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Conclusion:

“The Awakening to Come”

I am wiser than the founding fathers.

WENDELL PHILIPS

Our government has certainly not measured up to expectations.

WALTER LIPPMANN, “The Taboo”

Our inherited freedom is spent.

HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Let’s get free.

DEAD PREZ

As anarchist historian George Woodcock elegantly intimates, “the heritage that anarchism has left to the modern world is to be found in a few inspiring lives of self-sacrifice and devotion . . . [and] most of all in the incitement to return to a moral and natural view of society which we find in the writings of Godwin and Tolstoy.” According to Woodcock, “The great anarchists call on us to stand on our own moral feet like a generation of princes, to become aware of justice as an inner fire.” The great anarchists insist that “freedom and moral self-realization are interdependent, and one cannot live without the other.”¹

Through an analysis of the religious-ethical visions espoused by Henry David Thoreau, Dorothy Day, and Bayard Rustin, I have sought to elucidate the elements of anarchism that Woodcock identifies. Proceeding as I have has allowed me to illustrate the way in which Thoreau, Day, and Rustin were angelic troublemakers, possessed with the spirit of anarchism, which reveals that instead of being antithetical to anarchism as some assume, theism can actually motivate an anarchist ethic.

Although their religious-ethical commitments were not identical, Thoreau, Day, and Rustin agreed that God endowed human persons with the capacity

to discern the moral truth and the capacity to fulfill the moral law in practice. In view of their respective theological assumptions and religious-ethical beliefs, Thoreau, Day, and Rustin each endeavored to live in accord with the moral truth as they understood it, which involved encouraging others to answer the call of the divinity within and to stand on their own moral feet. Notably, the three all regarded individual assertions of moral autonomy as indispensable to any effective social justice movement or social reform activism. Indeed, Thoreau, Day, and Rustin, at different points in their activist careers, all posited rigorous ethical reflection and fidelity to God as the most auspicious means by which to usher in a more just social order; and they suggested that religious fidelity requires being proactively and assiduously engaged in the sociopolitical realm, as durable conditions of justice will become a possibility only if individual persons *incessantly seek* to be morally good or perfect and thus *always refuse* to comply with or participate in unjust practices.

In order to register the far-reaching sociopolitical implications of Thoreau's, Day's, and Rustin's respective religious-ethical visions, I have argued they each emphasize individual moral responsibility in a way that entails adopting a posture vis-à-vis modern territorial states that is constitutive of anarchism or an anarchist attitude toward political authority. More specifically, my analysis of Thoreau, Day, and Rustin has demonstrated how a commitment to social justice, an emphasis on moral responsibility (for oppression and social suffering), and an ethic of noncomplicity (Thoreau) or noncooperation (Day and Rustin) with unjust social practices can commend an anarchist posture or attitude. It should come as no surprise that one can derive a radical normative political vision from a given conception of God, the person, and moral truth. Yet, by making this fact explicit, I have shed important light on the commitments and values that informed Thoreau, Day, and Rustin as they endeavored to be morally good and illustrated the way in which certain religious commitments seem to point in inevitably and profoundly radical sociopolitical directions.

As most would agree, a commitment to always acting in accord with conscience or the higher law entails a refusal to take a given territorial state authority's command as a determinative reason for action. So a person who is committed to the idea of moral responsibility or autonomy, as I have described it, essentially denies that there is ever a reason to act strictly based on reasons provided by modern territorial state authorities. The significance of this denial comes to the fore in the light of the fact that a person can be said to follow the dictates of an authoritative figure only to the extent that the person bases his or her decision to perform or not perform a given act on an authoritative figure's dictate. When a person acts in a certain way based *solely* on the command of a given figure of authority, then the authoritative figure in that case represents the source of the reason on which the person acts. The figure in that case actually constitutes an authoritative

figure. Modern state officials (political authorities), of course, claim to have a right to issue commands that others have the duty to obey. Anarchists reject this assertion of authority; or, better, they deny that state officials possess *legitimate* authority. This denial, I have said, is constitutive of *weak* anarchism.

