



# Common Sense

A Journal of a wholly new type



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DATAILLE; SHORT STORY; POLL  
TAX; EARTHQUAKE; GERMAN  
CLASS JUSTICE; ENLIGHTNMENT  
SELVALORISATION; REVIEW



# Common Sense

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The ninth issue of Common Sense will appear in December 1989.  
Deadline for contributions mid-November.

Notes for contributors: send articles in clean typescript,  
single-space or space-and-a-half (not double-space). Leave  
wide margin on both sides, and wide gaps at top and bottom.  
Start first page half way down.

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Original illustrations (dance of death, etc.) by Aileen Wilson



## COMMON SENSE EDITORIAL



In an epoch of crisis, the distinction between marginal and mainstream theory is rendered problematic in the same movement as is the distinction between marginalised and mainstream practice itself. Equally problematic, where crisis obtains, are the traditional genre-distinctions between academic disciplines, between academic and non- or anti-academic theorising, between politics and culture and between fictional and non-fictional prose. A social and political crisis – as was seen at least as early as eighteenth-century Scottish "common sense" philosophy – is always an epistemological crisis as well.

Hence Common Sense. At present, academic publishing houses are amalgamating and organising themselves into cartels devoted to hyping mainstream orthodoxies at prices which protect these orthodoxies from marginalised threat: only those entitled to enter the requisite libraries can discover what academia reckons it necessary to know. Cuts in education, as a point of a sociology of knowledge, entail conformism in what is taught and learned. Similarly, the most successful fictional publishers are rushing downmarket at a speed which leaves the bookstall browser breathless. In such a situation, Common Sense sets out to break all the rules. Its conviction is that what appears marginal is only that which is politically and financially marginalised, more and more insecurely with the passage of crisis-ridden years. Instead of monopolising the currency of ideas, Common Sense's programme is one of dissemination. Instead of maintaining distinctions within academia and between the academic (the sacrosanct) and the non-academic (the profane), Common Sense sets out to break such distinctions down. Its strategy is one not of popularisation but of juxtaposition: only received wisdom can be popularised, whereas the popular reception of unreceived wisdom turns on its discourses remaining in an angular,

unregimented and reciprocally raw state. As long ago as the 1920's Walter Benjamin reported that truth can be seen as 'constellation': Common Sense, existing in no other way than as a relay-station for the exchange of critical (or crisis-oriented) ideas, picks up where Walter Benjamin left off.

## II

In all of this we are by no means alone. In 1989 there has appeared the first edition of the Small Press Yearbook whose opening statement is 'welcome to the brave new world of autonomous publishing' and which goes on to celebrate 'a cultural phenomenon of mind-boggling diversity': the revolt of an enormous network of small- and independent- and self-publication against the hegemony of cultural masters whose project it is to maintain the mainstream by monopolising, through finance and authority, the physical resources whereby the circulation of ideas occurs. The Yearbook lists literally hundreds of journals the intent of which, in form of not in content, is identical to that of Common Sense. In earlier editorials, we have declared that common sense is less a journal than an idea: if you don't like our version of an autonomous and critical publication then, on the same minimalist editorial and financial basis, produce your own. One section of the Small Press Yearbook contains invaluable practical advice on how to go about this. In the United States, a similar and astonishingly comprehensive index of small-press publications (complete with discussion of the problems attending self-publication and reviews of the numerous items listed) already exists, entitled Factsheet Five. The Small Press Yearbook is the first attempt, in the UK., to achieve a networking and interlinking of those to whom commercial publishing and academic monopolies are anathema to any conceivable life of the mind.

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The Small Press Yearbook (1990 edition forthcoming) can be obtained from Small Press Group, B.M. Bozo, LONDON EC1 3XX; Factsheet Five can be obtained from Mike Gunderloy, 6 Arizona Avenue, Renesse-laer, NEW YORK 12144-402 (USA).





BINGO - a short story by Walter Gibson



He walked down the corridor with a heavy measured pace, even footfalls thudding on the paving stones. As he had decreed, the only light came from real torches flickering in specially made bronze holders. The high curved ceiling above stretched into darkness, shrouded as the light faded into its oak panels. From the distance came the sound of whispering soft shoes; a servant creeping away before him back to its quarters from whence it would come only to serve his needs. The curtains, the papers, or the nine o'clock whisky and water.

As he walked he ran his fingers along the crisp edges of his dark perfectly cut suit. It was stiff and he imagined that the crackle from the torches came from the rich material. The long corridor stretched ahead. To his right a large white door shone grey and he paused, warmed by the emptiness of the hall, knowing in his absolute power that there was no one in the well lit room; that it waited for his own brief visit. The veins in his hands stood out as they closed around the brass handle, surrounding it in thousands of little rivers of blood.

He walked through the Guest Dining Room and its Annexe. The rooms were warm and softly lit with tall antique standard lamps casting circles of white onto thick patterned carpets. He sat for a minute before the wood fire which had burned to an orange glow. His fingers drummed on the cover of the leather armchair before he rose heavily to his feet and resumed his inspection, emerging further up the corridor, pacing on towards the heavy metal studded door of his study. His face, hidden in the shadows, was unsmiling but in this ritual walk he felt some small part of his worth as a solid achievement; and it was good.

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Deep far below the flagstones, underneath the cold wormy earth, there was a casino. Bright electric lights burned everywhere, showing up lines of fairy lights set into gaudy orange panels flashing all around the greasy smoky walls.

A huge plastic Bear revolved manically round and around on a pedestal, dipping and bobbing as it went, throwing a set of dice at each turn into a gold plastic dish. They always came up double sixes.

Rows and rows of one-armed bandits hummed with loud harsh tunes, their wheels spinning as they moved by themselves. Here and there they played out to the sound of electric disco jingles faintly reminiscent of christmas singles or popular hymns.

To their side eight ball pool tables were lit with shaded blue covered lamps touched off by more strings of the flickering fairy bulbs. There were no balls on the tables and their cloths' were unmarked, although the click of play could be heard across the room.

"... and on its own Number One, Kelly's Eye, with Number Five, a Cat's Alive, Whole numbers Yellow Five, Number Thirteen, Unlucky-For-Some And We Have A Result ! On your left. Take your cards. Any more, any more, Before we start. Eyes Down !"

The Skeleton languidly rocked on its swivel stool and leaned back to see who had won. It was some gibbering type all wrapped up in a rotting shawl who shambled past cackling and spitting some mumbled lines. A hot stench filled the Skeleton's nose as the thing rushed up the steep steps clutching its gold prize card with the embossed name and started up the stairs on the left, quickly disappearing up the unlit and narrow passageway.

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At eleven he liked to sign checks. He settled behind his wide polished walnut desk and waited for the double door to swing open and admit the little entourage. First in line before him would come Henry with carefully simplified sheets covering the major items of expenditure and date of authorisation. Martin came next, he would have the progress sheets on the holding companies which were to manage the subsidiaries tied up with over powerful managers or one time owners. Nigel held the programme diary, ready to finalise who would be seen and what was to be considered in the afternoon. Janet would stand on the other side of the desk, holding the delicate Wedgwood China tea service. His sock itched and he poked his finger down the shiny leather shoe and then quickly settled, straight backed and eyes front as the clock chimed.

The doors swung open and the four swung rythmically across the deep carpet and came to rest before him. He paused, smelled his fingers and eventually nodded at Henry. The day's work began.

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The Caller stood by a gold plastic chair, elevated from the semi-circle of players by a stage covered in dirty red carpet. He lent over towards them slightly, the bones of his huge hands crunching as they fell against his knees, flexing at a blood pulse. The Skeleton watched intently as the bones squeezed into the dark cloak, digging deep, rythmically, accompanied by a small swirl of dust or smoke.

The Skeleton felt dread and lifted its eyes to the blank hood which was turned directly to it. For the first time it looked and at first there was no startling, blazing eyes or features, only the shadows of some picture, unseen, and the pressure quickly building in its head, bringing colours and rock songs, making its arms itch with suspicion of some ineradicable crabs, making the corner of its sight shine with worms, worms in the plastic orange panels, in the pool pockets, swarming up the stool while it must stay absolutely still, bones locked. This is forever, forever a rising scream transfixed on and on in a living age of more tearing an age and finally a sing song voice calling to the Jester and the Skeleton could forget the creeping worms and watched transfixed the spinning heavy cylinder and its revolving balls. Sound began again and the Skeleton was unlocked, the Tables and play seeming crystal clear to it , the lights as bright and welcome as the moonlight on a face sent to rot in a grave. The Jester winked , nodding the shrill bells on his hat and hustled over to the Caller with tiny steps, stopping short and leaning over and into Its cloak, pushing forward a series of fluorescent numbers.

"..Red on its own number seven, Blue ten Maggie's den, with yellow sixteen, one six, never been kissed.."

The Skeleton ill-humouredly flicked across the numbers. Its teeth ground and it drummed with its skinless fingers on the marked and cigarette stained board.

"..Seventy-One for a White One, Seven and One, And we have a Result !

The Thing to the Skeleton's right looked from the side like a malnourished child, but when it oozed from its chair and turned the face was a bowl Weevil's, cracked and moving, the whole thing a mass of tiny shells held together in the semblance of a child. Now everyone and her dog had gone up this morning but the little Skeleton. Its drumming fingers began to tear at the corners of the formica.

"Take your numbers, Everyone aboard and off we go ! Yellow Four and One, Forty-One ! Red Fifty-Nine, For A Swine ! An Isolated One, Blue One !.."

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"Today is the Mountain top of my triumphs" he said to himself as he rose from the desk and retired to the smoking room for coffee. By the end of the afternoon he would have picked up the last of the occasionally troublesome independents. It was a matter of vanity rather than Business. His word had been law in the entire field, across the whole country, across

continents, for quite a while; not that he allowed this to become a talking point.

Health-conscious, he took one of the milder Silk Cuts and slouched in the deep creased armchair. For a second he stiffened, conscious of his image with the Help. Again he allowed himself to throw caution to the winds; after all it was only the Maid.

He watched the air trickle upwards, almost undisturbed by any deflecting currents, a representation of his own career; known as 'remarkable' in more than one great Nation. It floated increasingly effortlessly upwards to the top, which was where most of the shadow companies he controlled were to be found today. Not that the Unions in his Western divisions knew they were all his, or that it mattered whether they did any more, he reflected. It had gone beyond that long ago.

He tried to shift his underpants down a little by pulling through the cloth. To his faint discomfiture he found that he had been too hurried in the toilet and that residual urine had trickled out and dampened his leg. Of course the companies controlling basic commodity production did not even need to kowtow to these Union lunatics. Perhaps the methods were a pity, on occasion though. Balls ! He allowed himself a rare crudity and on impulse decided on a celebratory gin and tonic. He cocked a finger and a long-haired and long-legged Maid hurried up to him.

Fingering the fine crystal, he reflected complacently that the Maid's uniform was really cut too high for good taste.

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The rims of the joints of the Skeleton's bones were beginning to itch everywhere and he used both hands to scratch violently inside his eyesockets and up his chin. He flicked the numbers with a sharp elbow as he saw a vast hulking figure of the undead, some mass grave zombie with heads growing from where they had been thrown in together, pull itself up and grasp the winning card for the second time this afternoon.

The crash of metal fired on the Skeleton's nerves as the fruit machines behind them hummed and spun and money showered from a vast technicoloured machine which looked like a jukebox and paid out to the chime of Good King Wencelas. The tiny flickering lights shone into the back of its skull. The grease on the chair was full of grit.

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He always insisted on finishing all work at three. Sharp at ten minutes-to Martin arrived with the papers to be signed. He pretended to himself that he came to a snap decision while the papers were being laid side by side, but really he had been anticipating the risky excitement of this moment even as he had been enjoying the celebration of his final victory. The pen was weighty in his fingers. He set his lips in a strong line. After all, he had no intention of becoming a victim, although it was unfortunate that so many of his Lieutenants, as he liked to think of them, had become only so much dead weight. He wasn't some foolish old has been; they thought he didn't read the balance sheets, sensed the weighty structure and heavy duplication. He would not wait until his great work became vulnerable like an overripe peach, in victory came danger and he had no intention of being left behind. He scratched his signature on the parchment.

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"..Sixty-Nine, Any Way Up then Red On Its Own, Six with Blue Sixty-Six, Six and Six-Clickedy-Click !"

The Skeleton slammed the bottom number across, almost besides itself with fury. It was in such a rage that it hardly understood when the panel began flashing rythmically.

"..And We Have A Result ! A Result to the Skeleton on the right, any one else, Any One Else To Start !"

Its hand tightened close around the little card and it saw and heard almost nothing as it flew up the stairway, burrowing through the crack that led to the surface.

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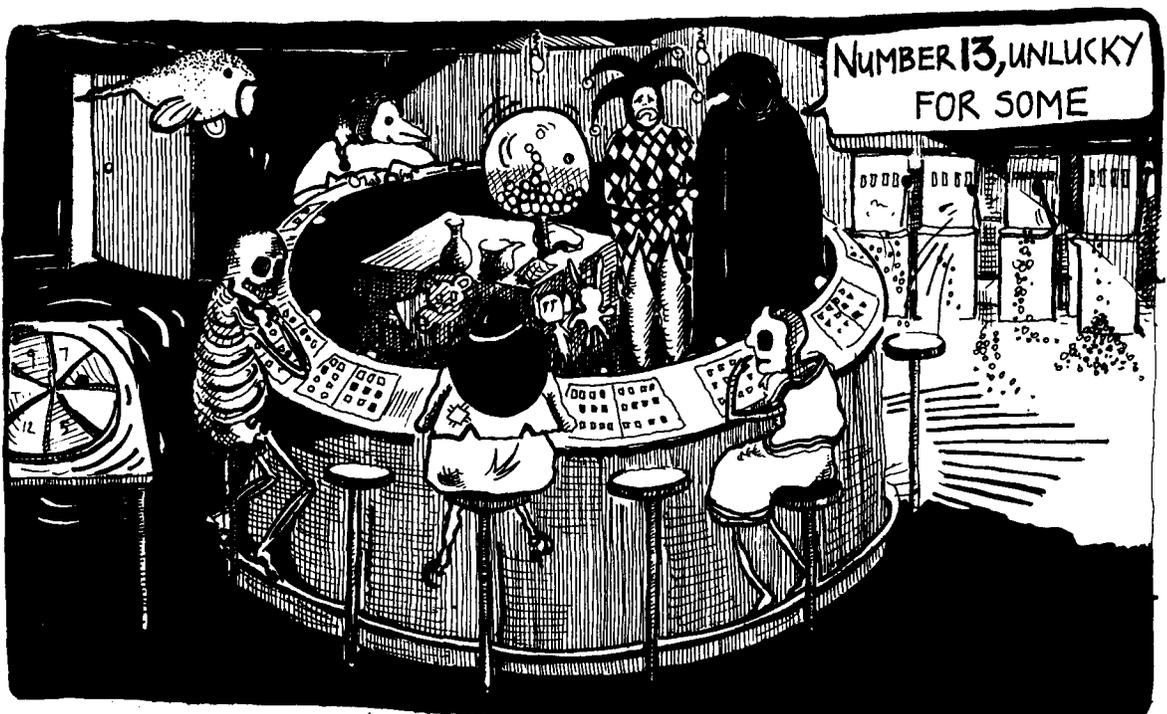
He rose heavily and Henry rushed to throw open the double doors. The flickering torches were already throwing their hissing light down the passage. He put the day's work behind him and felt the comforting solidness of the long walk and familiar inspection before him. As Henry closed the doors, he saw Martin quietly replace the phone.

His hand- made shoes fell crunchilly on the paving stones. It was quite dark after the study. Above, the curved roof had disappeared into the gloom. To his faint annoyance, because he wished to be alone after his day's labour, there was again a shuffling of rubber soled shoes disappearing by the Drawing Room door. He had no desire to meet any one there and shouted out. No one replied and he stepped ahead firmly, annoyed doubly now that he had been ignored. The corridor seemed

almost steamy. Of course it was smoky from the warm red lights of the living torches. Above there was a flickering and some noise. Perhaps there was some bird stuck, or squirrel searching for an exit. He must have Henry see to it tomorrow. It was quite noisy, those shadows could be wings, thousands of wings. The corridor stretched ahead, its walls bright though hazy and disguised by shadow. It seemed to narrow into the distance, not ending but passing on without end. It was dark above. He reached out to the walls and drew back. They were glowing without casting light and their surfaces, seen close to, were alive, many mouths meeting, wide open, coming together, half translucent, making up the wall, the corridor, wide open juicy mouths kissing wetly, many bodies together meeting together, crossing over and kissing, wetly, bodies like worms, seething together, just mouths and scaly bodies, intimate, together. Desperately reaching out, full of saliva and kissing, needing, needing As his knees came up to his chest, a mockery of running, slow jogging, a Sun silk advert, through bright haze, the noise above flapping, screaming, no noise, just thickness opaque noise thousands of wings, tight together just above the corridor, in the shallow groove above, pressed down the air thick the walls moving the corridor ahead narrow and endless running, slowly, getting nowhere, blurred eyes pushing forward with streaming eyes crying, suddenly crying, for the waste, for the poverty for the bellies the pain for the blindness sitting helpless for the tears and for us all as the paving stones ahead crash

With clearing vision sees before him the tiny crippled skeleton come dripping from the earth arms outstretched and waiting as the air cleared and brightened and the wings went and the walls were walls and his knees fell from pumping up to his chest and he fell gratefully into the bony arms the arms of steel, of strength beyond life, running, falling, into open arms, accepted, coming home with his mouth open to meet his new companion in rapture, enveloped and suddenly in dark

LUCIFER.....





**The trial of Ingrid Strobl  
An Interview**

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**EDITORIAL COMMENT:** Ingrid Strobl was arrested on the 18 of December 1987 charged with membership in a terrorist organisation. This charge was dropped during trial. After 18 months of detention and about 4 months of her trial she was found guilty of supporting, and assisting, terrorism. The judge's verdict was 5 years imprisonment.

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**Maria:** What is the background of the detention and imprisonment of Ingrid Strobl?

**Magdalena:** The cause was a bomb attack on the administration building of Lufhansa (the German air travel company) in Cologne for which the Revolutionary Cells claimed responsibility (1). The damage was only minor. Ingrid Strobl and was arrested in the aftermath of the police investigation. The prosecution sought to establish that Ingrid Strobl was a member of the Revolutionary Cells. At the same time Ulla Pennselin was arrested charged with membership in the Red Zora which claimed responsibility for the bomb attack on the German company Adler. The Red Zora sought to support the South Korean strike of women workers against Adler subsidiaries in South Korea.

**Maria:** Could you say w little bit more on this background.

**Magdalena:** Shortly after the bomb attack the Federal Criminal Office (BKA) raided several flats and, amongst others, an archive in Essen which gathered

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1: The Revolutionary Cells and Red Zora are underground organisations of the militant Left in Germany. They propose violence against property as a means of revolutionary emancipation. The Revolutionary Cells abandoned this policy when they kneecapped a Berlin judge who was responsible for deporting immigrants from Germany. The Red Zora is a women's organisation using the same means to articulate their politics. Red Zora focusses its campaign mostly on issues such as sex tourism, trafficking in women, female workers' strikes and, for the last 5-6 years, on genetic-engineering. They articulate their resistance through bomb attacks on peep shops, gentechnology centres and such like. Both organisations communicate their political opinion through (anonymous) contributions in newspapers and newsletters of the radical left.

information against, and produced papers criticising, genetic-engineering. Several flats of women who worked in this archive were subsequently raided. The federal prosecution service (BAW) used the bomb attack on Lufhansa as a means of criminalising people who organised resistance against issues such as genetic-engineering, but also sex tourism, anti-foreigner policies, deportation policies of immigrants, and female exploitation here and everywhere else. The criminalisation was undertaken and legitimised on terrorist charges. The aim was to declare critical writing and resistance on these questions to be terrorist and by doing so to undermine the social relations of people engaged in these activities and to undermine critical thinking through the terrorist use of state power.

**Maria:** Quite apart from the concrete case we are speaking about, the BAW must surely have some kind of reasonable justification for arresting somebody on terrorist charges?

**Magdalena:** Not really. You see, the terrorism act (the famous 129a) allows the police and state prosecution to seek arrest of somebody alleged to be either a member or supporter of a terrorist organisation. However, there is no need of any kind to prove a concrete case of terrorist action. What has to be established is that the person concerned is a member or supporter of terrorism. Such a charge, as you may gather, can be used in all kinds of ways. In many cases the terrorism act is used as a means of policing ways of thinking that are regarded as a potential threat to public opinion. Additionally, the arrest of somebody under terrorist charges for unfavourable ways of thinking opens up the opportunity of supervising the social environment attached to particular organisations. The human cost of criminalisation, solitary confinement, censoring of letters, and such like are obvious.

**Maria:** I find this difficult to understand. Could you explain this point a little further?

**Magdalena:** The BKA and BAW make increasing use of the charge of supporting terrorism by observing and supervising groups engaged in so-called sensitive issues such as genetic-engineering, sex tourism, deportation of immigrants and such like. They see the radical critique of this kind of population policy or female exploitation as providing the theoretical incentive for terrorist action. Secret policing, raids and, as it was the case with Ingrid Strobl and Ulla Pensselin, arrestment under terrorist charges, is legitimised as a preemptive surveillance of discussions that contain the possibility of terrorist attack. This interpretation provides something like a sponge of social supervision: every way of thinking regarded as politically sensitive and dangerous can be criminalised as potentially and practically supporting terrorism. The aim is to criminalise those groups which engage in a radical and practical social critique and to indicate the firm commitment of the state to crack down upon resistance with its own terrorist use of power. It would be of interest to mention that most of the 129a prosecutions are abandoned. The trial of Ingrid Strobl and Ulla Pensselin was motivated by nothing else than an attempt to undermine both militant and non-militant resistance.

**Maria:** You think that Ingrid Strobl and Ulla Pensselin were arrested not because of criminal offences but for political reasons?

**Magdalena:** Yes, undoubtedly! Ulla Pensselin was engaged in organising resistance against genetic-engineering and population policies (e.g. sterilisation policies against

black women and the encouragement of white middle class women to give birth to quite a number of kids in so-called 'third world countries'). She is one of the editors of a magazine called E. Kolibri, a legal publication concerned with the critique of reproduction technology and genetic-engineering. Not long ago, the Red Zora was engaged in a militant campaign against the German based company Adler. Adler was faced with a strike by its female labour force in South Korea. Red Zora supported the women by bomb attacks against Adler plants in West-Germany. Adler conceded that the strike in South Korea was won partly because of the activities of Red Zora. It was alleged that Ulla Penssiline was a member of Red Zora and one of the responsible persons involved in the attacks on Adler. Ulla Pensselline and Ingrid Strobl were tried under terrorist charges because of their way of thinking. The Lufthansa and Adler case were used as a broad attempt to undermine the Revolutionary Cells and Red Zora, and, most importantly, to undermine political organisation against patriarchic and class domination.

