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jes' folks revolutionary printers commune

Theodor W. Adorno, 1903-1969

Hans Gerth

When Theodor Adorno became a professor of Philosophy at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University in Frankfurt in the 1930s, he became the colleague of Max Horkheimer, his lifelong friend and companion. In 1933, with Nazism in power, 47% of German university teachers were ousted, in Frankfurt 59%. Adorno and Horkheimer, after some time in France, found refuge in this country and established the Institute for Social Research in affiliation with Columbia University. The *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, edited by Horkheimer, bespeaks from the outset of a lively interest in every field of the social sciences, theoretical and practice problems of research and substance. A wide circle of contributors from diverse countries assured an extraordinarily extensive coverage of literature and developments.

After World War II, Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Frankfurt. Horkheimer for a time became Rektor of Frankfurt University, the city of Frankfurt rebuilt the Social Science Institute, and Adorno was elected president of the German Sociological Society. He died only shortly after having retired from teaching. He has published over the years 24 books, and one in English with Else Brunswick and others, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York, 1950), made Adorno well known among social psychologists. The flood of over 1500 follow-up studies shows that the book made a stir indeed. Most of Adorno's publications, however, are not located in psychology, but rather in philosophy, or in music and literature.

These dual interests enabled Adorno to assist Thomas Mann in his work *Dr. Faustus*. He served as a 'ghost writer' and contributed some pages and paragraphs bespeaking of a professional knowledge of music. Adorno, in the 1920s, studied with Anton von Weber, one of the foremost disciples of Schoenberg. Rudolf Kolisch, for several decades the leader of the Pro Arte Quartett at the University of Wisconsin, was a friend of Adorno since common Vienna days during the 1920s. During the early 1930s the Kolisch Quartett stayed in Frankfurt and cooperated with Adorno. They would perform compositions of Schoenberg and his school and slowly build up such works from an analytical presentation of their themes and their transformations to the uninterrupted final presentation over Radio Frankfurt.

The last published philosophical work of Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt/M, 1966), represents the summa of his philosophical thought. It is the most comprehensive and incisive discussion of the philosophical metaphysical tendencies since the 1920s. Like Georg Lukacs in his book *History and Class*

Consciousness, Adorno seeks to establish the connection between reified phenomena in social life (this refers to the transformation of social historical phenomena into things and invariant categories of nature) and central features of classical German idealism. Adorno shows linkages between ontological projects of existentialist philosophers and unfolding experience. Naturally, the themes ranging from anxiety and care to 'the principle of hope' (utopia) after the repeated disillusionments of our time and the man-made hell of Auschwitz require intellectual tools which go beyond what Lukacs, in the early 1920s, could use. Still, with Lukacs, Adorno learned to see to what extent reification affected central features of classical German philosophy from Kant to Marx.

We may briefly mention the figures whose works meant most to Adorno. They are Walter Benjamin, Franz Kafka, Valery Proust, and Arnold Schoenberg and his circle.

The central impulse of Adorno's thought would seem to be to avoid and to critically void illusionist invariants, be they called 'human nature', 'Folk-spirit' (national character), or 'Being' a la Heidegger. It is a rare and special feature of Adorno's reasoning to bring an exact language analysis to bear upon the critical enterprise. What seems a pervasive drift of modern society Adorno sees as decay; the central effect of modern art--melancholia.

In a commentary, written decades after his composition of (Stefan) George's *Entrückung*, Arnold Schoenberg has praised the poem as a prophetic anticipation of the sentiments of space navigators. By naively therewith pressing down one of his most significant pieces to the level of science fiction he acted unwittingly out of the distress of metaphysics. (Negative Dialektik, p. 389)

Schoenberg died in 1951. We do not know whether Adorno saw man setting foot on the moon. It may be that the progressive disenchantment of man's world with its extension beyond the terrestrial confines gives some justification to Schoenberg's point. Perhaps, he refused in his naivete to spiritualize the text the way Bible editors of the Baroque period elucidated the collection of love poems and songs of King Solomon.

contents of current number include:

- Karl Marx, 'Einleitung to the Grundrisse'
 Andrea Calzolari, 'Structure and Superstructure in the Thought of Antonio Gramsci'
 Paul Piccone, 'Students' Protest, Class-Structure and Ideology'
 Jim Hansen, 'Hook and Liberalism'
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A Reading of Marx



For some years a debate has been raging throughout the European left, particularly in France, over the work of Louis Althusser and his comrades of the Marxist-Leninist Study Circle.(1) What follows is a sympathetic attempt to indicate the scope and character of Althusser's contribution to Marxism. Because the issues Althusser raises are controversial and far-reaching, discussion of his work will almost certainly enhance the theory and practice of our movement.

It is important that suspicion of Althusser's politics not cut debate short. To be sure, Althusser is a member of the Central Committee of the French Communist Party and it is reported that he was silent on the May-June uprisings and the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Certainly, these political positions figure in any final evaluation of Althusser's Marxism. But it should not be assumed in advance that they necessarily detract from his theoretical contributions.(2) To the contrary, I will argue that Althusser, though not a strategist or tactician of consequence for our movement, does provide theoretical insights of the greatest importance for informing the kind of thinking out of which strategy and tactics, and questions of political organization, can be fruitfully discussed.

In fact, I would maintain that Althusser's reading of Marx represents the first major contribution to Marxist theory to emerge free from the stultifying influence of the dogmatism characteristic, especially, of the Moscow-oriented parties. This influence pervades the work even of the great anti-Stalinists. Thus for writers as diverse as Sartre, Lefebvre, Block, Adorno, Marcuse and, although they never broke with Stalinism officially, also Gramsci and his school and the early Lukacs -- the return to Hegel and the early writings of Marx is motivated, at least in part, by the necessity to protest against the mechanistic and deterministic character of official Marxism.(3) Though his position is orthodox in comparison to most Hegelian Marxists, Althusser is really neither a Stalinist nor an anti-Stalinist. Rather, in its philosophical scope and its practical implications, Althusser's work marks a return to genuine Leninism, to the grand style of theoretical Marxism all but obscured and forgotten since the advent of official orthodoxy.

Althusser enjoins us to make a fresh start: to return to Capital, 'not with the eyes of those who have read it for us', not as commentators, but as 'readers'. The first volume of *Lire le Capital* opens with a remarkable analysis of what it means 'to read'. We must first of all break with the 'religious style' of reading, Althusser cautions: Capital is not The Great Open Book where everything is to be found clearly and definitively. To read is not to expound on a text's literal formulations; it is emphatically not to comment. Rather, to read Capital, for Althusser, involves a two-fold project of reconstruction. On the one hand, the claim is that Capital presents a radically new kind of scientific theory, different from prevailing scientific theories and also, particularly, from Hegelian philosophy. This new theory, historical materialism, must first of all be reconstructed and elaborated; not just as an alternative to bourgeois political economy, but as the theory of revolutionary practice, of the practice that is changing the world. This project, which is difficult because Marx himself was not always conscious of his own methodology,(4) and because Marx often expressed himself in what, for Althusser, is an inappropriate vocabulary, borrowed from Hegel(5), provides the starting-point for the second task of reconstruction: that of examining the conditions for the possibility of historical materialism as a revolutionary theory and practice.(6) This second, epistemological function is precisely the universal task of philosophy. Thus Kantian philosophy, to take the most outstanding example, is consciously an investigation of the conditions for the possibility of scientific knowledge, moral experience, and esthetic judgment -- each conceived in the ideological fashion of the then rising bourgeoisie. And since historical materialism is a new science, it finds a new philosophy which integrates its findings and establishes its possibility. Just as Kantianism provided a general theoretical nexus, a unifying and integrating world-view for the various theoretical and practical undertakings of the bourgeois class, Marxism calls forth a philosophy to give expression to the general movement of the proletariat. But although the philosophical task in each case is the same, the result is qualitatively different; for in accounting for historical materialism, a true and adequate science of society, Marxist philosophy will be correspondingly true and adequate, and therefore radically different from previous, ideological philosophies. Thus Althusser calls Marxist philosophy 'theory' (Theorie) and reserves the term 'philosophy' for earlier, particularly Hegelian-inspired philosophies. In the Marxist tradition, theory is the traditional province of 'dialectical materialism'. And however much the latter has degenerated and fallen into disgrace in the hands of Stalin and his official philosophers, the philosophical program itself remains valid and, indeed, urgent. It is this program that Lenin himself acknowledged and even attempted in *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*.(4) Althusser resumes the task.

THE EARLY MARX

To read *Capital* we are obliged to reread all of Marx and also his forerunners -- especially Feuerbach. In this respect, Althusser is in agreement with the Hegelian Marxists. But for the latter, *Capital* is not essentially philosophical in its own right; it does not found a radically new philosophy. Rather, it is an extension and perhaps also an elaboration of a philosophical perspective presented most clearly in the early work. The 1844 Paris Manuscripts and not *Capital* is, on this view, the main source for Marx's philosophical position. For Althusser and his colleagues, however, the texts themselves reveal a profound break, an 'epistemological rupture' (coupure épistémologique) separating the early work, inspired by Hegel and Feuerbach, from the mature establishment of historical materialism as a rigorous science. This rupture marks the emergence of a science of society from a pre-scientific philosophy, of mature Marxism from Left Hegelianism.

Historically, the break is situated in the middle of the 1840s and is depicted as a sharp and total divide.⁽⁸⁾ Among the more celebrated works in the one camp fall the 1844 Manuscripts, the essay *On the Jewish Question*, and the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*; in the other, *Capital* and the notes that form the *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie*. The *German Ideology* and the *Theses on Feuerbach* are products of the break, and therefore contain elements of both conceptual schemes.

The early works are philosophical or pre-theoretical and, therefore, on Althusser's view, ideological. Their debt is to Hegel and Feuerbach. What Marx does, in effect, is to give a concrete, historical interpretation to Hegelian notions, to sociologize the Hegelian dialectic.⁽⁹⁾ To effect this interpretation, Marx turns to bourgeois political economy. Thus in the 1844 Manuscripts, the speculative category of human essence is assimilated to the economic category of work, and property relations are depicted. Just as, for Hegel, progress towards freedom is the history of alienation and its overcoming, so also for Marx. The difference is just that, for Marx, alienation is no longer a condition of consciousness, but a description of the real experience of man in concrete social relations; it is the general form of all real contradictions in capitalist society. The overcoming of alienation must be correspondingly social; it must be a state of affairs in the real world, and not just its reflection in consciousness. Hence, the form of freedom - of real, social freedom - is not, as for Hegel, Absolute Knowledge, but Communism. Communism is the real fulfillment of the Hegelian system; and the proletariat, the agent of communism, the real heir of classical German philosophy.

In a closely reasoned essay in the first volume of *Lire le Capital*, Jacques Ranciere argues that this Hegelianized version of political economy, with its central reliance on the notion of human essence is ultimately Kantian in inspiration. Kantian ethics, which affirms the dignity and the moral autonomy of the agent, implicitly affirms the reconciliation of man with his essence. It is, in fact, just this implication that the Hegelian Philosophy of Right makes explicit, and that the Left Hegelians adopt. What Marx shows in the early works is how this ethical imperative is in contradiction with the real economic and social conditions of capitalism. Thus, Ranciere concludes, the philosophical content of the early works is, in the final analysis, a generalization and historicization of Kantian idealism.

It is this remnant of philosophical idealism, expressed as a vision of human essence drawn from speculative philosophy, that constitutes the 'humanism' of the early works. Althusser's celebrated 'anti-humanism' is nothing more than a denial of this speculative, anthropological philosophy, a rejection of the conceptual scheme of the early works.

'THE OBJECT OF CAPITAL'

What stands on the other side of the epistemological divide, historical materialism, is, for Althusser, a rigorous science, thoroughly distinct from the philosophical speculation of the early works. And like any science, historical materialism rejects philosophical speculation in favor of rigorous investigation aiming to discover lawlike relations between conceptual entities. But what is historical materialism a science of? For Althusser, this is the problem of 'the object of Capital'. Its solution is critical for any genuine reading of Marx.

To deal with this problem, we must first of all be clear as to the character of historical materialism. The texts themselves, on Althusser's view, afford only a starting point; for, as we have seen, Marx himself was often unconscious of his methodology and its implications. Thus a substantial portion of the work of Althusser and his comrades is devoted to the formidable task of presenting and, where necessary, reconstructing historical materialism. And contrary to the Hegelian reading, what Althusser shows is how the object of Capital exhibits a definite logically 'structured' coherence among relatively distinct, though structured, elements.(10) Historical materialism, in other words, is a structured science, and therefore fundamentally different from both the positive, natural sciences and philosophical anthropology. And this theoretically revolutionary character of historical materialism, Althusser maintains, calls forth simultaneously a new sort of philosophical foundation for its possibility. Thus the object of Capital, because it cannot be specified apart from the conditions of its possibility, reveals an essential interdependence between historical and dialectical materialism. The philosophical task, and the scientific one, though distinct, are, on this view, each facets of the same 'theoretical practice' (*pratique theorique*). (11)

Since Capital is, above all, an analysis of 'the laws of motion of capitalist society', the conceptual scheme out of which historical materialism is developed will have to do with making capitalism fully intelligible. This conceptual scheme can be built essentially out of two concepts: forces of material production and social relations of production.(12) The former notion encompasses the whole productive apparatus of society, including the organization of human producers, of labor. The latter denotes the real relations obtaining between individuals, as expressed through the society's conception of property, its juridical institutions, and so forth. The first volume of Capital presents an extended analysis of social relations under capitalism as essentially exchange relations; and of the forces of production as essentially exploitative. Thus we find that labor power, though circulating as a commodity at its exchange value, creates more value than it is worth as a commodity. Labor power is thus the source of surplus value. The theory of surplus value, the key to the understanding of capitalist society, defines the specific interrelation of these concepts for the capitalist mode of production.

Thus, for historical materialism, the principle of correspondence between relations of production and forces of production takes over the central role assigned to alienation in the early works, and establishes the study of capitalist society on a scientific footing. It is important to realize that the relationship exhibited is a structural one, revealed through examination of its object. Historical materialism is therefore not a simple 'reflection' of reality, but a theoretical achievement, a product of theoretical practice. Its adequateness, its correspondence to reality, is likewise conceptual. Materialism, in other words, affirms not only the primacy of reality over thought, but also their distinction. It is the philosophical heir of Spinoza and Descartes, not Hegel. The real and the rational, on Althusser's view, are not to be identified; though of course a principle task for Marxist philosophy, one which Althusser himself undertakes, is to explicate their relationship. (13)

Thus, the argument runs, historical materialism must break radically from Hegelianism in order to maintain its materialist foundation. The object of Capital, the capitalist mode of production, is not intelligible by means of the Hegelian dialectic; it cannot be understood as the complex unfolding of a single structure, developing according to its own contradictions. Instead, historical materialism presupposes an extrinsic relationship between separate structures, intelligible ultimately according to the principle of correspondence between forces and relations of production. It is in this light that Marx's claim to have set the Hegelian dialectic 'right side up' must be understood. The celebrated 'inversion of Hegel', the extraction of the 'rational kernel' from the 'mystic shell' is, at best, a highly misleading metaphor. 'It is inconceivable,' Althusser argues, 'that the essence of the dialectic in Hegel's work should not be contaminated by Hegelian ideology... that the Hegelian ideology should cease to be Hegelian and become Marxist, by a simple, miraculous 'extraction'.' (P.M., p. 103) Method, Althusser maintains, is integral to its object. A method developed for an ideal object, consciousness, cannot be simply transposed to the object of Capital, to the range of phenomena made intelligible by the conceptual scheme of historical materialism. 'The removal of the mystic shell from the rational kernel is an operation that transforms what it abstracts.' (P.M., p. 91)

Thus Marx does not simply apply the Hegelian method to the domain of bourgeois political economy. He has not, as Hegelian Marxists maintain, historicized economics. His achievement is more fundamental. He has founded a new science, with a new object, and discovered a new method. Althusser describes this method as 'dialectical', though not Hegelian, and we will see that he has good reason to do so. Historical materialism is not a positive science like any other. For in it, dialectical notions, finally separated from their ideological content and suitably transformed, play a prominent role.

ANTI-HISTORICISM

For Althusser, the most fundamental error arising out of the Hegelian reading of Marx has to do with the theoretical relation between Marxism and history; with the claim, for example, of Gramsci, that 'Marxism is an absolute historicism'. For the historicist, 'life and reality are history and history alone' (Croce); there is no escape from historical time, no understanding except historical understanding. Thus historicism is pitted against rigorous science and so, for Althusser, is an obstacle to a correct understanding of Marxism. Historical and dialectical materialism, if Althusser is right, must be fundamentally 'anti-historicist'.

Thus Althusser attacks historicism as a philosophical vestige that obscures the Marxist conception of history; it is a consequence, he argues, of an ideological, Hegelian conception of historical time, a conception superseded by historical materialism. For Hegel, history exhibits an homogeneous, ever-unfolding content. At any 'moment', at any break in the historical continuum, both the past and the future are implicit. Just as for ordinary, unreflective consciousness, there is a continuous, homogeneous time whose content is all events, so there is one historical time, and its content is all of history. An event is intelligible only when its place in history is understood. The event is determined by history and can only be understood historically. Though obviously Hegelian in inspiration, Althusser shows how the philosophical roots of this view derive ultimately from Kant, and his conception of time as an a priori form of experience. Temporality, for Kant, is the inner form of all intuitions; it is the most fundamental determination of an idealist epistemology. Thus, like the concept of alienation, the historicist's conception of time is another philosophical remnant, thoroughly contrary to the presuppositions of historical materialism. In rejecting this conception of historical time, historical materialism is 'anti-historicist'.

The conflict between historicism and anti-historicism is, in essence, a conflict between Hegelian and Marxist dialectics. Both Hegel and Marx agree in the possibility of unifying knowledge, of constructing a coherent system dependent upon a set of intelligible organizing principles. They each agree, in other words, on the central philosophical importance of 'totality'. Dialectics, historically, has been the philosophical method whereby a totality becomes intelligible. For Plato and Parmenides, the first great philosophers of totality and the first great dialecticians, the dialectical method was the relatively simple one of 'collection' and 'division'; it was the search for a 'real definition' of the essence of things. The situation with Hegel, though far more complicated, is essentially the same. Reality, to be sure, is no longer 'one-dimensional'; it is a complex of processes arising out of each other with staggering complexity and ramifications. Still the structure is intelligible; thought in *The Phenomenology of Mind* becomes adequate to it.⁽¹⁴⁾ Similarly, dialectical materialism is genuinely dialectical in its affirmation of the unified and intelligible character of its object. But the Marxist concept of 'totality', of the unified whole made intelligible by the dialectical method, is, on Althusser's reading, fundamentally different from Hegel's. And it is in this difference that Marx's anti-historicism, his alternative, scientific view of history, is apparent.

Since historical materialism accounts, among other things, for historical change, for the emergence of capitalism from feudalism and of socialism from capitalism, its conception of totality is naturally interpreted historically. This is, indeed, implicit in most Hegelian Marxists, and is the conscious program of Lukacs in *History and Class Consciousness*. Althusser cautions us against identifying the concept of social totality with the concept of history. Rather, he tells us, 'we must construct the Marxist concept of history, of historical time, apart from the Marxist conception of social totality' (L.C. vol. 2, pp. 43-44), which we will find to be fundamentally different from the Hegelian 'totality'. Althusser advises that we first reconstruct the Marxist conception of 'social totality' in order to grasp the picture historical materialism presents of its object. Then we will be able to reconstruct the Marxist conception of historical time accordingly.

The social totality Marx discovered is, Althusser argues, 'a totality in which unity, far from being the expressive or spiritual unity of Leibniz and Hegel, is constituted by a certain type of complexity; it is a structured unity... formed of what is to be regarded as levels or elements of a relatively autonomous sort' (L.C., vol. 2, p. 37). The whole is a complex, structured unity and not, as for Hegel, a single, unfolding essence. The relatively autonomous units that comprise the whole, relate to one another, Althusser argues, according to specific modes of determination, fixed in the last instance by the economic level. This notion of 'determination in the last instance', perhaps the key to Althusser's reading of Marx, will be discussed below. For the present, it is enough to point out that where the Hegelian totality was simple and homogeneous, the Marxist concept of totality is complex and heterogeneous, though structured.

Each of these heterogeneous elements - whether economic, political, ethical, esthetic, or ideological - is not only relatively autonomous, but also structured in its own right, possessing its own determinations. Thus each level can only be understood in the concrete, through actual historical analysis. It is not possible to see the whole in the part, as for Hegel, by somehow dividing an event's essence. The superstructure is not a pure expression of the economic infrastructure, but has a relatively autonomous existence and must be understood accordingly.(15) Thus the Marxist conception of totality enjoins 'a concrete analysis of concrete situations' such as Marx himself undertook in his historical writings, and such as has characterized correct revolutionary praxis, whether Leninist or Maoist.(16)

Historicism is the Hegelian concept of totality temporalized, represented as having real historical existence. Similarly, the Marxist conception of totality implicitly determines a radically different, profoundly anti-historicist, conception of historical time, what Althusser calls an 'appropriate time' (un temps propre), relatively autonomous, relatively independent of the historical times of the other levels. Thus the conception of a structured totality has as a presupposition the rejection of the Hegelian notion of a continuous and homogeneous time. And this rejection of Hegelian time is tantamount to a rejection of an historicist reading of Marx. For it is no longer enough to situate an event historically to understand it. Rather, we need a conceptual scheme and a developed science, such as we find in *Capital*, capable of rendering it intelligible.