Stating the matter as I have points to the fact that many moral theories share an affinity with *weak* anarchism. This owes to several related developments in contemporary ethical discourse. To begin, individual conscience and an idea of moral autonomy have assumed a central place in modern ethical thought. Further, many ethicists and activists specify at least some absolute prohibitions and differentiate between social practices and a higher moral law of some sort. In practice, for such persons, when the moral law and a social practice are in conflict, the upstanding moral subject is charged with acting in accord with the moral law or conscience against the social practice or legal norm. Thus, if a state requires a person to perform immoral acts, then an individual has a moral duty to defy or disobey commands or laws issued by territorial state authorities. In this way, many moral theorists maintain that as a moral matter the positive law is subordinate to the dictates of individual conscience. (On my view, to emphasize moral autonomy in the way that many contemporary theorists do, invites a consideration of the relationship between moral autonomy and varieties of anarchism.)

It is crucial to appreciate that whether a government or political organization actually calls for its subjects to commit immoral or morally prohibited acts is an empirical question. And the more concerned one is by the fact of social injustice and the more seriously one takes one's ethical commitments, the more pressing one is going to find this kind of question. (These matters are especially urgent for religionists such as Mennonites, Quakers, Buddhists, Sufis, and others who maintain that their religious commitments prohibit participation in the organized practice of killing.) When persons conclude that a particular territorial state or political entity systematically requires persons to perform immoral acts, then the anarchist impulse will become more pronounced, which is what we would expect and is undoubtedly why anarchism gained so many adherents during the American-Vietnamese war of the 1960s and 1970s. Thoreau, Day, and Rustin, for their part, argued that territorial states, as a practical matter, are given to coercing persons into participating in unjust social practices, which is a claim that I am inclined to agree with, based upon the territorial states that have existed since Thoreau published *Walden*.

The question as to whether we should comply with the commands of a given territorial state is no less urgent today than it was during the eighteenth century, the nineteenth century, or the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s. (The age of revolution has not ended.) That so many are convinced otherwise only underscores how complicated the structure of modern society is and the

degree to which we assume that it is impossible to avoid complicity in oppressive social practices. But it is precisely this complicatedness that makes it so critical for us to reflect on what individual persons must do and who we must become if we are to be decent. Perhaps the only option for a morally conscious agent at this point in history is perpetual political disobedience or revolutionary withdrawal. Anarchism as a moral tradition poses these kinds of questions, which is why it is essential to know something about the tradition and to reflect on the anarchist challenge.

As I suggested in the introduction, because anarchism is frequently associated with or reduced to terrorism, nihilism, and antireligious atheism, many are reticent to take anarchist activists and thinkers seriously. Since in the modern world, especially the American context, religious awakening and sociopolitical revolution have gone hand-in-hand, anarchists do a disservice to their revolutionary cause by neglecting religiously motivated anarchism, in that this neglect facilitates the common misunderstanding of anarchism. In other words, the neglect of certain varieties of the general anarchist tradition reinforces problematic assumptions about anarchism and makes it more difficult than it needs to be to make anarchism an attractive option for large segments of the population. By focusing on religiously motivated expressions of nonviolent anarchism, I hope that I have made a case for dispensing with at least a few of the reductive understandings of anarchism. Such reductions or caricatures obscure the character of our normative political philosophical options and thus impede constructive normative exchange and debate about possible viable action in the face of an unsatisfactory and unjust status quo.

As more attention is given to anarchist thought, I anticipate that not only will the many caricatures likely be dispensed with. Several of the bases on which theorists tend to reject anarchism will also be called into question. For example, it is common for liberal and republican political theorists to reject anarchism based on a claim about the need for social order. But as far as I am concerned, such rejections often fall short on account of their being predicated on two debatable assumptions or claims about the modern territorial state and a related mistaken belief about anarchism itself. To examine anarchist theory necessarily entails reassessing these kinds of assumptions and beliefs.

