

Opening to present and future:  
The continuing relevance of US's megathinker "Lewis Mumford".

In previous files some photos showed that we do share the view that landing on the present in order to open to it and to the future involves both understanding-criticizing and criticizing-understanding US, today's leading superpower. To exercise those two functions in a substantial way we must appreciate its sages, profiting from them, and criticize its not glorious antipodes of its sages; while at the same time we should do accept the criticism of its sages for our not so glorious bigshots and study their ways of appreciating our sages and profiting from them. Our island has the privilege of hosting the translator and editor of a very recent American megathinker, Lewis Mumford (1895-1990). Before we use him to criticize his nation, as he had the lucidity, self knowledge and uprightness to do, let's have the uprightness to borrow lucidity and knowledge from him to criticize our own nation's most glorious periods, while at the same time we will be comparing notes with, and profit from, his appreciation of our nation's best pages and sages.

*"...It was in the theater that the Greek citizen saw himself and obeyed the Delphic maxim: Know Thyself. Best of all, in the comedies...he learned to see himself, wryly, as others saw him, chastened by their painful laughter. And in the tragedies he 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"*

Lewis Mumford ("The City in History")

*...The Greeks, it seemed, had in some degree freed themselves from the outrageous fantasies of unqualified power that Bronze Age religion and iron Age technology had fostered: their cities were cut closer to the human measure, and were delivered from the paranoid claims of quasi-divine monarchs, with all the attending compulsions and regimentations of militarism and bureaucracy. The Greeks broke down, indeed they had hardly developed, the hard caste and occupational divisions that had come with civilization itself: at this early moment they had the flexibility and inventiveness of the amateur, not willing to sacrifice too much of his life to specialized competence. As the city developed, the democratic habits of the village would be often carried into its heretofore specialized activities, with a constant rotation of human functions and civic duties, and with a full participation by each citizen in every aspect of the common life... Colonization did not have the character of expansion of size that would change the way of life of the metropolis but aimed at preserving the original way of life when the population growth pushed toward undesired changes... The village ways made the post-Homeric Greeks distrustful of kingly power and centralized rule: even at Troy this was plain. The mystique of kingship did not fit well with either their village parochialism or their inbred self-respect...Agamemnon reproached Clytemnestra for her servile effusiveness of speech: "as a man, not as a god, let me be honored." The delusion of divinity in a ruler was a product of their civic decadence. Even the growth of imperialism in the fifth century, though it turned Athens itself into a ruthless exploiter of smaller Greek cities, did not bring about the restoration of kingship or enlarge the dominion of the Olympian gods. Quite the contrary: not merely did the Greeks discard the more superstitious claims of royalty, making their leaders dependent upon popular support, cutting them down to human dimensions, but their gods are represented either to have the same build as other human figures, as in the Parthenon frieze, or as slightly larger creatures of the same mold. By the fifth century they even made the gods themselves a little ridiculous, if not contemptible, by playing up their amorous foibles and jealous rivalries...For a time the Greeks' pride in their unfettered humanity possibly had a humanizing effect upon religion: it resulted, as Gilbert Murray pointed out, in a moralization of Olympus, in an effort to bring the gods up to at least the human level of conduct, and to cover over, as unworthy of godhead, the scandalous amours and knavish tricks*

that the members of the Greek pantheon had carried over from the cosmic delinquents of an earlier day. Olympus itself must be turned into a polis of respectable citizens. So the least godlike of all gods, Hephaestus the blacksmith, found a temple built for him, to celebrate his solid craftsmanlike virtues, hard by the old quarters of the potters and smiths below the Acropolis, while Prometheus, he whom Hesiod characterized as “sly”, became in Aeschylus’s drama, the moral superior of Zeus. Though Athens offers most of the ready examples of the deification of the polis, the spirit itself prevailed everywhere. God, city, and citizens became one compact manifestation of ego...Not till the barbarous Macedonian, Alexander, set out on his conquests were the aboriginal claims of the divine king revived...This sparse material culture, in many places little better than a subsistence regimen, gave rise to a new kind of economy of abundance...The Greek poleis in their best days had no great surplus of goods: what they had was a surplus of time, that is leisure, free and untrammelled, not committed—as in America today—to excessive materialistic consumption, but available for conversation, sexual passion, intellectual reflection, and esthetic delight . Is it an accident that in the short Ephebic Oath the vow to do one’s duty “single handed or with the support of all” is uttered twice?...Athens had no patent on these virtues: those who live in villages and value their intimacies do not confuse size with significance. Lonely courage played a part that mass obedience to the leader’s command could never rival. Such courage produced heroes of the mind as well as of the battlefield, often in the same person. In their formative period the Greek cities never lost their connections with their countryside or their villages... Independence and self-reliance were as ingrained in pre-imperialist Greece as in Emersonian New England: there was pride in the old saying “Greece and poverty are twins.”...This new kind of economy of abundance opened up virgin territories of mind and spirit that had hardly been explored, let alone cultivated. The result was not merely a torrential outpouring of ideas and images in drama, poetry, sculpture, painting, logic, mathematics and philosophy; but a collective life more highly energized, more heightened in its capacity for esthetic expression and rational evaluation, than had ever been achieved before. Within a couple of centuries the Greeks discovered more about the nature and potentialities of man than the Egyptians or the Sumerians seem to have discovered in as many millennia.. All these achievements were concentrated in the Greek polis, and in particular, in the greatest of these cities, Athens...Somewhere between the second and first century B.C., Dicaearchus could observe: “The road to Athens is a pleasant one, running between cultivated fields the whole way. The city is dry and ill-supplied with water. The streets are nothing but miserable old lanes, the houses mean, with a few better ones among them. On his first arrival a stranger would hardly believe that this is the Athens of which he had heard so much.” The best one could say about the housing situation in Athens is that the quarters of the rich and the poor were side by side, and that except perhaps in size and inner furnishings, were scarcely distinguishable: in the fifth century, noble poverty was more esteemed than ignoble riches, and public honors and family repute counted for more than public wealth...In the biggest cities of the fifth century the spottiness , if not the downright lack, of sanitary facilities was scandalous, almost suicidal: a fact that the great plague during the Peloponnesian War , which had crowded Athens with refugees, emphasized...To understand the full achievement of the Hellenic polis, one must take one’s eyes off the buildings and look more closely at the citizen...who had mastered Emerson’s great secret: Save on the low levels and spend on the high ones. What we regard as an unfortunate handicap may in fact be partly responsible for the greatness of Athens. The Greek citizen was poor in comforts and convenience; but he was rich in a wide variety of experiences, precisely because he had succeeded in by-passing so many of the life-defeating routines and materialistic compulsions of civilization. Partly he had done this by throwing a large share of the physical burden on the slaves; but even more by cutting down on his own purely physical demands, and expanding the province of the mind. If he did not see the dirt around him, it was because beauty held his eye and charmed his ear. In Athens at least the muses had a home...What distinguished the Greek polis in its developing phase was the fact that no part of its life was out of sight or out of mind. Not

*merely was every part of existence within view; only the most servile mechanical activities were denied to the citizen: in most occupations, the free man worked side by side with the slave, and the physician received the same rate of pay as a craftsman. All that men did was open to inspection, alike in the market, the workshop, the law court, the council, the gymnasium; and whatever was natural was acceptable, so that the naked body would be proudly shown in athletic contests, and even its most repulsive physiological processes were not excluded from consciousness. In that sense the Greek had a completely open mind...The citizen not merely performed military service at call, contributing his own equipment, but he served in the assembly and the law courts...Almost every male Athenian, at one time or another, had to take part in public business...As Fowler emphasizes, work now done by executives, permanent secretaries, inspectors, and magistrates, was done by ordinary Athenians, rotating in sections of fifty. Participation in the arts was as much a part of the citizen's activities as service on the council or in the law courts...In a hundred years, Ferguson tells us, two thousand plays of picked quality were written and staged in Athens, while six thousand new musical compositions were created and presented...every year something like two thousand Athenians, it has been estimated, had to memorize the words and practice the music and dance figures of a lyric or a dramatic chorus. This was an intellectual discipline as well as an esthetic experience of the highest order; and as an incidental result no small part of the audience consisted of ex-performers, expert judges and critics as well as enthralled spectators. Thus the public life of the Athenian citizen demanded his constant attention and participation, and these activities, so far from confining him to an office or a limited quarter, took him from the temple to the Pnyx, from the agora to the theater, from the gymnasium to the harbor of the Piraeus where matters that concerned trade or the navy would be settled on the spot...That open, perpetually varied and animated world produced a correspondingly unfettered mind. Both in arts and in politics, Athens had largely overcome the original vices of the city, its one-man rule, its segregation of activities, its occupational narrowness, and worse, its bureaucratization—and they had done this for at least one generation without forfeiting skill or lowering the standard of excellence. For a while, city and citizen were one, and no part of life seemed to lie outside their formative, self-molding activities., This education of the whole man, this “Paideia,” as Jaeger has called it, to delimit it from a narrower pedagogy, has never been equaled in another community so large...If the Greeks were notably successful in throwing off the institution of kingship, which had hardly passed beyond the claims of the earliest tribal chieftains, their achievement of democracy remained slow, partial, fitful, never fully effective. Not merely did landed oligarchies and tyrannies long continue in powering many regions; but even where democracy prevailed, as it did in Athens, it retained the old principles of segregation and monopoly. Athenian democracy excluded the foreigner and the slave: no small part of the total population... We must look elsewhere for the forces of the mind that seemed ready to breach the invisible walls that had confined the new attributes of personality to the king and his nobles, and limited a general human development in the ancient city. To find the special secret of the Greek city one must look outside the bigger centers. And if one wanted to sum up in three words what supremely distinguished Greek urban culture from that of its predecessors, one might say simply: Olympia, Delphi, Cos. It was the contribution of these three centers that raised the whole ceiling of human achievement so high. None of these places had any pretenses to being a great city. Each stands in fact for a specialized kind of town, with a power of attraction that drew men together, occasionally or seasonally, from the farthest regions of Magna Graecia, sending them back again, with their parochial limitations challenged, and with a salient aspect of their life renewed and lifted to a higher level. What the transport and interchange of goods had done to stimulate the daily life of the Mesopotamian city, the personal visits to Olympia, Delphi, or Cos did for the religious, political, literary, and athletic development of the Greeks. The first was the home of the Olympian games; the second held the chief shrine and the sacred oracle of Apollo, the one great unifying civic and religious influence, comparable to that of the Vatican in Roman Catholic countries; while the third was one of the*

great health resorts and sanatoria, where a new group of physicians, the predecessors and followers of Hippocrates (460-375 B.C.), sought through a rational understanding of nature to cure disease and promote health. From these three centers flowed currents of vital energy, transmitted by pilgrims and participants, faring on foot and by boat, which brought into every Greek city a whole stream of unifying and self-transcending ideas and norms of life. The characteristic work of each of these centers was carried on in many other cities: Cnidus and Epidauros, the original home of the Asclepius cult, rivalled Cos; and the Apollonian shrine at Delos turned that barren isle into both a pilgrim's refuge and a center of international banking and trade despite its treacherous approach by water. Similarly, once the inter-urban games were started, many other cities competed with Olympia. Through the influence of these institutions, the more adventurous members of the polis came into direct contact with other cities, other peoples, other ways; and the participants experienced that process of "withdrawal-and-return" which both Patrick Geddes and Arnold Toynbee have demonstrated historically is an essential mode of human growth. These festivals and congregations challenged the ingrained parochialism of the polis. The four great Panhellenian festivals—the Olympian, the Pythian, the Isthmian, and the Nemean—drew Greeks together from every part of Hellas, along the sacred roads, where wayfarers were immune to attack at such seasons. Such mobilization and congregation forecast even freer movement in an even wider world... Olympia stood for the body as the active physical expression, through disciplined play, of the human spirit. Whatever the later sins of Greek dualism, in the formative days of their culture, the classic Greeks never identified spiritual development with incorporeality, still less with a contempt for the body or a monkish masochistic pleasure in degrading it or courting disease. Delphi represented through its oracle the combination of the unconscious, in its depths, accessible through darkness, sleep, drugs, intoxication, with open-eyed intelligence and a far-seeing providence: its twin gods, as Werner Jaeger reminds us, were Apollo and Dionysus, not just the orderly, clear-thinking, Apollo alone, himself a symbol of both solar and spiritual illumination. Those who were put to sleep by the priestess at Delphi were visited by the god in their dreams: probably under the influence of hypnotism or a soporific, even perhaps an anesthetic; for there is a report from that center of the lifting of a cataract from a sufferer's eye during the night, unknown to the dreamer. It was such a Delphic priestess, Diotima, who bade Socrates listen to his daimon; so that, at the moment rational thought left the temple to run the gauntlet of common experience in the marketplace, it was accompanied by a vivid reminder of its pre-rational cosmic beginnings in cave and grotto and animal rite. The masters of Greek tragedy never forgot that lesson. It was not for nothing that Delphi in Greek legend, like Jerusalem on medieval Christian maps, occupied the exact center of the earth. This was its precise position in the Greek mind. The original function of the Delphic priesthood was to determine the correct order of the religious festivals, and it is quite probable that Delphi as early as the seventh century sought, though unsuccessfully, to spread its recognition of a uniform type of calendar in the Greek world. Finally, Cos was the great center from which a new concept of health radiated: at once a sanatorium, a hospital, a center of medical research, as George Sarton has pointed out, medical thought matured. But these centers were not just a collection of utilitarian buildings, half factory, half hotel, like most of our modern hospitals. They also possessed the calm attributes of a cloister: here, for perhaps the first time, the function of the cloister, of withdrawal and inner dedication, escaped the confines of the temple, even while the temple of Asclepius itself remained close at hand. The physicians at Cos knew the healing qualities of seclusion and beauty, space and order: they set their sanatoria on a little island, famous for its grapes and mulberry trees, and its specially fine silk, with a wide view over the sea: a noble landscape freed from the clutter, the disorder, the smells and noises of the Greek city. Perhaps no one has ever translated these ideals so effectively, if quite unconsciously, as Henry James in his dream allegory, "The Great Good Place." People traveled hundreds of miles by land and by sea to be under the care of such dedicated physicians, bound by their noble oath, working in such a healing environment. By the very act of detachment through

travel, the patient took his first step toward rehabilitation; and the psychosomatic discovery of the curative properties of a change of scene may have been a contribution of Hippocratic lore, based on improvements the physicians observed in newcomers even before they applied their positive remedies. Can one doubt that the order that came into the new cities of the fourth century registered, in collective form, some of the lessons that this great school of healers and hygienists applied to the individual patient? That sense of space and harmony, in nature and of nature and yet surpassing nature through man's own ordered effort, left its mark on later cities... At Olympia the cities met, so to say, in person; and the contests were concerned with the body as an expression of the human spirit. These games brought together poets as well as athletes; and both were moved to give their utmost to the competition, since their audience was not merely their fellow-townsmen, but the assembled representatives of a larger commonwealth, wide-flung Hellas. Under the impetus from these games, a new institution entered the Hellenic city, and a new place must be found for it: the palestra or wrestling ground. This in time developed further into the gymnasium, an enclosed sports-ground, often set in a grove of plane trees...equipped with baths, dressing rooms and finally with classrooms; for, following Olympic precedent, the mind was not left apathetic and idle by too violent physical exercise. Here is where the young and the old came together for friendly bouts of wrestling or boxing, for racing, for hurling the discus or javelin. Out of three such sacred groves, already established in the sixth century, came three famous schools of learning, the Lyceum, the Academy, and the Cynosarges...But so ingrained was the sense of sportsman ship at first, that even wars between cities sometimes took the manner of a sporting contest, for honor than for more vicious stakes. Witness the "war" between Chalcis and Eretria, in the seventh century, held only as a contest, with all hurled missiles, spears, slings and arrows barred. These cities had emerged from the barbarous depravity of total war and had sublimated brutal aggression...The spiritual by-products of this new institution proved as important as its gifts to health; for here the old and the young came into constant companionship, not as parents and children, or even as teachers and students, but as partners in discussion, led by the older members, all the more stimulating because of the difference in age and the escape from purely parental authority. Sometimes this intimacy proved an encouragement to a sterile homosexuality, in provoking passionate infatuations relieved from any threat of offspring; but it was also, as the Platonic dialogues remind us, a contribution to higher education. Did an authoritative priesthood have anything of comparable value to offer by way of method? And as long as the gymnasium invited physical exercise, it helped to overcome the bodily slackness that too often was the price exacted for adaptation to the constricted, sedentary urban environment.