**Maria:** What, if any, was the substantial charge against her?

**Magdalena:** Ulla Pensselin was under observation for a long time. So was Ingrid Strobl. It was alleged that she took part in conspiratorial meetings. However, these meetings were those of the editorial group of the magazine she is engaged in. The prosecution saw its charge dissolve into nothing, resulting in the dropping of the charges against her altogether. She was released from prison after half a year of detention.

**Maria:** And what about Ingrid Strobl? As we know, the charge against her was not dropped. Indeed she was found guilty of supporting terrorism and subsequently imprisoned for 5 years. Didn't you say that the case against Ingrid Strobl was similar to that of Ulla Penssiline?

**Magdalena:** The prosecution alleged that Ingrid Strobl was a member of the Revolutionary Cells and a member of the group that was responsible for the bomb attack on Lufthansa.

**Maria:** How was the charge substantiated?

**Magdalena:** With an alarm clock she had bought. Don't laugh. I know it would be ridiculous were it not for 18 months detention, 4 months trial and 5 years imprisonment.

**Maria:** You mean the proof lay simply with the fact that she bought this alarm clock?

**Magdalena:** No, the alarm clock was a cause, the substance for her imprisonment was her political opinion which she expressed radically in her work as a journalist for 'Emma' and 'Konkret' (1) concerning issues such as sex-tourism and the question of deporting of immigrants.

**Maria:** What is the story of the alarm clock?

**Magdalena:** The BKA had established that the Revolutionary Cells, as well as Red Zora, used the same alarm clock for their bombs. In order to trace these people, the BKA had all alarm clocks of this kind serialised and had installed video cameras in

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1: 'Emma' is a monthly feminist magazine, 'Konkret' is a monthly magazine of the radical left.

all shops which sold this clock, so as to have a picture of every buyer. Ingrid Strobl was seen buying this kind of alarm clock. What made this buy interesting for the BKA was the fact that Ingrid Strobl's writing in 'Emma' and 'Konkret' was highly critical of sex tourism and the deportation policy of the FRG. The Revolutionary Cells, who claimed responsibility for the bombing of Lufthansa, claimed that Lufthansa is, amongst other business, engaged in both sex tourism and deportation.

Maria: Surely, Ingrid Strobl must have been known at the BKA.

Magdalena: Yes, she was observed for a long time prior to the buying of the alarm clock. The reason was her political opinion expressed in her work. I told you about this practice above.

Maria: What happened during the trial? I mean, was the alarm clock of any relevance?

Magdalena: The clock was never found. Ingrid Strobl maintained during her trial that she had given the alarm clock to a friend of hers. She did not disclose the name of this friend who became known during the prosecution as the famous Mr. X. It was never proven that the alarm clock she had bought had any connection with the bombing.

Maria: What about this Mr. X? Why did she not disclose his name?

Magdalena: There were four other people who were wanted by the police in connection with the arrest of Ulla Pensselin and Ingrid Strobl. Three of them were women and one of them Mr. X. They were wanted not specifically for the Lufthansa bombing but for their connection with these two women and their engagement in the political scene in Cologne. Ingrid Strobl maintained her innocence during her trial. She did not disclose the name of Mr. X because she did not want to put somebody else under the strain of the German class-biased juridical system, a system concerned with political persecution. As her own experience showed there is not much chance to get out of the system. If they want to persecute you, they will do so. Why then help the prosecution in a politically motivated persecution?

Maria: Since the alarm clock was not found and since there was no proof that it was the alarm clock bought by Ingrid Strobl, on which grounds was the Ingrid Strobl verdict based?

Magdalena: The prosecution sought to charge her with membership in a terrorist organisation. This charge was dropped. She was found guilty instead of supporting and assisting terrorism. This charged was based on her political opinion and on her insistence not to disclose the name of Mr. X. . She was sentenced for her political opinion.

Maria: Could you explain this a little bit more?

Magdalena: During the trial the question of the alarm clock played a less and less important role. Instead, the court tried to establish that the articles she has published in 'Emma' and 'Konkret' were identical in content and substance with the political opinion of the Red Zora and the Revolutionary Cells. I think it worth mentioning that she not only wrote critically about deportation policies,

the situation of so-called 'foreigners' in the FRG, but also about the continuous fascist tradition of the West-German judiciary. During her time in detention she finished a book on anti-fascist resistance by women. She also wrote open letters during this time. In these letters, which were published in the form of leaflets by supporting groups, she concentrated on expressing her political opinion as an anti-imperialist and radical feminist. She declared that her part in the resistance against exploitation was to engage by writing and journalistic work. In these leaflets she also explained her reason for not disclosing the name of Mr. X. Her publications and papers were read out in court, the aim of which was, as I said, to establish not only a connection with the theoretical position of the Revolutionary Cells but also to establish that her writing provided spiritual support for terrorist activities. She was convicted for allegedly supporting and assisting terrorism because of her way of radical political thinking. The criminalisation of militant critique was the object of the politically motivated trial of Ingrid Strobl. The political aim of the trial was to undermine the radical criticism of issues regarded as politically sensitive by the state. The Lufthansa bombing was merely an occasion for providing this politically motivated blow against our movement.

**Maria:** Before I ask you about the political consequences, I would like to ask you about the political support, if any, for Ingrid Strobl during her time of detention and trial.

**Magdalena:** There were basically three different kinds of support. Firstly, there was support by prominent left-liberals calling the trial a farce in consequence of the evidence and the violation of the liberal principles of the judiciary. Secondly, unlike other prosecutions on alleged terrorist engagement (§ 129a), the trial of Ingrid Strobl was widely reported in the bourgeois media. Ingrid Strobl was a well-known journalist herself. These commentators were incensed, expressing their disbelief that a bourgeois sense of justice could be violated to such a degree. The political dimension was disregarded almost to extinction. Thirdly, there was great support by the political scene Ingrid Strobl was engaged in. Radical feminists in Cologne organised a continuous supervision of the trial and published a newsletter about it. Together with 'Konkret' and other initiatives these women were engaged in publishing a two-weekly, nation-wide newspaper called 'Clockwork 129a' in which they reported the trial and other 129a trials which had previously not enjoyed public attention and discussion. This latter support concentrated to a large extent on the political dimension of the trial. 'Konkret' published reports about the trial regularly as well as articles written by Ingrid Strobl while she was in detention and in court.

**Maria:** How big was the edition of 'Clockwork 129a' and what was the position of 'Emma'? So far you only mentioned the response of 'Konkret'.

**Magdalena:** The edition of 'Clockwork 129a' was 20.000 per number. The aim is to continue its publication after the particular case of Ingrid Strobl's trial has come to an end. Before I tell you something about 'Emma's' position I would like to mention that we organised a national demonstration in Essen shortly before the trial came to a conclusion. This demonstration was not as well attended as we had hoped for. Only 10.000 people took part. 'Emma's' position was to some extent similar to those who disclaimed the political dimension of the trial. 'Emma', and here in particular Alice Schwarzer, the editor of 'Emma', sought to claim that the case against Ingrid Strobl was an individual case, which it wasn't, and that it was due to an error of the judiciary system. 'Emma' sought

to depoliticise the trial of Ingrid Strobl. Tellingly, 'Emma' demanded the release of Ingrid Strobl but not the release of Ulla Pensselin while the latter was still in prison. Apart from this wrong-headed support, 'Emma' did remarkably little. While 'Emma' articulated its outrage about the sentence, 'Konkret' took up the political dimension, saw the trial as being in the fascist tradition of German courts and analysed the sentence in a manner based on the way of thinking of Ingrid Strobl. While 'Konkret' sought to penetrate the surface of the trial, 'Emma' sought to support the federal prosecution by alleging to know the name of the famous Mr. X. After Ingrid Strobl was sentenced for 5 years 'Emma' even disclosed the name. There is no reason whatsoever to assume that 'Emma' really knew the name. The name given was merely based on conjecture. Surely, given the political dimension and motivation of the trial of Ingrid Strobl, the disclosure of the name of Mr. X forced this man into hiding.

Maria: What do you think was the motivation for 'Emma's' disregarding of Ingrid Strobl's well-known opinion on this matter?

Magdalena: The reason was simply commercial. 'Emma' sold out at newsagents. On the back of Ingrid Strobl and the political scene in Cologne, 'Emma' sought to exploit the political conflicts between anti-imperialists and the women's movement. Ingrid Strobl was engaged in both. 'Emma' legitimated this move by alleging that Mr. X was an under-cover agent working for the security service. It was alleged further that Ingrid Strobl was deceived by this man. In the event, 'Emma' sought to make commercial advances by alledging the likelihood that Ingrid Strobl, despite the non-existing evidence, was involved in the bomb attack on Lufthansa. The strong and outspoken critique by the supporting groups of Ingrid Strobl did not alter 'Emma's' position.

Maria: Apart from the commercial interest, there seemed to me to be some underlying current of a quite particular feminist opinion entailed in 'Emma's' reaction. Could you say something about this.

Magdalena: Sure I could. But I think we should concentrate on the political dimension of the trial and its surroundings. The discussion on this concentrated on the question whether or not the support was mainly a question of women's support or the support of women and men together. As you know, this kind of question is conflict-prone within the German left during at least the last 2 or 3 years. The case for women only was based on the argument that although the criminalisation of political opinion through the charge of terrorism (§129a) affects women and men alike, this case was different. The trial of Ingrid Strobl aimed at trying for the first time a woman who defined herself as a radical feminist. The question for political organisation was hence seen as a question of the political organisation of women, of the political consciousness of women and of expressing the anti-imperialist strength of women engaged in anti-patriarchic struggle. The argument of the other side was that §129a affected everybody equally and that the fight against imperialism, exploitation and sexism has to be seen in class terms of which the fight against patriarchic structures is one moment, although an important one. The political and organisational consequence was that meetings and solidarity groups were mixed. The organisational and substantial work, however, was undertaken by women. The conflict remained an 'in house' one most of the time.

Maria: You mentioned earlier that the aim of the trial and the police was to

criminalise critique and resistance whether militant or non-militant. Do you think that the terrorist use of power by the state has achieved this aim?

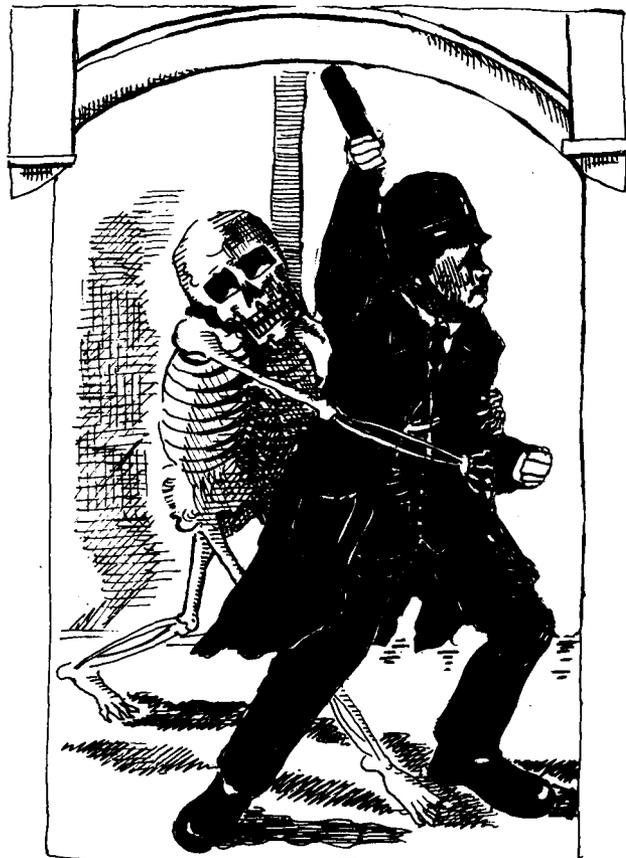
Magdalena: No. The resistance if anything has increased. As I see it, groups which discuss issues which are regarded by the state as supporting and provoking bomb attacks, such as genetic-engineering, sex-tourism, female exploitation here and in particularly the so-called 'third world' continue their work. I think that, even, they continue it much more vigorously. As it seems to me, this is partly due to the bloody-minded prosecution against Ingrid Strobl which opened the eyes of lots of women. Further, there have been two bomb attacks on travel agencies in West-Berlin which are engaged in sex-tourism after Ingrid Strobl was sentenced. A group called 'Amazonen' claimed responsibility for these attacks. Amazonen are located in West-Berlin and understand themselves as a West-Berlin sister of Red Zora. I think if anything the political trail of Ingrid Strobl could prove a boomerang for the BKA and the prosecution service.

Maria: I think we should stop here. Thank you very much.

Magdalena: Wait a sec. I regard it important to mention Ingrid Strobl's final communique at the end of the trial: 'I declare myself guilty of being radically left and of upholding a radical feminist way of thinking'.

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# The Uses of an Earthquake

by Harry Cleaver

Earthquakes, floods, droughts and volcanic eruptions, when they strike where we live, are usually considered to be instances of crisis and unmitigated natural disaster. Yet, recently I have had opportunities to witness how the meaning of crisis depends entirely on one's point of view.

The opportunities have come during two visits to Mexico City. The first visit was a month or so after the major earthquake that brought widely reported death and destruction. The second was a follow-up visit seven months later. During the days and weeks following the quake, television and newsmagazine images of the anguished search for survivors, of mountainous rubble and of tent cities of the homeless had fully prepared me to find a flattened city and prostrate population.

Instead, I have found a city with quite localized destruction and one in which at least part of the population was anything but prostrate. In dozens of the poorer barrios of Mexico City, the movement of the earth sparked movements of people using the devastation in property and the cracks opened in the structures of political power to break through oppressive social relations and to improve their lives.

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When the Chinese write "crisis," they use two characters, one of which means "danger" and one "opportunity." This expression points beyond the riskiness most people usually associate with crises

to the new possibilities inherent in any moment of dramatic change. The situation in Mexico City has shown just how perceptive this linguistic formation really is. Not only were the dangers created by the quake extremely complex, but so too were the new opportunities created.

Less obvious than the physical hazards of the quake, but no less real, were the economic and political risks created by this sudden disruption of social order. For the government, the earthquake was one more unexpected crisis superimposed on the foreign debt crisis and on the social tension created by austerity policies aimed at generating foreign exchange to repay the debt. Between the onset of the debt crisis in the summer of 1982 and the quake in September of 1985, neither government officials nor outside commentators ever knew whether the next devaluation or price increase would be met with acceptance or with massive social upheaval. In this atmosphere the quake posed the immediate danger of overloading the government's already taut managerial resources, rendering it unable to cope with an increasingly frustrated and angry populace. This is just what happened.

For many poor people in Mexico City, the immediate physical dangers of the earthquake were also quickly superseded by complex legal and economic dangers. Although the media focused on the photogenic collapse of major highrise buildings, far more extensive, though harder to see, were the dangerous structural cracks in thousands of buildings, especially residential houses and apartment buildings. This kind of damage left the buildings standing but made them too dangerous to inhabit. The majority of people sheltered in tents and shanties had fled such damaged, but still standing, housing.

When landlords and lawyers arrived on the scene the very day of the quake, the people in the community quickly realized that the greatest threat to them would come from these owners trying to take advantage of the situation by tearing down their homes and rebuilding more expensive, higher rent properties from which the former tenants would be excluded. This possibility loomed ominously because a great deal of the housing, especially that of the

poor, had been regulated by rent control laws since at least 1948. As a result, thousands of families had been paying extremely low rents and for years landlords had made no contribution to the maintenance of the buildings. Demolition and rebuilding would allow such landlords to escape rent control by turning their former tenants out into the streets — permanently.

Anticipating such actions, thousands of tenants organized themselves and marched on the presidential palace demanding government expropriation of the damaged properties and their eventual sale to their current tenants. By taking the initiative while the government was still paralysed, they successfully forced the seizure of some 7,000 properties. Although an even larger number of damaged homes remained unexpropriated, the popular mobilization and the potential for further government action undoubtedly prevented the eviction of many otherwise unprotected tenants. With remarkable acuity these militant poor had converted an eminent danger into a promising opportunity.

How was this possible? After three years of failure to resist austerity, how could the poor successfully push their case in this period of intensified crisis? The answer is two-fold: first, the earthquake caused a breakdown in both the administrative capacities and the authority of the government; second, the ability of these people to organize themselves grew out of a long history of autonomous struggle.

The breakdown of governmental authority is the easiest to understand. Many of the modern highrise buildings that collapsed were government office buildings and the destruction of both locales and records brought sizable sections of the bureaucracy to a standstill. Among those sections were the Ministries of Programming and Budgets, the Treasury and Telecommunications. Furthermore, the destruction of high-rises in central Mexico City involved the collapse of dominant symbols of the government's only claim to legitimacy — the centralized "modernization" bought with oil revenues, borrowed capital and continued poverty. The collapse of these symbols struck to the heart of the State's confidence in itself and in its policies.



While the government was still immobilized in shock, many communities moved into action. One of those, near the center of Mexico City, which over the years had developed a practice, and indeed a reputation, for successful autonomous self-organization and militance, is called Tepito.

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A relatively small community by Mexico City standards, Tepito has only about 125,000 residents in a city of some 20 million. An old, stable community, Tepito's people have lived there for generations with little influx, or outflux, of resident population. There is little influx, except by marriage, because there is little room in this densely packed community. There is little outflux because people like it there. They like the way they live and are proud of their own history of community struggle which they trace all the way back to the days of the Spanish Conquest.

To me this sense of history was intriguing but sounded at first like so much "invented tradition." Colorful but unlikely. It was only later, during a visit to the Museo Archeologico that I discovered evidence that their claims are perhaps not so exaggerated. There, on a wall in the Museum, is a large, transparent map of Pre-Columbian Mexico City superimposed on a modern map of the city. It is striking that Tepito stands today very close to the same ground as an ancient Aztec community called Tepiton. Perhaps there is more continuity in community traditions in Tepito than those outside want to admit.

However ancient its roots, Tepito survives today both within and underneath the official economy. On the surface, the work of many of its residents make Tepito the second largest producer of shoes in Mexico. They also produce clothing, stereo records, and many other goods. Complimenting this artisanal production are a wide variety of service activities such as restaurants, auto repair and retailing. Underground, Tepito's residents make their living by smuggling and bootlegging. The community's enormous open air market is known throughout Mexico City as a source of *fayuca*, cheap foreign goods smuggled in to avoid high tariffs. Under the counter of many an open air stall selling shoes is often a well illustrated catalog of hi-fi equipment available for home delivery. Less well known, but freely discussed by many, are the bootleg producers who sew American and European designer labels on Mexican jeans, who repair old Mexican irons and then glue General Electric face plates on them, or who fill empty Parisian perfume bottles with cheap substitutes.

What is fascinating about this economy is not its underground component — fairly common everywhere these days — but how little work it takes many people to make a living in it, and how much free time they have carved out to build a community around other kinds of activities. Although there are exceptions, such as shoe makers working long hours for outside capitalists at very low piece wages, the majority of the population seems able to earn enough income to live, more or less the way they would like, with as little as two to four hours of work a day on the average. These incredibly short working hours are affirmed by residents who explain that they are able to achieve this freedom from work partly by having all members of the family work (but only for a while) in the family workshop or street stall, and partly by choosing the lower income

and free time that is produced by this pattern of life.

Combine such short hours with the kind of low earnings you might expect in a Mexican barrio and you get some idea of the relatively low "standard of living" which predominates in Tepito. (Again, there are exceptions, such as smugglers who have made fortunes plying their trade.) It would seem an ideal verification of every conservative suspicion of the backward qualities of those in the underdeveloped Third World. They are poor because they want to be, because they won't work!

But "standard of living" is a slippery concept to say the least, however measured to the last peso by economists. What experience in the Third World has shown, and what the people in Tepito realize, is that hard work in the search for development via high personal in-

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- aims to document cultural work by women
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come brings profitable results for only the successful few and nothing but exhausted and wasted lives for the majority.

Instead, a great many Tepiteños have chosen a very different approach to life and to development. By minimizing their work time they limit their individual earnings but they also create considerable quantities of disposable time both for enjoying life together and for self-organization and collective struggle for community-wide improvement. This is done quite consciously, with pride in choosing a life style based on doing things together rather than on possessing things individually. For many in the community these are simply the values of the traditional Mexican peasant community, transplanted to the city. Traditional values they consciously counterpose to those of modern Mexican capitalism.

While the Mexican economy as a whole has been plunged ever deeper into crisis during the last few years, two very interesting things have happened in Tepito. First, the underground economy has prospered as the official economy has stagnated. The daily devaluations that have driven up the price of legally imported goods have made Tepito's less expensive smuggled ones more attractive to consumers. Second, according to one social scientist who has been keeping track of such things, over this same period the number of street parties in Tepito has increased seven fold!

This multiplication of street parties is symptomatic of a thriving and in some

ways joyous community life. In Tepito life is very communal, not only in the sense of community self-organization, but also in the more basic sense that people spend a great deal of their time in the streets or in their *vecindades*: a unique housing arrangement with large central courtyards surrounded by small individual habitations. Homes are small not only because people cannot afford more space but also by choice. While they may sleep, work or make love in their small homes, they spend even more time socializing, cooking and eating together in the courtyards. There too the children play, protected by the old who sit watch at the entrances which lead from the *vecindades* to the street.

We need not romanticize (the community is by no means free of poverty or crime) to recognize how people have chosen a life rich with social interaction over one less poor in individual material wealth. Tepiteños enjoy telling stories of those "new rich" who have moved out to larger accommodations in wealthier middle class communities only to return not long after, starved for the community spirit they left behind.

One of the most important results of Tepito's approach to development has been its ability not only to defend its community integrity but to elaborate its own autonomous plans for self-development. The most important instance of defense was its ability to thwart government plans for its "renewal." When Candelaria de los Patos, a similar community not far away, was "renewed," the people of Tepito watched carefully. They saw its inhabitants

swept away, scattered throughout the city; some even took refuge in Tepito. They then saw, rising from the bulldozed ruins of that community, a giant, modern housing development: Nonoalco Tlatelolco, whose high rise apartments were quickly filled by members of Mexico's middle class. From this experience the Tepiteños concluded, correctly, that urban renewal meant the destruction of poor communities and their replacement with middle class ones — a familiar experience throughout North America.<sup>1</sup> So, when the government turned to Tepito and said, "Ok, its your turn," they resisted, fiercely and with imagination.

From the history I was told, how they resisted governmental pressures was creative and resourceful. Drawing on the technical help of some young architects and urban planners from the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana, they elaborated their own community development plan, submitted it in an international competition sponsored by UNESCO, and won! The resulting publicity and legitimacy made it impossible for the government to move in and evict them.

The proof and the vindication of the wisdom of the people of Tepito came with the earthquake when highrise after highrise collapsed in nearby Tlatelolco. Thirty-six of the fifty-five apartment buildings were destroyed or rendered uninhabitable. Thousands were killed or left mutilated and lost everything. At the same time, the older buildings in Tepito received much less damage and only five people were killed in the whole community.

Today the plan's physical model covers a whole wall of one community center. In the wake of the earthquake, the original architects, now professionals, are redrafting the detailed plans for several representative parts of the community, in consultation with the residents.

