by just by consumerism’s commercials—would be able to realize that the above answer does show that the reductionist’s positions on free will are based on pseudo-arguments. Yet it only shows a way out of the pseudo-questions, not a way out of the fact that fewer and fewer people (in the west and north) have the confidence or even the orientation to give a free and responsible answer to such things. Let’s return to Mumford to see if he has any way out of what made him write that the best tombstone engraving he could hope to have, if only it were true, was : “Herein lies a fool who would be happy if he learned that none of the predictions he so reluctantly made came true”. In “The Transformation of Man” he considered we’re in race between universal education and universal destruction; also he considered that we must change our attitude to our superego, probably meaning to view our higher self not only as an entity repressing us when hindering us from unlimited relaxation but as a force pressing us to emulate higher aspects of ourselves or others (at least this meaning is suggested by his writing in “The City in History” *In the tragedies the Greek citizen beheld, in the larger figures of heroes and gods, beckoning potential selves whose imitation in moments of crisis would help him overpass the mediocrity of the safe and the habitual.*) What education he had in mind? Just after the war, in 1946, he wrote in “Values for Survival”: *“If we are to create balanced human beings, capable of entering into world-wide co-operation with all other men of good will – and that is the supreme task for our generation, and the foundation of all its other potential achievements – we must give as much weight to the arousal of the emotions and to the expression of moral and esthetic values as we now give to science, to inventions, to practical organization. One without the other is impotent. And values do not come ready-made: they are achieved by a resolute attempt to square the facts of one’s own experience with the historic patterns formed in the past by those who devoted their whole lives to achieving and expressing values. If we are to express the love in our own hearts, we must also understand what love meant to Socrates, and Saint Francis, to Dante and Shakespeare, to Emily Dickinson and Christina Rossetti, to the explorer Shackleton and to the intrepid physicians who deliberately exposed themselves to yellow fever. These historic manifestations of love are not recorded in the day’s newspaper or to the current radio program: they are hidden to people who possess only fashionable minds. Virtue is not a chemical product, as Taine once described it: it is a historic product, like language and literature; and this means that if we cease to care about it, cease to cultivate it, cease to transmit its funded values, a large part of it will become meaningless, like a dead language to which we have lost the key. That, I submit, is what has happened in our own lifetime.”** Of course nothing prevents the cheap and idiotic minds that produce things like “300” seeing their film as doing just that, e.g. transmitting and cultivating (their version of) the virtue of valor: nothing except the freedom of speech of the people who do see such samples as cheap and idiotic and don’t limit their freedom of speech to saying about the right of such films to exist “we believe in freedom of speech” (by the way, this statement besides being correct as referring to the makers of the film, only proves its pronouncers’ belief in the freedom of hearing, not of speech, since they do not themselves make speech). OK, in a sense we’re only joking since we do sympathize with people who would feel bad not finding opportunities, other and more creative, to express their disagreement with the developments we’re in, than lowering their level to criticizing a low level spectacle***. And it’s even sadder to see even strong and outspoken spirits finally having to exhaust their spirits’ such good qualities in criticizing the lack of documentation, rigor, class etc of people who do express their shared and common disagreement “but prematurely”. To such people, especially if they’re educators, Mumford is a fantastic opportunity to make, not low but top-top rate, discourse on the issues. So part of the function of this upshot is to attract academics to Mumford’s both validity and ongoing relevance and also to the enjoyment of the possibility that they really can play a role since classrooms and

*It’s worth entering e.g. the last paragraph of the above in a search machine and seeing contexts by Mumford or by others about it. It’s also worth looking up “Planet Without Laughter” by Smullyan** and, after enjoying it as it stands, it’s worth re-reading it wondering what changes would be needed if the, hopefully not lost (from genes) but, just eclipsed (from awareness only), too, faculty was not laughter but e.g. virtue, valor, honorfriendliness etc

**Raymond Smullyan, the mathematical logician, magician, humorist, pianist, Zen exponent, puzzle poser/solver+....

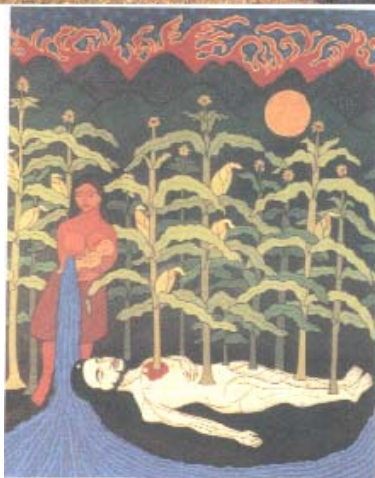
***Overlapping with the similar situation in having no other option than Dems and Republicans to be represented by.

