

NST

Nature, Society, and Thought

a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

Vol. 3, No. 3

1990

NST

University of Minnesota, Physics Building
116 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112

Nature, Society, and Thought

NST

a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

EDITOR: Erwin Marquit (physics, Univ. of Minnesota)

MANUSCRIPT EDITOR: Leo Auerbach (English education, retired,
Jersey City State College)

EDITORIAL STAFF: Gerald M. Erickson, Doris Grieser, April Ane
Knutson, William L. Rowe

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Herbert Aptheker (history, Univ. of Calif. Law School/Berkeley)

Andrew M. Blasko (grad. stud., philosophy, Duquesne Univ.)

Jan Carew (African-American studies, Northwestern Univ.)

Gerald M. Erickson (classics, Univ. of Minnesota)

Angela Gilliam (anthropology, SUNY College at Old Westbury)

Viktoria Hertling (German, Univ. of Nevada)

Gerald A. Horne (African-American studies, Univ. of Calif./Santa Barbara)

Jack Kurzweil (electrical engineering, San Jose State Univ.)

James Lawler (philosophy, State Univ. of New York/Buffalo)

Sara Fletcher Luther (political sociology)

Rinda Lundstrom (theater arts, Univ. of Louisville)

Philip Moran (philosophy, Triton College)

Michael Parenti (political science)

Howard L. Parsons (philosophy, Univ. of Bridgeport)

William L. Rowe (anthropology, Univ. of Minnesota)

Epifanio San Juan, Jr. (English, Univ. of Connecticut)

José A. Soler (journalism)

Ethel Tobach (comparative psychology, City Univ. of New York)

Daniel Todes (history and sociology of science, Johns Hopkins Univ.)

BOOK-REVIEW EDITOR: Doris Grieser

VOL. 3, NO. 3: (JULY 1990)

Copyright © 1990 Marxist Educational Press

All rights reserved

Cover design by Prockat

NST: NATURE, SOCIETY, AND THOUGHT (ISSN 0890-6130). Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by MEP Publications, 1771 Selby Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104. Second-class postage paid at St. Paul, Minnesota. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *NST: Nature, Society, and Thought*, University of Minnesota, 116 Church St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455.

Subscriptions. U.S.A./Great Britain, one year, individuals \$15/£11, institutions \$28/£18.50; two years, individuals \$28/£21, institutions \$56/£37. Other countries, add \$4 for postage for each year. Single copies: individuals \$5/£3, institutions \$10/£.

Subscription and editorial address: *NST* University of Minnesota, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455 (tel. 612/922-7993 or 612/647-9748).

Information for Contributors

Nature, Society, and Thought welcomes contributions representing the creative application of methods of dialectical and historical materialism to all fields of study. Submissions will be reviewed in accordance with refereeing procedures established by the Editorial Board. Manuscripts will be acknowledged on receipt. Please note: manuscripts cannot be returned. [

Submissions should be made in triplicate, typed, double-spaced, with at least 1-inch margins. Normal length of articles is expected to be between 3,000 and 10,000 words. All citations should follow the author-date system, with limited use of endnotes for discursive matter, as specified in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th edition. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the MEP Publications Style Guide, which appears in *NST* vol. 3, no. 1 (1990): 123-28. The *Chicago Manual* is the general guide on all other matters of style. [

Unless otherwise arranged, manuscripts should be submitted with the understanding that upon acceptance for publication the authors will submit the manuscript on an IBM- or Macintosh-compatible diskette and transfer the copyright to *NST*, the authors retaining the right to include the submission in books under their authorship. Diskettes cannot be returned. Consult the *NST* office about the disk format before sending a diskette.

CONTENTS
Vol. 3, No. 3 (1990)

In Memoriam: George M. Hampsh	259
ARTICLES	
<i>Charles W. Tolman</i> , Lewis Henry Morgan's Animal Psychology and Historical Materialism	261
<i>Jay Drydyk</i> , Hegel and the Sandinistas	269
<i>Azaria Polikarov</i> , The Character of Einstein's Realism	281
<i>Barbara Foley</i> , Race and Class in Radical African-American Fiction of the Depression Years	305
<i>Morris Zeitlin</i> , Land Use, Transportation, and Working-Class Politics in the Modern Metropolis	323
MARXISTS AS TEACHERS	341
<i>Philip J. Lutz</i> , Presenting the Ideas of Karl Marx in The Freshman English Course: The Limitations of Great Ideas Anthologies	341
CONFERENCE REPORTS	351
BOOK REVIEWS	363
Sahotra Sarkar: <i>South Africa Belongs to Us: A History of the ANC</i> , by Francis Meli	363
Jerry Lembcke: <i>Union Brotherhood, Union Town: The History of the Carpenters' Union of Chicago</i> , by Richard Schneirov and Thomas J. Suhrbur	369
Sara Fletcher Luther: <i>Peace and Communication: Media Contribution to Worldwide Security and Peace</i> , by Tapio Varis	372
Wylie Jones and Michael H. Washington: <i>White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery</i> , by Herbert Shapiro	374
Paul C. Mishler: "My Song is My Weapon": <i>People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture</i> , by Robbie Lieberman	378

CALL FOR PAPERS

**1991 Marxist Scholars Conference
Temple University, Philadelphia
14-17 March 1991**

The 1991 Marxist Scholars Conference, sponsored by the Marxist Educational Press, will take place at a time when Marxists are subjecting to critical examination positions long considered to be basic to Marxist social thought. This conference can make important contributions both to the reaffirmation of fundamental Marxist principles and to the identification of weaknesses in theory, method, and practice. Papers and proposals are welcome from all fields of study. Send one copy of papers or workshop proposals to each of the following persons by 15 October 1990:

Prof. David Schwartz
Economics Dept.
Albright College
P.O. Box 15234
Reading, PA 19612

Prof. Harold Schwartz
Medical School
Box 91 Mayo
University of Minnesota
Minneapolis, MN 55455

For further information, write to MEP, University of Minnesota, 224 Church St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455 (tel. 612/922-7993).

In Memoriam

George Hampsch 1927–1990

George served as associate editor of *Nature, Society, and Thought* since its start in 1987 and was a staunch supporter of its aims.

Issues in and around the philosophy of Marxism were central to his concerns. With steadfast devotion, George participated in the work of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Dialectical Materialism (later, Society for the Philosophical Study of Marxism). In 1968–71 he was secretary of the Western Division. After he moved from John Carroll University to the College of the Holy Cross, he continued in this position in the Eastern Division from 1973 onward. At the time of his death on 17 July 1990 he was the national secretary-treasurer. He contributed papers and commentaries to the symposia of the society, helping to organize and chair them.

His various writings, too many to mention here, include *The Theory of Communism: An Introduction* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965), and essays in *Dialogues on the Philosophy of Marxism*, edited by John Somerville and Howard Parsons (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1974), and *Cuban and North American Marxism*, edited by Edward d'Angelo (Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner, 1984).[

George's work on Marxism was intricately connected with his commitment to the theory and practice of peace. He was a member of the Society for the Prevention of Nuclear Omnicide, Concerned Philosophers for Peace, and other groups. His last book was *Preventing Nuclear Genocide* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988).

We knew George as a responsible, gentle, kind, cheerful, and life-loving person and a serious and fair-minded scholar. He was an ideal colleague to be with, in work and travel and leisure. Such qualities won for him many friends in the philosophical community at home and abroad.

In a unique personal way, George brought into his own dialogue the Christian and Marxist traditions, having studied seven years in a Trappist monastery (an acute tubercular malady prevented his ordination). His subsequent interest in Marxism gave him an empathetic and informed understanding of both.

In his essay, "The Practice of Freedom: A Prerequisite for the Catholic-Marxist Rapprochement," which appeared in *Marxism and Christianity: A Symposium*, edited by Herbert Aptheker (New York: Humanities Press, 1968), George wrote:

With mutual freedom will come mutual enrichment. From dialogue between a small number of isolated pioneers who are often suspect among their own will come in time a true dialogue between whole Marxist and Christian communities who have opted for the future. Then can Marxists and Christians begin to *work* together for that future—free men seeking greater freedom in order to better love one another while respecting the different outlooks.

George had opted for that future, and the work of his life was solid contribution to it, so that in him such a future of mutual freedom and love for all had already begun to arrive.

Howard L. Parsons

**Lewis Henry Morgan's Animal Psychology
and Historical Materialism**

Charles W. Tolman.

To associate Lewis Henry Morgan's speculations on animal psychology in *The American Beaver* (1986; originally published in 1868) with whatever might be construed as "historical materialist" in his later work or with what inspired Frederick Engels's elaboration of historical materialism as Gordon Welty has done in a review essay marking the republication of that work (Welty 1989) is, at the very least, open to dispute. It is well known that the contributions Engels particularly valued were those found in Morgan's *Ancient Society*, published in 1877. Engels himself (1975, 82) said that the ideas "developed in full consciousness" there were only "dimly guessed" in the 1871 work, *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity*, which was published three years after *The American Beaver*. It is debatable whether Morgan qualified even in his later works as a historical materialist (Opler 1962, 1964; Harding 1964; Leacock 1964; White 1964; Harris 1968, 213–15). A more measured assessment would be that, whatever Morgan's metaphysical assumptions (described as "mixed," "some old, some new" by White [1964, xxiv]), he collected important data on kinship systems, the study of which he effectively founded in anthropology, and put forward notions of societal development that lent themselves to more consistent historical-materialist interpretation by Engels. Notwithstanding Welty's claims, explicit or implied, there is precious little in *The American Beaver* that resembles a historical-materialist understanding of "humanity's place in Nature."

In order to see this more clearly, it will be useful to outline the positions on human mentality that had emerged by the end of the nineteenth century. The position that dominated Western thought from the seventeenth century onward was undoubtedly some variation or another of Cartesian dualism. René Descartes, noting the importance of human language and culture, sought to acknowledge the qualitative

uniqueness of human nature by asserting that humans had something that animals did not have, namely, a soul or mind. This was a solution to the problem of "humanity's place in nature" that affirmed the discontinuity at the expense of continuity. The major competing position was articulated by Thomas Hobbes, who, apparently more impressed by similarities than differences, asserted what became the model of all subsequent mechanical reductionist monisms. He affirmed continuity at the expense of discontinuity. For Descartes there were two basic principles underlying human nature, the spiritual and the mechanical (material). For Hobbes, there was only one, the mechanical.

It only became possible to resolve the debate between the dualists and the monists in a principled way with the development of evolutionary thinking in the nineteenth century, though only a few exceptionally perceptive thinkers saw the possibility clearly. These included Romanes, C. L. Morgan, Huxley, James, Mead, and Dewey, but it was Marx and Engels who unquestionably saw it most clearly. One advantage they had over most other thinkers of the time (except perhaps Mead and Dewey) was their grasp of the Hegelian dialectic. The solution to the problem was a dialectical one and they were best equipped to develop it consciously and systematically. The heart of this solution was and is the dialectic of quantity and quality, or continuity and discontinuity (see Fedoseyev 1979; Allen 1980; Talkington 1982).

An important recent formulation of this progressive solution is the theory of integrative levels (Novikoff 1945; Aronson 1987; Tobach 1987). Basically, it asserts that qualitative states, manifested as levels of integrative organization (discontinuity), are the products of incremental quantitative change (continuity). The evolutionary changes producing new species with emergent properties are examples of this. What is important here is that the principles governing qualities, being fundamentally descriptive, evolve with the material qualities: biological principles came into being with living matter; psychological principles with thinking matter; etc. According to this position reductive explanation will always fall short of the mark.

It is the qualitative, discontinuous aspect of the differences between humans and other animal species that sociobiology and other reactionary theories deliberately ignore. It is their reductionism that asserts a single principle, for example the genetic, as governing the "apparent" differences among all animal forms. Irreducible qualitative differences and discontinuity become illusory or inessential. The differences between human races are also accounted for in this way.

They are quantitative and genetic (recall that racial differences in intelligence are asserted to be different not in kind but degree, and are biologically fixed). According to this view, all human institutions are traceable to the underlying (quantitative) complexity of the genome.

It is such a point of view that allows sociologists to deny the Marxist analysis of classes in society and to replace it with a quantitatively based "socioeconomic status" that obscures the real significance of classes.

This suggests that it is not just ideology that is involved here. To ignore qualitative differences makes also for bad scientific methodology. For example, it prevents psychologists from seeing that mapping neuronal connections in the brain will not solve the problems of cognition, that measuring IQ will never answer the important questions about human intelligence, or that running rats in mazes will never allow us to help children get the most out of their schooling. In short, the reduction of quality to quantity (or discontinuity to continuity) serves to blind us to the really important questions in science and to the reactionary ideology that often guides our scientific activity.

