

## CHAPTER XI

### THE IDEOLOGY OF PRIMITIVE PEOPLES

Most of the writings of Marx and Engels make reference to an ideal model which is supposed to have existed in primitive societies. Everything rests on this model because subjects such as right, civil society, property, state, and others, are unavoidably related to the study of primitive societies, since that is where it all began. Little by little, the initial human families form clans, more heterogeneous as the societies grow older. When their development reaches the point that different ancestries or family lineages—gens, sibs, or secondary clans—can be distinguished, the tribe is practically formed. Tribes are of particular interest to us because many are said to have lived in a state of no government, which together with an economy that was a sort of collectivism has come to be known as primitive communism. Their analysis is difficult because historians have not gathered enough clues to decipher the organization of the first human societies, and because the study of those societies found today in a primitive state can serve as no more than a guide: they have already evolved, and we cannot assume that all societies developed in the same manner.

To Engels (from *Origen de la familia, la propiedad privada y el Estado*), primitive society was a model of perfection.<sup>1</sup> He based this opinion on three basic points: 1) the absence of the state, 2) a communal family and maternal right, and 3) communism of goods, which he arbitrarily infers from the analyses of the Iroquois gens by Morgan, and other similar

studies. I share the admiration Engels developed for the discipline, courage, and great sense of duty of some primitive societies, but I doubt they owed these qualities to the above basic points. Rather, they were rooted in the moral steadiness and spiritual strength which primitive man predictably manifested together with less admirable characteristics, just like today.

We must analyze, then, why those tribes warred with one another. If the savages were so noble and pure, if they shared everything, were not territorial, and were ignorant of property, why did they go to war? It does not seem likely that a moral offense or religious differences had led to all their numerous and continuous conflicts, especially in light of their relative isolation. This is where the myth starts to crumble, with intimations that the savage may not have been as noble as depicted. The extreme cruelty many primitive tribes exhibited toward the vanquished, the cultural subduing, the genocidal exterminations, and more, are all a fact. "In principle," Engels himself states, "every tribe was considered to be at war with every other tribe with which it had not expressly agreed on a peace treaty." Is this representative of a model society? It is well known the example of many tribes that were in an almost continuous state of war until they were brought together under a king or thorough some form of economico-evolutionary drive. And though not even this solved the problem over the long term because man cannot divest himself of his nature, it is certainly farfetched to assert that civilization is to blame for every human problem. There is no doubt that racism, the pursuit of unfair advantage, and the lure of booty, were all seeds of war. This puts a clearer light on *primitive communism*, where racism and the fear of racism often led tribes to view everyone else as the enemy.

Tribes warred over territory, among other reasons. Engels himself tells us, "War which in the past was made to avenge usurpation or in order to extend territorial limits which had become insufficient, is now made for no other purpose than plunder, and becomes a permanent industry." What a pity he is no longer with us so he could explain what was such territorial expansion if not usurpation, as when hunting preserves were invaded. Some peoples, like the Etruscans, exhibited a marked propensity for pillaging, and some tribes had such a

fondness for war that they often formed separate associations devoted to warring on their own; this must have led to expanded conflict more than once. Engels excuses pillaging on the basis that pillagers were separate from the gens. We may accept this, but then so must we accept that despots and civil society are not one, which they are not. In very primitive times, there was little that people could steal from one another other than food, raiment, or hunting weapons, but what a human group could steal from another is clearly more significant. We cannot justify any right to conquest based on mere formalities about social organization without inquiring into the motivation, meaning and consequences of such an action. All of the above points clearly to the primary cause of war in primitive times: economic gain. It was not necessary to denaturalize the gens for that, it was only necessary to steal. Disorganization of the gens came about because changing times made it obsolete. Even if so-called primitive communism did exist then, man did not acquire high ethical values as a result.