The government, of course, fiercely opposes this kind of autonomy. The hegemonic PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) and its state, which have ruled Mexico for the last 50 years, can not passively tolerate such challenge.

They have tried for years to crush or subvert this autonomous self-organization, sometimes with violence, sometimes with cooptation. The people in Tepito are well aware of these efforts. What is remarkable is how they have successfully defeated the threat.

Besides collective physical resistance to threat of violence, the most striking defense mechanism of Tepito is its chosen form of self-organization: infor-

mality and decentralization. Aware of the PRI's efforts to coopt what it cannot crush, Tepito not only has an incredibly diverse set of organizations but most are organized in a way that avoids cooptable power structures. Tepito is a living example that the absence of a strong "organization" does not necessarily mean the absence of strong organization. Every imaginable group, it seems, has organized itself in Tepito. Artisans (e.g., several different groups of shoemakers, auto repairmen, clothing makers, and bootleggers) have organized themselves along "industrial" lines; merchants have organized their own distribution and financial services by trade and by section of the community; in the streets lined with their stalls, the merchants have also organized their own police force to fight shoplifting by those from outside the community; the inhabitants of the *vecindades* have created their own active groups and then linked up with other *vecindad* groups; artists have organized Tepito — Arte Aca, one of the longest lived artist organizations in the city of Mexico; those interested in rebuilding have organized architects and community paper *El Negro* (short for *el compañero*) which has been published steadily for at least the last 14 years; and so on.

In all these cases organization is informal; there are no written rules, no presidents, no vice-presidents and no treasurers. In Tepito people speak of "leaders" rather than of heads of organizations. "Leaders," they say, are those who can get the things done that people want done. Leaders change, but the mechanisms of change are informal, the focus of discussion just shifts from some individuals to others. There is, in short, no hierarchy that can be bought off by the PRI, only individuals working together. Any decision that would seriously affect the community, or any section of it, has to be made through complex discussion and negotiation among the gamut of organizations with some interest in the matter. It is not only an effective defense mechanism, it is also an incredibly democratic, participatory form of organization.

The looseness of these diverse organizations, both in their internal workings and in their interactions would seem to imply great inefficiencies, tremendous lag times between the perception of a problem and its solution. The typical costs of democracy. And in truth this kind of organization does require a lot of time commitment, particularly considering that the different organizations cut across the community in many ways and a given individual is likely to take part in several different groups. But, as we have

just seen, life in Tepito is organized in just such a way as to make time available for this complex political life. The extraordinary amount of time devoted to such public life is reminiscent of many periods of popular revolutionary upheaval when large numbers of ordinary men and women set aside unnecessary work to seize time for their own participation in the creation of a new political order.

Moreover, recent history has shown that far from being inefficient, this form of organization has allowed the people of Tepito to move quickly and effectively to help themselves in an emergency and to deal with a much more inefficient, partially paralyzed government. Almost as soon as the aftershocks had ended, the Tepiteños had assessed the potential dangers posed by their landlords and moved to take preventive action. First they built their shacks and pitched their tents immediately in front of their houses, where they could defend them, refusing government and relief agency suggestions to congregate in parks and parking lots, or even to leave the city. Second, in many of the hardest hit streets they set up block organizations to coordinate relief and self-protection from street thugs and from government goons trying to intimidate them and to take control. Third, within a week of the earthquake, they had met with representatives of over 150 other communities and autonomous organizations to form a Self-Help Network to facilitate the circulation of information, talents and resources (La Red Intercultural de Acción Autónoma).

Using such methods, the people of Tepito successfully mounted their offensive to demand expropriation of damaged properties. Today, everywhere you walk in Tepito you see the large red on white signs hanging from doorways announcing that the property belongs to the federal government. The next step, in which the Tepiteños are now involved, is forcing the government to sell the properties to them at low prices and to either help them rebuild or to leave them alone while they rebuild on their own.

Some people of Tepito quickly demonstrated their ability and willingness to rebuild by themselves. Early on, they began to tear down unsafe buildings by hand — carefully preserving the building materials for later reconstruction. They have also forced the government to allow them to legally construct other things they need, such as toilets.

With some 50,000 people abruptly thrown into the streets by the earthquake, the government was forced to face the unpleasant realities of Mexico City's grossly deficient sewage situation. Even before the earthquake, it was estimated that some four million people were without flush toilets in the city. The results are notorious, a degree of public unhealthiness of staggering proportions. Mexico City, it is said, is one of the few cities in the world where you can get salmonella and amoebic dysentery from breathing the air.

Despite this situation, the Mexican government had apparently steadfastly refused to sanction the independent building of low tech, non-flush toilets by



individuals and groups desirous of changing the situation. As a result of the earthquake and the sudden, obvious increase in the number of people living and defecating in the streets, the paralyzed government could only sanction such alternative technological solutions as could be constructed by the people themselves. In support of such activities, newspapers such as *El Dia* have begun to publish technically detailed and easy to follow instructions for composting latrines. Here again, the poor of Mexico City were able to utilize the earthquake crisis to take the initiative, this time in the struggle over sewage and public health.

Despite these successful initiatives, the rebuilding needed in Tepito, and elsewhere in Mexico, is vast and beyond the financial and skill resources available to all who need help. Therefore, along with facilitating and coordinating the circulation of available resources, the Self-Help Network of community organizations has directed part of its efforts to gaining access to some of the hundreds of millions of dollars of reconstruction aid which has been offered to Mexico by a variety of international agencies (e.g., the World Bank, various countries' Red Crosses, various church groups, Oxfam, and so on).

The Network moved quickly to train community representatives to prepare proposals for reconstruction projects that could be submitted directly to foreign aid groups, bypassing the corrupt Mexican government agencies. Some of these projects have been for the physical reconstruction of housing, others have been longer range projects for the creation of workshops and community services.

In each case initiative and control remains in the hands of the local neighborhood or village group with the Network providing skills and communications. While I was in Mexico I visited a number of projects organized and financed in this manner. In each case the projects had been carried out by the local groups who were proud to show what they could do for themselves, using foreign aid but without giving up their own creativity and autonomy.

Given the Mexican government's propensities for centralized control and for contracting out work to private enterprise without consulting local groups, considerable conflict has arisen in the barrios of Mexico City over State directed reconstruction. At first, many people, tired of living in the streets, welcomed the help. But then, as they observed the type of buildings being constructed, they rebelled and angrily and directly blocked further work. As

already indicated, the people in Tepito, and in many other communities, have clear ideas about how they want their community structured, including the style and architecture of their habitations. Again and again the government and its contractors have ignored or opposed their wishes, minimizing costs and constructing vertical apartment buildings without the traditional *vecindad* organization around a central courtyard. As a result, there have been many pitched battles with the government over the concrete details of reconstruction.

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Danger and opportunity. The people of Tepito have proven themselves far more capable than the government both of responding to the dangers and of seizing the opportunities created by the earthquake. If the debt crisis, and now the collapse of oil prices, have thrown Mexican "development" into question as a viable path to social improvement, the earthquake crisis has brought into view a long existent but rarely recognized alternative. That alternative lies in the ability and willingness of the people of Tepito, as well as those in many other barrios, to assert a different set of values: those of autonomy, self-activity, and the subordination of work to social needs. It is also embodied in their ability, as against governmental paralysis, to design and implement their own projects, thus elaborating those values in concrete practice. Time and again, the people of Tepito are acting to meet their own needs and then presenting the

government with a *fait accompli* to be legalized ex-post.

Given the way they are organized, and their values and attitudes so antithetical to those of official Mexican capitalism, it is unlikely the government can coopt the people of Tepito. They would have to be crushed, and made over into something quite different from what they are today. Fortunately, the continuation of economic crisis in Mexico serves to preoccupy the government and forces it to stretch its resources of control. Simultaneously, like the earthquake, it creates more opportunities for the Mexican people to elaborate their won autonomy against official development plans and to take control over their own lives.

For those of us outside of Mexico, the people of Tepito have an important lesson to teach, not only about the uses of an earthquake, but about the use of crisis more generally. Every crisis involves change and contains opportunities for movement in new directions. Crises are not to be feared or "solved," they should rather be embraced and their opportunities explored. We should always be ready to take advantage of any crack or rupture in the structures of power which confine us. Only those who benefit from these structures should fear such cracks. For the rest of us, they are openings through which we may gain access to more freedom.

**Footnote:**

1) For a discussion of the state's use of "urban renewal" for political control, see *Midnight Notes* #4, *Space Notes*, "Spatial Deconcentration in D.C."



# MARGINALITY & SELF-VALORIZATION

by Harry Cleaver

In the notes that follow I want to discuss the politics of the dichotomy center-margins from two points of view. First, I accept the dichotomy and look at the political economy of the relations embodied in this concept. Second, I critique the dichotomy and sketch a very different way of thinking about and dealing with what are called the "margins."

## The Political Economy of the Margins

In periods of crisis and rapid change, such as the present, what has been "central" is often the focal point of crisis and what has been "marginal" often constitutes a major source of innovative change. Institutions, industrial sectors, geographical regions, even countries, which during the previous period formed what is sometimes called the "core" of economic development or capital accumulation, are plunged into crisis in the sense that the patterns and structures of power on which accumulation was based have been undermined by no longer manageable social conflicts. During such crises, when maintenance or restoration of old patterns is no longer possible, change is forced and new arrangements must emerge. The source of those new arrangements, of institutions, of industrial structure, of the patterns of reproduction, of the hierarchy of industries, geographical regions and national economies, is generally to be found in the dynamic of social forces which undermined the old arrangements in the first place. That dynamic always involves a recomposition of the hierarchical social order in which various groups succeed in breaking out of their assigned role or in linking their struggles to other groups from whom they had been separated or in so rigidifying their part of the hierarchy as to destroy its usefulness within the overall structure of accumulation. This kind of recomposition, which we should recognize as political in the sense that it has the power to throw the whole socio-political system into crisis, always involves changes in the relations between the center and the margins, which is to say between those higher up in the hierarchical order of the period and those lower down, between high waged and low waged workers, between the waged and the wageless, among the wageless themselves.

In these circumstances the problem for the managers of the system is to find a new class composition, a new pattern of hierarchical arrangements, which can be managed, i.e., accumulated, one in which valorization is possible on an expanded scale. To do this two kinds of strategy are possible: either an attempt is made to restabilize the old pattern through repression or somehow is found to harness the changing patterns of power and "centralize" the "marginal" forces which have forced themselves to the fore. The former approach often produces a regressive stagnation or, at best, purely quantitative expansion, while the latter may, if successful, generate a new cycle of development and accumulation.

Because capitalism is a fundamentally one dimensional, boring and repetitive way of organizing society the only real sources of creativity, innovation and change must come from "outside," from the "margins." In class terms capitalist valorization organizes society by putting people to work producing surplus work whose reinvestment results in another round of imposed work, and so on endlessly. Qualitative change, e.g., in quality of life, is subordinated to quantitative change; innovation to accumulation. Capital is dead labor and as dead labor it does not change; it only piles up like so much carrion. The only source of change, of life, is the human activity business is able to annex and harness for its own growth. Thus the importance to capital of people's imagination and struggles which it must strive to harness, in the form of new labor power, new products, new technology, new markets, and so on if it is to evolve and not merely expand its scale. For example, curiosity and imagination about the natural world is structured by schooling, harnessed by scientific or engineering professions and structured through corporate and governmental jobs. When such curiosity and imagination escapes such control, as it did during the energy crisis as many "professionals" as well as unharnessed

"amateurs" shifted their preoccupations to solar energy and dreamed up innovative ways of organizing human and non-human energy, the problem for capital was how to annex these innovations through commercialization and to convert this whole realm of activity from subversive opposition to the current order into an integrated part of it. Similarly, but on a different level, an essential part of the Keynesian solution to the Great Depression was the development of mechanisms (i.e., the productivity deals in collective bargaining contracts and the state manipulation of monetary and fiscal policy) to harness workers successful struggles for higher wages (which might otherwise have destroyed the system) in such a way that they became a motor of capitalist development. Such harnessings are known, in the rubric of critical theory, as "instrumentalization." When what was paradigmatic and central yesterday is undermined by struggle it may be marginalized, while the marginal forces which achieved the power to disrupt the old hierarchy are harnessed to become central.

In the current period where the international cycle of social struggles of the late 1960s and early 1970s ruptured the Keynesian social factory of Pax Americana and pitched the hierarchical system into crisis, capital has made many attempts to find a way out during the last 20 years. Some of those attempts have involved efforts to harness activities which had hitherto been seen as purely marginal to the central paradigm of mass production and social factory.

In terms of both national industrial structure and regional hierarchies, there has been dramatic change in the U.S. with the conversion of much of the previously preeminent Northern manufacturing industrial zone to a "rust belt," while the previously marginal Southern "sun belt" has become a principal home of the now central electronics and information sector. The very success of the struggles of workers at the "center" (especially in auto, steel, coal, etc) strengthened by the struggles of those at the margins (the outmigration of Southern blacks, the ghetto struggles that ruptured the Welfare State) undermined their usefulness to capital and has led to their being attacked via lower wages (union busting and industrial deregulation), unemployment (the rise of homelessness among working class families), geographical reorganization (i.e., runaway shops and international competition) and the reordering of the industrial hierarchy (i.e., the displacement of auto by electronics).

At the level of the labor market, we have also seen a rapid rise of part-time and precarious jobs. Because one aspect of the crisis was the growing resistance of youth to the alienated monotony of the mass production factory and office, the late 1960s saw, along with the revolt of young factory labor, an increasingly common rejection of job ladders in favor of more flexible patterns of work for target income to finance play or travel. In its search for ways to deal with the struggles of mass production workers, capital sought to harness the labor power of rebellious youth by channelling more and more resources into the creation of what the Italians call the "diffused factory" --decentralized patterns of part-time work.

In terms of state control mechanisms, we have seen, as one aspect of the crisis of Keynesian planning in the West and of centralized state planning in the East, the resurgence of free market ideology (e.g., P.T.Bauer or H. DeSoto) in the former area and a willingness to experiment with market allocation in the latter (e.g. Gorbachev's *perestroika*). In both cases we see an attempt to bolster and harness a diversity of off-the-books, illegal production and commercial activities. These activities, long identified with the informal sector or underground economy, have been singled out as having potential for cooptation and integration into the larger economy with a view to utilizing the former to revitalizing the latter. What such "revitalization" means, of course, is not only harnessing the energies of the people working in the "informal" sector, but also in utilizing them against those in the "formal" sector; using the ones to discipline the others via competition.

What these examples illustrate is the way in which the hierarchical organization of centers and margins have been both functional to capitalist control *and* subject to rupture and crisis as a result of people's struggles against their assigned place and role in the overall structure.

Of these two insights into the relationship, it is the latter --the ways in which the structure of centers and margins change according to people's struggles-- that is of the greatest importance politically. For too long hierarchies have been studied mainly in terms of their role in capitalist control. Not only in such microcosms as the factory wage hierarchy or the urban organization of

commercial center-residential-squatter slum but also in such macrocosmic nation state hierarchies as those of center-periphery or metropolis-satellite or First-Second-Third Worlds, we find mostly observation and commentary on the character of the hierarchy and how its structure perpetuates injustice, powerlessness and human suffering. What is encouraging in recent years has been the displacement of such doleful accounts by recognition and analysis of how these hierarchies have been and are being challenged and changed from below. In labor history we now have the beginnings of useful "bottom-up" accounts of working class power. In anthropology we have seen a dramatic increase in the effort of specialists to not only understand but, indeed, to advocate and support the circulation of struggles for cultural survival among indigenous peoples around the world. In sociology and political economy we have a growing number of studies of grass roots social movements in the Third World as well as the First which go beyond lamenting the weakness of the poor to examining the sources and modalities of the power they do have.

Often implicit in these efforts, but sometimes explicit, are attempts to understand the world not from some academically traditional "objective" point of view, but rather to grasp the world and its dynamics from the quite subjective point of view of the group or people being studied.

### **From the Margins to Self Valorization**

Such efforts to grasp the world from the bottom up raises two problems with the concept of "margins." The first problem is that the concept defines diverse phenomena, usually on the bottom of the social hierarchy, with respect to something else. Poor or ethnically distinct communities, no matter how different from each other, are defined as marginal with respect to some other social grouping, e.g., a commercial center, another culture, etc. The second problem is that the very concept of "margins" implies, as we have seen, not just difference but a hierarchical rank ordering of what is central and what is not; as such the concept is an expression of domination. In today's world, individuals, neighborhoods, and even whole peoples are mostly defined as marginal with respect to the dominant capitalist (and socialist) social order. In these cases the very term "marginal" clearly reflects the point of view of the dominant order which seeks to impose its own economic, political and cultural hegemony.

If we reject this hegemony and this point of view, and shift our perspective to one, or another, of the so-called margins, then that margin ceases to be a margin and becomes an entity unto itself, a social entity with a wide variety of relationships to other social entities. Such a shift in perspective does not involve a simple reversal whereby what was a margin is now the center and what was the center is now marginal. Abandonment of the perspective of domination must mean the abandonment of the center-margins dichotomy itself. People who are not working for a wage are only marginal from the point of view of the capitalist labor market; from those persons' point of view they are members of a peasant community, travellers exploring the world, musicians performing for their friends or what have you. A neighborhood, e.g. a *vecindad* in Mexico City, is only marginal from the point of view of the urban economy which fails to incorporate the people of that neighborhood into its projects of accumulation; from the point of view of the people living in the *vecindad* they constitute a community of friends, family, and neighbors who spend much of their time working, playing and dealing with the rest of the world together. A culturally coherent people, such as a hunter-gatherer tribe living in the rain forests of the Amazon, is only marginal from the point of view of the labor market which they refuse to join, of the national or multinational mining and lumber companies whose rape of the earth they resist and of the state which wants their lands to settle tamer, more integrated peoples; from their own point of view these people and their environment constitute a world, a microcosm within which they live, grow up, relate to each other and find meaning in life.

Because the dominant world order is that of capitalism (and the state capitalism we call socialism) we must also confront this issue of the "margins" in class terms. Traditionally, Marxists have seen those on the margins as outside the central class relations of capitalism, i.e., as belonging to neither the capitalist or working classes. Where the working class has been defined in terms of the wage, sometimes even more narrowly in terms of the factory proletariat,

the "margins" have been large: including everything from the reserve army of labor in the cities to wageless peasants in the countryside. These margins have been seen as a mix of survivals from pre-capitalist societies, e.g., peasants, and of constantly regenerated by-products of capitalist accumulation, e.g., the reserve army. In the former case the assumption has generally been that the survivals would eventually disappear through proletarianization. In the latter case the regenerative character of the reserve army made it an eternal accompaniment to the waged active army.

The problems with this analysis are many. First, the narrowness of the definition of working class has been theoretically simpleminded and politically crippling. The preoccupation with the wage as the defining character of the working class has blinded Marxists to the diverse forms through which capitalists have exploited people and thus to the equally diverse forms of resistance that has been mounted against such exploitation. Second, the admittedly eternal character of the reserve army (in all its forms: floating, latent and stagnant) belies its characterization as "marginal." Any set of social relations which are endlessly reproduced (and on an extended scale at that) as an integral part of accumulation should hardly be called "marginal" by Marxists, especially when old Karl himself saw the reserve army as one of the most important and "central" aspects of the class relations of capitalism. Third, and this rejoins the earlier critique of the concept of "margins," to define the reserve army (or "survivals") as marginal is to accept the capitalist point of view, to accept capital's own definition of what is central and what is marginal. To take this a step further, the same problem occurs when one accepts the capitalist definition of people as workers! The working class is a capitalist construct even when the people in it move beyond being a class-in-itself (defined by having work and surplus work imposed on them) to become a class-for-itself (defined by their struggle against that imposition).

Fortunately, and this both Marxists and "post-Marxist" social critics tend to overlook, "working class" struggle against capitalism has almost always included more than the struggle *against* the capitalist imposition of work and exploitation. It has also contained a wide variety of positive elements: struggles *for* a diverse series of goals which are incompatible with capitalism and go beyond it. To put this in other, more theoretical words, working class struggle generally contains both the fight against capitalist *valorization* and the elaboration of projects of what Toni Negri has called *self-valorization*. People's struggle against valorization involves the refusal of the subordination of life to work and amounts to the effort to cease being "working class," to cease having their lives unidimensionally defined by work. Self-valorization is the process of developing self-defined goals and ways of being which are not compatible with capitalist organization. N.B.: the term *self-valorization* is not meant to refer just to individuals' struggles, but more generally to the autonomous projects of social groups, communities and peoples which both undermine accumulation and develop ways of being not based on endless work. Both success in the struggle against work, in the reduction of the amount of time and energy that has to be given up to capitalist valorization and success in the battles to appropriate land or buildings or "rooms of their own," expands the times and spaces for self-valorization. The fewer hours people can be forced to be workers, the more time and energy they have to pursue their diverse paths of self-determination. The more space which is subtracted from capitalist control, the greater the room for autonomous projects.

For example, successful peasant struggles for the reappropriation of stolen lands expands their opportunities to elaborate their own non-profit oriented communities as well as the resources necessary to develop networks of communication and mutual aid among different communities --networks which may evolve into what Gustavo Esteva likes to call "hammocks" whose flexible construction can serve different communities in different ways. Similarly, the success of a barrio or favela in resisting urban renewal preserves the integrity of the communal space in which self-organization can continue to develop. Finally, the success of rebellious youth in seizing space, such as an unused building or even a school room, can make possible the elaboration of counter-cultural projects which are antagonistic to their integration into the labor market or consumer society.

The existence of such struggles and the positive autonomous projects of self-determined activity they produce mean that "working class struggle" is, in a very essential sense, a misnomer. To the degree that struggles for self-valorization elaborate new ways of being in which people no longer define themselves as workers, then such struggles cannot properly be called "working class." They are something else, a going beyond of the current social structures of class, a construction of something entirely new in which no single yardstick, such as money or value, can be used to measure or compare different realities. Such struggles dismember the world of capital by destructuring the economic relations through which it rules and thus work toward the construction of social forms which cannot properly be called economies much less "modes of production."

Not seeing this is a principal limit to socialist ideology. Socialism is thought to occur through the taking of power by the working class which replaces capitalist hegemony with its own. Thus the standard and arrogant political position vis à vis "marginals" -- the newly hegemonic working class will *lead* the "marginals" (mostly the peasants) toward a socialist mode of production in which everyone will be a worker. Once we recognize, however, that people struggle to escape being defined by work, in order to define themselves in the most diverse ways, then we must also set aside any notion of post capitalist *class* hegemony. The working class is a social grouping that was formed through coercion and domination. If we want a world without domination then we must not think about post-capitalist society in terms of classes. Socialism must be abandoned as a project in favor of the old notion of communism, i.e., a classless society in which the most diverse kinds of peoples co-exist and interact through non-coercive political relationships.

Thus our methods for thinking about, and making alliances with "marginals" and with other waged workers are fundamentally quite similar. In each case we have to recognize and accept the existence and autonomy of heterogeneous, self-defined realities which go beyond the categories and material realities imposed by capital.