Marx and Engels vigorously opposed both the ideological and methodological consequences of reductionism. For example, Engels noted: "One day we shall certainly 'reduce' thought experimentally to molecular and chemical motions in the brain; but does that exhaust the essence of thought?" (1972, 248). The context of the question suggested that the negative answer was too obvious to need stating. And then there is the central historical-materialist thesis that human nature is not a product of biological evolution but of history, in which humans, unlike animals, shape their own natures (Fedoseyev 1979).

It should be noted that the mere recognition of the importance of language does not constitute a transcendence of reductionism. Hobbes recognized it, and so have most reductionists since his time. A case in point is John B. Watson, the founder of behaviorism. He wrote that "future analysis will enable us ultimately to show that every word, spoken or thought, produces a characteristic form of response which, when recorded must be looked at from the same standpoint which we adopt when looking at habits elsewhere" (Watson 1914, 328). Certainly, language is important, but it is itself reducible to the kind of bodily movements displayed by all animals.

So where is Lewis Henry Morgan on all of this? What he appears to offer us in *The American Beaver* is a fairly typical example of the quantitative reductionist, single-principle point of view: "as we

are unable, in similar specific acts, to find any difference in kind between the manifestations of perception, appetite and passion, memory, reason and will on the part of a mute [nonhuman animal], and the corresponding manifestations on the part of a man, we are led to the conclusion that the difference is one of degree, and not of kind; and therefore that the principle from which they emanate is the same in kind, but bestowed in different measure” (1986, 276).

In *The American Beaver* Morgan recognized, like many before him, the importance of language and culture. Speaking of the amenities of human civilization, he wrote: “Language has been the great instrument of this progress, the power of which was increased many fold when it clothed itself in written characters. He [the human] was thus enabled to perpetuate the results of individual experience, and transmit them through the ages” (1986, 281). The difference between Marx and Engels, on the one hand, and Morgan and Watson, on the other, was that the former were able to see that language and culture involved evolutionarily *new* principles that were not to be found in prelinguistic and precultural biological forms. Morgan and Watson did not see this. And it was the theory of the formation of *new* qualities, whether evolutionary-biological or societal-historical, that formed the distinctive heart of historical materialism.

The potentially reactionary consequences of reductionism in *The American Beaver* are not hard to find. First, because he was able to affirm for himself the existence of a single immutable principle governing living beings, Morgan did not find it difficult to reconcile his “evolutionary” biology with his religion. Allusions to “God the Creator” run throughout the chapter on animal psychology. While Morgan scorned the “metaphysicians” who explained animal behavior by citing the concept of instinct, he himself did not hesitate to cite Divine Providence: “When the Creator brought into existence the various species of animals, He intrusted to each individual being the care of his own life” (149); “When the Creator made man omnivorous, He designed his use of animal food” (283); etc. The views of Marx and Engels on this topic are too well known to require comment.

Second, *The American Beaver* contains claims that are perilously close to those for which Thomas Hobbes and Robert Ardrey, among others, have been correctly criticized by progressive thinkers. Speaking, for instance, of the early stages of human evolution, Morgan wrote: “There are glimpses afforded to us, here and there, of a

state of society in which the family relations were unknown, and in which violence and passion reigned supreme" (281). The idea of primeval or innate human aggressiveness runs hand in hand with that of our uninterrupted continuity with nature "red in tooth and claw."

Third, though it says nothing of Morgan's personal views on the races, the position he articulated in *The American Beaver* is one that is easily turned into a justification for racism. He writes: "Portions of the human family are still found in the darkness of ignorance, and in the feebleness of mental imbecility; and yet, although the distance of their intellectual separation is very great, it is much less than that between the latter and the most intelligent of the inferior animals" (281). The differences between the races, in short, are of the same sort as those between us and the brutes (cf. Harris 1968, 137–40). This is a view that Morgan shared with the good Dr. Down who invented the scaling of races on the basis of intelligence and then became immortalized for his preoccupation with developmental fixation at the "Mongolian" stage of human evolution ("Down's syndrome").

Fourth, Morgan was led by his reductionism in *The American Beaver* to a possible dilution of the concept of culture with his suggestion that even animals may have it. "On the other hand, can it be truly affirmed that the inferior animals have been stationary in their knowledge from the commencement of their existence? This conclusion should not be over-hastily assumed" (282). He went on to support this idea by pointing to all the things that we know dogs, elephants, horses, and bears can learn. That most of these things are taught to them by humans and thus constitute evidence more of human than of animal culture appears to have escaped him.

Morgan's reductionism also displays a curious metaphysical consequence that is not uncommon among reductionisms. This is something that even those with materialistic pretensions harbor, more or less covertly, that is, some form of idealism. Morgan's appeals to Divine Providence may be such a consequence, as it was for the seventeenth-century mechanistic materialists who were able to reserve to God the roles of designer and prime mover. But there is a more immediate example in *The American Beaver*. Like all mechanists, Morgan was unable to comprehend the metaphysical nature of the principle underlying morality and mentality. He was therefore prey to the notion that it is an immaterial one. In connection with the alleged absence of qualitative differences between humans and

animals, he quoted Agassiz with apparent approval: "This argues strongly in favor of the existence in every animal of an immaterial principle similar to that which, by its excellence and superior endowments, places man so much above animals" (278). It is not surprising, then, to find Morgan speculating on the immortality of animal souls (277–78).

There was undoubtedly a significant growth in Morgan's understanding of societal and historical processes between 1868 and 1877, but there remained even then significant differences between his thinking and that of Marx and Engels's historical materialism. With respect to "humanity's place in nature," Krader pointed out why the common ground between Marx and Morgan (in *Ancient Society* should not be overemphasized:

The anti-teleological element in Marx's thought found support in his reading of Darwin, but thereby he separated the science of man from the science of nature, given both the respective states of both sciences and the separation of man in his actuality from nature. Marx criticized Darwin's use of the model of contemporary English society in the study of the animal kingdom. From this it follows likewise that *Morgan wrongly because one-sidedly and too facilely proceeded from nature to man by application of the model in the inverse sense.* (Krader 1972, 84, emphasis added)

This remains the complaint of historical materialists today against theories like Herrnstein and Jensen's psychology and Wilson's socio-biology.

*Department of Psychology
University of Victoria*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Allen, Garland E. "Dialectical Materialism in Modern Biology." *Science and Nature*, no. 3 (1980): 43–57.
- Aronson, Lester R. "Some Remarks on Integrative Levels." In *Cognition, Language, and Consciousness: Integrative Levels*, edited by G. Greenberg and E. Tobach. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1987.

- Engels, Frederick. *Dialectics of Nature*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972.
- . *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. New York: International Publishers, 1975.
- Fedoseyev, Pyotr. "Pyotr Fedoseyev on Socio-Biology." *Science and Nature*, no. 2 (1979): 58–59.
- Harding, Thomas G. "Morgan and Materialism: A Reply to Professor Opler." *Current Anthropology* 5 (1964): 109.
- Harris, Marvin. *The Rise of Anthropological Theory*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1968.
- Krader, Lawrence. *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*. Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972.
- Leacock, Eleanor. "Morgan and Materialism: A Reply to Professor Opler." *Current Anthropology* 5 (1964): 109–10.
- Morgan, Lewis Henry. *The American Beaver*. New York: Dover, 1986.
- Novikoff, Alex B. "The Concept of Integrative Levels and Biology." *Science* 101 (1945): 209–15.
- Opler, Morris E. "Integration, Evolution, and Morgan." *Current Anthropology* 3 (1962): 478–79.
- . "Reply." *Current Anthropology* 5 (1964): 110–14.
- Talkington, Lester. "Continuity and Discontinuity in Evolution." *Science and Nature*, no. 5 (1982): 52–57.
- Tobach, Ethel. "Integrative Levels in the Comparative Psychology of Cognition, Language, and Consciousness." In *Cognition, Language, and Consciousness: Integrative Levels*, edited by G. Greenberg and E. Tobach. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1987.
- Watson, John B. *Behavior: An Introduction to Comparative Psychology*. New York: Henry Holt, 1914.
- Welty, Gordon. "On Humanity's Place in Nature." *Science and Nature*, nos. 9/10 (1989): 171–76.
- White, Leslie A. Introduction to *Ancient Society*, by Lewis Henry Morgan. Cambridge: Belknap, 1964.

REPLACES AD PAGE.

Hegel and the Sandinistas

Jay Drydyk

Thinking about democracy at this particular juncture poses some unique problems. One is the tendency to identify democracy with *liberal democracy* characterized by a multiparty parliamentary government and guarantees of free political competition, such as free speech, a free press, and so on. In particular, democracy, political competition, and individual liberties are commonly seen as essentially the same thing, or at most different aspects of the same thing. This naive view is by no means restricted to the West. Among the authors of de-Stalinization in Europe there was no clear alternative conception of democracy; nor have the publics they politicized seemed especially tolerant of suggestions that “democracy” could mean anything but establishment of competitive liberal institutions centering on multiparty elections. That these institutions could *fail* to be democratic is an idea that they are not prepared to believe.

I want to suggest that, contrary to this increasingly popular conception of the matter, “democracy” does mean more than liberal political competition. In my view, both the course of events and the best available philosophical reasons will bear out the following further stipulations:

1. A community is not fully democratic unless it has rid itself of social antagonisms.
2. A community is not fully democratic unless every social group holds, through its own defensive organizations, the power that it needs for self-preservation against the contingencies of social interaction.

The second point assumes that, with or without social antagonisms, social interaction makes our lives insecure. With or without social antagonisms, there are various social groups whose members share the same insecurities. For instance, socialism radically reduces the insecurity faced by industrial workers; nevertheless,

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 3, no. 3 (1990)

industrial workers also share a common set of insecurities in a socialist economy—even though their insecurities are fewer and different than in a capitalist economy. The point I want to make about this is that a community is not fully democratic unless every such group has sufficient power, held by its own defensive organizations, to protect itself against the insecurities its members face in common. This was the view that Hegel urged upon his liberal and revolutionary friends, as he tried to draw political lessons from the self-consuming collapse of the French Revolution. It also describes, in effect, some former practices of the Nicaraguan revolution. To me this suggests that those of us who think we have something to learn from the Nicaraguans about democracy can consider Hegel as a philosophical resource—a philosophical ally.

What are the terms of this philosophical alliance? The first one (spelled out in point 1, above) amounts to acceptance of what I will call minimal general will theory. This does *not* include accepting Hegel's view that something like the general will exists and is at work in history. What we do need to accept is a certain view of democracy: that democracy is not possible unless people are capable of setting aside *antagonistic* interests. This is crucial not only to Hegel's conception of general will but also to Rousseau's. In Rousseau's view of the state of nature, for instance, private possessions are included at once among forces for one's own self-preservation and among obstacles to self-preservation for others. This social antagonism necessitates the social contract, for Rousseau, and it is to be resolved within the reign of the general will (Levine 1976, 20–25). These were among Marx's reasons, I believe, for thinking that it will take socialism to “win the battle of democracy.” Full democracy is not possible unless society can set aside antagonistic interests; this is not possible under capitalism, which cannot, therefore, be fully democratic (Marx and Engels 1968, 52–53).

Does this view make sense? Does democracy necessarily have anything to do with the removal of social antagonism? Or are democratization and the removal of such antagonisms two separate issues? There is a way, I think, to show that these two are essentially connected, and to show at the same time that liberal democracy is insufficiently democratic because it is indifferent to social antagonisms.

Now I am going to engage in the philosophical vice of telling far-fetched stories about possible worlds. The point of this exercise is to show that the identification of competitive liberalism with

democracy is *conceptually* incoherent. The practical problems of liberal democracies are to be ignored for the moment; this exercise is concerned exclusively with the conceptual incoherence of “liberal democracy.” Therefore I am entitled to choose an example that no one would call “realistic.” I am not concerned here with realism, merely with coherence. What I hope to provide is an especially vivid example showing how liberal conceptions of democracy break down, and how the removal of social antagonism is crucial to democracy.

I can imagine a possible world, then, in which there are three sorts of people. One-third of the people are exclusively left-handed; another third are only right-handed, and the rest of the people are ambidextrous. The politics of this land follow a certain vicious cycle. At some times the left-handers ally with the ambidextrous. You are aware that telephones in our world are designed for the greatest convenience of right-handed people. In the world I am imagining, an alliance of left-handers with the ambidextrous would not only make all telephones left-handed, it would make doorknobs left-handed, water fountains left-handed—everything that is ever used in public would somehow be made very convenient for left-handers and annoyingly inconvenient for the right-handed. This would be more than annoying to the right-handed; it would become a source of indignation, an impediment to self-realization, and an infringement on equal opportunity. Eventually the right would organize; they would conduct strikes, which threaten the prosperity not only of the left but of the ambidextrous as well. This would give the ambidextrous one of their motives for switching alliances, breaking with the left and joining with the right. The other motive would be greed. In exchange for agreeing to make all left-handed public instruments right-handed, the ambidextrous would extract from their new allies certain privileges for themselves. Perhaps they profit from the left-to-right conversion industries. The shift in alliances begins the cycle anew. Now it is the left that organizes, strikes, and eventually splits the ambidextrous away from their right-handed allies. Again there is a conversion of all public instruments and conveniences, and again the ambidextrous engage in profiteering—via their position in the right-to-left conversion industries.