Marxism recognizes a relatively autonomous time for each relatively autonomous structure, and therefore also a relatively autonomous history for each structure. It is not enough to 'understand' the whole; what is required is concrete analysis of each element that figures in the structured totality. Thus Althusser's reading of Marx is profoundly anti-dogmatic; the Marxist view of history, for Althusser, consists essentially in respect for facts. Historicism, on the other hand, threatens to obliterate history's 'facticity'. It is enough, for the historicist, to somehow extract the 'essence' from concrete phenomena. Althusser's contribution is to reveal the idealist foundations of this view of history, and therefore also its reactionary implications. For a revolutionary movement has no room for ideological distortions or simplifications of social and historical reality; it requires, above all, 'the concrete analysis of concrete situations'. Dialectical materialism, on Althusser's reading, enjoins this view of history; it enjoins rigorous scientific investigation capable of guiding revolutionary practice.(17)



CONTRADICTION AND OVER-DETERMINATION

The twin concepts of social totality and historical time reveal 'an accumulation of effective determinations, determined in the last instance by the economic level'. This view is the basis for Althusser's reconstruction of the dialectical notion of contradiction. For dialectical logic is integral to its object. If, as for Hegel, totality were homogeneous, then contradictions could only develop internally. Thus the Hegelian conception of totality leads to the denial of the logical law of identity -- a doctrine carried over into Marxism by Engels, and developed, during the Stalin period, as official orthodoxy. But historical and dialectical materialism show, contrary to the Hegelian view, that social totality and history are heterogeneous, though structured. Thus the Hegelian conception of contradiction as internal to its object must be rejected, and replaced with a view consonant with the Marxist account of society and history. We shall see that this position has enormous practical significance.

It is in this spirit that Althusser reconstructs the situation of the October Revolution in the essay 'Contradiction and Over-Determination' (P.M., pp. 85-129; translated in NLR, 41, Jan/Feb 1967). (18) The revolution, on

Althusser's reading, represents a real break in historical continuity and is, therefore, not intelligible in terms of internal contradictions of the sort Hegel describes. The workers and peasants won in Russia not through the inner workings of some metaphysical essence, but because of a number of relatively distinct and relatively independent circumstances: the war, the collapse of Czarism, the weakness of the Kerensky regime, the availability of the Bolshevik party, and, above all, the tactical genius of Lenin. The situation in Russia in October 1917 was, in short, 'over-determined'. And this situation of over-determinedness, Althusser maintains, is precisely what Marx meant by 'contradiction'.

Thus contradiction, for Althusser, 'is inseparable from the entire social structure, from the relations of all its relatively independent parts... it is, in itself, at its heart, affected by them, determined, and also determining... the diverse levels and diverse elements of the social formation it directs; thus it is said to be 'over-determined' (surdeterminee dans son principe)' (P.M., pp. 99-100). Contrary to Hegel, contradiction for Marx is the result of a specific concatenation of relatively independent causes, determined in the last instance by the economic level. These causes must be studied in their specificity; there is no single master explanation apart from the facts themselves.(19) And apart from concrete analysis, theory will be incapable of guiding practice.

'DETERMINATION IN THE LAST INSTANCE'

If the economy, as analyzed in *Capital*, is itself to be understood as a determinate and relatively autonomous structure, what justification does Althusser have for regarding it as 'determining in the last instance'? What, in other words, gives the economic level its central, theoretical role? This question is crucial for evaluating Althusser's reading of Marx.

To deny that some level is determining in the last instance would be to undermine the possibility of a dialectical understanding of the social totality. Historical materialism would then be a positive science like any other, and dialectical materialism would give way to an empiricist philosophy of science. Althusser is very conscious of this problem and devotes a great deal of attention to it (cf. especially P.M., pp. 155f). The notion of 'determination in the last instance' requires a thoroughgoing reconstruction of many basic philosophical categories, particularly the notion of causality. Only then can the central role of the economic level be accounted for, not as a metaphysical principle, but in a manner consonant with the interpretation of historical materialism as a rigorous science. For this purpose, Althusser appeals to the results of French 'structuralism' -- to the anthropology of Levi-Strauss and, above all, the interpretation of psychoanalysis offered by Jacques Lacan.(20) Thus we have, for example, Althusser's ingenious account of 'structural causality'; construed, following Spinoza, as 'the immanence of the cause in its effects'. (cf. L.C., vol. 2, pp. 170-71). Structuralism provides a non-empiricist philosophy of science, a way of making the philosophical connections presupposed by the dialectical method. It provides, for Althusser, an explicit rendering of the philosophical categories presupposed by Marx.

Whether structuralism really does save Marxism from empiricism - and I think that in Althusser's hands it does - our original problem remains: granted that Marxist philosophy requires a 'determination in the last instance', why does the economic level play this role? The obvious answer is that historical materialism requires it, that Marxist philosophy, conceived as a description of the conditions for the possibility of historical materialism, must take the economic level as its most basic foundation. But this answer is not entirely satisfactory. We recall that Kant, who was the first to consciously seek to determine the conditions for the possibility of scientific knowledge, of the science of his day, attempted a 'transcendental deduction' of his categories. It was not enough, for Kant, to show that the categories are presupposed by science but also that, in fact, cognition necessitates these structures. Something like a transcendental deduction of this kind is attempted by Marx in the first part of the German Ideology, before the complete maturation of the science of historical materialism. The starting point of this 'deduction' was, as for Sartre in the Critique of Dialectical Reason, the conflict between man and nature 'in a milieu of scarcity'. The production of the means of material existence, the reproduction of life, is man's most fundamental response to this aspect of the human condition, and so man's 'mode of production' determines his material, and therefore also, his mental life. This starting point is, of course, 'anthropological', and ultimately, if Althusser is right, incompatible with historical materialism. But perhaps in stressing this incomparability, Althusser has overlooked an important connection: a connection that alone can make his programmatic reading of Marx, his notion of determination in the last instance, entirely adequate. Althusser has shown the radical break between the conceptual scheme of historical materialism and Marx's early philosophical anthropology, an 'epistemological rupture' separates science from philosophy. But perhaps there is nevertheless a connection between the philosophy of historical materialism, dialectical materialism, and the anthropological situation depicted in the early work. We need, in short, to trace more carefully than Althusser has yet attempted the philosophical space between the German Ideology and Capital.

THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY

Ideology is an important aspect of the social totality. And like the other elements of that totality, the ideological level is relatively independent, determined only in the last instance by the economic organization of society. Thus Althusser argues in 'Marxism and Humanism' that ideological thought will persist in classless societies, and can figure prominently in the construction of a socialist society and the evolution of socialist man.(21) It is in this light that 'humanism' finally is vindicated: not as a philosophy of history, but as an ideological antidote to a rigid, stultifying dogmatism.

This result, despite its conclusions on humanism, lends itself to the charge of 'theoretical Stalinism'. Science and theory are the property of an elite; ideology, meanwhile, directs the masses; and so, it is argued, Althusser's politics intrude on his thought, after all. I would argue, however, not only that this interpretation is unfair, but that Althusser's view of the role of ideology, appearance to the contrary, is profoundly anti-elitist and democratic.

To see why, it will be well to examine the consequences of doing away with the distinction Althusser draws between rigorous science and ideology. This is just the position of Hegelian Marxism for which all 'science', whatever its claim to rigor, is still ideology. (22) And it is no accident that the most brilliant and insightful of the Hegelian Marxists, Lukacs, in his essay on 'Class Consciousness', presents the only respectable philosophical justification of Stalinist practice. Under the influence of bourgeois ideology (including its scientific ideology), the argument runs, the consciousness of the actual proletariat, whatever its historical mission, is subject to deformation. Thus the Reason of the class, the class-for-itself, is not manifest in the empirical proletariat, but in its political arm -- the party. And so the consciousness on which the realization of socialism depends, is the consciousness of a group of individuals -- for, of course, the party must be led. And it is surely consistent with this position, as in fact was claimed in Russia, that Reason should find its embodiment, at least temporarily, in a Leader who substitutes himself for the ruling group. Lukacs shows, in effect, how the dissolution of science into a greater Reason is the beginning of Stalinism. This is precisely the legacy of Hegelian Marxism, whatever its historical role as antagonist to official orthodoxy. Camus was not wrong in *The Rebel* to describe the Hegelian Reason as a 'rational terror'.

Science, on the other hand, is eminently democratic: its insights and results are available to anyone, whether party leader or rank-and-file militant. It cannot in principle become the property of an elite. It is the conscience of the left.

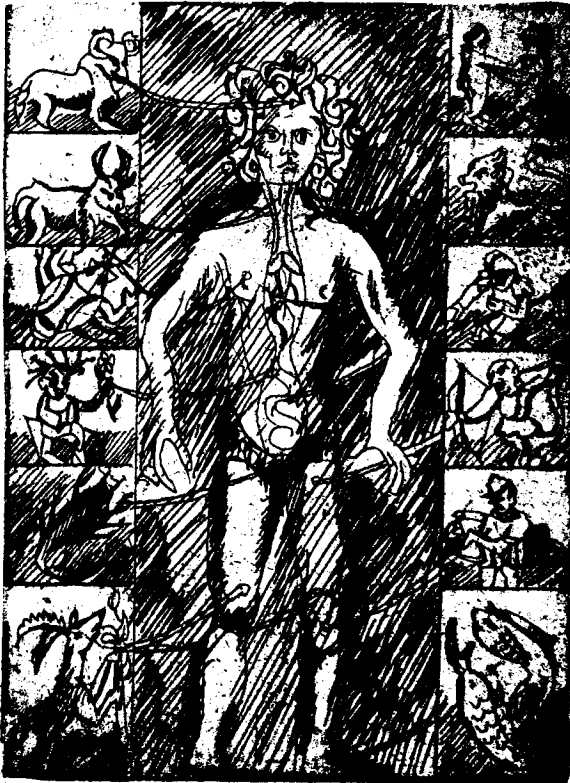
THEORY AND PRACTICE

The early Marx 'solved' the problem of the relation of theory to practice by dissolving the distinction in a vast, Hegelian synthesis. The goal of classical German philosophy was Freedom -- the overcoming of the alienated consciousness. But consciousness, for Marx, is just an aspect of man's struggle with nature to produce the conditions of his emancipation; consciousness, in short, is determined by life. Hence, the condition for overcoming spiritual alienation, for attaining Absolute Knowledge, is just the overcoming of real, social alienation. The proletariat, the historical agent of social revolution, thus completes the task begun by German philosophy. The proletariat realizes philosophy by fulfilling its mission. This is the meaning of the justly famous eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach: 'The philosophers have merely understood the world in different ways; the point however is to change it.' To understand the world, we must change it: the arm of criticism literally passes into the criticism of arms. Theoretical activity becomes revolutionary praxis.

In rejecting, as ideological, this reading of Marx, we must also reject this account of the relation of theory to practice. And with good reason: for in obliterating the distinction between theory and practice, the early Marx would seem to preclude the kind of directed, practical activity that, for example, Lenin prescribes in *What Is To Be Done?*, or that motivated Marx's own mature researches into the workings of capitalist society. Theory and practice must be related organically, but neither can be efficacious if the distinction between them is not maintained. To establish socialism, we need more than 'the cunning of Reason' on our side: we need to be conscious of our situation, and able to direct our practice accordingly.

This Leninist view, which for Althusser is also Marx's view in *Capital*, is implicit in the portrayal of historical materialism as a rigorous science. The object of *Capital*, we have seen, is not the object of bourgeois political economy, but something radically new. That object ultimately is practice (cf. P.M., p. 167) -- the practice that has brought the world out of barbarism and is moving it towards a classless society. Historical materialism makes that practice intelligible; it is the science of practice. And because in *Capital*, historical materialism founds a philosophy, a *Theorie*, conscious of its own conditions, Marxist theory becomes conscious of itself as practice. This consciousness integrates and gives expression to the varied practices of the revolutionary class -- moral, esthetic, ideological, and political. Thus in *Capital* we find, at last on a scientific basis, practice becomes conscious of itself.

Historical materialism and dialectical materialism are weapons in the hands of the proletariat. They represent the means by which the working class becomes conscious of its own activity, and therefore able to guide its activity to victory. This is the enormous theoretical contribution of Marx, and his results are confirmed in the practice of all revolutionaries. Althusser, programmatically and tentatively, has sought to explicate the nature and content of Marx's contribution. It remains to complete his program.



Notes

1. cf. Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx*; L. Althusser, Jacques Ranciere, and Pierre Machery, *Lire le Capital*, vol. 1; and L. Althusser, Etienne Balibar, and Roger Estabiet, *Lire le Capital*, vol. 2; all published by Maspero (Paris) in the series 'Theorie', directed by Althusser. Unfortunately, only one essay from *Pour Marx* has yet appeared in English: 'Contradiction and Over-Determination', *New Left Review*, 41, Jan/Feb 1967. (However, *Pour Marx* is scheduled for publication in the United States by Pantheon???????????)

2. This style of debate is unfortunately not confined to self-righteous social democrats like George Lichteim (cf. *New York Review of Books*, January 30, 1969), whose account of Althusser's work is confined to malicious gossip. cf. Francois George, 'Lire Althusser', *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 275, May 1969.

3. Grouping these writers under the rubric 'Hegelian Marxism' obviously involves an enormous over-simplification, particularly in the case of Sartre. I think, however, that this over-simplification is helpful in clarifying the scope of Althusser's contribution to Marxism. Althusser's work is very much 'against the stream' of the past forty or fifty years.

4. Althusser and his coauthors devote a great deal of attention to Marx's one real 'methodological' text: the Introduction to the never-completed Critique of Political Economy. The 1857 Introduction is now to be found in the German and French editions of the *Grundrisse*, and is most accessible in English in David Horowitz (ed.), *Marx and Modern Economics* (Monthly Review Press, 1968). A French edition of the *Grundrisse* is published by Editions anthropos (Paris: 1967) under the title *Fondements de la critique de l'economie politique* (two volumes).

5. Recent academic investigations of the sources of Marx's thought, and of his debt to Hegel, afford striking corroboration of Althusser's view. For example, see Z. A. Jordan, *The Evolution of Dialectical Materialism* (St. Martin's Press: 1967), Chap. 3. Jordan also presents evidence against the view - now popular among some East European Marxists and in social democratic circles in the West - that Marx was essentially a positivist, influenced by Comte, bent entirely upon establishing a positive science of society. The textual evidence supports Althusser's claim that Marx achieved a 'theoretical revolution' superceding both Hegelianism and positivism.

6. Althusser's own formulation is somewhat more complicated. He distinguishes three levels of 'theoretical practice' (*pratique theorique*): (1) the construction of a conceptual scheme (*Generalite I*); (2) the transformation of this conceptual scheme into concrete concepts and scientific laws (*Generalite III*); and (3) accounting for the possibility of this transformation (*Generalite II*). The point of the three-fold division is to explicate the character of the 'epistemological rupture' recounted below.

7. Something of this sort was also attempted by Engels in the *Anti-Duhring* and the *Dialectics of Nature*. Engels, however, seems to regard dialectical materialism as an inductive generalization of scientific theories, rather than as an epistemological foundation for historical materialism (cf. Jordan, esp. chapters 5 and 10). The former view, of course, became official orthodoxy, cf. Joseph Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism* (International Publishers).

8. Strictly speaking, Althusser recognizes four principle strata: (1) the early works (1840-1844); (2) the works of the break (*de la coupure*) (1845); (3) the works of the period of maturation (1845-1857); and (4) the mature works (1857-1883) (cf. P.M., p. 27). It is obviously not practicable to present the arguments for this historical and textual thesis in a short space. It should be noted, however, that Althusser's account depends heavily on the monumental study of Auguste Cournot, *K. Marx & F. Engels*, vols. 1-3 (P.U.F.: 1962), and that substantial portions of *Pour Marx* and the essay by Ranciere in *Lire le Capital*, vol. 1 ('*Le Concept de Critique et la Critique de l'Economie Politique des Manuscrits de 1844 au Capital*').

The notion of an 'epistemological rupture' grows out of a whole tradition in French history and philosophy of science, owing much to writers as diverse as Bachelard, Koyre, Canguilhem, Lacan, and Levi-Strauss. This tradition has many parallels to recent developments in Anglo-American philosophy, cf. esp. T.S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1962).

9. This movement from Hegel to Marx is brilliantly depicted by Herbert Marcuse in *Reason and Revolution* (Beacon Press). Marcuse, however, takes for granted the continuity of Marx's thought.

10. Probably the best introduction to 'structuralism' in English is Yale French Studies, nos. 36-7, though this edition is far from adequate. The French journal *Esprit* devoted an issue (May 1967) to 'structuralism as an ideology and method'. A piece by Jean Conilh on Althusser is included in the latter volume.

11. In Althusser's terms, Marx's theoretical contribution was to establish a new 'problematique', a new domain for scientific investigation and, consequently, a new range of philosophical problems. This problematique is radically incommensurable with the pre-scientific problematique it supercedes.

12. cf. Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy* (1859): 'The general result at which I arrived and which, once won, served as a guiding thread for my studies, can be briefly formulated as follows: In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces. The sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure, and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness... At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come in conflict with the existing relations of production... From forms of development of productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution.' (Marx, Engels, *Selected Works*, v. 1, pp. 362-63)

13. The identification of the real and the rational, under the guise of materialism, leads characteristically to an empiricist and pre-scientific form of determinism. This reading of Marx, which owes a great deal to Engels, became dogma during the Stalin era. It has been criticized decisively by Sartre in '*Materialism and Revolution*' (1946), *Situations III*.

14. In a sense, the Phenomenology is a defense of the possibility of dialectics, of ascertaining the structure of reality, in the face of the Kantian arguments in the *Transcendental Dialectic* of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to the effect that dialectics in the requisite sense is not possible. The great Hegelian Marxist Lukacs, in the chapter of his masterwork *History and Class Consciousness* called '*Antinomies of Bourgeois Thought*', deals explicitly with Hegel's 'reply' to Kant -- his transformation of the Kantian problem of cognition into the more general problem of consciousness is depicted as part of the process of overcoming 'reification', the conceptual analogue of

'alienation'. Marx's alleged sociologizing of Hegel's view of consciousness is represented as the culmination of this process. Unfortunately, Lukacs' writing, which is perhaps the definitive expression of the position Althusser attacks, is, like Althusser's, largely unavailable in English. A French translation of *History and Class Consciousness* (Les Editions de Minuit: 1960) does exist, and a new German edition was published by Luchterhand in 1968 with a preface by Lukacs.

15. cf. Engels' letter to Bloch of September 21, 1890: '...According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. More than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions, established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants - political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless hosts of accidents... the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise, the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.' *Selected Correspondence*, p. 417.

16. The Cultural Revolution is perhaps the most recent and definitive proof of the relative autonomy of the ideological and political levels, and is vindication of the concept of 'totality' explicated by Althusser. Althusser's views depend heavily on the essay 'On Contradiction' (1937) of Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, vol. 1, cf. P.M., p. 198f.

17. Sartre has likewise sought to restore history's 'facticity', though from an Hegelian perspective, with his doctrine of 'mediations', and his progressive-regressive method for the social sciences. cf. *A Search for a Method* (Vintage Books: 1968). The final chapter of *The Savage Mind* by Claude Levi-Strauss (Univ. of Chicago Press: 1966) is an attempted refutation of Sartre's position, from a point of view very close to Althusser's.

18. This essay has given rise to an enormous literature. cf. esp. Maurice Godelier, *Rationalite et Irrationalite en l'Economie* (Maspero: 1968), pp. 123-202. A version of this essay is available in English in *The Socialist Register 1967* under the title 'System, Structure and Contradiction in Capital'. Also, cf. G. Besse, 'Deux Questions a propos de contradiction et surdetermination', *La Pensee*, no. 107, G. Mury, 'Materialisme et Hyperempirisme', *ibid.*, no. 108, and R. Garaudy, 'Les Manuscrits de 1844, Cahiers du Communisme', March 1963.

19. The search for a single 'master-explanation' is perhaps the main theoretical stumbling block of our movement and the cause of so much confusion, for example, on the race question. For a brilliant analysis of the student movement as the product of an over-determined contradiction, involving economic, political, and cultural factors, see the article by Gareth Stedman Jones, 'The Meaning of the Student Revolt', in the *New Left Review* anthology, *Student Power* (Penguin: 1969).

20. cf. 'Marxisme et Humanisme' (P.M., pp. 227f.). The essay is easily read as an apologetic for the Soviet Union and, no doubt, on a certain level, this reading is correct. Here, however, it is appropriate to 'extract' the 'rational kernel' from its ideological 'mystic shell'. The rational kernel is just the scientific understanding of the role of ideology.

21. For Lukacs, the ideological character of science is demonstrated brilliantly, by means of his concept of 'totality', and his account of 'reified thought'. A modern variant is Herbert Marcuse's account in *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon Press). Contrasting with Lukacs' carefully reasoned arguments, Marcuse seems to require that revolutionary praxis should somehow grow out of the structure of scientific theories. For a critique of Marcuse's views on science, see Peter Sedgwick, 'Natural Science and Human Theory: A Critique of Herbert Marcuse' in *The Socialist Register* 1966.

