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1968 IN CONTEXT: SCARCITY AND DECADE ANALYSIS

The year 1968 is pregnant with genuinely *political* meaning for both the French and the Czechs. But for the Americans, 1968 seems, in retrospect, much more simply strange and accidental. The year was full of televised violence—the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the assassinations of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy, riots in the cities and outside the Democratic National Convention—that seemed to discredit the various causes of the 1960s: the civil rights movement, the Vietnam War and the antiwar movement, and the movement of the young called the New Left. The year culminated with the election of a president, Richard Nixon, who in effect promised to bring all the violence, and all the causes that inspired it, to an end. And Nixon did so, mainly by ending the military draft. After 1968, the “revolution” in America was safely contained to college campuses.

In Europe, they speak not of “the Sixties” but of “Sixty-Eight,” the year of the May events in Paris. In the American context, however, looking at 1968 in isolation makes the American 1960s seem nothing but a pageant of absurdity and destruction. But that is hardly a fair perspective. I have no choice, then, but to turn from *an analysis of the year* to *an analysis of the decade* to give a fair and balanced account

of what was going on in our country forty years ago. Whit Stillman’s insightful character Jimmy Steinway (in his novel, *The Last Days of Disco, With Cocktails at Petrossian Afterwards* [2000]) reminds us that reviewing human life in terms of decades results in “trashing” certain decades “for no very good reason.” Those who wax nostalgic about the 1960s almost always trash the 1950s and the 1980s. But there is, Jimmy notices, “actually a bit of *decade scarcity* in life, and so it’s better to find something good in each of the few decades that make up your life.” The 1980s, for example, might have been somewhat greedy, but Jimmy prefers to remember them “as years of hard work and maximum productivity.” From the 1980s perspective, the 1960s were actually greedier, because young people wanted to live well without working hard.

Before we praise or blame the 1960s too much, we have to remember that its liberationist excesses were an understandable episode of democracy in America. The decade actually seemed to prove Marx wrong; we capitalists were not, after

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all, sowing the seeds of our own destruction. The 1960s may, instead, have sowed the seeds of the destruction of communist totalitarianism. The Prague Spring, the attempt to construct “socialism with a human face”—which took place in 1968, and was inspired in part by the American 1960s—was violently crushed by a Soviet invasion. That was the end of the illusion that socialism within the Soviet empire could ever be reformed in accord with the spirit of liberty. Nothing that happened in America, or even France, came close to matching the genuinely revolutionary moment of 1968, which belongs to the Czechs.

Civil Rights and True Liberalism

If memory serves, the only genuinely political issue that inspired passion in the early 1960s was civil rights—meaning desegregation. The only political event I remember attending in that time (with my parents) was a very classy picnic at the Alexandria, Virginia, estate of a devout Episcopalian gentleman-lawyer from an old Southern family. That man, Armistead Boothe, was widely admired as the heroic leader of those who opposed “massive resistance” to desegregation in the Virginia legislature. He was running for lieutenant governor and was narrowly defeated by the candidate of the “Byrd Machine.” To us, the Byrd Machine seemed to be a corrupt alliance of business interests and segregationist fanatics. Opposition to it seemed noble, even aristocratic, a cause worthy

of a dignified Christian gentleman. If Virginia didn’t slowly desegregate on its own, Boothe warned, the national government would eventually make them do it in a ham-fisted way. The 1960s’ “second



Nixon makes his contribution to 1960s iconography

Reconstruction” of the South was, in fact, caused by a Southern failure of self-government. It could have been avoided had astute gentleman like Boothe prevailed over demagogic populists like George Wallace.