One might wonder why, in this possible world, the left-handed and the right-handed do not make an alliance to make public conveniences neither left-handed nor right-handed but neutral, equally accessible to both. Remember that “realism” is not required in

this exercise. But those who cannot abandon their sense of realism easily should ask themselves which assumption they would call more “realistic”: that people can easily set aside their differences for a common good, or that people can easily gang up against others for short-term gain, even if this might work to everyone’s disadvantage in the long term.

Surely there is something undemocratic about the system I have described. Two-thirds of the population have their chances for success periodically jeopardized. The remaining one-third not only escape this fate; not only do they profit from a process which literally manufactures disabilities for the others, but, what seems most damning, they engineer the entire scenario in what surely must be regarded as a form of political manipulation. Yet in this possible world, none of the rights guaranteeing free political competition is violated. Under conditions of perfectly free political competition, it is possible for one-third of the population to permanently manipulate two-thirds, in the interests of the minority and against the long-term interests of the majority.

What is undemocratic about all this is that the *social antagonism* between left- and right-handed people has not been removed. In the possible world I am discussing, being left-handed in a right-handed world is a serious impediment, reducing the sum total of what one can accomplish in a lifetime. A lifetime of success for left-handers (in creating and preserving a left-handed world) means a lifetime of relative failure for right-handers. Hence this conflict qualifies as a social antagonism. The decision-making apparatus in a genuinely democratic community would at least discourage or perhaps prevent such outcomes, in which the development of one group is achieved at the expense of the development of another.

This explains why it is not sheer paternalism on my part to say that even though the left- and right-handed people choose to gang up on each other instead of breaking this cycle, they are being manipulated, their interests are not being served, and the political system therefore is not so democratic after all. Their choice was a mistake. Whatever else they want to do with their lives, the right- and left-handed people will be better able to succeed at it if they make an alliance with each other to stop changing the world back and forth to inconvenience each other. However they hope to succeed in life, they would be in a better position to do so if they gave up trying to beat each other at this vicious political game and agreed to unhand the world.

But even complete removal of all social antagonisms would not entirely equalize everyone's means of development. Between a person's present and the future life one is trying to create, there are always contingencies, and different people face different contingencies. If political power is needed to protect oneself against these contingencies, then every group which faces a distinctive set of contingencies should have sufficient power of its own to protect itself against them. This is my second claim about full democracy.

Here, too, liberal democracy falls short, as we can see by comparing it to some features of Nicaraguan politics before the Sandinista defeat. There were a number of mechanisms, mainly informal mechanisms, by which the power of the ruling Front in Nicaragua was limited by the influence of the mass organizations, including organizations and federations of farmers and ranchers, women, neighborhood committees, and agricultural and nonagricultural workers. By organizing the first three of these groups at various times and with different degrees of energy and success throughout the seventies, the Sandinistas succeeded in opening their struggle against the Somoza regime to broad popular participation. It was the participation of these groups which transformed a guerrilla war into a social war—which is, generally speaking, what such struggle needs in order to succeed. Some of these groups, especially the neighborhood and town organizations (the Sandinista Defense Committees), coordinated provision of essential services when the Somoza government fell. After victory, the Front launched an organizing drive among workers, expanding the number of unions tenfold and increasing union membership fivefold, from about ten percent of the employed workforce to nearly half.

I have claimed that one of the distinguishing features of postliberal democracy is that it puts self-protective powers into the hands of social groups who need it, by empowering their defensive organizations. There are three ways in which the Sandinistas gave such powers to the mass organizations I have just described.

First, these organizations acted with considerable independence from the Sandinista Front. The Front did not claim to be the sole interpreter of the needs of its constituents, and it encouraged the mass organizations to express and pursue their members' grievances, aspirations, and demands independently, whether they were consistent or inconsistent with the Front's policies of the day. Indeed, there have been sharp conflicts between the Front and the farmers over land reform and between the Front and workers over wages, which took shape organizationally as conflicts between the Front, on one hand,

and unions and other mass organizations on the other (Ruchwarger 1985, 94–98).

In this sense, political competition was not only allowed but encouraged between the governing party and the mass organizations. Although some gestures were made toward entrenching this competitive relationship in political structures, the powers of mass organizations to compete directly with the Front in elections (e.g., by nominating candidates or electing a certain number of them directly) never took root. Thus political competition between the Front and the mass organizations remained informal.

Even so, the mass organizations in Nicaragua loomed much larger as political forces and competitors than their counterparts in liberal democracies ever have. In liberal democracies, political competition occurs only between parties; power-sharing with mass organizations is with rare exceptions simply out of the question. Traditional parties of the left—social-democratic and Leninist parties—can be as bad on this score as any others—perhaps worse, for while promising to empower certain people (workers, peasants, women, youth) they have been known at times either to delegitimize or to restrict the independence of the people's organizations representing these groups.

The second sort of influence which the mass organizations exercised was anti-bureaucratic. Every victorious revolution finds that what it has won is not simply an administrative apparatus which, after a period of civil war, works poorly, but it has won an apparatus that only works at all through the efforts of officials who made careers of working for the other side. In this sort of setting, the various mass organizations, especially Sandinista Defense Committees, took on a watchdog function. Moreover, they were encouraged by the Front to take militant action when faced with government inaction, bureaucratic foul-ups, or red tape hindering essential projects (Ruchwarger 1985, 102). In this respect the bureaucracy was not only accountable hierarchically through higher officials to the governing party, but also answerable informally to mass organizations. Consultative links were also established at central, regional, and local levels between government ministries and mass organizations. The first political philosopher to have recommended this kind of double accountability for government bureaucracy may have been Hegel, who called for a similarly decentered authority on grounds that “the security of the state and its subjects against misuse of power by ministers and their officials... lies too in the authority given to societies and Corporations [his term for what were essentially to be democratized guilds], because

in itself this is a barrier against the intrusion of subjective caprice into the power entrusted to a civil servant, and it completes from below the state control which does not reach down as far as the conduct of individuals” (Hegel 1952, sect. 295).

Something like this also happens in liberal democracies. Interest groups do monitor the actions of government agencies and the behavior of officials. However, they have neither official nor unofficial authority to do so. Consultative linkages tend to occur covertly, in the worst cases via the “bagman.” Those linkages which occur openly between interest groups and government officials have the least effect—moreover, they are expected to have little effect, on the principle that government officials should be influenced not by interest groups directly but only political representatives who come to positions of authority through the process of political competition. The idea that, quite apart from electoral competition, some interest groups should be legitimately entitled to supervisory authority over the bureaucracy—that authority should in this sense be decentered—is quite foreign to most conceptions of liberal democracy.

Thirdly, not only was authority somewhat decentered in the Sandinista state, but so was executive power, to some extent, and it was due to the fact that the mass organizations wielded limited but effective executive power that they could also address the bureaucracy with authority. These associations did not confine themselves to demanding that the government ensure the supply of essential goods and services; they did not merely advocate local improvement projects. In the early years of Sandinista power, they would organize supply, service, and other projects themselves if the state apparatus responded too slowly. Food rationing, price controls, basic services for pregnant women, and construction and operation of commissaries, consumer sales outlets, farm produce storage facilities, and roads were at different times implemented directly by various mass organizations.

This sort of popular parastate power also offends against liberal conceptions of democracy, which would subject all political power to the ebb and flow of multiparty competition. If the parastate powers of Nicaraguan mass organizations had been entrenched, rather than unofficial, they would have constituted a third center, counterpoised to, though not always in conflict with, the presidential and legislative powers. While the mass organizations would have continued to operate with internal democracy, they likely would not have been subject to the same partisan competition in which the presidential and legislative powers were contested. Whoever might be elected to the presidency

or legislature would still face the limited but autonomous power of the unions, defense committees, women's associations, and farmers. To this extent free political competition would be restricted.

In practice, though, the Sandinista revolution never got this far. A strategy of entrenching the powers of the mass organizations was never adopted. It was thought that their interests could be served more effectively, under the circumstances, by presidential government, and that the best way to prevent their exclusion from power was simply to win elections, using their organizational capacity as the undercarriage for a bandwagon electoral campaign. Once liberal multiparty competition was introduced, the mass organizations no longer held down one end of the main axis of political competition, as they once did. Worse, they were stripped of their former influence as well, due to the Sandinistas' electoral defeat. Forced to accept liberal democracy as the price of peace with the United States and the *contras*, the Sandinistas also sacrificed all immediate chances for further democratization.

This bitter history displays with some clarity the distinction I want to draw between liberal and postliberal conceptions of democracy. In the liberal view, free political competition is paramount. There is no interest (except preservation in the face of temporary emergency) that cannot be sacrificed for the sake of preserving free political competition. The postliberal view denies this. Political competition must be situated so as to protect certain fundamental interests. Political competition which sacrifices these interests is taken to be insufficiently democratic; in a more democratic arrangement, political competition would work in ways that would allow these interests to be served. Political competition alone is not sufficient for democracy. To achieve a state that is more democratic than liberal democracy, what we need is not to eliminate political competition, or to confine it within the ranks of a party, but to shift the orientation of political competition by including the mass organizations—such as union federations, women's federations, and defensive organizations of national minorities—as players.

It is perhaps easier to agree that these groups must be represented than to agree on *how* they must be represented. Suppose for the sake of argument that there is either a party or a coalition which represents and enacts what I have called the minimal general will—the will to eradicate oppressive social antagonisms. How should other groups—some of them victims of oppressive social antagonisms—be represented? Why should they be represented separately, by

their own organizations, whose members hold sufficient power in their own hands to protect themselves against the particular insecurities they hold in common? We can find some reasons in Hegel's reflections on the French Revolution, and others from more recent experience.

Hegel's reasons stem from his reflections on the self-consumption of the most radical elements of the revolutionary movement during the Terror (Hegel 1967, 599–610]. The movement was dedicated to pursuing the universal interest, which was seen to exclude any particular interests. Those who seemed to serve their own particular interests in pursuing the universal were greeted with suspicion, and Hegel thought this left the movement nothing to do, ultimately, other than to turn on its own members. The solution required an alternative to the culture of suspicion, which he attributed to Catholicism. It also required that the universal interest be conceived differently. One had to avoid this conception of the general will which excluded particular interests. Societies which could not do this would fall victim either to self-consumption by terror or, where political competition could be conducted more peacefully, the sort of revolving-door liberalism with which we, unlike Hegel, are all familiar—the sort of arrangements by which factions or parties allow each other entry to the corridors of power (while, of course, even the most compelling interests can be made to wait forever in the cloakroom).

But I think that more recent history offers even better illustrations of why constituent groups within a radically democratic coalition must be able to represent and act upon their own particular interests. Leninist parties worked on the principle that these interests do not need to be represented separately, that the Party could successfully represent all particular interests, as well as the general interest in combating exploitation. Either this task was pursued conscientiously or it was not. If it was not, this was either because of corruption (where combating exploitation takes a back seat to building and benefiting from local fiefdoms), or it was because everything and everyone became subordinated to the interests of the Party. This, I repeat, is what happened if the objectives of representing universal and particular interests were *not* pursued conscientiously. But the result is not much better when such a party did operate conscientiously. There are serious cognitive obstacles blocking any attempt to represent general and particular interests at the same time. Particular interest groups, once organized and politically activated, have a life of their own, and they can be blind even to the compelling interests

of their allies. To think that these groups will spontaneously unite and reconcile without being pressured to do so by an agency representing the movement as a whole is exceptionally foolish. On the other hand, representatives of the movement as a whole will be bent on forging unity. Diverging interests among the constituent groups are *problems* from the movement-organizers' point of view. This tends to blind the latter, the movement-organizer types, to problems and grievances experienced within the constituencies. There is a gap between what is seen as a problem at the center of the movement and what is seen as a problem in the rank-and-file constituencies. This disqualifies those who place themselves in the movement-organizer role from representing particular interests of the constituencies.

A fully democratic community would be ruled by a unified coalition committed to rooting out those oppressive social antagonisms to which it is susceptible. Members of this coalition would include all potential victims of these antagonisms—starting with workers, women, national and racial minorities. But if Hegel and the Sandinistas were right, full democracy requires more than this. Achieving power for this sort of coalition should not rule out giving power and autonomy to its constituencies as well. It should not rule out a division of labor between the coalition, on one hand, and on the other hand its own constituencies, side by side with those other social groups that are defined and united by common insecurities. If Hegel and the Sandinistas were right, after all, then such a division of labor is what full democracy requires.

Department of Philosophy
Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Althusser, Louis. "Rousseau: The Social Contract," In *Politics and History*, by Louis Althusser. London: Verso, 1972.
- Colletti, Lucio. *From Rousseau to Lenin*. London: Verso, 1972.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *Philosophy of Right*. Translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1952.

