Nature metaphors have performed an abiding, variable, and powerful role — for good and evil — in the history of human self-understanding, from pre-literate organicism and mythology through Oriental metaphysics and the nature philosophy of classical antiquity to social Darwinism, the Nazi 'blood and soil' cult, and the 'dialectics of nature' endorsed by Soviet Marxist orthodoxy. A broadly benign modern variant has been taking many faceted intellectual form under the master concept of 'ecology', and, through articulations ranging from a host of 'environmentally' concerned texts to works like Gregory Bateson's *Ecology of Mind* and Murray Bookchin's own *Toward an Ecological Society*, contributing strategic new social, political, and cultural dimensions to traditional discussions in ontology and epistemology. *The Ecology of Freedom* is Bookchin's most comprehensive and ambitious effort to discover in the ecological concept cluster the means for illuminating an epic evolutionary scenario within which emancipatory possibilities for the advancement of life may find natural support (although no guarantees) against the destructive and dangerous continuum of the domination of human by human and hence of nature by society.

Bookchin, now in his early 60s and living in New Jersey, is an impressive figure with enduring integrity at the utopian pole of North American radical thought. In the course of an actively political public life, which has taken him through a variety of oppositional formations in the roles of militant activist, anarchist theorist, or radical educator, he has become known as a brilliant orator, a formidable polemist, and a reliably compelling essayist whose contribution is distinctive, credible, and increasingly highly regarded. With respect to ecological politics, he has been a leading opponent since the 1950s of the growing use of pesticides and food additives, radioactive pollution, and the construction of nuclear reactors. He has been involved in anti-nuke alliances such as Clamshell and Shad, as well as their predecessor, Ecology Action East, whose manifesto, 'The Power to Destroy, the Power to Create,' he wrote in 1969. Indeed, Bookchin has served as an influential pioneer of the social ecology movement since well before the 1960s and 1970s were marked by Carson's *Silent Spring* and Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful*, Alinsky's urban activism, the engineering and design proposals of such figures as Fuller, Heronemus, Meinel, Glaser, O'Neil, Soleri, or the environmental politics of the Seabrook occupation, MUSE, Greenpeace, or Commoner's Citizen's Party.
As a historian of radical social movements and of urbanization, and as an ecological philosopher, over a generation of writing in the tradition of Aristotle, Fourier, Kropotkin, Mumford, and Goodman, in periodical publications such as *Liberation, Telos*, the more recent *Comment*, and the new *Harbinger*, and in his earlier books, including *Our Synthetic Environment, The Spanish Anarchists, The Limits of the City*, and the classic *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, Bookchin has staked out with admirable consistency a crucial minority position within radical discourse and ecological discussions in particular. His emphasis has always fallen on the toxic social institutions and values that underpin the ecological crisis on the planet — broadly speaking, the crisis of life. He has repeatedly advanced the thesis that ecology must mean social ecology, his stance resting on "the conviction that the very concept of dominating nature stems from the domination of human by human, indeed, of women by men, of the young by their elders, of one ethnic group by another, of society by the state, of the individual by bureaucracy, as well as of one economic class by another or a colonized people by a colonizing power." In consequence, he has again and again pointed to the compelling imperative to renew humanity, and thus the relation between humanity and nature, through strategies for global social change governed by a consciously non-domineering sensibility. In *The Ecology of Freedom*, Bookchin goes further, to argue that such an emancipatory social momentum can find its ultimate grounding in nature. Here, he undertakes to present his long range project of sketching the dialectical reunification of social history and natural history. His propositions culminate, as I will summarize, in a teleological ontology which turns, without theological nuances, to nature as the basis for ethics. That Bookchin's image of nature is credible, attractive, and helpful is demonstrated persuasively by his text. That 'nature' allows of such a construction is not in doubt. What may be the final epistemological status of these reflections and how provisional the objectivity they postulate, is closely tied to ongoing debates about representation to which, also, this text has something to contribute.

All of Bookchin's well-known themes are recast and reinforced within a systematic framework in a text organized around a conceptual narrative of human history form the earliest organic consociations to the most recent social forms hollowed by bureaucracy. The thread that he tugs at unwaveringly to unravel the tapestry of human life is the thread of hierarchy, announced in the book's speculatively optimistic subtitle: "The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy." In following this thread, Bookchin is able to formulate propositions that aim for universal reference and call for some response equal to the challenge. He aims to encompass far more than mere environmental engineering (e.g. 'limits to growth', 'alternative' power sources), merely quantitative futuristic extrapolation (e.g. Toffler, Kahn, Erlich, Fuller), as well as other radical critiques of social life that are less thoroughgoing than his (e.g. Marxism, psychoanalysis). His intellectual strategy is also oriented self-consciously on a different path from the ones taken by libertarian skeptical currents or contemporary endeavours to reconstruct the human project on
strictly subjectivist foundations. In taking account of the accelerating tempo of destruction that is engulfing physical, social, and psychic life, Bookchin is unashamed about highlighting the utopian imperative of a radical ecological reconstruction — down to the level of the molecular relationships in society — on the principles of natural ecology: diversity, complementarity, spontaneity.

He argues that this will involve the restoration of human scale, the renewal of community and a self-governing civil self, and the persistent striving for face-to-face democracy, liberatory technologies, and non-hierarchical values and institutions. It is the worthy intention of the text to stimulate the imaginative development and interchange of utopian views in public dialogue in order to evoke the details of reconstruction. In his own words: “utopian thinking today requires no apologies. Rarely has it been so crucial to stir the imagination into creating radically new alternatives to every aspect of daily life. . . . Utopian dialogue in all its existentiality must infuse the abstractions of social theory.

The Order of Domination

Even Bookchin's earlier work barely prepares the reader for the rich and lucid exploration of the conspicuous features in the development of our world that *The Ecology of Freedom* offers. In brief, the book anatomizes the "curse of domination" that, since its inception long before the rise of economic classes, has profoundly infused virtually every human achievement in rationality, institution, technique, science, ideology, and art. Bookchin refuses the mystifying explanations that place the blame on 'reason', 'technology', or the pressures of a 'stingy' nature, analysing, instead, the sinister institution of subjugation consequent on the emergence of elites, and the correlative psychological self-abnegation that comes with the social conflict and repression that accompany the rise of hierarchy.

The text analyses the imposition of rule, acquisitive impulses, property rights, contracts, and the rule of equivalence on a recalcitrant archaic world. It reviews the stupendous mobilization of materials, wealth, human intellect, and human labour over the centuries for the goal of domination, with the result that in our own time domination has spread over the social landscape to a point where it seems out of control and where it has penetrated our basic socialization processes and our most intimate experiences. Freedom is betrayed "by our treatment of children and women, by our physical stance and most personal relationships, by our private thoughts and daily lives, by our unconscious ways of ordering our experiences of reality. The betrayal occurs not only in our political and economic institutions but in our bedrooms, kitchens, schools, recreation areas, and centers of moral education such as our churches and psychotherapeutic 'conventicles'. Hierarchy and domination preside over our self-appointed movements for human emancipation..."
What most sharply distinguishes Bookchin's work, however, from that of prophetic dystopian critics of human life — for example, Jerome Deshusses in his impressive *The Eighth Night of Creation* — is his commitment to rescuing "the legacy of freedom that the legacy of domination has sought to extirpate from the memory of humanity." What relieves the grim account of the rise of hierarchy is the account of the enduring features of a subterranean libertarian realm. Ranging from the earliest archaic customs, through the Gnostic heresies and radical moments in Christian intellectual history, to the modern secular traditions of resistance and freedom, Bookchin's text takes note of the technics, forms of association, religious beliefs, conventicles, and institutions of this realm of freedom. He finds "residual areas of freedom in communities where the word simply does not exist, in loyalties that are freely given without expectations of recompense, in systems of distribution that know no rules of exchange, and in interpersonal relations that are completely devoid of domination."