lecture halls, like also music halls and open spaces for rock concerts, have not, so far, been leased for teaching by the hired media. And also there's nothing anarchic etc in putting books on libraries' reserve shelves and assigning term papers on an intellectual like Mumford, nothing that incriminates instructors teaching Mumford more than it incriminates people objecting to that! Much much more delightful is of course the enjoyment of presenting the thoughts of Mumford in contexts and idioms better fitted to the reading habits of people from other walks of life; personally we enjoyed more than anything else (than e.g. the format of writing novels) the format of writing theatrical dialogs for a theatrical scenario in the format of soap opera. (What adds to the delight is that this form is an educational alternative that does constitute an answer to the cheapness and stupidity of the education offered by 300-like bullshit. Of course the heroes among the characters playing in the soap opera are either imaginary and Utopic, or borrowed from other countries' history or from US's potential future history to be lived by identification or by self fulfilling prophesy or, even better, by common and cooperative growth and mutual influence and osmosis with other countries; but this is only natural at the present state of things in US which is only the beginning of a beginning. And since we were not addressing the kind of Americans that are beyond help (the people who sent to the top of the top ten songs like "We're going to kick some ass the American way") we didn't lend US any heroes who, to have a spine, needed any hate and spite like the "300" nor did we make their enemies so imaginary as to need to be represented by pixel-beings, we made their enemies as real as to have real names (Perle, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz (the Princeton part of the gang), Cheney and Bush) but in forms so sublimated that what looks like pixel-like imagination and low level compared to them is their factuality (which nobody would call "reality". Their unreality is not only factual but, already, as conspicuous and proverbial as it will look in future history textbooks affording the lucidity of hindsight. It's even not just admitted but boasted about! Hasn't a neocon answered to a journalist that his criticism is "too reality based" because "leading powers can afford to create their own realities"?) Now let's get back to Mumford's reasons for not being pessimist and for writing at all (as he put it, if he did not see a way out to be tried out he would consider his books a mere exercise in futility and would not write). He was a man of proposals, and the proposals he expounded and elaborated and worked for were proposals of others who had not shaped them through his influence, whether they were much older or his contemporaries. Besides his prestige, he lent to them his prodigious powers as "generalist" (that's what he called himself, in contradistinction to "specialist" and in emulation of Patrick Geddes, who considered himself "professor of things in general" and whom Mumford considered as his mentor and had given his last name as first to his son. Regarding influencing even through being plagiarized they both considered themselves like cuckoos who lay their eggs in other nests to be hatched by others in order for themselves to go further (when we say he is a great unknown of history we don't mean that he didn't teach in Stanfords and MIT's and Berkeleys or that his google citation list is not 994, 000, we mean they don't mention him in elementary education schools so that all Americans know of him as they know of the people featuring on Mount Rushmore where they should also have put him. The only reason for missing from there is that he should have been somewhere higher; at least right now the place from where he would function better is the place of the Statue of Liberty but turned inward to illuminate Americans, before they ever deem themselves worthy of wanting to illuminate others to whom the Statue was facing initially*). One proposal he supported and invited man to was the society of plenitude in contradistinction to society of affluence, something inspired in him by Cannon, a biologist, and which nicely harmonized itself with his admiration of the genteel poverty way of life of Emerson and of the ancient Athenians sacrificing affluence in goods to have affluence of personal time; a proposal he supported and closely followed up, in both its implementations and its implications, was Howard's idea of greenbelt towns which nicely harmonized itself with the biology models of town growth and the related way he saw ancient Greeks starting new towns and colonies to keep the size of towns to optimal functioning level, which for the means of those days meant sizes small enough to be visible in their totality from a hill and populations which, if their whole was

*Of course we do not deem us Europeans worthy of really meaning it bringing Mumford home to North Americans, more than Americans meaning it exporting anything related to freedom, before we can answer North Americans the following simple question: "Why should we Americans be taught anything from you in matters of influencing our government when you yourselves cannot influence your governments that are not half as influential as ours since they always succumb to our government's demands?" The reason the present address to Americans is not an exercise in futility is because for European intellectuals to propose anything to Europeans they must first answer their corresponding question: "What's the use of influencing us, who more or less know all that, when the decision making happens in US? Can you first influence there?" The way out of this vicious circle that would never let anything begin anywhere is obviously co-operation for mutual influence and for interacting that begins at both ends (and "both" is oversimplification, it's not only two ends in play).