Maybe the worst feature of the decade as a whole was the pointless violence. One piece of evidence for the basic health of American society, even during the 1960s, is that violence always aroused the politically effective anger of a silent majority. That was true of what happened on our campuses, in our cities, and at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. But it was first true about the segregationist violence in the South, especially in 1963. Until that year, the nonviolent “direct action” of the civil rights movement had not had much effect. But by mid-1964, tutored by the television nightly news, Americans were convinced that something had to be done to end Southern lawlessness. That was the year that Congress finally passed civil rights legislation with real teeth, and the Democratic president who pushed the

Civil Rights Act through won a huge victory over the Republican candidate who opposed it. One original intention of our Constitution and Declaration was fully achieved politically in our country in 1964 and 1965. All Americans were finally recognized as free, equal, dignified, and politically participating citizens.

The second Reconstruction was not only good for justice in the South; it was also good for prosperity. Air-conditioning and integration combined to produce the Sunbelt—the most “livable,” entrepreneurial, Christian, and Republican part of our country. The 1960s’ transformation of the South was, like almost all social change, both good and bad. What was left of agrarianism and localism and the distinctively Southern or aristocratic criticism of the excesses of American commercialism atrophied, and men like Boothe are now virtually extinct. Justice and prosperity took priority over personal love, communal tradition, and enduring personal significance. There are certainly good reasons to be repulsed by the wasteland of McMansions, megachurches, and big box stores that flourishes better in Southern suburbs than anywhere else. Megachurches, however, are really churches, and they are both a product of and a rebellion against the 1960s.

Sexual Liberation

The civil rights movement set the precedent for subsequent forms of 1960s liberation. It seemed that people needed to be liberated from *all* repressive classes and categories. But both sexual liberation and women’s liberation proved more controversial and less effective than desegregation. Women, I hope, cannot help but notice that the movement for sexual liberation came first, and it was mostly led by men, allegedly on behalf of love. The Summer of Love (1967)

was surely distinguished by a lot of casual sex, with bourgeois hang-ups like jealousy put on hold. But the cost of disconnecting sex from love was the trivializing of both. “All you need is love” might even be true, but love isn’t much if it has nothing to do with what free beings do with their bodies.

Separating sex or *eros* from all repression means separating it from birth and death, and especially from procreation. So the theorists of the 1960s celebrated polymorphous perversity. The real-world result was not real polymorphous liberation, however, but rather one-dimensional sexual commodification. Sexual preferences find their place on the liberated person’s ever-expanding menu of choice. As Flannery O’Connor wrote (in the 1960s), sex sentimentally or imaginatively detached from all its hard purposes *is* pornography. That is why the 1960s weren’t so good for prostitutes or “sex workers”; their business depends on society *not* normalizing their distinctive purpose. The 1960s mainstreamed the big business of sex, and the result was that Americans seemed less erotic than ever. American men became capable of yawning at virtually unclad, perfectly-sculpted young women on MTV.

Sex that is no more than recreation or diversion becomes progressively more disappointing. Human beings are really polymorphously erotic, social, relational, generative, and transcendent beings who cannot help but long for a lot more than enjoyable ways to pass the time. The detachment of sex from love, birth, and death tends to isolate each of us so much that we believe that the bare act of copulation is the only way of making a human connection. But that connection, it turns out, is not particularly real: it promises much more than it, alone, can deliver.

The turn to soft drugs in the 1960s was, in part, both to facilitate and to ease the

disappointment that comes with the effort to separate love from sex. There was some very erotic, blues-driven music in the late 1960s; its purpose was to restore the depth or at least the intensity of human longing in a very unpromising time. Psychedelic music, however, was curiously unerotic. It reflected and supported the effort to desexualize or depersonalize love. It was about friends helping friends become less emotionally dependent on one another by getting high alone together. (Let me say in passing that, while the 1960s made us stupider when it comes to sex and drugs, there was real improvement in the best of rock 'n roll. Smart and imaginative kids went into music, and the excellence of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, and the Band can't be reduced to decade analysis.)