In effect, Bookchin articulates this 'legacy of freedom' at five levels. First, the history of ideas and ideals. Thus from the early 'Land of Cockayne' story of a bountiful nature through medieval chiliasm to the hedonism of Rabelais and Fourier, Bookchin embraces the libertarian utopian imagination and endorses its fundamental commitment to fecundity, sensuousness, and the principle of pleasure. He writes, for example: "The greatness of the Dadaist tradition, from its ancient roots in the gnostic Ophites to its modern expression in Surrealism — a celebration of the right to indiscipline, imagination, play, fancy, innovation, iconoclasm, pleasure, and a creativity of the unconscious — is that it criticizes this 'hidden' realm of hierarchy..." Correspondingly, at a second level, he embraces the social instances of libertarian resistance and struggle, for example, popular movements in the medieval world like the Crusade of the Shepherds (13th C.), the Taborites of Bohemia (15th C.), the Diggers (17th C.), the sweeping popular revolutionary movements from the time of the Reformation to the Paris Communards (19th C.), and the counter-cultural radicals of the 1960s.

The question remains of how to account for the persistence of these empirical instances of the striving for freedom and whether there are grounds to believe that they resurface again and again not only as ad hoc responses to the pressures of domination but that their reproduction and endurance is nourished from deep roots. Bookchin's answer is to offer interpretations of three deeper layers in the legacy of freedom: the historical heritage of freedom with its basic social programme embedded in the customary relations of the earliest pre-literate organic societies; early socialization through mother-love; and finally, as the grand source of the freedom strivings of human subjectivity, the dynamic evolutionary subjectivity of nature per se.

Bookchin's analysis endeavours to move through "the layered membranes of freedom," from its outward surface manifested in struggles for justice (what
Bookchin calls "the inequality of equals", a mutilated form of quantitative balancing belonging to hierarchical societies, built around the quasi-radical and quasi-mystifying principle of equal treatment of people with unequal situations), through various economic layers of equivalence, finally to "its core as a caring personal sensibility, a supportive domestic life, and its own rule of the equality of unequals" (this last, a form of qualitative sharing, being Bookchin's term for a reconciliatory, compensatory social logic, still echoed in Marx's "to each according to his need", which offers to equalize by compensation for inescapable inequalities in attributes, skills, powers, etc.).

The Outlook of Organic Societies — Updated

In criticizing modern societies built on property and bureaucratic power, it is not surprising that Bookchin's strategic sense would be to stress the links between freedom and community, and that his attention would turn to the other great model of human association, the model of the family. Indeed, he finds in the outlook of pre-hierarchical organic societies, of the primal communities based on blood-ties, fundamental principles of human life that he urges us to recover. His review of anthropological data concerning the habits and values of early hunting and foraging groups and of communities like the Hopi, Wintu, Ihalmiut and others — which "might well be called organic societies because of their intense solidarity internally and with the natural world" — uncovers as their most prominent operative features the practice of usufruct, the guarantee of an irreducible minimum, and complementarity.

'Complementarity' works as the fundamental social articulation in the absence of coercive and domineering values: people, things, and relations are not hierarchized into 'superior' and 'inferior' groupings but appreciated for their dissimilarities, variety and differences being valued as priceless ingredients of communal unity, entailing equality and respect for all individuals (irrespective of age, sex, or attributes) as a byproduct of the democratic structure of the culture itself and not as a calculating principle to be applied. Sharing follows as a matter of group solidarity and offers inalienable access to the 'irreducible minimum' of food, shelter, and clothing to every individual in the community, simply by virtue of belonging to the community, irrespective of the amount of work contributed by the individual to the acquisition of the means of life.

Finally, the practice of 'usufruct' comprises the freedom of individuals in a community to appropriate resources merely by virtue of the fact that they are using them, thus placing unconscious emphasis on use and need that are "free of psychological entanglements with proprietorship, work, and even reciprocity". Thus, Bookchin argues, usufruct differs qualitatively from the subsequently arising quid pro quo of reciprocity, exchange, mutual aid, and the world of contracts, all of which, with their 'just' ratios and 'honest' balance sheets, taint consociation by the rationality of arithmetic and degrade the human spirit to a quantitative world of 'fair dealings' between calculating egos.
whose ideology of interest barely conceals a mean-spirited proclivity for acquisition.

Bookchin's argument is that there was a period in humanity's early development marked by the disinterested willingness to pool needed things and needed services and by an unthinking sense of responsibility and cooperation that both prized individual uniqueness and fostered the unity of consociation. His point is that "we should not disdain these almost utopian glimpses of humanity's potentialities, with their unsullied qualities for giving and collectivity... Rarely is history notable for its capacity to select and preserve the most virtuous traits of humanity. But there is still no reason why hope, reinforced by consciousness and redolent with ancestral memories, may not linger within us of what humanity has been in the past and what it can become in the future."

Bookchin makes two further arguments on this score. First, that these features in the heritage of freedom have never entirely died out but faded and mutated within the subterranean libertarian realm that remains active, if always under threat, within the order of domination. And secondly, that the appropriate response to the dangers arising from the insane irrationalities of our world is to recover not only the best features of organic societies, but to recover those features as mediated by the benefits of the intervening era of civilization/domination. This is not the same as saying that civilization/domination was a necessary evil for a greater future good (Marxism), but rather that the passage beyond the parochial boundaries of blood kinship offers creative opportunities in spite of the dark side of history. An ecological society would not only be based on usufruct, complementarity, and the irreducible minimum, but would also recognize the existence of a universal humanity and the claims of individuality. It would embrace the 'stranger' and exogenous cultures, and, beyond tribal society's respect for the person and for uniqueness of behaviour and character structure within a group context, would embrace the individual's autonomy to act in accordance with his or her sovereign judgment of 'freedom of will', that is, to select or formulate personal needs, to choose or create the constituents of choice, to function as a competent, hence rational, self-determined, self-active, self-governing being.

Indeed, irreversibly, civilization has rendered customary and unconsciously practised ancient values ideational and conceptual, with particularly enormous potentialities latent in the formation of ethical standards for a shared humanitas, a human community, and in the placement of emphasis on volition as a formative element in social life and culture, especially to the extent that the will has been identified with personal freedom. "A free-flowing realm of ethics, as distinguished from a world of hardened customs (however admirable these may be), is a creative realm in which the growth of mind and spirit is possible on a scale that has no precedent in the world of traditional mores. Ethics, values, and with them, social relationships, technics, and self-cultivation can now become self-forming, guided by intellect, sympathy, and love."

If civilization has usually betrayed its promise of ideational and personal
self-creativity, if both collective ethics and individual volition have found expression in domination, if both community and individual autonomy are declining through a fetishization and bureaucratization of needs that reduces freedom to the level of normalized custom, nevertheless the reality of these potentialities and the many achievements in which they were actualized is not altered. Bookchin looks to the tradition of artistic creativity as a permanent model of the right to imagine life as an art rather than as a conflict. He writes: “In contrast to the parochial world of the kin group and its fixity in custom, ‘civilization’ has given us the wider world of the social group and its flexibility in ratiocination. Today, the real issue posed by this historic transcendence is no longer a question of reason, power, and techné as such, but the function of imagination in giving us direction, hope, and a sense of place in nature and society.”

“Second Nature” and “Third Nature”

But again, what can support the imagination of freedom against the massive power of domination? Bookchin turns for a ray of hope to the mother-infant relationship, to the initial step in the socialization process, and to its monumental (if now declining or altering) role in shaping human thought processes and sensibilities. In an analysis which (like his analysis of organic societies) some will see as one-sided and marked by elements of sentimentalism — even though his purpose is to urge that hopeful features abstracted from the concrete history of human life need to be self-consciously nurtured to pre-eminence for the growth and enhancement of future life — Bookchin represents the early mother-infant relationship, the point at which biology and socialization are conjoined, as the cradle in which the need for consociation is created and the most fundamental canons of reason are formed.