In the case of so-called "survivals" of pre-capitalist societies, it is sometimes fairly easy to see how communities and peoples have been able to preserve aspects, sometimes richly complex patterns, of earlier ways of being. An Indian community living along the San Francisco river in Brazil today struggles to expand the time and space for age old (pre-colonial) rituals of communion with the plant world. After almost half a millennium of colonialism and neo-colonialism they retained only a single, sacred grove of trees. But today, through both legal and armed struggle, they are expanding their lands, their forests and their ability to live according to their own unique understanding of the meaning of human life and its relations to the rest of nature. However much these ways of being have been modified by the relentless pressure of capitalist hegemony, they still persist and inform the projects such peoples seek to implement in their struggles.

In the case of those whose ancestors capital successfully wrenched from their prior social formations, who have lost touch with their pre-capitalist roots, there is still the restless struggle to create new, more interesting alternatives to the current order. For generations the peoples of Western Europe (including those who moved to America, and later those they displaced) who were forced off the land and into the new capitalist factories fought against the destruction of many aspects of their traditional culture: their holidays, their family structures, their rhythms of work and play, and so on. After losing these battles for many years and suffering the extensive prolongation of work, they proved successful in blocking this extension. Ever since they have been on the offensive, reducing the amount of life time and energy given up to capital. From the 12 hours through the 10 hours to the 8 hours (and 5 day week) movement they have chopped away at the appropriation of their lives. In the time set free by the success of those struggles, people have sought to elaborate, starting from both the few surviving traditions and the material and social environment created by capitalist development, better ways of being. This, of course, was matched by capitalist attempts to harness the activities people developed during this expanding "free time" through mechanisms of cultural domination and the manipulation of life as "consumption." Thus there has been a generalization of social conflict beyond the work place to the entirety of life. In each sphere we find a set of antagonistic relations between peoples efforts

to develop new kinds of relationships --among themselves and with the rest of the world-- and capital's attempts to harness and subordinate those efforts. The generations of struggle against capitalist hegemony, throughout the world, has thus repeatedly sought to constitute endlessly varied amalgams of the old and the new against the monotony of capitalist exploitation and alienation.

From this point of view, if we want to understand the possibilities of escape from domination, we must learn to see (in the content and forms of what capital considers the "margins" of society) the diverse projects of self-valorization which have the potential to expand in the times and spaces carved out of capitalist control. We know that capital will always try to either crush such projects or to reduce them to moments of its own valorization. Sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it fails. Its failures are the critical successes of the people involved in the elaboration of those projects. The greater their success, the greater the crisis for capital. It is the recognition of these moments of success at the heart of the capitalist crisis that makes it possible for us to envisage the way forward in our struggles. Where capital's problem is to co-opt and harness moments of self-valorization, thus incorporating them into itself, our problem is that of defending and elaborating the autonomy of those moments against just such instrumentalization.

### Conclusion

Defending the autonomy of our spheres of self-valorization and elaborating their diverse projects, these are two political tasks that flow from the above analysis, tasks which both complement and go beyond the more traditional political objective of attacking the structures of domination. Preventing the prolongation of imposed work, or expanding the time free of imposed work, these struggles not only attack exploitation but they defend or expand the sphere in which we can elaborate our own self-determined ways of being. This is what is exciting about the study of the "margins:" to see and to connect with the development and elaboration those alternative ways of being is to understand and to participate in the construction of a future at least potentially free of domination.

I say potentially free because it is always possible that projects of social development incompatible with and antithetical to capitalist (or socialist) forms of domination, may themselves contain other forms of domination. Classic examples of this are political movements against the present order which oppose exploitation and elite corporate or bureaucratic social management but retain strong elements of sexual, racial, ethnic, or nationalist discrimination. More generally, struggles which fail to perceive, critique and reject all of the current forms of domination, from the imposition of work and hierarchy to the inculcation of passive consumption, will simply reproduce some of those forms in a would-be, liberated world. So there is a fourth political task which must complement the attack on current forms of domination and the defence and elaboration of spheres of self-valorization: the critique of and opposition to all current *and* emerging forms of domination. We can no longer settle for half a loaf: revolutionary liberation must seek the abolition of all forms of domination and the creation of social and political mechanism to prevent their reemergence. The construction of such mechanisms is one of the great political tasks facing our world, and one on whose success or failure its future will turn.

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## THE ANTI POLL TAX CAMPAIGN : NEW FORMS OF CLASS STRUGGLE

Edinburgh C.S.E. <sup>1</sup>

### 1. The Politics of the Anti Poll Tax Campaign

1.1. The most significant feature of this campaign is the extent to which the official labour movement has instead of leading a struggle , followed it. In March 1988 a MORI poll suggested 75% of Scots were against the tax , and 42% prepared to join a non-payment campaign. Polls taken in January and May 1989 were within 3% of these figures. In other words 40% of those interviewed were prepared to break the law to defeat the poll tax.

Despite this all the electable parties (except the Greens) have refused to support non-payment. The SNP has a position of delayed payment, but only until threatened with a fine.

1.2. The introduction of the poll tax has been delayed by the non-cooperation of the working class. In Lothian the poll tax register , claimed to be 95% complete in October 1988, has not yet been publically displayed ( a legal requirement of the Act) - it is known that 50,000 applications for rebates have been received from unregistered individuals. In Strathclyde, Scotland's largest region the backlog in administration is so severe that payment books were not issued until June (despite the issue of bills during April). In Tayside Region 60% of the poll tax due to be collected during April was still outstanding by the 15 May causing a cash flow crisis. In Lothian because of the delays in processing rebates and amending bills the process of pursuing non-payers has been put back by over a month.

Currently (June13) even the authorities admit that 150,000 (25% of those registered) in Lothian have not yet paid anything towards their poll tax, and it is estimated that there are 1 million (out of 3.5 million) non-payers in the whole country. Each Labour local authority has been urging its electorate to pay the tax - and each authority has threatened fines and warrant sales against non-payers and those who do not register.

1.3. These facts suggest that the Labour Party is out of step with the feelings of the working class. This is not of course a new claim. However it is likely that this division will be deepened by the financial burdens

that the poll tax (and the Labour Party) will place on the workers, and the process of recovering debts that the local authorities are prepared to resort to.

1.4. The strength of the opposition to the tax will be demonstrated mainly in how much money the local authorities are unable to collect. If, as we would guess they have a shortfall of more than 20% on collection, they will face difficulties balancing their budget in future years (the other areas of their budget being closely controlled by central government). It is then that they will have to choose to cut services. The redistributive and ameliorative functions with which the Labour Party has justified its involvement in local government will no longer be arguable - they will be firmly identified with the local state - that is the debt collectors, planners, housing officials and so forth, which they have previously been able to claim they were doing 'something' about. If this scenario holds then we might expect the illusion that the working class can run a capitalist state through the Labour Party to suffer.

1.5. The anti-poll tax campaigns represent nuclei for such disaffection. There are between 20 and 30 local groups involved in campaigning against the tax in Lothian. There is no very clear political programme for these groups (outside the Militant ones). The numbers involved in the campaign are a significant increase in size over those in other recent campaigns (such as the miners strike), and they operate largely without the support of the labour movement institutions which would normally back such a campaign. They are also of a fairly small size in comparison to the non-payers they represent.

Haymarket/Tollcross, one of the longest running and most successful poll tax groups, operate a membership scheme for non-payers. They have a membership of 250, and a core group of 15.

1.6. There is an additional notion within the anti poll tax groups in comparison with the main body of non-payers. It is an understanding of the need for organised opposition to defeat the tax. In Lothian organised opposition - in pickets, demonstrations, public meetings and an active public presence have encouraged the non-payers and alarmed the council. Further activities will be the physical support of non-payers threatened with warrant sales and workers who refuse to administer deductions from wages.

1.7. Many of the groups (particularly those with left Labour or Trotskyist cores) direct their campaigns towards convincing the Labour Party/STUC to take a more active stance on the poll tax. However a third or more of the campaign groups in Edinburgh are dominated by those who have approached the campaign as a way to develop sufficient local resistance to make the tax impossible to administer. The difference can be related back to the different interpretations of the role of the state and of the potential of a social democratic strategy within it. The point where these two strands of opposition to the poll tax (currently uneasily aligned through the Lothian Federation) part company has not yet been reached - although it may appear once appeals to Lothian RC councillors and NALGO and CPSA unions not to administer debt collection become exhausted. The choice will then be to defend non-payers physically with the attendant dilemmas of violence or to abandon the campaign as futile. Some may then redirect their energies to the

reform of the Labour Party or the unions. It is at this point that the real consequences of opposition to the poll tax will appear, together with the underlying issues of the role of the state, money and debt theorised below.<sup>2</sup>

## **2. The anti-poll tax campaign and the state**

2.1. We shall argue that, whether intentionally or not, the anti-poll tax campaign opposes law as such, law as a state-form. That is to say, it does not oppose the poll tax merely as an 'unjust law' passed by the state, this latter being the liberal view of the campaign shared by, for example, the Labour Party and the SNP. Rather than seeing the anti-poll tax campaign as a matter of civil liberties, our view is that it should be understood in terms of class. It is from its class character that its opposition to law-as-such springs.

2.2. Always, capital has subordinated society to production through its requirement that labour-power be reproduced. However, the form of this subordination (or in other words of the relation between production and reproduction) undergoes continual change. Currently, we see the integration of hitherto unpaid service labour into the wage-form, women's domestic labour transforming into service industries; we see the deregulation of the welfare state; and we see the regulation of large sections of the unemployed through forced labour (training schemes, etc.). All these tendencies involve a dramatic extension of the wage-relation into society, i.e., the extension of the wage-relation beyond the direct production process itself. This has important implications for how, currently, class struggle has to be seen.

2.3. Since capital exists only as individual capital, the class-recomposition just outlined casts up the problem of the reproduction and disciplining of labour power as one of political domination. The extension of capital into reproduction (i.e. the commodification of the reproduction of labour-power) poses the question of how, politically, to integrate labour-power into capitalist reproduction. The question is a political one because it involves recomposing the conditions under which labour is reproduced as 'doubly free'. As a political question, it raises the problem of the state.

2.4. We see the problem of the state as follows. The crisis of accumulation involves the increased placing of capital in money markets. Money markets are the institutional form within which capital, in its most abstract form, exists as counterposed against (but also as related to) production. The mobility of capital in the form of money translates into currency problems (inflationary pressure, balance of payments, public expenditure, credit). The development just sketched imposes monetary constraint on the state, a constraint which undermines the state's attempt to integrate the working class through

material concessions. Hence the crisis of social democratic (Keynesian) politics. A contradiction obtains between monetary constraint and integration of the working class through material concessions because, with unemployment, the proportion of the population relying on public expenditure has increased. The mobility of capital undermined the social democratic consensus based on integrating the working class into capital through policies of full employment.

2.5. This contradiction of political domination is temporarily harmonised in the monetarist attempt to recompose the institutional form of the state. The form of reasserting social domination peculiar to the monetarist state is that of financial and law-and-order control. The outcome is the imposition of the abstract category of value in the form of money (to which the state itself is subjected) upon the population at large. This re-forming of the state goes forward in and through the category of money-as-command.

2.6. The current anti-poll tax campaign exemplifies struggle against the imposition of money as command. Money-as-command only exists in and through the state, and hence the anti-poll tax campaign is a class and anti-state campaign. Its 'illegality' (non-registration, non-payment) is therefore no accident, nor a matter for the individual conscience alone. To be sure, the anti-poll tax campaign is not a campaign organised around the direct production process but focuses, instead, on taxation and the state. Thereby, its class character may appear at first sight to be secondary. However, as we have argued, it is the reimposition of the abstract category of value over the population at large which, in the poll tax, is at stake.

2.7. The measures of social control involved in the imposition of the poll tax are not new: restructuring of the welfare state, monetary disciplining of the low paid and unemployed, the centralisation of the state apparatus. However the significance of the anti-poll tax campaign is that, unlike campaigns over low pay, training schemes and unemployment itself, its character is that of class opposition to a quite general (because monetary) mode of control. Money-as-command renders problematic strategies of divide-and-rule although it does not exclude them. The anti-poll tax campaign thus has a unique significance, in that it raises general issues of domination, but it has this significance only if understood in class terms.

### **3. Against the State: New Forms of Class Struggle**

3.1. To speak of a crisis of capital is to speak of a crisis of domination. Inevitably, the power of the dominated (the working class) is the other face of that crisis, but it does not necessarily appear as such. The fate of the world depends crucially on the practical (and theoretical) realisation of that power. At a general level, we must ask of the anti-poll tax campaign (or any other political action) how it

makes explicit the power of labour which is the crisis of capital. In what way does the anti-poll tax campaign express the underside of the crisis of capital?

3.2. In the previous section, it was pointed out that the crisis of capital is a crisis of the Keynesian integration of the working class through material concessions and social democratic politics, and that the form of capital's attempt to reassert social domination is that of financial and law-and-order control: money-as-command. In the first section, it was made clear that these three issues - social democracy, legality, money - have been central practical issues raised by the course of the anti-poll tax campaign.

3.3. The crisis of Keynesianism is a crisis of **social democracy** and of social democratic parties. The attempt to reestablish such parties within the political system involves a narrowing of their social base, a weakening of their ability to channel social conflict into state forms. It is significant, for example, that in the recent round of elections, although the position of the Labour Party was restored in that they acquired more votes than the Tories, the turnout in all elections was extremely low: a return of the Labour Party to government is quite compatible with a narrowing of the basis of their support and the weakening of their capacity to institutionalise resistance. The contradiction between what might be called the Nissan strategy of the Labour Party (its orientation towards what it sees as the responsible, core, post-Fordist worker) and its ability to channel protest is dramatically illustrated by the anti-poll tax campaign. The narrowing of the Labour Party (as a precondition for its survival as part of the reorganised state) has meant that it has been quite unable to capture the massive protest against the imposition of the poll tax in Scotland. The narrowing of social democracy opens up a new area of struggle which can not easily be institutionalised. The attempt of the SNP to channel that struggle in its direction has had very limited success. The significance of the anti-poll tax movement is not only that it grows out of a particularly unpopular piece of legislation, but that it provides an expression for a deep social discontent which has burst the banks of social democracy.

3.4. Inevitably, struggles which are not institutionalised into the state come into direct confrontation with money-as-command. This can be seen in relation to the issues of legality and debt.

The crisis of the Keynesian state has meant that measures taken by the state in recent years have rested on a narrower social basis of support: one effect of that has been to further undermine any sense of moral obligation to obey the law. In relation to the poll tax, the issue of **legality** and of the legitimacy of parliamentary democracy is immediately raised by the non-payment demand. Resistance to the law can, of course, take different forms, from the liberal view that immoral laws should be disobeyed, to the nationalist claim that the poll tax should be resisted as the act of a foreign parliament, to the socialist view that the poll tax is a particularly crass manifestation of the class nature of all law. Recent experience in Aberdeen and Edinburgh suggest that the only way in which effective non-payment can be maintained is through collective resistance to the law and that the course of the campaign itself is likely to raise more

explicitly the question of legality and the related issue of violence.

3.5. The inflation of credit is the most powerful expression of the current fragility of capitalism. This inflation is the expression of the non-resolution of the crisis of overaccumulation. As such, it is an expression of the power of the working class (even in moments of defeat) and at the same time a response to that power which is repressive in form: credit expansion is a response to the power of labour which both individualises and oppresses, through **debt**. The crucial element which holds the system together is **debt enforcement**: money-as-command. At this moment, when capitalism can survive only through unprecedented credit expansion, the issue of debt enforcement and debt repudiation acquires a new centrality in class struggle: this is true both at a global (e.g. in Latin America) and at a local level. In the anti-poll tax campaign, collective resistance to debt enforcement has become a major political issue, and it is certain to become the principal strategic and tactical question in the months to come. In the working class home it is traditionally women who feel the burden of and must deal with household debts. For this reason women are much more involved in the anti poll tax campaign than in the trade unions and traditional political parties. The informality and closeness to home of meetings and other group activities further facilitates their participation. The degree of spill-over between the poll tax and more general questions of debt and debt enforcement is already emerging as an explicit issue in the campaign. For example, recent tactics to resist poindings and warrant sales have rested on the assumption that the sheriff officer (bailiff) is a universally hated figure. Similarly, the recent occupation of the sheriff officers' premises in Edinburgh was not a "single issue" event, but rested on a widely held understanding of debt collection: that is what made it so effective.

3.6. Social democracy, legality, debt: these have arisen as the key issues in the campaign itself. As the campaign develops, and as all appeals to Labour councils are finally exhausted, it becomes more and more clear that the only way in which the campaign can continue is as an autonomous campaign in open confrontation with Labour councils, with legality and with debt enforcement. This is not necessarily to be optimistic about the outcome (although we are), but to recognise that there is no other way forward for the non-payment campaign.

1: CSE stands for the Conference of Socialist Economics. The CSE publishes the journal Capital & Class and is involved in the publication of Catalyst (formerly 'Interlink'). The CSE is an independent organisation of the Left. Its organisational structure is one of working-groups (state, money, law, labour process etc...) which feed into both the annual conference and the journal. If you are interested in the of the CSE in Edinburgh please contact Common Sense. The present paper was written between June and July 1989 and presented to the CSE-Conference 1989 in Sheffield.

2: Something of the dilemmas concerning these two strategies are transmitted to the members of an anti-poll tax group either through the realisation that time is being wasted on particular activities, or that particular political arguments have become so tortuous that they are no longer comprehensible. What happens next depends on the composition of the group - if the individuals so decided can't find a channel for these frustrations they will leave the group, and the campaign. If they are encouraged to stay by involvement in discussions of the groups' activities then they may participate in future activities in the anti-poll tax campaign and carry their experiences (and a conclusion) forward into other struggles.



Suspect World-Views: Non-Deterministic  
History and the Eating of Greens



Peter Dymohe

"Excuse me," said Pooh, "but what does "crustimoney proceedcake mean? For I am a bear of very little brain, and long words Bother me." "It means" said Owl "the Thing to Do."

A.A. Milne, Winnie the Pooh

"I cannot count myself to have apprehended."

St. Augustine

**THE PROBLEM:**

Marxism is a deterministic philosophy. Determinist philosophies suggest that the systems concerned are governed by fixed, immutable laws and hence that absolute prediction of the behaviour of these systems is possible. Marxism suggests that the course of history is fixed and governed according to laws expounded by Marx, these laws stating that history is governed by conflict between classes over the ownership of the means of wealth creation. This article will show that **all** deterministic world-views or models of history and/or economic development are fundamentally flawed. Any realistic model of history and/or economic development must be suspect because any discription must be an approximation to reality. No description can **BE** reality, since this requires infinite knowledge, which is impossible, as we will demonstrate. We will show instead that theories are approximations to reality, based on the state of knowledge at the time of their formulation, and that progress is made through criticism of existing theories and state of knowledge, and the replacement or reformulation of these theories as new information comes to light. A dogmatic interpretation of any theory refuses *a priori* to accept the possibility that the theory concerned will one day be unable to explain observation.

This article is written primarily as a response to two Marxist critiques of Green philosophies. (1,2) These two critiques, as seems most of *Common Sense* that we have seen so far (we are prepared to admit that this is a relatively small proportion of the total published output of this journal), are based on the philosophies of Marx and Engels. These philosophies are deterministic, in that they are based on the proposition that sociological change is governed by immutable laws, of which Marx in particular believed himself to be

the discoverer. As we see it, the arguments in these two critiques, once unnecessary waffle, verbiage, and self-indulgence had been filtered out - this was not always easy - essentially reduced to the proposition that since Green philosophies are not Marxist, any world-view based on Green philosophies is necessarily wrong. This proposition therefore interprets Marxism dogmatically, refusing to accept the possibility that Marxism might be wrong, or might need altering in the light of developments since the writing of *Das Kapital*. This reply is therefore based on criticism of Marxism, and is based on the criticism of Marxism and other Utopian doctrines by the philosopher Sir Karl Popper. Popper's criticism is found mainly in (3) and (4), and is believed by many non-marxists, including ourselves, to be devastating. Marxists should therefore familiarise themselves with this criticism.

Prior to the presentation of the main body of our reply, some background information is needed. Popper's basic world-view is non-deterministic, that is it is based on belief in the impossibility of absolute knowledge of the behaviour of scientific, social, and economic systems, able to explain **everything** in their respective fields; in other words, Popper is non-determinist. Popper based his philosophies on quantum physics and relativity, both of which are non-deterministic. The essentials of these two fields of science where they relate to the topic under discussion here will be explained. Popper termed deterministic theories of historical change and evolution *Historicism*, his criticism of Historicism in general and Marxism in particular will then be summarised. Then, this criticism, and non-determinism, will be used to show how Green economics actually does have a role to play in our society.

#### THE BACKGROUND:

Until this century, it was generally believed that Science was concerned with the exact description of phenomena and their characterisation as systems whose conditions and properties at the time of observation defined uniquely their subsequent behaviour. Hence, the behaviour of a system of, for example, planets revolving around a star could, it was believed in principle, be predicted exactly by accurate observation of the positions and velocities of the planets, using Newton's laws of gravitation. Hence, Laplace speculated that the entire history of the universe could be predicted with accuracy from its beginning to the present, and from the present to its end, if enough was known about its present state. As a result, the intellectual climate in Scientific circles was dominated by determinism, the belief that the properties of the universe could be known in their entirety and that in the fullness of time, such knowledge would become apparent, and would allow exact reproduction and explanation of the properties of the universe and of its behaviour, past, present, and future.

In sociology, the equivalent of deterministic science is Historicism. As has already been stated, Historicism was the term given by Sir Karl Popper to theories of sociology which

assumed that historical prediction was the main aim of the social sciences, based on the belief in the existence of deterministic and invariant laws of historical change. Historicism is based on the interpretation of history as the empirical information that is available for the use of the social sciences; thus the social sciences take the form of theoretical history, and historicism is the belief that history can be predicted. Since the ultimate aim of science is prediction, Historicist doctrines claim to be scientific.

However, it has become clear that the certainty that was thought to characterise science needs to be replaced by uncertainty. The first nail in the coffin of determinism was the development of thermodynamics, which essentially showed that disorder and entropy will increase with time, at the expense of the order, that is seen presently in the universe. Thus, order and structure, if left, will decay spontaneously to random-ness, giving off energy in the process, unless the order is perpetuated by the input of energy from an external source. Since the universe is a closed system, no external source of energy is possible, unless one invokes the existence of God. Classical mechanics, based on Newton's laws of motion, was based on the suggestion that the behaviour of systems was reversible, or that by reversing the directions of forces acting on a system at a given time, the motions in the system would reverse so that the initial state of the system would ultimately be attained. The lack of realism in this scenario can be envisaged by considering a snooker table. It is easy to produce a random distribution of balls on the table from the initial ordered distribution by hitting one of the balls, while it is essentially impossible to produce the initial ordered distribution at the beginning of the game by hitting one ball then allowing the system represented by the distribution of the balls to evolve spontaneously.

Subsequently, Einstein's theory of Relativity showed that the properties of the observed universe depend on the position and motion of the observer. We (the authors) do not know the details of how relativity is derived, since we are not physicists, but the implication of this central tenet of Relativity is that a given part of the universe will look different to observers in different locations, hence that **absolute** (deterministic) knowledge of the properties of the universe is fundamentally impossible to derive or gain.