Much is often made of the fact that prison was an unusual resource then, and that savages incorporated the vanquished into their own, and that unlike civilized peoples, they did not take slaves. The former is probably due to practical reasons, for there was no absence of disciplinary action, from fines and exile to capital punishment. The latter is historically false, but when they actually did not, it is possible that at least in part it was because slaves were unproductive for purposes of immediate consumption, which is what savages were interested in. Incorporating new members into their group, on the other hand, could be a long-term benefit since it increased the supply of warriors; this is called annexation in modern times. The *noble savage* used to exterminate or annex the vanquished, an act which cannot be lightly described as admission to the tribe. But more important than that is the fact that modern civilized nations do not enslave the vanquished as a rule... with the exception of the communists. The Allies did not enslave the Germans or the Japanese at the end of World War II. They occupied their territories as was to be expected, but they did not annex them, and helped to incorporate them into democracy as free allies

instead. Where the Soviets entered, however, they raised an Iron Curtain.

Let us now analyze the three basic points of Engels:

### **1. Absence of the state**

A serious problem confronted when discussing these matters is that it is difficult to agree on the proper criteria for distinguishing between primitive and civilized peoples. If we include culture in our definition of civilization, there is hardly a people which can be called primitive. It has been clearly demonstrated that the predominance of certain forms of the family is not an adequate criterion either. On the other hand, a proper state of nature (vulgar anarchy) or the so-called *egalitarian folk society* with diffuse sovereignty is probably more imaginary than real. There could have been no full development of the state in remote times, but its role there is performed by institutionalized traditions. In those tribes we can observe today which can be classified as most primitive, we can already discern the influence of a gerontocracy or of temporary chiefs. Even in the earliest stages, it is impossible to imagine an absence of cooperative human gatherings aimed at survival. And when this occurs, there must also be a delimitation of spheres, which serves precisely as a proto-institutionalization of natural rights. Now then, although criteria such as sociological localism and the bond between kingship and social function are useful, it seems simpler to define a people as primitive or civilized according to their scientific, educational (absence of writing), and organizational-technological development such as the degree of division of labor. Thus, we would find tribal societies in different states of economic primitivism, but also sometimes in a notable state of scientific development. It is not good to obscure the distinction between state of nature and primitive communism, term which should be restricted to the economic realm.

Tribal organization also used to grant authority to an assembly of the people when there was internal struggle, which gave rise to the designation of primitive democracy for these societies. However, this was a mechanism to prevent or to get out of a crisis, and elders, shamans and sages always

exercised an overruling authority. Iroquois tribes, for example, had a tribal and a *sachem* who represented them in a federal council. The latter had full authority, empowered to decide even in matters of war, an attribute exclusive of a full-blown institution.<sup>2</sup> Besides, certain secret societies, among whose goals was the conservation of the social order, are often found in very primitive societies. As opposed to the amorphousness alleged by Morgan, studies made by Robert H. Lowie show that rank was clearly defined and that well stratified social classes, even a middle class, could be found. In our American continent, the Incas had formed a great empire ruled by a monarch of supposedly divine origin and characterized by a fixed class structure. And yet, the state does not arise from a class division, but from an anti-anarchic ontological demand interiorised and personified in the *ksatriya*, which in turn constitutes itself as the ruling class. In any case, anarchic schemes would seem to fit extremely low consquential evolution. The existence of a patriarchal state in China has always been known, a gerontocracy seems to have ruled at the beginning, and the Shang dynasty is immemorial.

Something else in the work of Lowie on these matters is worth mentioning. When he analyzes the governments and laws which prevailed in these societies, he finds a wide variety. Some have no chiefs, but that is rare; and when that happens, they often have heroes instead. Others have autocratic governments, as have been found in Africa, Oceania and other places. Sometimes, democratic or feudal models are found. Most have very elaborate councils, empowered to promulgate laws and to judge. Tradition, however, rules most ordinary social interaction.<sup>3</sup> The complexities and elaborations of the law which more civilized societies later found necessary did not exist in those times. The simple life made it easier to function through meta-legal praxes, such as giving one's word of honor. But the concepts of right and law were already etched in the minds of men. Sometimes, Lowie states, there is no central authority, and justice is in the hands of the family, to the extreme that death may be inflicted on any member of the family of a criminal by way of revenge. Justice was applied by one's own hand, and *vendettas* were the order of the day. We may assume that culpability was often difficult to establish in

the absence of sophisticated means, and so vendettas must have been responsible for the loss of innumerable innocent lives, as well as for enormous disruption of the social order. Lowie narrates that when a woman of the Upa tribe unwittingly burned a child in an attempt to heat water, the life of her own child was demanded in exchange.