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LENIN vs. ALTHUSSER

Martin Glaberman

Andrew Levine begins the discussion of the work of Louis Althusser that must take place. It is unfortunate that this beginning is so uncritical of Althusser and so uninformed about Marx and Lenin. Does Althusser's work mark 'a return to genuine Leninism, and so to the grand style of theoretical Marxism'? Or does it more properly reflect the grand style of a sophisticated revisionism, a latter-day Bernsteinism?

Crucial to Althusser is the separation of the early from the later Marx and the almost complete dissociation of Marx from Hegel. Some theoretical contortions are required to uphold such a view. The earlier writings of Marx so penetratingly illuminate the later writings that the treatment of Marx as a developing rather than a fragmented thinker seems inherent in Marx's work.

In 1946 I published (under the pseudonym of Martin Harvey) the first English translation of some of the Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts for a group of Marxists around C. L. R. James. (1) The reason for this effort was not to find out about the early Marx but to understand the later Marx. In 1946 most of what passed for Marxism in the world was in a state of collapse. Russian Marxism had descended to the barbarism of the Stalinist era and the Stalin-Hitler pact. The critique of Russian Marxism (Trotsky's in particular) had been proved entirely inadequate in its explanation of the world. We turned to the sources of Marxism to see if a new beginning on a Marxist basis was possible. It proved invaluable, especially in getting rid of the narrow economist materialism that passed for Marxism everywhere.

'...For historical materialism,' writes Levine, 'the principle of correspondence between relations of production and forces of production takes over the central role assigned to alienation in the early works, and establishes the study of capitalist society on a scientific footing.' Let us see.

In the 1844 essay on 'Estranged Labor' Marx says:

The laws of political economy express the estrangement of the worker in his object thus; the more the worker produces, the less he has to consume; the more values he creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he becomes; the better formed his product, the more deformed becomes the worker; the more civilized his object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier labour becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the duller becomes the worker and the more he becomes nature's bondsman. (2)

This conception can be found throughout Capital, but above all it is evident in the great chapter on 'The General Law of Capitalist Accumulation', the climax to volume I.

...Within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labour are brought about at the cost of the individual laborer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the labourer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into a hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labour-process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labour-process to a despotism the more hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working-time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital. But all methods for the production of surplus value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and every extension of accumulation becomes again a means for the development of those methods. It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse.(3)

It took the philosophic humanism of the early essays to clarify why Marxists have so consistently ignored that profound phrase, 'be his payment high or low'. It is the expanded concept of alienation in Capital that is in conflict with the view that reduces the revolutionary potential of the working class to a response to low wages or that, in Levine's interpretation (via Althusser), replaces alienation (that is, the worker) with sweepingly abstract categories. What in the world does Levine think 'relations of production' are, if they are not the alienated worker confronted by the representatives of capital?

In his earlier works Marx is developing his methodology. By cutting Marx off from his earlier works, Levine and Althusser can pretend that Marx paid little attention to methodology. (There is some fancy footwork involved in this. Levine writes: 'as we have seen, Marx himself was often unconscious of his methodology'. The 'as we have seen' turns out to be no more than the following clause earlier in the article: 'Marx himself was not always sensitive to methodological questions.' By repeating the same unsubstantiated statement twice and footnoting, but to no particular work, the impression is given that it is somewhere documented.) The claim is absolutely outrageous, one that is disproved by even a superficial reading of Marx. But Marx himself (and Lenin) lay it to rest in particular relationship to Hegel and the dialectic. In his preface to the Second Edition of Capital Marx goes out of his way to express his debt to Hegel: '...just as I was working at the first volume of Das Kapital, it was the good pleasure of the peevish, arrogant, mediocre (Epigones) who now talk large in cultured Germany, to treat Hegel in the same way as the brave Moses Mendelssohn in Lessing's time treated Spinoza, i.e., as a 'dead dog'. I therefore openly avowed myself the pupil of that mighty thinker, and even here and there, in the chapter on the theory of value, coquetted with the modes of expression peculiar to him. The mystification which dialectic suffers in Hegel's hands, by no means prevents him from being the first to present its general form of working in a comprehensive and conscious manner...'(4)

But, of course, Levine and Althusser know better. Levine: 'The object of Capital, the capitalist mode of production, is not intelligible by means of the Hegelian dialectic...' Althusser: 'It is inconceivable that the essence of the dialectic in Hegel's work should not be contaminated by Hegelian ideology...' (5)

Neither one of them seems to have read Lenin: 'Aphorism: It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!' (6) And half a century after that was written, Levine and Althusser are still determined to keep us all in ignorance.

It would make a valuable study for Marxist theory to develop the connection between Lenin's study of the Hegelian dialectic from 1914 to 1916 and his greatest works which followed, Imperialism and State and Revolution. It would also be valuable to show that the limitations in Lenin's (and Plekhanov's) early philosophical work (Materialism and Empirio-criticism in particular) stem from the fact that Marx's early, i.e. methodological, writings were not available during their lifetime.

What is at stake is not a reinterpretation of Marx but the destruction of dialectical materialism as a viable and useful method of thought. In the rejection of 'historicism', of internal contradiction, of the revolutionary quality of Hegel's dialectics, dialectical materialism is reduced to a sophisticated but empirical form of scientific method.

'If history,' writes Levine, 'were in fact homogeneous, then all contradictions could only develop internally; hence the Hegelian denial of the logical law of identity and Engel's celebrated doctrine of the 'interpenetration of opposites'... Thus, contrary to Hegel, contradiction for Marx is not internal to the essence of an historical event.'

It is difficult to know where to begin. All of Capital is the development of the internal contradictions of categories that reflect human (class) relationships. The contradiction between use value and value in a commodity; the contradiction between concrete useful labor and abstract labor; the developing contradiction between form and content -- value appearing as exchange value and ultimately as price; the contradiction in capital between constant (means of production) and variable (labor); and on and on. For Marx these contradictions are internal and therefore necessary, not external and accidental.

The method is evident in Lenin's study of imperialism. To discover why the Second International collapsed in the face of World War I, he searched for the internal contradictions within the working class and found them to be rooted in a new stage of capitalism which had produced a labor aristocracy. He was not satisfied to settle for such external explanations as betrayal, bribery, etc.

Lenin's summary of the elements of dialectics stands in striking contrast to Althusser:

1. the objectivity of consideration (not examples, not divergences, but the Thing-in-itself).
2. the entire totality of the manifold relations of this thing to others.
3. the development of this thing (phenomenon, respectively), its own movement, its own life.
4. the internally contradictory tendencies (and sides) in this thing.
5. the thing (phenomenon, etc.) as the sum and unity of opposites.
6. the struggle, respectively unfolding, of these opposites, contradictory strivings, etc.
7. the union of analysis and synthesis -- the break-down of the separate parts and the totality, the summation of these parts.
8. the relations of each thing (phenomenon, etc.) are not only manifold, but general, universal. Each thing (phenomenon, process, etc.) is connected with every other. (History is homogeneous.--M.G.)
9. not only the unity of opposites, but the transitions of every determination, quality, feature, side, property into every other (into its opposite?):
10. the endless process of the discovery of new sides, relations, etc.
11. the endless process of the deepening of man's knowledge of the thing, of phenomena, processes, etc., from appearance to essence and from less profound to more profound essence.
12. from co-existence to causality and from one form of connection and reciprocal dependence to another, deeper, more general form.
13. the repetition at a higher stage of certain features, properties, etc. of the lower and
14. the apparent return to the old (negation of the negation).
15. the struggle of content with form and conversely. The throwing off of the form, the transformation of the content.
16. the transition of quantity into quality and vice versa. (15 and 16 are examples of 9)

'In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This embodies the essence of dialectics, but requires explanations and development.' (7)

Remove the opposites contained within whatever category is being examined, that is, remove the internal development of contradiction, and what is left of the dialectical method?

It is because the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic assume movement toward destruction on the basis of internal contradiction that the methodology is inherently revolutionary. In his notes on Hegel's Logic Lenin enthusiastically marks in the margin: 'Leaps! Breaks in gradualness! Leaps! Leaps!' (8) There is a fascinating paragraph in the Preface to Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind:

For the rest it is not difficult to see that our epoch is a birthtime, and a period of transition... But it is here as in the case of the birth of a child; after a long period of nutrition in silence, the continuity of the gradual growth in size of quantitative change, is suddenly cut short by the first breath drawn -- there is a break in the process, a qualitative change -- and the child is born. In like manner the spirit of the time, growing slowly and quietly ripe for the new form it is to assume, loosens one fragment after another of the structure of its previous world. That it is tottering to its fall is indicated only by symptoms here and there. Frivolity and again ennui, which are spreading in the established order of things, the undefined forebod-

ing of something unknown -- all these are hints foretelling that there is something else approaching. This gradual crumbling to pieces, which did not alter the general look and aspect of the whole, is interrupted by the sunrise, which, in a flash and at a single stroke, brings to view the form and structure of the new world.(9)

This was written about Europe in the period following the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. It is a remarkable portrait of our own world today. But no-- 'The revolution, on Althusser's account, represents a real break in historical continuity and is, therefore, not intelligible in Hegelian terms.' It is evident that Althusser cannot comprehend a history which is both continuous (homogeneous) and explosive (revolutionary). By fragmenting history and turning to structure and 'over-determination' he leaves himself free to interpret any event however he sees fit unburdened by a fundamental theory that views human development as a totality.

It is impossible in this space to deal with Althusser's philosophy as a whole. I would like, however, to set it in a conceptual framework, even though schematically.

Althusser's conception of over-determination (and his affinity to Mao on contradiction)(10) is closely related to his rejection of Hegel and 'historicism' in Marx. It is a return to bourgeois rationalism, to an approximation of ordinary scientific method, to the fragmentation of political theory.(11) It rejects the overriding aspect of totality in Marxist thought and practice and puts theory at the service of partial or national needs. It is a universal theory of national exceptionalism. It corresponds to the view that Capital deals with England and is therefore of little value for France or the United States; that Marx on the Commune deals with France and therefore has little of use to Americans or Germans, etc., etc. In this Althusser rejects Stalinist dogmatism, but only in the sense that there is one all-powerful ideological center. He substitutes for it a whole series of Stalinist ideological principles.

In his work that appeared in New Left Review there is a clear enough indication of what his basic conceptions are. In his conclusion he says: '(1) that a revolution of the infrastructure does not ipso facto modify the existing superstructure and particularly the ideologies at one blow (as it would if the economic was the sole determinant)...'(12) By rejecting Marx's conception of alienation and his placing of the working class at the center of production relations Althusser comes up with the theory that socialism can be achieved by nationalizing property (infrastructure) and still be compatible with a bourgeois superstructure (dictatorship, inequality, etc.)

'(2) that the new society produced by the Revolution may itself insure the survival and reactivation of older elements through both the forms of its superstructures and specific (national and international) circumstances.'(13) That is, that a theory of Russian exceptionalism (or Chinese, or American, etc.) can be made to justify a lot of nonsense, viciousness, and so forth which could not be accepted as compatible with socialism on any serious reading of the total Marx.

Here is the crux: I shall not evade the burning issue: it seems to me that either the whole logic of 'sublation' must be rejected, or we must give up

any attempt to explain how the proud and generous Russian people bore Stalin's crimes and repression with such resignation; how the Bolshevik Party could tolerate them; and how a Communist leader could order them. (14) Althusser cannot say: the Russian people bore Stalin's crimes because it had a gun pointed at its head; the Bolshevik party tolerated Stalin's crimes because its leadership had been physically wiped out and its membership transformed; a Communist leader ordered these crimes because he was no longer a Communist leader. So, rather than state these simple facts, Althusser finds it necessary to discard Hegel, dialectics, the early Marx, etc., and thereby produce a theory that can be used to justify almost anything. It is not irrelevant that Althusser did not criticize the counter-revolutionary role of the French Communist Party in the 1968 revolution or the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia. It follows from his empirical theory of overdetermination that political policy need not derive from fundamental social contradiction. It can just as well derive from the appropriate Central Committee. Is that also to be included in 'the grand style of theoretical Marxism'?

NOTES

1. The introduction to the 1946 translation by C. L. R. James, F. Forest and Rita Stone was reprinted in *Speak Out*, Vol. 1, No. 5, May 1966.
2. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow (n.d.), p. 71.
3. Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. 1, pp. 708-9, Kerr or Modern Library editions.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- (omit 5)
6. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 38 (Philosophical Notebooks), p. 180, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1961.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-23.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
9. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 75, Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1967.
10. See: Martin Glaberman, 'Mao as a Dialectician', *International Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. VIII, No. 1, March 1968.
11. See, C.L.R. James, *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, Chap. XI, 'Philosophy in the Epoch of State Capitalism', Facing Reality Publishing Committee, Detroit, 1969.
12. Louis Althusser, 'Contradiction and Overdetermination', *New Left Review*, 41, Jan/Feb 1967, p. 34.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*

Structuralist Marxism?

Paul Piccone

Reading is an activity comprising three main components: the 'reader', the 'read', and the concrete context within which the activity takes place. Whereas a bourgeois account of the adequacy of any such reading is a mere function of interpreting correctly what is being read - a purely academic exercise - a concrete marxist analysis, following the second thesis on Feuerbach, consists of relating the teleology of the reader to the socio-historical context within which it is to be implemented: whether or not one agrees with Lukacs, it is a matter of relating to society as a totality. (1) To the extent that Levine's account of Althusser hardly ever deals with the concrete socio-political realities of present-day France, it remains abstract and meaningless -- for it is precisely in terms of these realities that political and philosophical notions obtain their meaning.

Without indulging here in a detailed account of Althusser's brand of Marxism, it will be sufficient to briefly relate his work to the politics of the French Communist Party, indicate some of its major theoretical and political shortcomings, and point out how his alleged theoretical (or scientific) rigor threatens to plunge Marxist thinking into those shallow philosophical swamps that, after a brief sojourn, even the most muddle-headed positivists abandoned some thirty years ago.

After a period immediately following its publication, during which time the bourgeoisie attempted to ignore it out of existence, *Das Kapital* had been read by Bernstein, Lenin, Lukacs, Stalin, etc. Yet, from what can be gathered as their understanding of this work, it is difficult to conclude that they all read the same thing. These differences are not a matter of hermeneutical competence on the part of the readers, but are instead traceable to things such as the trade-unionist and social-democratic politics of the Second International, the Bolsheviks' revolutionary requirements, and the 'socialism in one country' politics of the Stalinist period. Also relevant is the philosophical elaboration that these various readings of Marx have received: it is no mere accident that Bernstein was a positivist whose major theoretical effort was to purge the dialectic out of Marxism, that after Lenin hurriedly and carelessly wrote *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism* in order to throw Bogdanov and his neo-kantian friends out of the party he went back to Hegel (e.g. the 38th volume of his *Collected Works*), and that the third law of the dialectic - the law of the negation of the negation - was gradually phased out of Stalinist Marxism. Similarly, it is not coincidental that Althusser's program, camouflaged as a return to 'scientificity', seeks to straitjacket Marxism within static structuralist categories.

It is no secret that Althusser, who is often praised as a structuralist par excellence (2), starts out with standard structuralist categories: synchrony and diachrony (3), relative autonomy of structures, *coupure* epistemologique between Marxist ideology and Marxist science, etc. Within such a structuralist context, however, it is impossible to deal with dialectical logic. Godelier,

one of Althusser's collaborators, has attempted to 'structuralize' the dialectic, i.e., to incorporate the dialectic within structuralism (4), but as Seve has put it, 'how can the dialectic, the logic of development, be translated, without losing its very essence, into structuralist concepts that seem to belong to the logic of immobility?' (5) The attempted answer is that structure deals with internal relations, while dialectic deals with development which is external: as such, the two are complementary. This is accomplished by illicitly separating diachronie from synchronie, system from history, and subsequently attempting to eclectically reconcile the two. But this is impossible, for 'the logical aspect of things is not truly understood unless it is founded on the historical aspect which is at its base.' (6) History, temporality, or process is at the very heart of things: it cannot be brought in post festum as an afterthought. As Federici has shown (7), the first victim of Althusser's structuralist revision of the Marxist dialectic is the dialectic itself as a theory of qualitative change which is replaced by a mechanistic interstructural process whereby it is no longer the working out of internal contradictions that eventually explode the system, but 'overdetermination' -- the accumulation of a series of 'relatively autonomous' elements which eventually lead to the revolutionary break. The 'cause', therefore, is no longer internal but external, and the entire notion of dynamic contradiction degenerates to the level of natural conflicts. The 'rational kernel' of the Hegelian dialectic is no longer a revolutionary methodology as Lenin, Engels, and Tran-Duc-Thao have repeatedly stressed (8), but a positivistic-mechanistic abortion that retains only the name of 'dialectic'.

Althusser's reification of the dialectic starts out with a redefinition of the Marxist notion of 'concrete totality'. For Althusser the totality is not 'reality as a dialectically structured whole in which and from which every fact (class of facts or set of facts) can be rationally understood' (9), but it turns out to be '...the unity constituted by a certain type of complexity, the unity of the structured whole involving the possibility of distinguishing distinct levels or elements 'relatively autonomous' which co-exist in such a structural unity, and are articulated reciprocally according to specific modes of determination settled, on the last instance, by the economic element or level.' (10) In other words, there is a regression from organicism to mechanism: whereas the Hegelian-Marxist totality refers to the organic structure which gives meaning to and articulates its parts, the structuralist totality refers to the mechanistic sum of the relatively autonomous parts. The latter is precisely what Konrad a generation ago exposed as the 'bad totality', not much different from Popper's which, because of its nature, cannot be known as such. (11) Thus, whereas in the Hegelian-Marxist notion revolution means 'change of the structure', in Althusserian Marxism it becomes 'realignment of the relatively autonomous structures'. At this point the dialectic is theoretically reduced to the status of what Ofburn calls 'cultural lag' (12) which, as in Althusser, also functions as a 'structural invariant' and it 'is itself the condition of the concrete variation of the contradictions that constitute it.' (13)

If the dialectic obtains among structures that are relatively autonomous, man as 'the motor of the dialectic' (14) fades in the background and is eventually forgotten entirely: it is no wonder that Althusser winds up as an anti-humanist. This occlusion of the human subject results eventually in what George calls a 'most distressingly ridiculous scientism'. (15) The subject-less structuralist version of a Marxist science leads to a strange reading of

Marx: '...when Althusser reads that it is a matter of transforming the world, he understands it to mean that it is a matter of founding a new science, the science of history.' (16) Similarly, for Althusser, 'the eleventh thesis on Feuerbach does not announce a revolutionary theory, but a theoretical revolution.' (17) To the question: 'what changes history and the world?', he answers: 'the concept, the new science, the epistemological rupture'. (18) The object of history for Althusser is no longer Marx's starting point 'individuals producing in society' (in Gesellschaftproduzierende Individuen), (19) but 'the production, the construction of the concept of history'. (20) It is no wonder that George closes his critique of Althusser by pointing out that 'the coupure épistémologique that (Althusser) discusses so much is between himself and reality.' (21)

Althusser's Hegellosigkeit which, according to Lucien Goldmann, results in a non-dialectical structuralism aimed at negating the subject (22), creates serious terminological problems since Marxism, in fact, employs a Hegelian terminology. Thus, Althusser has sought to replace the standard Marxist notion of 'concreteness' with the allegedly neutral and scientific concept of 'synthesis' which clearly distinguishes between 'theoretical' and 'empirical' concepts. (23) But whereas 'concreteness' refers to the subjective appropriation of the object in an inter-subjective praxis by actively relating all the constitutive determinations, i.e., it is a process of creation and modification of reality, both cognitively and practically, 'synthesis' deals with the static construction of objects from an alienated and unfounded theoretical framework and a pregiven and unchanging empirical reality. The problem that such a scientific posing of the problem generates, regard both the validation of the theoretical framework employed, and the explanation of how, independently of a theoretical framework, can the empirical concept be given. This is precisely the fundamental difficulty of logical empiricism in the early post-Tractatus days, and in raising this stupid question Althusser plunges Marxist discourses back into the positivistic dark ages in the 1930s when a similar conceptual clarification was sought in the philosophy of science. The only difference is that the positivists, in their honest ignorance, were much more interesting and considerably more rigorous than Althusser. Even the reasons why they both arrive at such an impasse are strikingly similar: the positivists started out with the myth of science as the pathway to truth and experience as the map of how to get there, but were unable to ever reconcile the two and ended up with the bogus analytic-synthetic distinction according to which the logical and the empirical were radically separated (24), while the structuralists arrived at such a problematic via the stress of the relative autonomy of structures, the concluded and closed character of human knowledge (25), and the emphasis of relations (structures) among objects rather than of the objects themselves.

The distinction between the 'theoretical' and the 'empirical' -- in positivist terminology: the distinction between the theoretical and the observation language -- had to be eventually rejected for it either led to Hempel's 'theoretical dilemma' (26), or to the recognition that the observation language is the theoretical language and, therefore, that empiricism is a philosophical fraud. (27) Since the two could not be kept, it was attempted to reduce the theoretical to the observation language. Unfortunately, rescue efforts such as Craig's theorem (28) or sense-data theory (29) failed, and nowadays surviving positivists thrive on the hope that probability theory will someday work. Quite obviously, Althusser is not aware of the history of recent positivism so that he does not realize that he has unwittingly appropriated their

entire discarded problematic. But when structuralism will be asked to justify itself as a science, these problems will undoubtedly arise leaving Althusser and his friends up the proverbial stream, without a philosophical paddle. A subject-object dialectic of the kind that Marx practiced all his life obviously avoids all of these problems: man creates categories in the praxis in order to make sense out of his world. The problem, therefore, is not to arrive at artificial syntheses as Althusser claims, but to periodically reconstitute those very categories and their institutional otherness that human praxis constantly renders obsolete.