The part played by the Delphic shrine is harder to describe, especially since the cult left behind no readable record other than its treasury and its votive monuments. Though the cult of Dionysus may have come from much farther afield, it was perhaps with the sanctions of Delphi, itself constantly bringing together Apollonian measure and clarity with Dionysian darkness and ecstasy, that the drama captured the Greek city. Here we may pause to take in the theater as an urban institution which entered the Greek city at about the same time as the gymnasium, perhaps first performing in the agora on improvised grandstands of wood, as depicted in three early sixth-century vases. But soon, because of the crowds attending in the growing town, the theater established itself on the slope of a hill on the outskirts, under the open sky. The festivals out of which the theater arose were religious festivals, long celebrated in the village; and the priests from the temple occupied the front row of the "orchestra." If the Attic comedy grew out of old fertility rites, rooted in the neolithic past, tragedy wrestled with the problems of human development opened up by the new urban order: fate, chance, free will. As the city itself developed, the drama sloughed off both sides of its religious heritage: mere cerebral amusement took the place of bawdy rites and horseplay as well as solemn edification. With this went a loss of cosmic perspective. At the very moment its pride and confidence became overweening, the human self began to shrivel. Cut off from its sense of the cosmic and the divine, it seemed more and more a prey to meaningless change and external caprice. In its own development, the drama

*thus symbolized the course of urban development, as the vulgar, the trivial, the sordid, the spectacular displaced the sacraments of birth, citizenship, vocation, marriage, death. Yet in its post-tragic phase, when the religious connection was broken, the theater remained one of the distinguishing marks of the classic city, visible in the most distant of towns built for the colonizers and the pensioners of Empire. Even today, on the hillside of Fiesole near Florence, the semi-circle of stone benches looking over the valley that spreads below and the mountains that rise beyond, recaptures the all but universal form of the Greek theater, and exhales a faint breath of the original culture that produced it. The beauty of ordered space within an ordered cosmos. If one mark of the end of the classic city is the termination of the Olympic games, the other is the abandonment of the theater. For it was in the theater that the Greek citizen saw himself and obeyed the Delphic maxim: Know Thyself. Best of all, the relentless comedies of Aristophanes tell us, he learned to see himself, wryly, as others saw him, chastened by their painful laughter. But at the same time he 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. Self-consciousness and self-realization, even self-transcendence, became the new marks of the urban personality—or at least of an awakened minority. But even more directly and practically, Delphi worked still another change in the development of the Greek city. Because the founding of the city was for the Greeks, as it had been for earlier cultures, primarily a religious act, Delphi naturally assumed charge of the new foundations; and especially in the early period of colonization, the Pythian Apollo gave specific advice that dispatched new colonies in every direction, under the aegis of Apollo himself. Few cities would undertake such an expedition without consulting the oracle. Thus at the moment when the growth of the population might have led to congestion within the city, to random emigration, or to conflicts for arable land in the more densely populated regions, Delphi, willy-nilly, faced the population problem and conducted a program of organized dispersal. Through this program, the keepers of that shrine lessened both the acerbic economic competition and the wars of conquest, while it spread Greek culture and the Greek polis to the thinly settled village communities of the perimeter. The control of city growth by orderly colonization, repeated as often as numbers demanded, was the first practical recognition of an organic limit to city growth. During the century in which it was most widely practiced, when the norm was maintained, the Greek city proved an extremely favorable environment for human development. The Delphic doctrine of the golden mean held for the cities as well as for men. Note that religious persuasion and voluntary action brought about this colonization movement: not centralized military control. The latter came under Alexander the Great, when religious authority had crumbled and civic norms had vanished. Cos, Cnidus, and Epidaurus were no less symbols of the Greek concern for wholeness and balance than the Olympic games or the Delphic shrine; and the lessons they taught played a part in later town planning, though they have not yet been fully assimilated even today. One of the most famous Hippocratic treatises is “Air, Water, and Places”; a work which laid down the outlines of public hygiene in relation to the choice of sites and the planning of cities. If Greek love for the concrete object led these keen physicians to neglect forces and organisms below the ordinary threshold of sight, so that they apparently never suspected that diseases might be transmitted by invisible agents, they nevertheless did full justice to matters more easily discovered and handled: the orientation of buildings and city streets to evade the summer sun and catch the cooling winds; the avoidance of marshy lands and insanitary surroundings; the procuring of pure sources of water, as a matter doubly necessary for the sick, to whom wine must usually be forbidden. These prescriptions did not make headway quickly. It was easier for the wealthy and the leisured to visit a distant sanatorium when they were ill than for a municipality to provide the capital needed for great works of engineering that would bring pure water down from the hills, provide ample open spaces for recreation within the city, open up the crowded dwelling places and secure circulation of air...But gradually the Hippocratic injunctions would bring into the city pure water for drinking and bathing and spacious parks for exercise and spiritual rejuvenation...One phase of*

hygiene is, however, strangely missing: the medical school left no text on public sanitation; and there are no references to the proper disposal of excreta. Such were the decisive contributions the wide-ranging Greek assembling periodically in special centers, made to the culture of cities: the gymnasium, the sanatorium, the theater. Not merely did they remold the form of the city: each introduced, likewise, a motive for wider circulation and cultural interchange, by travel and pilgrimage. This was a Panhellenic influence. In the poems of Tyrtaeus even surly Sparta made a contribution to the common literary culture. The people who ventured forth, in trickles or in broad streams, to Olympia, Delphi, and Cos, and their sister cities, had temporarily detached themselves from the self-enclosed world of the polis. They became members of a larger unity, brought about, not by encirclement and enclosure, but by a vivid attraction. At the point of meeting, they overcame the particularization and parochialism of their native city and gazed on a wider horizon. The sacred roads that led from Elis to Olympia, or from many other places to Delphi, served as a visible bond of this unity. Potentially, these practices had within themselves the basis for a new kind of urban polity, based on federated organization, operating over wider areas, not by centralized command but through voluntary transactions and mutual services. If these efforts had been more thoroughly understood and more consciously appraised by the political thinkers of Greece, even as late as the fourth century, they might still have left their mark on the city. But Greek practice was far in advance of Greek theory: indeed, theory accentuated the separate, the particular, the static, the archaic, and neglected the new tendencies toward dynamic cultural intercourse, and political federation. Aristotle examined the constitutions of 158 Greek cities, each sufficiently different to merit separate analysis; but there is no record of his paying attention to the efforts of trying to create a general league of cities, though this had begun as early as the sixth century, and before Rome had wiped out the last vestige of Greek freedom, Greece had produced some twenty such confederations. The majority of these leagues, McDonald pertinently notes, got their start in a common religious festival, and in the organization needed to protect and supervise a special cult. And all too belatedly two new devices of urban government were introduced: the principle of isopolity, by which one city gave its citizenship to another city, while remaining separate and self-governing; and that of sympolity, by which a city became part of a co-operative group, under a co-ordinating authority, with each citizen professing a double loyalty. In a peaceful world, these efforts might have multiplied and come to fruition. Even those whose knowledge of Greece is as exhaustive as that of Toynbee are inclined to attribute the divisiveness of the Greek cities to their topographical situation, to jealousy and rivalry, or to their narcissistic infatuation with their own image. That all of these played a part one cannot doubt: but the fact that so many efforts were made at federation demonstrates the existence of many counter-pressures. The earliest federal state in Greece for which J.A. Larsen finds an adequate description was the Boeotian Confederacy of the period 447-386 B.C. The appreciation of that effort dates only from the discovery of the Hellenic *Oxyrhynchus papyrus* in 1908. Perhaps this innovation was favored by the absence of mountain barriers and strong cities in that wide fertile plain; but despite its Attic reputation for thick-wittedness, Boeotia had in fact created a well-organized federal system, with a board of magistrates, a large representative council, a treasury and a command of an income, even a federal court or courts; and it was strong enough to impose uniform local governments upon the member cities. In all a brilliant innovation. This achievement of representative federal government, with its combination of union and local autonomy, was a political development of no little magnitude. What caused it to fail was not the inveterate particularism of Greek cities, something fatally inherent in their character and constitution: on the contrary, this federal system was overthrown by a brutal specific act, namely the "King's Peace" of 386, which stipulated that Greek cities were to be "free." Under Spartan rule, this meant that they were not free to join together in a federal union. All this occurred before Demosthenes sought to rally the cowed cities confronting Philip of Macedon. Had Boeotian federalism prevailed against Spartan isolationism the cities of Hellas might have fended off the fatal blow at Chaeronea. If the force

*and self-confidence of the Greek cities had not been wrecked by the series of wars that began among themselves, their later efforts at federation, born largely of desperation, might have given them a better chance against the empires that finally swept over them. But the larger concept of a federated urban polity, which would have rectified the failures of both urban isolationism and imperialistic political and cultural expansion, never had a career long enough to create a radically new pattern of civic life. War dragged the polis back to the more regressive pattern of the earliest king-centered cities, and finally wiped out all but a vestige of their independence and autonomy. So it was as conquered refugees, subjects, and slaves, not as free citizens, that the Greeks ultimately carried the lessons of Olympia, Delphi, and Cos to the rest of the world...Athens, supreme in every department except colonization, was the embodiment of all fresh promises of civilization and of the achievements of the Greek polis. But while Athens created a cultural legacy to which every succeeding age has been indebted, it sought to pre-empt for its own vainglory the goods that every other city had contributed to, and had a right equally to share in. though conserving, indeed cultivating, the benefits of internal democracy, Athens chose to act the king among lesser cities, demanding homage and tribute in tyrannous fashion, in return for protection...Pericles' funeral oration tells a different story from that Greek scholars often have drawn from it, once one escapes the hypnosis of Thucydides' rhetoric. Covered by an affable mask of modesty and moderation, that speech is in fact a hymn of complacent self-worship: in it ideals still only partly realized were treated as if they were solid actualities, and injustices all too palpably actualized were hardly even glanced at, still less repented of...The Parthenon, which was the public-works project of Pericles himself, was made possible by mounting acts of flagrant injustice and calculated terrorism, perpetrated by Athens upon her weaker neighbors and allies. This culminated in the wholesale extermination of the males of Melos, even after the surrender of its inhabitants. Such elaborate public works perhaps kept the surplus population of Athens in employment; but the money that made them possible was blood money, which degraded the taker...By the sixth century a new god had captured the Acropolis, and had by an imperceptible passage, merged with the original deity. This new god was the polis itself; for the people who built these great temples were seized with an ecstasy of collective self-worship...to set high upon a hill their image of order and beauty they would show exorbitant pride and shocking moral callousness...Parthenon itself presented this insidious inflation of the collective ego: the moral weakness is not less visible because it had materialized in a flawless esthetic image: the Panathenaic frieze is an idealized presentation of the actual procession that wound about the narrow streets and climbed upward into the temenos of Athene, the members beholding themselves...the self looked admiringly upon the self that looked upon the self: a statue of enraptured narcissism...deepened, no doubt, by reason of the final triumph over the Persians...Pericles used words woven out of the deeds of free men to conceal a policy of "colonial" exploitation, enslavement, and merciless extermination...The excrement of early civilization – war, exploitation, enslavement, mass extermination – backed up on Athens as from an ancient sewer. In the end these forces overcame a movement toward a wider fellowship, with more humane goals, that was already visible in the seventh century. Had Greece's intellectual leaders fully grasped the implications of this universalism, they might have liberated urban culture from its chronic involvement in the practice of human sacrifice for perverse and irrational ends. Between the forthright Solon, who cast off, as it were a soiled garment, the political power he had gathered into his hands, and the devious Pericles, between these polar opposites there was less than the span of a century. But in that brief period Athens was rich in citizens as no city had ever been rich before...The secret of creating such citizens as the polis had briefly produced was eagerly sought by philosophers and educators, from Plato to Isocrates; but it was never successfully analyzed or revealed, and much of it doubtless still eludes us...For a brief generation in Athens, the ways of the gods, the ways of nature, and the ways of men came close to a common point: it seemed as if the arrests and fixations, the aberrations and perversions embedded almost from the beginning in the very stones of the ancient city might be overcome.*

*And it was not merely in sculpted figures that a new ideal of the human form, indeed of the fully developed personality at each of the climactic stages of life, had taken shape: that was but the crystallization of a more living moment that life itself had held in solution. In the generation that had thrown back the Persian invasion, a new idea of human wholeness took possession of this society and pervaded every life. In the activities of the polis, if not in all its architectural furniture, human nature suddenly rose to fuller stature. In two men whose overlapping lives span the fifth century, the new idea of wholeness, balance, symmetry, self-discipline became incarnate: Sophocles and Socrates. And not by accident was each in his own way a master of the dialogue; for it was by struggle and by opposition, not merely by symmetrical growth, that they rose to their fuller stature. Sophocles, the older, handsome in body and face, the leader of the dance, skilled in warfare as a general, carrying on through his tragedies the new form of the drama, itself suddenly released from ancient village ritual—here was such a man as Solon had first foreshadowed, in his detachment from all jealous preoccupations of power. Sophocles was the opposite of the archetypal specialist, the crippled, fragmentary man, molded by civilization to fill his little role and to serve with antlike devotion the needs of the hive. Just the contrary, here was a personality capable of facing life in all its dimensions, even in its furious irrationalities and obscure compulsions: at home in every environment, equal to every occasion, ready to assume moral responsibility for his choices, though the whole community might oppose him. “Single-handed or with the support of all.” Alongside Sophocles stands the contrasting figure of Socrates, likened in his old age to a Silenus, snub nosed, far from handsome, but with a magnificent physical frame and a constitution impervious to the rigors of war or climatic extremes; cool-headed in the midst of fighting, clear-headed in his cups, when others were reeling drunk: introvert and extrovert: capable of both solitary mental rapture and endless conversational inquiry. Like many other freemen, he was a stonecutter by training, and the son of two working people, a stonecutter and a midwife, but entirely at home in every part of the polis: an athlete among athletes, a soldier among soldiers, a thinker among thinkers. These men were but two outstanding representatives of the new city, the city that was latent as an idea but was never adequately realized in brick or marble. They were not alone, for they were surrounded by people of similar dimensions, figures like Aristides and Aeschylus, Themistocles, Thucydides. Euripides, Plato. By their very existence these spirits gave evidence of that sudden mutation which produced, among a few million people, within a space of less than two centuries, a far richer efflorescence of human genius than history anywhere else records, except perhaps in renaissance Florence... When this moment was over, buildings began to take the place of men... By the time Plato was ready to put the question [of how Athens was as rich in citizens as no other city had ever been] the original synergy had turned partly into a concentration of stone, and part of it was dispersed in the wastage of war: Plato’s own answer to the problem showed only the courage of desperation... he never suspected, apparently, that the Athens of Solon and of Themistocles was itself a greater school than any imaginary commonwealth he was capable of creating in his mind. It was the city itself that had formed and transformed these men, not alone in a special school or academy, but in every activity, every public duty, in every meeting place and encounter... As a result, the philosophers who followed Plato and Aristotle, if they still sought balance and fullness of life, no longer dared to seek it in the city. They betrayed their own creed by dodging their civic responsibilities or by turning to an idealized empire or a purely heavenly polity confirmation... The naive utopia to which Plato regressed would be a city in which Socrates would have remained a stonecutter, but Plato never realized that... Till now mankind has been saved from Plato’s dream by its technological innocence – and impotence. But we today, who have the means of achieving Plato’s ambition without yet having plumbed its horrible implications, would do well to pause and examine the prospect. If we continue in science and technology along the lines we are now following, without changing direction, lowering our rate of speed, and re-orienting our mechanisms toward more valid human goals, the end is already in sight. Cybernetics, medical psychiatry, artificial insemination, surgery and chemotherapy have*

given the rulers of men the power to create obedient automatons, under remote control, with just enough mind left to replace the machine when its cost would be prohibitive. The polite name for this creature is “man-in-space,” but the correct phrase is “man out of his mind.” Another century of such “progress” may work irreparable damage upon the human race. Instead of deliberately creating an environment more effective than the ancient city, in order to bring out the maximum number of human potentialities and the maximum amount of significant complexity, our present methods would smooth out differences and reduce potentialities, to create a state of mindless unconsciousness, in which most of man’s characteristic activities would be performed only by machines. Even if the infamous nuclear and bacteriological weapons that already threaten wholesale extermination remained unused, historic man, he who lives in cultural time and space, who remembers and anticipates and makes choices would disappear...