Casual Sex and Civilization

The 1960s failed to routinize the orgy in America, and even wife-swapping was common nowhere but in the imagination. According to Gerard DeGroot in *The Sixties Unplugged* (2008), the lurid dimension of the sexual revolution "was often seen by those who participated in it as something fun at the time, but in retrospect embarrassing, bewildering, and sordid." The 1960s' institutional alternative to the nuclear family's exclusivity was the anti-authoritarian commune. Children would flourish there in freedom and love. But it turns out that an anti-authoritarian commune is an oxymoron. Parents remain stuck with the alienating and loving reality of their own children. The 1960s damaged, but hardly abolished, the foundations of both *eros* and civilization.

In *Achieving Our Country* (1998), Richard Rorty argues that the sexual liberation of the 1960s was actually highly civilized. By reducing the amount of sexual repression in the country, the 1960s also reduced

the amount of cruel "socially acceptable sadism" which is its consequence. So decent men and women, such as, for Rorty, Walt Whitman, can't help but delight in "the kind of casual, friendly copulation that is indifferent to the homosexual-heterosexual distinction." The cruelty of sexual repression, he contends, is caused by "the inability to love." Which is why, in Rorty's mind, the theorists of the 1960s were able to connect sexual casualness with the liberation of love.

We have to admit that Rorty is not completely wrong, as decent men and women have never approved of the cruel treatment homosexuals have received in the past. But he doesn't really explain why *indifference* is good for love. "Don't be cruel!" and "Don't hate!" are imperatives of justice for free individuals. Love, however, is a source of privileging and exclusivity; it can lead people to be easily suckered and aroused. Casual, friendly copulation occurs only between people who neither love nor hate each other. It is undistorted by the intense personal and social connections that are at the foundation of both hate and love. Emotional isolation is, in Rorty's eyes, the true antidote to cruelty. But if that's the case, then love, not "repression," must be the true cause of cruelty. Certainly Rorty's antidote requires an unerotic indifference to biological imperatives, to the hard purposes of bodies that generate shared human responsibilities and devotion.

To avoid the possibility of cruelty, love has to be replaced by a kind of benign fellow-feeling that falls short of both obsession and personal obligation. The 1960s version of "love" really was more easygoing, nonjudgmental, and nonbinding. It made love seem more compatible with the individual's perception that the pursuit of happiness trumps one's duties to those we can't help but love. People rather quickly became far less judgmental about abortion

and divorce, for example. Sexual repression experienced as guilt or sin didn't fade away but it certainly did fade, and real insouciance about sexual expression became much more common. If we believe that the right to put one's happiness first is at the core of the American view of justice, we have to conclude that what is good for justice is bad for love.

The truth, of course, is less that marital sex was replaced by casual sex than that enduring monogamy was replaced by serial monogamy. And that change was certainly countered—if not exactly weakened—by the enduring reality of parental and filial love. Our experience since the 1960s gives us more evidence than ever of the cruel loneliness that is the downside of personal indifference. And contra Rorty, we probably have more sexual sadism than ever before, precisely because we have partly freed *eros* from inhibition and personal love.

Women's Liberation

Because women could see—even if they couldn't often say—that sexual liberation is bad for love, they began to demand more from justice. The core assertion of feminism is that “the personal is the political.” That means that the American principles of justice are to be applied to every personal—i.e., every intimate—feature of life. Women need protection from uninhibited men, men with no authoritative guidance about how to treat women: the Summer of Love too easily morphed into the Summer of Rape. If sex is separated from love, familial duty, and communal responsibility, then it surely needs to be strictly governed by contract and consent. Consent seems both more reliable and more just than personal love, especially in a time when love had become more unreliable than ever.

The good news is that the transformations of the 1960s caused women to be

treated as free individuals—just like men. Even we conservatives must admit that there is a real—if rough and incomplete—correspondence between women's gains in the direction of justice and those achieved in the 1960s by blacks. The true dignity of women as free and equal citizens has been better recognized than before. Even conservative women today would not surrender the opportunities they have as individuals, even if they choose not to exercise many of them.

The bad news is that women have found it increasingly difficult to avoid becoming wage slaves—just like men. As Marx predicted, the “halo” was stripped from women, who out of dutiful love had chosen to be simply or primarily wives and mothers. They found themselves less and less exempt from the bourgeois standard of productivity—from making money. The family wage became a distant ideal. Families increasingly were stuck working more hours than any one individual could work, just to maintain a satisfactory standard of living.