One more example will suffice to indicate the extent of Althusser's positivization of Marxism. In 1968 the Italian newspaper *L'Unita* interviewed Althusser, and one of the questions asked was the following: 'How would you define the essential function of philosophy?' The answer was: '...to trace a demarcation line between true and false ideas.'⁽³⁰⁾ What should be pointed out to Althusser is that one of the main pseudo-problems that positivism sought to solve in its 1930s heydays was to distinguish precisely between science and non-science (i.e., between true knowledge and arbitrary fabrications). The way to do this was thought to consist in the development of an adequate conceptual tool to trace the demarcation line: the verifiability principle.⁽³¹⁾ Advanced as a methodological bulldozer meant to clear nonsense (metaphysics) out of the philosophical construction site, the principle immediately developed serious mechanical defects. It was soon realized that verifiability was impossible for statements of the type 'when it rains the ground gets wet', since their verification would involve either an examination of all instances of raining - an infinite task impossible to carry out - or a solution to the problem of induction whereby universal statements can be validated through an examination of some finite number of instances. This impasse split the positivist camp into two groups. One school (Carnap, Reichenbach, etc.) sought to remedy the mechanical failure by simply adding as an auxiliary accessory some kind of theory of probability - a satisfactory version of which has yet to be devised for the job - while the other (Popper and the deductivists) argued that, since the trouble was fundamental, the whole principle should have been traded in for a more logically sound one: the falsifiability principle.⁽³²⁾

According to the new principle, the validity of universal statements is no longer to be grounded in the number of verifying instances, but rather in the ability of universal statements to withstand falsifying attempts. Empirical content, what positivists regard as the cash-value of general statements, is now seen as a function of perseverance under critical bombardment in the laboratory rather than as mere seniority accumulated through the positivist ritual of verification. This move seemed to placate for a while the more logically rigorous empiricist souls until the sneaking suspicion arose that this principle too, although glittering in the formalists' showroom, might not perform in the field. The suspicion was partially confirmed when Feyerabend, through an examination of the scientific credentials of microphysics-⁽³³⁾ noticed that falsifiability was possible only under exceptional circumstances. Facts (or evidence) can be caught only with the help of theoretical nets such that, if only one net is available, there is no way of finding out the truth or falsity of the theory. When alternative theories are available, on the other hand, they can generate facts capable of falsifying the accepted theory thus giving it empirical content.

This analysis leads Feyerabend into a re-examination of the structure of scientific theories as highly refined metaphysical doctrines. Hence the door is left wide open for all sorts of metaphysics in as far as they can generate theories which, even if false, can be so shown by the 'correct' theory. The latter, in turn, obtains empirical content in direct proportion to the number of alternate theories that it refutes. Such an account kills two problematic birds with the same methodological stone: it allows Feyerabend to explain why physics has stagnated in the past thirty years while at the same time supplying a new criterion of scientific meaningfulness.

But something very strange has happened in the process: what originally started out as a methodological tool meant to yield a line of demarcation turns out to presuppose precisely what it meant to eliminate (metaphysics). To add insult to injury, as Mary Hesse has pointed out (34), this latest development involves a dilemma: in order to function, Feyerabend's methodological device must regard different theories as ontologically incompatible or else the whole enterprise collapses into the trap whereby all science is seen as continuous and qualitative progress is rendered impossible in science (35) -- something that flies at the face of the history of science. But if theories are ontologically incompatible, how can the evidence obtained through one hold for the other? What Hesse suggests as a solution is that the judgment concerning the choice of the 'correct' theory be no longer formal (since this is actually impossible), but informal: a kind of subjective prise de conscience on the part of the scientist. This last move, however, closes the circle. Whereas the positivists sought an objective formal tool with which to guarantee the soundness of knowledge, after thirty years of uninterrupted investigations what results is a subjective procedure whose very existence hinges on a precategorical foundation which is precisely what dialectics give: that the demarcation line is impossible on the categorical level since metaphysics and science (or true and false ideas -- to use Althusser's terms) are part of the same dynamic continuum which cannot permit a sharp separation (36), and requires a constitutive praxis. (37)

If the history of modern positivism has taught us anything, it is that a demarcation line can only be dogmatically traced for any given time and that, on the ultimate analysis, questions of truth resolve themselves in praxis, i.e., in the creation and realization of man's (or, in terms of the positivists: the scientists') teleology. If Althusser will work as hard as the positivists have, maybe in the next thirty years he will be able to realize the futility of his Fragestellung and start studying dialectical logic not as a mechanistic inter-structural procedure, but as a phenomenologically-based logic of human activity and of reality. As of now, he is asking questions that Hegel himself exposed as nonsensical over 150 years ago (38) and which no serious radical need bother with.

The question to be asked at this point is this: how has it been possible for Althusser to become the leading theoretician of the French Communist Party? The answer is that Althusser's nonsense offers the perfect apology for the stagnant and retrogressive politics of the French Communists. Committed as it is to the bankrupt Soviet strategy according to which, through peaceful co-existence, the capitalist world will unavoidably shipwreck on the rocks of its own contradictions, the FCP plays a collaborationist role in the hope of eventually leading the situation to a point of no return where a peaceful take-over becomes possible. In practice, such a disguised social-democratic maneuver only strengthens the capitalist status quo and, when the chips are

down, as in May 1968, it ends up saving French capitalism. Althusser's structuralist-mechanistic dialectic obtaining among set structures (the USSR, the FCP, the USA, the trade-unions, the military, etc.) offers the perfect apology for such a non-marxist piecemeal strategy by making revolutionary change a function of overdetermination, i.e., the simultaneous restructuring of the 'unity' by some sort of overloading (e.g., the FCP bargaining directly with De Gaulle concerning the price of keeping things cool?). Stalinist voluntarism, economism, scientism, and a whole host of divergent notions are thus dialectically reconciled in one theoretical sweep. Even the epistemological rupture between Marxist ideology and Marxist science can be used to account for the contradictory political theory and practice of the party. Althusser's 'philosophy of structures' replaces Garaudy's 'philosophy of the dialogue' at a time when, because of the total embourgeoisization of the party, the humanist values of the dialogue come to appear as wholly utopian and an ideological account of the structural integration of the FCP into the capitalist facticity of French society becomes much more useful and realistic.

Contrary to what Levine claims, Althusser has nothing to contribute to Marxism or to any radical movement. Along with George it must be pointed out that 'to combat Althusser, to denounce the myth of his rigor, is to contribute to the abandonment of the thermidorean period; otherwise the slumber of dialectical reason will generate monsters.' (39) The struggle continues, but while externally it is directed to institutionalized insanity, internally it must be aimed precisely at dogmatists such as Althusser who represent an age that is rapidly sinking into historical obsolescence. 'Marxists' of the Althusserian variety have hitherto interpreted Marx: the point, however, is to apply his teachings.

NOTES

1. Georg Lukacs, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Berlin, 1953), p. 61. 'Concrete investigations mean, therefore, relating to society as a totality.'

2. Cf. Francois Wahl's comments concerning Althusser in Oswald Ducrot et al, *Qu'est que le Structuralisme?* (Paris, 1968). It is not surprising that Wahl immediately after having praised Althusser for his structuralism, reproaches him for contaminating it with extraneous philosophical and political elements. Like the 'science' of the positivists and neo-positivists, structuralism is to be neutral and a-historical (recall Levi-Strauss's characterization of history as an illusion of intellectuals). To quote one of those rare passages from Engels' *Dialectics of Nature* still worth quoting: 'Natural scientists may adapt whatever attitude they please, they are still under the domination of philosophy. It is only a question whether they want to be dominated by a bad, fashionable philosophy, or by a form of theoretical thought which rests on acquaintance with the history of thought and its achievements.' (Moscow, 1954) p. 279.

3. Althusser criticizes the standard structuralist account of synchrony and diachrony (cf. his 'Esquisse du Concept d'Histoire', in *La Pensee*, June 1965, no. 121, pp. 18-19). Whereas for structuralists synchrony and diachrony mean respectively 'concrete co-presence' and 'development', for Althusser synchrony '...is not this concrete co-presence... but the knowledge of the complexity that produces... this very co-presence', and diachrony is 'knowledge of the process' (ibid): in other words, whereas for structuralists these are categories of being, for Althusser they become categories of thought.

4. Maurice Godolier, 'Le Structuralisme', in *Aletheia*, no. 4, May 1966.
5. Lucien Seve, 'Methode Structurale et Methode Dialectique', in *La Pensee*, no. 135, Sept.-Oct. 1967, p. 72.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
7. Silvia Federici, review of Oswalt Ducrot et al, *Qu'est que la Structuralisme?*, in *Telos*, 2, no. 1, Fall 1969.
8. Cf. Tran-Duc-Thao, 'Le 'Noyau Rational' dans la Dialectique Hegelienne', in *La Pensee*, no. 119, Feb. 1965 (previously published in Vietnamese in *Tap san Dai hoc (Van Khoa)*, a journal of the University of Hanoi, no. 6-7.
- *. Cf. Tran-Duc-Thao, 'Le 'Noyau Rational' dans la Dialectique Hegelienne', in *La Pensee*, no. 119, Feb. 1965 (previously published in Vietnamese in *Tap san Dai hoc (Van Khoa)*, a journal of the University of Hanoi, no. 6-7, 1956). In relation to the influence of Hegel on Marx, he writes: 'Evidently such an influence is not possible other than because of the authentically materialist content of the hegelian logic' (p. 7). In this context, he quotes Lenin's famous phrase that 'One cannot fully understand Marx's *Capital* and specifically its first chapters without having closely studied and understood the whole of Hegel's *Logic*.'
9. Karl Kosik, *Dialettica del Concreto*, Italian translation by G. Pacini (Milano, 1965), p. 46.
10. Althusser, 'Esquisse du Concept d'Histoire', *op. cit.*, p. 8.
11. Kurt Konrad, *Svar Obsahua a Formy (Contrast of Form and Content)* (Stredisko, 1934). For an excellent account of Konrad's argument see Kosik, *op. cit.*, pp. 67f. Popper's totality is the mechanistic sum total of the composing parts. Because all these parts cannot be simultaneously known, Popper considers the notion of totality worthless. Althusser is obviously much closer to Popper in his conception of totality than to the Marxist tradition. For Popper's account, see his *The Poverty of Historicism* (New York, 1961), p. 87f.
12. This theory, which nowadays rests in the huge graveyard of dead sociological theories, functions also as the motor of social change and its definition is strikingly similar to Althusser's 'overdetermination'. For an excellent account and criticism of 'cultural lag' (which is also applicable to Althusser), see Joseph Schneider, 'Cultural Lag: what is it?', in *American Sociological Review*, 10, no. 6, Dec. 1945.
13. This is one of Althusser's definitions of 'overdetermination' given in his 'Sur la Dialectique Materialiste', in *La Pensee*, no. 110, August 1963, p. 39.
14. This is Merleau-Ponty's account: 'The motor of the dialectic is man engaged in a certain mode of appropriation of nature', *Senso a Non-Senso*, Italian translation by A. Bonomi (Milano, 1962), p. 152.
15. Francois George, 'Lire Althusser', in *Les Temps Modernes*, no. 275, May 1969, p. 1926.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 1927.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 1928.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 1931.
19. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse der Politischen Oekonomie* (Berlin, 1953), p. 6.
20. Althusser, 'Esquisse du Concept d'Histoire', *op. cit.*, p. 19.
21. George, *op. cit.*, p. 1962.
22. Lucien Goldmann, *L'Ideologie Tedesca e le Tesi su Feuerbach*, Italian translation by G. Capone, p. 43 and p. 49. This entire work is a heated polemic (wholly justified) against Althusserian Marxism.
23. Louis Althusser, 'Sur le Travail Theoretique', in *La Pensee*, no. 132, March-April 1967, p. 5. He writes: 'This synthesis consists of the precise combination-conjunction of two types of elements (or determinations) of knowledge, that we will call... theoretical concepts (in the strong sense) and empirical concepts.'

24. Since the publication of Quine's 'Two Dogmas of Empiricism', the whole thing has been in crisis. Cf. W. v. O. Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (New York, 1963), pp. 20-46.

25. Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London, 1966), p. 269.

26. Carl G. Hempel, *Aspects of Scientific Explanation* (New York, 1965), pp. 173-226. The dilemma is roughly the following: if there is such a thing as a direct access to objects (the observation language) why do we need a theory? Contrarywise, if we do not have direct access to objects and we need a theory to tell us about what to look for when we observe, how is an observation language possible free of a theoretical language? Hempel has yet to satisfactorily solve this dilemma.

27. Paul K. Feyerabend, 'Problems of Empiricism', in R. G. Colodney, editor, *Beyond the Edge of Certainty: Essays in Science and Philosophy* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1965), pp. 145-260.

28. Craig's theorem was meant to solve the problem by converting what Althusser calls 'theoretical' terms within a theoretical language into observation terms, thus resolving the possibility of inter-theoretical conflicts. Cf. William Craig, 'On Axiomatization within a System', in the *Journal of Symbolic Logic*, 18, 1953, pp. 30-32. For reasons that cannot be gone into here, the theorem has turned out to be practically useless. For a brief account of this, see Ernest Nagel, *The Structure of Science* (New York, 1961), pp. 134-137.

29. The last known exponent of this view was A. J. Ayer, in his *Language Truth and Logic* (New York, 1950), and, apparently, even he has given it up as a lost cause.

30. Cf. L'Unité of February 1, 1968. This interview has been subsequently reprinted as 'Appendix B' to the Italian translation of Althusser's *Lire le Capital* (Milano, 1968), pp. 346-353.

31. For an accurate account of this principle, see Hans Reichenbach, 'The Verifiability Theory of Meaning', reprinted in Herbert Feigl and May Broadbeck editors, *Readings in the Philosophy of Science* (New York, 1953).

32. Cf. Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York, 1961), section 6, pp. 40-42.

33. Paul K. Feyerabend, 'Problems of Microphysics', in R. G. Colodney, editor, *Frontiers in Science and Philosophy* (Pittsburgh, 1962).

34. Mary Hesse, 'A New Look at Scientific Explanation', in *The Review of Metaphysics*, 17, 1963-64, pp. 104-5.

35. This is something that Feyerabend forcefully rejects in his 'Explanation, Reduction and Empiricism', in Herbert Feigl and Grover Maxwell, editors, *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, vol. III (Minneapolis 1962).

36. Feyerabend is not altogether satisfied with Hesse's suggestion and has sought to give a formal answer to the problem of incommensurability of theories in terms of the domain over which a set of theories applies. What he overlooks, however, is that the domain is also 'theory-infested' and not independently given. In other words, a formal answer fails again. Feyerabend's latest attempted solution is in his article 'Against Method', scheduled to appear in the IVth volume of *Minnesota Studies in the Philosophy of Science* in the Fall of 1970.

37. This is the main point of Edmund Husserl's *Die Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften* (Den Haag, 1954). In this context, the whole positivist problematic is in need of a subjective foundation in order to be self-consistent -- at which time it becomes dialectical. This last point is brilliantly developed by Enzo Paci in his *Funzione della Scienze a Significato dell'Uomo*, (Milano, 1964). The last chapter of this work has appeared in English translation in *Telos*, 2, no. 1, Spring 1969.

38. Cf. William Wallace, *The Logic of Hegel* (London, 1962), p. 78ff.

39. George, op. cit., p. 1962.

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THE PECULARITIES OF STRUCTURALISM

DALE TOMICH

Social life is essentially practical. All mysteries which mislead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and the comprehension of that practice.

Karl Marx

Theses on Feuerbach, 1845

Louis Althusser's interpretation of Marx's thought, presented to us by Andre Levine, poses some difficulties for those trying to understand and change human reality. I should like first to sketch briefly some of these difficulties in theoretical terms, and then examine some of the implications of Althusser's method in a more concrete sense with a discussion of the analysis of English society by Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn in *New Left Review* which is deeply influenced by Althusser's work.

To claim, as Althusser does, that the elements composing the social totality - economic, political, ethical, esthetic, ideological - are relatively separate, autonomous structures whose relations are extrinsic and not internal to an historical event inevitably fragments human experience. Levine writes that 'the superstructure is not a pure expression of the economic infrastructure, but has a relatively autonomous existence and must be understood accordingly.' The consequences of such a dichotomy is that social consciousness becomes independent of social being. Human beings cannot, however, exist independently of the consciousness they employ in every act of their labor; there is no such thing as pure economic or pure cultural life. To see the world in this way fails to see reality 'as human sensuous activity, practice...' (Theses on Feuerbach, Marx-Engels, *Selected Works*, v. 11, p. 403, Moscow). Rather, it is to see the world only in the form of an object (practical activity is not guided by consciousness and is thus subject to manipulation) or of contemplation (consciousness does not stand in dialectical relationship to practical activity and does not seek to dialectically transform the world), a characteristic of the crude materialism that Marx criticized.

Men are the creative agents of their own history. Within the broad boundaries set by nature, it is men in definite contexts who create both the possibilities and the limitations of their society. Their action may, of course, be restricted by the circumstances imposed by their predecessors, but nevertheless, society is the product of human agency. In this process of creating society, consciousness is neither the mere translation of practical activity into ideas nor is it autonomous from practical activity. Rather, consciousness is intimately linked with practical activity, which is initiated, planned, done purposefully, and to fulfill some needs. Consciousness is determined by social being, but it is not therefore of lesser importance; in its turn, consciousness acts back upon social being and together they form complementary parts of the social totality.

Their indifference toward the interrelation of the various dimensions of social activity cause Althusser and Levine to retreat from Marxian philosophy and reject the very meaning of 'base' and 'superstructure'. To posit the autonomy of the base and superstructure and then to mix the two together to make up reality like one would mix paints is to caricature reality, not to create the basis for understanding it. Indeed, if all the structures of a social totality are autonomous, one cannot speak of contradiction in any meaningful sense. Thus as a substitute for contradiction Levine offers us 'overdetermination' -- an accumulation of relatively independent causes. Interestingly, neither Levine nor Althusser describes the connections between the autonomous structures and their history and the causes of actual historical events. When talking about the overdeterminedness of the Russian Revolution both speak in terms of independent causes and circumstances, but neither relates these to the specific determinations of actual and specific structures in spite of Levine's exhortations for concrete analysis. Economic base and superstructure, and the contradiction between them, have no meaning in a Marxist sense except as aspects of a dialectical unity; a social totality intrinsically mediated through human labor.

Althusser tries to overcome this fault by making the structures only 'relatively' independent and autonomous. In the last instance, he claims, the economic level fixes the modes of determination of the relatively autonomous units that comprise the whole. Elsewhere he has written, 'the economic dialectic is never active in the pure state; in history, those instances - the superstructures, etc. - are never seen to step aside when their work is done or when the time comes, as his (the economy's, DWT) pure phenomena... From the first moment to the last the lonely hour of the 'last instance' never comes.' ('On Contradiction', *New Left Review*, 41, p. 32) Seemingly this unites the base with the superstructure and consciousness with being, while at the same time keeping the economic level far enough away to save us from crude determinism. However, such a solution does not successfully resolve the tension in Althusser's thought.

In order to posit economic determinism 'in the last instance', it is neces-

In order to posit economic determination 'in the last instance', it is necessary for Althusser to state that the central economic contradiction is active in all other levels and their fusion. (1) (*NLR*, 41, p. 23) The effect of this proposition is to invert the entire trajectory of Althusser's thought, even though the economic level is never active in its pure state in practice. The totality is tied together by the economic level. Structures are no longer independent and autonomous, but rather part of a totality that is connected and homogeneous (i.e., not heterogeneous). The relationship between the various elements is no longer extrinsic, but rather intrinsic.

Thus, viewed as independent and autonomous structures, Althusser's conception of social totality fragments reality and is centrifugal. When the necessary steps are taken to tie it together, the system looks very much like the more conventional dialectic he is arguing against as a misreading of Marx.

Contradiction for Marx, Levine writes, is the result of a specific concatenation of relatively independent causes which must be studied in their specificity. In this spirit, I would now like to move on to a discussion of the analysis of English society and culture made by Perry Anderson and Tom Nairn in the pages of *New Left Review*.⁽²⁾ I would like to trace their analysis of the development of English society in an attempt to show how the weakness of their philosophical critique results in an abstract and unreal presentation of concrete historical events. It is not my intention to offer an alternative analysis of English history, though to some extent this must occur in the course of criticism. Rather, I hope to examine some of the implications and consequences of Althusser's method in a more practical and concrete light.

The English Civil War, according to Anderson and Nairn, was a watershed which set the pattern for the subsequent development of English history. The war is seen by them to be an overdetermined crisis fought between segments of the land-owning class, neither of which were direct crystallizations of opposed economic interests. The divisions between them were clarified and magnified by the nature of the allies that aligned themselves with each side. Anderson describes these allies as 'wider, more radically antagonistic social forces (which) came into temporary and distorted focus'. (Anderson, TS, 13-14) These independent currents strengthened the contradiction within the landholding class and fused with it to form what Althusser refers to as a situation of revolutionary rupture.