...Is the city of ...Plato and of beautiful-goodness [kalon-k’agathon] in which, as Anaxagoras said, mind “sets things in order”, and in which the forms of art mirror a super-mundane perfection—is all this an illusion? Did the forms of Phidias rise in this barnyard scattering of workshops and booths and cattle-pens and shrines and fountains, mid these mud-walled huts, hardly to be dignified with the name of houses? Is there no counterpart in the outer city to the order and clarity of the Greek mind? There is no better place to confront the paradoxical relation between the mind and the body through which it expresses itself ...than in the Greek polis, above all in Athens. One aspect of the order we find in the Greek mind was indeed passed to the city during the later Hellenistic Age; but what we find in the fifth century was something more deeply organic, closer to the quick core of human existence. That order had emerged as idea in the seventh and sixth centuries, a wild union of opposites, restriction and exuberance, Apollonian discipline and Dionysian delirium, rational intelligence and blind intuition, skyward flight and muddy tumble: the very opposite of all that one would now characterize as classical. The highest product of that experience was not a new type of city, but a new kind of man. For a little more than a generation—between 480 and 430 B.C., roughly, —the polis for the first time assumed an ideal form that distinguished it from all earlier villages and cities: an ideal form not primarily in stone but in flesh and blood. In a great succession of citizens the new urban order, the ideal city, became visible, transcending its archaic outlines, its blind routines, its complacent fixations. For the Greeks added a new component to the city, all but unknown to earlier cultures, dangerous to any system of arbitrary power or secret authority: they brought forth the free citizen. Like Sophocles’s lonely heroes, he was a king if not a god in his own right: acting alone and seeking by the exercise of his intelligence to “hold a hand uplifted over fate.” Whatever the city possessed the citizen considered as his own birthright: between citizens as between friends there were to be no secrets, no professional walls, no presumption of inequality. The freeborn citizen owed nothing to princely favor or to his economic or official function: he resumed the place he had once in village culture, that of being first of all a man, endowed with every human dimension, to whom every part of life was open and accessible. This at least was the ideal. And it is by its capacity to formulate that ideal—not by its failure to achieve it—that we still properly measure the Greek polis... The role of the polis was admirable: every part of the city had come to life in the person of the citizen...Never had the life of men in cities been so significantly animated, so varied and rewarding, never had it been so little blighted by external mechanisms and compulsions, as during the period I have sought briefly to characterize. Work and leisure, theory and practice, private life and public life were in rhythmic interplay, as art, gymnastic, music, conversation, speculation, politics, love, adventure, and even war, opened every aspect of existence and brought it within the compass of the city itself. One part of life flowed into another: no phase was segregated, monopolized, set apart. Or so at least it must have seemed to the full-fledged citizens, however doubtful the proposition might appear to their slaves or their womenfolk. In such a human constellation, temple ritual might turn into tragedy and the boisterous bantering and the rude horseplay of the marketplace might become satiric comedy; while the gymnasium, at first meeting place for athletes, would become in the Academy of Plato, in the Lyceum of Aristotle, or

*the Cynosarges of Antisthenes, the gathering place of a new kind of school, a true university, wherein learning became socially responsible, linked to a moral system that had become self-critical and rational. But that inner unification never quite produced an outward form that reflected and sustained in equal degree the life that had brought it into existence...despite the admirable role of the polis, the worship of that institution and that role was an obstacle to further development, for however great the goods Athens achieved, they could not remain transfixed into a static image of perfection. No human institution, be it polis or papacy, can claim its own being any ultimate perfection, worthy of worship...In the division that had taken place during the sixth century between natural philosophy, which considered the cosmos as a thing or a process apart from man, and humanistic wisdom, which considered man capable of existing in a self-contained world outside the cosmos, the older insights into man's conditions, truer if more confused, had been largely lost. Even in Socrates, at least in Plato's Socrates, the limitations of the worship of the polis became patent, just at the point where they should have disappeared. For exclusive preoccupation with the polis further widened the distance between the understanding of the natural world and the control of human affairs In the "Phaedrus," Socrates declares that the stars, the stones, the trees could teach him nothing: he could learn what he sought only from the behavior of "men in the city." That was a cockney illusion: a forgetfulness of the city's visible dependence upon the country, not only for food, but for a thousand other manifestations of organic life, equally nourishing to the mind; and not less, we know now, of man's further dependence upon a wider network of ecological relations that connect his life with creatures as obscure and seemingly as remote as bacteria, the viruses, and the molds; and ultimately with sources of energy as remote as the radiations from distant stars. Babylonian superstition was closer to the truth in its erroneous associations of the planets' movements and human events than was Greek rationalism in its progressive dissociation of man and nature, polis and cosmos. To know oneself, as Socrates advised, is to know that one is not a disembodied mind or a walled-in city dweller, but an integral part of an enveloping cosmos, glimmering at last with self-consciousness. Neither the Greek polis nor the Greek cosmos took the full measure of man: both were conceived in a static image that allowed for neither time nor organic development. By making the city their god, the Greeks generally and the Athenians particularly, lost hold of the greatest gift of divinity—that of transcending natural limitations, and pointing to goals beyond any immediate fulfillment...Though his years had witnessed an extraordinary burgeoning of human powers, the fifth-century citizen did not find a way of producing a city capable of continuing the process itself: he sought only to fit the mold already achieved. But the polis could not become a cosmos, and a cosmos that did not allow for change, for transcendence and transformation, could not produce a higher order in the city... For Aristotle, the ideal was not a rationally abstract form to be arbitrarily imposed on the community: it was rather a form potential in the very nature of the species, needing only to be brought out and realized...he did not overlook the role of time and the way he went beyond the limitation of using geometry like primitives used magic was that of a biologist, rather than a mathematician... which a future generation will perhaps consider a limitation of our days...Aristotle was not handicapped by the restricted conception of causality that 17<sup>th</sup> century physics imposed on modern thought, in order to keep all changes on the plane of the external and the observable...He was forced to use an abstract noun, entelechy, to describe the form-determining elements; thus he turned an observable process into an extraneous and unobservable entity. But Aristotle's static terminology should not lead one to overlook the familiar facts that it points to. To use the word "mechanism" when faced with the need to recognize a teleological process is to overlook the fact that machines are themselves exquisite examples of purpose...Though he brought to the discussion of the cities something that Plato lacked, a knowledge of the immense variety of species and an appreciation of the endless creative manifestations of life itself...neither Plato nor Aristotle had any just insight into the happy moment that Athens, and in some degree all other Greek cities, had lived through, from the time of Solon to that of Pericles: therefore their ideal cities made no provision for continuing and*

strengthening these creative forces. They had no vision of a wider polis, incorporating the ideal principles of Cos, Delphi and Olympia and working them into the generous complexities of an open society. Their ideal city was still just a small, static container, under the grim direction of the citadel...but on such terms the burgeoning mind of the actual polis would have withered and wilted. "It needs a whole society to give the symmetry we seek" observed Emerson. Aristotle and Plato sought this symmetry in less than half a society—not even a full polis but a class segment frozen in archaic image. Not Athens or Corinth, alone, not Sparta or Delos, could flourish apart from its neighbors. Nor indeed could any of the cities of Hellas embody the Greek ideal of life without calling upon men and ideas and institutions that no one could appropriate exclusively for itself. Still less could any single class achieve the noble symmetry these philosophers sought. As a result, the growing polis, in its flux and disorder, swelling beyond all previous bounds, did more justice to the ideal possibilities of urban society than did those utopian projections, for all their crystalline perfection. This failure to understand the dynamics of human development as a key to urban form was not overcome by any further progress in the natural sciences after Aristotle. Under tyrannous rulers it is safer to pursue the physical sciences than to study human nature and society. The Hellenic polis was arrested by another weakness: inability to understand the human contribution of the slave, the industrial worker, the foreigner, and the barbarian: that is to say, the rest of mankind...The notion that the whole community must share the active life of the city, as all the peasants shared the life of the village, did not occur to Aristotle any more than to Plato. The good life could be found only in noble leisure; and noble leisure meant that someone else must do the work. This exclusion of a large portion of city dwellers from citizenship partly accounts for the debacle of the Greek city. By keeping the majority of its inhabitants outside politics, the area of full citizenship, the polis gave them a license to be irresponsible. What was equally bad, it gave them no other occupation than self-promoting economic activity, and relieved that of any moral end or obligation even in those affairs they could govern. Thus it prompted the traders, in Plato's words, "to seek inordinate gains, and having people at their mercy, to take advantage of them."...Except the commercial cities of Ionia, which had thrown off the aristocratic customs of Homeric Greece...the Greek citizens rejected trade as a possible mode of the good life. Thieving and cheating, if we may judge from Homer, were not incompatible with the aristocratic virtues; but plain dealing, on the basis of value given and received, was treated as more ignoble than one-sided expropriation by forceful means. The Corinthians alone were sufficiently proud of their success as merchants to be exempt of this prejudice. This de-moralized money-making paved the way for other forms of demoralization. The Greek contempt for trade was self-defeating: the good faith and reciprocity needed in all forms of long-distance commerce, dependent upon credit, never spread from business to politics; indeed, just the opposite happened, for Athens turned herself into a ruthless exploiter of the helpless, and the systematic enemy of her economic rivals, at a moment when her own growth of population demanded a widening of the whole field of joint effort for the common good. In building up her empire, Athens used the strong-arm methods of the nobility, with an extra twist of civilized brutality, in order to claim exclusively as hers the surplus that should have enriched all of Hellas\*...The movement that had begun in fact with Socrates and his lower class follower, Antisthenes, to open up the best life possible even to the handicraft worker and give him the full benefits of spiritual growth, halted in thought as it halted in action...The goods that the Greeks had imagined and created were human goods, not limited in their origin or their destination to the Greeks alone. Plato might recognize, after his travel to Egypt, that the Egyptian priesthood had funded esoteric knowledge that surpassed any he had access to: but the fact is that other peoples—the Jews, the Persians, the Babylonians—had much to contribute to the Greeks, and it should have been possible to embrace this otherness without being looked upon as a renegade or a traitor. That the Greeks never repaired the error of slavery, that some of their best minds could not even admit that it was an error, shows how easily they submitted to arrest, how far they fell short even in

\*The repetitions seen here, above, and below, of course go to show how relevant it now is to learn history.

*their concept of democracy of the generically human... \*By making the city, the artifact they had themselves created into their god, the Greeks lost hold of the greatest gift of divine experience – the impulse and the capacity to transcend natural limitations. The invisible city, as yet only incarnated in a handful of great citizens, whose new lines of magnetic force had issued from Olympia, Delphi, and Cos, never assumed a more effective political and physical structure. While that city was still in fluid form, it had nurtured men of larger stature, of higher potentialities, than had ever before in such numbers, among such a small population. But when the moment to pass from individual ideation and incarnation to collective embodiment took place, the city, self-infatuated, returned to an earlier form, highly organized and ordered, sanitary, wealthy, even sumptuously beautiful; but sadly inferior to the inchoate polis of the fifth century in its capacity for creation... We have here perhaps an explanation of why the Greek idea of wholeness and beautiful-goodness, incarnated in great personalities who flourished during and immediately after the Persian War, never fully created a city in its own image. What took the place of such an image was the Hellenistic city: sanitary, orderly, well-organized, esthetically unified; but grossly inferior in its capacity for fostering creative activity. From the fourth century on buildings began to displace men... Except in the physical sciences, in the more quantitative scholarly disciplines, and in the production of material goods, nothing prospered in the post-Hellenic city. For as technological organization and wealth increased, the ideal purposes of the city no longer found expression in the daily life. Even the mind was starved, not for lack of food, but by its being overstuffed with depleted and sterile nutriment. The museum and the library took precedence over life and experience: academicism replaced the organic balance of the original academy: collection and classification became the chief avenues of intellectual activity. The proliferation of devitalized knowledge, knowledge treated as a substitute for responsible action, not as instrument of life, properly takes its name from the great metropolis of Alexander. “Alexandria” brought such knowledge to heights rivalled only by the suavely empty productions fostered by the great educational foundations of our own time. This sterile, academic knowledge, like a dangerous virus prudently killed and diluted, must, if we can judge by present experience, often give complete immunity against original thought or fresh experience for a whole lifetime. Yet, as with various other features of the Hellenistic city, something permanently valuable – a patience, an order, a discipline, an ability to cope mechanically with large quantities – was passed on through the devious channels of classical scholarship to later cities in Western Europe. But quantitative expansion was not confined to the market or the museum: every part of the city underwent the same process. The streets grew longer and wider, the buildings bigger, the external regimentation became more oppressively evident. But the more effectively the centralized controls and beneficent handouts of the great empires worked, the more plainly did the Greek city depart from its original premises and – what is more important – its original promise. Whatever it was, after 300 B.C. the polis no longer was internally strong enough to challenge, even in thought, the political oppressions, the class divisions, and the irrational sacrifices, the futile war and pillage and destruction, that characterized the ancient city... Doubtless the physical structure of the Hellenistic town improved as technological facility increased: Archimedes’ feat of destroying the enemy’s ships by using the sun and a mirror to set fire to their sails may serve as a symbol of the kind of ingenious activity that began to pervade this fading classic culture, whilst it kept repeating the old myths and going through the old motions, ever more empty, for a full thousand years. But to the vacancy and triviality of the life there is little doubt. The old polis was dead. Nightmarish fears and superstitious auguries overwhelmed men at the very moment the sciences were becoming more rigorous in their method and ever larger parts of the physical world seemed “under control”. We have seen the same dark fantasies rising under similar conditions in our own time.*