- . *The Phenomenology of Mind*. Translated by J. B. Baillie. New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbooks, 1967.
- Levine, Andrew. *The Politics of Autonomy; A Kantian Reading of Rousseau's "Social Contract."* Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1976.
- Marx, Karl, and Frederick Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party*. In Marx and Engels, *Selected Works in One Volume*, 31–63. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968.
- Ruchwarger, Gary. "The Sandinista Mass Organizations and the Revolutionary Process." In *Nicaragua: A Revolution Under Siege*, edited by Richard Harris and Carlos M. Vilas. London: Zed Books, 1985.

REPLACES AD PAGE.

The Character of Einstein's Realism

Azaria Polikarov

[Science] is the attempt at the posterior reconstruction of existence by the process of conceptualization.

Einstein

One would think that by now the question of Einstein's philosophical views should have been answered in a definitive fashion. However, not only is there a continuing interest in the current literature in precisely these same questions, but many of the opinions and views discussed have long been disputed. Indeed, still under discussion are certain interpretations of Einstein's positions which previously had been dismissed as either completely unsound, or at least questionable. Because of this ongoing controversy, I feel that it is appropriate once again to give this topic an overall examination.

Kinds of realism

Alongside such older, classical forms as metaphysical, representational, critical, and common-sense realism, new varieties are still emerging today. The scientific realism of Wilfrid Sellars, the fiduciary realism of Karl Popper, the systematic realism of C. Hooker, the convergent realism of Niiniluoto, the comprehensive realism of Marjorie Grene, the experiential realism of A. H. Johnson, the causal realism of John C. Cahalan, and the referential or modest realism of R. Harré are only some of the better known notions. Niiniluoto provides a classification of these varieties and conceptions of realism (Niiniluoto 1986, 259) which serves to refute realism. In general, we may speak of the various notions of realism as pairs of conceptions which exclude or complement each other in a hierarchical sequence from more general to more particular conceptions.

Our first example of such paired conceptions is the distinction

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 3, no. 3 (1990)

between philosophical (metaphysical) realism and scientific realism. Realism as a philosophical (epistemological) conception is opposed, on the one hand, to subjectivism and, on the other, to instrumentalism and various forms of relativism. There are two well-known basic types of philosophical realism, namely, idealistic, or Platonic, and materialistic, and both exist in several varieties. One contemporary version of philosophical realism maintains that the structure of the external world is independent of the observer, and that scientific theories correspond to and are linked with this structure in an approximate fashion (Fine 1986, 105). Boyd gives us perhaps the most comprehensive formulation of the central theses of scientific realism (1983, 45). These are:

1. We should consider that even the nonobservational elements in scientific theories are terms which refer to the structure of the independent objective world. In other words, we should interpret scientific theories in a “realistic” fashion.
2. Not only can we interpret scientific theories “realistically,” we can as such also confirm them. In fact, we may often confirm them as approximately true by interpreting ordinary scientific evidence in accordance with ordinary methodological standards.
3. The process of the historical development of mature sciences is largely a matter of successively more accurate approximations to the truth about both observable and unobservable phenomena. Later theories typically build upon the observational and theoretical knowledge embodied in previous theories.
4. The reality which scientific theories describe is largely independent of our thoughts and theoretical commitments.

A second example of such opposing pairs is the distinction between causal and statistical realism. This distinction turns on differing views concerning the question of determinism (causality). Causal realism maintains that there is a strict type of objective causality operative in nature, while statistical realism upholds the position that objective processes are basically indeterminate, and that our grasp of apparent causal sequences is limited by statistical approximations to causal relations.

A third such example is based on differing attitudes to the correspondence theory of truth. As a rule, realists accept this theory. However, a given notion of realism may be either essentialistic or phenomenistic, depending upon whether or not it maintains that theoretical knowledge discloses the nature of an

independent object, that is, an objective essence or law-governed structure, or only describes the nature of sensible phenomena.

Fourth, we can distinguish between naive realism, according to which we accept objects such as they are, and critical realism, which stresses that there is some type of mediated connection between an object and our cognition of it.

Fifth, there is the controversy between empirical and rational realism, which depends on whether one accepts empirical or theoretical knowledge to be primary. A dialectical conception maintains that knowledge is a unity of empirical and theoretical moments, although there are versions which view one or the other as relatively primary. We denote these versions respectively as proempiricism and prorationalism.

Finally, there is the distinction between what are called hypothetical realism and convergent realism. The former maintains that scientific knowledge has a tentative character, while the latter maintains that it possesses a substantial continuity.

Einstein's realism

At first, and especially in the twenties, there was an ample debate about the philosophical meaning of the theory of relativity in which we can see lines of divergence and convergence. The discussion was polarized between the opponents and proponents of the theory. The opponents maintained that relativity theory was not mechanistic, nor Kantian, nor in the spirit of phenomenology, ontology (Nicolai Hartmann), or German critical realism, nor positivistic, nor scholastic, nor compatible with dialectical materialism, or in contradiction with the irrationalist philosophy of life. It was characterized as idealistic by materialists, as materialistic by idealists, as relativistic from the viewpoint of absolutism, as absolutistic from the position of relativism, etc.

The general acceptance of the theory of relativity inverted these positions. The theory was declared to be consistent with the standards of Kantianism, positivism, scholasticism and religion, and dialectical materialism, as well as with neo-Pythagoreanism and neo-Platonism, relativism, new philosophies of eventism, and emergentism. Naturally, the representatives of each of these doctrines denied that the theory had anything in common with other philosophies (Polikarov 1966, chap. 2). The theory continues to be opposed by mechanicism, philosophy of life, and other conservative philosophies.

Controversies on the question

The attempt to characterize Einstein's philosophic views causes as much controversy as the initial disputes about the theory of relativity. Einstein's views are condemned as positivistic, Kantian, Platonistic, materialistic, etc., by authors espousing other philosophies, or they are defended from each of these philosophical positions by proponents of that position.¹ Einstein, referring to an article by Northrop, where an attempt is made to juxtapose Einstein's views with the principal epistemological systems, points out that, from the standpoint of a definite philosophy, the scientist may seem to be a realist, an idealist, a positivist, and even a Platonist, or a Pythagorean (Einstein 1957b, 684).

When we consider Einstein's case it is essential to keep in mind that he can seem to be a proponent of various philosophies only if we have the rigid attitude of one or another philosophy. Meanwhile, he accepts only separate rational ideas from these philosophies and does not embrace the corresponding philosophy as a whole. The ideas in question are relatively independent. You are not a Platonist because you assign a primordial significance to rational knowledge and to mathematics. Neither does it follow that you are a positivist when you emphasize the role of empirical knowledge. Both may be combined with realistic and materialistic conceptions. Because of this, we cannot agree with Philipp Frank, who argues that it is possible by quoting Einstein to provide satisfactory evidence that his conception of realism is metaphysical (materialistic) or positivistic (Frank 1957, 271). I shall try, however, to crystallize Einstein's basic conception by considering these quotations in a general context.

There are old and new attempts to use Einstein's statements in support of religion and mysticism.² This is due to Einstein's *belief* in the rational nature of reality. However, he takes the categorical position that science and religion are "irreconcilable opposites." Solovine says that it is inappropriate to call belief in the rational nature of reality a religious belief, even if we take it along the lines of a pantheistic conception. With respect to that remark, Einstein adds the following about his sense of belief: "For all I care, the parsons can make capital of it. Anyway, nothing can be done about it" (1951a, 119).

There is disagreement about whether Einstein's views are realistic. They have been characterized as idealistic, conventionalistic, instrumentalistic, and as a combination of realism and antirealism, and of realism and conventionalism. We should take special notice

of Fine's work among these new attempts to characterize Einstein's views. Fine maintains that Einstein is closer to so-called "constructive empiricism," i.e., to van Fraassen's antirealism, than to metaphysical or scientific realism. He states that Einstein's realism is a "motivational" kind of realism, that it is "a littler paler and more shadowy than one might have expected" (Fine 1986, 97). Fine does confess that there are many passages of Einstein's works which express ideas close to that of metaphysical realism (Fine 1986, 106). It is in this sense that Einstein treats the history of physics from Newton's mechanics to general relativity as a triumph of the realistic creed (Fine 1986, 96; Einstein 1953b). Einstein's conceptual model is based on spatio-temporal representation and the deterministic (probabilistic) character of physical laws (Fine 1986; 97, 104). Fine also includes Einstein's statement that he and Infeld have written their joint book in order to emphasize the role of a realist epistemology in the history of physics (Fine 1986, Einstein 1938, 85).

However, contrary to these statements, Fine stresses Einstein's view about so-called "entheorizing," that is, that certain concepts are meaningful only within the framework of a definite theory, only along the lines of a coherent theory of truth. The entheorizing of concepts relating to "reality" and the refusal of further inquiry into their significance, which deflects the inquiry into the empirical adequacy of the whole theory, constitutes, according to Fine, the foundation of Einstein's realism (1986, 93). But I do not feel that Fine's view is substantiated because he refers mainly to selected quotations from, and corresponding interpretations of, Einstein's letters. These are drawn from the general body of Einstein's work in a way which seems convenient for a manipulation of their meaning.

In my own investigation of Einstein's philosophical views concerning the relation of the scientific process and objective reality, and in an effort to avoid such apparent manipulation of sources, I shall emphasize those of his publications which deal principally and directly with these problems. I shall denote these writings as group A. To this category belong about seven papers: Einstein 1957a, 1957b, 1936, 1933, 1927, 1931a and Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen 1935. These issues are discussed in a secondary fashion in other publications, which I shall denote as group B. These include about ten papers, among which are: Einstein 1940, 1944, 1921a, 1932a, 1928, 1931b). Of course, I do not exclude references to ideas raised in Einstein's correspondence (group C), but I believe that they do not invalidate ideas defended in publication groups A and B. Along

with this I shall refer to the opinions of competent authors.

I feel that Fine's discussion of Einstein's realism is unjustifiable in light of these works. Contrast Fine's view with the following statements from Einstein: "Scientific truth is valid independent [of] humanity" (1931b), or "Science searches for relations which are thought to exist independently of the searching individual" (1950c, 53). It is also widely accepted in the literature that Einstein adheres to the correspondence theory of truth (de Ritis and Guccione 1984, 107; d'Espagnat 1980). Let us note Henry Le Roy Finch's statement: "The pure truth—independent from man, independent from consciousness, independent of morality—this was Einstein's 'religion'" (Le Roy Finch 1985, 281).

Nor can we consider that Einstein's view is closely linked with Duhem's holistic conception (Fine 1986, 87, 91) since there are several statements by Einstein to the contrary. For example, Einstein admits that there may be a juxtaposition of theoretical conclusions and individual experiments (Einstein 1933, 271–72). In addition, Einstein makes the categorical remark in antithesis to the holistic weakening of the criteria for the refutation of theories that "if a single one of the conclusions drawn from it [the general theory of relativity] proves wrong, it must be given up" (Einstein 1919, 232).

He also speaks of the rigidity of the theory, meaning that it is either true or false, but not modifiable (Einstein 1950b). Finally, the revolutionary character of the theory of relativity in respect to classical mechanics is contrary to Duhem's idea that the conceptions of classical mechanics can be improved infinitely.

I shall come back to Fine's ideas later. Now we should like to look at recent work by Don Howard which describes Einstein's conception as a combination of realism and conventionalism (1984, 616; Herneck 1976, 21f.). According to Howard, Einstein's conventionalism consists of the view that principles are conventions (626), and that there always will be equivalent alternative theories (617). He argues that this is due to Schlick's influence on Einstein (616).

Einstein conceives of principles (postulates, axioms, elementary laws) as hypotheses which must be indirectly verified and, accordingly, confirmed as true statements. In this sense Einstein believes that the general laws of physics have an objective meaning (1957b, 681), and he speaks of "insights of definite nature" (1957a, 61). Einstein's guiding idea is that the laws of nature are invariable, i.e., that they are objective, and this is incompatible with conventionalism. We should note in this respect the statements of Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen

about the completeness of a physical theory, according to which its elements correspond to elements of physical reality (Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen 1935).

Of course, there are conventional elements in scientific knowledge, but in science they are subordinated to a construction which is not conventional. This is valid for Einstein's theories, too, and Einstein himself is far from the basic conventionalist position. Whereas Poincaré, in a conventionalistic fashion, adheres to Euclidean geometry because it is the most convenient type of geometry, and believes that it should not be afraid of new experience (1906, 74), Einstein, on the contrary, uses non-Euclidean geometry because it is adequate in regard to objective metric properties. Einstein, evidently as a rejoinder to Poincaré, writes: "The question whether this continuum has a Euclidean, Riemannian, or any other structure is a question of physics proper which must be answered by experience, and not a question of a convention to be chosen on grounds of mere expedience" (1921a, 238).