Quantum Mechanics is also something which we know little about, but one of the main tenets of this theory is Heisenberg's uncertainty principle. This shows that **either** the position, or the velocity of an electron in "orbit" round the nucleus of an atom can be measured. However, it is not possible to measure both. Hence, if the view is taken that all the theories and explanations of science can ultimately be reduced to the behaviour of subatomic particles (a common supposition, since all matter is made of subatomic particles), this behaviour is fundamentally uncertain, non-determined, and non-determinable.

Finally, mathematics was also shown to be fundamentally uncertain by Godel's theorem, elegantly explained in (5). If a system of logical arguments and statements is defined, such that they can be expressed in mathematical (unambiguous) form, such a system will be internally consistent: that is, it will normally be possible to decide whether a statement derivable in the system is logically consistent with the other statements derived in the system. However, Godel's theorem shows that in all such systems, statements can be written whose consistency with the rest of the system cannot be decided. This is equivalent to saying that it cannot be decided whether a statement is right or wrong. All rigorous systems, and all conceivable rigorous systems have this fundamental problem; this problem shows that *there is no such thing as certainty*.

It is therefore clear that knowledge of the universe in its entirety is impossible to derive, since, sooner or later, uncertainty - inability to measure some property - will be encountered. There is even absolute uncertainty in measurement since all conceivable measurement is of the magnitude of something relative to something else, which in turn is measured relative to something else; infinite regress results if certainty is sought. Even if complete knowledge of the universe is gained, the resultant set of arguments would be rigorous, and therefore subject to Godel's theorem. As a result, any doctrine or philosophy which calls itself determinist **must** lapse into incoherence. All theories are subject to error and are therefore non-determinist, and must be subject to modification, or ultimately, refutation.

#### THE CRITICISM OF MARXISM:

Marxism is a Historicist doctrine. Marx believed that the fundamental governing force of historical change was conflict between the classes, specifically between the owners of the means of wealth creation, (a minority who, since they were wealthy, were also powerful) and the producers of wealth, the working classes who were exploited for their labour, and could not fight back due to their lack of power (We do not dispute the fact of exploitation of the working classes that Marx rightly recognised as taking place). The main implication of the Historicism that is Marxism is that political processes cannot in themselves be of any use in aiding the oppressed:

"Political developments are either superficial, unconditioned by the deeper reality of the social system, in which case they can never be of real help to the ... exploited; or else they ... give expression to a change in the economic background and the class situation, in which case they are of the character of ... complete revolutions."

Sir Karl Popper (4), see also (6)

Thus, Marxism suggests that the only way in which the future course of history, governed by class warfare, can be influenced is for the working classes to take power by a fundamental reorganisation of society, that is by revolution and to, as it were, start again.

Most of Popper's criticism of Marxism is a criticism of Historicist doctrines in general. We have already shown how determinism in Science can no longer be considered tenable, and will now show that similar problems are associated with social scientific doctrines.

Firstly, Historicist doctrines imply that wholesale change in society is necessary. As a result, Historicist social change aims at a complete re-structuring of society. However, if any system is changed to any extent, some of the repercussions and consequences of this change will be unforeseen, simply because of the inevitable incompleteness of knowledge of the system concerned. This point cannot be laboured hard enough; it is fundamental, but overlooked by holders of Historicist doctrines. Clearly, the larger the envisaged change, the greater the extrapolation from the known (the *status quo*, or the current structure of society which is envisaged as needing changing) to the unknown (the desired result). Hence, the greater the change desired, the more greater will be the repercussions of the change that will inevitably arise. As a result, those that implement the change will be forced into further changes to try and undo the effects of the repercussions. These further changes lead in turn to further repercussions.... and so on... . As a result, the desired society state is unattainable.

Secondly, Historicism claims to be scientific, in that it is claimed to have predictive power. It is worth evaluating the basis for this claim. For a doctrine to have scientific status, it must, obviously, be testable; thus, it must be possible to refute the doctrine. If a test capable of refutation is applied, and the doctrine survives the test, then the doctrine is supported by the experiments used in the test. In the case of Historicism, the only possible experiment that one could stage as a test would be the whole-sale re-organisation of a society, that is, one would need to carry out a revolution. This is because if such an experiment is carried out on a small section of a society, the results would not be representative. The essence of good scientific practice is the narrowing-down of possibilities by carefully controlled experiments. It is difficult, to put it mildly, to see how careful experimental practice can result from a revolution. In addition, by their nature, revolutions lead to repression, so free discussion of the results of the experiments, which would require criticism of the leaders of the revolution, is unlikely to occur. Thus, the true results of the experiment are likely to be unknowable, since these results will be repressed by the leaders of the revolution. Historicist doctrines cannot therefore claim to be scientific, since it is impossible to test them in a rigorous way.

The other main reason why Historicist doctrines are unscientific is connected with the

belief that the desired change in society is necessary. Thus, the holders of a Historicist doctrine will be closed-minded as to the desirability of the proposed reform and as to its possible scope and effects. As a result, Historicism involves the rejection of possibilities before they have been assessed or tried out. Such *a priori* rejection of possibilities without evidence is not scientific.

We turn now to the criticism of Marxism. Since it is an example of a Historicist doctrine, Marxism has the problems discussed above associated with it. We believe that these problems are sufficient for the rejection of **any** Historicist doctrine. However, Marxism has many additional problems; these will now be discussed.

Firstly, Marx was analysing the society of the nineteenth century. As we recognised above, exploitation of the working classes was all-pervasive at this time. This exploitation can be interpreted in terms of the Paradox of Freedom; in a society free of regulation, there is nothing to prevent the strong imposing their power over the weak resulting in little or no freedom for the disadvantaged. In the case of the early stages of Capitalism, no legislation was available to protect the working classes, the producers of wealth, from the ruling classes, the owners of wealth. The ownership of wealth conferred power, and in the absence of protective legislation, this power was usually abused.

As a result of this abuse of power, there did indeed arise class conflict, as was recognised by Marx. However, Marx also believed that the only way in which this conflict could be won for the oppressed class was by revolution; political action was useless. Despite the uselessness of political action, Marxists still insist on the value of such action, thus seeming self-contradictory. The obvious resolution of the Paradox of Freedom is by society acting to protect the weak against the strong, by limiting the freedom of the strong to abuse their power over the weak, by legislation. Thus, political action of a non-revolutionary kind can in fact be effective in prevention of oppression of the weak. *Laissez-faire* or unrestrained capitalism must therefore be given up in favour of state interventionism on a scale sufficient to preserve basic freedoms for all. It is worth noting here the fact that *Laissez-faire* capitalism is also Historicist - the market place rules -. The criticisms above are therefore also applicable to the present government of Britain. These policies are an example of the poverty of Historicism; the government protects its policies by intervention (rate-capping, the poll tax, Y.T.S.), and therefore limits freedom. Most importantly, these policies intervene in the market place. It is impossible not to intervene in the market place.

We claim, as does Popper, that as a result of legislation to protect the weak, (the present British government appears to be reversing this trend) the society described by Marx has largely ceased to exist. If Marxism is still to be considered applicable to the late Twentieth

Century, it must be adjusted. Hence a **dogmatic** interpretation of Marxism, in its original state, besides being irrational and unscientific in itself (recall that Marxism claims to be scientific), is unlikely to lead to a successful analysis of the world.

Popper characterised the point just discussed as the "most central point in my analysis of Marxism...". (4,6) The main difference between the point of view represented here and that of Marxism is the role of political action. Marxism claims that any political action is ineffective unless revolutionary. The point just discussed, however, claims that non-revolutionary, or evolutionary, political action in a society that allows free discussion and criticism is central to bringing about social change, simply through legislation by the rulers on behalf of the ruled, as demanded by the ruled. Without the control of the rulers by the ruled, (democracy is clearly an example of, though not necessary for, such control) there is no reason why the rulers should not exploit the power vested in them for their own ends. Such abuse took place in Marx's time, and now occurs in dictatorships, most, if not, all, of which are based on Historicist doctrines.

We therefore feel that a dogmatic interpretation of Marxism is entirely inconsistent with reality. Dogmatic interpretation of any theory refuses to accept the possibility of error, and is therefore prejudicial, and the way in which societies have changed since Marx's time has shown that the ideas espoused by Marx are no longer applicable. We do not, however, completely reject Marxist or Socialist ideas, and we acknowledge their importance, in recognising the exploitation of wealth-producers, and continuing to draw attention to the exploitation that is still occurring.

So, what of Green politics in general, and Schumacher in particular? Schumacher, generally regarded as the founder of the Green economic movement, came in for strong criticism in (2). We intend next to answer this criticism in the next section, in the light of our own criticism of Marxism.

#### **WHY EATING GREENS IS BAD FOR YOU:**

Based on the claim of Historicist doctrines to be scientific, and based on the fact that non-determinism is ingrained in the very fabric of science, Historicist doctrines can be shown to be fundamentally flawed for several reasons, some of which have been outlined above. The lesson to be drawn from this analysis is that the only way in which any form of social manipulation, engineering, or reform can proceed is in an interventionist manner; the would-be reformer needs to be aware of the possibilities and limitations of the proposed reform. This alternative to fundamental social reform will now be explained further, in the light of Green philosophy in general, and Schumacher's philosophies in particular.

Popper's view of science is one of knowledge always being in a state of flux, change or evolution as a result of critical evaluation of the existing state of knowledge. Hence theories, are "best fit" explanations to what has been observed so far, and *need modification in the light of new observations and knowledge*. It is possible for *a priori* rejection of information contradictory to a given theory to occur, but such rejection leads to non-science and dogmatism. The two articles to which this is a reply are guilty of such dogmatism: a rejection of Green economic models **just** because they are not consistent with Marxist philosophies.

Applying critical analysis to the current *status quo*, capitalism, though improvements have occurred since Marx (see above), still emphasises the making of profit as the driving force of economic change. While conventional capitalism measures profit solely by the amount of financial gain, Green economists call for a re-interpretation of the profit motive by the measurement of loss in terms of loss to the environment, as well as of financial loss to the company. Thus, the exploitation of the environment by capitalism leads to exploitation of the producers of wealth, simply because environmental exploitation leads to a deterioration in the environment, hence in life-style. The burning of Brazilian rain-forests, acid rain, and C.F.C.'s in aerosols endanger the environment of the Earth; we are therefore exploited for profit. Green economists therefore simply call for assessment of environmental cost as well as material cost when a given plan is being assessed. This is an alternative both to Marxism and to Capitalism; though, unlike Marxism, the Green alternative can be emplaced into our existing society without whole-sale change in its organisation; Greens simply call for a change in emphasis.

The results of Green reform can easily be forecast; companies will make less profit, but the environment will benefit, and the dangers associated with wholesale revolutionary change will be avoided. As was indicated above, the dangers associated with revolution are legion: repression, anarchy and exploitation of the weak by a different group of the strong to that which was replaced by the revolution being some of these dangers. We submit that these dangers are unavoidable during a revolution, and those lessons that can be drawn from past history are consistent with this submission. A revolution which "starts again" begs the question of the influence of the past on the subsequent evolution of the society concerned. A revolutionary will obviously claim to disregard the past entirely, and will claim to be re-building completely, from the base upwards the society that is being reformed. Effects from the replaced society will be felt in the very process of conscious attempts to disregard those effects. The replaced society will therefore continue to influence the re-building process. The Green alternative is to recognise that the past **cannot** be disregarded, and that the very act of trying to disregard the past leads to internal contradiction, and to exploit the mistakes of the past, to alter, not to re-build, society.

The analogy with the way in which science progresses is clear. Problems are recognised with the existing economic system, and alterations and modifications are suggested that should help solve the presently-recognised problems. However, it is also recognised that these solutions, when applied, will in themselves give rise to further problems which are unforeseeable (if they could be foreseen, these problems would not be in the future, but in the present - hence problems are generally unpredicted since we cannot see far into the future: this is because of non-determinism). Thus, Green economists, as should any other colour of economist, should be aware of the limitations of what they propose. Hence, by slow, steady reform in a piecemeal, interventionist manner, with free and open discussion of the results and implications of attempted reform, the world should change for the better, in an evolutionary, not a revolutionary manner. Hence, Green economic policies can claim to be scientific, since they are non-determinist, proceed by trial-and-error, and their proponents will be open-minded, and will not reject *a priori* possibilities and pitfalls.

Now we will consider Schumacher's philosophy in detail. Schumacher essentially advocates local-scale reform, with technologies appropriate in scale to the region to which they are applied. As a result, a large-scale economy, such as our own, can assimilate a large-scale new technology. However, a small economy, such as are present in the Third World cannot assimilate a new large-scale technology, since the effects of such a technology will be revolutionary, hence dangerous. Examples of the effects of such a technology on a Third World country include the many horror stories of irrigation or hydro-electric schemes that silted up or broke down within five years of construction and could not be repaired because the country concerned could not afford it. The selling of large-scale, western technologies to Third World countries is exploitive since the recipient country cannot service the technology without the aid of the donor country. This aid needs to be paid for; the recipient country wastes valuable farmland by growing cash crops to earn foreign currency to pay for its new technology, and the people starve. This analysis is probably simplistic in detail, but is familiar and close to the truth; it is how the Third World debt crisis arises.

Schumacher's philosophy of the application of small-scale technology which places little demand on resources and the environment to bring about reformation of societies and improvements to peoples' lifestyles is therefore of great use to Third World countries and gives rise to the concept of sustainable development. This is development which inflicts relatively little damage or cost to the environment. The development therefore allows the recovery processes in the environment to keep pace with the rate of change; the environment can therefore sustain the development. Environments In Third World countries are fragile, and their economies small; so any change **needs** to be small-scale, otherwise the effects will, as just discussed, be revolutionary, hence disastrous.

The charity Intermediate Technology (I.T.) has the aim of applying Schumaker's philosophies specifically to the problems of the Third World. Based on the premise that Third World problems are different in scale to First or Second World problems (problems associated with Capitalism or Marxism respectively) and therefore need Third World-scale solutions, I.T. shows people within a community how to produce labour-saving technology *only using local materials*, thus removing the requirement for the community to import. I.T.'s work therefore prevents the major disruption to lifestyles that would otherwise result from the import of high-technology goods into the community concerned. This style of work could be described as "paternalistic"; however, a community has the choice of whether to accept or reject I.T.'s help. All development work within a community is carried out with the full co-operation of that community. The other possible criticism is that of whether charity *per se* is justifiable. Some would hold that it is not, and the majority of charities campaign for governments essentially to make them unnecessary. However, we believe that the work of groups such as I.T. illustrate vividly what can be achieved with a relatively small sum of money in bringing about improvements in peoples' lifestyles. They therefore show how small the problems actually are, and how easily they are solved, given the willpower of governments.

#### CONCLUSIONS

For development to be sustainable, it needs to be carried out in an open-minded manner with regard to the uses, possibilities and limitations of the methods whereby society is controlled. Revolutionary or Historicist doctrines must be rejected, since they inevitably have unforeseeable consequences for the societies to which they are applied. They are therefore inappropriate for development in the Third World. It must be pointed out that we recognise that free-market capitalism is as inappropriate for Third World development as Marxism, mainly for the reasons discussed above.

Green philosophy is therefore specifically non-deterministic. Certain reforms, or alterations to the structure of societies and to attitudes of individuals are regarded as desirable, and even necessary. However, these changes are **not** believed to be inevitable. Green philosophy is therefore scientific, while Historicist doctrines are not.

We therefore believe that, rather than eating Greens, it is better to allow them to grow and become strong and influential. If Greens are eaten before they have time to grow, the world will suffer because the environment is being exploited in a manner that will not allow it to recover. This exploitation leads in turn to the exploitation of the producers of wealth by the owners of wealth, and the rise of those who wish that Greens were eaten.

We also believe the arguments outlined above to be sufficient for rejection of the

Historicist and deterministic world-view that is Marxism. We have addressed the fundamentals of Marxist philosophy, rather than addressing specifically the issues raised by the two critiques of Green politics referred to at the beginning of this article. This is because the two articles were based on a dogmatic and determinist view of the world, assuming that this world-view was correct. If we had tried to criticise the internally consistent set of arguments contained within the articles, and derived from the propositions of Marx for the evolution of history, we would have failed in our attempt at criticism. Marxism cannot live with Green politics for the reasons outlined above. Thus, to be able to criticise the two articles, we had to set out to show that their basis, Marxism, is logically flawed. This, we believe we have done, but we are willing to admit a possible mis-understanding of Marxist philosophy. If this mis-understanding is profound, then our reply may lapse into incoherence.

So far as the specific criticism of the two articles was concerned, we feel that it is wrong, for example, to criticise a man's philosophy because he happens to be a Christian, or an ex-captain of industry (2). We may, or may not, be Christians, but you, the reader, do not know whether we are or not, or if one of us is, which one. This property, which may, or may not, be present in one, or both, of us does **not** alter the logical consistency of our arguments. To suggest that it does is like saying that black people are less clever than white people because they are black, *i.e.* it is prejudice.

One other criticism of Schumacher that was made in (2) was his belief that women did not need to go out and work. If this statement means what was implied in (2), then it is sexist, and we are prepared to admit to this. We do **not** interpret Schumacher's philosophy as universal truth: rather, we might identify this contentious statement as one that needs modification. As a result of criticism of this statement, Schumacher's philosophy is modified and strengthened, not weakened. The point here is that a critic of Schumacher, wanting to find something wrong, might jump on such a potentially contentious statement and suggest that, because of it, all of Schumacher's teachings are wrong. This would be mistaken, because this statement, that women do not need to work, is one article of Schumacher's philosophy: it does not form the basis for this philosophy. In contrast, the statement "there is conflict between the classes" forms the basis of Marxism. Destroy that statement and you destroy Marxism.

We conclude with this: do not eat Greens until they are fully grown and ready. Otherwise, you may get a nasty surprise.

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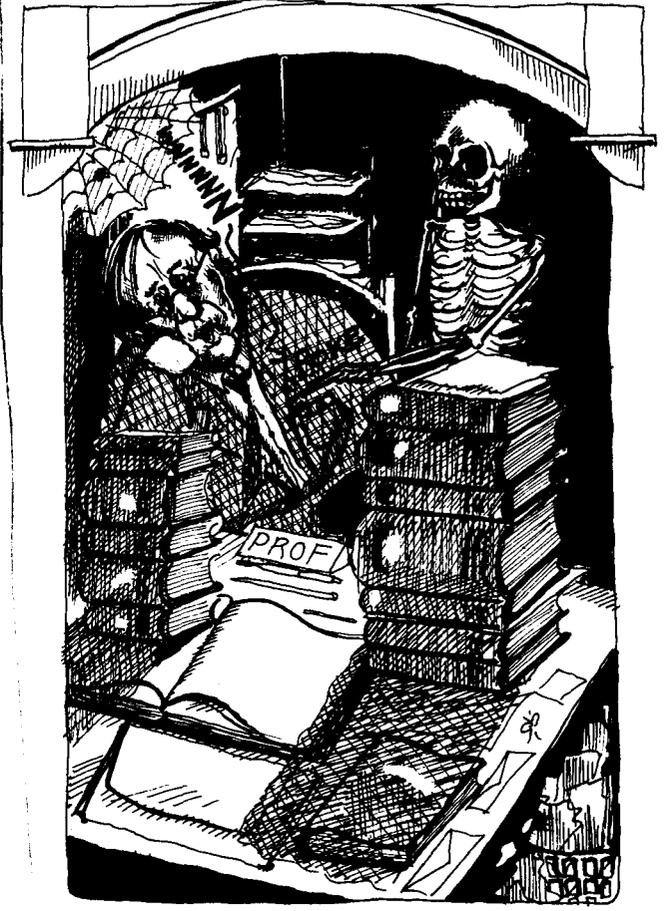
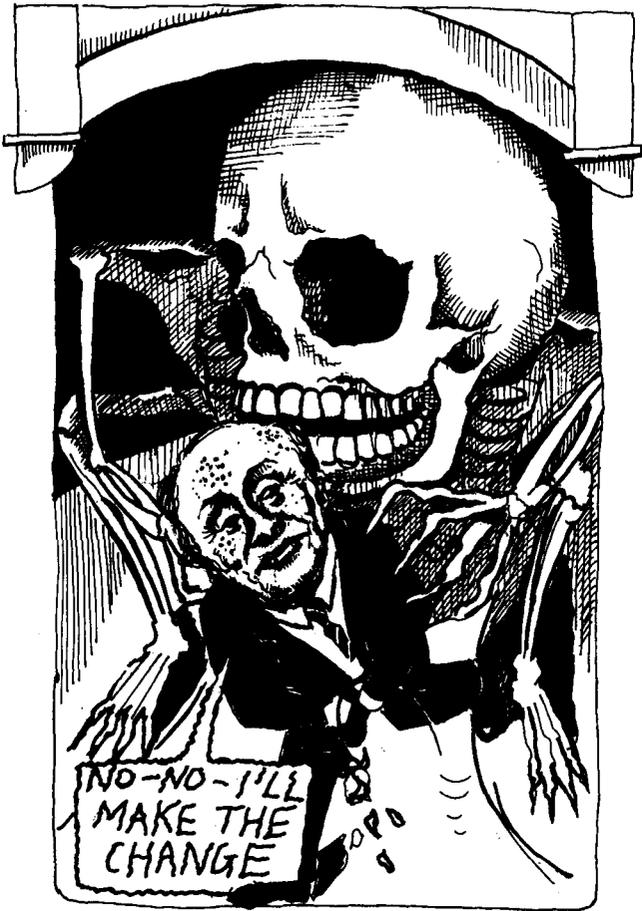
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**Lettre à X., chargé d'un cours sur Hegel...**  
**Paris 6 December 1937**

George Bataille

Translated by Nicola Fisher

**EDITORIAL NOTE:** To the best of our knowledge this is the first UK translation of the following text, a crucial document for the development of Hegelian, Marxist, existentialist and post-structuralist thought. We issue it here with the permission of Gallimard, publishers of Bataille's Oeuvres complètes. For further translated material from Bataille, covering the same period as the 'Letter', see his Visions of Excess: Selected Writing (1927-1939) (Manchester University Press 1985, reviewed in Common Sense no. 3).

The 'X' of Bataille's title is Alexandre Kojève, a Russian émigré and reputed Stalinist who later became a bureaucrat in the EEC. Between 1933 and 1939 he taught a course on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit at the Sorbonne, and his lectures - published in 1947 under the title of Introduction to the Reading of Hegel - were attended at various times by, amongst others, Queneau (who later edited them for publication), Lacan, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. Even Hannah Arendt is said to have dropped in as a tourist, and Walter Benjamin lurks somewhere on their fringe.

A central theme of Kojève's Hegel-interpretation is that of the end of history, which Hegel (à la Kojève) believed to have been inaugurated with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Kojève, unlike numerous more recent commentators, takes this apocalyptic theme seriously and thus finds himself attempting to imagine what the character of a post-historical 'work' world might be. His first-off version is to envisage it as a condition in which desire is definitively satisfied, all historical 'work' having been already done.