A human ‘second nature’ is structured around nurture, support, concern, love, and a deobjectified world of experience within the maternal, domestic universe, rather than a world guided by domination, self-interest, and exploitation. Indeed, to accommodate humanity to war and obedience involves the undoing not only of human ‘first nature’ as an animal but also of this human ‘second nature’ as an infant. Thus it is possible and necessary to lament that “the story of reason in the history of ‘civilization’ is not an account of the sophistication of this germinal rationality along libertarian lines; it is a vast political and psychological enterprise to brutally extirpate this rationality in the interest of domination, to supplant it by the ‘third nature’ of authority and rule.”

As always, Bookchin’s analysis here is also a call to action. He notes that ‘modernity’ may well “demarcate an era in which the cradle of reason has finally been demolished.” But also that: “As barbarous as its most warlike, cruel, exploitative, and authoritarian periods have been, humanity has soared to radiant heights in its great periods of social reconstruction, thought, and art — despite the burdens of domination and egotism. Once these burdens are removed, we have every reason to hope for a degree of personal and social enlightenment for
which there are no historical precedents. Through the mother-infant relationship, we regularly plant the seeds of a human nature that can be oriented toward selfless endearment, interdependence, and care. These are not trite words to describe the womb of human renewal, generation after generation, and the love each child receives in virtually every society. They become cliches only when we ignore the possibility that separation can yield an aggressive egotism and sense of rivalry, when material insecurity produces fear toward nature and humanity, and when we 'mature' by following the pathways of hierarchical and class societies."

**Nature and Society: Evolution and History**

We must, urges the author, try to create a new culture, not merely another movement that attempts to remove the symptoms of our crises without affecting the sources. We must create a new culture around the most hopeful and free aspects of our total history. But our total history involves natural history, indeed, conversely, natural history as evolution includes social history — or, put differently, the dialectical and hermeneutical circle of the story of life must be made comprehensive by rejoining nature and society. It is in this prospect that Bookchin now finds the deepest elemental motivation for the project of freedom and for the self-conscious direction and integrative meaning of an ecological society. Considering our experience with the power exercised by reactionary and oppressive traditions of theologically tainted naturalism, it is here that his deliberate departures from the conventional wisdoms and strategic directions of radical social criticism are likely to prove most risky and controversial; but it is also here that they appear most daring, most ambitious, and perhaps most fruitful.

1. **Commonality.** In short, Bookchin starts with the proposition that "the concept of an ecological society must begin from a sense of assurance that society and nature are not inherently antithetical." We need to see the commonality of society with nature, as a 'niche' in a given bioregion and ecosystem. We do not need to extol the very failings of civilization, the domineering and exploitative relationships to nature and human beings, which are falsely represented as intrinsic social attributes, as evidence of the disembeddedness of society from nature (e.g. Marx).

   Humanity is a manifestation of nature, however unique and destructive, and it is not the case that human 'interference' in the natural world need necessarily be seen in a pejorative light, as 'unnatural'. When human society cultivates food, pastures animals, removes trees and plants, that is, 'tampers' with an ecosystem, these seeming acts of 'defilement' may enhance nature's fecundity rather than diminish it. "To render nature more fecund, varied, whole, and integrated may well constitute the hidden desiderata of natural evolution. That human beings become rational agents in this all-expansive natural trend... is no more an intrinsic defilement of nature than the fact that deer limit forest growth and preserve grasslands by feeding on the bark of saplings."
THE ECOLOGY OF FREEDOM

In other words, humanity's well-being, even survival, may depend on consciously abetting the thrust of natural evolution toward a more diversified, varied, and fecund biosphere. It is clear in the context that this is not meant to justify the reduction of nature to a mere object of human manipulation as a 'something' that merely exists 'for us'. In fact, Bookchin suggests, it may be the task of ecological ethics to discriminate which of our actions serve and which hinder the thrust of natural evolution whenever humanity, a unique product of that evolution, "brings its powers of reasoning, its creative fingers, its high degree of conscious consociation — all qualitative developments of natural history — to nature.

2. From Biology to Culture. Secondly, Bookchin stresses that natural evolution phases into social evolution in that we are heirs to a strong natural thrust toward association. Owing to our prolonged dependency as children and the plasticity of mind that this long period of growth provides, we are destined to live together as a species. To care for our own kind, to collaborate, whether in village or town, polis or city, commune or megalopolis. Indeed, the kinship tie or blood oath is a more strictly biological basis for association than any form we know. Yet the strictly biological, parochial and restrictive as it is, may not be more 'natural' than the human social attributes produced by natural evolution. "Our very concept of nature may be more fully expressed by the way in which biological facts are integrated structurally to give rise to more complex and subtle forms of natural reality."

On this account, if human nature is part of nature, the associations that rest on universal human loyalties, nourished by our modern commitment to a universal humanitas beyond the blood tie, "may well be expressions of a richer, more variegated nature than we hitherto have been prepared to acknowledge."

In other words, conscious cultural affinity on the basis of tastes, cultivated similarities, emotional compatibilities, sexual preferences, and intellectual interests, can be regarded as a more creative and no less natural basis for association than the unthinking demands of kin loyalties and tribal forms, with the result that "it is not 'retribalization' that an ecological society is likely to seek but rather recommunalization with its wealth of creative libertarian traits." Society might take the form of a Commune composed of many small communes, containing the best features of the Greek polis without its fatal ethnic parochialism and political exclusivity, networked confederally through ecosystems and bioregions, artistically tailored to their surroundings, and aspiring "to live with, nourish, and feed upon the life-forms that indigenously belong to the ecosystems in which they are integrated."

3. The Natural Ground of Libertarian Ethics. Thirdly, in order to find general coordinates by which to take our social bearings, Bookchin offers to illuminate the human enterprise by way of the distinction between 'libertarian' and 'authoritarian', the latter referring to all the social and psychic forms of hierarchy and domination, the former guided by his description of the ecosystem: "the image of unity in
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diversity, spontaneity, and complementary relationships, free of all hierarchy and domination." What he considers decisive for a new rationality, for shaping a new approach to subjectivity, is to raise "a biotically variegated ethical standard based on the fecundity of life, on the virtue of complementarity, on the logical image of an ever-richer mosaic of experience..." And he proposes that a libertarian ethics can be grounded objectively — beyond the vagaries of opinion, taste, or instrumental effectiveness, and also apart from 'inexorable dialectical laws' — on an "intentionality latent in nature, a graded development of self-organization that yields subjectivity and, finally, self-reflexivity in its highly developed human form." The argument opens out to a full philosophy of nature with emphasis on the purposive structure and behaviour of organism and the inwardness of substance. Life can be known only by life, and as a result of life; that is, life "can never, by its very nature, be dissociated from its potentiality for knowingness..."

Bookchin's arguments need to be read in their complete form, then debated and expanded. But the net effect is to dissociate from Bertrand Russell's image of life and consciousness as the meaningless product of mere accident, and to place the properties of inorganic matter and of organic life into some kind of unified context. Based on a variety of scientific and philosophical reflections touching on molecular self-organization and mutation toward complexity, Bookchin here makes every effort to consolidate his understanding of nature as active rather than passive. He writes: "The prospect that life and all its attributes are latent in substance as such, that biological evolution is rooted deeply in symbiosis or mutualism, indicates how important it is to reconceptualize our notion of 'matter' as active substance."