The conception of geometry as both a formal system and as an empirically interpreted or applied branch of physics plays a substantial role in Einstein's thinking. Geometry may be true as a formal system, whereas its justification as a branch of physics constitutes its empirical confirmation. According to Einstein's well-known formula, the propositions of mathematics are not certain insofar as they refer to reality, and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality. We should also add here the statement, typical for Einstein, that "even if the axioms of the theory are proposed by man, the success of such a project presupposes a high degree of ordering of the objective world" (1952, 131).

Nor does Einstein believe in the possibility of equivalence between alternative theories. He is convinced that relativistic mechanics, electrodynamics, gravitational theory, etc., surpass their predecessors and are destined to replace them. Einstein gives his preference to one theory over another, and, in particular, to deterministic (causal) theories over indeterministic (acausal) ones (1954b). He responds to the question of whether we can say that any system of physics might be equally valid and possible by stating that theoretically there is nothing illogical in this idea. However, scientific development has shown that even with many possible theoretical structures a single one has proved to be superior to all the others at each stage of history (1932a; 1957b, 681; 1940).³

Finally, as far as Schlick's influence on Einstein may be

maintained, it refers to an early period when Schlick held realistic positions; when he departed from them, the influence in question ceased (Hentschel 1986, 475).

We shall next consider Einstein's conception of realism in some detail, starting with a general statement of the problem.

The realistic attitude

Einstein declares himself to be against the positivistic denial of metaphysics, especially Russell's (Einstein 1944), and confesses to be guilty of the metaphysical "original" sin (1957b, 673). His conviction that "an external world independent of the perceiving subject" is "the basis of all natural science" (Einstein 1931a, 266) runs like a red thread through several of his works. For example, Einstein and Infeld maintain that "physical theories tend to frame a reality image and to connect it with the vast world of sensory perceptions." They add further on: "Without the belief that it is possible to encompass reality with our theoretical constructs, without the belief in the internal harmony of our world, there would be no science" (Einstein and Infeld 1942). For Einstein, the "real" in physics is to be taken as a type of program (1957b, 674).⁴

Einstein's realism has a materialistic character. According to him, we are confident that our thoughts refer to reality only when they have a relation of "correspondence with our sensations" (1951, 159). Einstein believes that the setting of a "real external world" is associated with the formation of the concept of bodily objects,⁵ with sense impressions, and with the comprehensibility of the world, and that we are able to comprehend the world because it is possible to connect sense impressions through a system of concepts and set forth substantial relations between them, i.e., to formulate laws of nature (1936, 291–92). Einstein usually understands "physical reality" as objective existence, and states that the continuous field, in addition to mass point, also represents physical reality (1931a, 268). Moreover, Einstein maintains that the concept of the continuous field has gradually replaced the concept of the material object as the fundamental concept of physics (1954a, 274–76).

In the general theory of relativity, according to Einstein's words, the geometrical properties of space are not independent; rather, they are conditioned by matter (1942, section 32). He maintains that the development of the concept of space occurs from the point of view of sense experience in the following sequence: solid body, spatial relations of solid bodies, interval, space. Space looked at this way,

Einstein continues, appears as something real in the same sense as solid bodies (1934).

When we juxtapose Boyd's statements about the basic principles of scientific realism with representative statements of Einstein, we are convinced that Einstein's views conform completely with this conception. First of all, Einstein and his collaborators introduce the concept of the completeness of a physical theory, which they understand in the sense that "every magnitude and every assertion of a theory (within its framework) lays claim for an objective meaning" (Einstein 1957b, 680). Second, we can understand reality by means of concepts whose relevance is based entirely on their confirmation. Concepts are freely introduced, but they acquire a corresponding relation to reality insofar as they are connected with empirical data which verify them. According to Einstein, it is exactly through this connection of empirical data with theory that we attain a knowledge of reality. As far as the consequences of the theory of general relativity are concerned, Einstein and Infeld state that "they can go through experimental verification wherever comparison is possible" (Einstein and Infeld 1942). Third, Einstein regards relativity theory as a natural continuation of a line which we can trace over centuries (1921b, 246). The special theory of relativity was simply a systematic development of the electrodynamics of Maxwell and Lorentz, but it pointed beyond itself to a further theoretical development (1919, 230). Fourth, alongside Einstein's idea that the belief in an external world independent of the perceiving subject is the basis of all natural science, we would like to add Einstein's view that the supreme task of the physicist is to arrive at those universal elementary laws from which the cosmos can be built up by pure deduction (1918). Einstein expresses the same thought in the formulation that the aim of science is to establish general rules which determine the reciprocal connection of objects and events in time and space (1941, 47).

The idea of the continuity of physical processes in space and time (and of space and time), and especially of the deterministic character of these processes, plays a substantial part in Einstein's scientific and philosophic conception. In this sense, we can also characterize Einstein's realism as deterministic or causal in antithesis to indeterminism and to statistical realism.

With respect to the distinction between phenomenistic (descriptivist) and essentialistic realism, it is evident that Einstein's conception pertains to essentialism. We can support this by several of his statements. For example, Einstein believes that "physical theory can provide plausible

explanations for the nature of things, i.e., to answer not only the question how do processes go on, but also why do they occur *just this way*" (1929). He also speaks of "grasping the real in all its depth" (1933, 275), as well as about a "passion for comprehension" (1950b, 342). According to Einstein, both the scientific ideal, as well as the motivation of the scientist, is to comprehend reality (1932b).

Prorationalism

The opinion that Einstein's realism has a deeply empiricist core formed through the influence of Hume and Mach (Fine 1986, 108) contradicts the spirit of Einstein's conception, as well as his explicit statements. One of Einstein's fundamental ideas is that theory does not arise from experience (1936), which contradicts the idea that scientific theory is framed on the basis of empirical data, notwithstanding formulations stressing the meaning of the latter. The so-called postulative approach is characteristic of Einstein. When Einstein frames theories of principle, he postulates basic statements by means of which we can achieve an explanation and the representation of facts is achieved: the postulates cannot be deduced from the facts. It is worth remembering Einstein's principle that it is the theory which decides what we can observe (Heisenberg 1971, 63). Also, Einstein, in speaking of Bridgman's operationalist program, affirms that there is no physical theory which can satisfy the operational demand that all of its assertions be independently "operationally tested" (1957b, 679).

The influence of Hume and Mach on Einstein is restricted to their criticism of classical science, and it does not include the positive philosophical parts of their doctrines. With respect to Einstein's views on the relation between empirical and rational knowledge, Northrop states: "Notwithstanding all his other departures from Kant, Albert Einstein is a Kantian and a Greek empirical rationalist, rather than a Humean British positivistic empiricist" (1957, 390). This view is largely accepted in the literature. Thus Barker, for example, states: "Einstein never completely accepted Mach's philosophical position. Moreover, the broad outlines of Einstein's later position are consistent with the philosophy of science proposed by Hertz and incompatible with the views of Mach, or indeed his successors, the logical positivists" (1981, 133 and 142). At the same time Einstein rejects Hertz's a priori concepts.

As may be seen from a number of his works, Einstein is concerned mainly with the relationship between empirical and theoretical

knowledge.⁶ The particular character of his conception consists in his rejection of the inductionist scheme. Einstein maintains that theoretical statements (concepts and laws) do not follow directly (logically) from empirical data, but are rather constructed. They have the character of hypothetical structures, and we imposed them upon empirical data in order to effect the unified description and explanation of that data.

In contrast to naive realism, according to which things are what they seem, Einstein believes that the knowledge of things is a working-over of the raw material furnished by the senses (1944, 21). "In fact, however, the real is in no way immediately given to us," he writes. "Given to us are merely the data of our consciousness. . . . There is only one way from the data of consciousness to reality, to wit, the way of conscious or unconscious intellectual construction" (1951, 158). "The justification (the truth content) of the system rests in the verification of the derived propositions by the sense experiences" (1936, 322). Einstein calls this the epistemological postulate (1964), and this idea expresses the critical character of his realism.⁷ In addition to the requirement that a theory correspond with a wide range of experimental data, a theory must also be internally consistent (1957a, 23). There is generally more than one theoretical framework which can meet these requirements, but practice usually imposes one of them on us.

Just as natural language is built up successively from an initial word set denoting objects, their properties, or their actions, to words which are expressed by means of this initial word set, to constructions of increasing complexity (1942), so does a theory begin with concepts and relations which express a more or less direct correlation with facts, which serve as the bases for relatively more abstract concepts. Through the latter, we achieve a greater generality and unification in theoretical conception (1936, 292).

By and large, both empirical data and theoretical constructs (concepts, laws) are orientated to objective, physical reality insofar as they represent and reconstruct it. Einstein accepts that "all knowledge of reality starts from and ends in experience," but he believes that "pure thinking can get to the root of the matter" (1933). Einstein maintains that we can do this by means of the simplest conceivable mathematical ideas: in the limited number of mathematically existent simple field types and in the simple equations possible between them lies the theorist's hope of grasping the real in all its depth. Along these lines Einstein points to physics "as a conceptual attempt to

grasp reality as it is thought independently of its being observed" (1957a, 81).

An idea which runs through many of Einstein's works is that sense perception only gives indirect information of the external world (1931a, 266), or of "physical reality," which we can grasp only by speculative means (1918). We find the quote from Einstein which we used as the epigraph to this article to be particularly striking in this respect (1941, 44).

Fine regards Einstein's statement that our notions of physical reality can never be final (Einstein 1931a, 266)⁸ as an argument in favor of the claim that Einstein's realism does not include the idea of successive approximations to reality (Fine 1986, 96). It is not difficult to refute this. The theory of relativity follows the tradition of field physics and, according to Einstein, the special theory of relativity is only the first step of a necessary development (1957a, 63). Einstein brilliantly expresses this attitude in the statement that "no fairer destiny could be allotted to any physical theory than that it should of itself point out the way to the introduction of a more comprehensive theory, in which it lives on as a limiting case" (1952).

In addition, Einstein accepts the existence of teleological concepts and relations (1950a, 332), and he regards uncertainty relations in particular as teleologically demonstrated (1957b). Also, Einstein considers classical thermodynamics as an example, if even the only one, of a physical theory of universal content and which will never be overturned within the framework of applicability of its basic concepts (1957a, 33). This observation is of special importance for those who are skeptics on principle.

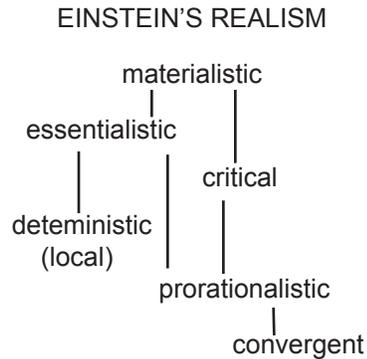
We can say that for Einstein there are no theoretical statements (including theories) which cannot in principle be reexamined. The successful explanation of facts is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the truth of a theory, considered as an adequate reproduction of reality. However, certain theoretical statements retain their validity while new universally valid statements are established. Along with the changes, at every stage there is certain class of statements which are not subject to change. In the same vein Holton states that "very early in his career Einstein had, it seems to me, formed a clear view about the basic structure of nature: at the top there is a small number of eternal, general principles or laws by which nature operates" (1986, 13).

The above considerations lead us to believe that it is quite justifiable to maintain that we can find in Einstein a concept of realism. In particular, we find in his published works a concept of critical realism and of contemporary rationalism, i.e., of what I have referred to above as prorationism, which maintains that knowledge possesses an empirical ingredient. We can characterize this as a “dialectical combination of rationalism and realism” (Bachelard 1957), or, in a word, as “rationalistic realism” (Holton 1974, 240).

It is appropriate here to remark that Einstein framed his views not only in the process of the cognition of nature, but also in the process of the critical study of the history of philosophy and his contemporary philosophy of science. To be sure, his views go beyond spontaneous materialism and spontaneous dialectics, and approach dialectical materialism (Aronov et al. 1979).⁹

Fine attempts to qualify Einstein's realism as motivational realism. Now, we can look for and find motives behind every conception, and in this respect we can denote any conception as motivational. Indeed, we may see the scientist's methodology in such a motivation. I can agree with Fine when he acknowledges that he invents motives on Einstein's behalf (1986, 109). But I cannot agree with him when he when he claims that this is “not much,” for it is enough to distort Einstein's realism.

Consequently, we find in Einstein a combination of materialistic, essentialistic, deterministic, critical, prorationistic, and convergent realism. We can represent the hierarchical relations between these types of realism by means of the following diagram.



From this position, Einstein is opposed, on the one hand, to nonrealistic, empiricist, and indeterministic views, and, on the other, he expresses his solidarity with the realism of such well-known scientists and philosophers as Planck, the early Schlick, and Meyerson.