*...The outward form of the Hellenistic town hardly betrayed a hint of what was going on below the surface of its life. For a counter-movement of the spirit, challenging all the assumptions of*  
*\*The next few of Mumford’s thoughts illuminate the previous by both extending and recapitulating them.*

civilized power, had been gathering headway from at least the sixth century. This movement arose in the classes that the old polis had excluded from citizenship; that is, among women, slaves, and foreigners, to say nothing of disaffected and alienated citizens. As the common life of the polis, apart from spectacles, became emptier—and perhaps the “spectacle” was itself the emptiest of all manifestations—a new life sprang up, private, hidden, in clubs, friendly societies, burial groups, fraternities: above all in those secret congregations that met together for the worship of Bacchus, god of the corn and the vine, and Orpheus, god of the lyre, or later still, the more ancient Phrygian goddess of sex and fertility, the Great Mother herself, a carry-over from matriarchal days. Most of these clubs, according to W.W.Tarn, were small, a membership of even a hundred was uncommon; they were usually grouped around a small temple, and were apparently, after 200 B.C., often family associations, to perpetuate the family memory. With the polis in dissolution, these clubs formed, as it were, a private polis that served the needs of excluded foreigners and even sometimes of slaves. The old shrines and temples with their daylight rituals and their bloody sacrifices were not for these new cults. The mystery religions, at first no doubt houseless, meeting far outside the city on the wooded slopes of mountains, finally brought into existence a new urban form, an enclosed hall, whose darkness corresponded to the darkness of the underworld from whence Bacchus was reborn, where Orpheus sought Eurydice. This was no longer a temple, maintained by a priesthood, but a meeting house (synagogue) built to enclose a congregation. Those who were purified, and who believed in the new god, were included into the mysteries and were saved: that is, they formed a new polis, more universal than any empire, but a polis “not of this world.” No matter how hard life pressed on the believers now, they had the promise of a life beyond the grave, a real life, not as leaden shadows in a Plutonian world. Thus the participants in the mysteries seem to have escaped the limitations of the old polis: each found himself the member of a wider society that recognized neither temporal nor geographic boundaries. A political wisdom that the wisest members of the ancient city lacked, a wisdom unknown to Thucydides or Aristotle, to Socrates or to Plato, became the working creed of the mystery religions. The classes and groups that had been rejected by the polis became the leading members of the Great Society. But apart from their formal meeting places, like the great Telesterion, or “Hall of the Mysteries,” in Eleusis, the home of one of the new cults, the new polis existed only in the mind. Those who sought salvation renounced the earthly city: they put behind them the transitory and corrupt body of the polis, courting only those moments of ecstasy or illumination that might offset a lifetime of frustration. After the sixth century B.C. this new spirit began to express itself everywhere, in new religions and new philosophies, alike in China, India, Persia, the Near East, and the West: whatever their individual accents, these axial ideologies revealed a profound disillusion with the fundamental premises of civilization: its over-emphasis on power and material goods; its acceptance of grade and rank and vocational division as eternal categories; and along with this, the injustice, the hatred, the hostility, and the perpetual violence and destructiveness of its dominant class-structured institutions. But those who sought to reverse the polarities of civilized life could not do so and yet remain within the city that had first contained and increased the potential of all those destructive powers. To achieve a new life, the holders of the new vision must desert the city: they must either establish themselves in the rural hinterland, in lonely forest or hillside cave, at least on the outskirts of the city, in gymnasia or in garden colonies, a few dozen or a few hundred, hardly enough to form even a village. Witness Pythagoras and Epicurus, witness the followers of Lao-tse, of the Buddha, of the Master of Righteousness. If they enter the city, they must form a secret society and go underground in order to survive. The movement that resulted in the creation of these new religions and cults must be interpreted, I submit, as a profound revolt against civilization itself: against its lust for power and wealth, its materialistic expansion and repletion, its degradation of life to the servitude of the body, its degradation of life by vacant routine, and the misappropriation of higher goods of life by a dominant minority. All this began far earlier than the sixth century B.C., for the emptiness of civilization that had no other goals than its own

*existence had become visible, as I have pointed out, long before: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity under the sun. The spirit expressed in the new religions had found utterance as early as the Assyrian tablet on Utnapishtim, Noah's alter ego: "Give up possessions, seek thou life: Forswear [worldly] goods and keep the soul alive." Since the new fraternities and the religious groups had no part in the city and could not keep either their possessions or their city secure, they were driven, in compensation, to make the soul their chief object and to retain only so much of the city as would serve their cult. The polis, now, shrunk to a church, at last could in the great dispersion of emigrants, refugees, colonists, expand beyond the city's walls. Many centuries must pass, indeed, before the new religions could overcome their original alienation from the city and all its works. And an even longer time must pass before they seek even in theory to overcome the dualism between body and spirit, between the earthly and the heavenly city, which lay at the bottom of both this alienation and this special system of salvation. So before the prophetic religions and mysteries leave their imprint on the city, the scene shifts. Rome conquers the Hellenistic conquerors, and overcomes the surviving free or semi-free cities of the Mediterranean and the Aegean seas. In the Roman world the principles of Hellenistic town planning were carried further, and mingled with other urban elements derived from remoter municipalities in Africa and Asia. The muscular-cerebral culture of the Greeks gave way to the massively visceral culture of the Romans: the lean Attic diet was replaced by daily feasts on the most colossal scale. What the oral Greeks lacked almost entirely in their cities in the best Hellenic days, the anal\* Romans acquired in suffocating abundance. What the Greeks originally had in abundance, the gifts of improvisation and spontaneous creativity, qualities as visible in the small dimensions of an epigram or a tombstone as in an epic or a temple, the costive Romans could hardly show at all, at least after the death of the Republic, except by vulgar imitation and inflation.....*

.....

PS of 2007: UN's mediator Mathew Nimitz said that Greece and FYROM shouldn't quarrel about the nationality of Alexander the Great because he was a barbarian mass slayer anyway. This does agree with Mumford's view of this historical personality. Does this make Nimitz a Mumfordian? It would if he added that the greatest slayers of this kind are the contemporary gang-governments of US.

## Is Mumford's "The City in History" relevant after more than 40 years?

*"...Modern man's only alternative is to emerge once more into the light and have the courage, not to escape to the moon, but to return to his human center –and to master the bellicose compulsions and irrationalities he shares with his rulers and mentors. He must not only unlearn the art of war, but acquire and master, as never before, the arts of life."*

Lewis Mumford ("The City in History")

In 1938 Mumford wrote "The Culture of Cities" many parts of which he included or extended in "The City in History" in 1961. One of these parts, with a different title, was the chapter "Brief Outline of Hell" which many critics considered, as he himself writes in 1961, "unduly pessimistic, indeed perversely exaggerated and morbidly unrealistic". And he continues: "*Many were sure then that no dangers worse than chronic unemployment threatened the Western World; and above all they were certain that war and the total destruction of cities were both highly improbable...*" in 1961, years after "*the large scale-destruction of Warsaw in 1939 and that of the center of Rotterdam in 1940, the total destruction in five years of vaster urban areas and the extermination of large populations from London to Tokyo, from Hamburg to Hiroshima, the killing of millions of people-six million Jews alone- by Germans in their suburban extermination camps, by starvation and cremation...*" this chapter seemed to have lost its relevance in the way predictions that were fulfilled but could not stop anything, lose it. We know that Mumford wished the following could become applicable as a writing on his tombstone "Herein lies a fool who would be happy if he learned that none of the predictions he so reluctantly made came true". We know that as the greatest threat to life on the planet he considered, as he was writing in the '50's, the "post historic man"\* who would try to intervene in the biological evolution, too, and would do it with optimization criteria inspired by the laws of free market, and we know that as the only margin for optimism he considered the emergence, from "the race between destruction and education" in which humanity finds itself, of a new kind of universalized man, not the globally homogenized construct of electronic media that are sustained, through advertisement, by the competition of different brands of similar products that are equally useless. We already see companies promoting genetically modified food trying to beat, following the laws of free market, not only each other but also nature itself; and achieving as a result the undoing, in a few years, of equilibria that nature had stabilized through the experimentations of millions of years. And we also see "rulers and mentors" thwarting, through undisguised and extravagant destructiveness, wishful thoughts of analysts unable to see not half a century but not even half a year ahead. Upshot? Is the work of Lewis Mumford relevant in an essential way at this moment? That is, can its reading inspire some idea worth trying out with respect to the efforts, that we are all seeking, to prevent worse things that possibly are still not inevitable? Or the only thing still to do with the ideas, of even such a man, is what is essential only in the so called "days of innocence" (which every now and then not only seem lost but also seem as if, possibly, never having really existed). In those days, OK, it feels substantial to enjoy the work of any Mumford, e.g. about the city, with regard to how many details he discovered in the course of its writing, how carefully and painstakingly he substantiated them from which exotic sources, how original or even revolutionary in comparison with other researchers he had been, in how beautiful and pedagogic ways he presented his findings, how much food for further thought and how many sparks for further inspirations and sequels he gave etc. (And in particular, for this work, on the city, what would constitute success would not be academic recognition but, of course, the application of some proposal of his or of people he presented, to city planning) But in our days? Days like those of '38 in which Mumford in USA was writing "Brief Outline of Hell" and about which Sikelianos in Greece was writing, correspondingly, "the threat this time is that life can roll back to the pre-ontological abyss"? In what ways should we read Mumford in

\*A term coined by R. Seidenberg which we'll see Mumford use in its original context later.

days for which A. Xenakis of “The Perfect State. The night of the reptiles” finishes his book writing “The only hope I have that we are not entering an everlasting and very dark night is that my analysis is wrong despite my not being able myself to find where I am making a mistake”. Mumford himself helps us in this by saying in which spirit he himself wrote this book of his (the fact that he wrote it in 1961 does not change anything since at that time he , with “the reluctant predictions of his analysis which he would be happy to see not coming true”, did not only live “the days of innocence” like most of us in Western conditions , but also lived , through his concerns, the hell of today, as well; and he had already lived the previous hell (not only as he had outlined it before it took place but in reality : like an overseas spectator through seeing the second World War and Hiroshima; and in his immediate circle through the death of his son in one of the last battles of the war)), OK, he writes: *“Now, if the total picture were as grim as that I have painted in the present chapter , there would be no excuse for writing this book, or rather, it would be just as irrational a contribution as the many other irrationalities and futilities I have touched on . If I have duly emphasized the disintegrations of the metropolitan stage, it has been for but one reason: only those who are aware of them will be capable of directing our collective energies into more constructive processes. It was not the die-hard Romans of the fifth century A.D., still boasting of Rome’s achievements and looking forward to another thousand years of them, who understood what the situation required : on the contrary, it was those who rejected the Roman premises and set their lives on a new foundation who built up a new civilization that in the end surpassed Rome’s best achievements, even in engineering and government. And so today : those who work within the metropolitan myth, treating its cancerous tumors as normal manifestations of growth, will continue to apply poultices, salves, advertising incantations, public relations, magic, and quack mechanical remedies until the patient dies before their own failing eyes”*. OK, in his book, Mumford means all this in the context of the monstrously gigantic megacities, not of the issues upsetting us today. As quack mechanical remedies he considers solutions like slum demolition , model housing, civic architectural embellishment, suburban extension, urban renewal etc. But , on the one hand, the issues are not only analogous at places but also mutually overlapping indeed; on the other hand , our passions for the issues of today’s TV news must not make us forget that the problems Mumford analyzes belong to today, too, since they have not been solved and since, as we will see, his book also refers to city planning proposals which will be opportune in a valuable and indispensable kind of way for a long time to come. Lastly, one of the many components of his book and of the way in which it is written, not only transfers to our days but is also significant in the most pressing and urgent way at this moment. The book is written as to also function like a collective psychoanalysis of the collective man in the present moment of civilization with the help of a collective psychoanalyst and most lucid and wise mirror. Mumford does not base his final optimism on a wishful analogy with Rome but on things he does see and which he points out to us : these are the good points of the monstrously gigantic megacity whose bad points and their consequences in short and long runs of time he has analyzed throughout the whole book with a profundity of the most rigorous logic and with a sarcasm of the most humane lucidity. These good points, by being situated towards the end of the book , also function as a catharsis to de-depress us , but we cannot just mention them right off because they are of the kind also presupposing the previous analysis. So, for us to realize that the catharsis is believable as real and not just wishful , we too have to leave those good points for the end of our summary, a summary which , by the way, we allow to be very imperfect since no presentation of such a book can aspire to any degree of perfection.

Mumford , as a precedent of city and village, does not even consider the villages , colonies and architectural works of castors (which has drawn the attention of the “philosophical writings” of Marx’s youth) but already the somewhat more permanent settlements groups of fish or birds make to secure food . As one of the first needs that differentiate the existing practical activities of human groups from those of animal groups, he considers the concern, checked in all paleolithic findings, to create a cemetery in all settlements. Man’s respect for the dead makes the necropolis

a nucleus of every living city, already since that time but also up to the closer times when the traveler entering Egyptian, Greek and Roman cities would first meet the dead ancestors of the inhabitants, and maybe also the remote mythical and deified founders of the city, before meeting the inhabitants themselves. Another repeating feature, already since paleolithic times, is the cave which, frequently, was found at the end of a difficult road and concentrated the artistic expression of its time and also attracted as a magnet, like sourcesprings and glades attracted too, the dwellers from around in regular intervals for rites, and was, as it seems, the ancestor of the pyramids, the ziggurats, the Mithraic caves and the Christian crypts, and also of the astronomical observatories, of the theater and of the university. Thus, part of the history of the city, according to Mumford, is that even before the city's creation, immediately after the human mind became liberated from immediate animal needs, it played freely with the whole spectrum of existence and began to leave its trace in caves, trees and sourcesprings. In the mesolithic period, maybe 15,000 years ago, man begins to store food, learning to salt it and smoke it, and is released from the hunter's everyday starvation anxiety, this releasing for him both time and energy for erotic activities and it may even be that a sexual revolution preceded the agricultural revolution that was led, in the neolithic age, by the woman, as is rather well known. The village became for the young a collective nest where they could play and be fed for extended periods of time, and the stored food supplies created a feeling of security for the adult too. Without this feeling and without the foresight and planning that were then cultivated, maybe the creation of city would not have become possible. The presence of woman became felt everywhere in the village and the similarities with her protective enclosures presented either by granary and oven etc. or, later, by the wall and the moat etc. do not need the belated speculation by psychoanalysis to be noticed, it suffices for that to know that e.g. in Egyptian hieroglyphics "home" and "city" also represent "mother" and that, in the somewhat more primitive constructions, houses, rooms and tombs have round shapes. Phallus and vulva, sometimes symbolically as obelisks and enclosures and sometimes quite literally, have a constant presence in the village. Also, fences protect from lions and tigers the children playing during the day and the domestic animals during the night. *"The village, in the midst of its garden plots and fields, formed a new kind of settlement: a permanent association of families and neighbors, of birds and animals, of houses and storage pits and barns, all rooted in the ancestral soil, in which each generation formed the compost for the next. The daily round was centered in food and sex: the sustenance and reproduction of life... Village life is embedded in the primary association of birth and place, blood and soil. Each member is a whole human being, performing all the functions appropriate to each phase of life, from birth to death, in alliance with natural forces that he venerates and submits to... Before the city came into existence, the village had brought forth the neighbor: he who lives near at hand, within calling distance, sharing the crises of life, watching over the dying, weeping sympathetically for the dead, rejoicing at a marriage feast or a childbirth. Neighbors hurry to your aid, as Hesiod reminds us, while even kinsmen "dawdle over their gear"... What we call morality began in the mores, the life-conserving customs, of the village. When these primary bonds dissolve, when the intimate visible community ceases to be a watchful, identifiable, deeply concerned group, then the "We" becomes a buzzing swarm of "I's", and secondary ties and allegiances become too feeble to halt the disintegration of the urban community. Only now that village ways are rapidly disappearing throughout the world can we estimate all that the city owes to them for the vital energy and loving nurture that made possible man's further development."* And running a little ahead in the story, we must remark that according to Mumford one of the most outstanding reasons why *"the Greek city, and Athens particularly, became a symbol for what was truly human and ran in two centuries through stages of evolution through which other cities had not run in millennia... and created a human ideal in which being human was more divine than being a god of the past"*, the reason for that was that the Greeks found the size up to which a city can continue to be a village. But let us return to the history of the city in temporal order: The paleolithic phase, with man as a hunter in the protagonist's role, was not replaced by