But, since he has previously defined 'man' as desire, it follows that an end of history for Kojève entails a re-animalisation of man or, in his own phrase, 'the definitive annihilation of Man properly so-called'.

It is at this point that Bataille, arguably Kojève's most brilliant pupil, intervenes. In the first place he stresses that Kojève had construed desire as negativity, i.e., as a reaching beyond oneself to something that one is not-yet. And then in the second place - and this is the central argument of his 'Letter' - he urges that we can perfectly well imagine an unworkmanlike negativity, i.e., a négativité sans emploi which has nothing more (historically) to do. If humanity equates with negativity, an end of history, far from abolishing this humanity, confronts it with itself and brings it into its own.

The theme of a negativity, or humanity, "without employment" or "out of work", is a central concern of Bataille's writings from beginning to end. But what form might such a negativity take? Bataille thinks this question through by discussing what he terms expenditure. Expenditure may be either productive (re-serving and con-serving, as when we expend resources economically in order to maximize benefits: this is "workmanlike" expenditure) or unproductive (as when we throw resources unconstrainedly towards our pleasure or our honour as our gods: Bataille's example is primitive potlatch). It is to this second sense of expenditure that Bataille reserves the term "expenditure" sans phrase. Such expenditure, according to Bataille, breaks into the space of the sacred, a category he construes as including both the highest (as in the Catholic mass which devours God's body) and the lowest (as when children are forbidden to play with shit): the sacred is everything that is taboo. Expenditure, by breaking through into the sacred whether through ritual or childishness, always transgresses, in Bataille's eloquent term. Transgression is, in other words, the resource left to negativity without employment. Once all historical work has been done a scoring-through of the sacred is the mirror-image of humanity which, in order to obviate the possibility of a regression from post-history into history, humanity has forever, and continually, to reclaim as its own.

All of this, perhaps, had an impact upon Kojève. for in the second edition of his Introduction to the Reading of Hegel he revised his view that post-history entails the annihilation of Man. Besides 'desire', a further central theme in Kojève's Hegel-reading is that of 'recognition': and now, post-historically, it is recognition (or mutual acknowledgement between human individuals) which governs post-history's play. Throughout history, fights about recognition - as in Hegel's Master/Slave dialectic - turned upon points of substance; but during post-history nothing but formal plays of recognition are at stake. Kojève sets out to clarify this notion of formal recognition through a series of Japanese examples: 'the Noh theatre, the ceremony of tea, the art of bouquets of flowers'. However fanciful his examples, his second-edition point is that since 'Man' is not just a desiring but also a cognitive being, the end of history need not equate with the annihilation of Man (of negativity), properly so-called. To be sure his conception of post-historical existence still turns upon the idea of an end of historical work since, otherwise, how could recognition devolve from questions of substance into question of form alone? But, nonetheless, it is as though Kojève is struggling to integrate Bataille's conception of négativité sans emploi into his own thought.

The above comments are intended only to contextualise the 'Letter' of Bataille translated below. In case the theme of an end of history - of

apocalypse - should seem exorbitant it is worth pointing to other theorists, e.g. Bloch and Benjamin, who dwell on the same figure of thought around the same time. One way of focussing the issue upon which Bataille and Kojève join combat is to ask: minus a summoning of the end of a history which (as Hegel reported) amounts to chariots riding roughshod over skulls, where can we imagine we should go?

MY DEAR X.,

In trying me you have helped me express myself with a greater precision.

I acknowledge (as a plausible supposition) that as of now history is completed (near to a final outcome). My way of seeing things has always been other than yours...

Such as it may be, my own experience, in a life full of hardship, has brought me to think that I had nothing more "to do". (I was ill disposed to accept this and, as you have seen, only resigned myself to it after it was forced upon me.)

If the act (the "doing of things") is - as Hegel says - negativity, the question then arises as to whether the negativity of one who has "nothing more to do" disappears or is subsumed under "negativity out of work" [négativité sans emploi]. Personally I can only decide on the one sense, my own being exactly this "negativity out of work" (I could not define myself better). I wish Hegel had foreseen that possibility: at least didn't he put it at the outcome of the processes he described. I imagine that my life - or its miscarriage, better still, the open wound my life is - this alone constitutes the refutation of Hegel's closed system.

The question you put to me comes back to knowing whether or not I am insignificant. I often asked myself that, haunted by a negative response. Beyond this, as the way I see myself varies, and it can happen that I forget, in comparing my life to that of more remarkable men, that it could be mediocre, I have often told myself that at the peak of existence there couldn't be anything negligible: nobody, as it were, could "recognize" a blacked out peak. Some facts - like an exceptional difficulty in getting myself "recognized" (in the same way others are "recognized") have led me seriously but cheerfully to the hypothesis of an irrevocable insignificance.

This doesn't trouble me, I don't connect it with the possibility of vanity. Yet I wouldn't be human if I

just accepted it without having tried not to sink beneath it (in accepting I would have too much chance of becoming, as well as comically negligible, bitter and vindictive: thus my negativity has be retrieved).

My saying this must make you think a misfortune has befallen, and that's all it is: finding myself before you I have no other justification for myself than an animal caught growling in a trap.

In truth its no longer a matter of misfortune or life, only what has become of "negativity out of work", if it is true that it does become something. I am there in the forms which it engenders, forms not at the outset in myself but in others. Most often negativity without power becomes the work of art: this metamorphosis whose consequences are real usually responds ill in the situation brought about by the culmination of history (or the thought of that culmination). A work of art responds by evasion, or, in such cases where that response is prolonged, it never responds to a particular situation, the worst response is to closure, when evasion is no longer possible (when the **hour of truth** arrives). In what concerns me, the negativity which belongs to me didn't give up work until that moment when there wasn't any work: the negativity of a man who has nothing more to do, not that of a man who prefers to talk. But the fact - which seems incontestable - that a negativity turned away from action would express itself as work of art is no less charged with meaning given the possibilities remaining to me. It shows that negativity can be objectified. This fact is not just the property of art: better than a tragedy, or a painting, what religion makes of negativity is an object of contemplation. Yet neither in the work of art, nor in the emotional elements of religion, is negativity "recognized" **as such**. Quite the opposite - it is introduced into a system which annuls its, and only affirmation is "recognized". Also isn't there a fundamental difference between the objectification of negativity, such as was known in the past, and that which remains possible **at the end**. In effect, the man of "negativity out of work", not finding an answer to the question of who he is in the work of art, can only become the man of "negativity **recognlzed**". He has understood that his need to take action is left no further work. But this need cannot be indefinitely duped by the delusions of art, sooner or later his recognition takes place: as negativity empty of content. The temptation still arises to reject this negativity as sin - a solution so convenient that no one waited till the final crisis to adopt it. But since this solution has already been discovered, its effects have already been exhausted: the man of "negativity out of work" hardly takes any notice of it: given that our man is the consequence of what preceded him, the sense of sin no longer has a hold over him. He is in front of his own negativity as if before a wall. Whatever ill he suffers from this, our man knows that henceforth nothing can be avoided, for negativity has no issue.





Brian Mc Grail

## *What Is Enlightenment?*



### I.

What is Enlightenment? A very old question, asked by the *Berlinische Monatschrift* 200 years ago<sup>1</sup>, which has prompted many interesting, delightful and erudite answers<sup>2</sup>. This essay is hardly the first to attempt to enlighten the concept of Enlightenment. However, in these pages I make no claim to answering the question 'originally' as if I have discovered something 'new' which was unavailable previously or has been missed before. This argument is not solely *my* argument. On the contrary, in response to a prompt from a very old question I shall use a very old answer. An answer which can be found in certain places and events, and also in the works of several writers, including Marx, Lukacs and Adorno and Horkheimer, but an argument which I believe is best presented in Hegel's 1807 work the *Phenomenology Of Spirit*.

The problem with many, if not most, discourses upon 'What Is Enlightenment?', especially 'Liberal' ones, is that they are *theoretical* whilst Enlightenment is essentially *practical*. Theoretically speaking Enlightenment is still in existence, and from this starting point we eventually end up with a discourse about *the* Enlightenment. This discourse then (as always) refers to the eighteenth century Enlightenment which it regards as the *birthplace* of a new and fully rational world. A world in which problems can be resolved by talking, and in which everyone has an equal opportunity to speak and be heard<sup>3</sup>. Enlightenment is perceived as a thing, as a period *in* time: a period of which we are still a part. Liberal theory contrasts this period with the preceding one in which *the* 'truth' was not yet known, whilst now it is, for the 'nature' of rational 'man' has been revealed. *The* Enlightenment for Liberal theory not only reveals the 'origins' [*Ursprung*], the truth, of 'man', an inherently rational and 'individual' being, but is seen as the beginning (the origin) of Liberal theory itself. Liberal theory's 'origins' [*Ursprung*] are in Enlightenment and truth. This idea of the 'origin' of truth is the type of argument which Nietzsche so vehemently attacked in both *The Genealogy Of Morals* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* for putting history in front of itself (or in Sartrean terms of putting essence before existence). For Liberal theory it is as if the truth lay in the past, in a monkey, in the *Origin Of Species*. A monkey walks behind Zarathustra as if it were his shadow and is dragged along as he [Zarathustra] strives forward, but the Liberal concept of Enlightenment puts the meaning of history itself at issue for who is in control, Zarathustra or the monkey? It is after all the 'natural' being, the monkey, which is rational!

Practically speaking *the* Enlightenment has been the mystic covering of an unmitigated disaster. *The* Enlightenment has failed. "The fully enlightened earth radiates disaster triumphant"<sup>4</sup>. The modern world in practice is no closer to solving

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its problems by rational discussion (reasoned debate) than Genghis Khan was, no matter how much the *idea* of Enlightenment may still reverberate in the divine pews of the Palace Of Westminster. As if problems could ever be solved by mere talking. What in reality we come up against are closed doors. No Exit! Eighteenth century Enlightenment set out to destroy myths but the idea of Enlightenment itself becomes myth in a world which is not yet emancipated in practice. A myth which Liberal political theory has entirely been taken in by. We must, therefore, refrain from seeing Enlightenment as a thing, as *the* Enlightenment, as a period *in* time, as the birthplace of our age. For our age is not of that period. History is not 'progressive' for only an unenlightened world could call the megaton bomb an improvement. We must see Enlightenment as something we have still to attain to.

What is Enlightenment? Perhaps, as is often the case, it is easier to say what the phenomenon is *not*. Enlightenment is not dogma; it is not sticking to your guns *of necessity* until you are a pig in a poke. What Enlightenment must therefore offer is an escape route for the pig. It is a way out! And, as Foucault points out in his essay of the same name, this is precisely the way in which Kant saw eighteenth century Enlightenment. He saw it as a way out from *immaturity*, as an Exit [*Ausgang*]. For Kant the escape is from immaturity, by which 'immaturity' means "a certain state of our will that makes us accept someone else's authority to lead us in areas where the use of reason is called for"<sup>5</sup>. One example which Kant gives of immaturity is "when a book takes the place of our understanding"<sup>6</sup>, but a more modern example would be the way in which an electronic box in the corner of a room tells us how to think and what to think (for example, the use of 'canned' laughter in comedy programmes which prompts the audience to laugh or clap, etc. -- the box tells us when we are enjoying ourselves). Of course, 'immaturity' is based upon the obedience of someone (or something) else's authority and can thus be seen as an *attitude* towards authority. By the same token 'maturity' (ie. Enlightenment) can also be seen as an attitude towards being led, etc. An attitude of people who refuse to be led.

Enlightenment is an attitude of openness. An Enlightened person is one who is not easily led but instead can utilise the faculty of reason freely and make their own decisions. Dogma on the other hand is the attitude of the closet. It is caused, however, by a situation in which one is not *free* to make one's own decisions. "Listen Buddy, money makes us do the type of things we don't want to"<sup>7</sup>. We take the stance of dogma when we are pushed into a closet and the door is shut behind us (or, as is often the case, when we enter the closet because we want to and shut our own doors). Hence, we cannot see the world, nor can we hear it, nor do we speak about it, for Zarathustra has three shadows! We amble along blindly and allow others to make our decisions for us. Dogma is the attitude of the eye of Cyclops whilst *Enlightenment is an attitude of freedom*. However, it is an attitude which we cannot simply wake up and choose one day for it is a collective attitude which only ever arises out of certain practical (ie. material) preconditions -- that is, the conditions of freedom. Thus, before we can say what Enlightenment is we must first of all understand what freedom is, that is, we must understand what it means and entails to be free, and this can only be achieved through self-knowledge. *We must understand why we are what we are*. Why is it that we are capable of being Enlightened? Why is it that we are free?

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### II.

What is Enlightenment? Enlightenment as an attitude is *realisation* of what we are. The Enlightened person not only *looks at* but *lives* life in a certain way. To understand this we must take into consideration two interpretations of the word 'realise'. Most commonly, 'realise' is taken to mean something *passive* as in I am *made* aware of the fact that this crow is sitting on the telephone cable, and that I play no role in the realisation of this fact. It is an interpretation of the word which goes hand-in-hand with the modern scientific idiom of a correspondence theory of truth. As if the truth is *out* there, just waiting for me to be made aware of it, for my theory to correspond to it. Less commonly, we can interpret the word 'realise' in an *active* sense, as Hegel does in his phenomenological approach, whereby the word 'realise' is taken in its literal sense as meaning 'to *make* real'. I only *realise* the phenomenon of the crow on the cable through my *actions*: I *see* it, I *perceive* it, and I *understand* it. Under closer inspection (through *my* further actions) the 'crow' may well turn out to be a blackbird, the 'telephone cable' a washing line, etc. When I realise something I make it real, a part of my reality. I have an active part in creating or constituting my reality. Thus, when I ask 'Why is it that we are capable of being Enlightened?' this is just another way of asking 'Why is it that we are capable of *realising* ourselves?' Why is it that we can *make* ourselves real? Why is it that we can constitute our reality?

Simply because we are free. We are free to make our own environment, or if you like to *name* it, to realise it: to give it *meaning*. Freedom is the ability to *constitute* (give meaning to) the world, in what ever way we like. And since we are also a part of that world, freedom is the ability to constitute ourselves; it is self-determination; it is freedom to give ourselves a *meaning*. We are capable of being Enlightened because we have a *purpose* in living, that is, we have something, a *meaning*, which we can realise. However, what is 'meaning'? What then is Enlightenment if it is the realisation of meaning; of our meaning?

Enlightenment is realisation of what we are. What we are, of course, is self-conscious. If I am self-conscious I am aware of who I am. That is, I have a *meaning*; I mean something. But what does it mean to 'mean something'? What does this entail? Just as I, as a consciousness, can *name* something, an object, and thus give it meaning, likewise, in order that I may know myself, what I am, in order that I may become self-conscious (conscious of what I am) it is necessary that I am *named*, that I am given meaning by something which can point me out and *realise* what I am. That is, I am *realised* and given meaning by another consciousness, which in turn through *my* *action* becomes self-conscious; is realised and given meaning by me. Hence, 'meaning' only makes sense in terms of consciousness, or that which can give meaning, and *my* meaning is dependent upon reciprocity; my social relations with others. I *realise* myself, that is, I realise who I am, through other people, who tell me who I am.

Both Liberal and Hegelian approaches see Enlightenment as *realisation* of the *truth*, but in two different ways under their understandings of the word 'realise'. As before, Liberal theory sustains the idea of 'origins' [*Ursprung*]. For it Enlightenment is a passive realisation of a truth which was already there. Again, in terms of eighteenth century Enlightenment, it is the revelation that 'man' is *naturally* an

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individual and that the free market is the place in which 'he' can best fulfill 'his' potential<sup>8</sup>. Perhaps then the greatest revelation for Liberal theory over the past two centuries has been Darwin's revelation that 'man' is in fact a monkey. The moment of truth in Liberal theory is that human beings are natural beings, but its greatest error is that it reduces the former to the latter. In contrast Hegelian theory sees *realisation* as being future orientated whereby we attempt to realise/make ourselves in the future by knowing in the present (by reflecting upon the past<sup>9</sup>) what we were unsatisfied with in the past. Freedom is not an inherent part of our biology but is something we must make. Realisation is therefore an excellent word for describing the attitude of Enlightenment since it covers all three tenses: I realise *now* what *was* wrong and I *hope* to correct (to realise) my mistake in future. Now I know what *was* I can change myself and the world. Or more to the point, now I know what I was, or what I am (others have made me realise what I am) I will prove them wrong (if I do not like what others make of me) by changing myself and hence the world, for they will be forced to realise me differently. However, what is the better world that we should try to realise in the future?

Enlightenment is realisation of our meaning, our purpose, our *reasons* for living. It is indissolubly bound up with the concept of *Reason*. Reason is a faculty of Question and Answer. It asks 'Why?' and tries to answer 'Because'. Ultimately Reason seeks for our reasons in living; the purpose of life.

Why Life? The answer is in the question, or more correctly, the question is in the answer. For the meaning of life is life with meaning, and from where does meaning come? From whatever it is that knows what 'meaning' means; from whatever it is that can ask 'Why Life?' Life. Where else? The meaning of life is life, for what else can give my life meaning and purpose other than *another living being*. Our purpose in life is therefore *social* and Enlightenment is realisation of our social being, that we are a *social animal*. In fact, Enlightenment is also awareness that life has no other meaning nor purpose outside of itself, outside of society. Enlightenment is realisation that our purpose in life is *political*, that, we are in fact, as Aristotle would have it, a *zoon politikon* (a political animal), and that outside of politics there is no meaning to life. 'What Is Enlightenment?' is a very youthful question when compared to the answer it must receive, but this is because the question only came to the forefront on the eve of its practical resolution. "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk"<sup>10</sup>. Aristotle may well have been enlightened to the answer, but his answer was always purely theoretical due to the society in which he lived. And so it has remained for the remainder of history, for only at the end of history does the answer become practical; only then is the world fully Enlightened.

Yet even theoretically Enlightenment, as Liberal theory demonstrates, has either been misunderstood or completely absent. The reasons for this, as I have already pointed out, are that the theoretical attitude of Enlightenment depends upon the practical attitude of Enlightenment; upon freedom. If freedom does not prevail then neither does Enlightenment, and hence, Reason finds itself searching in the dark for the meaning of life.

### III.

What is Enlightenment? One of the most important attacks of eighteenth

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century Enlightenment was its attack on religious explanations for the foundations of the human state or human condition. All of these explanations tried to explain or give *reasons* for the way things were with reference to a 'natural' world order. Reason in this situation always gives the human race *significance*, purpose and, if you like, a *place* in the universe. We serve a purpose; we are useful; God's purpose. The universe was built for us by God and therefore we are of the highest importance. The meaning of the human race, and life, is tied in with the natural world. We are of necessity, ie. it is necessary that we are here on earth, and the rest of the universe could not do without us. For a while Enlightenment overcame these dogmas and the problem of the *external* meaning and necessity of life by transplanting *natural* theory with *social* theory. However, Enlightenment was not to last as Reason and Enlightenment on their own are not enough. Rather, the attitude of Enlightenment and the successful use of Reason are dependent upon the emancipation of the human race from a self-imposed 'natural' order. Therefore, as the French Revolution collapsed and, once again, a 'natural' order was imposed, so Enlightenment faded. And once more ideas come forth which try to explain the necessity of human life in terms of its importance and significance to the universe.

However, the attitude of Enlightenment always threatens no matter how difficult it may be for humans to come to terms with their own mortality and insignificance. Whereas dogma states that God made the universe for us the latest scientific theory states that it has no origin. This theory's exponent finds it difficult to imagine that the universe was created for us since we are tiny creatures occupying a minor planet orbiting a minor star in a galaxy which is made up of a hundred billion stars, in a universe which has a hundred billion galaxies. The point of 'natural' theories should now be clear: they are an attempt to come to terms with our own insignificance and meaninglessness. For when one truly dares to think about it life is unnecessary to the outside natural world (universe). The attempt of 'natural' theories has been to read human meaning into external things. What Enlightenment must discover, however, is that things, things which really are things, have no human meaning. Enlightenment destroys the myths of Astrology and Alchemy. It comes to terms with the insignificance of human beings to the natural world, but that does not mean that life or humans are insignificant (have no significance or importance at all).

Rather, the significance of being human is that I am only significant to other humans, and they are only significant to me. For I can only have meaning to something which understands what meaning is: what it is to desire meaning and purpose in life. Thus, if it is Reason which tells me my purpose in life; it tells me *why* I am here; it tells me *Because* of this, that, and the other; then Hegel is quite correct when he tells us that:

Spirit is consciousness that *has Reason*; it is consciousness which, as the word 'has' indicates, has the object in a shape *implicitly* determined by Reason.<sup>11</sup>

That is, 'Spirit *has* Reason' or *only* Spirit has Reason, for what Hegel is saying is that our purpose in life only makes sense within the terms of *Spirit*, whereby the word 'Spirit' refers to a social world *and* our consciousness, or awareness, of this

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social world. This social world is '*implicitly* determined by Reason', whereby the word 'implicit' should be thought of as meaning 'internal', 'virtually contained' or 'absolute', that is, the *shape* (or form) of a social world is determined by a *purpose* which is *internal* to the social world. Therefore, a social world for Hegel is not determined by reasons which are *explicit* to it. Taking these interpretations of Spirit as 'Social World' and Reason as 'Purpose' we can then *translate* Hegel's line 'Spirit is consciousness that *has Reason*' into the more modern way of stating the same thing: *Political life is living that has Purpose.*

We may be insignificant to the outside universe but we are significant to each other in a social context. We give each other something to aim at, a purpose in surviving, a goal in *life*. A parent's children may be their only purpose in living, and therefore, not for nothing do they put their own life at risk in defending them for without them their life may have no meaning. The meaning of life is not just animal life, but life with meaning. Life must be social.

## IV.

What is Enlightenment? Enlightenment is understanding why we think in the manner that we do. In light of what I have said above it is clear that the human being so far has found it difficult to find significance and meaning in a social context, so much so, to the extent, that it has tried to find its purpose in the external universe. Why is this the case? I would contend that it is impossible to face up to our insignificance to the outside world as long as the social world in which we live, the very thing which gives us meaning and purpose, remains outside of us. If the social world is outside of us, externalised from us, how can we say that we have no meaning beyond ourselves? Thus, we find enshrined in religious dogma that we are here for God's purposes. The meaning of life is God the universe, and it is from *God* that we gain meaning.

Heaven is a social world in which the believer will obtain the fullness of life and a meaning which will console their fragile existence. The point to note, however, is that heaven is a social world which lies *beyond* the grave; beyond us as we are. It is, as yet, *external* to our mortal/material lives; our human and earthly social existence. Therefore, the purpose and goal of life is outside of us. and when we try to Reason, to discover what it is that *determines* the *shape* of our social world, we eventually, as we must come to the conclusion that the 'way of the world' is determined, not by us (when in fact it is), but by some external force. When we do not live in a completely free social world, a world in which we are self-determining, our theory, or reasons for living, reflects this external determination.