The productivity of the nation soared because women entered the workforce, but wages fell in relation to productivity. The traditional American division of labor described by Tocqueville, in which men are primarily responsible for business and politics and women for family and the household, became completely discredited. That division of labor surely did put unjust constraints on women as individuals, and in the high-tech suburbs being a wife and mom often did become boring and lonely—especially for women with college educations.

The theorists of the 1960s didn't focus on women as countercultural agents of change; to them, it seemed unjust to think of women, in particular, at all. In truth, during much of the 1960s wives and moms—often burdened or blessed with

considerable wealth and leisure—flourished as never before as voluntary leaders of civic, educational, and charitable associations. But the liberationist spirit of the 1960s as a whole eventually brought to an end the abundance of feminine social capital that was the public-spirited fruit of the early 1960s. Liberation, justice, and productivity turned out to be more characteristic of the decade than love, generosity, and caregiving.

Liberation as Conquest of Scarcity

The deepest thoughts of the 1960s were all based on genuine efforts to think about who human beings are and what they are for. And the inability to focus particularly on who women are and what they are for was one example among many of the impossibility of making even quite authentic concerns about purpose compatible with radical or unprecedented visions of liberation. The most erudite New Left theorist, Herbert Marcuse, began with the Marxist premise that modern technology and the capitalist economy had conquered scarcity; people could now easily meet their material needs with very little work. The real cause of erotic repression, he explained in *Eros and Civilization* (1955), was the discipline required by scarcity. From the standpoint of our technological civilization which had conquered scarcity, we could now see that Freud was wrong (although he used to be right) when he asserted that “free gratification of man’s

instinctual needs is incompatible with civilization.”

The “pleasure principle,” Marcuse proclaimed, no longer needed to be controlled by the “reality principle.” The time had come when human *eros* could be liberated to be what it is according to its own uninhibited nature. As Abraham Maslow had explained to Americans, when our basic needs are met, we are free for the highest forms of self-actualization. The human greatness that used to be rare could now become common. The most enthusiastic man of the 1960s, Abbie Hoffman, began his bizarre radical journey with the revelation that Marcuse was the right mixture of



Abbie Hoffman (center) on his bizarre radical journey

Maslow and Marx for our times.

The function of reason, Marcuse explained in *One-Dimensional Man* (1964), was now to direct technology in the service of “the art of life.” The more we can reduce our physical and mental work, the more we can reduce anxiety and fear, and the more joyful self-determination becomes possible. We have freed ourselves for “trans-utilitarian ends.” All of life can now become the leisure celebrated by the philosophers, and as a result there will be new births of freedom, creativity, and love. Marcuse and even Maslow, both very culti-

vated men, thought of this erotic flourishing as genuinely polymorphous—sex, the imagination, art, music, culture, spiritual life, and even philosophy will now be experienced as they truly are. Because there is finally no scarcity of the good things of life, nothing we think or feel or do will have to be distorted by self-denial.

Marcuse and Marx were not, to say the least, environmentalists. Many thinkers of the 1960s tended to differ from them not in rejecting technology, but by thinking about technological means in a “humane” way. The conquest of scarcity means that it is possible to imagine “alternative technologies” that reconcile living in comfort and security with the aesthetic enjoyment of our natural surroundings. Because “small is beautiful,” technologies themselves might be reconfigured to reconcile abundance with beauty.

There was little in the 1960s that pointed with more than a very selective nostalgia to a genuinely “organic” life that would dispense with the benefits of techno-liberation. There was certainly no desire to return to what couldn’t help but seem to be the drudgery and unjust rural idiocy of the low-tech environments of the past. The 1960s inaugurated post-materialism in the sense that human beings, having definitively defeated nature, could now be friendlier toward their former foe. Although the poetry of the time often flirted with pantheism and Buddhist self-negation, the 1960s were nothing if not humanistic—even if their tendency was to empty the human of any definite content. The decade’s environmentalism was not nearly as green as today’s Greens, nor as apocalyptic as Al Gore’s inconvenient truth.