Einstein's attitude is also manifest when we enumerate certain basic previous achievements in physics, as well as their continuity with contemporary physics. For example, Einstein considers as his friends men of the past and present who have insight into the extrapersonal existence of the world (Einstein 1957a, 5). Here we find the view of the great materialists of ancient Greece that all material events should be traced back to a strictly regular series of atomic movements (Einstein 1927, 254). Here also is Kepler's faith in the existence of natural law (Einstein 1930, 262). Here as well is Newton's view that we should regard physical events as the motions of material points in space as they are governed by fixed laws (Einstein 1931a, 266). Here, too, is Descartes's physics, as well as the concept of "physical reality as represented by continuous fields" (Einstein 1931a, 269).

Evolution of Einstein's views

We can conditionally distinguish in this evolution three states which are not sharply differentiated from one another, namely:

1. A spontaneous adherence to scientific realism and materialism, which is expressed in Einstein's scientific papers from 1905 to the beginning of the 1920s;
2. Einstein's initial philosophic-scientific papers from 1914–1921, as well as later papers with a philosophic character from the thirties, forties, and the last years of his life;
3. A sequence of papers from 1927, in which Einstein propounds his realistic position as an antithesis to the standard conception of quantum mechanics. The latter enunciates the fundamental character of statistical interpretation, which claims that it can become the basis for a unifying construction of physics.

Holton believes that Einstein's transition from a Machist (positivist) to a rational realist occurred shortly before 1930 (Holton 1986, 100). In our opinion it is not justifiable to assert that Einstein had ever been a Machist. He clearly escaped from the influence of Mach's epistemology much earlier than 1930, at least by the time of the framing of the general theory of relativity, i.e., before the 1920s. Already in 1918 Einstein evidently shared Planck's position in his

polemics with Mach (Einstein 1918). We can find in 1917 an expression of his reservations concerning Machism in a letter to Besso (*Albert Einstein, Michele Besso* 1972), and we can trace this attitude back to his early works on molecular-kinetic theory.

We will begin a more concrete examination of Einstein's basic ideas in the indicated periods of his development by noting that in his biography Einstein reveals that already as a twelve-year-old boy he overcame his religiosity and became convinced that "out yonder there was this huge world, which exists independently of us human beings and which stands before us like a great, eternal riddle, at least partially accessible to our inspection and thinking" (Einstein 1957a, 5).

No less important are the implicit conceptions in Einstein's basic works, namely, statistical physics, quantum theory, and field theory, which are based on scientific materialism. Indeed, the major aim of his work on Brownian motion was "to find facts which would guarantee as much as possible the existence of atoms of definite finite size" (Einstein 1957a, 47). Einstein, in his famous paper on light quanta, reached the conclusion that we have to ascribe a kind of immediate reality to Planck's quanta (Einstein 1957a, 51). As a result of his contribution to electrodynamics, the electromagnetic field came to be considered as just such a material reality as is the chair on which we are sitting (Einstein and Infeld 1942).

We find essential elements of Einstein's conception of realism in his early papers. In "The Principles of Research" (1918) we read the following: "Man tries to make for himself in the fashion that suits him best a simplified and intelligible picture of the world; he then tries to some extent to substitute this cosmos of his for the world of experience, and thus to overcome it. This is what the painter, the poet, the speculative philosopher, and the natural scientist do, each in his own fashion." Continuing, Einstein states that the specificity of the theoretical physicist's picture of the world is that "it demands the highest possible standard of rigorous precision in the description of relations, such as only the use of mathematical language can give" (225). Einstein returns to this conception many times.

Einstein expresses his realistic convictions in various later works which have a philosophical content. Thus, Einstein announces that all science is based on a realistic philosophical system (Einstein 1928). He asserts that "no physicist believes that the outer world is a derivative of consciousness, or he wouldn't be a physicist"

(Einstein 1932a). And he later states: “There exists a physical reality which is independent of substantiation and perception” (Einstein 1950d, 756).

Einstein’s conceptions of the relationship between empirical data and theory undergo a certain evolution, especially in connection with the framing of the general theory of relativity. He writes in 1914 of a *sui generis* balance between inductive and deductive physics (Einstein 1914). On the occasion of an assertion that Galileo substituted the experimental, empirical method for the speculative, deductive one, Einstein insisted: “There is not an empirical method without speculative concepts and systems, and there are not systems of pure thinking in the closer study of which we would not discover the empirical material upon which they are constructed. The sharp opposing of the empirical and deductive approaches is false and is quite alien to Galileo” (Einstein 1953a).

However, at the same time Einstein propounded the idea of the primacy of the theory: “It seems that the human mind first has to construct forms independently before we can find them in things. Knowledge cannot spring from experience alone but only from the comparison of the inventions of the intellect with the observed facts” (Einstein 1930).¹⁰ Along these lines he speaks of “a transition from mainly inductive to mainly deductive methods” (Einstein 1934). According to Einstein, the foundations of theory have a fictitious character in the sense that concepts are free inventions of human intellect (Einstein 1933, 273).

The realistic convictions which Einstein propounded in a series of papers are directed against a certain interpretation of quantum mechanics. According to the latter, the views concerning quantum mechanics are polarized between the idealistic conception that merely probabilities exist and the realistic position that there is a physical reality whose laws allow of nothing other than a statistical expression (Einstein 1951, 161). Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen start their discussion of quantum mechanics with a formulation of the reality principle. According to this principle, “If without in any way disturbing a system we can predict with certainty the value of a physical quantity, then there exists an element of physical reality which corresponds to this physical quantity” (Einstein, Podolsky, and Rosen 1935). According to the same authors, any serious consideration of a physical theory must take into account the distinction between the objective reality which is independent of any theory and the physical concepts with which the theory operates. These concepts are intended to

correspond with objective reality, and by means of them we picture this reality to ourselves. With respect to quantum mechanics, Einstein adheres to the idea that we can conceive of a better theory which will represent things themselves, and not merely the probability of their occurrence (Einstein 1933, 276).

Finally, the fact that we can comprehend Einstein's philosophy of science as realism is of far-reaching importance, and as such his concepts have influenced many philosophers and scientists. Ample evidence for this is supplied by the fact of criticism from opposing positions, as well as by his followers' support. For example, Bridgman, who is critical of Einstein, describes Einstein's position in the general theory of relativity in the following manner: "He believes it possible to get away from the special point of view of the individual observer and sublimate it into something universal, 'public' and 'real'" (Bridgman 1957, 349).

A second example is that the proponents of complementarity have reproached Einstein for starting from the conception of an objective world which exists in space and time, and whose changes are determined by the laws of nature (Heisenberg 1971).¹¹ At the same time it is worthwhile emphasizing that Bohr, under the impact of the discussions with Einstein, renounced his earlier formulations in the spirit of subjective idealism and the so-called strong version of complementarity, which involved the idea of the disturbing action of observation.

A third example is that several distinguished physicists, such as Born, von Laue, and Sommerfeld, give witness to Einstein's firm conviction that physics provides knowledge about the objectively existing world (*The Born-Einstein Letters* 1971). The Italian physicists R. de Ritis and S. Guccione stress that the philosophical aspect of Einstein's whole scientific and epistemological work is a coherent monistic realism, and that this is a generative metaphysics (philosophy) which guided Einstein's work throughout his scientific life (de Ritis and Guccione 1984, 106, 112).

As a fourth example, we have to give special attention to the testimony of his associate P. Bergman that during Einstein's Princeton period he called himself a "realist," but was rather a materialist (Bergman 1982).

In conclusion, Einstein's realism finds its place in the philosophical tradition of Spinoza, as well as in the scientific realism of such physicists as Hertz, Boltzmann, and Planck. Einstein contributed to the growth and relative completion of realism, and his work provides

important support for the proponents of realism in the defense and elaboration of its contemporary forms.

*Institute of Philosophical Sciences
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*

NOTES

1. There are cases in which the theory is accepted as materialistic, but Einstein is declared to be an idealist. There are also cases in which Einstein's views are characterized independently of the evaluations of his theory and the philosophic positions of the authors. For example, the idealist A. Wenzl considers Einstein to be close to dialectical materialism (Wenzl 1958).
2. This even goes as far as attempts to look for parallels between Einstein's realism and the theology of Athanasius (Paul 1982).
3. According to Einstein, the relation of concepts to sense experiences is analogous to that of a check number to an overcoat. He compares this situation with a word puzzle which admits one solution only (Einstein 1936, 295). Howard, incidentally, mentions an analogous statement of Einstein in "Principles of Research" (1918; Howard 1984, 621).
4. Krueger, who advocates so-called "moderate realism," also writes about realism as a research program in respect to modern theories (Krueger 1983, 281).
5. As with all other concepts, it is not inferred from the sense data and, therefore, cannot be conceived as a "bundle" of sensory raw material, as Russell claims (Einstein 1944).
6. An insignificant peculiarity of the great physicist's statements is the fact that he often uses sensualistic terminology and, instead of facts and phenomena, speaks about sensations, sense perceptions, etc. However, contrary to idealist sensualism, they establish, in his opinion, the connection with objective reality.
7. The introduction of the concept of mass points, i.e., elements of atomistic character, already goes beyond the framework of immediate observations and, therefore, means a step from naive to sophisticated realism (Einstein 1950d).
8. There is a similar idea in another of Einstein's papers: "The

- theory...is the result of an extremely laborious process of adaptation: hypothetical, never completely final, always subject to question and doubt" (1940, 323–24).
9. Here we mean the essence of Einstein's views. Ignorant statements by dogmatic followers of dialectical materialism gave Einstein the occasion to write in his correspondence satirical remarks directed against this philosophy. In fact, however, these are directed against groundless, speculative claims on the part of such dogmatists, and not against the philosophy itself (Dukas and Hoffmann 1981, 67; Hoffmann 1975, 265).
 10. Here we may add such statements from Einstein's correspondence that he has been "converted into a believing rationalist," and "in Nature the overall principles represent a higher reality than does the single object" (Dukas and Hoffman 1981, 84).
 11. In his Gifford Lectures (1956–57), Heisenberg rejects Einstein's "dogmatic realism" and "materialistic ontology" (Herneck 1976, 29).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Albert Einstein. *Michele Besso: Correspondance 1903–1955*. Paris: Hermann, 1972.
- Aronov, R. A., et al. "Elements of Materialism and the Dialectic of the Framing of Einstein's Views" [in Russian]. *Voprosy filosofii*, no. 11 (1979).
- Bachelard, Gaston. "The Philosophic Dialectic of the Concepts of Relativity." In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, 565–80. See Schilpp 1957.
- Barker, Peter. "Einstein's Later Philosophy." In *Proceedings of the Einstein Centennial Celebration at Memphis State University, 14–16 March 1979*, edited by Peter Barker and Cecil G. Shugart. Memphis: Memphis State Univ. Press, 1981.
- Bergman, P. G. "The Unified Field Theory: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow." In *Problems of Physics: Classical and Contemporary* [in Russian]. Moscow: 1982.
- The Born-Einstein Letters*. New York: Walker, 1971.
- Boyd, R. N. "On the Current Status of the Issue of Scientific Realism." In *Methodology, Epistemology, and Philosophy of Science*, edited by Carl G. Hempel et al. Dordrecht: 1983.

Bridgman, P. W. "Einstein's Theories and the Operational Point of View."

In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, 349–54. See Schilpp 1957.
de Ritis, R., and S. Guccione. "Albert Einstein: The Scientific Monism."
Fundamenta Scientiae 5, no. 2 (1984).

d'Espagnat, Bernard. "Einstein et le principe de la causalit,."
Epistemologia 3 (1980).

Dukas, Helen, and Banesh Hoffman, eds. *Albert Einstein--The Human Side*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1981.

Einstein, Albert. "Principles of Theoretical Physics" (1914). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 220–23. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "Principles of Research" (1918). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 224–27. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "What is the Theory of Relativity?" (1919). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 227–32. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "Geometry and Experience" (1921a). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 232–46. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "On the Theory of Relativity" (1921b). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 246–49. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "The Mechanics of Newton and Their Influence on the Development of Theoretical Physics" (1927). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 253–61. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "A propos de 'La deduction relativiste' de M. E. Meyerson." *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* (1928).

———. "Über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Feld-Theorie." *Festschrift Prof. Dr. A. Stodola zum 70. Geburtstag*. Zurich, Leipzig, 1929.

———. "Johannes Kepler." (1930). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 262–66. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "Maxwell's Influence on the Evolution of the Idea of Physical Reality" (1931a). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 266–70. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "The Nature of Reality." *Modern Review* (Calcutta) 49 (1931b).

———. Epilogue. In *Where Is Science Going?* by Max Planck. New York: 1932a.

———. Address to students of the University of California at Los Angeles. In *Builders of the Universe*. Los Angeles: 1932b.

———. "On the Method of Theoretical Physics" (1933). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 270–76. See Einstein 1954a.

———. "The Problem of Space, Ether, and the Field in Physics." (1934). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 276–85. See Einstein 1954a.