Indeed, on this account, the self-organization of substance into ever-more complex forms, its ever-striving, creative development, provides a picture of unceasing growth and evolution as the epic drama of the universe, an evolution that is entropy-reducing and charges the universe with meaning, even ethical meaning. Moreover, there is no suggestion here whatever of a supernatural deity to be invoked ex machina to introduce design exogenously into the universe. Bookchin writes:

Hence our study of nature — all archaic philosophies and epistemological biases aside — exhibits a self-evolving patterning, a 'grain,' so to speak, that is implicitly ethical. Mutualism, freedom, and subjectivity are not strictly human values or concerns. They appear, however germinally, in larger cosmic and organic processes that require no Aristotelian God to motivate them, no Hegelian Spirit to vitalize them. If social ecology provides little more than a coherent focus to the unity of mutualism, freedom, and subjectivity as aspects of a cooperative society that is free of domination and guided by reflection and reason, it will remove the taints that blemished a naturalistic ethics from its inception; it will provide both
humanity and nature with a common ethical voice. No longer would we have need of a Cartesian — and more recently, a neo-Kantian — dualism that leaves nature mute and mind isolated from the larger world of phenomena around it. To vitiate community, to arrest the spontaneity that lies at the core of a self-organizing reality toward ever-greater complexity and rationality, to abridge freedom — these actions would cut across the grain of nature, deny our heritage in its evolutionary processes, and dissolve our legitimacy and function in the world of life. No less than this ethically rooted legitimation would be at stake — all its grim ecological consequences aside — if we fail to achieve an ecological society and articulate an ecological ethics.

Mutualism, self-organization, freedom, and subjectivity, cohered by social ecology's principles of unity in diversity, spontaneity, and non-hierarchical relationships, are thus ends in themselves. Aside from the ecological responsibilities they confer on our species as the self-reflexive voice of nature, they literally define us. Nature does not 'exist' for us to use; it simply legitimates us and our uniqueness ecologically. Like the concept of 'being', these principles of social ecology require no explanation, merely verification. They are the elements of an ethical ontology.

Conclusion: Ontology and Value

Hans Jonas noted in the Epilogue to The Phenomenology of Life that ontology as the ground of ethics was the original tenet of philosophy, before the 'objective' and 'subjective' realms were divorced. If their reunion was to be effected, it had to be from the 'objective' end, through a revision of the idea of nature. This is the project that animates Bookchin's reflections, to found an ethics, no longer foundable on divine authority, on a principle discoverable in the nature of things, in the immanent direction of natural evolution, and thus to avoid the relativism that plagues the modern temper. At the same time, he argues for a loose conception of teleology, and open-ended relationship between potentiality and actualization, as the frame for representing human subjectivity in continuity with nature but free to play a role as the creative, self-governing heir of evolution's thrust toward mind.

On this speculative account — whose scope of parameters, polemical edge, and totalizing reach for coherence will not be readily embraced universally but whose sense of urgency communicates to set in sharp relief the issues and values at stake — our options are to continue on a moribund, counter-evolutionary path, destroy life on the planet, and leave our Earth "a dead witness to cosmic failure." Or else, to recover nature in history and restore
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history to evolution, create a new world and sensibility based on self-reflexivity and an ecological ethics, and thus "reclaim our legitimacy as the fullness of mind in the natural world — as the rationality that abets natural diversity and integrates the workings of nature with an effectiveness, certainty and directedness that is essentially incomplete in nonhuman nature."

There remain, inevitably, many problem clusters open to discussion and dispute, among others: the evaluation of past, present, and future forms of reason and sensibility, forms of association and politics, forms of communication, science, technics, ethics, and aesthetics as to their 'libertarian' and 'authoritarian' dimensions; the composite features of the earliest forms of human consociation; ontogenesis and early socialization; the relationship between morality and politics; the emergence of will as a dimension of subjectivity, and its articulations and representations; the relationship between ethical and aesthetic value, the assignment of a quasi-hegemonic role to ethics, the question of value abundance and value hierarchy generally, and the scope of imagination; the representation of natural value as displaying the warm current of an ethical tropism; the nature, place, and implications of teleology; and the epistemological mediations of ontological propositions.

Most broadly, the haunting problem is that the questions of value and interpretation at the level of human history — at a more complex, subtle, ambivalent, and problematical level than non-human nature — are not likely to be resolved by either ontologizing or ethicizing the structural integration of non-human nature. More specifically, there remain questions as to how the prominent features of nature and their social analogues — symbiosis and predation, cooperation and conflict — are to be highlighted and interpreted, for ontology and for ethics. One line of inquiry would lead us to ask whether nature might not lend itself more readily to a Manichean ontology or some other variant of Gnostic dualism than to a mutualist ecological monism? On what authority are we entitled to believe that the dark side of the force is intrinsically dissolvable (even allowing for the occasional empirical "cosmic failure") into some Hegelianized or naturalized version of Augustine's Omnia cooperant in bonum, etiam peccata ('All things, even sin, work together for good')? Or why would the fact that life is in principle entropy-reducing guarantee suspension of the second law of thermodynamics which proposes entropy for the universe, the eventual loss of universal coherence? Again, put differently, why would the seemingly perpetual opposition between entropic and counter-entropic forces, in human society as in nature, not provide greater support for a dualist metaphysics than for Bookchin's monistic preferences? What guarantees that the pre-eminence of Good is inscribed in the nature of things?

To pursue this ontological speculation further might be to review the ethical closure of ontology that is implied at one level of Bookchin's argumentation. It would seem, recasting somewhat his own account of the thrust of natural evolution, that the action of the counter-entropic force of life in regions of the universe can be read as the creation of value in the course of the self-organization of evolutionary substance. The dynamic principles of complexity,
diversity, spontaneity, and complementarity add up to an operative guidance system for the generation of value abundance. Such value creation proceeds into human history, but the strategic question would seem to concern what we are to make of the realm of ambivalence (indeed, polyvalence) that appears to arise in natural evolution with the emergence of self-conscious human life? And closely linked, the consequent question: when and in what ways (under what conditions) does ambivalence — the imprint of alternativity and human choosing (in short, freedom) on natural ontology — become problematical (entropic) and tendentially destructive of value (hypothetically, by homogenization, dispersion, inhibition, extermination, or some other mode of reduction and dissolution)?

Interpretive problems of course abound. Is human predation an ambivalent social analogue of ecological predation among animals or the problematical, entropic distortion of cooperative possibilities? Is the strongly matricentric bias of Bookchin's warm hermeneutic, undoubtedly important corrective as it is, on its own an ecologically sound basis for human life? Are the ambivalent dimensions of individuation characteristic features of a new stage of complexity or problematical, entropic offshoots of aberrant hierarchy? In general, how can we best apprehend the ontological topology of the relations between the ambivalent (polyvalent) and the problematical (entropic)? Finally, if "harmony" is a helpful teleological aspiration, how can it be theorized and fleshed out to be of counter-entropic use in attacking the problematical destruction of value without entropically undermining the ambivalent creation of value?

In brief, precisely because value, in an evolutionary frame, is expansionary and not only regulative, the ethical question does not exhaust the value question at the ontological levels. The emergence of value in the human sphere comprehends the broad range of existential and structural dimensions that make up human history, including all its rich buzz and sparkle. It seems desirable to incorporate an ecumenical dimension into our social-ontological speculation to support an attraction that many of us will feed for a somewhat more positive evaluation of civilization than Bookchin is inclined to offer. I suspect that a more ecumenical embrace of the structural-institutional-technological-existential evolution of complexity that human civilization comprises goes, in any case, with the grain of the evolutionary/ontological arguments, and can be understood to do so while providing us with cognitive, affective, volitional, and practical grounds for all the more relentlessly confronting the problematical, value-destructive, ethical atrocities that curse and haunt human history with the spectre of entropy.

I do not wish to suggest, by raising some abiding analytical and speculative problems of ontology-construction and value theory, that Bookchin is mistaken either in articulating an ontology per se, or in proposing that an ethics is derivable therefrom, or even in claiming that such an ethics can validly be articulated as a libertarian, life-enhancing, counter-entropic ethics. On the contrary, the ontological scope of his concerns, and his particular ethical principles, can take us a long way toward placing our world on a better footing.
Indeed, to say, as he does, that the natural thrust of the evolution of life is counter-entropic, is in the end to offer a valid account of the emergence of the human and of human subjectivity in our region of the universe. To urge that this unique level of natural subjectivity, the human, be self-optimizing and reflectively oriented to enhancing the counter-entropic forces in this region is to urge a cosmic evolutionary ethic (by way of the social-historical-cultural) that is right and sane, responsible to the universe, favourable to the survival and life interests of the human race, and authentically grounded in the potentialities and actualizations of nature. If we are compelled to note, nevertheless, that the concrete questions of valuation, symbolization, and objectivation are not thereby resolved, we are merely taking note of the ambivalent constituents in the self-organization of a gradient of life evolved to a point of relative indeterminacy in programming where the daily drama of life is not decisively informed by non-human natural analogues, and where the ambivalent and the problematical need to be recognized and distinguished.