Old and New left

The American Old Left aimed to free the

poor from poverty and for security. Its appeal was to working men and women who wanted to share in the good life that capitalism had made possible for a few. The Great Society programs of Lyndon Johnson, inspired by both the generous spirit of the early 1960s and the ambitions of the early New Left, went much farther. Johnson explained in his 1964 commencement address at the University of Michigan that most of American history had been devoted to “subduing the continent,” and the result of our “unbounded invention and untiring industry” had been “an order of plenty for our people.” So our new goal would be to discover and employ the “wisdom...to enrich and elevate our national life, and to advance the quality of American civilization.” Our rich and powerful society could now become great.

That Great Society would rest, of course, on “abundance and liberty for all,” and therefore on a complete end to “poverty and racial injustice.” Once those goals were achieved, it would be possible to create “a place where leisure is a welcome place to build and reflect, and not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness,” as well as one “where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community.” Johnson urged us to prove that we have the power and the wisdom to shape a civilization that meets *all*—even the highest—of our human needs and desires.

LBJ displayed his greatness by claiming, in effect, to be the mixture of Marx and Maslow appropriate for the times. As much as the New Leftists, he thought that human or political will would be required to liberate unfulfilled human capabilities. But Johnson agreed with the Old Left that the defeat of poverty still required our unreserved commitment and the programmatic power of the national government.

His somewhat noble but quite ridiculous thought was that our national government—designed for limited ends and leaving happiness to the individual—could both take on and resolve the issues of human purpose and human happiness. Johnson was a man of the 1960s, most of all, in having no realistic sense of limits.

The War on Poverty, not surprisingly, inspired the Old but not the New Left. In the privileged lives of the members of the New Left, poverty or scarcity had already been defeated. Their focus was on their *own* boredom, restlessness, and loneliness, and they didn't focus their search for meaning on government programs or on being anti-poverty warriors. They thought of themselves as the idealistic children of soulless oligarchs, and they imagined themselves, as did LBJ, as occupying a privileged moment in history. Thinking of themselves primarily as intellectuals or students, they, most of all, demanded an education appropriate to their situation.

They criticized their education for being merely technocratic, for not preparing them for the "art of life." The "elective" system of the "multiversity" was evidence that Americans lacked a unifying vision of a whole human life. What's more, they noticed that only the scientific and technical courses were taken seriously as conveying real knowledge. They were the courses concerning "facts," whereas the humanities were concerned with emoting about an arbitrary and weightless species of "values."

Our universities, the New Left claimed, were teaching nothing about how to live well after scarcity's conquest; the schools did nothing to direct liberated reason, love, or imagination. Nothing, of course, was an exaggeration. But even 1950s intellectuals with a genuinely bohemian concern for living well, such as Russell Kirk, had often dropped out in disgust from an increasingly bureaucratic and standardized

university system. The charges the New Left leveled in the Port Huron Statement about the University of Michigan echoed, in many ways, what Kirk had already said about Michigan State in the 1950s.

Kirk, of course, was too informed about permanent features of human nature to think for a moment that scarcity had really been overcome. But only in a high-tech time could he, lacking hereditary wealth or noble birth, devote himself so successfully to living as he pleased. He knew well enough that one good point of bourgeois success is the alternative way of life of the bohemian, but he also knew that even a Beatnik couldn't really have the imagination to become truly countercultural without some knowledge of the aristocratic and spiritual truths embodied in the high culture under bourgeois assault in the modern world. Kirk's diagnosis was that the students in the 1960s, living in abundance and freedom and without cultivated imaginations, were causing trouble because they were *bored*.