Because it was fought within and not between classes it was the most mediated and least pure bourgeois revolution of any major European country. The ideological content of the struggle was largely religious and therefore more dissociated from economic aspirations than political idioms usually are. (Anderson, TS, 14) It was a supremely successful capitalist revolution -- shattering numerous institutional, juridical, and constitutional obstacles to rationalized capitalist development -- which left the entire social structure intact. It accomplished this by transforming the roles, but not the personnel, of the ruling class. 'The victory of one section of the ruling class over another,' according to Anderson, 'converted the whole class to a new type of production.'⁽³⁾ (Anderson, TS, 15-16)

Because the landed aristocracy became its own capitalist class, it continued to rule and dominate society. Merchant capital received major economic benefits from the Revolution as it expanded on an imperial basis. However, the representatives of merchant capital remained politically and socially subordinated to the landed aristocracy. Bankers and merchants remained a 'subaltern group within the ruling system, an interest and not a class.' (Anderson, TS, 16)

Capitalist forms of production grew and were dominant. 'There was thus from the start,' Anderson states, 'no fundamental antagonistic contradiction between the old and the new bourgeoisie.' (Anderson, TS, 18) The prior existence of a capitalist class prevented the urban merchants and bankers, the mercantile bourgeoisie, from achieving the social or political revolution which would remake the world in their image. Because it never had to confront a feudal society and transform it root and branch, it left intact the superstructures of the landed aristocracy -- who Tom Nairn characterizes as the 'protagonists of a civilization halfway between the feudal and the modern'. (EWC, 20-21)

rabbits



T.L. KRYSS







It was the autonomy of these autonomous superstructures, midway between feudal and modern, which were to dominate and distort the cultural development of the English bourgeoisie. Because it never had to transform the world, this bourgeoisie never developed a coherent world-view of its own. (Anderson, NC, 12-13) Part of the reason for this was the premature character of England's capitalist revolution. Because it was fought in religious terms, Anderson claims that the 'ideological legacy of the Revolution was almost nil.' (Anderson, TS, 16) Tom Nairn is more explicit.

The final destruction of English feudalism (1640-1660) took place long before the full flowering of bourgeois ideology... Their (the bourgeoisie's) practical struggles were necessarily conducted in terms of a pre-Enlightenment philosophy, a world view unequal to what was at stake, English puritanism. This fact explains a large part of those aspects of the Revolution which appear to us as a failure; its profound empiricism, the patchwork of compromise and makeshift it ended in, and the resultant organic coalescence with the English ancien regime. (EWC 44)

It is to these factors that the English bourgeoisie owes its peculiar development. There was no fundamental contradiction between the old aristocracy and the new bourgeoisie. The Industrial Revolution, according to Anderson and Nairn, took place within the mold of agrarian capitalism. The conflict between aristocracy and bourgeoisie was mediated by the fear of both propertied classes of the French Revolution and of the English working class. The bourgeoisie ended by losing its own identity. Thus, 'the late Victorian era and the high noon of imperialism welded the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie together in a single bloc.' (Anderson, TS, 29) The precocity of the English bourgeoisie, according to Anderson and Nairn, had paradoxically retarded its growth.

* * *

To present the issue as Anderson and Nairn do is to ignore the actual struggle that took place and the terms in which it was fought; it is to divorce the practical activity of the participants from their consciousness of it. 'What was the net result of this history?' Anderson asks. 'The British bourgeoisie from the outset renounced its intellectual birthright. It refused ever to put society as a whole in question. A deep aversion to the very category of the totality marks its entire trajectory.' (NC, 13) Thus the bourgeoisie seems to have been dominated by an ideology that was independent of its practice.

Although they mention that capitalism was maturing in England for a hundred years before the Revolution, Anderson and Nairn are not able to see the consequences of this maturation. In their analysis the Revolution was a break in historical continuity -- the consequences of relatively distinct and independent causes rather than the result of a long period of development within feudal society. The Revolution, for Anderson and Nairn, was not the birth of capitalism from the womb of feudalism. They must therefore reject the long process of the decomposition of feudal property and the development of capitalism among the landowners. Because of the method they employ, which breaks the continuity of the historical process and separates consciousness from social practice, Anderson and Nairn see the landowners as midway between feudal and modern civilizations. They cannot see the landowners as authentically capitalist in theory as well as practice.

Because of the conceptual tools which they employ, Anderson and Nairn are unable to see, as Edward Thompson rightly points out in his essay *The Peculiarities of the English*, that what was at stake was

exactly a capitalist redefinition of 'the basic property statute', from 'ancient right' to 'natural law' and purchase; of the mode and rationale of production, from quasi-self-sufficiency to the marketing of commodities for profit; and of productive relations, from the organic compulsions of the manor and gild to the atomized compulsions of a free labor market. And this entailed a comprehensive conflict and redefinition at every level, as organic and magical views of society gave way before natural law, and as the acquisitive ethic encroached upon an authoritarian moral economy. (SR, 316-17)

The Revolution may have been fought in religious terms, but it neither follows that it therefore had little ideological significance, nor that it was more dissociated from economic aspirations than political idioms usually are. The Revolution was fought in religious terms because religion really mattered to the participants. People not only fought for spiritual reasons, but the religious terminology also had very definite economic content congruent with developing capitalism. 'By destroying the magic of the Church,' Thompson writes, 'triumphant Protestantism made possible the multiplication of rationality and the dispersal of rational initiatives throughout the country and in different social milieus. Even before it had taken possession of the market economy, private enterprise and a qualified *laissez-faire* had taken over the cultural economy.' (SR, 332) Even though the change from a traditional corporate society to a competitive society based on a market economy retained a religious idiom, there was nevertheless a completely different consciousness of the nature of man and society in that idiom.

The settlement of the Revolution, Thompson notes,

registers not some half-way house between 'feudalism' and 'capitalism', not some adjustment of interests between a tenacious feudal superstructure and an embryonic capitalist base, but an arrangement exquisitely adjusted to the equilibrium of forces at that time -- so delicately designed, and yet, in its ambiguities, so flexible, that it was to endure not only through a hundred years of social stasis but also through the next fifty years of the dual revolutions. (SR, 317)

Because they separate consciousness from practice, Anderson and Nairn caricature actual historical development and impose ideal, extrinsic standards of theory and practice upon it. Measured against a 'pure' bourgeois revolution, the English Revolution looks for them miserable indeed. The bourgeoisie was subordinated to an agrarian aristocratic capitalist class. And there being no fundamental contradictions between these two classes, the bourgeoisie had no necessity for throwing off the aristocracy, and as a result never developed its own comprehensive view of the world. Quasi-feudal superstructures and ideology remained, and throughout its history the English bourgeoisie remained locked within their framework. Thus, Nairn writes, 'the English bourgeoisie remain partly within the pattern of the Seventeenth Century even today....'

The English bourgeoisie stood apart from the victory of the Eighteenth Century, isolated in a unique path of evolution, half innovator, half anachronism, bringing forth a new world from the very bowels of society while in heart and head it looked back to an older one... What need did it have of the Enlightenment? It could take what it wanted from it and produce its own limited, parochial Enlightenment in the shape of political economy and Utilitarianism. (EWC, 45)

Because they seek a history other than what did happen, Anderson and Nairn fail to recognize that there was a coherent world-view coincident with the development of capitalism. As intellectual leaders, Locke and Hobbes posited a view of human nature which saw man as a possessive individual -- a legitimation of capitalism which differed profoundly from previous images of man. Likewise the theories of Adam Smith explained the workings of and provided the justification for a society based upon a laissez-faire market economy. A new view of the nature of man and society arose from a particular equilibrium of forces and corresponded to capitalist practice.

With Locke and Hobbes a new view of Man and Nature congruent with capitalist activity emerged. No longer were either the individual or property subordinated to the interests of the community. Man was seen by them to be an egoistic agent, setting his own ethical standards, and property rights were viewed as natural and absolute. Their views were the theoretical dimension of a movement which smashed a world based upon religious and legal restraints upon the use of property, and where relations between men were governed by customary rights and duties, not by unrestricted economic competition. Society was seen by Locke and Hobbes to be made up of atomized individuals, each engaged in the unrestricted pursuit of private gain. Labor was a commodity to be bought and sold and property, no longer subject to communal restraints, was naturally and inviolably the object of unlimited individual acquisition. The market had replaced custom as the nexus holding society together.

* * *

The peculiar development of the bourgeoisie, according to Anderson and Nairn, had profound consequences for the development of the working class. The propertied classes' fear of the French Revolution, and counter-revolutionary war abroad combined with domestic repression to circumscribe the working class and cut it off from the rest of society. Viewed in Althusser's terms, there were no other autonomous contradictions to fuse with the contradiction between the proletariat and the old order and form a ruptural unity. The basic contradiction remained isolated. The tragedy of the proletariat was that it was premature. Anderson states, 'its maximum ardor and insurgency coincided with the minimum availability of socialism as a structured ideology.' (Anderson, TS, 21) It had to invent its own tactics, strategy, ideas, values, and organization from the start. It achieved no victories, but rather an astounding string of defeats during its heroic period, the first half of the nineteenth century. (Anderson, TS, 21) In the absence of a coherent ideology these defeats were a pure loss, 'Armed with a coherent view of the world,' Anderson claims, 'it would probably still have been defeated, but its experience and aspirations would have entered into an enduring tradition and have been saved for the future.' Instead, Anderson asserts that the savage repression which the working class suffered in its formative years drove it to form its own culture in its own universe. (Anderson, TS,

34-35) The defeated working class assumed a place within but not of British society. It became a separate and distinct class, accepting the role capitalism assigned to it.

The working class was the chief victim of the bourgeoisie's estrangement from the Enlightenment, as 'a supine bourgeoisie produced a subordinate proletariat'. (Anderson, TS, 36) The French Revolution, by contrast, was the political realization of the Enlightenment and its Jacobin phase, based upon an alliance of the petit bourgeois with the peasants, workers, and various dispossessed groups, pushed its most advanced democratic conceptions to the limit. Jacobinism brought capital into its inheritance, according to Nairn, by the hegemony of classes destined to be appropriated by capital. This was a source of weakness to the reign of bourgeois capital. Thus in France, the politization of the lower classes was a legacy that was a constant threat to the bourgeois order. (EWC, 46)

In contrast, the English bourgeoisie bypassed this Jacobin stage. It never had to confront a hostile, powerful and repressive ancien regime. As a result, 'it handed on no impulse of liberation, no revolutionary values, no universal language,' says Anderson. (TS, 36) The bourgeoisie never wanted to upset the social order, but merely find a place in it, and as a result they did not make the demands and alliances which would have given the lower classes the political education they in turn would need to transcend the social order. This situation was worsened when Jacobinism became a foreign enemy.

The working class, according to Nairn, has no foundation within capitalist society corresponding to the base that the middle class has when it arises as the agent of a new mode of production within medieval society. The proletariat has nothing outside itself, its own organization and consciousness. Blind, gradual, piece-meal transformation of the society by stages is not possible for the working class as it is for the bourgeoisie. Therefore, Nairn declares, 'Consciousness, theory, an intellectual grasp of social reality -- these cannot occupy a subordinate or fluctuating place in the socialist transformation of society.' (EWC, 52)

In order to grasp social reality intellectually, the working class had to become a class dominated by Reason, yet the evolution of British society militated against this development. Anderson posits that as a general historical rule, a 'rising social class acquires a significant part of its ideological equipment from the armory of the ruling class itself.' This remark brings into focus the difficulty the working class would have in England. The English bourgeoisie was, because of its historical evolution, estranged from the Enlightenment and German philosophy, and thus did not offer the working class the classic bourgeois tools for understanding the social totality. The working class had no basis for rethinking social reality except for the partial 'traditional' and 'empirical' doctrines of the bourgeoisie, and was never able to develop a theory to meet its needs. No significant body of intellectuals made common cause with the proletariat until the end of the nineteenth century. The aristocracy never allowed an independent intelligentsia to develop in England. (Anderson, TS, 35) The result of its history was that the working class was never able to develop a theory adequate to the task before it, and that when Marxism did arrive in Britain it found a hostile environment.

With the collapse of Chartism, 'a profound caesura in English working class history supervened,' Anderson states. Socially isolated from the rest of society, and unable to develop a consciousness capable of transforming that

society, the working class turned inward. Nairn states that it was 'forced into a corporative mode of existence and consciousness, a class in and for itself, but not of society, generating its own values, organizations, and manner of life in conscious distinction from the whole civilization round about it.' Only English conditions could make the worker such a total exile inside the society he supported. (EWC, 52) There was a kind of deference in this corporative consciousness -- for it resigned everything that was not a 'natural' concern of its class to others possessing wealth and power.

The parochialism of this outlook was fatal to all revolutionary ideas. A genuine distinct working class consciousness integrated that class into the entire system. Its experience was the opposite of coherent, aggressive self-assertion. 'This inward turned class consciousness,' Nairn writes, 'was a vehicle of assimilation whereby bourgeois ideas and customs were reflected downward into the working class, which transforms everything into its own corporative terms.' The English working class had a distinct class consciousness, but one which could not be expressed or realized positively in a non-corporative view of the world. After the defeat of Chartism, the working class was necessarily thrown back into itself and this condition was intensified. (EWC, 55) 'Henceforward,' Anderson writes, 'it evolved, separate and subordinate, within the apparently unshakeable structure of British capitalism.' (Anderson, TS, 33, 39) Consequently, the working class adopted more moderate and timid forms of corporative action.

It is this view of the working class and its consciousness which underlies Anderson and Nairn's analysis of trade union activity, laborism, and the subsequent development of British society and culture.

* * *

The method which permits Anderson and Nairn to split the consciousness of the English bourgeoisie from its practice and thus characterize both as partial and impure, allows them to do the same with the working class. Because they do not judge ideas and actions in the historical situation in which they arise, Anderson and Nairn can mechanically posit an ideal and ahistorical standard of what working class consciousness SHOULD HAVE BEEN. Its consciousness shorn from its actual struggles, the English working class looks horribly inadequate in comparison with a pure revolutionary proletariat with true revolutionary theory (which, however, exists nowhere in reality).

To make such comparisons is to denigrate the historical consciousness of the working class; since, as a class it does not have a 'revolutionary consciousness', it is relatively easy to ascribe a 'corporative' consciousness to it -- but one can call the consciousness of any group which hasn't made a revolution 'corporate'. To separate practice and consciousness is thus to mock both -- neither comes up to the level of an ideal standard. The denigration of the working class in Anderson and Nairn's work is the opposite side of the coin from the Communist Party's spurious glorification of the working class. The former see the history of the working class as a string of continuous defeats instead of continuous victories. What was the reason for these defeats? In one passage, Nairn writes, 'No external fetters could have withstood this colossus. It was held by intangible threads of consciousness, by the mentality produced by its distinctive conditions and experience.' (EWC, 54) It inevitably must follow from these premises that the working class must repudiate its 'false consciousness', reject its historical experience and follow the bearers of the proper revolutionary ideology.

Splitting consciousness from practical activity in this way makes it impossible to look at real people struggling in an actual context. Consciousness both informs and grows out of practical activity and is thus inseparable from it. Any theory which makes this dichotomy must expect people to be something other than what they are. It can only posit ideal consciousness and practice in a mechanical way, making it impossible to **open** a real dialogue with people based upon their actual historical experiences and perceptions, no matter how 'reformist' that may be. Such a theory, by its nature, must embody a consciousness 'superior' to that of the people. In the case of the English working class, for Anderson and Nairn, consciousness is not only separated from its activity, but ceases to exist as an active agent at all. Working class consciousness remains frozen to this very day in the mold into which it was forced in the middle of the nineteenth century. The working class no longer seems made of real living people, but appears to be a thing to be molded and shaped by a revolutionary elite. However, the working class, as it develops through its own experiences and struggles, does not need the direction of an elite which, while disregarding the concrete historical experience and development of that class, demands of it allegiance to their ideas alone. If a group of professional revolutionaries do posit such a role for themselves, I fail to see what either their theory or their practice have to do with Marxism.

I must, therefore, disagree sharply with Andrew Levine. Historical materialism and dialectical materialism, as interpreted by Louis Althusser, are not weapons in the hands of the proletariat by means of which the working class becomes conscious of its own activity and is therefore able to guide that activity to victory. Rather, by Althusser's propositions, they are weapons in the hands of those who seek the workers' struggle from above. Such is the continuity of philosophy and tactics: the Althusserian interpretation of Marxism, as we have seen in both theoretical and practical examples, fragments and keeps separate both the consciousness and the activity of the working class, and is antithetical to any notion of the self-development of that class towards its own goals, the restructuring of society from the point of production.

NOTES

1. The relationship between overdetermination and economic determination in the last instance is crucial to the understanding of Althusser's thought. The article by Althusser in *New Left Review* shows the complexity of this relationship a bit more clearly than Levine's presentation.

2. Perry Anderson, 'Origins of the Present Crisis', *New Left Review* 23; 'Components of the National Culture', *NLR*, 50 (hereafter NC); Tom Nairn, 'The English Working Class', *NLR*, 24 (hereafter EWC); 'The Anatomy of the Labour Party', --2', *NLR*, 28 (hereafter EWC). Anderson's 'Origins of the Present Crisis' and Nairn's essays on the Labour Party are readily available in *Towards Socialism*, edited by Perry Anderson and Robin Blackburn (hereafter TS). Also see Edward Thompson's 'The Peculiarities of the English', in *The Socialist Register*, 1965 (hereafter SR).

From an Althusserian point of view, Nicos Poulantzas criticizes Anderson and Nairn for having an historicist and subjectivist perspective. That is to say that the type of unity which characterizes a social formation is not an objective, complex whole with a plurality of specific levels of structure with a dominant economy in the last instance. History for them becomes the unilinear, temporal becoming of a class which is the subject of history and society. See Nicos Poulantzas, 'Marxist Political Theory in Great Britain', NLR, 43. Admittedly, Anderson and Nairn's theory is a hybrid based upon Gramsci, Lukacs, Adorno, Sartre and other twentieth century Marxist theorists. Nonetheless, overdetermination, autonomy of elements, and economic determination in the last instance are central to Anderson and Nairn's analysis although they may not be part of a totality as the Althusserians would conceive of it. Furthermore, in the course of their development Anderson and Nairn have become more consciously Althusserian (see NC, 9). It is the centrality of Althusser to their work that provides the justification for dealing with Anderson and Nairn's analysis here in an attempt to see the consequences of using Althusserian conceptions.

3. Some confusion arises at this point. Anderson is in the position of positing a capitalist revolution which destroyed the institutional and juridical obstacles of feudalism to economic development and yet did not transform the superstructures of society. (TS, 29) It is difficult indeed to understand how institutional and juridical levels can be distinguished from the superstructures of society. Since the structures of society are considered autonomous however, it is possible to see how the economic level could change those levels which affected it directly, while leaving other superstructures intact. This would mean that the capitalist, landowning, ruling class could reconstitute the economic order of society, transforming certain superstructures that were obstacles to it, but maintaining the social order (aristocracy, middle classes, laboring classes) and its place in it, as well as other autonomous superstructures. Though there is considerable terminological confusion in Anderson's argument at this point, I take it that this is what he means. (See SR, 315)

Leviathan

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Through a Glass Darkly

Greg Calvert

Andrew Levine characterizes Althusser's interpretation of Marx as 'the first major contribution to Marxist theory to emerge free from the stultifying influence of Stalinist dogmatism'. He also suggests that Althusser's silence during the May Revolution and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia does not reflect on his theoretical contributions because he 'is not a strategist or tactician, but a theorist whose views are valuable in informing the kind of thinking out of which strategy and tactics, and questions of political organization, can be fruitfully discussed.'

I find it paradoxical to argue these two points; for, if Althusser had indeed escaped Stalinist stultification, why then did he not freely express a non-Stalinist position in response to the official CP line in the two most important revolutionary developments in the recent history of advanced industrial societies? What is this lofty role of theorist which bears no relationship to the political events of the real world? Is Marxism itself now so 'destultified' - not only in relation to Stalinist dogmatism but also in relation to social reality - that its theoretical formulations exist in an idealist realm of pure thought?

In discussing the revolutionary orthodoxy of Rosa Luxemburg, Lukacs wrote that 'there are no armchair Marxists'. The attempt to create and legitimize such a category seems the essence of Levine's viewpoint. And, although I do not regard Althusser as an 'orthodox' interpreter of Marx, I do believe that Levine presents a faithful reading of Althusser. Unfortunately, this legitimization of Althusser's idealized Marxism is not just a question of academic armchairitis. Althusser lives in the very concrete world of French capitalist society as a member of the central committee of the French CP, a powerful political organization which plays a consistently counter-revolutionary political role.

The apparently abstract character of Althusser's 'Marxism' is integrally related to his political role as a party ideologue and derives precisely from the function of 'Marxism' in the Communist movement -- its function as ideology, false consciousness designed to mask the class character of the social reality which underlies it. If this role has the aura of the mediaeval scholastic theologian, it is because of the similarity of functions: to proclaim the purity of the faith and maintain its intellectual cohesion while the heretics from below (be they Albigensians or some Czech reformers or members of the March 22nd Movement) are burned, purged, sold out, or run over by Russian tanks.