It is not the case that we are *unfree*, for it is *never* the case that we are entirely determined by things which are external to us. This only seems or *appears* to be the case since the social world is external to us, and it is, after all, this which *does* determine us. However, the social world cannot be totally external to us for *we are* the social world. It is *us* who *make* our social world, *along with history* which has created the situation into which we are born. It is the *communitiy* which realises who I am but it is *we* who determine ourselves as a community. Self-determination is necessarily plural, that is, it is based upon public selfhood. Realising my individuality is not upto me as an individual for I need other people to realise who I am.

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Hence, a community which will not realise my individuality appears as external to me. My situation is beyond my control and this is then reflected in my Reasoning. This kind of Reasoning, which I shall term 'natural theory', is found in societies in which people find a certain kind of 'individuality' in their *private* selfhood. Private selfhood starts out from the basis that there are no other *subjects* (self-consciousnesses) because the world appears to the private self as being made up only of objects, of natural beings *not* human beings. Thus, private selfhood only ever attains to consciousness not self-consciousness, for who I am is not *freely* determined by other free beings but is determined by *things*, or, more often, by Nature, with the result that I do not know who I am other than as a thing that other private selfhoods realise me as.

If the private selfhood then wants to discover 'who am I?' it necessarily looks outside of itself, it looks for itself and the meaning of its life in Nature, but can never find itself there for as far as Nature is concerned the beastly of private selfhood is *meaningless*. It can search all it wants but since natural knowledge is *boundless* (ie. it is not Absolute or finite) the private selfhood can never attain to an *absolute knowing* of itself. Instead, the private selfhood finds in Liberal theory, which never knows real politics, the apology for the disastrous world which it has created. The shape of the social world in which it lives has been determined not by people but by something which is out of their control -- Nature. The social world shape known as the 'free market' has its origins in nature, in monkeys. And the purpose of life is to act like one. For as far as the private selfhood and its 'social' or 'political' philosophy can see, and this is not very far, there is no other world than the natural one. The Natural world as we have seen, however, is *unfree*, and therefore, so are the origins of Liberal theory. For to be free means to be *self-determining* but in order to be self-determining we must take control of our own lives, that is, if we are free we take full *responsibility* for our actions. Yet, all theories which are based upon a *determining cause*, such as Nature, for the 'way of the world' release their exponents from their responsibility for the world, responsibility which is necessary if they are to be free. Not taking responsibility for the world of course is a part and parcel of 'immaturity'. "I am not responsible for this, it is up to my leaders to do something about it", "It is their own fault", etc. etc.

It is because we are not yet free that we do not realise our purpose. We are unaware that life is essentially political and that a 'political animal' must take *responsibility* for the world if it is to be free, if it is to be human. (Human being is synonymous with free being). I suppose in Kant's terms a social being or political animal is 'mature' in that it does not hide from its responsibilities for the social world. Still, even the most 'mature' or Enlightened *individuals* cannot attain to *absolute knowing* if the social world in which they live is still external to them for to gain absolute knowledge of the world is one and the same thing as gaining *absolute knowledge* of oneself. Absolute knowing can only ever be attained to through self-knowing, for as I have pointed out we can never expect to have an absolute knowledge in terms of Nature (ie. natural knowledge) which is boundless. I achieve an absolute knowledge of myself, and likewise of my social world, only if all others are free to point out what I am and only if I am free of a social world which is external to me. That is, I cannot achieve an Absolute Knowledge of myself if I am still outside of myself; if the social world which realises who I am is outside of me; for absolute knowledge is free-knowledge, and free-knowledge just like a

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free-purpose is *self-contained*, ie. it is *independent of an external force*.

### V.

What is Enlightenment? Enlightenment is absolute knowledge. Perhaps I should have given this answer at the beginning since it does seem to be the expected one. "Of course, if I had access to absolute knowledge I would be fully enlightened" the reader might have thought, but at the same time the reader might also have cast doubt upon the notion of Enlightenment since it would have then been linked to an *impossibility*. For how can anyone ever have 'absolute knowledge'? It is only possible for a God (if we were to believe in one) to have absolute knowledge of everything.

Thus, it was more important to explain the dichotomies of immaturity/ maturity, external/ internal, natural/ human and dependence/ independence first. For absolute knowledge does not mean 'total' knowledge of every natural phenomenon; it does not refer to the accumulation of data; rather, it refers to the knowing of one self-contained phenomenon in its *entirety*, or as Lukacs puts it, in its *totality*. Absolute knowing is a knowing which is *not* outside of itself. It refers then to something which can know itself *totally* by looking in on itself. Thus, absolute knowledge is the knowledge of freedom. It is knowledge of our independence and the only purpose of life in this independence. Enlightenment is *absolute* for a political animal is *absolute*, it is *all*; it is everything to itself. It is all there is. There is nothing outside of politics for a political animal.

It is therefore impossible for the individual in the capacity of private selfhood to attain to absolute knowledge of themselves. For complete self-knowledge the individual requires the opinion of other people. Other people who must be free to say what they like; to say what they really are thinking, otherwise complete self-knowledge remains an idea; it remains theoretical.

But when is one not free, or *unfree*, to say what they like? There are two basic scenarios to this occurrence. Firstly, there is the *repressive* model. It is the form one usually thinks of when talking about countries or phases in history, for example, pre-Reformation religious regimes in Europe, where there is no 'freedom of speech'. Under this model the individual (or group) does not speak out because something *bad*, some evil, will be done unto them. It is a *prudential* decision on behalf of critics in order to avoid pain and even death. It is the use of force on behalf of the powerful so that the truth (the true consensus) about them may be kept secret. It is, as far as 'Liberals' are concerned the *only* model, when in fact this use of force has always been merely a *last resort*. It allows 'Liberals' to decipher between a 'good' government which *allows* its people to speak from a 'bad' government which does not, but the fact that a 'good' government can *allow* means that it can take away, for *all* government is *evil*. To understand the problems of achieving absolute knowledge one must look at the other scenario.

Secondly, we have the *productive* model. Under this model people do not speak their minds not because they wish to *avoid* something but because they wish to *gain* something. It is a 'classic' case of immaturity whereby authority is accepted as a process through which *success* and freedom can be gained. In private the immature attitude curses the whole notion of bosses, but when it comes face to face with the representatives of authority, or in public where the individual is in

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competition with other individuals for the position of teacher's pet, the truths of free thoughts are *distorted* into a garble of appraisal. "Yes Sir, No Sir, Three bags full Sir!".

Thus, we can never know ourselves, what others make of us, if we *either* make them *dependent* upon us for the realisation of their life, because in this situation they are not going to speak openly, *or*, if we are the dependent ones, we refuse to speak our minds through fear of what we potentially might lose (what we might *not* gain), for in this situation we accept authority -- the very thing which undermines free speech and absolute knowledge -- and we do not *realise* ourselves.

## VI

What is Enlightenment? Enlightenment is a *language*, but by this I do not mean that it is a talking shop. For our language is directly tied to the way in which our society practically recognises, or realises, Objects<sup>12</sup>. Yet, this does not mean that language is *determined* by an 'economic base'<sup>13</sup>, rather that, when we change our language we do something material and utterly practical. To change the way in which society speaks about an Object is to change the Object, but language has to be changed by force.

In recent years the most strident attacks upon language have been made by feminists, gays and lesbians, and many ethnic, racial and national groups who have refused to be trampled under by the authoritative and established use of the language of identity and conformity. Hence, many new terms have been 'invented' which express this resistance to the will of authority. However, new terms are never easily accepted by the established way of thinking exactly because they require *thinking*. A thinking-about-other-people with which the private selfhood cannot cope. The 'immature' become confused by a language which represents a mature attitude towards authority. It is *not* that the 'immature' are 'stupid' or 'ignorant', etc. but that they are apolitical, and they are apolitical because they see the world as a 'natural', external place, ie. they are not yet free. The language of Enlightenment is not intended to be understood by the 'immature' (the Mr. and Mrs. Nobodies who think society can be put 'right' by disciplinary measures -- "*What we need is better education for ye masses ; reintoriduce gruel and cains...*"); those who accept authority; but is a language for those who want to stand up for themselves. It is a language of self-emancipation. The Enlightened attitude uses a language which leaves the identity of every Object at issue. It is a language designed to upset the attitude of 'immaturity'; those who want a democratic *process* or a *proper* way to speak. *Wimmin, themself, theirstory, wo/manned, etc.* It is not a language of security (it does not say 'do not speak about your religion and politics in public'), but is a language of argument.

It is with this in mind that I believe it is important to reclaim the language of eighteenth century Enlightenment; to reclaim a language of *individuality* stolen by 'Liberal' theorists and hence turned into a melodrama of *individualism*. Eighteenth century Enlightenment contains both these aspects, of individuality and individualism, within its *language*, for on the one hand it says 'stand up for yourself', do not be fooled, do not allow yourself to be led, whilst on the other hand it says 'be realistic and pragmatic', consider your position as an individual, look at the options available to you (as an individual) and choose which ever you perceive

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(from your *situation*) to be the most beneficial to you as an individual. Thus, the language of Enlightenment appeals for freedom, but since only those who either are already truly free or are abused by the authority of others know what real freedom means it is a language which has become distorted in the minds of those who *think* they know what freedom is -- freedom is 'freedom of choice' or 'freedom of speech' *within the framework*. That is, for example, those with power (money) who have the option to do (buy) this or that believe that this is 'freedom', and they readily believe *everyone* to possess this 'freedom', whilst those with *no* 'power' (money) know that they do not have (possess) this 'freedom'. Needless to say 'Liberal' theory has forgotten about the *depths of the Enlightenment* which used language along the lines of 'stand up to your bosses'; for eighteenth century Enlightenment was nothing other than a quick breath of *actual freedom* (the French Revolution) which, when snuffed out, left behind it a language that only came to confuse the unenlightened. Even 'Liberal' words have their roots in workers' revolution.

Therefore, *we* should not be afraid to talk of the 'freedom of speech' since there can never be any 'freedom of speech' without *actual freedom*; that is, there can be no 'freedom of speech' in a *hierarchial* society (ie. one with a *social* division of labour -- try thinking of a society with a *social* division of labour which does not involve a hierarchy!). This, *by now*, should be plain to see. The 'Liberal' spouts about the 'freedom to speak', the 'freedom' to vote, etc. However, if it is a company chairperson who is talking we do not need to listen, or if there is an election we need not bother about the result other than as a *measurement*. For once we ask 'Why does this person say what they do?' or 'Why have people voted in this way?' it must come to our attention that these things are pre-determined by 'position'. We already know what a company director will say and for whom the wretched will vote. Therefore, free speech depends upon a lack of 'position'; it needs a society with a certain *fluidity*. Whilst a society with bosses can be described by many adjectives none of them can be *fluid*. Enlightenment requires fluidity, however, for it requires that we see society from many angles, that is why, if Enlightenment is anything it is Anarchy!

## VII.

What is Enlightenment? Enlightenment is only partial now; *the Enlightenment* has been a failure and all we are left with is the Dialectic of Enlightenment. The Dialectic is the indicator of the failure of Enlightenment; it is a dialectic between how the individual sees themselves as free when at the same time they subordinate their individuality to the rule of law. As we have seen, there is a contradiction inherent in the idea of *individual rationality* between 'stand up for yourself' and 'be careful' or 'watch out for yourself'. This contradiction, as I have already pointed at, is caused by a social division of labour under which we are realised or constituted as individuals. A social division of labour which is *of necessity* for the maintenance of hierarchy. And hierarchy is the root of all Evil.

We live in a terrible world; we fear that our lives may end up meaningless, that they will go unrecognised. We try to secure our recognition in the outside world; in a social world which is outside of us. We wish to *escape* from *this* world so we believe in myth and fantasy, but whilst trying to escape from this world we necessarily shed our *responsibility* for it. And hence *we* perpetuate the existence of

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Evil, of hierarchy, of the social division of labour, for ironically it is these very things which allow us to *escape*, to shed ourselves of our responsibility for what we do. In order to be recognised we are forced to behave and fall in line; we take refuge in 'glory' or 'faith'; the realisation of life is *ordered* and the State recognises us for what we do in its name, and further, it displays our obedience to everyone; the meaning of a person's life amounts to a piece of tin. Medallion Man triumphs!

In the *Dialectic Of Enlightenment* Adorno and Horkheimer trace the doing of terrible deeds back to the separation of mental from manual labour; to the separation of decision-making from execution. It is this separation which allows the 'immature' attitude of Kant to prevail, and which also makes it *acceptable*. At the same time, of course, it is an 'immature' attitude which allows hierarchy and the separation of decision-making from execution to prevail. If, for example, we take the Nazi extermination of the Jews what would be the answer if we asked the question 'Who is to blame?' Hitler? Hardly, for although he made the decisions *decisions* are meaningless unless they are carried out, and Hitler did not single handedly massacre six million people. The guard who pulled the trigger or turned on the gas? Not on your life, for they were only doing their job, they were only following orders; it was not their *place to think*; and anyway, they faced execution themselves if they did not execute. The system? Yes, the System; the system that allows each individual to 'only do their job'; to get on with their own life without having to think nor do things for themselves. (They may well believe they are doing things for themselves, but where will Thatcher's entrepreneurs find *docile bodies* (the docile, non-thinking bodies that they want) if the system does not first of all force workers to sell their labour-power?).

As Foucault demonstrates in *Discipline And Punish* during the eighteenth century there is a veritable take-off in the techniques of training soldiers to accept the authority of their officers without question. And it is not merely in the army that these techniques are found but in hospitals (patient - doctor), in schools (pupil - teacher), in the home (children/wife - Householder), in prisons, and, most importantly, in the factory (worker - capitalist) for it is the need to control workers that leads to and dictates the extension of discipline into all other spheres of life. And in *Capital* Marx ties the knot between the disciplining of workers and the 'freedom' of individuals to buy and sell on the market. The free, democratic world of those who are 'free' to exploit (buy the labour-power of) others, who are not so 'free'.

Thus, Enlightenment can only ever be the overcoming of its Dialectic. It is the expulsion of our immature attitude towards the responsibilities of political life -- the only life with meaning. It is Anarchy -- the capitulation of hierarchy!

## VIII.

What is Enlightenment? Enlightenment is being aware that it is our job to think. That it is up to us to take responsibility and make our world. It is awareness that it is *We*, not God, not Nature, not the man in the moon, who are responsible for what we are; for the world in which we live; for whatever we make of ourselves. The world is all we have, there is nothing else, but at least it is *our* world. Freedom means *Nothing* to us!

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### Notes

1. The *Berlinische Monatschrift*: an eighteenth century German journal. Foucault reminds us of how the function of a journal differed then as compared with today. Whereas modern 'trade journals' set questions to which they already know the answers they will receive from their readers, eighteenth century journals asked their readers for answers to new and truly problematic questions. 'What Is Enlightenment?' was one of these questions, asked by the *Berlinische Monatschrift*, which eventually received two very different answers from Kant and Mendelssohn.
2. For example, see (i) *What Is Enlightenment?* by Michel Foucault (found in *The Foucault Reader* edited by Paul Rainbow, Peregrine), (ii) 'The Concept Of Enlightenment' in *The Dialectic Of Enlightenment* by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Verso. Also related material by Jurgen Habermas in his *The Philosophical Discourse Of Modernity*, and *After Philosophy: End Or Transformation* edited by Baynes, Bohman and McCarthy (especially the 'General Introduction' and the 'Introduction' to the section on Habermas), MIT.
3. There is still a widespread belief that people can be 'reasoned' with. This is especially prevalent amongst Americo- Liberal- Empiricist social scientists, eg. Dahl, who condemn 'violence' and who try to channel everything into the 'democratic process'. A *process* which simply ignores the views of so many people and which has been built upon the *violent* suppression of workers' revolts. How can everyone have an equal opportunity to speak in a society in which 'money talks'? It is not so much a 'democratic process' as a *processed democracy*.
4. *The Dialectic Of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer, Verso, Page 3.
5. *What Is Enlightenment?*, Foucault, Peregrine, Page 34.
6. *ibid*, Page 34.
7. From the motion-picture *Wall Street*. The film centres around a young yuppie stockbroker, Buddy Fox, who finds an easy way of making money by giving insider information to his political paymasters. He allows himself to be used in return for the benefits of money and power until he realises how expendable he is to his superiors.
8. In the eighteenth century women were totally excluded from debates and 'rational' discussion. This shows the extent to which true Enlightenment, which requires the *input* of *all* in order to be rational, was an impossibility at that time. What is also interesting to note at this point, however, is the way in which the *vocabulary* of eighteenth century Enlightenment has lingered on long after what few freedoms it brought have disappeared in practice. Where can the 'equality of man' be found in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? A similar example can be found in the use of revolutionary language by the Soviet State under Stalin. Freedom may be ephemeral but the language of freedom seems to be eternal.
9. "For Hegel all knowledge is *recollection*", Richard Gunn: Lecture on Chapter 8 of Hegel's *Phenomenology Of Spirit*: 'Absolute Knowing'.
10. *The Philosophy Of Right*, Hegel, Oxford, Page 13.
11. *Phenomenology Of Spirit*, Hegel, Oxford, Page 265, Paragraph 440.
12. I use the term *Object* (capital 'O') to refer to anything which can be defined within a field of knowledge. Thus, in all fields of knowledge 'people' are Objects, but it is only under certain knowledge fields that people may be reduced to things which are unable/ not allowed to speak back as subjects, ie. they are reduced to *objects* ('o').
13. I am referring to 'deterministic' readings of Marx which *always* pick up on the 1859 *Preface* in which Marx talks of an 'economic base' which determines a legal, aesthetic and *literary* 'superstructure'. I believe this reading to be totally misguided.

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Stephen Houlgate Hegel, Nietzsche and the Criticism of Metaphysics  
Cambridge University Press

A good deal of twentieth century philosophy can be understood as a battle between the heirs of Hegel and the heirs of Nietzsche. Those who inherit Hegel's mantle include Marxists and the 'critical theorists' associated with the Frankfurt School. Prominent among the Nietzscheans are the poststructuralists of contemporary France. The analogy which suggests itself is that of a Franco-Prussian war fought out on Germanic soil (cf. the opening paragraph of Nietzsche's Untimely Meditations). Of course, in this cultural conflict, the battle-lines are not always sharply drawn. Bataille, a signal influence on poststructuralism, was influenced by Hegel via Kojève's lectures on Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit in Paris during the 1930's; conversely Adorno, arguably Critical Theory's leading representative, moves in the ambits of Hegel and of Nietzsche alike. And in Walter Benjamin (sometimes Adorno's inspiration and sometimes his opponent) the influence of Hegel is conspicuous by its absence; Benjamin, like Bataille, stands much closer to French Surrealist thought.

Just as the battle-lines are ragged, so is it the case that the issues over which conflict erupts are not always clearly distinguished. Each side too often condemns out of hand caricature versions of views held by the other so that the atmosphere of the debate swarms with the savaged remnants of straw men. Additionally, each side tends to use the same terms ('power', for example) in different senses so that quite frequently there results a missing rather than a meeting of minds. This said, however, the battle remains a real one: in it, potent issues of truth, subjectivity and emancipation are at stake. So bloodthirsty is the struggle that commentators, always of course more or less partisan, have emerged to spell out for us what is what. Jürgen Habermas's The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity and Peter Dews's Logics of Disintegration, both written from a broadly understood Critical Theory perspective, are cases in point.

Stephen Houlgate's contribution to the renewed Franco-Prussian war is a lucid and careful comparison of the critiques of metaphysical thinking

undertaken by Hegel and Nietzsche. By 'metaphysics', Houlgate understands thought which deals in terms of conceptual oppositions between fixed and given terms, concepts and entities; he urges that metaphysics, thus construed, is something both Hegel and Nietzsche deplored.

His argument is to the effect that Hegel's critique of metaphysics succeeds where Nietzsche's fails: Nietzsche, himself, remains caught in a metaphysical opposition between thought and consciousness and language on the one hand and, on the other, 'intuition' and 'life'. In contrast Hegel's ideas of speculative discourse and 'judgement' (the latter implicitly containing the former) allow him to surmount metaphysics by way of immanent critique. For Hegel, metaphysical distinctions undermine themselves and so have to be set in motion rather than externally opposed. An external opposition, as in Nietzsche, would reproduce metaphysics instead of surmounting it since it is in external opposition that metaphysics, for its part, consists.

Houlgate's argument is an elegant one and is supported with a wealth of expository detail. His pages on speculative discourse and judgement, for example, are striking and clear. Moreover his respective evaluations of Hegel and Nietzsche appear broadly fair: Hegel's setting-in-motion of categories reveals conceptual figures (determinate negation and mediation, for instance) which have powerful anti-metaphysical potential and of which Nietzsche seems, by and large, to have been unaware. And from all of this Houlgate draws interesting conclusions about Hegel's and Nietzsche's rival conceptions of subjectivity: Nietzsche's celebration of heroic inwardness severs (metaphysically) the individual subject from society whereas, for Hegel, it is in and through the sociality of 'mutual recognition' that the emancipation of the individual is to be achieved. 'Life', in its Nietzschean sense, is something we are invited to struggle with alone.

This said, however, some reservations can be entered regarding Houlgate's treatment of Hegelian thought. (I set aside his treatment of Nietzsche for the purposes of the present review.) Sometimes it is a matter of the surface elegance of clear exposition glossing over difficulties; sometimes it is a matter of interpretive judgements about which questions can be raised. An instance of the latter is his ascription to Hegel of the view that reason can a priori determine truth. This is of course the conventional "idealist" reading of Hegel, and is a consequence of disregarding Hegel's assertion that it is in his Phenomenology that the justification for his Logic and his Encyclopaedia is to be found: the Phenomenology unfolds a dialectic of 'experience', quite explicitly free from suspicions of a priorism, whereas the starting-point of the Encyclopaedia - to the first section of which the Logic corresponds - is, in Hegel's words, 'the will that resolves pure thought'. To be sure the relation of the Phenomenology to the Encyclopaedia is a controversial issue in Hegelian scholarship (cf. Werner Marx's Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit for a useful discussion), but Houlgate's order of presentation seems perverse inasmuch as he brings in the Phenomenology's notion of an immanent critique of modes of experiencing only after he has discussed judgement and speculative discourse. Thereby he reverses Hegel's own ordering - for Hegel it is phenomenology which renders logic and the contents of the Encyclopaedia intelligible - and not only allows the imputation of 'idealism' to go more or less unchallenged but tends to weaken the force of his own reading according to which Hegel sets the ghosts of metaphysics to rest. For surely a priori thinking has been one of the main pillars of metaphysics in Houlgate's (and Hegel's and Nietzsche's) sense. Where thought can rely only on its own resources - where it separates itself off from phenomenology and becomes a priori - perhaps its sole criterion for

truth and meaning lies in its capacity to deal in terms of clear and distinct (metaphysically distinct) ideas.