With respect to the first assumption about the state, many persons maintain that the territorial state is desirable or necessary. Many if not most persons who proceed from this assumption about the state's necessity tend to downplay the territorial state's role as an oppressive and repressive entity and thus neglect the major criticism of the state forwarded by anarchist social critics. As I have already intimated, Thoreau, Day, and Rustin (especially during his radical pacifist phase) contended that territorial states actually foster nationalism and racism, mostly in service of capitalism, in order to make persons into instruments of oppression and repression. Ruling elites

employ the state apparatus in order to transform subjects into objects. This objectification (process) is extended indefinitely: one set of tools (police or soldiers) is employed by ruling elites in order to oppress and repress another set of tools (workers and dissidents). The territorial state, as a type or form of political organization, is problematic from a moral perspective because of the way in which it systematically interferes in the lives of persons in order to force persons to be or become agents of domination. (Again, it is the fact that the state operates in this fashion that makes principled noncooperation or disobedience an effective means by which to interrupt the workings of the unjust machine, as Thoreau puts it.)

It is undoubtedly possible to argue for the necessity of the territorial state and also acknowledge the way in which territorial states function as entities that protect the interests of ruling elites (with violence or the threat of violence). Persons who take up this stance sometimes regard the territorial state as a necessary evil, which brings us to the second problematic assumption about the state that often buttresses criticisms or the rejection of anarchism. Ordinarily, theorists who acknowledge the state's role in sustaining unjust conditions and nonetheless reject anarchism do so based on the (implicit) assumption that the modern territorial state is the only viable type of political organization.

It is easy to appreciate why persons might assume this, given how pervasive modern states are in the affairs of most societies, how much they affect the lives of most persons, and the degree to which we presently depend on goods that state agencies produce. Nonetheless, as a practical and theoretical matter, the territorial state is not the only feasible type of political or governmental organization. More to the point, as simple or as obvious as it might seem, it is imperative to explicitly acknowledge that the territorial state is not the only possible source of law and order, even if we concede—which strong anarchists do not—that territorial states contribute to just social conditions rather than perpetuate a multiplicity of injustices. To assume that the state is the only viable type of political organization is to unnecessarily constrain our imagination and it is therefore an assumption that must be challenged.

It is also an assumption that connects directly to the common misconception about anarchism that I mentioned earlier. In this work, I have presented what probably strikes some as a problematic conception of anarchism. Distinguishing between strong anarchists and weak anarchists, I have indicated that in practice most consistent strong anarchists advocate for the establishment of decentralized and nonviolent or noncoercive (or at least minimally violent or coercive) political organizations or institutional practices. As I have noted already, the fact that this is the case deserves greater attention than it has received, since it calls attention to the fact that anarchism is not best thought of as a rejection of political organization or government *per se*. Articulating the matter somewhat ironically, I have insisted

that anarchism can actually be thought of as a type of political organization or a norm with which to evaluate and identify morally acceptable forms of organization. Because few critics of anarchism acknowledge this fact, much criticism of anarchism actually fails to respond to what I take to be the fundamental contentions or aspirations presented by most anarchists.

There is a dialectical and paradoxical relationship between the neglect, misunderstanding, and mischaracterization of anarchist theory and the neglect or portrayal of anarchist experimentation and disobedience. So, it is not simply that persons misunderstand anarchist theory, or more particularly, anarchist ideas as they are presented in writing. Persons also fail to appreciate the character of anarchist sociopolitical experiments. For, many of the theoretically informed anarchist experiments underway across the globe are neither given the attention that they deserve nor accurately portrayed when they are discussed.