Althusser's own insistent concentration on the 'purified', 'scientific', 'non-theological' reading of Marx reminds one again of the 13th century scholastic of the mediaeval church trying desperately to maintain the ideological screen

on feudal-class rule in the face of nascent urban-capitalist society. Theology in the mediaeval world was never 'the hand-maiden of science' which it claimed to be but rather the ideological arm of class domination. And so it remained in its Calvinist-capitalist form after the social-political upheavals of the 16th century.

His 'scientific' ('structuralist'?) pretenses to the contrary, Althusser's interpretation of Marxism is a specific, ideological reading of the holy texts in the context of a specific historical-ideological movement. It is the context of Leninism, the Bolshevik party, the establishment of state capitalism in Russia, and the international movement to defend the interests of the new Russian state bourgeoisie. But it is also an interpretation specific to a new historical moment in the development of state capitalism. It is the moment in which new forces of authentic revolutionary activity have come to challenge Leninist hegemony over the workers' opposition in the advanced industrial world. These authentic forces of revolt, be they in Czechoslovakia, France, or the United States, give the lie to the Leninist myth of a socialist revolution in Russia and the CP myth of vanguard leadership of the western proletariat. The Old Orthodoxy of the Leninist movement is thus challenged by a movement of socialism from below, of decentralist, non-authoritarian, anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist notions of socialist liberation and the hope for a non-repressive, non-manipulative society.

For the New Left, the world-wide Leninist movement has begun to assume its historical perspective: as the movement of declassed elements in the pre-industrial world who have organized successful revolutions in the face of their own weak and incompetent national bourgeoisies and then performed the task of directing the process of industrialization as a new state-bourgeoisie. Their successes have been undeniable though they have in each case been aided by the fact that feudal-imperial structures were on the verge of collapse and that some new force must inevitably have replaced the old structures. Ideologically they performed their task in the name of socialism in its Leninist formulation and as a result confused the question of human liberation with the development of state-capitalism. Outside the pre-industrial world their fellow-travelling movements did little more than propagate the ideas relevant to Russian (or, now, Chinese) nationalist foreign policy and stultify authentic movements of revolt against advanced industrial capitalism.

The last gasp of Leninism has been the myth of de-Stalinization. It is the attempt within the Leninist movement to dissociate the 'purity' of Lenin from the 'excesses' and the 'crimes' of Stalin. Althusser and his 'Marxist-Leninist Study Circle', represent the most sophisticated (and the most scholastic) attempt to square the circle. The result, despite the pious rhetoric, remains 'ideological' -- 'theological'. Reading Marx through Althusser's eyes is finally to see theory 'through the glass darkly'. His is not the scientific, dispassionate reading which he and his followers claim. Rather it is the final attempt to make Lenin's interpretation of Marxist theory respectable -- the new scholasticism. (Had I intended this piece as real polemic, I would have entitled it 'Althusserianism, The Highest Stage of Leninism'.)

Althusser reveals his viewpoint most clearly in his essay on ideology where he argues that socialist revolution will not mean the end of ideology but rather a new form of ideology. Certainly, if 'socialism' is accepted as a new form of class rule, as state-capitalism, there must also co-exist with it a new ideological obfuscation of the realities of class domination. Fifty years

of Leninist ideological hegemony in world revolutionary history has done much to illustrate the way in which Marxism can become an ideology of successful class rule and a powerful tool of counter-revolution in the hands of such organizations as the French CP. It has done little to clarify the problems of Marxist theory to the development of an authentic revolutionary movement in advanced capitalist societies or to the building of a free society. The revival in the 1960s of a left-wing opposition to Leninism has posed, however haltingly, this question in a new context.

I raise the question this way because we have recently observed the manner in which ideology can become a powerful tool in the hands of factional leadership in the New Left. Until recently, it was fashionable for more theoretically oriented elements within SDS to decry the 'lack of ideology' within the organization. I used to ask people what they meant by that phrase. Rarely did I get the answer which I felt was meaningful. For it seemed to me that what was needed was a clear theoretical understanding of the nature of neo-capitalism -- of the specificity of our historical context. What was certainly not needed was what we now have in SDS -- competing sets of mystical jargon which do little to clarify historical reality and much to make serious political discussion impossible. Absurd political positions gain respectability and adherents when the proper textual citations from Lenin, Stalin, or Mao (rarely Marx) can be produced.

Is there something beyond this notion of theory which we need in our movement? Perhaps so -- but of a very different sort than our Marxist-Leninist vanguards would prescribe. What is needed is a theory of revolutionary practice which is appropriate to the kind of society in which we live and which embodies the values which are central to the creation of a non-repressive society. It is precisely this which the New Left once represented and which made it a vital force -- precisely this which it lost track of and replaced with the Maoist phrase-mongering which now dominates an increasingly divided and factionalized movement. It is true that the New Left's theory of practice was not spelled out in careful detail but rather remained instinctually embodied in a set of values which emphasized love, community, quality of life and relationships, self-reliance, life-affirmation, and decision-making from below. The reversion to Leninist practice and notions of a vanguard party organization, cloaked in the rhetoric of the Little Red Book and accompanied by a lot of guerrilla-warfare posturing, has gone hand-in-hand with the rejection of the prior set of values. What has been sadly lacking is the serious theoretical discussion of relevant practice.

The historic debate with Lenin was really a debate about practice. At one point it took the form of Rosa Luxemburg's famous denunciation of the organizational practice of the centralist, vanguard, authoritarian party:

Lenin seems to demonstrate again that his conception of socialist organization is quite mechanistic. The discipline Lenin has in mind is being implanted in the working class not only by the factory but also by the military and the existing state bureaucracy -- by the entire mechanism of the centralized bourgeois state.

We misuse words and we practice self-deception when we apply the same term - discipline - to such dissimilar notions as: 1, the absence of thought and will in a body with a thousand automatically moving hands and legs, and 2, the spontaneous coordination of the conscious, political

acts of a body of men. What is there in common between the regulated docility of an oppressed class and the self-discipline and organization of a class struggling for its emancipation?

The self-discipline of the Social Democracy is not merely the replacement of the authority of the bourgeois rulers with the authority of a socialist central committee. The working class will acquire the sense of the new discipline, the freely assumed self-discipline of the Social Democracy, not as a result of the discipline imposed on it by the capitalist state, but by extirpating, to the last root, its old habits of obedience and servility.

At another point it was inherent in the early Lukacs's emphasis on self-actualization in the revolutionary process -- 'revolutionary activity is self-activity' -- and in Gramsci's notion of organicness as the key to revolutionary development.

It is instructive to recall that Althusser's initial importance as a party ideologue lay in his critique of the Hegelian Marxists of the 1950s who attempted to deal with the problem of values by emphasizing the early Marx of the 'Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts'. The threat which this heretical tendency represented to Leninist organizations required an ideological response. Unfortunately (or cleverly?), the debate never focused on the question of Leninism but rather on the relationship of the young to the mature Marx. Rather than discussing the practice of centralist organizations, Althusser chose to focus debate on the rather scholastic question of the 'epistemological rupture'. A neat way of side-tracking issues.

Althusser's treatment of Marx's dialectics is perhaps the clearest example of the way in which he is willing to bend and remake theory in order to justify the Russian revolution and Lenin's practice. The category of 'over-determination' is nothing more than a philosophical device for forcing the facts of Russian history into a Marxian mold which does not fit. Rather than tacking this new category onto Marxism and thus distorting the whole schema, it would be fruitful to produce a real dialectical analysis of the Russian development toward state capitalism. It would also do justice to Marx and render service to socialist revolutionaries. It would not, however, serve the ideological end to which Althusser is devoted -- the justification of Leninism.

Only in a recent (and painfully inadequate) work does Althusser return to the question of Lenin's own work. In *Lenine et la philosophie*, he presents what is perhaps the most hedging, garbled, and evasive discussion of Lenin yet to appear on the printed page. His assumptions are clear: Lenin was 'a great proletarian leader' who led 'the first successful socialist revolution'. Lenin distrusted philosophical debate because it was 'divisive'.

Unfortunately, Levine seems to share these same assumptions and it is precisely at this point that both Althusser and Levine must be challenged. It is also at this point - the critique of Leninism - that the New Left must begin its own self-reevaluation if it is to read Marx 'face to face' and redefine that practice which is relevant to making a socialist revolution in the advanced capitalist world. That reevaluation cannot happen if we continue to read Marx through the eyes of Lenin (or Althusser) or try to develop a vision of socialist liberation through the dark glasses of the Russian revolution. As long as we continue to do so, we will remain trapped in the blind alleys of 'epistemological rupture', 'over-determination', and the host of philosophical-ideological dodges which serve only to hide the reality of the 20th century from our naive, though searching eyes.

PLUCKING THE SLACK STRINGS OF SUMMER

Von Braun Says It Means Immortality "The other day, when the question was raised with what historical event I would compare this, I gave the answer, 'the event of aquatic life crawling on land.'"

On the moon landing, Associated Press

Meanwhile some one made an end of it, crawled back, having run after the boulder one too many times. That last push up the sticky slope took his breath too far away, a crevice opened in his mind and he rolled into it. "Fuck it!" And the word came into the bedroom this morning, plain and unpunctuated: Another man gone. His boulder, rolled from city to country to city again in the same molding country, stopped on the slope, the burden awaiting its next beast.

Rolls of fatty rationalization. "There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn" said Camus before he wrapped himself senseless into a film by Goddard. Possession of a life in the ending of it: All that nobility wears wrinkles now, my freshman tears long caked and washed away. The absurd after ten years is simple tedium. "His rock is his thing"; that may be, but what is this dying world but thing upon thing?

"One must imagine Sisyphus happy" -- also the executioner wears a sheep-eating grin. Perhaps he prepares to exploit the rock for its minerals, which science will break down. No, one must imagine Sisyphus mad, merely preserved moment to moment by a mountain's dumb solace. After all another reconciler.

I turn one face.
tripping over my anguish, pushing what will not be pushed, tired of being exhausted. Not enough friction for heat, only the drag. Tired of trails, afraid of the bush. Worse: not even sure I've been condemned. Then why go awaiting reprieve? When the leaves get to orange, will there still be leaves?

Humor me. From the launching pad called a bed I climbed on you, we blasted off, mastered our wobble, passed those moments seeking position, exceeded gravitational pull, spun slow orbits, and off down to a wholly other place I came down on the dark side with you, came down and in and made the most soft landing. Lost contact with Mission Control and didn't care. Rapture of the high and the clocks stopped everywhere on earth
But seriously

You'd run out of pills, no kidding.
You shyly handed me those words and what the hell, I made them a toy, why not. The seed of the man might turn out greater than the Man's female technology. Well, I'm bored with choiceless choice and could imagine worse than to have made new life this slack July.
Man has not yet evolved: Men have, and must for the moment still be horn, if only somehow to be born again.

POLITICAL PREFACE TO SKLAR

John Kaufmann

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

The National Convention of SDS brought with it this year the loud and ugly eruption of sectarian quarrels, and like a tidal wave moving across the ocean to sometimes unprepared islands, the factional struggles have begun to hit hard at local chapters trying to avoid the dilemmas of dogmatic quarrels. But at the same time, the convention expressed - almost by proxy - the failure of many members and chapters to take seriously the existence of a national organization. Concerned with building a mass revolutionary movement, we concentrated our early efforts on strictly local organizing, with only a vague notion of how our struggles linked to a national movement. Even on a regional level, we rarely coordinated our efforts, pausing instead occasionally in our local work to meet with each other and rap about the condition of each chapter. Our time tables, our strategies, were decided on the basis of the immediate needs organizers felt in their constituencies. Many excellent organizers have expressed their position on national organization by indulging in the politics of absence: they avoid bothering with national organizations, claiming that 'resolutions are only paper' and that the National Office, no matter who runs it, exerts no real leadership. And the circle closes.

Guided by this orientation toward the National SDS, we have enabled such political groups as PLP, YSA, ISC and the CP to exert a disproportionate strength nationally. This in turn has isolated local organizing, with the serious consequence that we have failed to aid each other in the development of a comprehensive theory to integrate and strengthen the steadily expanding work of local chapters. It is sadly ironic that the crisis in the national organization coincides with the development of a political maturity in many local chapters which strongly sees the need for a nationally coordinated view of our struggles, only to have the view clouded by an N.O. sectarian in its politics and exclusionary in its style. We have brought the problem back to ourselves, and we can surely no longer expect a leadership to naturally arise which we have not participated in creating. The inertia holding us back from national coordination is a hangover from our former style, and something we must face. The tendency to concentrate solely on local projects and internal education is strong, but we should not allow that tendency to obscure the need to analyze their present relevance, and to relate them to larger questions.

This letter is an appeal to people who share this same general sense of priorities with the Rochester chapter. We are in no way interested in 'recruiting' for our political position, or in forming a popular front. Rather, we want to open fresh discussion based on the assumption that national coordination of some sort is necessary and desirable among the chapters which share an assessment of the needs of the movement but which previously have been isolated from one another. Calling a national conference may be in order, though it is uncertain whether people are presently prepared for it. We must begin, at least, to determine if there exists a common political perspective which can unite people in a viable group, and if there is, to decide how it should function.

The Rochester chapter is willing to act as a clearinghouse for getting people together from Wisconsin, San Francisco, Boston, Western Mass., Stanford and other places whom we found sharing our political perspective at the N.C. The first objective of getting together at long range should be an exchange of position papers and papers on program. The crucial question is: how can we make a revolution in an advanced technological society? We should begin discussion on the effects of changes in the nature of production on our conception of class and of imperialism. We invite people to send responses and papers (150 copies) to us for distribution, along with names to add to our small mailing list. It is crucial for us to begin this interchange if we are to lay the groundwork for concerted national work.

Papers should be sent to:

John Strawn
8 Harvard Street
Rochester, New York

...that we are still in need of an 'old' theory seems to stand as a devastating self reproach; we should have brought the capitalist system to an end long ago. It reminds us of our failure; it is something like facing an ordeal, a labor of agony, we thought or wished we were finished with, only to find that in fact we have not so much as begun. Some of us may prefer the 'ideology of the future' -- it is incomparably more 'human' and intelligent. True, but it does not come cheaply -- we have not yet earned the right to it; it has no real political force because it is in the future, but we live in a political society dominated by the economic past, whose accounts can be settled only by a consciousness still rooted in that past. For it is only by this settlement that present society can be released from the grip of the dominating moribund past and transformed into the theater of the future -- and then, but not before, the 'ideology of the future' may become the expression of practical affairs. We cannot get to the future conceptions of progress by bypassing the old ideologies and concepts of progress, but by transforming them; for this is only another way of saying that we can not bypass the old society to get to the new, but must transform the old into the new; that we can not bypass our present selves to get to our new selves, but must confront ourselves as we are, express ourselves as we are, and in doing so transform ourselves into what we will become. Right now, the duty of every person dedicated to making humanity prevail is to mount the class struggle. Capitalism, imperialism, the profit system, exploitation of man by man -- not some external Carthage -- delunda sunt!

...from the conclusion of Marty Sklar's article

The need for an historical consciousness as a basis for an understanding of ourselves, and as a framework from which to evolve relevant programs with a consistent future, has never been so immediate as now. Sectarian forces are emerging -- forces that are vying for the leadership of an embryonic left, and which threaten its development. Neither PLP nor any of the factions in RYM have developed a full political-economic critique of our contemporary American society. PLP's critique is still in the 19th century, while RYM has no grasp of the internal dynamics of our country and as a result of this theoretical vacuum entertains erroneous conceptions of the nature of Ameri-

can imperialism. It was in beginning to deal with this problem that the Rochester SDS helped produce the May-June issue of RADICAL AMERICA. The article by Marty Sklar represents years of intensive work investigating the changes in American industry and marketing since the beginning of the twentieth century and their effect upon our culture, institutions, and class formations. Stuart Ewen's piece forms an important supplement to Sklar's by expanding upon his discussion of changes in the nature of social production during the same period, a development that was essential for the bourgeoisie if it was to sustain its power and which, up until recently, went unchallenged by would-be socialist-revolutionaries in America (except for a brief period in the '20s discussed by Sklar):

We believe these articles, although not directly programmatic, are by no means 'academic' and have been in the case of our chapter invaluable in the development of programs and strategy as well as in understanding better the previous organizing in which many of our members have been involved. We have written an introduction which may be of some help in approaching the two articles. While they are by no means exhaustive, we believe they may begin to offer a framework from which to evaluate the weaknesses of our enemy and, more importantly, the potentials that may lie in the dialectic of our movement.

* * *

While the people of this country are aware that there is a ruling class, by and large they see no necessity for themselves to replace that class. The arguments one hears in bars have a certain recurring theme: 'man is an evil creature and inherently bad, and it doesn't matter who rules, because whoever does will be dictatorial and will only impoverish the rest of the country.' This kind of thinking is not limited to blue collar workers; rather, it is prevalent among all sectors of the working class and is one of the primary problems facing organizers. Unless the question of the need for the people to rule (and by this, socialism is meant) is confronted directly, our struggles will be limited either to reformist politics or to self-destruction. We should bear in mind, in the latter case, that struggles that may momentarily disrupt the system, do not necessarily lead to revolution. Our enemy is shrewd and has weathered many catastrophes -- the depression, post World War II Europe, etc. To combat this mode of thought, we are in need of a critique explaining the regressive function of those who now rule our country. The nature of this rule is not static and its manifestations have many aspects distinctive to an advanced technological society. Only when men and women fully understand how this system and those who control it oppress their lives and frustrate the potential for them to achieve happiness, can we make a social revolution. No crisis, however severe, will lead to a revolution without this kind of consciousness.

In order to develop this critique, we must ask: what is really the capacity of our industry? To what extent is it capable of meeting the needs of the American people today? What is the nature of the way that it is developing and what will its potential be in the future? There is much talk of utopian, cybernated societies of the future. But no one until very recently has investigated in any serious historical way what the situation actually is. Sklar's article begins. And the implications of his work are far reaching. He explores our industrial evolution beginning with the turn of the century. He documents a fall in the number of work hours at the point of production in ratio to an expansion in industrial production. This has been no mild trend.

Unfortunately, the men most aware of these changes and their implications for the last 70 years have not been on the left. Here the issue is not the depression, but a much broader process, of which the thirties were only symptomatic. The Hoover commission, made up of power magnates like Owen D. Young, became very conscious of this crisis in the 1920s' when, in spite of the seeming prosperity, the unemployment problem was growing. The implications were profound. If work hours were going down, and if more and more goods were going onto the market, they were faced with a two-fold crisis. Their control over workers had previously been based upon their work place and the necessity for workers to labor long hours to obtain a livelihood. If the working hours grew shorter and goods became more accessible, then this control would rapidly diminish. Secondly, they had to find more markets upon which to unload the growing quantities of goods. Thus, those in power became increasingly conscious of the need somehow to subvert the growth of productivity and leisure, or retard it, or both, if they were to sustain their power. John K. Galbraith said it simply 35 years later:

Advertising and salesmanship - the management of consumer demand - are vital for planning in the industrial system. At the same time, wants so created insure the services of the worker. Ideally, his wants are kept slightly in excess of his income. Compelling inducements are then provided for him to go into debt. The pressure of the resulting debt adds to his reliability as a worker... Few producers of consumer goods would care to leave the purchases of their products to the spontaneous and hence unmanaged responses of the public, nor on reflection, would they have much confidence in the reliability of their labor force in the absence of pressure to purchase the next car or to meet the payments of the last.

- New Industrial State, p. 273

Changing the perspectives of working people to meet the needs of capitalism was no mean feat. It involved the smashing of the Ben Franklin thrift myth. This was more than a matter of getting people to accept the credit and debt spending mentality. The Ben Franklin mentality was based upon a bourgeois conception of freedom and democracy which had outlived its need and was now threatening. The idea of private property as the basis for full political participation grew increasingly hollow as control over the means of production fell into fewer and fewer hands. Men like Tom Paine were not apologists for the aristocracy, but at the time saw the idea of land holding free-men as fundamental for democracy. By 1900, that conception of freedom was becoming glaringly obsolete. The demand for a democracy of the people, carried to its full logical end was clearly becoming impossible under capitalism.

The response of the ruling class, and this is not new to new left theory, was to redefine a freedom which would not challenge its class control and would help to expand the consumer market. Man's desire for freedom had to be taken out of its historical dimension. If people were gaining more money and more 'free time' (Privilege?) then a new independence could develop which could only be a threat if left unchecked. Part of the answer lay in a change in the nature of social production. Leisure had to be integrated into a market economy society. Freedom had to become defined and limited to the right to choose which goods one wanted rather than the right to the determination over one's full social life. This is no airy concept (the desire

for control over one's life). Ewen's article shows that men like Edward Filene (Filene's Department Stores) way back in the '20s were quite cognizant of such a desire as a danger. What is control here is not just that social production was necessary in order to expand domestic markets, but that further, and just as important, the very nature of the growth of industrial production itself (its capacity to meet the needs of the people and liberate them) threatened the control of those in power.

To answer this problem, the rulers did two things. First they developed forms of social production that channeled discontent into avenues that would help the economy; expanding wages, within limits, or reduced working hours, if directed properly, were advantageous to a growing capitalist economy. The growth of the advertising industry was essential to this development, as was the development of much of America's trade unionism. This expansion of goods, however, could not go unchecked or it would increasingly liberate the people and destroy the economic balance of the country. The second factor, therefore, was waste-production. Elemental to this was the development of the 'military-industrial complex'. It was not foreign markets, nor any domestic program alone that got us out of the depression. The development of a gigantic war industry was the final key. Here was the way to develop a dependable market for producer goods which would perpetuate the class system: the answer to keeping people in the shops and offices and limiting their access to goods lay in directing production away from the people and into industries like military production.