gathered around a speaker on a small mount they could hear him and give back an opinion during some decision making, and also large enough to include all sectors of economy and culture needed to provide for them (agrarian, industrial, marine, educational, ...). All the virtues of such town planning, and their role in democracy too, he considered as descendants of the ways of neolithic village in the time of an agrarian revolution that had led to surpluses of energy and leisure and to an erotic revolution, too. The towns now established in the world in that way, starting from England, he considered as droplets whose growth might bring about a phase transition in civilization, like communities of Christians had similarly helped civilization renew as Rome was decomposing. A proposal he outlined in a Jules Verne kind of way was the mutual education of people through what we now call net, web, google and the like and another, closely related to this, set of droplets able to start a phase transition inside megacities decomposing into decomposing megaslums, were the clubs of people of common interests that only in megacities could reach a critical size to affect civilization. So we see the way he was such a versatile scholar was not some mere, or even eccentric, mult curiosity or pedantry but a passionate involvement and concern which was teaching him everything as he was following the turns and curves that the steps to the solution of real problems demanded. For the world after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, that turning point which also led youths of that time as Noam Chomsky, to, within hours, suffer whole phase transitions, and silently reach decisions kept lifelong, OK for that world, for our world that is, Mumford wrote: *“As of today, this resurgence of reproductive activity might be partly explained as a deep instinctual answer to the premature death of scores of millions of people throughout the planet. But even more possibly, it may be the unconscious reaction to the likelihood of an annihilating outburst of nuclear genocide on a planetary scale. As such, every new baby is a blind desperate vote for survival: people who find themselves unable to register an effective political protest against extermination do so by a biological act. In countries where state aid is lacking, young parents often accept a severe privation of goods and an absence of leisure, rather than accept privation of life by forgoing children.”* In all these things we do see reasons his relevance is continued. Don't we also see gaps and factors he didn't predict closely enough to take into due account? Of course we do, anyone does, and most of all his fans and lovers, like the present writer obviously is, since thinkers who teach their readers how to think don't have groupies but interlocutors through time and space: Mumford did write very deep and relevant things about religion and its very remote, and very similar, past, in all civilizations, and also things about it to become very relevant in the hopefully not very remote future that will see the synthesis of an organic science; and these things can be very relevant at the end of the clash of civilizations, which now is carried in, also, religious terms. But he didn't write almost anything to help in the present stage that needs an elucidation of how that clash arises, possibly because, as he himself realized, many-many more sources that could illuminate the west on the east and middle east had not yet been translated. This gap seems to become less wide by more recent books like Tariq Ali's "Crusades and Jihad: The Clash of Fundamentalisms" (the book with Bush dressed as Taliban on its cover) or Gilbert Achcar's "The Clash of Barbarisms". But an East-West dialog cannot start for real before, within the West itself, another thing too is discussed, and which, at least to our acquaintance with Mumford's books, it did not occupy his attention: Early Christianity had its martyrs and later Christianity had its Inquisitors and its Conquistadores. The last gentiles had their martyrs in the hands of the first established Christians and the relatively more recent South Americans had their martyrs in the hands of the long established Christians. Many of those martyrdoms took place on genocidal scales. Also some universal spirits and some conscientious objectors to Church's violence had the same fate. Quite recent Jews suffered the same in the hands of Nazis and even more recent Palestinians and Lebanese suffered the same in the hands of Jews. The Christian or Christianized among the above martyrs saw Christ as an archetypical fighter supporting their struggle. And Dostoyevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" burned Christ himself on the stake. Both Greek and Russian Christian orthodox churches prided themselves on their difference from Catholics in the lack of Inquisitions for heretics, but at least the former counted vast numbers gentiles as their victims. Both prided themselves on their difference from Catholics or Protestants in helping popular uprisings against ruling classes instead of helping them die out, yet some Catholic priests in South America stood by masses in revolt. Standing by people in struggles leading to the ultimate sacrifice involves belief in either dogmas or values or both that in some sense answer what death and what immortality are about. Without some dialogs somewhat straightening out the mutually canceling values and beliefs, and facts and data, of all these westerners what dialog can they enter with the east? By what representatives? With what common denominators? Is the east going to speak with a being with a split personality but calling itself unified? (That's not abusive language. Abusive language would be "a descendant of sadist slave-traders who remain sadist gangs"). Also, here "dialogs" hardly means debates