There are several factors that might help explain this neglect and misunderstanding. Part of it has to do with the fact that many persons simply take no interest in anarchism and base their views on secondary accounts of anarchism. But this does not explain why the caricatures and reductions exist in the first place. My sense is that one must take into consideration how our predispositions and biases inform our neglect and misunderstandings. To understand why anarchism has been interpreted and described as it has been, one must recognize that many persons, particularly in America, are predisposed to suppose that there are no practically viable alternatives to existing institutional arrangements. For better or worse, our notions of what is possible are shaped by dominant narratives that reinforce our sense that the status quo is either inevitable or nearly the best that we should or can hope for in good faith.

Critical theorists since Marx have referred to these dominant narratives, that is, conceptions of reality, as ruling ideologies. These ideologies shape consciousness or lead to what we might refer to as a particular frame of mind. In our era, the predominant frame of mind leads people to conceptualize the earth's terrain in the light of the political geographical boundaries accepted by the political leaders of the political units with the most advanced and organized military forces. But not only do territorial states claim a monopoly on the earth's territory, they claim a monopoly on justice on the earth. As most would agree, in popular thought and political theory, the existence of the territorial state, particularly in its representational democratic form, is taken for granted. And among most contemporary political theorists, justice, to invoke Alain Badiou, is posited as a relation to the state.

Anarchist theory and praxis, of course, challenges the territorial state order on exactly these points. To begin, at a basic level, anarchist experimentation and disobedience, such as Thoreau's and Day's principled withdrawal or quasisecession, challenge the territorial state's claim to a monopoly on the earth's terrain. In addition to challenging the state's monopoly on the earth's

soil, anarchist experiments and disobedience represent a challenge to the territorial state's claim to a monopoly on justice on planet earth (just as the Black Panthers and Zapatistas challenge the state's claim to a monopoly on organized violence).

As I alluded to earlier, the predominant way of thinking about geography, justice, and social reality generally speaking undermines our capacity to wholly appreciate the character and significance of anarchist experimentation and disobedience in that the predominant way of thinking shapes how anarchist experimentation and disobedience are described. Persons who are committed to alternative social practices, such as founding anarchist communities or communes, are routinely and even predictably described (or dismissed) as "unrealistic," "naïve," "other-worldly," "freaks," "utopian," and so on. So, when anarchists are not simply ignored, they are mocked or subjected to name-calling. In truth, many anarchists take these labels as compliments, and so the point here is not to condemn mockery. Rather it is to draw attention to the way in which this kind of name-calling functions to shape discourse and thus our orientation toward certain social agents and objects of inquiry. Name-calling of this sort is meant to preclude conversation rather than initiate it. It is a stand-in for analysis rather than an invitation for analysis. Ironically, name-callers of the kind that I have in mind are often name-callers precisely because they hope to avoid (perhaps unconsciously) confronting certain facts about reality, namely social injustice and our complicity in it.

In the end, the general response to anarchists is probably the response that we should expect from persons who are conditioned (as we to some extent all are) to assume that no just political thing can exist that does not exist in relation to the territorial state, since existing territorial states have laid claim to the entire earth and to justice on earth. This basic assumption might be described as a facet of *cartographical hegemony*. It is an idea or ideal that stems from certain social practices and in turn plays a role in perpetuating the social practices in question. To the extent that we play a role in perpetuating cartographical hegemony, we impede the realization of alternative social practices by discouraging imagination and experimentation. It is a role that radical activists and intellectuals in the coming years must refuse to play and must discourage others from playing.

Although anarchist thought is not a panacea and has its gaps, tensions, and perhaps even contradictions, as is true of all theoretical orientations, since anarchism is so little understood, it is at present difficult to have a fruitful debate about the strengths and weaknesses of anarchist thought. Such a debate is probably a long way off and will become possible only once anarchism as a normative political philosophy is better understood. Once a larger number of theorists adequately understand the varieties of anarchism, the door will open for discussions about substantive disagreements and more constructive comparisons of anarchist thinkers with critics of anarchism or

persons who do not explicitly accept anarchism, and more sober evaluations of anarchist praxis. In fact, comparative analysis is one path to the improved understanding that I contend is needed.