As a rule, the absence of an impartial central authority which could correct distortions of ordinary social interaction must have caused real negative externalities, and that must have given rise to the full establishment of the state, that is, the central authority which already governed other aspects must have taken control of the internal administration of justice as well. Reason assisted Locke, not Engels or Marx. In other tribes, good judgment must have prevailed and the phenomenon of vendettas must not have exceeded the limits of natural law. A common practical mechanism consisted in the gens of a man guilty of homicide offering presents to the gens of the victim in an attempt to avoid further bloodletting, and such offers were commonly accepted.

## **2. Communal family and maternal right**

Engels bases his theories mainly on studies which Morgan made of the Iroquois culture, and on Bachofen, who asserted that all primitive societies had initially lived in a state of promiscuity. Such promiscuity would have made any determination of paternity arguable, so the more reliable maternal lineage became preferable, and monogamy started as a transgression of the sexual possession of all by all. Engels relished these ideas, of course, since he saw an opportunity for including the family, or more specifically, the conjugal society, in the mythical concept of primitive (or familial) communism.<sup>4</sup> All the men were the spouses of all the women in their generational circle, that is, grandparents with grandmothers, sons with daughters, male grandchildren with female grandchildren: the so-called group marriage. A great deal of evidence suggests that the monogamous family, today called nuclear, is the most ancient in origin and probably the basic model from which all others derived. What is more, almost no one today accepts, even as a possibility, the existence of group

marriage. Other observed forms of conjugal society, such as polyandry, developed at least partly as adaptational phenomena, in that case in response to the scarcity of women.

According to Engels, filiation by maternal right was typical of savage and barbaric conditions while paternal right implied civilization. But sociological studies show that many primitive societies determine ancestry by paternal lineage. Engels asserts that for every stage in the social evolution of a people there is a corresponding type of family, the monogamous one being a creation of civilization; this has also been shown to be false. According to him, even the concept of (and our moral strictures regarding) incest should disappear. All this would not matter, of course, if it did not lead him to a conclusion. What would he infer? Simply that since savage and barbaric men were supposedly at a stage of primitive communism the family which corresponds to that stage was pure and noble, while monogamy was the result of class interests bent on establishing the right to bourgeois property and must therefore be eradicated. History does not support his conclusions: societies where paternal lineage determined filiation, and where the organization of the gens was patriarchal, have practiced primitive communism the way it should be understood. Conversely, the particularization of right is discernible in societies of matrilineal filiation.

The family has several functions: social, educational, for providing, for support, and as a source of authority. In primitive tribes, the nuclear family functions mainly at the most intimate levels of contact, while other activities are performed together with the extended family or with the clan. Some decisions, thus, are made at the level of the entire gens. Kinship is very important in tribes, especially for the protection of both person and property as well as for transmitting and safeguarding political and religious ideas, which later are based more on the nuclear family and on national ideology.

A basic aspect of family and family ties relates to the key question of who inherits. For the monogamous family, the answer is: those closest to the center of the nucleus. For reasons previously discussed, there is no better answer. In primitive societies, upon the death of someone, the clan inherits, although not always indistinctly. What is impor-

tant here—even Engels recognizes this—is that property should remain with the gens. In certain societies of matrilineal filiation, the children of a deceased father belonged not to the gens but to the mother, and were thus disinherited; they inherited together with the other relatives on the side of the mother, however, or directly from her. This clearly indicates that the concept of private property was already developed and established as a natural right, linked to the gens or clan. In other situations, inheritance is even more particularized. Engels avers that the abolition of maternal or uterine right was a great defeat for the female gender, and that the modern family contains the seeds not only of slavery but of servitude. What could be more absurd? It is known for certain that tribes have enslaved or exterminated other tribes regardless of how family and kinship were structured in the former. In modern societies, women are in no way set apart, being able to inherit from their parents and bequeath to their children. Merely consider the fact that seventy per cent of the wealth in the US is in the hands of women. In societies of matrilineal filiation, women determined kinship but men headed the clans, and men did not always treat women well. To Engels, the advent of monogamy made the woman the main servant of the house (an assertion he could not make today) without any role in social production. The highly important function of educating the children, however, has been mainly hers; if that is not social production, who knows what is.