- . “Physics and Reality” (1936). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 290–323. See Einstein 1954a.
- . Letter to Maurice Solovine, 10 Apr. 1938. In *Letters to Solovine*. See Einstein 1987.
- . “The Fundamentals of Theoretical Physics” (1940). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 323–35. See Einstein 1954a.
- . “Science and Religion (1941). In *Ideas and Opinions*, 41–49. See Einstein 1954a.
- . *Relativity: The Special and the General Theory*. New York: 1942.
- . “Remarks on Bertrand Russell’s Theory of Knowledge.” 1944. In *Ideas and Opinions*, 18–24. See Einstein 1954a.
- . *The World as I See It*, translated by Alan Harris. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.
- . *Out of My Later Years*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1950a.
- . “On the Generalized Theory of Gravitation.” 1950b. In *Ideas and Opinions*, 341–59. See Einstein 1954a.
- . “Laws of Science and Laws of Ethics.” 1950c. In *Out of My Later Years*. See Einstein 1950a.
- . “Physics, Philosophy, and Scientific Progress.” *Journal Intern. College of Surgeons* (Dec. 1950d).
- . Letter to Maurice Solovine, 1 Jan. 1951a. In *Letters to Solovine*. See Einstein 1987.
- . Letter from Dr. Albert Einstein. In *Essay in Physics*, by Herbert L. Samuel. Oxford: Blackwell, 1951.
- . Letter to Maurice Solovine, 30 Mar. 1952. In *Letters to Solovine*. See Einstein 1987.
- . Foreword to *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, by Galileo. Berkeley: Univ. of Calif. Press, 1953a.
- . “Preliminary Remarks on Fundamental Concepts.” In *Louis de Broglie—physicien et penseur*. Paris: 1953b.
- . *Ideas and Opinions*. New York: Bonanza Books, 1954a.
- . Foreword to *Concepts of Space*, by Max Jammer. Cambridge, Mass.: 1954b.
- . Autobiographical Notes. In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*. 1957a. See Schilpp 1957.
- . “Remarks Concerning the Essays Brought Together in this Co-operative Volume.” 1957b. In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, 665–88. See Schilpp 1957.
- . “Fundamental Ideas and Problems of the Theory of Relativity.

- In vol. 1 of *Nobelstiftelsen: Physics* [Nobel lectures]. Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1964.
- . *Letters to Solovine*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1987.
- Einstein, Albert, and Leopold Infeld. *The Evolution of Physics*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942.
- Einstein, Albert, Boris Podolsky, and Nathan Rosen. "Can Quantum-Mechanical Description of Physical Reality Be Considered Complete?" *Physical Review* 47 (1935): 777–80.
- Fine, Arthur. *The Shaky Game: Einstein, Realism, and the Quantum Theory*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Frank, Philipp. "Einstein, Mach, and Logical Positivism." In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*. See Schilpp 1957.
- Heisenberg, Werner. *Physics and Beyond*. New York: Harper & Row, 1971.
- Hentschel, K. "Die Korrespondenz Einstein-Schlick: Zum Verhältnis der Physik zur Philosophie." *Ann. Sci.* 43 (1986).
- Herneck, Friedrich. *Einstein und sein Weltbild*. Berlin: Buchverlag der Morgen, 1976.
- Hoffman, B. *Albert Einstein—createur et rebelle*. Paris: 1975.
- Holton, Gerald J. *The Thematic Component in Scientific Thought*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1974.
- . *The Advancement of Science and Its Burdens*. Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986.
- Howard, Don. "Realism and Conventionalism in Einstein's Philosophy of Science." *Philos. Naturalis* 21 (1984).
- Krueger, L. "Empirismus oder Realismus—eine Alternative in der Wissenschaftstheorie?" In *Der Mensch und die Wissenschaften vom Menschen*, edited by G. Grey and J. Zager. Innsbruck: 1983.
- Le Roy Finch, Henry. "Conversations with Einstein." Cited in *Albert Einstein—Wirkung und Nachwirkung*, edited by A. P. French. Brunswick: 1985.
- Niiniluoto, Ilkka. "Theories, Approximations, and Idealizations." In *Logic, Methodology and Philosophy of Science*, vol. 7, edited by B. Marcus et al. Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1986.
- Northrop, F. S. C. "Einstein's Conception of Science." In *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*, 387–408. See Schilpp 1957.
- Paul, Iain. *Science, Theology, and Einstein*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1982.
- Poincaré, A. *Wissenschaft und Hypothese*. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1906.

Polikarov, Asaria. *Otnositel'nost' i kvanty*. Moscow: 1966.

———. *Ainshtein: razlichni rakursi*. Sofia: 1985.

Schilpp, Paul A., ed. and transl. *Albert Einstein: Philosopher-Scientist*. Evanston, Ill.: Library of Living Philosophers, 1957.

Wenzl, A. "Der Begriff der Materie und das Problem des Materialismus." *Sitzungsbericht Bayer. Akad. Wissenschaften, Philos.-hist. Kl.*, no. 3 (1958).

REPLACES AD PAGE.

Race and Class in Radical African-American Fiction of the Depression Years

Barbara Foley

Until quite recently most commentators on African-American literature have argued that African-American writers have traditionally found Marxism alien to their sensibilities and have produced their best work in spite of, rather than because of, its influence (Young 1973, Bone 1965, Gayle 1976, Cruse 1967, Record 1971, Klehr 1984; for recent opposing views, see Naison 1983, Rampersad 1987). Taking issue with this position, I shall argue here that William Attaway and Richard Wright—the two major African-American novelists associated with Depression-era literary radicalism—worked as conscious Marxists adhering to the principal tenets of contemporaneous Marxist discourse about race and class. The line of the 1930s Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) as regards the so-called “Negro question,” I shall argue, was in fact more subtle than is often granted in literary discussions of the politics of the Depression-era left. A fresh scrutiny of 1930s political and literary practice reveals that radical African-American writers found in the left’s analysis of racial matters a complexity and breadth—but also an ambiguity—that corresponded to their own problematic sense of the political position of U.S. Blacks. Thus in the very ambivalence of their formulation of the relation of African-American emancipation to class struggle, African-American writers were not primarily expressing a skepticism toward the program of the organized left—though in Wright’s case this was to become increasingly a factor—but were instead articulating the left’s own highly contradictory construction of the relation of race to class. One goal of this essay, then, is to demonstrate that these writers were active contributors rather than passive respondents to the dominant Marxist discourse about race and class that was formulated during the Depression years.¹

In giving fictional articulation to a complex and contradictory political position, however, Attaway and Wright both placed considerable

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 3, no. 3 (1990)

stress upon the inherited form of literary discourse within which they were working—namely, the realistic novel. A second goal of this essay is to explore the specific nature of these writers' challenge to the premises of the realistic novel and thus to examine from a theoretical standpoint some of the representational issues confronting the novelist aspiring to embody an oppositional politics in fictional form. In one sense, of course, Attaway and Wright were engaged in a project that was in no way unique: by the time they composed *Blood on the Forge* and *Native Son* at the end of the decade, scores of novelists more or less closely associated with literary proletarianism had been attempting to find forms appropriate for the expression of revolutionary politics. Attaway and Wright were clearly working within the proletarian tradition and, insofar as they devised successful methods for embodying leftist politics in fiction, were to a significant degree indebted to their leftist colleagues. But in some ways Attaway and Wright—as well as a number of other writers of fiction, white and African-American, who were committed to examining what was then called the “Negro question”—present a particularly interesting test case, insofar as the politics that they were seeking to articulate was especially dialectical and required especially deft and nonreductionist formal treatment.² An examination of the formal strategies devised by Attaway and Wright thus illuminates not only the specific literary challenge posed by the left's discourse about race and class but also the dilemma of the oppositional writer faced with the task of stretching the limits—or moving beyond the limits—of inherited genres that would appear to have an embedded political tendency to foreclose the very contradictions that the writers wish to explore.

* * *

Throughout the 1930s—and for some years beyond, for that matter—the CP's analysis of African-American emancipation partook of a peculiar blend of nationalistic and integrationist tendencies. During the so-called Third Period (1928–1935)—a period commonly held to mark the Party's most revolutionary phase—this divided discourse took on an almost schizophrenic character. On the one hand, following upon the policy established at the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928, the CPUSA broke definitively with the strictly class-based analysis of racism inherited from the Second International (“We have nothing special to offer the Negro,” as Eugene Debs had put it [quoted in Aptheker 1939, 17–18]). Positing that African-Americans, in a parallel to the national minorities in the USSR,

constituted an oppressed “nation within a nation” rather than an oppressed race, the CP argued that self-determination in the so-called “Black Belt” (that is, those areas in the South with an African-American population higher than fifty percent) was a necessary stage in the completion of the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South, which had been arrested with the defeat of Reconstruction. While there was dispute about the chronological relation between the establishment of a Negro republic and the proletarian revolution—some arguing that the former was politically and temporally separable from the latter, others that it would immediately precipitate the latter—there was general agreement, at least on the level of theory, that the needs of the Negro people, comprising both Northern industrial and service workers and Southern sharecroppers, could not be met by a workers’ revolution alone. On the other hand, the call for a Negro republic was accompanied by equally fervent invocations of revolutionary unity between white and Negro workers. Self-determination in the Black Belt, the CP repeatedly asserted, could only be of benefit to poor whites residing in the Negro republic; moreover, the only viable strategy for hastening the proletarian revolution elsewhere in the United States entailed a concerted effort to abolish racial discrimination in all its forms, since racial disunity fostered false consciousness among white workers and divided the working class against its common foe, the capitalists. Negro nationalism was thus seen as a means to the end of proletarian internationalism—a necessary stage in the multiphased process of socialist transformation (see Foner and Allen 1987, Foster 1932, Prokopec 1930, Haywood 1930 and 1978, Minor 1931, Browder 1932, Painter 1979).

Such a call for a Negro republic might appear to entail a lessening of stress upon class struggle, since it postponed the moment of proletarian insurrection until after bourgeois democracy would be consolidated throughout the United States. Moreover, such a proposal might seem to suggest a potentially progressive role for the Negro bourgeoisie, since the establishment of an African-American republic would presumably involve the continuance of capitalist relations of production under the consolidated power of this social group. Yet Third-Period U.S. Communists insisted that the call for Black Belt self-determination was no retreat from the fight for a workers’ state, and that the class of Negro professionals and businessmen was a bankrupt social force that could play no useful role in the process of social change. There was, the Party maintained, no contradiction between revolutionary Negro nationalism and multiracial proletarian insurrection, since one was simply the necessary temporal prerequisite

to the other. What is more, it argued, Southern Negro sharecroppers constituted such an oppressed—and therefore revolutionary—social group that, even when enfranchised in a bourgeois context, they could not be hostile to the larger movement for workers' power and would not settle for anything less than full participation in the United Socialist States of America. The contradiction between Negro self-determination and proletarian revolution was more apparent than real, since the former strategy was—in a favorite slogan—"national in form, but class in content."

Even during the Third Period the CP's theory and practice only partially coincided: in actual struggles against racism, South as well as North—the defenses of the Scottsboro boys and Angelo Herndon; the organizing of sharecroppers into the Southern Tenants Farmers Union; the insistence upon multiracial unity in key strikes, such as those in Gastonia (North Carolina), Harlan County (Kentucky), and New Bedford (Massachusetts); the many urban protests for relief and against evictions and job discrimination—the self-determination thesis was raised only intermittently. With the adoption of the Popular Front policy in the years 1935–39, mention of the Black Belt republic was dropped from almost all the Party's agitational propaganda, and integrationism became the order of the day. Yet while one might expect that the deemphasis upon Black nationalism might result in a sharpened focus upon militant class struggle, in fact the opposite was the case. In the major antiracist activities of the period—the antidiscrimination platforms of the CIO unions, multiracial support for antifascist forces in Spain, the establishment of the National Negro Congress—the CP promoted a reformist politics that now attempted to reconcile former enemies, from the Socialist Party to the NAACP, and to build a mass base of support for the New Deal. And while one might anticipate that a revision in the self-determination thesis might have accompanied the many other revisions in CP policy at this time—the reversal of the position on social-fascism, the supersession of revolutionary politics by the appeal for broad antifascist unity—it is noteworthy that Popular Front integrationism did not entail abandonment of a theoretical commitment to the Black Belt thesis. The call for self-determination remained an important component of the CP's definitive statements on Black liberation throughout the decade, constituting the core of James Allen's argument in *The Negro Question in the United States* (1936) and of James Ford's many public pronouncements on racial issues in the late 1930s. The CP's brand of integrationism thus altered significantly from the early

years of the Third Period to the end of the Popular Front, moving from a militant call for multiracial proletarian unity to the construction of broad coalitions with left-of-center forces from a variety of social classes (Naison 1983, Allen 1936, Ford 1938). Yet the Party's commitment to the notion of a Negro republic remained remarkably consistent, injecting into even the left's most multiracial campaigns a reminder that, according to the Marxism of the CPUSA, the path to Negro liberation did not lie in class struggle—or coalitional unity—alone.³

Critics unsympathetic to the activities of the Depression-era CPUSA—from Wilson Record to Harvey Klehr—have lambasted the Party's line on the Negro question, charging that the Black Belt thesis was an unmitigated disaster demonstrating the subservience of the CPUSA to the Comintern, which imposed the presumably rigid categories of Lenin and Stalin's theories of self-determination upon a situation in the United States to which they had at best marginal relevance (Record 1971, Klehr 1988, Cruse 1967). Such a criticism, I should note in passing, in some ways distorts the relation of the Comintern to the CPUSA, which played a greater role in shaping its own line than is often granted. But it should be acknowledged that many features of the self-determination position were indeed highly problematic. Certainly the Party's inability to incorporate the call for a Negro republic into most of its campaigns reveals the difficulties it encountered in attracting adherents to this position. Moreover, the CP's insistence upon completing the bourgeois-democratic revolution in the South smacks of a productive-forces determinism entailing a somewhat mechanical insistence that all social formations develop through the same set of evolutionary stages: even if many sharecropping African-Americans subsisted in a quasifeudal economic state, it might be asked, why could they not be included in a movement that would fight directly for workers' power? Most important, it is difficult to see how a program that called for the establishment of a separate Negro state could evade the charge of segregationism, however elaborate its theoretical rationale. The stringent objections that were raised to the separatist implications of the Black Belt thesis in the years 1928–30, and that clearly continued to underlie the CP's hesitancy about foregrounding the demand in its platform in subsequent years, indicate that the contradiction between integrationism and nationalism was in some measure real as well as apparent (Haywood 1930, 1978; Prokopec 1930, Browder 1932, Minor 1931).