Ultimately, and here lies both the classicism and the contemporary strategic merit of Bookchin's approach, he is looking for a self-definition of mankind in order to (re)orient the human project. Definition, on his method, emerges only from the total history (both natural and social). Hence he turns, especially under the pressure of society's war on nature and nature's incipient revenge, to the big picture that situates our predicament within a broad evolutionary frame. And since this history is neither completely known nor completed — indeed, seems to be at a decisive cusp, a point of choosing — he develops a processual form of definition that can span a broad continuum of life and frame a processual ontology that is not instrinsically bound to any essentialism of origins, manifestations, or ends. In value terms, the stress falls on abundance, difference, complexity. And the growth of life. It needs to be said that for a potential community of embodied minds who have been denied a dynamic communal and personalizing transformational logic by both the reductiveness of the Marxist labour theory of value and the strict culturalism and ultra-Kantianism of the structuralist and post-structuralist allegories, Bookchin offers pathways to renewed self-awareness and renewed praxis.

Even to have raised an agenda as complex and significant as the abbreviated list above of issues outstanding suggests, and, much more, to have offered carefully supported and clearly argued perspectives within such a broad range of strategic parameters, testifies to the courage, dedication, and intelligence of the author. Bookchin's text provides so many insights and practical challenges that, in addition to its educational role in a broadly conceived and indeterminate public realm, it can properly prove to be directly relevant to the concerns of a large sector in the oppositional community, including many engaged in ecological, feminist, peace, cultural, anarchist, or socialist politics, and especially the incipient Green politics currently taking organizational and philosophical shape in Germany, Canada, and elsewhere. The Ecology of Freedom can serve as an extraordinary stimulus to imaginative social dialogue and it deserves a reception which ungrudgingly accords it that function.

Trent University
A QUÉBEC DOCTOR:
ANALYSIS, ETHNOGRAPHY AND PATHOS

James N. Porter and Michael Lustigman

The text we employ is a fragment, a piece—perhaps a piece of life. A writer’s life? A life of writing? Our treatment remembers that sketches are not drawn in one stroke—nor are signatures. It remembers that the figure of a man may be anticipated in that of a child, but that the relation of child and man is more one of uncanny resemblance than identity. It is a beginning that is of interest here, a man’s childhood as recalled from a distance of time and development—the development of the figure of a man. And it will be remembered that a figure is not the whole of life, but that it is perhaps the memorable part of a life for which one cares. The text of initial interest to our work is a first person account of the background or inheritance of a country doctor who has practiced for many years in a rural community of the Eastern Townships of Quebec. We hope to glimpse the beginning of the part of life called writing in this image of the part of life called healing. It is an account of the man’s origin and his relation to his origin. The account is deceptive because it seems to be two accounts—the account is divided into two tales—one concerning family background and the other concerning the iteration of an image—so perhaps together the account(s) render(s) the facts and figures of a life.

The first tale reads as follows:

“...My great-grandfather came out in 1833 and he settled beyond Inverness and that’s where my grandfather and grandmother, a neighbour’s daughter, were brought up. And when they got married they came out here and homesteaded three miles from Englishville, in the Law Forest area. It was on that farm that I was brought up.

“...My father was a farmer. When he got old enough to get married he moved to his own farm. It was a terrible time: my parents were just getting established on their farm when my father’s brother died of Spanish flu—and without anyone to take care of my father’s parents, my..."

It would be difficult to witness a life without being moved by it. We take it, therefore, that the characteristic problem of the ethnographic genre (and of the particular geneological trace to which it is bound) is that of pathos. Initially, then, our work will be that of formulating the character of this problem as the problem of a character whose particular logic and passion become available through analysis of a distinctive style. It is in pathos’ stylistic particularity that we may glimpse the irony of the doubled life wherein the pathologic figure is embodied—both in the practices of a physician and in those of the ethno-
father was obligated to return and take care of them.

"They moved back to the ancestral farm where his father had cut and cleared the first cultivated lands. They went back to an old lady with TB and an old man with arterial sclerosis... The neighbours below looked after their parents—and our other neighbours just finished looking after their parents. So it was the family trait in this area for children to look after their parents."

"Did you in turn look after your parents?"

"Well, no... not to that extent. I could not do very much, I could not get by my epileptic brother and I could not get by my father. In a sense my father left me to settle the will but... I could never contribute the way I thought I should. I could not break through my father and brother; they had the feeling that things ought to be hard to be good and that any decent thing in the house was an insult. My mother waited on them hand and foot as she always did until she died. Then my sister looked after my father... I was always frightened of him, I remember my mother saying 'Don't beat the child, it's not going to make him better'. It took a lot of guts to stand up to him."

"Did you have friends?"

"No, we did not go out much, because... my father did not like that... he became annoyed when I played with my neighbour's kids, so I rarely did. And they did not come to visit us because my grandmother had TB and everybody knew that my mother had all that she could do... you did not play with things around the house because my father did not like anyone to play."

"Did local people come by to give a hand?"

The doctor's problem is how to achieve an enjoyable relation to his inheritance, how to achieve a desirable difference between his origin and his fate—between the figure of his predecessors and that of his own life. The problem of pathos (of the pathetic figure) seems to be its weakness, the weakness of its unavoidable inscription within a particular style of figuration: literally—as the account/gesture that paces and punctuates a spatio-temporal alternation of the presence/absence of the object of its desire. The pathetic figure can only conceive a strong relationship as his identity, either with what he desires, or with the conditions of his life. If the pathetic figure is undesirable, it is perhaps because its literal style of figuration grants no strong place in its life to its own desire. So the problem of which pathos is an example is the problem of one's relation to his desire.

We might be tempted to think that the pathetic figure's problem is that his imagination is weak or constrained—that he cannot imagine himself committing an act of violence, that he must conceal from himself the great violence that identity (e.g., his identity as pathetic) does to (his) desire. The pathetic figure could move us to feeling sentimental, if we were to repeat his strategy: he treats his desire as if it were emotion—he does not see his emotion (his unhappiness) as an image.
"No, we all kept to ourselves. I was never close to people. At school I had poor contact with the teachers—which kept me more isolated. They were not very bright. They kept me after school to write out words without telling me what was wrong. This was not a very good way to learn."

"Did you not have any friends?"

"Well . . . I did have friends in my brothers and sisters. We were a close-knit family . . . I guess you wonder why, if I was so unhappy at home, I came back here to practice medicine?"

We are initially tempted to call this talk geneographic, i.e., organized by reference to a literal treatment of an image of the line—the family line. The aim of family life is to preserve the line unbroken through its several generations—to insure that each generation is like the previous one, such that there is no generation, only iteration. Truly, this is hard work! It is the difficulty of indefinitely suspending the development of one's own particularity and of seeing this deed as doing and being good—the difficulty of a life of obligation and necessity as a family trait—of being obliged to have no influence, to become unable to make a contribution when it is clear that one is needed. It is being stuck and unable to break through. It is living in fear of one's predecessor and yet having no one else to live with.

The family's child thus tries to keep to his own, but confuses his own with what owns him, i.e., fear, isolation, rigidity, helplessness, severity and frustration—a life unlikely to

of his version of the life of desire. If the pathetic figure masks his own violence, it is this mask that permits him to repeat his act of self-mutilation. What is masked is the election to not differentiate one's origin, circumstance and fate. What is masked is the limited appropriateness of this deception—perhaps to the particular circumstance of the child in an environment of indifference. But the very notion of the child references an alternate circumstance: that the child could mature. This is to remind us that the problem of imagination is not adequately treated in terms of its abstract strength or weakness, but rather in terms of its specific limitation as an expression of the development of character.