the neolithic-agricultural phase, with woman in the protagonist's role, overnight. (Even now, on weekends, so many people become engaged in the paleolithic occupation of fishing, a tendency that would be even stronger at those times). The adventurous hunter man who had become used to risking had no reason to lay down his arms, on the contrary he used them, e.g. to protect his fellow villagers or their cattle from being attacked by savage beasts that would never become domesticated, yet it would not be infrequent that his fellow villagers would need protection, from his attacks on them, but this protection they would not find. Regarding when the existence of war begins, the examination of various conjectures (of course there are no monuments dating from that time) tends to conclude that the first conflicts were not between different communities but within the interior of each of them and ended with the prevalence of the "noble" over their "peasants". Thus the protector lives in the elevated, inaccessible and, by now, guarded citadel of the village (and the inaccessible shrine of the village sometimes has its own wall against its own, supernatural, enemies, and sometimes it is within the citadel, like the roles of the leader and the priest too sometimes are differentiated, sometimes they support each other and sometimes coincide. In the task of coercing others the two roles usually collaborate in ways that gradually help the scale of the imposition to take off). But the feats of the muscular strength and courage of such a protector-hero are not limited to the confrontation of wild animals but extend to the confrontation of dangers from the physical environment, through carrying out tasks more demanding than e.g. simple and usual cultivation. Also, his decisiveness and his imposition help at moments at which the council of elders would take too long to face an urgent situation (elders because in the times when only an oral transmission of experience was possible one became wise only by getting old and accumulating lots of experience). We already see clearly some latent possibilities that could, with the creation of towns, emerge and further themselves; e.g. an extended physical destruction, like a flood destroying cultivations, could only be confronted with works necessitating the collaboration of many villages and with the continuous work of people (who would identify with their superhuman protector in feeling heroes when they would give their all, if only to avoid the whip of their supervisor). In general, excruciatingly painstaking works are assumed that no small community would ever start, the aesthetics of the ceramics and sculptures is not equal to that of the paintings in the caves of the paleolithic hunters, but the pains necessary for hunting now extend to the handling of all the natural environment. The evolutionary changes leave no traces, only later crystallizations suggest what could have happened, the monuments show images from the unconscious that accompany the magnification of the human ego, the superhuman hero-idol we saw crystallizes as Gilgamesh and Hercules. In a few millennia we reach 3,000 B.C., witnessing (there are proofs for that) the simultaneous appearance of grain cultivation, the plow, the potter's wheel, the sailboat, the draw loom, copper metallurgy, abstract mathematics, exact astronomical observation, the calendar, writing... We will better understand the nature of the change if we compare it to the change we are now living: *"We live in fact in an exploding universe of mechanical and electronic invention whose parts are moving at a rapid pace ever further and further away from their human center, and from any rational, autonomous human purposes. This technological explosion has produced a similar explosion of the city itself: the city has burst open and scattered its complex organs and organizations over the entire landscape. The walled urban container indeed has not merely been broken open: it has also been largely demagnetized, with the result that we are witnessing a sort of devolution of urban power into a state of randomness and unpredictability. In short, our civilization is running out of control overwhelmed by its own resources and opportunities, as well as its superabundant fecundity. The totalitarian states that seek ruthlessly to impose control are as much the victim of their clumsy brakes as the seemingly freer economies coasting downhill are at the mercy of the runaway vehicles. Just the opposite happened with the first great expansion of civilization: instead of an explosion of power, there was rather an implosion. The many diverse elements of the community hitherto scattered over a great valley system and occasionally into regions far beyond, were mobilized and packed together under pressure, behind the massive walls of the city. Even the*

*gigantic forces of nature were brought under conscious human direction: tens of thousands of men moved into action as one machine under centralized command building irrigation ditches, canals, urban mounds, ziggurats, temples, palaces, pyramids, on a scale hitherto inconceivable. As an immediate outcome of the new power mythology, the machine itself had been invented: long invisible to archaeologists because the substance of which it was composed-human bodies-had been dismantled and decomposed. The city was the container that brought about this implosion, and through its very form held together the new forces, intensified their internal reactions, and raised the whole level of achievement. This implosion happened at the very moment that the area of intercourse was greatly enlarged, through raidings and tradings, through seizures and commandeering, through migrations and enslavements, through tax-gatherings and the wholesale conscription of labor. Under pressure of one master institution, that of kingship, a multitude of diverse social particles, long separate and self-centered, if not mutually antagonistic, were brought together in a concentrated urban area. As with a gas, the very pressure of the molecules within that limited space produced more social collisions and interactions within a generation than would have occurred in many centuries if still isolated in their native habitats without boundaries, or to put it in more organic terms, little communal village cells, undifferentiated and uncomplicated, every part performing equally every function, turned into complex structures organized on an axiate principle, with differentiated tissues and specialized organs, and with one part, the central nervous system, thinking for and directing the whole. What made this concentration and mobilization of power possible? What gave it the special form it took in the city, with a central and political nucleus, the citadel, dominating the entire social structure and giving centralized direction to activities that had once been dispersed and undirected, or at least locally self governed? What I am going to suggest as the key development here had already been presaged, at a much earlier stage, by the apparent evolution of the protective hunter into the tribute-gathering chief: a figure repeatedly attested in similar developments in many later cycles of civilization. Suddenly this figure assumed superhuman proportions: all his powers and prerogatives became immensely magnified, while those of his subjects, who no longer had a will of their own or could claim any life apart from that of the ruler, were correspondingly diminished. Now I would hardly be bold enough to advance this explanation if one of the most brilliant of modern archaeologists, the late Henri Frankfort, had not provided most of the necessary data, and unconsciously foreshadowed if not foreseen this conclusion.....I suggest that one of the attributes of the ancient Egyptian god, Ptah, ...-that he founded cities- is the special and all but universal function of the kings. In the urban implosion, the king stands at the center: he is the polar magnet that draws to the heart of the city and brings under the control of the palace and temple all the new forces of civilization. Sometimes the king founded new cities; sometimes he transformed old country towns that had long been a-building, placing them under the authorities of his governors: in either case his rule made a decisive change in their form and contents...In the final creation of the city, the "little city", the citadel, towered above the village and overwhelmed the humble village ways. No mere enlargement of its parts could turn the village into the new urban image; for the city was a new symbolic world, representing not only a people, but a whole cosmos and its gods".*

Before going on to the history of the city in temporal order, let's also go to the last paragraph of the book, this really helps, and Mumford himself, before even starting the book, in the prologue, mentions things from that end, maybe because he knows that it would help us in our understanding if we knew what he was driving at. So let's see the first paragraph of the prologue and, after the dots, let's see the last paragraph of the whole book and, if it sounds to us overly poetic to inspire tangible optimism, let's keep in mind that we keep saving for the end the tangible optimistic of Mumford because it is based on the analysis still to be carried out, and out of which we have only seen the beginning of the beginning. So: "This book opens with a city that was, symbolically, a world; it closes with a world that has become, in many practical aspects, a city. In following through this development I have attempted to deal with the forms

*and the functions of the city, and with the purposes that have emerged from it; and I have demonstrated, I trust, that the city will have an even more significant part to play in the future than it has played in the past, if once the original disabilities that have accompanied it through history are sloughed off.....The city first took form as the home of a god; a place where eternal values were represented and divine possibilities revealed. Though the symbols have changed the realities behind remain. We know now, as never before, that the undisclosed potentialities of life reach far beyond the proud algebraics of contemporary science; and their promises for the further transformations of man are as enchanting as they are inexhaustible. Without the religious perspectives fostered by the city, it is doubtful if more than a small part of man's capacities for living and learning could have developed. Man grows in the image of his gods, and up to the measure they have set. The mixture of divinity, power and personality that brought the ancient city into existence must be weighed out anew in terms of the ideology and the culture of our own time, and poured into fresh civic, regional, and planetary molds. In order to defeat the insensate forces that now threaten civilization from within, we must transcend the original frustrations and negations that have dogged the city throughout its history. Otherwise the sterile gods of power, unrestrained by organic limits or human goals, will remake man in their own faceless image and bring human history to an end. The final mission of the city is to further man's conscious participation in the cosmic and the historic process. Through its own complex and enduring structure, the city vastly augments man's ability to interpret these processes and take an active formative part in them, so that every phase of the drama it stages shall have, to the highest degree possible, the illumination of consciousness, the stamp of purpose, the color of love. That magnification of all the dimensions of life, through emotional communion, rational communication, technological mastery, and above all, dramatic representation, has been the supreme office of the city in history. And it remains the chief reason for the city's continued existence".* It is also worth here seeing the last phrase of "The Myth of the Machine" which he wrote some years later, where, among other things, he saw the machine in history from the time of the megamachine made of human bodies up to the time of the writing of that book (or rather, because of the possibility for happy end which he traced in that book, too, let's wish he saw the history not only up to now but also for many future years)

*"On the terms imposed by technocratic society, there is no hope for mankind except by "going with" its plans for accelerated technological progress, even though man's vital organs will all be cannibalized in order to prolong the megamachine's meaningless existence. But for those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, 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".*

Before we return to the history of the city in temporal order, it's worth also seeing the, not poetic but practical, last but one paragraph of Mumford's book, if not for any other reason at least to also add to our, positive or negative, first impressions as to where he's driving at, the, be it oversuspicious, question of whether he's simply a daydreamer, and then see if his analysis will confirm this mistrust or will prove it unnecessary. It is not unusual nor unreasonable for a reader to take glances at the last pages of a book as he is reading the first ones, especially if it's thick. It's in this way we've read this book of Mumford's and it's in this way we are presenting it. The only "made up" thing is the mistrust we pretend we're having in him: we would indeed suspect, during our first back-and-forth leafings through the present book of his, that he might be a blissfully naïve daydreamer, but it is not the first book by him we've read so this mistrust was not really there. So let's go to his last but one paragraph and to a photo of his (to also see the body language with which he said the things we'll immediately see, and with which he expounded the analysis we'll see in the sequel) :

*"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...(Note: This also reminds Palestinian mothers shouting to TV cameras “We’ll bear more children to become human bombs”)...The automatic response of every species threatened with extirpation takes the form of excessive reproduction. This is a fundamental observation of ecology. No profit-oriented, pleasure-dominated economy can cope with such demands: no power-dominated economy can permanently suppress them. Should the same attitude spread toward the organs of education, art , and culture, man’s super-biological means of reproduction, it would alter the entire human prospect : for public service would take precedence over private profit , and public funds would be available for the building and rebuilding of villages, neighborhoods, cities , and regions, on more generous lines than the aristocracies were ever able to afford for themselves. Such a change would restore the discipline and the delight of the garden to every aspect of life; and it might do more to balance the birth rate, by its concern with the quality of life , than any other collective measure. As we have seen , the city has undergone many changes during the last five thousand years; and further changes are doubtless in store. But the innovations that beckon urgently are not in the extension and perfection of physical equipment: still less in multiplying automatic electronic devices for dispersing into formless sub-urban dust the remaining organs of culture. Just the contrary: significant improvements will come only through applying art and thought to the city’s central human concerns, with a fresh dedication to the cosmic and ecological processes that enfold all being . We must restore to the city the maternal, life-nurturing functions, the autonomous activities, the symbiotic associations, that have long been neglected or suppressed. For the city should be an organ of love; and the best economy of cities is the care and culture of men.”*



**Lewis Mumford**

Let’s return at last , to the history of the city in temporal order, without very much interrupting him from now on:

Note: From now on the dots may mean not only missing phrases or paragraphs but also missing pages or even whole chapters. But the selection of excerpts will be such that the text here can be, almost, self contained and also “continuous with respect to reading” (in the sense that if an “oral reading” didn’t mention the dots they would be hardly audible. Also in the sense that we will, almost\*, not at all separate paragraphs or even chapters)

\*Roughly , we’ll separate , by one spacing , the story—life and death—of cities before the Greek city, then that story from the story of the Roman city, then that from the story of the medieval city, then that from the story of the city of modern times and ours. Extra separations will be self-explanatory where they occur.