The ramifications for all this are many. First, the ruling class can be seen as totally dysfunctional. Before 1900 it played at least a positive role in expanding the productivity of America. Since then, however, its role has been to limit productivity - especially productivity relevant to the needs of the working people in America. Redistribution of goods is not what is at the root of things. This kind of thinking leads to the fear of loss of the crumbs that are considered 'privileges'. What is essential is the redirection of production (and since much of our production is in producer goods this would include the rational democratic expansion of industry).

The question of people seeing the need for themselves to rule can be revised in this context. Workers' conception of the role of bosses is very similar to that of PLP. Both see their exploitation only in the fact that the boss makes, let's say, 40¢ an hour off each hour of a laborer's time. It still sees the boss as doing socially useful work, but reaping unfair profits from it. This misses the real quality of exploitation in 1969. The very nature of the market economy, of what's being produced, in what quantity, under what conditions, and under whose control, is exploiting working people far worse than the 40¢ alone. (Again, the military is the best example -- ABM, ASMA, etc.) It is the very work that a worker is engaged in that is being turned against him. This it is more than the fact that the bosses are making money off people. Bosses are keeping them from shorter hours and gaining the material abundance and social well-being by perverting the entire direction of production. The same holds true for taxes and social services. Even if you taxed the corporations heavily and sustained price control, as long as they were producing the way they do now, you would still not gain the revenues and benefits needed (things would be only apparently better) or change work life. Expanding taxes would be comparable to cutting that 40¢ an hour profit mentioned previously down to 20¢. It doesn't deal with the fact that the wrong goods are being produced at the wrong time in the wrong quantities.

Other perspectives on the left argue for demands for more jobs, for getting people back at the point of production. Again, this is an archaic approach because, except for a possible period immediately following revolution, the question of work for socialists is one of a diminishing rather than an expanding need. This does not mean an immediate end to all work. It does mean, however, the labor hours will go down at an accelerating rate. The question will be one of more systematic technology and planning rather than more labor hours. Our program should make people aware of this.

Finally, and most important, is the question of historically-defined democracy and freedom. Increasingly, the use of these terms in the movement is a matter of lip service or brings on cringes of cynicism. A dichotomy has tended to grow, if not in theory, then in 'espoused practice' between these values and what these radicals see as the 'needs of the people'. Our movement (SDS) began with the desire for a more democratic society and the logic of such a demand led us to socialism. If we juxtapose this desire with the economic aspects mentioned earlier, we can see the roots of the student movement of the early '60s, the youth movement of the late '60s, and what Sklar describes as the young intellectuals of the '20s. Young people have become increasingly aware of the potentials of production in their society. Increasingly, they see the vast bureaucracies, the military spending, the wastefulness of our consumer market, and the advertising agencies as 'absurd' wastes of time and effort. They are aware, to varying degrees, of the potential of such resources if used rationally, and have no real desire to participate in them as they now exist. (That a society can afford such useless extravagances - useless in the sense of meeting their needs - indicates to them that it is capable of offering a better life.) The capitalist work-ethic rings hollow for working class youth in a society whose TV describes successful men and women prospering with lives which seem so far away from any socially valuable work.

Young people in all areas of American life want to be able to control their lives and somehow they can't. Hip culture, street culture, has spread to blue collar youth, and working class high schools. The desire for democracy, for control, an end to being treated like 'things', to being subjugated to indignities, is by no means necessarily regressive, as most high school organizers know. For it is in dynamic conflict with the oppressive institutions for youth of high schools, colleges, factories, and the army. It can be achieved under socialism and we on the left must make that clear. Socialism means an end to the control of a ruling class and the democracy of the people. This is not utopian organizing. The experiences of the Wisconsin Draft Resistance Union, of a project in Union Springs, N.Y., and the insurgency we have seen in the Rochester high schools indicate that people are moved by the desire for a freedom beyond consumer choice. After all, that's what Marx wanted: a society in which all the people would become the subjects of history rather than the objects.

What we must make clear is that social revolution means that people can gain greater abundance and democracy as well. The question of struggles around wages, shop conditions, police, taxes, and schools are revolutionary if they are motivated by this drive. For only when people see the need (as compared to just knowing that they do not) to run their own society, and see the ruling class as frustrating this, can a variegated working class (blue collar, service worker, lower managerial, black) unite. Our task is, while conscious that some workers have advantages that others do not, to develop a unified class struggle based upon their shared exploitation and alienation.

Today a political-economic revolution cannot be made without a cultural revolution. The need for a cultural front must be confronted directly if production is going to be defined by the needs of the people rather than the needs of the people being defined by the demands of American capitalist production. If leisure and work have been subverted by our ruling class then we must begin to turn the tables on them. Work and leisure must be redefined if we are to effectively grow and not be manipulated or 'coopted' as was the 'old left'. In the process of struggle we must search ourselves (our movement) to find that humanity hidden in ourselves, obscured by the mire in which we have been born. Questions such as women's liberation must be looked at in their full light as the poverty of social relations for both men and women, relations subservient to the needs of capitalism, assisting in their collective domination. We must begin to confront the oppression of our culture as it fits into socially producing men and women in their everyday lives. Our work and organizations must project a humanism at conflict with the demands of capitalism, only then can freedom be defined in a way that will fundamentally challenge capitalism in all its manifestations.

This, of course, takes program and we are in the process of writing up what we have been doing. All of the above is obviously skeletal. It will be clearer after reading the articles which cover much more ground. Actually, the primary thrust of the articles is in dealing with the changes in the nature of class that accompanied the processes discussed. Clearly, this is only the beginning (a movement euphemism).

WE FALL TOWARD VICTORY ALWAYS

STEPHEN TORGOFF

Roofs burst with the weight of wires
the time before us closes
like a jackknife.
When we come to the foot of morning
we will own the whole day.
Our power awakens and tries itself on.
Those who have lost nothing shall not gain
tho the fire walk thru them.

C. L. R. James's Modern Politics

Robert Wicke

Modern Politics is a series of six public lectures given by C. L. R. James in 1960 in the adult education program of the Public Library in Port of Spain, Trinidad. The lectures were published at the time in book form, but the book has not been previously available, as it was immediately suppressed by the Williams regime.(1) With the exception of a handful of copies, it has been stored in certain state warehouses in Trinidad. During the decade since then, the relevance of the book and pointedness of its thesis have increased. The development of a movement in the United States, the May Revolution in France, the Czech revolt combine to enhance the importance of Modern Politics and to make it meaningful to an American audience in a way that it would not have been in 1960.

That James is an excellent speaker comes through in the text; the interplay of speaker and audience is left intact. (It is simply not edited away -- something which does work sometimes and not others, and in this case does.) This could, however, be disturbing to some readers; academic readers, in particular, are not accustomed to encountering sophisticated theses argued in simple, everyday terms, and in the form of a personal statement.

The West Indian context is important. Port of Spain is 'virtually a satellite city of London and New York'.(2) The population is westernized to an extreme degree; in fact, so much so that James has written:

The populations in the British West Indies have no native civilization at all. People dance Bongo and Shango and all this is very artistic and very good. But these have no serious effects upon their general attitude to the world. These populations are essentially Westernized and they have been Westernized for centuries. The percentage of literacy is extremely high. In little islands like Barbados, Trinidad, Jamaica and even in your own British Guiana, the population is so concentrated that with the development of motor transport, nobody is very far from the centre of things. There is an immense concentration of knowledge, learning and information. People live modern lives. They read modern cheap newspapers, they listen to the radio, they go to the movies. The modern world is pressing upon them from every side giving rise to modern desires and aspirations.(3)

Down the page he adds that they have what amounts to a '500 pounds a year mentality' on an annual per capita income of fifty pounds. (On Trinidad itself the figure is somewhat higher -- about \$400.) The modern temper, the cosmopolitanism are only a part of it; there is the quality of life that the people create on the Island (the steel bands and the pirate-taxi system come most quickly to mind), and also the pervasive desire for education.(4) James is a West Indian intellectual, the Islands' earliest and best claim to international repute. The materials he deals with are those of Western civilization, history, philosophy, literature, art -- the whole scope. He is in an advantageous

position to argue his thesis. He is if anything more disturbed and angered by the structure and character of world society than a European or American, but he escapes defeatism.

Most readers will doubtless find particular points of disagreement. James seems at times to give more ground than is necessary to some of the key figures in history: Aristotle and Descartes are both cases in point. A passage on 'the yellow peril' shows the effect of having been said prior to the Vietnam War. Another, a reference to Eisenhower, seems to come close to mistaking public image for reality. But to dwell on particular interpretations is to miss the point altogether. The task which James takes upon himself in these lectures is urgent, both in a practical, political way and from the point of view of adequate theory to sustain practice.

Marxism is what he sees as the theory, but not Marxism-Leninism as it is in the American Left today -- not the phrases, nor their non-dialectical, mechanical application. James is a particular kind of Marxist-Leninist, one who believes that 'Marxism is not an abstract ideal'. What he brings to Marxism is a mastery of dialectics and a willingness to examine society in all of its aspects:

In the end it is practical life and its needs which will decide both the problems of social and political existence and the correctness of a theory. But mankind has today reached a stage where action is conditioned by thought and thought by action to a degree unprecedented in previous ages. That indeed is the problem of our twentieth century.(5)

The uniqueness of that orientation in Marxism could scarcely be overstressed. Very few figures in the Marxist tradition have made an original contribution; most have either changed Marxism to correspond to middle-class aspirations - invariably a

tions - invariably in a reformist direction - or they have held to the formulas.

Modern Politics is a record of how C. L. R. James put together a variety of concerns on six particular nights in Trinidad in 1960; he made a case for the Marxist viewpoint, and a strong one.

* * *

City-states play an important part in Modern Politics. The Greek city-states embody the idea of a relationship between citizen and community which is crucial in the development of Western political theory. Rousseau's central problem was how to obtain such a relationship. Rousseau is of paramount importance to James because of his concern with direct democracy. Rousseau knew that political parties, institutions of representative democracy, etc., would assume a life of their own 'separate from the life and interests they are supposed to serve'.

The main body of James's analysis begins, however, with the Renaissance city-states: Florence, Genoa, Siena, etc., in Italy; Ghent, Antwerp, etc. in Flanders. They differed from the Greek city-states in one very important respect: they were wealthy. There was, compared to Greece, a tremendous surplus, based upon a form of capitalist production. People came in from the countryside and were employed in a cooperative process in the manufacture of textiles and other products. They city-states were torn by internal conflicts chiefly between employer and employee. The conflict was sufficiently

embittered that one popular leader, Van Artevelde, thought it necessary to eliminate all of the employing class over the age of six. That phase in the development of civilization was finished by the insoluble conflicts within the city-state. The phase which followed, the phase which we have now, is that of the nation-state.(6) It is now reaching completion and for altogether similar reasons. The modern states are faced with unlimited contradictions, because, within the framework of the policy alternatives available to them, they cannot attack the real problem.

Begin with the Welfare State. The Welfare State varies from country to country in its degree of institutionalization. The European countries have, since the nineteenth century, been far ahead in this respect. They are committed to a greater extent to full employment, public health, social security in general. In Britain 'they see after you "from womb to tomb": pre-natal care, the right to have any kind of medical care including expensive operations, the right to receive unemployment insurance or welfare without being treated as one who wants 'something for nothing' -- even free tobacco vouchers, and finally at the end, free burial. In short, it is the mitigation of market society in favor of consumption on the basis of need. But for all this, the state cannot touch the key point. It can do nothing about work; it cannot provide for creativity in the work process, and once we use the word - creativity - it cannot provide for that anywhere else either. Because it cannot do that it cannot end industrial conflict. The British state has been faced with extensive industrial conflict from the Shop Stewards Movement to the recent wave of wildcat strikes. In fact, full employment generates its own contradiction vis-a-vis production. It is more difficult for capitalist society to maintain labor discipline when there are plenty of jobs.

As for the United States, subsequent developments have borne out James's analysis. He refers to the steel strike of 1958 as an indication that industrial conflict had not been brought to a close here either. He also compares the way the Welfare State functions here to the way it functions in Britain. He mentions Roosevelt's proposal to Wilkie to end the political paralysis by a realignment of the parties.

To the present reviewer the implied connection is more clear now. In the United States, the contradiction within consumption acts as a veil for the contradiction within production. The Welfare State is run under the philosophy of the British poor laws -- public services in general are in a state of advanced deterioration. The environment is being ruined: air, water, land, everything. There is no coherent public responsibility for anything; nothing can be done about a single problem which is not a market solution, which does not put money, usually a tidy sum, in the pocket of someone who already has it. Meanwhile the military and space budgets are enough alone to provide a per capita annual income of \$520, not bad by world standards.

This altogether familiar portraiture veils what happens in the work process, but is not unconnected to it, for the sickness in the sphere of consumption feeds upon the sickness in the sphere of production and vice versa. Why should anyone go and work on a lousy job in some factory or office if he or she can get a decent living some other way? The poor law philosophy behind the welfare program is rooted in an altogether real situation. Work motivations are based on the size of the paycheck, on personal relations at the job, or on ever more elusive prestige factors; and all these are on the decline.

The American government is more bankrupt to deal with this than it is when it comes to dealing with all the other problems. The Kerner Commission advocated certain increased expenditures in the Welfare State, far more than the liberals could possibly get in the current situation. The report focused on unemployed and ignored the structure of employment in the black labor force. The report ignored altogether the fact that a sizable percentage of the employed black male labor force (55% in 1965) (7) was in the industrial working class. Two years later it would be ridiculous for anyone to argue that this is slowing down the Black Revolution. (8) Regarding industrial labor in general, the number of work stoppages has reached the 5000 mark, which is a high point, comparable in most respects to periods of labor unrest in American history, and a fantastic level by world standards. (9) The only conceivable solution the government will be able to offer is to attack the labor unrest itself and not the work process, which will probably mean a crackdown in the form of compulsory arbitration or the like. The most liberal administration conceivable will have no more policy alternatives open to it than any other national government in the world today.

* * *

The nation-state has created the possibilities for the post-scarcity era, but at the same time suppresses the possibility by shoring up national economies based on scarcity premises. James reminds us that in St. John's vision of the harmonious society (see Revelations), there is the necessity of suspending the laws of nature so as to provide the plenty to make the utopia seem reasonable. There would not be a sea. 'The fruits of the earth would bear every month... There would be plenty to eat... The lion and lamb would lie down in peace.' The entire manner in which St. John poses the problem has reference only to the past. The technical capacity exists to provide a decent standard of living for the population of the world within a quite narrow time span. It is not possible, of course, within the framework of nationalist economic policies; the limitation is self-evident -- the absurd, spiralling increase in the standard of living (paralleling the deterioration in the quality of living) in the imperialist countries, while substantive development possibilities are everywhere inhibited and systematically destroyed. For James the next step is continentalization with the goal of an industrial economy in which the world market as it now exists will be destroyed.

The problem, James says, is 'how to handle, how to master the mass of accumulated wealth, the mass of accumulated scientific knowledge which exist in the world today.' The mastery cannot be external, it must be from within. If ordinary men and women are to determine the use of such wealth and knowledge, it must be in their role as producers as well as consumers. Try it with something so simple as the consumption of durable consumer goods. One of the leading merchandising firms in the United States sells products manufactured for it by other companies. The employees of the other companies know that these products do not meet even the routine specifications, but the consumer does not know that. Government and the independent research firms (e.g. Consumer Reports) may mitigate the circumstance for some consumers, but there are quite definite limits which are related to the question of power. Over-all, the quality of goods and services in the United States has deteriorated at a rapid clip over the last two decades, and this tends to be the case in the other modernized societies as well. As producers, people could and would put an end to this state of affairs. And again, it does not seem to be too much to hope that certain products would not be produced at all.

It is, in fact, James's point of view that only the producers can bring the state to a halt. This is, of course, the familiar argument concerning 'strategic location'. But the point is that we have not reached in any country the stage in which the economy is dominated by fully automated processes. Nor are we even rapidly moving in that direction.(10) The current stage - which is the stage of crisis - is dominated by the assembly line and the production by routinized work within the framework of an increasing ratio of constant to variable capital. Those who hold technical jobs on the one hand and the poor on the other, both have strategic location, as well, but with severe limitations when compared with the potential power of the blue-collar labor force.

Nor is the modern economy dominated by the white-collar masses. In the United States, a check of the census reveals that what has happened over the long haul (the last 60 years) is that the white-collar sector has gained in size at the expense of the farm population, while the proportion of the labor force which is blue collar has remained rather stable.(11) Additionally, a number of jobs classified as white collar, particularly in female labor, are such by name only (e.g. key punch operators).

In a revolutionary situation the activity of the workers is decisive. The middle classes can vote and may have more votes, but 'the moment a revolutionary struggle is on... this group takes the railway, the other one the waterfront, the other one turns off the electricity...' The Teamsters alone could go far towards shutting down the country. The State, the political parties, and the trade union bureaucracies will attempt to shift the conflict to the plane of elections, collective bargaining, mediation, etc. When the working class moves it can shut down production or take it over from the inside and that is decisive. Brothers Cohn-Bendit corroborate the point:

From 27 to 30 May nobody had any power in France. The government was breaking up, de Gaulle and Pompidou were isolated... No stratum of the population was strong enough or reliable enough to oppose the strike.(12)

And conversely:

...once the call for a general election was accepted, the revolutionary tide began to ebb.(13)

* * *

James begins one of the lectures by quoting The Times Literary Supplement, describing our period, under the title of 'loyalties': 'a time of strained and breaking loyalties all over the world -- in politics, nationalities, religions, moralities, and families -- is certainly a time of troubles...' It is for James a crisis, a crisis which constitutes a 'total breakdown in all the things that really matter to civilization.' The nation-state has become a mechanism of suppression; its other claims have been vitiated. There is no civilization, but rather barbarism, and James enumerates it for you: collectivization in Russia, Hitler, the Morgenthau plan, the arms race, the space race (and the list we could not append).

The question for James is how the barbarism is to be interpreted. The interpretation frequently encountered is based on a series of modern versions of the doctrine of original sin. Man is evil, and it is necessary to control

him more effectively -- conflict resolution. The doctrine is a political doctrine, and watch out for it, he warns. Marxism, James argues, is the competing explanation. Capital rules and in order to maintain its rule, the state apparatus represses all that is creative in men -- across the board, the head, the body, and the activity which is the individual's contribution to society, simultaneously.

James discusses Freud - under the heading of 'the crisis of the individual' - toward the end of his closing remarks, and it is a most interesting passage. His emphasis is properly placed on infantile sexuality and the pervasiveness of neurosis. 'I am not sure,' James says, 'but I believe that when Freud wrote as he did he was conscious of society as it was and he meant that mankind would never be able to adjust himself to this society.' The model in Civilization and its Discontents, for example, is based upon the existent 'civilization'. (The particular society at hand is always confused with 'society' -- that is the key to the entire discussion.) James continues:

Freud was no socialist. But in a socialist society the unconscious could be the source of enormous power in the way human beings tackle their social and not only their individual problems...

What he says about D. H. Lawrence can be quoted in the same light:

You cannot reject Lawrence. It is true being a Protestant Englishman he rather shrieks and yells about things which people on the continent would take a little more lightly, but what he has to say about the sexual degeneration of modern society is as valid today as it was when he wrote it.

James's analysis resembles that of Wilhelm Reich; it is in one sense the other side of the coin. Reich also sees repression on the social level as the organized resistance to the creative possibility of man:

...why nobody wanted to touch it or to get at the biological core where I was working at that time. Before you can reach that core, you must encounter hate, terror, murder. All these wars, all the chaos now -- do you know what that is to my mind? Humanity is trying to get at its core, at its living healthy core. But before it can be reached humanity has to pass through this phase of murder, killing, destruction. What Freud called the destructive instinct is in the middle layer. (It is cultural - 'a structural malignancy...') A bull is mad and destructive when it is frustrated. Humanity is that way too. That means before you can get to the real thing - to love, to life - you must pass through hell. (14)

* * *

James has made an analysis of the crisis in terms of the nation-state. He has indicated that the nation-state can in some countries successfully solve some of the more extreme effects of the national market. He has indicated, however, that it cannot end industrial conflict other than by suppression and that a creative, even a decent way of life cannot be constructed or maintained within it. Nor can the nation-state do much with respect to the effects of the world market; the overdeveloped, wealthy states can seek to shore it up, since it works to their advantage with respect to the underdeveloped world, but even they do not have control over it. Capital is international simultaneously as it is maintained by the national governments.

The other part is extremely difficult for an American audience to grasp, for it will be hard for Americans to believe that the author of a quite hard-headed view could pin his hopes on the democratic movement from below. In the United States the paranoid view and/or abstract phraeseology is the order of the day. The very analysis of radical movements has been lost along with our history.