Engels also derives adultery and prostitution from the institutionalization of monogamy. This is not only historically false, but even slanderous. Monogamous society has certainly meted women severe punishment for adultery, but that was also true for other family structures, and is no longer true today. Some ancient prejudices against women seem to have originated in a great respect for an elevated and idealized concept of her. This made her into the bearer of virtue, whose transgressions were punished. This conceptualization had to be accompanied by greater restrictions and responsibilities befitting the important role society had assigned her. Unfortunately, this has been too often manipulated to the detriment of her global social status.



To Engels, the basis of monogamy is social, not natural, and not a fruit of the mutual love of a couple. What is social, however, is natural to man; marriage may be seen as the encounter of nature with culture, as Levi-Strauss would say. But Engels relies greatly on the contracts agreed to by the parents unmindful of the will of the future spouses, their children. It is true that this occurred at one time, but the motive which guided this custom was to get all that they could for the children, not only in economic terms, but in moral, religious, social, and even medical aspects as well. It was the duty of the parents to make a good match for the children, and it was the duty of the children to respect the decision of the parents. It would be very much the same as misjudging the custom of purchasing brides, common in many primitive societies. Because of all of the above, no one can argue that civilized man sees woman as a simple means of production, as Marx asserted. But even more important, the civilized world knows love, the love of the couple which is the ethical basis of the family, and whose highest manifestation can only be found in the nuclear family. Marriage contracts undoubtedly stumbled on many difficulties, but when the rules were followed and believed in, love usually developed; at least that was the expectation. And while all this could be deemed a fiction, the same cannot be said of the many, many loving couples we see strolling on the thoroughfares of the free world. In due time, they will raise a nuclear family, authentic expression of love and natural law.

The nuclear family is not of economic origin; like every family, tribe, nation and man of honor, it protects its patrimony. The nuclear family is a veritable social micro-cosmos—and its rules genuine dialectical synthesis of its member's wills—it is justly awarded recognition and full rights with the passing of time. And even more, in practice, it has proved to have been a great spur for development. Property rests with it; so what is objectionable about that? What difference does it make whether the property of the deceased is inherited by four or five, or by fifty or a hundred? It seems far more natural to limit the economic unit to what is naturally the most basic spiritual unit. Group marriage does not seem to be emerging in Communist states, where (as opposed to primitive societies

and modern capitalism) the family is subordinated to the state in every way, and where both the individual and the nuclear family have been destroyed as economic units. All that rests is to destroy the latter as the forger of the social being and as basic unit of spiritual support.

### 3. Communism of goods

This is what would most characterize primitive communism. The assertion is that man was totally collectivist in those times, and that he was ignorant of all the economic phenomena known to civilization. Thus, he was unaware of trade, currency, inequality, and the right to property. There seems to have always existed, however, a spontaneous respect (below the level of awareness) for individual rights, which has made social life possible. This, of course, does not exclude the concomitant presence of a hierarchical guarantee of those rights.

The observations which attribute collective characteristics to primitive economies are usually very coarse; careful assessment reveals that collectivization existed only where it was strictly necessary for survival. Goods tended to be basic and scarce in those times, and almost everyone contributed equally to production given the simplicity of their economic activities. In such a situation, it is easy to deduce, distribution also tends to be equal, perhaps originating a solidaritarian supraeconomic unconscious consensus needed to survive. But circumstances where property has been partially collectivized seem to have coexisted not so much with a diffuse sovereignty or anarchy as with well-established aristocratic and monarchic systems of government, that is, in the midst of a full civil society. So it is difficult from now on to attribute to the central government, as Engels alleged, the goal of abolishing collective gens rights.

As Adam Smith rightly conjectured, the individual—the family—as initial economic unit must have existed first; every collectivized aspect of the economy takes place later, above all, we can be sure, as a phenomenon of adaptation to adverse circumstances and scant resources where the priority is to secure a basic universal welfare, such as when there is a need to share water in the desert. Collectivism may well

acquire the force of law in these circumstances, because society cannot allow its members to die for lack of shelter or nourishment, or to turn to violence in desperation. Basically, however, the criterion followed is ordination and functional, socio-biological, or purely economic, that is, in the sense of adaptational organical behavior before scarcity. No legal-socio-economic criterion is ever implied which would deny the right to private property. When the right of the gens, the classic form of right of primitive peoples, appears, collectivism is denied, because the former constitutes no more than a familial right.<sup>5</sup> And within such sphere, collectivism is not total either, since even the degrees of kinship determine differences in the distribution of resources.