and disputes until reaching “agreements”. Usually free mutual briefing and education are sufficient mutual identification, inspiration and emulation borrowing from each other’s top representatives. E.g. who would feel like making long debates (what for?) on whether US was founded by top Europeans who went overseas to try out the noblest Utopias and turned genocidal by lack of self knowledge as Mumford puts it, or was founded by thugs fleeing the gallows and optimized evolution through competing gangs of Scorcesian good fellahs? Is Mumford distorting facts through rosy pink glasses? If yes why is he the unpopular view and not the best selling view? Partly because his view can inspire change). Let’s go back to West as “split personality calling itself unified”. And vice versa of course: Only lack of data or interest about existing such data, so far, keeps us westerners from knowing the specific mirror-like or non mirror-like eastern analogs of non-unification; we gradually come to massively get briefed on that from the evening news on e.g. Shiites and Sunnites. Or is the unifying principle of the West, or even within Europe, a faith in culture and values that yield all ground to technology? Or in rational science yielding all ground to market-like incentives and initiatives? How can free competition be the common denominator? Is it not just an oxymoron? (Let alone its contradiction with rationalism if faith in optimization of life is assumed to be brought by it as we saw) Or is the solution to be found in the lamentable effort of European educational system in cutting down on historical self knowledge of its various citizens so as not to be aware of past differences just in case they’re still poignant? It sounds like going fast to become as ridiculous as US’s promptings or instructions or directives to remove national borders and national identities while at the same time releasing a film like 300 suggesting the Iranians are direct descendants of pixel-like Jurassic park beings; and maybe the deeper reason for that will be that either cutting down on the length of one’s past or not having one, does not only, or at all, remove nationalistic pride but also historical analogs to trustingly identify with and to be guided by without either rediscovering the wheel or erratically flying up in the air as a deflating balloon. Until one comes up with a better solution for common ground, the present writer’s proposal is that more will be offered to peace and international co-operation by small talk and gossip of the type outlined here and where one western nationality would mirror and parody the other western nationality and everybody will parody US but not mirror it (it is inimitable in its self representation on screen. And it’s criminal to imitate it outside screen). And only after they laugh so heartily at themselves and at each other will they be able to start pulling the Muslims’ leg without calling them humorless if they protest or telling them that we westerners enjoy free speech. From where could ever start recomposing a solution and common ground and not mere decomposing the picture into pieces to be eternally rearranged as jigsaw puzzle without finding a central spine,? Yet they have already started in the mental dialog between e.g. U-topic Jews (look up Steiner) and U-topic Christian orthodox Greeks or between universalists loving as mother country and defending it, that region within man’s DNA that they chose as dwelling. Let’s shift emphasis from Utopics and poetics to nuts and bolts and practical upshots about how to start moving to the third alternative sorely missed everywhere where a juggling between two mirror parties mocks itself and its voters. In a recent interview Chomsky said “A more practical proposal is to help to change the culture of the domestic society enough so that what should be now done could at least be made a subject of discussion”. To fix ideas let’s e.g. take the subject of the dialog of civilizations. Would it mean seeing live on nationwide TV Bush talking with bin Laden as two cultural or typical representatives? If one proposed Chomsky talking with Tariq Ali instead, some would say that they belong to the same side, so it’s unfair (besides one can already search on the net for the dialogs of Chomsky with Gilbert Ashcar). So let’s propose Cheney or Perle or Wolfowitz, with Huntington, Fucuyama, Friedman (Tom)... as their experts, to sit live and nation-wide and talk with Chomsky, Ali, Ashcar, Blum, Monbiot, Herman, Stiglitz, Akerlof, Albert... Of course such we won’t see until after change takes place, so change can’t count on it. And it is not the discussion Chomsky had in mind in his interview. He rather had in mind the discussions we have with our kin, friends and neighbors upon seeing together a stimulus like such a TV event. But those close chats can be made real even if the discussion among the names mentioned never takes place but just remains hypothetical and is never on TV but is read on the net as if it was a printed version of a TV event. So it would help if political fiction plots took for a while the place sci-fi. More on such a proposal should of course be made through deed, this, now, meaning through giving a tangible example of such plot. *OK, more or less we’re through what we wanted this upshot to contain. Let’s just add two pages of photos about gran’pas who fought responsibly in a war along with their peers—and went back home living in one of the so many contemporary survivals of a neolithic village—and about the relation of the missions accomplished by contemporary leaders with those of the times that have survived as myth and religion and about the relative sizes of leaders we all know and of the mutual relation of the missions they accomplished (we leave the verses from Neruda’s Canto General in Spanish; (in the present context) their sound is better escort to the photos)* John Alevizos/March 25/2007



A las tierras sin nombres y sin numeros bajaba el viento desde otros dominios, traia la lluvia hilos celestes, y e dios de los altares impregnados devolvia las flores y las vidas.
Y en el final del iracundo mar, en la lluvia del oceano, como gotas de sangre y plumas, los cardenales desangraban el amanecer de Anahuac.