James says that in addition to the degeneration of the nation-state, there has been a democratic movement, which, at important turning points, has taken a political step forward. He begins with the development from the revolutions of 1848 to the Paris Commune. In 1848, the demand had been a vague notion of a socialist republic in contrast to middle-class republic. No one knew what it meant. In the Paris Commune, nothing was nationalized - the national bank was left alone and it was socialist in name only - and the political form taken was government entirely by the Municipal Council, with no division between the legislative and the executive. The Commune changed the nature of political authority in a way central to mass participation and control. As Marx put it, 'they rejected the bourgeois state and they made a state for themselves.' (15)

It is the Soviets which bring the development into the twentieth century. They emanated from the working class districts of St. Petersburg in 1905 and again in the February Revolution in 1917. They questioned the principle of territoriality: representatives were elected by the members of organizations of production. The Commune had made a revision of the nature of the state, a council in which the executive and legislative were merged, but the Soviets were an entirely new development in that 'these Russian workers, the majority of them knew nothing about Marxism, absolutely nothing, had formed a political structure which was based upon the economic relations of the country.' They were not based on Marxism as a prior ideology, but they were, nevertheless, a Marxist development. The Soviets were created spontaneously by the population: they were in no sense organized from above or from the outside. The party and the professional revolutionaries were caught by surprise by the development. 'Power to the Soviets', Lenin said. There was the workers' opposition, and the consolidation of state power at the expense of the Soviets.

Everywhere, in the twentieth century revolutions, essentially the same form reappears, in Germany at the close of the First War, in Barcelona in 1936, and so forth. But Hungary constitutes another important step, for the Workers' Councils demonstrated full consciousness of the difference in their political form from the political party. They announced that the political party was an inept, entirely outworn political form in the modern societies by repudiating parties and outlawing their representation within the Councils. This is a crucial development. On the one side the one-party 'workers' state' and on the other the working population which repudiates the party and the state alike. In the midst of the general strike they provided for the basic needs of the population (though this had also been accomplished elsewhere):

Their demands had resulted in a radical change of the workers' position

tion within the framework of industry. They had attacked exploitation at its very roots. Public order, their order, had been maintained. The distribution of food, fuel and medical supplies, had been carried out magnificently. Even a reporter of The Observer recognized this: 'A fantastic aspect of the situation is that although the general strike is in being and there is no centrally-organized industry, the workers are nevertheless taking upon themselves to keep essential services going, for purposes which they themselves determine and support. Workers' Councils in industrial districts have undertaken the distribution of essential goods and food to the population, in order to keep them alive. The coal miners are making daily allocations of just sufficient coal to keep the power stations going and supply the hospitals in Budapest and other large towns. Railwaymen organize trains to go to approved destinations for approved purposes...' (16)

Hannah Arendt makes an essential connection in view of our earlier discussion of the nature of man:

...nothing indeed contradicts more sharply the old adage of the anarchistic and lawless 'natural' inclinations of a people left without the constraint of its government than the emergence of the councils that, wherever they appeared, and most pronouncedly during the Hungarian Revolution, were concerned with the reorganization of the political and economic life of the country and the establishment of a new order. (17)

The source Arendt cites for this evaluation is the United Nations' Report on the Problem of Hungary, 1956.

The Hungarian Revolution was isolated. The USSR crushed it to prevent its spread to the East, a composite of forces (right-wing governments and left-wing parties) prevented its spread to the West. It was defeated militarily because it was isolated. Today, Europe is being drawn closer to the continental conflagration which for a long time has been the fear of the national governments. This is not merely a reference to the long-time instability of the post-war governments; that is all well known. Revolution is becoming continental in Europe, in the same sense that to speak of world revolution (18) is today not to push a point. Elements in Czechoslovakia became conscious of the importance of the rest of Eastern Europe. And, when there is the possibility of further 'disorder' in France, the news media, even in the United States, reflect the concern of the Italian government.

* * *

Hannah Arendt has a similar view of these developments. (Origins of Totalitarianism is recommended by James. (19) On Revolution had not been written.)

Both Jefferson's plan (the ward system) and the French *societes revolutionnaires* anticipated with an almost weird precision those councils, soviets and Rate, which were to make their appearance in every genuine revolution throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Each time they appeared, they sprang up as the spontaneous organs of the people, not only outside of all revolutionary parties but entirely unexpected by them and their leaders. (20)

And again:

The role the professional revolutionists played in all modern revolutions is great and significant enough, but it did not consist in the preparation of revolutions. They watched and analyzed the progressing disintegration in state and society; they hardly did, or were in a position to do, much to advance and direct it. Even the wave of strikes that spread over Russia in 1905 and led into the first revolution was entirely spontaneous, unsupported by any political or trade-union organizations, which, on the contrary, sprang up only in the course of the revolution. The outbreak of most revolutions has surprised the revolutionist groups and parties no less than all others, and there exists hardly a revolution whose outbreak could be blamed upon their activities. It usually is the other way round: revolution broke out and liberated, as it were, the professional revolutionists from wherever they happened to be -- from jail, or from the coffee house, or from the library. Not even Lenin's party of professional revolutionists would never have been able to 'make' a revolution; the best they could do was to be around, or to hurry home, at the right moment, that is, at the moment of collapse. Tocqueville's observation in 1848, that the monarchy fell 'before rather than beneath the blows of the victors, who were as astonished at their triumph as were the vanquished at their defeat', has been verified over and over again.(21)

There is an essential difference, however. Arendt does not see the Workers' Councils as able to run production. They are for Arendt solely a political form and as such not adaptable to the management of production, as their membership is chosen by political criteria.(22) The desire of the workers to run production is interpreted as individual aspiration to rise into the middle class. This is a much different interpretation of the social organization of production than that of James. For the latter, under the current system, the managerial hierarchies are dependent upon the capacities of the work force to a very high degree for what efficiency there is. It is a view of the industrial process which with a body of serious research - employing an adequate organizational model - would come into greater prominence.

There is another essential difference between Arendt's view and James's, for James sees movement while Arendt stresses continuity. Arendt is concerned with the practically coeval development of the political party and the popular councils -- as two counterposed, entirely different political systems. James concentrates on the way in which the revolutionary upsurges differ, as well as the continuity. The form that they take is superficially the same, but at the same time a transformation has taken place which is consequential for the nature of revolution in the current era. The Hungarian Revolution and the Workers' Councils, there and elsewhere, are not only an episode in a series of popular councils, but also the high point of a certain development, a high point which becomes possible only in the modern world.

James's conclusion is stated at the end of the appendix: 'The world will choose between hydrogen bombs and guided missiles and some form of Workers' Councils. James is quite clear what he means here. There will be either a society in which there is full participation by the population at large, a society that has that relation between citizen and the communal life which Rousseau saw as the nub of the matter, or the very possibility of social life will be destroyed. 'Socialism or Barbarism', he says, is more to the point in 1960 than ever; in 1969, it is at least the same.

NOTES

1. For as much of the story behind the suppression as is available, see James's volume, *Party Politics in the West Indies*, pp. 76ff and 157ff, and then, Ivar Oxaal's *Black Intellectuals come to Power* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1968), pp. 127ff. There can be no doubt that James knew Modern Politics would be suppressed. There is a double reason for the emphasis 'The first thing is to know. Anyone who tries to prevent you from knowing, from learning anything is an enemy of freedom, of equality, of democracy'; and again, '...Whoever, for whatever reason, puts barriers in the way to knowledge is thereby automatically convicted of reaction and enmity to human progress.' (At the end of the last lecture (p. 109) and in the preface, respectively.)

2. Oxaal, op. cit., p. 7

3. James, op. cit., p. 89.

4. The steel bands are important in a political sense, as well as artistically (cf. Oxaal, op. cit., pp. 49-50 and passim). The pirate taxi system is a kind of low-cost, grass roots taxi system which is not only effective, but a source of entertainment and vital information, including politics.

5. Preface to *Modern Politics*.

6. See *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Detroit, Mich.: Facing Reality, 1969) (first published in 1950), for the theoretical underpinnings of much of the following discussion.

7. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *The Negroes in the United States: Their Economic and Social Situation* (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1966).

8. See Robert Dudnick, *Black Workers in Revolt* (Guardian pamphlet, 1969).

9. The figure is 5,045, involving 2,650,000 workers (Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Monthly Labor Review*, June 1969 issue). See also, George Rawick, 'Working Class Self-Activity', *Radical America*, vol. 3, no. 2, and Martin Glaberman, *Be His Payment High or Low: The American Working Class in the Sixties* (Facing Reality Pamphlet, 1966). Also, a number of items on the Brumbach, Evansohn, Foner, Meyerowitz and Naison bibliography in *Radical America*, vol. 3, no. 2 (available as a reprint from New England Free Press, 791 Tremont, Boston, Mass. 02118).

10. Cf. Charles E. Silverman, 'The Real News about Automation', *Fortune*, vol. 71, no. 1, January 1965; and 'Blue Collar Comeback', *Fortune*, vol. 71, no. 2, February 1965.

11. In 1900, white collar: 18%; blue-collar: 36%; service: 9% (total manual and service: 45%); farm: 38%. In 1965 (Bureau of Labor Statistics): white collar: 44%; blue collar: 39%; service: 13% (total manual and service: 52%); farm: 6%. (See Wattenberg and Scammon, *This U.S.A.* (New York: Pocket Books, 1967) -- worth looking at, barring ideologically-slanted discussions such as the debate with Keyserling over the number of people living in poverty (the statistical considerations introduced obviously cut both ways, considering, e.g., the number of large families with incomes somewhat above Keyserling's poverty line); and such as the discussion of the black movement.

12. D. and G. Cohn-Bendit, *Obsolete Communism: the Left-Wing Alternative* (Andre Deutsch, 1968), pp. 124-26.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 127.

14. Mary Higgins and Chester M. Raphael (eds), *Reich Speaks of Freud: Wilhelm Reich Discusses His Work and His Relationship with Sigmund Freud* (New York Noonday Press, 1967), p. 109.

15. For Marx's initial discussion of the Commune and the state, see *The Civil War in France in Marx and Engels, Selected Works*, vol. I (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House 1962) pp. 516ff

16. Andy Anderson, Hungary 56 (Kent, U.K.: Solidarity, 1964), p. 40.
17. On Revolution (New York: Compass Books, 1965) (first published in 1963), p. 275.
18. See appendix for a discussion of the Workers' Councils in China in November of 1956.
19. 'Hannah Arendt does not understand the economic basis of society. But for knowledge and insight into the totalitarian monsters and their relation to modern society, her book is incomparable the best that has appeared in the post-war world.' (p. 110) See also 'A Few Words with Hannah Arendt' (same page and following).
20. Arendt, op. cit., p. 252.
21. Ibid., p. 263.
22. Ibid., p. 278.

MODERN POLITICS

C. L. R. JAMES

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With Eisenstein in Hollywood

Gary Crowds

'Please tell Mr. Eisenstein that I have seen his film *POTEMKIN* and admire it very much. What we should like would be for him to do something of the same kind, but rather cheaper, for Ronald Colman.' Thus Sam Goldwyn remarked after Sergei Eisenstein's arrival in Hollywood in 1930: it was to set the keynote for his entire stay in America.

After the worldwide success of *POTEMKIN* in 1925 many of the Hollywood studios, in keeping with their policy of importing foreign talent, were anxious to put its young Russian director under contract. Hollywood was always interested in new talent even if it meant, as it did in this case, risking inflammation of the habitual political paranoia of the Red Scares. In fact, after the huge success of *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT*, it was not unusual for the studios to be interested in productions shaded slightly pink. Eisenstein had been given a year's leave from the Soviet Union and was anxious to visit America, particularly Hollywood and, perhaps, even make a film there. With the assistance of his friend Ivor Montagu, a young British filmmaker, a contract with Paramount was arranged whereby Eisenstein, his assistant G. V. Alexandrov, his cameraman Eduard Tisse, as well as Montagu and his wife, would all come to Hollywood to make a film. The efforts of Eisenstein and Co. in Hollywood, however, were to come to naught -- as well they might for anyone who consciously came to Hollywood to make Art: 'Our objective was -- to make, with the nearly unique resources available there at that time, one picture that should be faithful to our principles of life and art.'

Montagu's personal account of Eisenstein's Hollywood period is one of the most enjoyably readable film books in some time for its wealth of anecdote and historically valuable both for its explanations of the ill-fated result of Eisenstein's American excursion as well as its first hand account of filmmaking in the Hollywood studios of the '30s.

While Marie Seton's definitive biography, *Sergei M. Eisenstein*, offers a much more detailed account of Eisenstein's visit to America (particularly in all its political ramifications) and the *QUE VIVA MEXICO* affair, Montagu here provides a valuable personal account of the group's failure to make a film in Hollywood. He suggests, for instance, that studio politics were as much to blame as the crackpot political machinations of Major Frank Pease and his campaign to rid America of the 'cursed Red dog, Eisenstein', for Paramount's rejection of their scripts. Pease's political scare tactics (employing large amounts of anti-Semitism, which was then enjoying vogue in California) are only briefly alluded to, Montagu suggesting as equally important for their failure the behind-the-scenes power rivalries at Paramount. The Eisenstein contingent was being sponsored by Jesse Lasky (who had signed Eisenstein to the contract and brought him to America) and the head of the studio, B. P. Schulberg, in order to consolidate his own position of power, deemed it necessary that Eisenstein and Co., because they were

'Lasky's men', should not succeed. He therefore rejected their script of SUTTER'S GOLD, ostensibly for budgetary reasons. When Jesse Lasky thereafter proposed an adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's novel, An American Tragedy, to which Paramount had bought the rights, Montagu concedes that they knew then that it was 'a final sentence of doom on the Eisenstein expedition at Paramount' for 'it would never be permitted to foreigners, even some Russians, to make An American Tragedy...' He was proven right. Pease's campaign had by this time gained sufficient momentum to force Paramount to end the agreement.

Montagu also sheds new light on the QUE VIVA MEXICO affair and the understanding between Eisenstein and his sponsor, Upton Sinclair, that had such tragic consequences for film art and served as the coup de grace for Eisenstein's American excursion. Rather than return home a complete failure after the annulment of the Paramount contract, Eisenstein made an arrangement with Upton Sinclair, America's well-known crusading Socialist novelist, for the financing of a proposed Mexican film. The production was halted, however, when Sinclair became alarmed at the length of the rushes coming from Mexico and the rising costs. Eisenstein returned briefly to New York, then returned to Moscow with the promise from Sinclair that the negative would be shipped to him there. Of course, Eisenstein never received the film and the footage was never assembled in the manner he wished.

Montagu suggests that Sinclair's motives for wishing to help Eisenstein were sincere enough: 'a genuine desire to benefit Eisenstein and help him to achieve his purpose; concern for the good name of the U.S. which he saw endangered by its failure to give Eisenstein an opportunity; (and) a not ignoble desire to become patron of a notable development in film art.' The catastrophe was initiated, it seems, by Eisenstein's naivete in film financing (the estimated budget figure he presented to Sinclair was based on an uninformed guess by a bookstore owner/friend of Eisenstein's) and further complicated by Sinclair's unfamiliarity with film production techniques (when viewing rushes, he could not understand why the same shot would be repeated again and again -- to him it seemed blatantly wasteful). Sinclair did not help matters by assigning a relative, rather than a professional film producer, as watchdog over the entire production in Mexico.

The book also provides a highly amusing document, with numerous anecdotes, of the then undisputed filmmaking capital of the world -- Montagu's scriptwriting experiences (at first, standard studio product and, later, with Eisenstein), socializing with Fairbanks, Pickford, Chaplin and other Hollywood luminaries, California sightseeing, and, of course, his not infrequent encounters with the minds behind it all. The image of the Hollywood boss as a fat, cigar-smoking vulgarian is not, it seems, all a myth -- stereotypes do indeed have a basis in reality.

Also included are the scripts written by Eisenstein, Alexandrov and Montagu in Hollywood -- published in their entirety for the first time, complete with Eisenstein's production sketches and notes -- SUTTER'S GOLD and AN AMERICAN TRAGEDY. Both scripts are easily readable, being uncluttered with technical instructions, and provide a highly evocative succession of visual and aural impressions. The latter script is also noteworthy for its experimental use of an 'internal monologue', a stream-of-consciousness technique refined by Eisenstein.

The portrait of Eisenstein that emerges is not a completely flattering one -- in praising his talents as a director, film theoretician, graphic artists and, in his voracious and wide-ranging interests, a throwback to the Renaissance man, Montagu also speaks of Eisenstein's oftentimes cruel and ruthless nature and his ability, indeed willingness, to subordinate personal relationships to his work. And this is, perhaps, the chief value of *With Eisenstein in Hollywood* -- its fascinating portrait of not just an artist who happened to have an insatiable appetite for experiences, ideas and people, but also a superior human being, the only 'universal genius', perhaps, the cinema has ever had. As Seymour Stern has said of him, 'He was the most intelligent human being I have ever met: he was intellectually free of illusion, politically free of dogma, socially free of prejudice, and spiritually free of superstition. He was refreshingly clean of medievalism. He was an intellectual light in a world and an age too often blinded by confusion, moral bigotry, political intolerance, religious tyranny and social authoritarianism. In Eisenstein I found a free mind.'

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Karl Kraus 1874-1937

Anson G. Rabinbach

Frank Field, *THE LAST DAYS OF MANKIND: KARL KRAUS AND HIS VIENNA*. New York, Macmillan, 1967.

Wilma Aberles Iggers, *KARL KRAUS: A VIENNESE CRITIC OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*. The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1967.

In 1967 two books on the Viennese critic, Karl Kraus, who died in 1937, appeared. Frank Field's *THE LAST DAYS OF MANKIND* tries to balance Kraus's cultural criticism and satire with political developments in Austria during Kraus's lifetime. The book is a failure because Field misunderstands Kraus so completely that he argues that Kraus was close to the Social Democrats until his later years, when in reality Kraus was the very opposite politically. All of Kraus's satire, his humor and his philosophical insights are ignored at the expense of already well-known political history. The second book, *KARL KRAUS: A VIENNESE CRITIC OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY*, by Wilma Iggers, is far better, dealing with Kraus's work in some detail. The book, however, suffers from a simplistic organization in which each paragraph is given a heading and is somewhat autonomous, resulting in the loss of the fundamental unity of Kraus's work and thought.

Nonetheless, through Mrs. Iggers' book we can begin to grasp some of the importance of Karl Kraus. In an era when positivistic notions of progress had captured the Social Democratic consciousness to the point where Kautsky could write that Socialist art would change the size of objects of art, making them larger, less saleable, public, and more accessible to workers, Kraus demanded a new vision in art and culture which rejected the polluted bourgeois spirit. Kraus's critique demanded that artistic values, that all human values for that matter, no longer be subjected to commercial interest, that man no longer would be a mere appendage of 'business-man'. He called for the end of capitalism, he attacked false sexual attitudes, calling for sexual freedom for women; he attacked the press for its distorted, rhetorical and fragmented presentation of the news, and for its destruction of language. Kraus demanded that the notion of progress be dismantled and that its false nature be revealed:

Progress... assures all creeping spirits that it controls nature. Progress molests nature and says that it has conquered it. Progress has invented morality and machines in order to drive nature out of man, and feels safe in a world-structure which is held together by hysteria and conveniences...

Human relations, and consequently all art and culture, were destroyed by capitalism and its ideology of progress. The solution for Kraus was not to be found in political parties; which he attacked for their dogmatism and obedience to the demands of business and commerce. Even the Social Democrats, he noted, carried advertisements from the same bourgeois they attacked editorially, and the Christian Socialists, for all their anti-capitalist verbiage

were rather tame, though demagogic. The solution was not, in fact, to be found at all. Kraus saw no hope for mankind in the future, he found no appeal in human nature, which he viewed as evil, perverse, and greedy, becoming steadily worse through contact with bourgeois institutions. In his pessimism Kraus wrote, 'And one day mankind will have sacrificed itself for the great works which it has created for its comfort.' He tried to speak to the working class, encouraging it to cast off the 'perfumed evaporations of the bourgeoisie' and called on it to make a revolution which made socialism not a matter of party politics but one which would affect their whole lives. He soon rejected this road, receiving only scorn from the party officials for his efforts. The stagnation of the left in cultural as well as political matters is the source of his conservatism, the source of the attraction which the right held for many young intellectuals in Kraus's century. His ideal was Vormarx, pre-1848 Austria, free of the bourgeois spirit, an age of true culture in which purity of language and purity of art prevailed. Like Spengler he contrasted the past 'age of culture' with the banal present and foresaw only doom.

Karl Kraus is an anachronism today. There are no more conservative thinkers of his type and stature. The worst of his notions, the vague anti-capitalism, the transcendent concepts of pure spirit, the romantic contrast of a cultured age against the crude bourgeois age, the yearning for the past, and the bitter antisemitism were captured and perverted in the rhetoric of European Fascism. Kraus himself lived to see the beginnings of this perversion. All the corruption of capitalism and its henchman, technology, had come to fruition in the Nazis who used for evil purposes the very ideals and concepts which Kraus thought could only serve truth. In the fact of this he accepted the demise of his own species of critic by remaining silent in the face of the Nazi terror which he, in his pessimism, had predicted. The best of his notions have been accepted, for the time being, by the New Left which is concerned with the relations of men in their environment, with producing a qualitatively different man, with the sexual liberation of women, and with the human use of technology and science. Perhaps there is also a place for the irrational, which Kraus held over reason, in the New Left. There is also much that he would have hated: cheap rhetoric, repeated cliches, false symbols, and mass manipulation. Kraus was an individualist, a pessimist, a radical, and a political conservative. He had a unity of purpose though he manifested contradictions. Despite his faults and his failures, despite his pessimism, his standards for mankind went far beyond the anemic claims of bourgeois 'universal humanists' and socialist pundits of progress in his era. For this he is still to be greatly respected.

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