We could think of ethnography as a response to the pathetic problem of imagining (treating) oneself as unable to make a desirable difference between oneself and one's origin or environment (unable to make a contribution). Ethnography treats making a difference as a problem of rule, i.e., ethnography might think of the pathetic child as needing a rule of difference—it might think that a contribution is produced by the application of a rule to an environment (of events or materials). Ethnography thinks that rule makes (and we think that it masks) the difference that is wanted, i.e., that the difference between itself (as the actor who is happy with his account—his contribution) and the unhappy child (whose only account is his tears) is its ruleful discipline. It might suggest that the child's problem is that of its submersion in the endlessly multifarious particulars of its life. The rule of eth-
generate care for its history because, for it, history is only chronology and care is obligation. To care for himself one would have to leave this line, for this family line truly does not know how to care for itself—for its own need to care. And yet—it produces this child!

Why, he wonders, would he (would anyone?) return to such a domicile (such a community) and care for its diseased members? Why would a sensitive spirit desire to cleave to that kind of hard life? If we cannot imagine the continuation of the practice of necessity without its desirability, perhaps visiting the doctor in his maturity would enlighten us. But recall that we have already heard the mature man speaking of his childhood—yet the speech disguises (and knows that it disguises) the decisive difference between adult and child, between the doctor and his inheritance.

The doctor’s office is a part of his domicile—its entrance appears as the front door of the house. Inside, as you enter, you make yourself acoustically visible by buzzing a bell the resonance of which nears completion when you’re already in the outer office. As a rule, the announcement does not yield immediate recognition; neither nurse nor receptionist provide formal acknowledgement, instead one waits for the doctor.

Functionally, the outer office seems not unlike other waiting rooms with their usual assortment of chairs and reading materials. However, what seems unique to this place may in-
Initially be grasped as a decorative preference for wood; all the furniture as well as the walls are made of clear pine, giving the office a darker shade—a setting more appropriate to the intimacy of a living room than a medical office. The resemblance to home is not accidental to the medical practice at hand but essential to it.

Concretely, the office is part of the doctor’s family house and the inseparability of these distinct spheres of life is made audible to waiting patients, be it in the form of a piano being tuned or the excitable sounds of children playing outside; in any event, the plethora of family sounds permeates and is held as a stable fixture of this place. When the doctor does appear in the outer office neither apology nor any other sign referring to the propriety of these sounds is heard. They are accepted as the ongoing background to the medical work in question. Features of familial life do not end with these sounds; the doctor himself repeats the familial which the sounds first disclose. His attire, for example, is stripped of any designation that would draw attention to his professional status. Dressed in the same manner as his patients, that is, without the white medical uniform, it is difficult for a stranger to distinguish the doctor from his patients: they tend to look alike. Moreover, they talk in the same way and about the same things, so the patient/doctor relation—in the outer office at least—is covered over by the membrane of an alternate mode of sociation: that of neighbour and kin.

The ruse of ethnography is its claim to ground itself in a rule (e.g., of the adequacy of description as an image of good writing) and its deflection of any interest in the desire of either its decisive author (whose commitment to the rule is the ground of its authority), or its decisive subject (who becomes thereby a cypher). The ethnographer thus appears to speak methodically rather than passionately—at least long enough to suggest an image of why he would do so, i.e., why his passion serves itself in this style and how this writing befriends and best serves the good of the desire that animates it.

We find both pathos and ethnography depressing. By this is meant that they depress or flatten the essential problem of writing into the technical problem of the depiction of materials. Neither shows its interest in a decisive way—neither is desirable because neither permits itself to enjoy the free play of its desire. Neither is desirable because neither shows that it desires itself—neither shows that it chooses its particular life and that such a decision (and the experience of what is chosen) is one’s own, i.e., offers a home in which desire can dwell and ease its restlessness: neither exemplifies desirability. The kindest thing one could say of them is that they are modest, but to be honest one would see their asceticism; their desire to generate a world without desire, a world without pain and pleasure (and hence without the need to moderate them),
If the natural social intercourse within the outer office effectively conceals the medical practice, there does exist a sign that makes explicit the function served by this place. Facing the entrance, there hangs on the wall a diploma identifying the resident of the house as a licensed medical doctor. And, as if to predicate the formal announcement of medical competence, there hangs an additional document—a photograph of an elegantly dressed man. Ordinarily the photograph evokes no conversation; given the urgency of the sickness that brings patients to the outer office, concern with the photograph is necessarily deflected. However, when asked as to who might this man be, the doctor responded that the photograph is of his predecessor. But why should a photograph of his predecessor be on public display, when conventional medical establishments are known to cultivate a scene wherein the concern for "the here and now" makes certain that any and all artifacts belonging to "the there and then" are strategically displaced? The doctor's (second) tale is indispensable:

"He . . . was very good to members of my family whether it was the oldest one who had epilepsy and he took him to see Dr. Penfield at the Royal Vic in Montreal, or when my older sister had spinal meningitis and it looked like a hopeless case, he attended her even though he had to come up with a horse and buggy to see her. And, when my younger sister had pneumonia very badly at the age of four he attended her, so our family relationship with him was good.

a world of duty rather than enjoyment, of conventional deprivation rather than essential luxury—their participation, in short, in the city of pigs.

But how can this be seen as other than a mistake or blunder—what can we learn from the city of pigs? Perhaps something of the danger of passion and of the potential of desire to consume a soul. Perhaps pathos and ethnography know of these extremes as possible fates, yet neither truly encounters them and is tempered (educated) in the course of meeting their resistance. Neither risks its education, i.e., the adulteration of its purity of spirit with the wisdom that spirit alone cannot provide for a life. This would develop literality's desire to preserve what is good in the encounter with the truth that the best cannot be described, but only suggested. This could be glossed by saying that both ethnography and pathos are deeply abstract, despite their seeming emersion in life's particular details. Their abstraction is their lack of their own particularity, their nonparticipation in the practice of making the difference they embody. They do not enjoy the exercise of their particularity.

Perhaps, then, the city of pigs is populated by those who seek to improve themselves rather than develop. This suggests that development is an arresting of desire's abstractly infinite plasticity at those points of crystallization befitting the particular needs of a particular life. Improvement, in contrast, is distinguished by its mimicry of a foreign form—the mistrust and betrayal of what is best in oneself. That the best
"When I came here to practice so many people came in and asked 'Have you got Dr. Goodfellow's photograph?' Then, what happened was that a friend of his said that she would get me a photograph. She wrote to Dr. Goodfellow's wife and this is the photograph that was sent. And when I put it up, I found a great many who were here thirty years ago, are very happy to come in and look at this photograph."

Although the photograph is enigmatic to many of his present-day patients, we are invited to treat their ignorance as an index of their relative newness to this area; after all, those who have been here thirty years would recognize the photograph. Even though the photograph in its present context fails to disclose the sensible figure represented therein, it does touch these patients in ways which, while they are as yet invisible, will be shown.

The account, specifically in the manner and figure that it unfolds, is (structurally speaking) exceptional for its powers of disclosure. Not only is the photograph employed by the medical practitioner as a discriminatory device intended in its usage to articulate an existing division between new and old patients; but having achieved drawing our attention to a difference that does not lend itself to direct observation, we are then re-introduced to the same difference through the documentation of the responses which "the old" have towards the photograph. Initially "the old" are identified as those who, in knowing Dr. Goodfellow, may at first speak in a small voice (perhaps akin to that of a child) is mistaken by improvement for the weakness and irrelevance of the call of the best. Improvement is thus charmed by what seems good (and, abstractly, may even be good—e.g., for another) but is in truth another's affair. Improvement does not know how to cultivate and care for its own good which is the work, life and enjoyment of development.