With this in mind, going forward, it will behoove anarchist theorists to identify nonanarchist theorists, philosophies, or traditions that share commonalities with anarchism. Comparative analysis of this sort will involve both explicating anarchism in terms that reveal how much anarchism shares in common with ostensibly rival theories and interpreting the given rival theories in a way that brings to the fore elements of those theories that complement or are compatible with anarchism. There are at least three ways in which an anarchist theorist or student of anarchism might approach these ostensibly competing theories. First, one might make a strong claim and assert that, given a particular theorist's normative commitments, the theorist can actually be said to put forward a vision that is consistent with certain brands of anarchism. Alternatively, one might make a weaker claim and simply suggest that the given theorist presents a vision and develops concepts in a way that might facilitate the refinement of arguments for an anarchist ethic or the evaluation of anarchist praxis. Finally, one might, of course, attempt to combine the two above approaches.

For an abbreviated yet concrete example of how such an argument or reflection might go, I can briefly discuss Hannah Arendt's political philosophy in a way that illustrates why it might be an especially fecund place for anarchists to turn. Based on Arendt's criticisms of Thoreau that were canvassed in Chapter 1, one might imagine that Arendt and anarchists conceive of social life in ways that are irreconcilable. Yet, I think that an anarchist theorist might offer an interpretation of Arendt that shows that Arendt's normative vision is closer to certain expressions of anarchism than one might at first suppose. Wholly appreciating this, of course, is possible only insofar as one proceeds with the conception of anarchism that I have endeavored to explicate in this text.

The promise of Arendt's conception of politics for anarchist theorists is especially evident in her reflection in *On Revolution*, where she spells out her normative political vision through an interpretation of the American Revolution or the events surrounding it. Resisting the tendency among political philosophers and social theorists in the mid-twentieth century to conflate violence, power, and politics, Arendt insisted that politics properly understood transcends violence. She predicated this claim on a particular understanding of the difference between violence and power. To Arendt, the denial of this distinction has led and leads many theorists to misunderstand the character of revolutions and to miss the meaning of politics per se. (Consistent with this, on one level, Arendt's reflection on the American Revolution is meant to demonstrate how power and authority are distinct from one another and from violence and to show how the former two can be lost without violence; thereby a revolution itself, properly understood, does

not require violence even if revolutionary situations are often accompanied by it.) It is not a stretch to say that one of Arendt's principal contributions to twentieth-century political thought was the way in which she held fast to the distinction between power and violence, which is one of the reasons why her thought is pertinent for anarchists.²

Arendt's conceptions of the political realm and power are tied to her understanding of freedom. In *On Revolution*, as elsewhere, Arendt asserts that freedom is the freedom to participate in the political realm. Participation in the political realm entails getting together and making and keeping promises that pertain to the common good. Power is the fruit of participation. In consequence, for Arendt, political freedom is expressed when people get together and make and keep mutual promises that have to do with public goods.

Bona fide political action, then, presupposes reciprocity and mutuality—equality. It is precisely this, if Arendt is correct, that American revolutionaries seemed to realize. Three long quotes bring together why Arendt finds this so significant and points to how considering Arendt's thought might be edifying for anarchist theorists. According to Arendt,

The unique and all-decisive distinction between the settlements of North America and all other colonial enterprises was that only the British emigrants had insisted, from the very beginning, that they constitute themselves into "civil bodies politic." These bodies, moreover, were not conceived as governments, strictly speaking; they did not imply rule and the division of people into rulers and ruled. . . . These new bodies politic were "political societies," and their great importance for the future lay in the formation of a political realm that enjoyed power and was entitled to claim rights without possessing or claiming sovereignty.³

Moreover, Arendt suggests that American revolutionaries recognized and maintained that