Lowie shows that territorial ownership is clear in many primitive societies, and that property is rarely, if ever, communal; what is found is joint ownership of property by family groups, sibs, and others. In most cases there are shared goods and also individual goods,<sup>6</sup> such as self-made weapons, a private sleeping spot, and others; this, let us note, applies to consumer goods as well as to production goods. There are even cases where all the land is individually owned. In the islands of the Torres Strait, for example, he finds that even each stone is individually owned, and that property may be turned over to others, given as inheritance to (or taken away from) offspring. We conclude, then, that when the collective ownership of goods is no longer necessary, man rejects it, institutes first the right of the gens and then individual right, thus inaugurating another stage of social life.

The idea that there once was a communism of goods has found support in the early phenomenon of common production. But it must be clear that the latter was the result of a primitive economic stage. Later, the responsibility for production fell on each family group. In other societies, the factor of tradition weighed heavily on keeping practices, but given the existence of different branches of production or labor, not everyone was accorded equal social status and benefit. The limited development of (political) individual conscience must have been the main factor in what development there was of collective behavior in primitive society. But collective behavior may have also come to the fore as a response to the chal-

lence represented by rivals for the possession of scarce goods, provoking a militant reaction in man (following Spencer) or perhaps leading man to act with *mechanical solidarity* (a la Durkheim). And it is custom which perpetuates the phenomenon as a traditional good, and which explains the resistance to change.

It is worth noting that even though it is not immediately apparent, there is still a great deal of common ownership today: the country itself, social services, much of the economic infrastructure, institutions, and the wealth derived from taxation, are all common property. But since there is no evidence whatsoever that the survival of groups living under free economies is threatened, collectivism in any shape must be rejected, and the free economy must be allowed to function because it is better adapted to natural law. For this reason, even if all primitive peoples had a doctrinal affinity with communism, that would not be a compelling motive for us to follow them. It is true that primitive peoples were quite conscious of the problems which could derive from the accumulation of wealth. There were even ceremonies, quite mystical in tone, for redistributing or even destroying what had been accumulated. We must remember, however, that those who benefitted from redistribution acquired obligations toward those who were affected by it; and destroying the wealth was a sacrificial offering to the gods. How admirable was the example of those primitive peoples! Perhaps arbitrariness, but never cheap rationalizations! Today, on the other hand, rather than the acknowledgement of an obligation toward those affected by exceptional redistribution, we witness the creation of doctrines of anti-concepts in order to justify despoilment without having to express gratitude or pay just compensation.

The property of the clan was deemed to belong to every one of its members, while excluding the members of all other clans. The rights were theirs, the wealth was theirs; wealthy Russians, destitute Chinese, rich tribes, poor tribes... what kind of communism is that? Admitting the slightest particularization of right contradicts the spirit that should characterize communism. But if we hold, on the other hand, that barbarian production was destined to a common fund, we cannot hold at the same time that man owned what he produced. The

ideology that leads producers to own what they themselves produce is not lost, but rather revived and modernized in contemporary capitalism. Anthropologico-ideological analysis shows that it might be more accurate to categorize primitive societies as capitalist, obviously under a capitalism adapted to the times.<sup>7</sup> Not going quite that far, we might at least classify them as belonging to the reason-individualism-mysticism-capitalism axis. Closer to modern capitalism and unlike communism, for example, interchanges in primitive societies were freely determined, rights were particularized (especially when it came to the family), there was no statist infrastructure, or any conception of class struggle, and so on.

Except in the most complete sense, the particularization of right does not by itself guarantee an adequate administration of justice. In primitive societies, however, there was little internal (centrally directed) usurpation (and tyranny). Probably close kinship, a diffuse army organization, but above all a strong allegiance to the second principle of nomocratic right offset any statist tendencies. Obviously, a market as elaborate as that of today, and production by means of financing and well-established enterprises, could not have existed in primitive times. All this is secondary to capitalist doctrine; what is basic is that the resources (such as capital in modern days, and weapons in ancient times) be owned by those who are assisted by natural right. The market is a means, not a principle, and may, like all means, vary according to the times; each culture will find its praxical mode of institutionalization.