Perhaps the distinction of the interests of development and improvement could be illustrated in the contrast between the doctor's image of life as embedded in the line of a genealogical trace, and the image of a line of development presented in Plato's Republic. The doctor recites a litany of generations gathered and collected with one another in a relation of continuity. What is continuous is the treatment of predecessors as an inhibition of successors' development. What is repeated is the unsuccessful attempt of a son to be free of the need to stand in relation to concrete versions of life's source (father) or conditions (nature, the land, illness, accident, congenital defect). Each generation is a pathetic regeneration of its predecessor's impotence (and consequent need to be compelled by duty and convention) to care for its inheritance. At no point is this care desired, at no point is the line marked by anything but a moving cypher. Even at the end of the genealogical line the question suggested is that of why the son came back, not why he (or anyone) would want to come back; for there is no suggestion of a life one could desire, a life to which one could be related by
form a select group apart from the new and the ignorant. They are, accordingly, privileged in having had the opportunity to experience Dr. Goodfellow's particular commitment to their care. However, insofar as Dr. Goodfellow is recalled for his special attendance to the well-being of family members, the recollection of "the good doctor" has the structural effect of shifting the speaker out of one frame of reference and necessarily into another. For example, in bearing witness to the relative state of health of his brothers and sisters, the status of our speaker is displaced from that of doctor to that of family member. The displacement or shift is not without significance; sociologically, it serves to locate our speaker in the limited capacity of family member, i.e., contained within a particular genealogy. At the very moment that membership within the family is proclaimed, a structural shift takes place again which returns to our speaker his professional status. "I found," he says, "that a great many who were here thirty years ago, are happy to come in and look at this photograph." As one "who was here thirty years ago," he looks at the photograph and speaks his recollections qua family member. He recognizes, however, that although the recollections triggered by the photograph are his, the photograph evokes a similar impact on others. The recognition of the shared effect which the photograph has on others, is in fact the acknowledgment of its usefulness as a therapeutic tool, specifically since it attends well to the afflictions of "the old."

The therapeutic of the photograph passionate enjoyment. So the therapeutic/geneological interest in improvement of the conditions of life raises for us the question of what such a life is for—a life of systematic disregard of its interest, a life that seems unbearable because it remains unaware of and disinterested in what it bears upon? What such a life bears upon is the question of the desirability of the life of necessity. The strongest interest of such a life is to improve its capacity to satisfy its obligations. The missing interest is in the development of that life—its maturation—its releasing of itself into its rightful heritage, its gift to itself of the recognition that a heritage, a gift, is for something. To use a gift in such a way as to recognize both what it is, and who oneself is, is to enjoy it.

The geneological interest is analogous to the interest of the familiar lives its account recounts—the account doubles the line it traces. The ethnographic account, similarly, doubles the kindness it describes. Kindness is a loyal practice, loyal to the rule of necessity within which familiarity is inscribed. Its rule is that interest be limited by need rather than desire and be oriented to satisfaction and compliance rather than enjoyment. Its aim is sleep rather than play—it works in order to keep its place, rather than plays in the enjoyment of its development. Its work is hard because it is the work of avoidance and concealment of its own (best) interest. It works to secure a place of rest, but cannot thereby make a place where one could want to be—it excludes decency as a respect for and interest in feelings.

The practice of medicine could
is not, according to our speaker, to be found in the stylistic or aesthetic composition of the photographic texture, but in the reading which "the old" and the knowledgeable apply to it. A reading, moreover, not dissimilar from the account itself; a reading which begins with the remembrance of a family life prior to his present occupation, only to terminate with the acknowledgment of its communal property. The reading therefore is loyal to and respectful of the mediating function served by the figure of Dr. Goodfellow. The genealogy of family life is recalled, but always in relation to the services rendered by "the good doctor." The repetitious invocation of the authoritative figure represented by the doctor makes of the reading a litany. Hence, those others "who are happy to come in and look at this photograph" are happy because through the auspices of this photograph they are able to retrieve a life that is no longer. Their happiness stems not from the recollection of past events—for in itself the recall of these events is achievable under radically diverse conditions—rather it is from the recognition of the valuable nature of this photograph, for unlike others this photograph links "the old" into a community—one that shares a common figure. The photograph, therefore, is not merely a photograph, but more of an icon through which a particular community sustains a life. That that icon is located in the outer office of the medical establishment (and that the figure represented therein is a country doctor) bears directly upon seem a version of decency, for the physician's concern is to eliminate disease and pain. Yet this is a negative interest, not the cultivation of well-being, but the elimination of particular instances or episodes of feeling poorly. Medicine's concern is to respond to the appearance of a complaint in such a way as to remove its specific cause. Medicine's negativity is its compliance with the life of expectation, its satisfaction with normalcy as an adequate version of its end, i.e., an adequate version of its patient's interest. Medicine's other is truly expected to be patient: to defer any possible present interest in well-being. Medicine's negativity is its loyalty to a normative order of the scrutiny of bodies for the discernment of atypicality, where the type is grounded in a rule of balance and symmetry among particulars (organs, functions, practices etc.) Medicine's negativity is its conception of what is first in terms of conditions. It seems thereby to be only concretely different from geneology's negativity, the conception of what is first in terms of origin.

We suggest that what is first could better be conceived as the committed actor who knows that he is more than either his origin or the particular conditions which his life encounters, whose commitment is to the exercise and development of his particularity (his style and character) in the enjoyment of what he loves. Profoundly, he loves neither his origin nor the conditions of his life (though he recognizes their needful character). Deeply he loves the influence of the play of his desire upon his beloved (upon what is best in himself). He
the particular vocation of the country doctor.

What seems unique to the figure of the country doctor, specifically in view of its iconographic representation, is not necessarily the concrete care for the sick (although that is indispensable), but that, stemming from the medical care, there issues forth a supplementary gain in the economy of family life. Family members, under the auspices of the icon, are offered the opportunity to reappropriate their collective history in a way other than familial, that is, in a peculiarly communal way. While the reappropriated histories retain their distinct familial background they share a common property, that being the inclusion of the doctor’s involvement in the on-going life of the family. In this strict sense, the doctor’s deed is inscribed in the familial history of each of his patients—and qua inscription bonds families into a community of shared interest.

However, although the “inscription”, i.e., the doctor’s practice, links dispersed families into a community, the “inscription” itself is presented as void of family. While the doctor makes possible the doubling of his patients’ families by giving them a second membrane, a communal skin so to speak, the very practice which adds to the affluence of each patient’s family simultaneously requires that the patient figuratively forego familial membership in the name of the community thus instituted. Put differently, the icon’s possibility as that which secures community, is grounded in the necessity of recognizing it loves the best of himself. His relation to his origin and circumstance is thus one of using them in order to imagine what his best could be. He knows that he is not yet wholly what is best—that what he can know of himself is always mixed with circumstance such that what he can expect of himself is less than what he wishes for. But to enjoy one’s life is to be able to see this inescapable circumstance as the place of one’s passionate happiness. This is the site of surprise—of self-recognition—the source of the generation of practices. This enclosing gap is the womb of the soul, its crypt and its milieu.

The deepest happiness of the soul is to stir and be stirred by its best part—to arouse and draw its best into giving a suggestion of itself—a suggestion of the soul’s own future, of its fate as other than the mimicry of its condition(s). If the soul’s best part is the standard of its development—what it as a whole is organized by and for—then the joy of any part of the mix that the whole is, is to influence the standard. Through its influence on the best the part can see how the best needs it, yearns for it and responds to it. Thus even the remotest part can see its necessity and desirability to the whole in its ability to animate the best. So we can see that to enjoy life is to open oneself to being influenced by one’s own future and that this is not a matter of passive waiting for the future as a chronological (geneological) consequence; rather, it is a resolution that the future is the realization of the best of one’s particular present in the whole of one’s life.

So it is this (or something like it)
as different from that which communal members solicit through it. If, by doctoring in the country way, the medical practitioner gives nourishment to the family, the gift given to the family (i.e., health and symbolic prosperity) is necessarily different from the gift that animates doctoring as a course of conduct; a difference which the account radicalizes as the difference between vocational and familial life.