The members of the early New Left shared Kirk's spiritual, aristocratic conviction that they were made for more than merely technological knowledge. The "how" or the means of living well were too easy for them to seem important; they could be taken for granted. But it turns out to be very hard to know what to do if you really believe that necessity gives us no guidance at all. And the members of the New Left were too attached to the liberating impersonalities of good government and high technology to embrace freely the harsh constraints or personal subordination required for genuine democratic community.

Like all of us, the students of the 1960s longed for the personal significance of communal life without its accompanying personal duties. They wanted both radical liberation and true purpose; they wanted

to do their own thing without being lonely. The illusions of liberation caused them to be too hard on—and to not learn from—the past, and too thoughtlessly hopeful for the future. They didn't have what it takes to really take advantage of their freedom to achieve the soaring, self-actualized excellence praised by Maslow or the leisurely cultivation of Marcuse's art of life (lived, in his own way, by Kirk.)

Intellectual Anarchism

Failing to discover a purposeful standard to direct technological rationality, the New Leftists lurched toward the view that the only way to control technology is to deny the truth and goodness of all claims to knowledge. All claims to truth are equally empty, because all of life is nothing but a struggle for power and identity. The New Left's early, somewhat reasonable rebellion against technocracy on behalf of the humane use of technology culminated in deconstruction by all means available. All there is, the assertion went, are assertions of significance or identity in a moral vacuum. This 1960s rebellion began against the technocratic view that true or factual statements always begin with "studies show." Real knowledge, the technocrat thinks, is nothing but impersonal and scientific. But by the end of the 1960s, courses based on "studies show" were displaced in the social sciences and humanities by aggressively personal and subjective "studies" courses—black studies, women's studies, and so forth. The deconstruction of the late 1960s trivialized the real achievements on behalf of justice of the early 1960s. Certainly no "studies" professor could explain why powerful white Americans could have been genuinely convinced or at least shamed into allowing relatively powerless black Americans to exercise their rights as free and equal citizens.

The truth is that technocratic studies are typically rational and factual, although the clarity of what the studies show usually comes through abstraction from personal reality. And "studies" courses really are mostly emotional outbursts of "value" that correspond to nothing real. So it is not surprising that progress in the natural sciences was relatively untouched by the know-nothing propaganda that exploded after the late 1960s. Our best scientists never lost confidence that they know what they're doing—even that they know much more than they really do. The effectual truth of the 1960s was to make American education more technological and more nihilistic than ever. The thinkers of the 1960s saw the need for—but failed to come up with—a real antidote to *scientism*.

The privileged young leaders of the New Left got stupider, angrier, and more violent as the 1960s approached their end. The most anti-intellectual, amoral, and blindly destructive year of that decade was the academic year of 1969-70. There were few sights more disgusting to ordinary Americans than intelligent, middle-class kids terrorizing our universities into craven submission. The result of this partial but real success of the youthful rebellion was that a college education—at least for those majoring in the social sciences and humanities—became more than ever a boring, demoralizing waste of time.

The burgeoning anarchism of the New Left was closer to what Marx actually would have predicted than the early hopes for egalitarian excellence and love. According to Marx, capitalism destroys every human illusion about morality, spirituality, and personal significance—except those that can be measured through money. The whole achievement of capitalism appears permanent—both its high-tech material productivity and its moral/emotional destructiveness. Nothing discredited can

ever be restored—not God or love or nature or honor. History, for the Marxist, always moves in the direction of the truth, and the end of history would be the total eradication of the repressive illusions that limit freedom.

Under communism, Marx explained, people live liberated or completely unconstrained or unalienated lives. “Do your own thing,” without any guidance at all about your thing, really becomes the only rule. So communism—which is only communal in the sense that the community as opposed to any particular person takes care of the necessary work—really is radical democracy or radical anarchism or radical liberation. It is not at all compatible with the love- and death-obsessed civilizations of the past, the cultural achievements of which had already been commodified into insignificance by capitalism. The laidback communes of the 1960s semi-consciously aimed to imitate what Marx had imagined. Their success would depend on leaving all the baggage of the past at the door. Freedom would mean completely shedding oneself of the obsessions that plagued the repressed, scarcity-driven, stressed-out past. It would mean that there is *nothing* you feel you really *have* to do.