Man adapt his mentality to the epoch, but he cannot negate its basic drives. Modern capitalism began to appear in the sixteenth century. What characterized capitalism at that time, however, was only the entrepreneurial mind, and the greater and improved financial use of money. But even though money came to be accumulated in the hands of the leaders of large-scale mercantile production, from an ideological standpoint there is nothing that money can do that any other type of wealth cannot do. Man had long been using the same basic mechanisms in order to increase his wealth, although obviously with a different practical purposes as allowed by the times. Some people, such as tradesmen, could not have existed in primitive societies: buying in order to sell

at a higher price is an economic activity which requires a number of factors for its appearance. The analogy, however, exists. There was a limited room for accumulation and economic progress in primitive societies because of their own economic underdevelopment. The goal of bartering, however, was still to obtain greater relative value. Also, in early days exchange must have been limited, basically because it made no sense to have the same type of items changing hands. Yet on the other hand, currency was already known; the first coins were objects supposedly imbued with magical properties, ornaments later acquiring a more preponderant role. When objects with a fixed exchange value begin to circulate, currency is already well established.

Archaic forms of commerce, such as Kula trade and the *potlatch* phenomenon, have been discovered. Gifting, not bartering, is said to have been the first form of commerce, but it is well known that donation was a mutual affair; even if one intent was to flatter, it was somehow guided by principles of equality and justice. Otherwise, conflict and resentment could arise, not unlike interaction among children. All of those economic activities did not occur as we understand them today. Rather, they were imbued with spiritual or magical content. Notwithstanding that, however, one did not give without expecting something in return. Tribal societies, of course, did not know of mortgages, just like they did not know of jets or high-rises, but they were very conscious in honoring their debts. According to Engels, when shepherds appeared on the scene, they began to exploit others because they controlled the meat and the milk (both of which had great exchange value), a situation which later degenerated into the master-slave relationship.<sup>8</sup> It is well known that slavery originated mostly in war and piracy; what the shepherds took advantage of was their inventiveness and creative work, all well within capitalist principles.

Taxation, as we have said, was already a feature of very primitive societies, applied to foodstuffs at a time when that was the principal form of wealth. Even though, as time passed, tribute might have become more *anarchic* when each clan provided for itself, it became centrally demanded once again as society grew more complex. There are very clear instances of

tribute being exacted by the community in tribal societies: Lowie tells how the first to sight a beached whale on the coasts of Chukchi is awarded the bones, and his right to those bones is protected; the meat, however, is shared. What shall we call this if not private property and taxation? Goods are awarded in recognition of individual labor, and a portion of them is redistributed. The unwary will conclude that the society is a communist one, because what is evident is that the meat is distributed. The bones, however, are useful, and he who steals them from their legal owner may even risk capital punishment.<sup>9</sup> Even in these societies, then, communal spirit would seem to indicate a tributary mechanism for the joint labor of society, thus manifesting not a communist mentality but one of dialectical bipolar affirmation.

It is this last fact which argues most strongly against the existence of primitive communism. Let us remember not only the religious narratives but also such phenomena as the use of goods in making reparation for insult or injury, the purchase of wives, the payment of tribute to hierarchs, and others, which must have made for small differences, which in a society scant in resources must have seemed great. The very act of payment as a means to make amends—the possibility of keeping it, that is—signified a respect for property different from those of communal right. It is curious that communists have not labeled this practice bourgeois.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Engels, F., *Origen de la familia, la propiedad privada y el Estado*, Ch.IX, pp.181 and ff. Editores Mexicanos Unidos, S.A., México 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Engels, F., *Ibid.*, Ch.VII. In his analysis of Celtic and German gens, the author attributes great power to the assembly of the people, but Engels himself recognizes that the governing councils could impose decisions, even against the will of practically the entire gens.