Power comes into being only if and when men join themselves together for the purpose of action, and it will disappear when, for whatever reason, they disperse and desert one another. Hence, binding and promising, combining and covenanting are the means by which power is kept in existence.⁴

For the American revolutionaries,

Power [that] rested on reciprocity and mutuality . . . was real power and legitimate, whereas the so-called power of kings or princes or aristocrats, because it did not spring from mutuality but, at best, rested only on consent, was spurious and usurped.⁵

All of this is of note for our purposes in that Arendt echoes self-described anarchist theorists on fundamental points. As a practical matter, there is little difference between what Arendt refers to as “political societies” and the political entities that most strong anarchists are interested in bringing into fruition. In fact, Arendt can be taken to provide support for strong anarchists who hope to build or found political associations on the basis of universal mutual consent (and thus disperse power and authority so as to do away with a distinctive ruling class), since, as should be clear, in what Arendt calls “political societies,” persons’ political obligations are derived from promises that they have made.⁶ In sum, Arendt suggests that only mutual consent can create fully legitimate political power and obligations.⁷

Arendt makes this explicit with her invocation of the idea of a “horizontal social contract,” which she contrasts with “vertical social contracts.” Arendt complains that with a vertical social contract, the type proposed by Thomas Hobbes, a person surrenders his or her “rights and powers to either government or the community” and resigns his or her “power to some higher authority and consents to be ruled in exchange for a reasonable protection of his life and property.”⁸ Vertical social contracts, Arendt tells us, are antithetical to action qua *mutual* promising. Vertical contracts might ensure physical security. But vertical contracts comprise exchanges that undermine the possibility of freedom or veritable political action.

For the above reasons, Arendt prefers horizontal contracting. According to Arendt, American revolutionaries, namely New Englanders, did too. They entered into horizontal contracts as opposed to vertical contracts on account of a commitment to mutuality and reciprocity. They preferred mutual promises because they appreciated that, with mutual promises, the contracting parties’ powers are mutually multiplied and amplified rather than restricted. Describing horizontal contracts and mutual promising, Arendt intimates, “As far as the individual person is concerned, it is obvious that he gains as much power by the system of mutual promises as he loses by his consent to a monopoly of power in the ruler.”⁹ So, the horizontal contract presupposes and implements a vision of equality, whereas vertical contracting undermines equality by institutionalizing rulership, that is, the division between the ruler and the ruled.

Insofar as we recognize that anarchism does not entail the rejection of government or political organization per se, it should be evident how anarchism relates to or might be related to visions spelled out by ostensibly antianarchist or nonanarchist philosophers and theorists such as Hannah Arendt. I would certainly have to say more than I have in order to make wholly clear how this is the case. But, at the very least, it should be apparent that an anarchist might interpret and develop Arendt’s normative vision in ways that would enrich anarchist theory and perhaps make anarchism more attractive to certain contingents than it might otherwise be. As one of

the twentieth century's leading champions of political imagination, Arendt sought to transform our perception of sociopolitical reality by altering our understanding of what certain terms mean. By calling into question how we communicate about human interaction, Arendt prods us to imagine the past and present anew, which liberates us to think differently about future possibilities. In the words of Jonathan Schell, Arendt's approach was to "boldly take sides in debates on the meanings of certain words."¹⁰ After clarifying or fixing the meaning of certain terms she would offer "a new interpretation of historical events" and thus a new understanding of the present and what it requires of us.¹¹

Arendt not only reconsiders the meaning of revolution in order to provide an account of how revolutions can be effectuated without employing violent means. She also suggests, by melding her idea of mutual promising with the idea of the horizontal contract, a fresh way for theorists to think about the concrete form that anarchist sociopolitical practices might take. Through her creative interpretation of American history, Arendt aspired to provoke a reconsideration of our presuppositions about what the political represents and how we might attain political freedom. One of the enduring messages that Arendt communicates in *On Revolution* is that in practice it is profoundly difficult to preserve the kind of freedom and equality realized among certain early Americans. If Arendt turned to the American revolutionaries in part to celebrate their wise preference for the horizontal contract, she also turned to them in order to bemoan their failure to create political institutions that facilitate the kind of active participation that is necessary to preserve the freedom and power of the people.