If this is so, and if Hegel's speculative discourse is genuinely to surmount metaphysics, then the question of the relation of speculation to phenomenology becomes crucial. But this question receives little or no attention in Houlgate's account. Instead, the 'speculative sentence' is treated as a problem in logic alone. Certainly it is a problem in logic, and Houlgate rightly emphasises in this connection that it is what Hegel calls the 'movement' from the subject to the predicate of such a sentence that is all-important: the subject does not merely have the predicate appended to it externally but is 'redefined' in the process of predication itself. As it were: in the predicate, the subject articulates itself. The question is, however, what the ontological status of this 'movement' might be. Houlgate identifies it as a movement of self-determination, which is undoubtedly the case, but then identifies self-determination as sheerly the self-determination of thought. Arguably, for Hegel, it is a self-determination of practice as well: if Hegel can say (as he does say) that his "logic" is also an "ontology" this may be because, for him, the categories of free thought (or truth) and free practice are one and the same. But the theme of practice brings in the themes of phenomenology and 'experience' inasmuch as - according to the Phenomenology - it is the question of the modes of existence of freedom (as denied, contradicted, actualised, etc.) which allows us, in the end, to make sense of the ways in which people and peoples have experienced their worlds and lived their lives. In other words the themes of phenomenology and of practice are irreducible in the notion of speculative discourse which Hegel employs. The 'movement' of the speculative sentence just is the movement of self-determining (mutually recognitive) free practice, and makes no sense without it. Put crudely: the speculative sentence phenomenologically "reflects" this latter movement (speculum = mirror) so that, in textual terms, it is the Phenomenology which remains the key to the best in Hegel's later thought. Speculative thinking severed from phenomenology becomes "speculation" in that term's pejorative - idle and abstract - sense.

In fact Houlgate is to be praised for discussing the Phenomenology at all, since so many English-language commentators on Hegel (Plant and Avineri, for example) pass it by. But since he discusses it only as a pendant to - rather than as a presupposition of - Hegelian speculative discourse he presents, in effect, a Hegel who might be criticised in much the same way as he himself criticises Nietzsche. Or more exactly he presents a Hegel whom Nietzsche might forcefully criticise for his part. If Hegel is indeed an idealist then, for him, 'life' (or 'experience') in all its heroism and rawness and misery must remain, ineluctably, the mysterious "other" of thought. Adorno contends that the pathos of idealism is that of murderous 'rage' against what is other: it wants to assimilate it, even if slaughtering it is the condition under which assimilation takes place. Nietzsche of course (who influenced Adorno) knew this and accepted it, insisting only that it be accepted in good faith and that the bad faith of an idealism refusing to acknowledge its own pathos be set aside. As Houlgate argues, this makes Nietzsche merely the other side of the coin of idealism itself. But nonetheless if Houlgate's presentation of Hegel is accurate Nietzsche would have more to say against Hegel than Houlgate seems to allow. To show that Hegel overcomes metaphysics we have to show that he overcomes idealism as well.

Earlier, it was suggested that sometimes the very clarity of Houlgate's exposition allows him to gloss over difficulties. The prime example of this is his treatment, in relation to the Phenomenology, of the theme of immanent

critique. Houlgate rightly points out that immanent critique is a matter of evaluating modes of thinking, not externally by some pre-given yardstick, but in terms of their internal consistency. But of course this is too general and empty if "consistency" is understood in formal-logical terms alone: according to this criterion we should have no basis for distinguishing truth-claims concerning all possible worlds from truth-claims concerning the world in which we happen to exist. But then the notion of a more substantive criterion of consistency faces the difficulty that inconsistency in our terms may not count as inconsistency within the terms of the view we criticise or oppose. (As the criterion becomes more substantive, so issues of categorial differences raise their heads.) Houlgate, seeing this, goes on to contend that the inconsistencies which immanent critique should identify are, or should be, telling for the viewpoint to which critique is applied: for example 'in a case such as Nietzsche's the contradictions that are uncovered will not necessarily be the ones that he himself is proud to admit to' (p 175). But this move, although it may improve the matter, does not resolve it. The inconsistencies or contradictions we 'uncover' in, say, Nietzsche will depend on the interpretation of Nietzsche which we hold true, and on the categories in terms of which that interpretation goes forward; and of course our view of Nietzsche may or may not conform to Nietzsche's view of himself. In hermeneutical theory, this issue is a familiar one and quite frequently it is resolved by saying (with justification) that our interpretation of a text is not necessarily wrong just because it differs from the view of the text taken by its author him or herself. However, this sensible-enough hermeneutical strategy cannot be invoked to solve the problems of immanent criticism because immanent critique sets out to interrogate a viewpoint in terms of that viewpoint's own self-understanding rather than merely bracket that self-understanding off. In other words, immanent critique has to - without devolving into relativism or reintroducing external critique sotto voce - make clear the notion of "immanence" on which it relies. This issue (the issue foregrounded in, for example, Michael Rosen's Hegel's Dialectic and Its Criticism) should be all-important for Houlgate since his claim is that Hegel's critique of metaphysics is superior to Nietzsche's inasmuch as it is pursued in an immanent way. But we search in vain for an in-depth treatment of the issue in Houlgate's book.

In the absence of such a treatment it looks, once again, as though it is Nietzsche who holds the best cards. 'We sit within our net, we spiders, and whatever we may catch in it, we can catch nothing at all except that which allows itself to be caught in precisely our net' (Nietzsche Daybreak para. 117). This sentence contains Nietzsche's justification for his perspectivism and, arguably, his reason for preferring external over immanent critique. Immanent critique, he seems to be saying, is either hypocritical or relativistic; his advice is to break with its web-spinning and to accept relativism in good heart.

Can immanence be acquitted of the charges which, here, Nietzsche brings against it? Can the deficiency in Houlgate's presentation of Hegel be made good? A review is of course not the place to set out the resolution of philosophical problems in a systematic way. But it may be worth noting that phenomenology, in its Hegelian sense, goes some distance towards supplying an answer. Hegelian phenomenology is dialogical phenomenology inasmuch as the subject who phenomenologically 'experiences' is also the subject who is free (and thereby competent to evaluate truth-claims and categories without just measuring them against the yardstick of a pre-inscribed authority) in and through the practice of mutual recognition. Houlgate rightly lays stress on the theme of mutual recognition, but does so only in relation to Hegel's understanding of subjectivity and without bringing its epistemological

relevance into play. In fact, for Hegel socio-political themes (such as mutual recognition) and epistemological themes (truth, speculation, phenomenology) are inseparable in consequence of a thesis as to the unity of theory and practice which pervades his work. It is to an audience who are mutually recognitive - an audience which qua mutually recognitive is also post-historical - that Hegel, theorising dialogically, understands himself as addressing his phenomenological appeal.

The nature of this appeal can be sketched, here, only very briefly. To raise a phenomenological truth-claim amounts to saying "It's like this, isn't it?", the illocutionary force of the "isn't it?" being irreducible in phenomenological theory once, with Hegel and Marx and in contrast to (say) Husserl, we understand 'experience' as socially constituted and by no means as a sheerly private domain. As it were, the appeal "isn't it?" is an appeal for recognition of oneself and of the truth one avers - it is an appeal for constitutive validation of one's mode of being-in-the-world - so that the themes of phenomenology (theory) and of recognition (practice) are the same coin looked at from different sides. The question-mark of the "isn't it?" is the sign of dialogical openness. And it is in the dialogical space between the "isn't it?" and the "yes it is" or "no it's not" that the possibility of an immanent critique of the other's viewpoint obtains. Critique is immanent insofar as it recognises the other's being-in-the-world and hence the movement of his or her 'experience'; critique is immanent critique - i.e. it refuses to endorse the other's truth-claims without interrogating them - insofar as it remains a 'play' (Hegel) which places the other's truth-claims at issue in the same movement as it places at issue the truth-claims one raises on one's own behalf. The charge that immanent critique is trammelled by relativism falls, because dialogical recognition of the other gives one substantive purchase on the categories and perspectives he or she employs. If we can say, recognitively, "It's like this, isn't it?" we can also say, more challengingly but still dialogically, "But isn't it like this?". The question-mark remains the anti-relativistic sign.

If this is so then, once more, we have to endorse Houlgate's verdict in favour of Hegel and against Nietzsche. In an estranged and non-mutually recognitive world, Nietzsche makes a virtue out of necessity and chooses the voice of monological privacy as that in which truth can be authentically, if paradoxically, expressed. 'My solitude, that is to say recovery, return to myself, the breath of free light playful air' (Nietzsche Ecce Homo 'Why I Am So Wise' section 8). Zarathustra moves to and fro between the heights of solitude and the depths of a humanity he sometimes despises and sometimes, playfully, chooses to love. To be sure the earlier Nietzsche alludes to the desirability of something like a mutually recognitive audience: Human, All Too Human was a book dedicated to 'free spirits', but even there the relation between those who count as free spirits is construed on the Ancient model of agonistic competitive struggle rather than on the model of a mutual recognition in which, as a condition of its 'play' and its communicativeness, relations of competition and power are set at naught. In contemporary philosophy, J-F Lyotard's The Postmodern Condition renews this Nietzschean perspective of language-games as agonistic struggles in which, ultimately, power is at stake. But on this approach, of course, truth becomes inseparable from manipulation and rhetoric. Not all conversations are manipulative, and Nietzsche/Lyotard misses the (phenomenological) distinction between those which are, and which are accordingly worthless even if interesting, and those which are not. The distinction missed is that as between the symptoms and that which is made possible by the cure.

But, granted the above, if we should endorse Houlgate's verdict this is

for reasons which Houlgate does not himself present. The line of argument which this review has sketched might have been more accessible to Houlgate if he had started with the Phenomenology - wherein mutual recognition and dialogical interaction are celebrated - rather than merely finishing up with it. His contention that Hegel surpasses metaphysics remains a hostage to fortune because his presentation of Hegel remains conditioned by the Anglo-Saxon reading of Hegel as an idealist who spins metaphysical webs. Metaphysics, idealism and monological solitude must stand or fall together. And, certainly, it is the ascetic Nietzsche who can breathe the fine, thin air of solitude more readily than can Hegel; Hegelian theory, which is self-consciously prosaic, subsists not on the heights but in the valleys where human contact and human questions are to be found.

In the light of this, it is informative to address once again the question - raised by Houlgate - of speculative discourse and 'judgement' in the Hegelian sense. Hegel says that, speculatively, the subject of a proposition is identical with its predicate (S is P) but also that it is not identical with its predicate since, if that were so, nothing but tautology would result. In other words the form of a speculative proposition is "S is and is not P" (Sartre) or "S is not-yet P" (Bloch). The basic idea is that all propositions or judgements, speculatively understood, embody a contradiction. As Houlgate reports (citing Bertrand Russell) this is sometimes held to expose Hegel to the charge of confusing the "is" of predication with the "is" of identity. Houlgate defends Hegel against this charge by saying that, when he says 'identity', Hegel means 'inseparability'. But to the present reviewer it seems that a large amount of special pleading is bound up with this reading of the Hegelian texts. 'Identity' is what Hegel says. The fact is that Hegel is indeed guilty of confusing the "is" of identity with that of predication if, but only if, his Logic is a logic of the conventional practice-independent and idealist kind. (The logic of contemporary analytical philosophy, inaugurated by Russell, is a case in point.) Houlgate attempts to soften the edges of Hegelian contradiction because he tacitly accepts the idea of such a logic and so discusses speculative discourse before approaching phenomenology. The notion that "dialectical" contradictions are not genuinely "formal" contradictions is an old story in the Anglo-Saxon reception of Hegelian (and Marxist) thought. Or at any rate it is an old story whenever that reception gets into friendly or diplomatic gear. For example J N Findlay deploys Russell's own theory of logical types to construe Hegel, and Maurice Cornforth (The Open Philosophy and the Open Society) urged that dialectical contradictions are not formal ones in his defence of Marxism against Popper. Gunn made the same misguided move in an article on dialectics published in Marxism Today in 1973.

The question to be asked is: why should Hegel identify something as a contradiction if it does not count as a contradiction in formal-logical terms? The answer to this, it can be surmised, lies in his contention that contradictions are not merely matters of theory (a nominalist construal of contradiction) but can exist. More precisely, they can exist in practice. They can exist in practice because the movement of self-determining freedom - the 'sheer unrest of life' or 'the absolute unrest of pure self-movement', as the Phenomenology says - is itself a movement through contradiction. Now I determine myself as I will be but as, so far, I am not. Ec-statically, I stand ahead of myself in and through my mutually recognitive relation with others: conversation is a staging-post on freedom's road as well as being the destination of this road itself. My future existence lies on the tip of my tongue. I am (only, not-yet) what I will make myself to be. The sentence "I determine myself" is, in this sense, the paradigmatic Hegelian speculative sentence since, in it, the subject occurs as it were twice-over and, in each case (since what I determine myself to be in the future may be different from

what I presently am), with the same reference but with a different sense. In other words, qua self-determining, I am potentially self-different; and even if I determine myself by just resuming the continuation of my same existence the idea of self-difference is involved since (a) the possibility of self-change is inescapable even should I be totally hidebound and (b) through, say, nostalgia and boredom continuation becomes alteration the longer it is maintained. In short I exist as contradiction. This is why the notion of contradiction is inscribed not just in Hegelian thinking but in Hegelian ontology as well. The notions of self-determination and of existing contradiction go hand in hand.

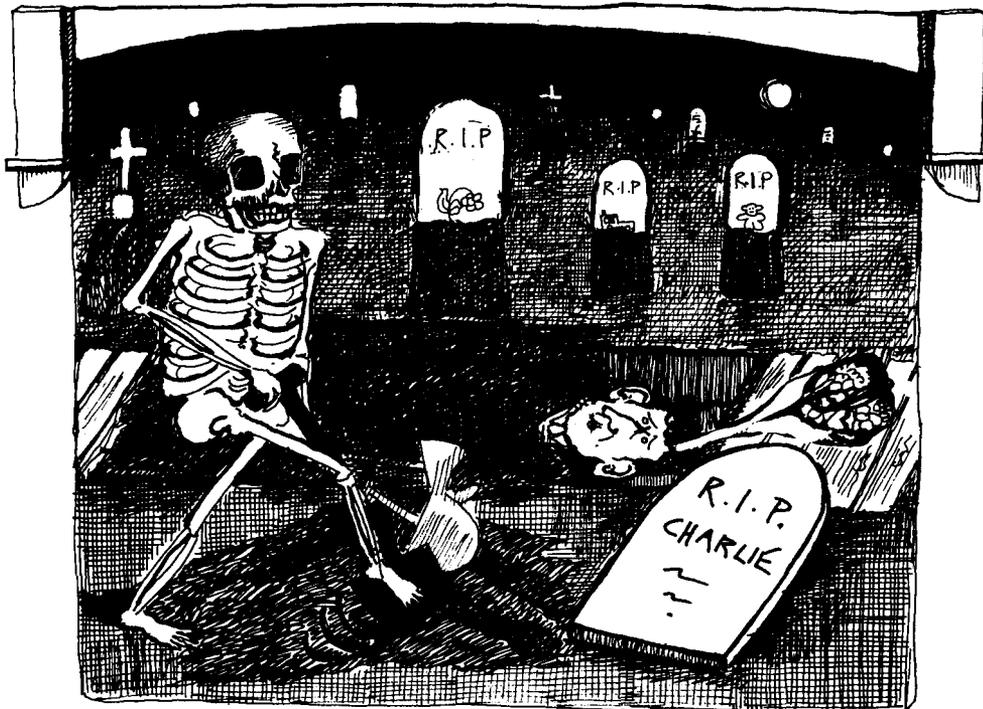
This said, a further objection to Hegel remains to be answered. I may, to be sure, determine myself differently from what I am at present but, in logic, a contrary (reporting difference) is not yet a contradiction. Does therefore a new confusion break out in Hegelian thought?

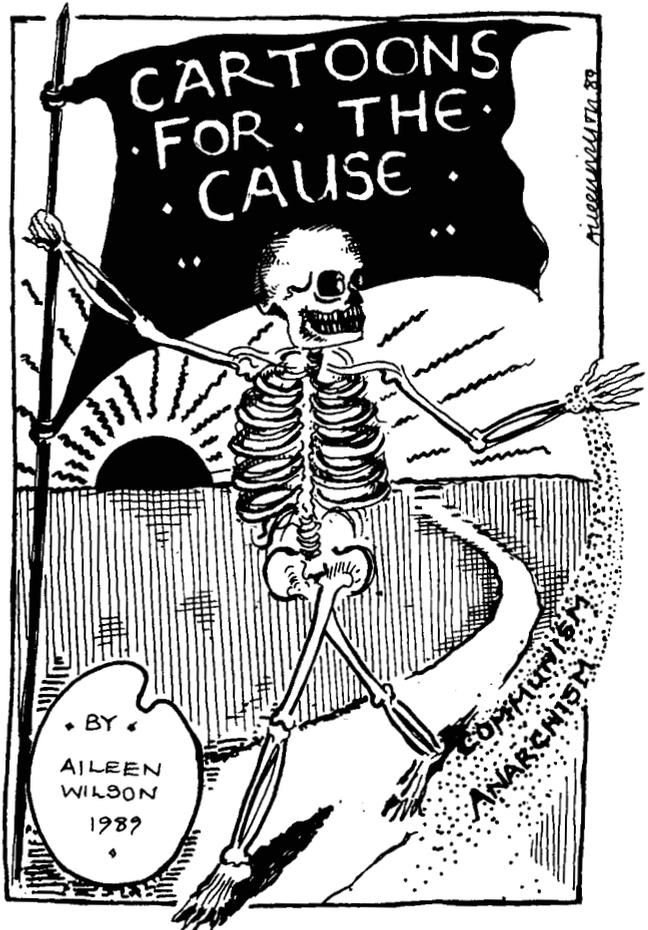
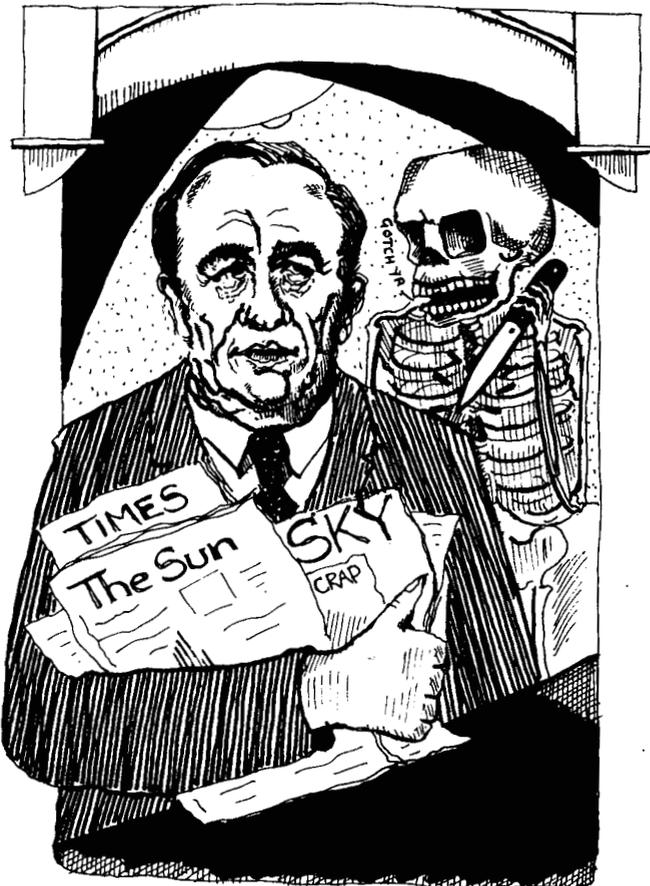
In the event it is not a confusion but a consistency since, from the standpoint of self-determining freedom, contraries (self-differences) count as contradictions and as nothing less. This is because, as Hegel insists, a movement of self-determination is a movement of self-totalisation as well. A totalisation does not consist in an additive series of indifferently - potentially metaphysically opposed - items, each of which is complete within itself. (As self-determining, I am not just a university lecturer and a Hegelian and a nice guy: in short the idea that, in propositions describing me, subject and predicate are externally linked falsifies my existence.) Rather, in a totalisation, each "item" is a moment which is and is not each other: "moments", as distinct from "items", are internally linked. Each exists through the other, just as each human individual exists through each other where mutual recognition obtains. In fact, this last point is more than an analogy or comparison: for Hegel I am totalised through my (free) interaction with others and vice versa, this interaction being a 'play' of totalisation for its part. And now the point in logic: within the framework of totalisation, a reciprocal indifference as between moments - the kind of thing that presents itself as a "contrary" - counts as a contradiction. It counts as a contradiction because it amounts, not to a difference from what is sheerly other, but to a difference from itself (from oneself) as well. As it were, it permeates through everything which might be a term's identity. If, for example, we take as an example of a "term" a human subject, we have to say that this subject's identity is recognitively-at-issue or "public" through and through. If we take the example of different aspects of the same subject's existence - university lecturer, nice guy, etc. - then we have to say that talk about any one aspect is pointless unless the other aspects are held in view. If I am to be self-determining, I have to be willing to totalise myself: 'The whole man moves together', as Schiller said. Indifferently counterposed aspects of my life remain untotalised aspects, so that in my own psyche I am sent from pillar to post. Self-division is self-antagonism at the same time. Contraries within myself count as contradictions since each aspect of what I am exists only through the other aspects and contains them within themselves. Relations of indifference towards others - as in, say, market relations (Marx) - count as social contradictions since what I am is a matter that turns on the social relations in which I act and stand. The above-signalled further objection to Hegel falls if, and only if, the quite specifically phenomenological question of what it means to be a "self" is thematised in an explicit way.

On this phenomenological basis it can be said: in speculative discourse (explicitly) and in ordinary-language judgements (implicitly) we can recognise the movement of the contradiction in which, as free and self-

determining beings, we consist. Only on a phenomenological basis – and therefore pace Houlgate – can this be said. To think speculatively is to think freely. Theory dovetails with practice, when (in a polity of mutual recognition) practice is uncontradictorily free. The idea of uncontradictorily free practice allows us to broaden the notion of contradiction (to emancipate it from the delimitations of merely formal contradiction) and, through speculation, to recognise discourse as our own. This, it can be suggested, is the core of the Hegelian critique of metaphysics: metaphysics is the theoretical moment of an alienation of freedom, alienation being understood here in a thoroughly practical sense. Houlgate never unites theory with practice, although Hegel does. In mutual recognition (in "conversation") the other's contradictions can pale into insignificance in the course of acknowledging the other and understanding – with empathy and acerbity – the trajectory of his or her projects and thought. To aver a formal contradiction on the other's part in the course of a good (a recognitive) conversation represents at most a locally and temporally confined movement within the flow of a discussion which ranges around. Recognising the other's contradiction – the movement of their freedom in and through what they say – is a more important concern. For Hegel, then, contradictions are not to be expunged in the interests of truth; rather, they condition it. Nor (therefore) are they to be set aside in a nominalist way. Houlgate's excellent book reports almost all of these elements in the Hegelian argument but without synthesising them. He fails to synthesise them because he demotes the idea of phenomenology in Hegel to, in effect, a footnote. Because he does not synthesise them he paves the way for a Nietzschean counter-critique. Nietzsche, who celebrated solitude, holds all the cards against a still-idealist Hegel. If the mirror of speculation is an idealist one, we can see in it only our alienated selves.

RICHARD GUNN





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