<sup>3</sup>Lowie, R. H., *Primitive Society*, Ch.XIII, pp.358 and ff. Liveright Paperbound Edition, New York 1970. Lowie provides numerous examples of clear governmental organization in primitive societies, but the careless observation of others has proclaimed that government was absent there, on the basis that justice was administered by and among the people involved. In Australia, he states, gerontocracy and the exclusion of women from power are common (p.359). And in Oceania and Africa, he continues, most tribes have well established governments of various types. Morgan would have us believe that kings could not exist in barbaric states or in groups organized in sibs, which Lowie refutes with multiple examples—he has even confirmed

the existence of monarchs and aristocrats in early savage societies (p.389). In Uganda, Lowie tells us the class distinction of certain tribes is so extreme that members of certain very low-ranking sibs can never aspire to the monarchy. And in order to demonstrate that this phenomenon is not related only to monarchical organizations, he also cites examples of discrimination among tribes where power is organized along democratic lines, such as the Masai and certain North American tribes (p. 390).

<sup>4</sup>Engels, F., *Ibid.* The subject is discussed in great detail in Ch.II, pp.31-93.

<sup>5</sup>Parsons, T., *Emile Durkheim, 1858-1917*, The contribution of Durkheim to a theory of integration of social systems. The Ohio State University Press, Columbus 1960. Parsons shows that primitive societies assigned resources among their significant structural units, each of which controlled the factors of production on its own, with little interchange, especially in the case of labor (p.129). Actually, this is true for all societies. What varies is the units: in modern capitalism, enterprises are very important; in societies where the right of the gens predominates, the ones Parsons refers to, the clan is highly relevant. Thus, the social possession of assets is never institutionalized as such, and refers only to those units, as Lowie and others have also demonstrated. The description by Parsons of Australian primitive society in *The society, evolutionary and comparative perspectives* leaves few doubts in that respect.

The bond of social structural units to things may seem more conspicuous in tribal societies; that, however, is because there is less internal barter. The principal manifestation of such bond in every society belonging to the natural axis of life is not the absence of commerce, but the right to property over things. Thus barter, which became generalized later, expresses the same right to property manifested in the form of a voluntary mercantile exchange of possessions. This is obviously favored by the division of labor, as Parsons correctly points out, but saying that such division frees the above-mentioned units from their bond to things is not to be taken the socialist way, since property is not denied and it does not seem correct to speak of freedom from rights. The bond between things and ordinary men (and legitimate institutions) is only broken in societies leaning toward the anti-natural axis of life.

In regard to labor or the force of labor, its commercial use is neither necessary nor conceivable when all economic activity produces practically the same things and may be performed by everyone in more or less the same way. In very primitive societies, the conditions did not require hiring labor in order to make things run better; such conditions arose especially with the subdivision of labor, spurred by technological advances.

<sup>6</sup>Lowie, R. H., *Ibid.* The author illustrates perfectly how the existence of certain economic phenomena has been interpreted as communism although they belong to a separate category of social thought (Ch.IX, pp.206-208). Some missionaries with scant knowledge of these matters pinned that label on the Kai of New Zealand, although Lowie proves that they have a strict code of right to property—not evident except upon careful observation, however. On page 323, I quote a fine example Lowie gives us on this matter.

<sup>7</sup>Perhaps something like this is what Marx had in mind when he saw a first negation of property taken place between individual and capitalist private property, the former supposedly existing only in civil society, that is, private property fully institutionalized. As we said in the previous chapter, the negation here is not of property itself, but of an arbitrary or anarchic form



of possession. Thus, between an spontaneous form of private property—the most unelaborated form of relevant praxis towards the satisfaction of need—and socially accepted private property—being both subsequent praxes of the value property—a reciprocal negation could be said to exist, given that both correspond to different and conflicting spiritual dispositions. Within a praxical spectrum, however, a contradiction seems to overplay the concept for all the praxes are meant to uphold the same value. It seems that here the term contradiction should be limited to certain determinants of the praxis, that is, to those which cause the right of property to be guaranteed and those which will have it restricted, altered or denied.

<sup>8</sup>Engels, F., *Ibid.*, Ch.IX, p.187. According to the author, the division between manual labor and agriculture was also influential.

<sup>9</sup>Lowie, R. H., *Ibid.*, pp.209-210.