Vocational and family life—at once together and separate, two hands, two looks, two sorts of seeing: their relation has the effect of documenting the family twice, from two sides as it were. The family is profiled as in need of external intervention, strictly in the form of medical assistance; without which it runs the risk of losing some of its members and perhaps of placing itself in jeopardy. At the same time that the account represents the family in its needful capacity, we are introduced to the country doctor who attends to these needs in ways not dissimilar from familial expectations. He goes out of his way in his care; he takes one child to Montreal in order that he may be examined by a specialist; in another instance he comes by horse and buggy to attend to his patient. The kindness exercised by “the good doctor” sustains the family—the source of sustenance, however, is other than the family. That is to say that kindness, in the way that it is inscribed within the account, can only be described as the effacing of the family itself. Kindness comes to be by its deconstruction of the family’s capacity to preserve an autonomous sphere of influence.

that we take to be the import for our work of the conception of development suggested in the Platonic version of the line. The peculiar feature of this conception is its formulation of the highest (best) part of the soul as that unknown but effective (desired) part which serves as the standard in terms of which the multitude of other parts (impulses, features, mistakes, conditions) are collected. What is still undeveloped (immature) in our discussion is the particular manner in which the best is both moved and placed (given rest) by the parts that are other than the best. How, in other words, can the best be influenced by what is not the best in a way that is other than decadence, degradation, humiliation, indecency and vulgarity? Put differently, how can the best be understood to desire multiplicity in a way that is other than sheer promiscuity?

The best enjoys the play of multus as the display of its own self. The best is that part of the soul that remembers (re-collects) itself as the interest in terms of which the several parts were generated as a response of the best to a particular set of conditions. As a mix of the best and its incidental milieu, every practice or part is a kind of image of the figure or form of the best in a certain stage of its development. So the mix of practices is a kind of family album, perusal of which could perhaps suggest the specific resemblance in terms of which each image belongs in the collection.

So the particular parts answer to the best’s desire to know the form in which to understand itself. Here we acknowledge again that the best is
In the hands of "the good doctor", kindness protects the family, yet the conception of family which it serves is other to the "natural" family—the family that claims as its jurisdiction an autonomous sphere of influence. Kindness, in fact, protects the family from its "natural" counterpart by doing violence to the rule of kinship. That is to say that the problem of the family, i.e., that which warrants attention and treatment, is its "naturalness"—the literal implementation of which serves to contain and thereby suffocate its members.

Pathos and ethnography are two possible forms of a soul's self-development, and we intend our treatment of them as particular instances or examples of our conception of development. Our aim, then, is to develop our notion of good writing through developing our relation to the interests which pathos and ethnography embody. This means that our interest is only incidentally arrested by pathos, ethnography, geneology, medicine or any of the other notions we employ. More than by them we are stirred by what they represent; namely, embodiments of what is best. So we are not interested in abstract bodies but in embodiment. This, however, is not to say that we are disrespectful of the body, for it is the site and sight of our soul's development. The notions we employ are essentially inessential reminders of the interest of the soul and the development of its own particularity. Reason's difficulty with our treatment of each notion is reason's difficulty in knowing (and hence directing itself usefully and enjoyably toward) what is best (and hence most useful and enjoyable) for the soul. We note here that reason's practice and interest, like that of the pathetic physician, is not to serve itself but rather to serve what is best in the soul. This is to serve the most particular, the own-most, feature of one's life. It is to identify and cultivate the unique self, understanding that as a kind of imitation of the best in the sense that the whole that is organized, collected and gathered in reference to the best will bear the mark of the best in each of its parts. Reason's problem could thus be understood as that of recognizing this mark rather than identifying the best concretely (literally) with some part. Reason yearns for (and is dissatisfied with what is other to) the best, so it follows the trace of the mark of the best like a hunter follows the trace of his prey. But a distinctive difference separates the hunter of prey from reason: the trace/mark that interests reason is internal to the self that reason serves. In the best sense we can say that the work of development is that of hunting for oneself in the strange terrain of one's own life—the strange body of another—a hunt that constitutes the very life it seeks. The terrain of a life is its traces, its works, creations, progeny. These, considered
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as a particular collectivity, constitute a life's embodied trace. The portion of the trace that is closest to hand is the body. The body is the most intimate tracery of the relation of the best to the conditions of its existence. Thus we do not treat the body primarily as a condition, rather, as a medium and milieu—as a text of the life of the soul.

The good doctor would thus be one who read the body's tracery in order to find there the signs of its well-being. He would be guided by the account that the body naturally renders of its good, and he would not mistrust the language of the body (feelings, postures, gestures and the like) or the accounts rendered therein (particularly symptoms). He would know that if language and signs are disassociated from their own ground, i.e., the life of their own corpus, they become free signifiers—capable of infinite self-reference—they truly signify only the fact of being off the trace, they become a labyrinth of darkness. He would also know that in truth no signifier can be free inasmuch as it is read. So one may read others but only for the purpose of reading the reading (my reading of the other is a sign of the best of me) so to be of use to me I must read my reading—read myself reading other. The proper (self-serving) use of work is to create a corpus in which I may read myself. It seems a little like going out of myself in order to come into myself. The condition of my entry is that I already have left and now return. The "entry" is thus in truth a re-entry—which has the form of self-recognition. What difference does self-recognition make? What does self-recognition recognize in its shock or surprise? Perhaps a different relation between itself and what is other than itself, e.g., its heritage, its environment, its practices, its fate, its temptations and the accidents that befell it. The difference is between what merely is and what is influential, compelling and inspiring. The recognition is of the authoritative relationship of the self and the best—the best acts authoritatively in its relation to the rest of the self, which is to say that what the rest is is due to the influence of the best. The way the best exercises its authority is not the way the rest does; the rest seeks to force the whole to accede to its requirements by invoking fear, necessity and obligation. The best is authoritatively influential by evoking a decisive commitment. The best does not insist; it suggests, and its suggestion stirs the self's desire to move itself. Such action is the self's risk of itself, i.e., its offering of its own desire as the ground upon which it moves toward the best as its place of rest. To move in this way is to enjoy experiencing oneself in the play of one's desire. This play is the gift of the best, it is the gift the best gives to the rest—the gift of luxury—the gift of desire—the exorbitant excess that is never necessary but is what every necessity is recognized to be for. This is the surprise one gives oneself in the shock of self-recognition—the decisive knowledge of what one is for.

So now we can see that the problem of pathos—what makes the pathetic character what he is—is what he is not. He is not for anything—he has no aim—he has no name of his own (no name that calls to him—to which he decisively responds—at best he reacts to his needs—he cannot give himself to another because he cannot give himself to himself)—he is not for himself. As well, we can now see that the problem of the life of rule (geneology, ethno-
graphy, science, etc.) is its impatience—its acceptance of a rule as a surrogate for the best that could call (to) one out of his own immature character. He accepts the appearance of a gift instead of the gift itself. We could say he lacks discrimination (has bad taste, does not know the taste of the best), but that would perhaps itself be premature. We would rather say (it would be better to say) he lacks a sense of timing—of the time it takes to develop a character—the time it takes to find what is best in and for oneself. He settles for what seems good enough for practical purposes, but finds (but we find) that he cannot truly settle himself with (collect himself in relation to) what he settles for. He remains restless—he cannot collect all of the rest because only the best is good enough for that. The life of rule is good enough for practical purposes, i.e., it can collect all practices because it is itself a practice—it can collect what is like it. It cannot, however, collect what is not like it, i.e., it cannot collect the desire that animates it and its practices of collecting. It tries to collect all practices because it is not itself limited (centered) in its own particular character. The best is particular in its collection because it can only collect what truly belongs to it by giving itself to what it truly longs for. It gives itself decisively to what it recognizes it belongs to. It truly keeps itself to (for) itself. It is not promiscuous because it only gives its particularity (only can give its particularity) to its own other. Desire, unlike rule, can give itself to the rest—but only to the rest of itself. The rest of itself is not everything, but it is what is best for itself—it is what desire is for.