Communism or democracy, so understood, has to be, as Socrates first explained, a rebellion of the young against the old. The old can’t help but be distorted by experiences of scarcity, and they are much more likely to be burdened by a scarcity of *time*. “Don’t trust anyone over thirty” means “don’t be brought down by the experiences of old folks.” Because of the 1960s, the old, to avoid ostracism, increasingly have had no choice but to think, talk, and look young; they have to fake the insouciant forgetfulness of necessity that is so easy for the young. The 1960s accelerated an American, democratic, and even capitalist tendency to celebrate the indefi-

nite perfectibility of the forever young.

But there are few things more repulsive—or more ridiculous—than the tyranny of the young and privileged who believe they are entitled to live without limits, without binding social and personal responsibilities. The demand to live as if there were no scarcity offended those Americans responsible enough—usually old and/or poor enough—to know how much their lives are defined by scarcity and its attendant responsibilities. Most Americans knew well enough that to imagine a world without countries, law, family, God, tradition, and the rest was to imagine hell, and only the most self-indulgent among us could imagine otherwise.

The Enduring Legacy (as They Say)

The truth is that Marx and Marcuse and even Maslow were wrong to believe that the conquest of scarcity could be accomplished for all. The need for bourgeois virtues—the virtues useful for productivity and managing time—had not in fact withered away. Even the liberation of a few from that need always depended on most people practicing those virtues. The 1960s ended with most people still trapped in the alienating division of labor, anxiously in pursuit of seemingly endlessly deferred gratification, stuck in the midst of bureaucratic hierarchies, and thinking of themselves as abstract or unerotic individuals with impersonal loyalties to corporate processes well beyond their comprehension and control. Technological progress has made work in some sense more humane; more of it is mental, less of it is physical. The demand for intellectual and imaginative productivity, however, is much more stressful than merely manual labor—you can’t help but take your work with you everywhere you go.

Marx was also wrong in thinking that the conquest of scarcity would cause the

withering away of pre-bourgeois political, noble, religious, and personal longings. But he would have rightly laughed at the New Leftists who placed their faith in an unprecedented future for the satisfaction of those longings. The real human alternatives are not technocratic domination and radical liberation. If the longings remain, scarcity does too. And so, too, does the credibility of pre-bourgeois accounts of what it means to live well, responsibly, and in love, in light of the truth.

The 1960s were, most of all, very destructive of what remains in America of pre-bourgeois sources of truth and virtue. Community, loyalty, religion, the family, every institutional form of nobility and love were damaged by the increasingly aggressive insistence on justice and freedom. But the nihilist's inability to articulate a standard more compelling than technological success and individual liberation was probably, on balance, good for American productivity. All sorts of moral and political objections to putting productivity first eroded—both those based on higher forms of human excellence and those based on various forms of prejudice.

It is also easy to exaggerate how destructive the 1960s were. A free and productive society does depend on pre-existing social capital, but the 1960s provided no real

alternative to people having to raise their own children. The preferential option for the young turns out to have been mostly for the most energetic, techno-savvy, and productive among us. Most features of the 1960s have become compatible with being bourgeois. The most educated and productive Americans today often have cultivated bohemian and “crunchy” tastes, for which they can thank the 1960s. And the “organic” aesthetics of the late 1960s have made our country a healthier, prettier, and cleaner place. But being bohemian or being crunchy now rarely means a whole, alternative art of life.

We cannot forget that, because of the 1960s, America is more just and in some ways less cruel than it once was. That decade's objections to “soulless wealth” and technocracy in the name of personal significance and personal love also still retain some force. They do so most powerfully, however, in the genuinely countercultural *religious* movements that have emerged since the 1960s—both evangelical and orthodox. These movements were inspired by and opposed to the 1960s. A genuinely anti-bourgeois communitarian rebellion on behalf of personal love seems in the end to depend on the real authority of a personal God.