...The early city, as distinct from the village community, is a caste-managed society, organized for the satisfaction of a dominant minority: it is no longer a community of humble families living in mutual aid. At that point kingly power claimed and received a supernatural sanction: the king became a mediator between heaven and earth, incarnating in his own person the whole life and being of the land and its people. Sometimes a king would be appointed by priesthood but even if he were a usurper, he needed some sign of divine favor, in order to rule successfully by divine right...Does all this not indicate a fusion of secular and sacred power, and was it not this fusion process that, as in a nuclear reaction, produced the otherwise unaccountable explosion of human energy?...Out of this union, I suggest, came the forces that brought together all the inchoate parts of the city and gave them a fresh form, visibly greater and more awe-inspiring than any other work of man. Once this great magnification had taken place, the masters of the citadel not merely commanded the destinies of the city: they actually set the new mold of the civilization, which combined the maximum possible social and vocational differentiation consistent with the widening processes of unification and integration. Kingship enlarged the offices of the priesthood...which measured time, bounded space, predicted seasonal events. Those who had mastered time and space could control great masses of men. Not merely the priesthood, but a new intellectual class, thus came into existence, the scribes, the doctors, the magicians, the diviners, as well as "the palace officials who dwell in the city and have taken an oath to the gods" as quoted ... from a letter. In return for their support, the early kings gave these representatives of the "spiritual power" security, leisure, status, and collective habitations of great magnificence... Was the building of the temple with all the vast physical resources the community now commanded the critical event that brought the sacred and secular leaders together? Surely the approval of the priesthood and the gods was as necessary for the exercise of the king's power as his command of weapons and his ruthless domination of large human forces was required to enhance theirs...The rebuilding and restoration of the ancient temple was no mere act of formal piety, but a necessary establishment of lawful continuity, indeed a re-validation of the original "covenant" between the shrine and the palace,...and transformed the local chieftain into a colossal emblem of both sacred and secular power, in a process that released social energies latent in the whole community...The development of kingship seems to have been accompanied by a collective shift from the rites of fertility to the wider cult of physical power...Although never complete it brought, at the opening of civilization, a change of outlook, accompanied by a progressive loss of understanding of the needs of life, and a gross overestimation of the role of physical prowess and organized control as determinants of communal life not just in a crisis but in the daily routine. Backed by military force, the king's word was law. The power to command, to seize property, to kill, to destroy—all these were, and have remained, "sovereign powers." Thus a paranoid psychal structure was preserved and transmitted by the walled city: the collective expression of a too heavily armored personality. As the physical means increased, this one-sided power mythology, sterile, indeed hostile to life, pushed its way into every corner of the urban scene and found, in the new institution of war, its completest expression. To understand the nature of this regression ...and to understand an infantile trauma of the civilization that created war and left its unmistakable mark upon the structure of the city... and has remained in existence to warp the development of all subsequent societies, not least our own, one must go further into the origins of kingship itself ...(Hocart,... Frankfort,... Frazer)...All over the world one finds evidence of totemic rites, with almost identic formulae, aimed at securing the abundance of food. These rites indicate a fertility cult that may even be older than the practice of agriculture. Everywhere, in both Old World and New, the birth and death of vegetation was associated with the birth and death of the corn god, the lord of the human arts of sowing and planting. With kingship, the two figures, god and king, became virtually interchangeable, for with his assumption of divine powers the ruler himself personified the pervading forces of nature...At the same time he accepted responsibility for its biological and cultural existence... With the growth of population under neolithic agriculture, the proto-urban community became increasingly

*dependent upon natural forces outside its control: a flood or a plague of locusts might cause widespread suffering or death...to mobilize new forces and to bring them under control the king gathered to himself extraordinary powers; he not only incarnated the community, but by his very assumptions held its fate in his hand. This shifted the ground for a state of collective anxiety... Urban man sought to control natural events his more primitive forerunners once accepted with dumb grace. Did kingship pay for this exorbitant increase of magical power? There is scattered evidence, too ancient and too widespread to be wholly disregarded, that fertility rites to ensure the growth of crops were consummated by human sacrifice... Very possibly the original subject of the sacrifice was the most precious member of the community, the god king himself... Frazer sardonically points out that this practice somewhat lessened the attraction of the noble office of the king and as his organizational skill and intelligence became as important as his implied magical functions, a more rational method would suggest itself: the selection of a "stand-in," who would first be identified with the king by being treated with all the honors and privileges of kingship, in order finally to be ceremoniously slaughtered in his place on the altar... Among the Aztecs, the need for sacrificial victims—as many as twenty thousand in a single year—was the main reason for the ferocious wars these people waged... Invasions in force to round up captives for slavery, rather than sacrifice, may well have been an independent source of war... If the city had not served as a focal center for organized aggression, the search for sacrificial victims need never have gone beyond the relatively innocent limits that were still visible in many primitive tribal communities down to the 19<sup>th</sup> century—a perverse but selective effort to obtain a few symbolic captives from another community. This practice was misinterpreted by missionaries and even by anthropologists... who took for granted that "war is as old as humanity" and never bothered to look carefully at the actual evidence... But the object of primitive interchange of blows between armed men was not the killing of a mass of people in battle or the robbing and razing of their village—but rather the singling out of a few live captives for ceremonial slaughter, and eventual serving up in a cannibal feast, itself a magico-religious rite. Once the city came into existence, with its collective increase in power in every department, this whole situation underwent a change. Instead of raids and sallies for single victims, mass extermination and mass destruction came to prevail. What had once been a magic sacrifice to ensure fertility and abundant crops, an irrational act to promote a rational purpose, was turned into the exhibition of the power of one community, under its wrathful god and priest-king, to control, subdue, totally wipe out another community. Much of this aggression was unprovoked, and morally unjustified by the aggressor; though by the time the historic record becomes clear, some economic color would be given to war by reason of political tensions arising over disputed boundaries or water rights. But the resulting human and economic losses, in earlier times no less than today, were out of all proportion to the tangible stakes for which they were fought... Thus by a curious act of transvestiture a ceremony that began by the invocation of more abundant life, turned into its very opposite: it invited a centralized military control, systematic robbery, and economic parasitism—all institutions that worked against the life-promoting aspects of urban civilization, and finally brought one city after another to its ruin. That was a final ambivalence and contradiction: for the many gains made through the wider associations and laborious co-operations of the city were duly offset by the negative economic activity of war. That cyclic disorder was embedded in the very constitution of the ancient city. But this much must be conceded: as soon as war had become one of the reasons for the city's existence, the city's own wealth and power made it a natural target. The presence of thriving cities gave collective aggression a visible object that had never beckoned before: the city itself, with its growing accumulation of tools and mechanical equipment, its hoards of gold, silver, and jewels, heaped in palace and temple, its well filled granaries and storehouses: not least, perhaps, its surplus of women. If war had originated in one-way raiding parties, sent out by the city, the existence of a new professional caste, armed warriors, may have turned those raids more and more away from the source of raw materials to the places that held the largest store of finished products. Cities*

*that had first drawn tribute from primitive folk now learned to prey on each other... Too easily have historians imputed war chiefly to man's savage past, and have looked upon war as an incursion of so-called primitive nomads, the "have-nots" against normally "peaceful" centers of industry and trade... with naïve projections—lacking both imagination and factual knowledge—from the 19<sup>th</sup> century imperialist and capitalist on the primitive man... War and domination, rather than peace and co-operation, were ingrained in the original structure of the ancient city. No doubt the urban surplus tempted poorer folk, for each city must have seemed a sitting duck to swift-moving raiders from the highlands or steppes: but the very facilities that enabled them to move swiftly, with horses and boats, came only after the city itself... And though anything like satisfactory proof of the early connection between kingship, sacrifice, war and urban development will always be lacking, I have put together enough evidence of the surviving fragments to cast serious doubts on the assumptions of either a biologically inherited belligerence or an "original sin" as the sufficient operative cause in producing the complex institution of war. But here, if anywhere, the doctrine of natural selection worked with classic exactitude, for in the course of five or six thousand years many of the milder, gentler, more co-operative stocks were killed off or discouraged from breeding, while the more aggressive, bellicose types survived and flourished at the centers of civilization. The peripheral successes of urban culture bolstered up its central failure —its commitment to war as the elixir of sovereign power and the most effective purgative for popular discontent with that power... If anything were needed to make the magical origins of war plausible, it is the fact that war, even when it is disguised by seemingly hardheaded economic demands, uniformly turns into religious performance; nothing less than a wholesale ritual sacrifice. As the central agent in this sacrifice the king had from the very beginnings an office to perform. To accumulate power, to hold power, to express power by deliberate acts of murderous destruction—this became the obsession of kingship... By the very act of war the victorious king demonstrated the maximum possibilities of royal control and invoked further divine support by wholesale infliction of death... With the king's command of its entire manpower, the city became, so to say, a permanently mobilized standing army, held in reserve. This power of massed numbers in itself gave the city a superiority over the thinly populated widely scattered villages and served as an incentive for further growth both in internal area and numbers. To meet this challenge, the aboriginal villages may themselves have often combined into larger urban units... Not merely did the walled city give a permanent collective structure to the paranoid claims and delusions of kingship, augmenting suspicion, hostility, non-cooperation, but the division of labor and castes, pushed to the extreme, normalized schizophrenia; while the compulsive repetitious labor imposed on a large part of the urban population under slavery, reproduced the structure of a compulsion neurosis. Thus the ancient city, in its very constitution, tended to transmit a collective personality structure whose more extreme manifestations are now recognized in individuals as pathological. That structure is still visible in our own day, though the outer walls have given way to iron curtains.*

(Of course Mumford who would only be very happy to have known that his reluctant pessimistic predictions were proved wrong after his death, would\* barely have time to rejoice for the undoing of the iron curtain before he saw in the everyday news, like we all see today, the "paranoid, parasitic, and military in an extremely violent way" repetition of the stages he describes; and so conspicuously that we all become, whether we wished it or not, reluctant pessimist prophets of the Mumford type; of course only for the events of the next day—that Mumford too predicts along with us but not the day before but in 1961 (and in 1938). Now we also learn (one thing or two) about the way he does it: on the one hand he thinks rationally and directly what he himself would do if he were e.g. a cultivator, a warrior, a priest, a bandit, a cannibal etc in such and such an age, so as to fill in the data he lacks in the same way he would fill them in if he were thinking about the future (for which the data are always lacking!) and on the other hand he looks very carefully into the existing data on those ages so as to spell out their

\*Actually this is not a "would" but a "did" since he died in 1990.

differences from the contemporary and recent data and not have his imagination blocked by them\* (e.g. if what is needed is to think like a cannibal, then to think like a cannibal of those times and not like a cannibal of the British colonialist type in India). The image that then results, though he is still in 1961, reminds aspects of 1999-2006 through reminding aspects of 3000 B.C. (not only because of the ignorance of the past that neocons have! After all, if they knew how extremely violent that past was, it is not at all certain that they would know, or care, to be taught how not to imitate it; maybe they would boast of having rediscovered it unaided or would consciously imitate it since CIA did learn brainwash methods from Nazis, Nazis did learn genocide methods from Turks and since neocons use even Orwell's "1984" for shortcuts towards fulfilling rather than avoiding its predictions. Besides, some of the ones among them who do not opt for violence consciously might not recognize it even in the past in the same way that they do not recognize it in the present). The past may remind the present for deeper reasons too (like the reasons that make the citadel, as the politico-religious nucleus of the city, remind the nucleus of a cell, with respect to its functions of centralized management). The break with the past for emergence of new functions etc (to any direction that may be in the mind of he who makes it) would surprise, with its leaps and bounds and backfires, even the deepest knower and analyst of the past and the philosopher and/or biologist of emergence of new forms, of ontological creation etc; and even more it would surprise somebody ignorant of all that – or would surprise him even less, or not at all, if he, once more, did not notice or did not even see whatever was to see even in front of his eyes in the present. Example: Americans who program military actions on the basis of data, on history or human nature, collected from Hollywood films and which Iraqis –even if they had any reason, or wish, to, obligingly, fulfill– just don't know about or cannot imagine, have one educational surprise/contact with the outside world after another (with scores of dead Iraqis and Americans per educational experience). Indicative is also the critique of a neocon to a journalist who spelled this out: "Your critique is too reality-based. A nation that can impose itself does not have to learn about reality. It creates its own realities". A rationale supplementing another rationale (that used to drive CIA's Colby crazy, when Rumsfeld and Cheney and other members of the present gang, then still promising young men, who then were his employees and were called "the crazies" by their not so avant garde–or rather "avant garbage" as an expression goes–colleagues) going like: "it is not so relevant that US Intelligence learns what Russians are up to, as to make Americans believe the Russians are up to what US Intelligence says Russians are up to")

*...The walls bring to light another urban ambivalence. In a townless culture, like that of the Spartans, living in open villages and declining to take refuge behind walls, the ruling classes had to remain savagely alert and threatening, under arms at all times, lest they be overthrown by the enslaved helots. Whereas such rulers had to back their naked power by overt terrorism, in walled cities the wall itself was worth a whole army in controlling the unruly, keeping rivals under surveillance, and blocking the desperate from escaping...In the early cities the inhabitants were "all in the same boat", and in a ship all learn to trust the captain and to execute orders promptly...But for religion, and all social rites and economic advantages that accompanied it, the wall would have turned the city into a prison, whose inmates would only have one ambition: to destroy their keepers and break out. From the beginning, however, law and order supplemented brute force. The city, as it took form around the royal citadel, was a man-made replica of the universe. This opened an attractive vista: indeed a glimpse of heaven itself. To be a resident of the city was to have a place in man's true home, the great cosmos itself...and witness the general enlargement of powers and potentialities in every direction...Living in the sight of the gods and their king, was to fulfill the utmost potentialities of life. Spiritual identification and vicarious participation made it easy to submit to the divine commands that governed the community...Once*

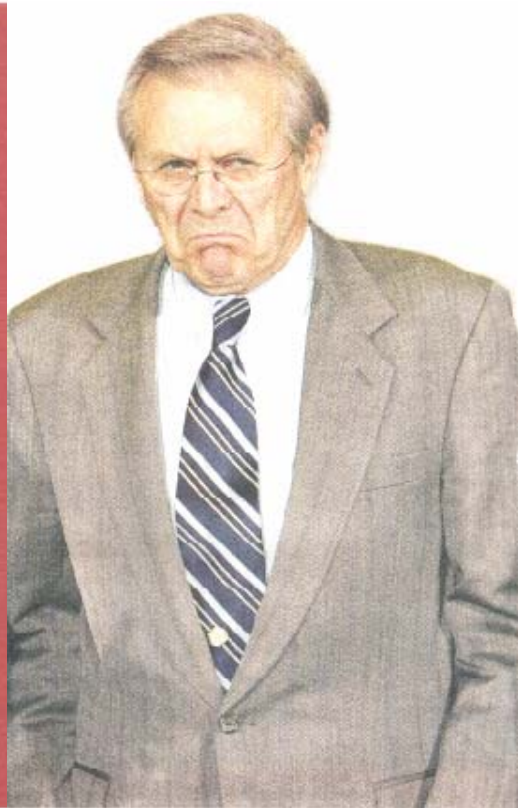
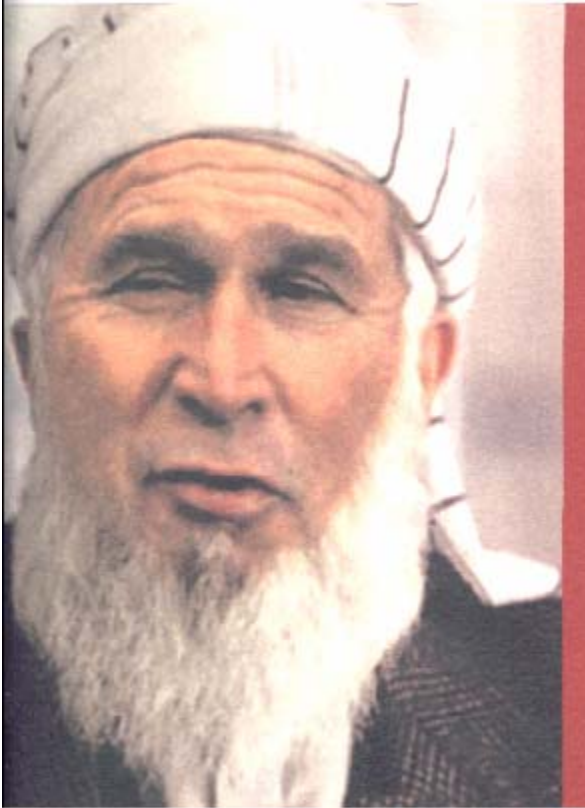
\*About some aspects of human history, even earlier than the above, at least those that relate to the emergence of language, Mumford shows that one can similarly use some anthropological data, thinking, and imagination, and do infer some things. But this needs a different context to describe (e.g. an appendix).