To Arendt, the American Revolution was only halfway successful in that the emergence of representational constitutionalism undermined the political participation of the demos. That is, in postrevolutionary America—the United States of America—"the people" were largely excluded from participating in the political sphere. Much of Arendt's writing throughout the 1960s in one way or another touched on the question of how to spur the kind of active (participatory political) life that she deemed necessary for the realization of freedom—and even the full expression of human personality—that she believed the American revolutionaries had envisioned and temporarily embodied.¹²

For any future people to realize freedom, Arendt thought that they would have to understand what it means to be free. Arendt explicates the meaning of freedom by juxtaposing it with liberation. To confuse liberation with freedom is one way to undermine the viability of any revolutionary praxis. Liberation from oppression, Arendt tells us, is not the same thing as freedom. Liberation is related to freedom, yet the state of being liberated is not identical with the state of being free. According to Arendt, for oppressed and repressed peoples liberation is a precondition to the realization of

freedom. Once realized, freedom (as power) becomes the thing that keeps repression and oppression at bay. To be free, persons must be willing to be constantly active. This is because, for Arendt, the only way to secure freedom is by generating and sustaining power. Because political power is the effect of mutual promises, and since mutual promising brings persons together and this togetherness is constitutive of power, we must continuously make and keep promises. In other words, to be free, we must (voluntarily) remain (active) together. In the end, Arendt draws her many distinctions primarily so as to highlight her sense of the demanding character of the authentic political life. It is perhaps on this point that Arendt most agrees with contemporary anarchists and has the most to teach us.

In this book, I have concerned myself with making sense of the religious-ethical visions of three American radicals who insist that there is no rest for those who would be free or for those who would be just. Neither freedom nor justice can be inherited, say these radicals. And even if freedom can be inherited, from where we stand, it is difficult to disagree with Thoreau. "We have used up all our inherited freedom. If we would save our lives, we must fight for them."¹³

Religious radicals in the anarchist tradition insist that the first line of struggle is the struggle with (in) ourselves. We cannot change the world without changing ourselves, including how we describe our social milieu. For Thoreau, Day, and Rustin, to describe reality, including God, the self, and social institutions, is to make or remake it or at least fundamentally transform how we experience reality. In other words, the struggle for freedom is one that begins with self-examination and self-reformation. The self-struggle must be accompanied by an awakening to the value of other human persons as individuals.

One wellspring of social justice movement and authentically revolutionary praxis is properly valuing oneself and others. It is persons awakened to the value of *all* individual human persons, then, who will usher in an age in which justice has been extended by at least one step. This is because it is such persons who will find the status quo unacceptable. In Thoreauvian terms, we might say that a new (more just) world will be a discovery of *conscience*. Conscience prompts our empathetic impulse and provokes visions and dreams of a freer world—freedom dreams, as Robin Kelley and Eddie Glaude Jr have put it. And as Thoreau put it, a step in the direction of a more desirable world is to announce the kind of world that would command our respect. We must share our freedom dreams before we can realize them.

It might be difficult to imagine taking any revolutionary steps given the present state of our world. Although we have failed to be awake, we should hope that we are living in the end of an ice age—an age of callous hearts and political apathy. Indeed, as Cornel West notes, "Some awaking is taking place. People are becoming more alert. The sleepwalkers are beginning to

wake just a little bit. Any such awakening is like falling in love: you care so much that you can't help yourself." What we need now, says West, is "leaders—namely, each one of us—to fall awake in this way."¹⁴ As we fall awake, which is nothing other than falling in love with the right things, we will experience a blossoming of conscience, faith, and imagination. *Let us be awake.*