*the urban transformation had been effected, the city as a whole became a sacred precinct under the protection of its god: the very axis of the universe went, as Mircea Eliade has made clear, through the temple; while the wall, under pressure of the new institution of war, was both a physical rampart for defense and spiritual boundary of even greater significance, for it preserved those within from the chaos and formless evil that encompassed them. The “innerness” needed for further human development found in the city—and above all in the sacred precinct—the collective form that would help call it forth. Behind the walls of the city life rested on a common foundation, set as deep as the universe itself: the city was nothing less than the home of a powerful god. The architectural and sculptural symbols that made this fact visible lifted the city far above the village or country town. Without the sacred powers that were contained within the palace and the temple precinct, the ancient city would have been purposeless and meaningless. Once those powers were established by the king, widening the area of communication and unifying behavior through law, life prospered here as it could not hope to prosper anywhere else. What began as control ended as communion and rational understanding. Without the religious potencies of the city, the wall itself could not have succeeded in molding the character as well as controlling the activities of the city’s inhabitants... But all organic phenomena have limits of growth and extension, which are set by their very need to remain self-sustaining and self-directing: they can grow at the expense of their neighbors only by losing the very facilities that their neighbors’ activities contribute to their own life... Urban communities, engrossed in the new expansion of power, forfeited this sense of limits: the cult of power exulted in its boundless display: it offered the delights of a game played for its own sake, as well as the rewards of labor without the need for daily drudgery, by forcible collective seizure and wholesale enslavement. The sky was the limit. We have the evidence of this sudden sense of exaltation in the increasing dimensions of the great pyramids; as we have the mythological representation of it in the story of the ambitious Tower of Babel, though that was curbed by a failure of communication, which an over-extension of linguistic territory and culture may in turn have repeatedly brought about. That cycle of indefinite expansion from city to empire is easy to follow. As a city’s population grew, it was necessary either to extend the area of immediate food production or to extend the supply lines, and draw by co-operation, barter and trade, or by forced tribute, expropriation and extermination, upon another community. Predation or symbiosis? Conquest or co-operation? A power myth knows only one answer... If I interpret the evidence correctly, the co-operative forms of urban polity were undermined and vitiated from the outset by the destructive, death-oriented myths which attended, and perhaps partly prompted, the exorbitant expansion of physical power and technological adroitness... Thus the most precious collective invention of civilization, the city, second only to language itself in the transmission of culture, became from the outset the container of disruptive internal forces, directed toward ceaseless destruction and extermination. As a result of that deep-rutted heritage, the very survival of civilization, or indeed of any large and unmutilated portion of the human race, is now in doubt—and may long remain in doubt whatever temporary accommodations may be made. Each historic civilization, as Patrick Geddes long ago pointed out, begins with a living urban core, the polis, and ends in a common graveyard of dust and bones, a Necropolis, or city of the dead: fire-scorched ruins, shattered buildings, empty workshops, heaps of meaningless refuse, the population massacred or driven into slavery... “And he took the city,” we read in Judges; “and slew the people therein; and he beat down the city and served it with salt.” ... The terror of this final episode, with its cold misery and blank despair, is the human climax toward which the “Iliad” moves; but long before that, as Heinrich Schliemann proved, six other cities were destroyed; and long before the “Iliad” one finds a lamentation, equally bitter and heartfelt, for that marvel among ancient cities, Ur itself, a wail uttered by the goddess of the city: “Verily all my birds and winged creatures have flown away. “Alas! For my city,” I will say. My daughters and my sons have been carried off. “Alas! For my men,” I will say. O my city which exists no longer, my city attacked without cause, O my city attacked and destroyed!”. Finally consider Sennacherib’s inscription on the total annihilation of Babylon:*

*“The city and its houses, from its foundations to its top, I destroyed, I devastated, I burned with fire. The wall and the outer wall, temples and gods, temple towers of brick and earth, as many as they were, I razed them and dumped them into the canal. Through the midst of the city I dug canals, I flooded its site with water...I made its destruction more complete than by a flood.” Both the act and the morals anticipated the ferocious extravagances of our own Nuclear Age; the only things the destruction described in the above inscription lacked was our swift scientific dexterity and our massive hypocrisy in disguising our intentions even from ourselves. Yet again and again the positive forces of co-operation and sentimental communion have brought people back to the devastated urban sites, “to repair the wasted cities, the desolation of many generations.” Ironically—yet consolingly—cities have repeatedly outlived the military empires that seemingly destroyed them forever. Damascus, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Athens still stand on the sites they originally occupied, alive though little more than fragments of their ancient foundations remain in view. The chronic miscarriages of life in the city might well have caused their abandonment, might even have led to a wholesale renunciation of city life and all its ambivalent gifts, but for one fact: the constant recruitment of new life, fresh and unsophisticated, from rural regions, full of crude muscular strength, sexual vitality, procreative zeal, animal faith. These rural folk replenished the city with their blood, and still more with their hopes. Even today, according to the French geographer Max Sorre, four fifths of the world lives in villages, functionally closer to their neolithic prototype than to the highly organized metropolises that have begun to suck the village into their orbits and, even more swiftly, to undermine their ancient mode of life. But once we allow the village to disappear, this ancient factor of safety will vanish. That danger mankind has still to reckon with and fend.....*

Later addendum on the occasion of a public dispute, both in Greece and in France (at least. Maybe in other European nations too), about removing from history books taught in primary and secondary education things related to the Enlightenment, French revolution, struggles during the formation of national states and identities, Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire, and in general anything beyond the least common denominator of European nations, and characterizing it as nationalistic, localistic, parochial, while at the same time encouraging, and instructing, teachers, explicitly, to promote the “deconstruction” of nationalistic consciousness and identity. Answer: The things mentioned just above from such a non-nationalistic, non-localistic, non-parochial, homo-universalis and multiversalis, as Mumford, a universal spirit incomparable to, and light-years beyond, any illiterate monkey-globalis, a spirit able to see, and daring to really go beyond, his country and to criticize it even when nobody else had suspected the coming deterioration of its ideals we now all witness, are a fantastically exhaustive answer; it’s universal to the degree of being cosmic while at the same time it’s not even nation-size narrow and parochial but even village-size narrow. Yet who of all the beyond-nation savants went one hundredth as universal and nation-critical as he? With the help of his thoughts and of the music and poetry and activism of other men of all seasons too (like Theodorakis, Ritsos, Elytis, Neruda, Sikelianos) and with the help of the vehicle of the everyday-like simplicity (and understandability by all) of dialogs of high school theatrical events and of actual stories of actual everyday people in moments as borderline as wars, we showed that the really free opening to the future is more similar than different to the deepest roots of national identity and more deconstructing than helpful towards the principles on which some idiot-illiterate-hired savants on leash (like Beckett’s Lucky-Lackey, the catatonic monkey on leash in “Waiting for Godot”) base globalization, free market and the deconstruction of national identity. We mean people like Fucuyama and Huntington who are to intellectual life’s freedom what Andy Warhol was to erotic life’s freedom. Why don’t we mean re-contextualizers/deconstructionists like Derrida? Derrida could think hard enough to know that the US analog of what he was up to was not some Rorty type of ex-Princetonian but the Rumsfeld type of ex-Princetonian; and he had enough esthetic sense to loath it and despise it. Can we find a school-kid’s language to convey these things too? Yes: By skipping the concept of deconstructionism (let kids run into it when they get older, if ever) and introducing the more fruitful concept of decomposers, to say: “Great minds like Mumford who draw their inspiration from organic sources, find in one civilization after another (neolithic, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Christian...) what is life’s to be used again for rebirth and re-composition like life recycles inorganic matter after some bacteria decompose the live matter that died.” (But savants who can’t also compose, just act like viruses when they “deconstruct”, i.e. like lifeless killers of the life they parasitize on; unlike life which includes decomposers they don’t decompose deceased life)

TOWARDS A NEW BEGINNING FOR ALL OF US, WESTERNERS:  
DO JOIN THE “CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS” YOU SEE BELOW:



-What do you think of Western Civilization?

-That it would be a good idea

- (Notes: 1)Of course the above captions' dialogue was from a Gandhi interview  
2)Of course the first photo is the cover of Tariq Ali's "Crusades and Jihad, the Clash of Fundamentalisms"  
3)Of course the above photos are an upshot that says this book is full of anti Americanism (it's a do-it-yourself manual for it, a "...made easy" kind of comics for it, even a gospel of anti-American arguments) and ...:  
4) Of course there is nothing racist against Americans in it. Their DNA is as good as anybody else's and anybody else in their present context, as "leading the developments on the planet", would be as bad if he, too, did not think hard as Americans should think but mostly don't.)

*“...It was in the theater that the Greek citizen saw himself and obeyed the Delphic maxim: Know Thyself. Best of all, in the comedies...he learned to see himself, wryly, as others saw him, chastened by their painful laughter. And in the tragedies he 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”*

Lewis Mumford (“The City in History”)

### **Addendum on one priority in 2007:**

*To the extent that intervention, in options of decision makers and in history and in our individual fates, also depends on being educated, and before we think of something more tangible to contribute, we propose a way to help increase lucid awareness of the global state of affairs by asking writers and editors to also offer free of charge some services to the public. To make the proposal more definite and vivid we leave it in its initial form, the format of the acknowledgements of some pages on Mumford:*

### **Invitation to an initiative for free self-teaching and free mutual education**

Acknowledgments:

*“We should all try to live within our means  
even if we have to borrow to do so”*

First of all I thank the friend\* who informed me that a person like Lewis Mumford has existed showing me his books “The City in History”, “The Myth of the Machine”, “The Transformation of Man”, and “The Story of Utopias”. Excerpting the first two in the manner that we’ll see in the sequel is the best way to describe what the above title means through an example full of specific content rather than through any long or short outline full of irrelevant expounding that floats in a vacuum and absence of content, like the reformed “avant garbage” education of the present. Very particularly I also thank all of this book’s prospective (for the time being they’re still just thinking of it) publishers for their mutual emulation instead of rivalry in the implementation of the author’s condition of adding to the top best and to the top worst reviewers’ comments, on the back cover, the note “The whole of this book can also be downloaded for free at our site...www. bla-bla-bla...editions”\*\*\*. Finally I thank the friend\* from whom I borrowed a line he had borrowed from an English writer and sounded fit for a motto on borrowing and on thanking.

John Alevizos/Christmas 2006

\*Names to appear in a later context in the sequel.

\*\*“...and an asterisk on the front cover sending to the back cover, and a trademark informing that the editors have entered a group called “free editions”, free in all senses of the word, that agree to only be paid if the reader does want and does afford to pay; at least for some writers whom these editors want to collaborate with and who demand this from them (Isn’t printing out privately, or Xeroxing, more expensive, for people who don’t want or don’t afford PC screens? Not if one just prints out, or has a friend or store print out, out of a cheaply reproducible CD, only what, each time, caught his eye. It’s as if reading, or as if suggesting to friends, only the pages that one likes as one leafs through some book taken down from a library’s or bookstore’s shelf, but having all the pages available for such excerpting, not only the ones of a, supposedly catchy, commercial preview); and that agree to have on their sites available all book reviews, good or bad\*\*\*, of the authors who demanded that deal, by all book reviewers who sent them to the editors, reviewers from both electronic review columns and of regular review columns if they did not only write reviews of books circulated the “regular” way...”. (Excerpt from an initiative for saving narration from a death that was really vulgar\*\*\*\*, and not like the death analyzed by Walter Benjamin)

\*\*\*So as to have author-provocateurs and reviewers-provocateurs of this movement be read in context; context would also eliminate editor-provocateurs who would publish bullshit authors in the above way; cheaper form of editor (or author) provocateurs who would demands big price for their books would be automatically self-eliminated by their also having to make available both a free of charge edition of the same; besides, they would have to compete paid editions of the same by other publishers.

\*\*\*\*Death by selling, signed by free marketeers, some authors-editors- readers all alike. But this initiative should be seen as part of a wider one, to be called “self teaching or self destruction” as to be a tribute to Castoriadis’ initiative “Socialisme ou le barbarisme”, to Mumford’s view that humanity is running a race between universal education and universal destruction and to Mark Twain’s advice to himself and to statesmen “I would never leave such a delicate and responsible matter as my own education to the state” and “You want to govern? Address yourselves to the stupid. They are the majority”.

Note: This book being an excerpting of Mumford just “belongs” to his editors and not to other editors or to the excerptor (!) who obviously gives them permission to freely publish his excerptings of their great author. But the above way of widening the circulation of ideas from usual hand to hand CD exchange doesn’t have to be restricted to excerptings. This is just a very meaningful example.

*And now, although we have hardly started on Mumford and although he had caught up with our days long before we saw them, let’s, for a while, skip a lot of him to move ourselves too towards catching up with our news, just using a motto from him to comment on some stations we sure shouldn’t let go unmentioned:*

*“...For those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, 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

Thursday, Nov. 14 at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. ET  
**World Premiere**

**A Soldier's Story**  
**Vietnam vet George Mizo and his mission to help the victims of war**

**UPDATE - November 7, 2002:**

At the International Committee meeting in Hanoi last week, the Veterans Association of Vietnam announced that there are now 120 children living at the Friendship Village.

Also, last week, Micheele Mason, Jeff Schutts, the Hatfield Group and some other local Vancouver activists created the Canadian non-profit for the Vietnam Friendship Village Project and have joined the International Committee to try and raise this year's operating costs at the village.

For more information about about the Vietnam Friendship Village Project Canada visit the Cypress Park Productions Inc. web site at [www.cypress-park.ca](http://www.cypress-park.ca).

In 1967, an American soldier named George Mizo went off to fight in Vietnam. More than two decades later, he embarked on a new mission: to undo some of the harm caused by his country's war in Southeast Asia.

The Friendship Village, a documentary making its world premiere on VisionTV Thursday, Nov. 14 at 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. ET, tells the story of Mizo's journey from war hero to peace activist. The hour-long film focuses on his efforts to help found a village for Vietnamese children and adults suffering from illnesses related to Agent Orange.

The son of a Native American father, George Mizo grew up believing the best of his country, and felt duty-bound to enlist for service in Vietnam. He would later be decorated for his valour on the front lines. But Mizo's experiences also caused him to question his assumptions. "We were killing the very people and destroying the very country I thought we were coming over to protect," he told Vancouver filmmaker Michelle Mason.

Badly wounded at Que Son in January 1968, Mizo discovered later that his entire platoon had been wiped out in combat. He returned home filled with anger, which he poured into protest against the war. As the years passed, his

commitment to the peace movement increased. In the 1980s, he joined with other Vietnam veterans in speaking out against U.S. policy in Central America.

The seeds of the Friendship Village project were planted soon after. During the war, American forces sprayed more than 70 million litres of the defoliant Agent Orange on the jungles of southern Vietnam. Today, vast areas remain contaminated with dioxin, a component of the herbicide. The Vietnamese believe this toxic compound to be responsible for more than a million birth defects. (A Vancouver firm, Hatfield Consultants, is heavily involved in researching the impact of Agent Orange in Vietnam.)

In 1992, Mizo and a group of other veterans from the U.S., Vietnam, Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain and Japan began work on the Friendship Village, a residential facility for victims of Agent Orange. Among his colleagues on the project: Sr. Lt-General Tran Van Quang, the same man who planned and led the Vietnamese assault at Que Son.

A place of reconciliation and healing, Friendship Village now serves more than 70 residents. Fundraising for new construction, rehabilitation equipment and ongoing care continues. As Mizo says in the film, this remarkable project is proof that "we can make a difference – each and every one of us."

George Mizo died in March of this year. He was 56.

The Friendship Village was produced, written and directed by Michelle Mason in association with VisionTV.

*"...For those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, 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

## Regaining My Humanity

By **Camilo Mejia**

, **AlterNet**. Posted **February 28, 2005**.

Conscientious objector Camilo Mejia: "I was a coward not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place."

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**For the Soul of the Church**

Ethan Vesely-Flad

More stories by **Camilo Mejia**

*In March 2004, 28-year-old Sgt. Camilo Mejia turned himself in to the U.S. military and filed an application for conscientious objector status. On May 21, he was sentenced to one year in prison for refusing to return to fight in Iraq. He was released from prison on Feb. 15, 2005.*

I was deployed to Iraq in April 2003 and returned home for a two-week leave in October. Going home gave me the opportunity to put my thoughts in order and to listen to what my conscience had to say. People would ask me about my war experiences and answering them took me back to all the horrors – the firefights, the ambushes, the time I saw a young Iraqi dragged by his shoulders through a pool of his own blood or an innocent man decapitated by our machine-gun fire. The time I saw a soldier broken

down inside because he killed a child, or an old man on his knees, crying with his arms raised to the sky, perhaps asking God why we had taken the lifeless body of his son. I thought of the suffering of a people whose country was in ruins and who were further humiliated by the raids, patrols and curfews of an occupying army.

And I realized that none of the reasons we were told about why we were in Iraq turned out to be true. There were no weapons of mass destruction. There was no link between Saddam Hussein and al Qaeda. We weren't helping the Iraqi people and the Iraqi people didn't want us there. We weren't preventing terrorism or making Americans safer. I couldn't find a single good reason for having been there, for having shot at people and been shot at.

Coming home gave me the clarity to see the line between military duty and moral obligation. I realized that I was part of a war that I believed was immoral and criminal, a war of aggression, a war of imperial domination. I realized that acting upon my principles became incompatible with my role in the military, and I decided that I could not return to Iraq.

By putting my weapon down, I chose to reassert myself as a human being. I have not deserted the military nor been disloyal to the men and women of the military. I have not been disloyal to a country. I have only been loyal to my principles.

When I turned myself in, with all my fears and doubts, it did it not only for myself. I did it for the people of Iraq, even for those who fired upon me – they were just on the other side of a battleground where war itself was the only enemy. I did it for the Iraqi children, who are victims of mines and depleted uranium. I did it for the thousands of unknown civilians killed in war. My time in prison is a small price compared to the price Iraqis and Americans have paid with their lives. Mine is a small price compared to the price humanity has paid for war.

Many have called me a coward, others have called me a hero. I believe I can be found somewhere in the middle. To those who have called me a hero, I say that I don't believe in heroes, but I believe that ordinary people can do extraordinary things.

To those who have called me a coward I say that they are wrong, and that without knowing it, they are also right. They are wrong when they think that I left the war for fear of being killed. I admit that fear was there, but there was also the fear of killing innocent people, the fear of putting myself in a position where to survive means to kill, there was the fear of losing my soul in the process of saving my body, the fear of losing myself to

my daughter, to the people who love me, to the man I used to be, the man I wanted to be. I was afraid of waking up one morning to realize my humanity had abandoned me. I say without any pride that I did my job as a soldier. I commanded an infantry squad in combat and we never failed to accomplish our mission. But those who called me a coward, without knowing it, are also right. I was a coward not for leaving the war, but for having been a part of it in the first place. Refusing and resisting this war was my moral duty, a moral duty that called me to take a principled action. I failed to fulfill my moral duty as a human being and instead I chose to fulfill my duty as a soldier. All because I was afraid. I was terrified; I did not want to stand up to the government and the army – I was afraid of punishment and humiliation. I went to war because at the moment I was a coward, and for that I apologize to my soldiers for not being the type of leader I should have been.

I also apologize to the Iraqi people. To them I say I am sorry for the curfews, for the raids, for the killings. May they find it in their hearts to forgive me.

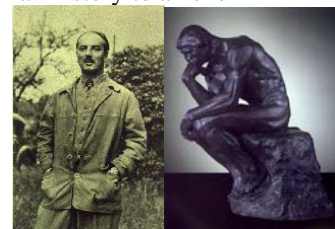
One of the reasons I did not refuse the war from the beginning was that I was afraid of losing my freedom. Today, as I sit behind bars I realize that there are many types of freedom, and that in spite of my confinement I remain free in many important ways. What good is freedom if we are afraid to follow our conscience? What good is freedom if we are not able to live with our own actions? I am confined to a prison but I feel, today more than ever, connected to all humanity. Behind these bars I sit a free man because I listened to a higher power, the voice of my conscience.

*For general comments and questions, email or write to: [The Free Camilo Committee](#), c/o Maritza Castillo, 201 178 Drive #323, Miami, FL 33160. [freecamilo@freecamilo.org](mailto:freecamilo@freecamilo.org)*

“...In the face of the threat that history may roll back to the abyss of the Arrhythmic, the Amorphous and the preontological, nobody can avoid assuming responsibility. Those poets who feel born on the pulse of the Universe have the additional responsibility to make Poetry take on her own horrible responsibility of breaking the causal deterministic sequence of events after first coming to know her own mystical origin in the infinity, the inner freedom and the biological God deep inside us, and from there draw strength to lift again the universal symbols of cosmic continuity of man with his similars and with the Universe, the symbols that are able to disperse his historical pseudoproblems and deliver man from all arbitrary myths of our age, scientific myths, mechanical myths, political myths, economic myths, artificial artistic myths, etc etc—that, through also exerting immense violence, have displaced man from the center of his responsibly creative self where is found the source of his freedom and have led to the dismemberment of the erotic core of man’s experience of the world and have disintegrated society into heaps of unburied corpses—and place him again at the center of Life and of duration from where the world, placed at the center of our consciousness and not at the periphery will bring down walls and open up horizons, not altogether imaginary, that have been waiting, since the beginning of time, to line up in perspective in front of us”\*



“...For those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, 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... Modern man’s only alternative is to emerge once more into the light and to have the courage not to escape to the moon, but to return to his own human center and to master the bellicose compulsions and irrationalities he shares with his rulers and mentors. He must not only unlearn the art of war, but acquire and master, as never before, the arts of life... We know now, as never before, that undisclosed potentialities of life reach far beyond the proud algebraics of contemporary science; and their promises for the further transformations of man are as enchanting as they are inexhaustible... Man grows in the image of his gods, and up to the measure they have set. The mixture of divinity, power and personality that brought the ancient city into existence must be weighed out anew in terms of the ideology and the culture of our own time, and poured into fresh civic, regional, and planetary molds. In order to defeat the insensate forces that now threaten civilization from within, we must transcend the original frustrations and negations that have dogged the city throughout its history. Otherwise the sterile gods of power, unrestrained by organic limits or human goals, will remake man in their own faceless image and bring human history to an end”



“...We wanderers ever seeking the lonelier way begin no day where we have ended another day; and no sunrise finds us where sunset left us. Even while the earth sleeps we travel. We are the seeds of the tenacious plant... If aught I have said is the truth, that truth shall reveal itself in a clearer voice, and in words more kin to your thoughts”



\*Such was, one, European answer in '38 and closely corresponded to, Mumford's, US '38 answer.

How many doors must *a man* walk out before you call him *a man*?

The answer of "*a man* for all seasons and for all countries"\*

"...In one sense I was happy my bomb missed his car by one meter. I'm not a killer, I'm a fighter. And to fight against a junta doesn't mean to kill its leader who is just a puppet buffoon played by foreign interests, nor to kill some of its quite replaceable policemen or soldiers, whom I would not stand the remorse to kill. To fight a junta means to disarm it, and disarming it means that a great number of soldiers will not obey their orders, and somebody telling them to do so means he proves to them that it is humanly possible to stand the consequences, as I did prove by only writing to your leader that he is a buffoon and a clown on all grace pleas and petitions you brought me to sign, in order for you not to expose your regime in front of international organizations which objected to my execution and at the same time for you not to appear as powerless in front of the people that you wanted to terrorize. My oration is not contempt of court martial, because you are not a court but bosses of torturers some of whom even have a sick thwarted surgeon's sexual imagination; and you are not martial either because you are not soldiers but deserters. I deserted your army to serve my country, as I do serve it everyday in the torture chamber; you deserted your country by not deserting an army that receives orders against its country and its people. Pity a nation that does not give birth to a tyrannocide when it gives birth to a tyrant."



\*To find a definite name and biography look up Orianna Falacci's book "*A Man*".

*“...For those of us who have thrown off the myth of the machine, 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



**Scientist and humanitarian Albert Einstein, when asked what weapons would be used in the Third World War: “I don’t know. But I can tell you what they’ll use in the Fourth — rocks.”**

*Stanislav Petrov — World Hero*

**He averted a catastrophe that could have shaken the foundation of the Earth for many centuries to come —and the future of humanity forever . . .**

In 1983 in Russia, there was a man who would have been considered an enemy by the people of America. But as it turned out, he would become for them and for the world an unknown hero — perhaps the greatest hero of all time. Because of military secrecy, and political and international differences, most of the world has not heard of this man. He is Stanislav Petrov. The extraordinary incident leading to his heroism occurred near Moscow, in the former Soviet Union, just past midnight, Sept. 26, 1983. Because of time-zone differences, it was still Sept. 25 in America, a Sunday afternoon. During the Cold War at this time, the United States and the Soviet Union were bitter adversaries. These two world powers did not trust each other, and this distrust led to a dangerous



*Stanislav Petrov  
in 1999*

consequence: They built thousands of nuclear weapons to be used against each other if a war should ever break out between them. If there ever were such a war, these nations would very likely devastate each other and much of the world many

times over, resulting in the deaths of perhaps hundreds of millions of people.

It was Lieutenant Colonel Stanislav Petrov's duty to use computers and satellites to warn the Soviet Union if there were ever a nuclear missile attack by the United States. In the event of such an attack, the Soviet Union's strategy was to launch an immediate all-out nuclear weapons counterattack against the United States.

On this particular day, something went wrong. Suddenly the computer alarms sounded, warning that an American missile was heading toward the Soviet Union. Lt. Col. Petrov reasoned that a computer error had occurred, since the United States was not likely to launch just one missile if it were attacking the Soviet Union — it would launch many. Besides, there had been questions in the past about the reliability of the satellite system being used. So he dismissed the

warning as a false alarm, concluding that no missile had actually been launched by the United States.

But then, just a short time later, the situation turned very serious. Now the computer system was indicating a second missile had been launched by the United States and was approaching the Soviet Union. Then it showed a third missile being launched, and then a fourth and a fifth. The sound of the alarms was deafening. In front of Lt. Col. Petrov the word “Start” was flashing in bright lettering, presumably the instruction indicating the Soviet Union must begin launching a massive counterstrike against the United States.

Even though Lt. Col. Petrov had a gnawing feeling the computer system was wrong, he had no way of knowing for sure. He had nothing else to go by. The Soviet Union’s land radar was not capable of detecting any missiles beyond the horizon, information that by then would be too late to be useful. And worse, he had only a few minutes to decide what to tell the Soviet leadership. He made his final decision: He would trust his intuition and declare it a false alarm. If he were wrong, he realized nuclear missiles from the United States would soon begin raining down on the Soviet Union.

He waited. The minutes and seconds passed. Everything remained quiet — no missiles and no destruction. His decision had been right. Stanislav

Petrov had prevented a worldwide nuclear war. He was a hero. Those around him congratulated him for his superb judgment.

But he had disobeyed military procedure by defying the computer warnings. And because of this, he later underwent intense questioning by his superiors about his actions during this nerve-racking ordeal. Perhaps because he had ignored the warnings, he was no longer considered a reliable military officer. Presumably in the military it is understood that orders and procedures are to be carried out unfailingly, without question.

In the end, the Soviet military did not reward or honor Stanislav Petrov for his actions. It did not punish him either. But his once promising military career had come to an end. He was reassigned to a less sensitive position and soon was retired from the military. He went on to live his life in Russia as a pensioner.

Because of Stanislav Petrov's actions that day in 1983, the Earth was spared what could have become the most devastating tragedy in the history of humanity. Stanislav Petrov has said he does not regard himself as a hero for what he did that day. But in terms of the incalculable number of lives saved, and the overall health of the planet Earth, he undeniably is one of the greatest heroes of all time.

There is yet something else unsettling about this incident. Stanislav Petrov was not originally scheduled to be on duty that night. Had he not been there, it is possible a different commanding officer would not have questioned the computer alarms, tragically leading the world into a nuclear holocaust. As it turned out, this incident ended fortunately for America and for the world. But unfortunately for Stanislav Petrov, it ruined his career and his health, and it deprived him of his peace of mind. This is one debt the world will never be able to repay.

(More about this incident below)

Article by Glen Pedersen  
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## *Dangerous Prelude*

In 1983 relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were severely strained. The timing probably could not have been worse for a mistaken nuclear attack warning. Had Stanislav Petrov declared the warning valid, as his computers indicated, the Soviet leadership likely would have taken his decision as fact. Consider what was happening in the weeks and months leading up to Sept. 25, 1983:

- The Soviet military shot down a Korean passenger jet Sept. 1, 1983 (only three weeks before this incident), killing all 269 people on board, including many Americans. Soon after, the KGB sent a

flash message to its operatives in the West, warning them to prepare for possible nuclear war, according to [CNN](#).

- The American leadership began referring to the Soviet Union as an “evil empire.”
- Throughout 1983 the Kremlin assumed the West was planning a nuclear attack on the Soviet Union, according to experts quoted by the Federation of American Scientists.
- After President Reagan’s “Star Wars” speech March 23, 1983, the Soviets feared such a system would increase the likelihood the United States would launch a first attack since the United States would not fear retaliation, according to [CNN](#).
- The Russians saw a U.S. government preparing for a first strike, headed by a President capable of ordering a first strike. Russian strategy is to fire its arsenal as soon as possible after receiving indications of an attack, according to Bruce Blair, an expert on Cold War nuclear strategies (*Dateline NBC*, Nov. 12, 2000).
- The United States and NATO were organizing a military exercise that centered on using tactical nuclear weapons in Europe. Soviet leaders were concerned this was a cover for an actual invasion. ([IEEE Spectrum](#), March 2000)

**And of course, after also re-thanking ZNets and googles etc, let’s finish by sending, both the reader of such things and ourselves, google starting with “ZNet Oaxaca”**

**PS: Also, unfortunately, there is now reason to read the PS on the next page which, fortunately, there were people to write:**



An officer of a fire brigade, in a letter to a newspaper, wrote after one of the last few months' wildfires:

*"...If we consider earth as a big living organism and the human species as a minimal part of its cells, we will realize, with fright, that the capitalist system has mutated the humans into cancer cells that are recklessly seesawing the branch on which we all are sitting. The prudent do realize that the planet is ailing. The earth is ill! Gravely ill! At one moment it's burning with fever, at the next moment it is run through by shivers. Half of the earth is burning with wildfires, the other half is drowning with floods. The ones responsible, enjoying the cool of their air-conditioning, are talking about remorseless arsonists, about unheard of heat waves, about extreme phenomena of climate change, successfully faced due to timely actions of the governments. I close my eyes and dig into my mind to remember some of the coordinated actions of the governments having passed over my neck. Here they are:...(1...2...3...4...5...6...)... Maybe there's more, OK. Imagine yourself a fireman looking, amidst so many fires and so many coordinated actions, to also locate and arrest the arsonists.*

*Little mother earth, forgive us. I wish you come out a winner out of all this ugly adventure of your health. I wish to be sure that your chemotherapy will be successful. It's only that, well, it's only that I won't be alive to see your lovely little hair grow back up and cover the sores we opened on your body"*