Nonetheless, it would be wrong, in my view, to maintain that the CP's endorsement of the Black Belt thesis did not play a crucial—and progressive—role in the history of antiracist struggle in the United States. For it must be recalled that, until the Comintern urged the CPUSA to conceive of African-Americans as an oppressed nation, the U.S. left had never moved from dead center with regard to the question of racism: clearly a politics based exclusively in class had not succeeded in energizing the movement for workers' power around this issue. Perhaps, as the African-American Communist theoretician Harry Haywood suggested, the insistence that Blacks were not a race but a nation countered a racist way of thinking affecting even U.S. leftists (1978, 218-44). Or perhaps the analogy between the world-historical role to be played by African-Americans and that performed by colonial peoples of color served to place U.S. antiracist activity in an international revolutionary context. Whatever the cause, it appears that the self-determination thesis, with all its flaws, did indeed galvanize the left into unprecedented levels of antiracist activity, creating a mass (if loose) base for the Communist Party among urban and rural African-Americans. As William N. Jones, editor of the *Baltimore Afro-American*, wrote in 1933 to *International Literature*, the organ of the Moscow-based International Union of Revolutionary Writers, "I bring you the greetings of fourteen million potential colored Communists. I say this, because in my work I am able to fathom somewhat what is going on in the minds of the Negroes in this country" ("Intellectuals," 151-52). Arguably, then, the CP's endorsement of the Black Belt thesis was an indispensable part of an antiracist theory and practice that hastened by decades the struggle for civil rights in the United States. That a major assault upon segregationist practices should have been spurred by a political platform carrying more than faintly segregationist overtones is one of the ironies of history that we may be happier to live with.

* * *

Clearly the theory and practice of the Communist-led left on the question of race and class encouraged a contradictory political discourse among writers and other cultural workers in its orbit. While a number of these ideological complexities are worth investigating, one is of particular relevance to the construction of nationalism—namely, the Depression-era U.S. Marxists' interpretation of the "folk" elements in African-American experience. On one level, as I have indicated, the left's position aspired to be synthetic: even when expressions of

African-American cultural solidarity might appear to be “national in form,” they were in fact “class in content.” It cannot be denied that such a flexibility enabled Party organizers to tap a powerful oppositional vein in African-American folk culture. As Robin Kelley has shown, African-American Communist organizers for the Alabama Share-Croppers Union, who were urging adherence to Party programs, discovered that indigenous African-American folklore provided powerful analogues to contemporary revolutionary activity. In a popular folk prophecy about reviving the Civil War to win full Negro emancipation, for example, the Russians were readily construed as the new abolitionists, and Stalin as the new Lincoln (Kelley 1988). Moreover, as one 1934 *New Masses* reporter enthusiastically noted, religious spirituals were being converted to revolutionary ends by Southern African-Americans who injected a class-conscious inflection into the familiar uplifting lyrics and tunes, thus transposing the fervor associated with religious experience to Communist political ends (Frank 1931).

Yet the formulation “national in form, class in content” obscured as much as it illuminated. For the fundamental question was: were members of the African-American “oppressed nation” to be seen as possessing a consciousness that was intrinsically oppositional to capitalism, or were they, like other workers, a revolutionary force only to the extent that they consciously subscribed to a class-conscious Marxist politics? As we might anticipate, given the contradictory analysis of the CPUSA regarding class and race, leftists of the Depression years were in fact divided on this score. Particularly during the Third Period, many leftist cultural commentators were skeptical of the claim that expressions of indigenous African-American folk consciousness could have revolutionary implications in the absence of a clearly-defined Marxist outlook. In a series of articles about Negro culture for the *New Masses*, for example, the journalist Eugene Gordon held that the culture of the Negro nation would reflect nothing but a “national psychosis” until it was guided by writers who “have been developed in the blast furnace of the Black Belt class struggle, and in the class struggle outside that zone” (1935, 143, 145; see also Gordon 1931 and 1933). During the Popular Front—when, as Mark Naison remarks, a “muted cultural nationalism” (1983, 207) became widely accepted in leftist circles—critics were more likely to argue for a revolutionary essence in Negro folk consciousness that required no refinement or transposition into another key. Thus the editors of *Challenge* (later *New Challenge*), a

short-lived (1935–37) African-American literary periodical significantly influenced by the CP, announced that their purpose was to explore “the life of the Negro masses” and to use “folk material . . . as a source of creative material” (“Editorial” 1937, 3–4). “The return to the earthy, burning, vital forces which typify the greater proportion of Negro existence is the hope and the source of work in the immediate future,” one editor declared in 1937 (Minus 1937, 10). Yet Popular Front commentators on African-American culture continued to highlight the limitations to even the most progressive nationalism. Wright, in his important 1937 essay, “A Blueprint for Negro Writing,” wrote that “Negro writers must accept the nationalist implications of their lives, not in order to encourage them, but in order to transcend them” (1937, 58). Allyn Keith sharply condemned “isolationist nationalism” and argued that even a more progressive—and historically necessary—“cooperative nationalism” was productive only insofar as it pointed toward “common class position” as “the lowest common denominator of group activity toward social improvement” (1937, 68–69). (For more on the left’s views on Black folk music, see Lieberman 1950).

The writings of Attaway and Wright—and of other Depression-era literary radicals addressing racial issues—cannot be understood apart from the context of the Depression-era left’s construction of the relation of race to class. Discerning contradictory pulls between nationalism and integrationism in African-American texts from this era, most criticism has tended to assume that this conflict was antagonistic, reflecting a conflict between a “real,” experientially based nationalism and an artificial, superimposed Marxism. As a result, textual contradictions between the two ideological tendencies have routinely been seen as resulting in crude and flawed artistry, for which the principal onus of blame is to be laid upon Marxism, which purportedly wrenches and distorts the narrative of African-American experience to bring it into alignment with the Party’s insistence upon the primacy of class. As I hope to suggest, this assessment, while frequently enough heard, is quite far from the mark. There are indeed conflicting representations of race and class in the novels of Attaway, Wright, and other Black and antiracist writers of the Depression era. And these conflicting representations do require the novelists to place strains upon the premises—and hence the narrative conventions—of the realistic novel. But such contradictory elements can be adjudged flaws—political or literary—only from a standpoint that ignores the actual complexities of the CPUSA’s

construction of the “Negro question” and that, moreover, privileges ideological unity as a prerequisite to aesthetic value. If we rehistoricize the project of 1930s Marxism and query the aesthetic of seamless coherence, quite different judgments may emerge.

* * *

William Attaway’s *Blood on the Forge* recounts the story of three sharecropping brothers, Melody, Chinatown, and Big Mat Moss, who, in the years immediately preceding World War I, flee the poverty and repression of Kentucky for a life as steel-workers in the Monongahela Valley. In its explicit focusing upon the issues of African-American migration and entry into industrial life, the novel anchors its treatment of class and race politics in the phenomenon of urbanization: its representation of the experiences of these deracinated “folk” characters presents the city as the catalytic site of political contradiction. Even though he develops a complex political position in the course of the narrative, Attaway adheres to an almost Jamesian narrative aesthetic of showing rather than telling, declining to rely upon those intrusive rhetorical elements—speeches, authorial commentaries, documentary fragments—by which many other radical novelists of the 1930s were directing attention to the political ideas shaping their narratives. Thus, throughout *Blood on the Forge* the novelist retains a point of view almost exclusively confined to the consciousness of the three brothers, eschews authorial commentary, resorts to symbol and ironic juxtaposition to reinforce most of his ethical judgments, and generally relies upon “story” as opposed to “discourse” to carry the weight of his political analysis.⁴ To the extent that *Blood on the Forge* expresses contradictory attitudes toward race and class, then, these are articulated within the single level of “story,” rather than between differentiated levels of narration in which the dialectic of conflicting voices can be more clearly discerned.

Simply on the level of “story,” however, the task that the novel sets itself is formidable, for it wants to make two quite different points about its characters and their situation. On the one hand, Attaway wishes to secure for his folk characters—at least Melody and Big Mat—an irrefutable dignity and to testify to the capacity for rebellion barely latent in their consciousness. Thus Melody, the brother whose meditations open the novel, is endowed with the ability to interpret through music certain political dimensions of his reality: it is no accident that the first song we hear him sing is a blues addressed to “Mr. Bossman.” Similarly, Big Mat, whose

assault upon the oppressive “riding boss” precipitates the Moss brothers’ flight to the Pittsburgh area steel towns, is portrayed throughout the novel as a seething furnace of oppositional impulses, whose venting of self in sex, violence, and fervent fundamentalism is to be seen as a clear displacement of potentially revolutionary energies. On the other hand, Attaway is quick to point out that the Moss brothers’ rebellious consciousness is confused and dissipated in the capitalist urban environment of the mill town, where sexuality is commodified, leisure time degraded, and racial antagonism continually fomented by corporations and corrupt unions alike. Much of the novel’s implicit commentary is thus given over to an ironic portrayal of the brothers’ loss of their sustaining folk culture. Melody deliberately crushes his guitar-picking hand, finding the old folk tunes no longer capable of soothing his hungry spirit. The fun-loving Chinatown is blinded in an explosion. Big Mat, alienated from his former religious beliefs as well as from his sexuality, becomes a thug for the strike-breaking bosses. In a key passage, he is clubbed to death at the very moment when, having just strangled a Ukrainian-born striker, he vaguely intuits that, in lashing out against white millworkers, he has himself become a riding boss, serving the interests of a millowner who “create[s] riding bosses, making a difference where none existed” (288).

Attaway clearly wishes to suggest the limitations to his protagonists’ residual folk consciousness in the absence of a class-based political outlook; in one sense, Big Mat’s moment of embryonic class consciousness supersedes his blind and incoherent nationalism. At the same time, Attaway insists upon the validity of his protagonists’ perspectives and represents the barriers to their attaining a class-conscious outlook—most particularly, the absence of any more than fragmentary manifestations of antiracism among white workers—as sufficiently formidable to justify the Moss brothers’ continuing adherence to Negro nationalism. Adhering closely to his heroes’ perspectives and refraining from introducing another discursive voice that might argue more explicitly for an alternative point of view, the novel only hints at the class-based discourse that might encompass and transcend the brothers’ limitations. The text thus exhibits a contradictory tension of integrationist and nationalistic impulses within its “story,” with neither tendency establishing a definitive vantage point from which to erect a hierarchy of political discourses.

To quite a remarkable extent, commentators upon *Blood on the Forge* have attributed signal importance to Attaway’s description of

Big Mat's glimmering of class awareness at the moment of his death. Anti-Marxist critics have condemned the passage for its presumably crude injection of class politics into the narrative: James Young notes that the account "rings a false note, 315... submerg[ing] race conflict within the context of class conflict"; while Robert Bone argues that the passage "damages the aesthetic structure of the novel beyond repair" by "reducing [the] protagonist from a tragic hero to a mere mouthpiece of [Attaway's] own political views" (1973, 229; Bone 1965, 139). Bernard Bell, who is on the whole more sympathetic to Attaway's politics, objects that in Big Mat's "vision just before his death, the truth belatedly and implausibly comes to him" (1987, 170). While these readings differ in the conclusions they draw about the political and aesthetic value of *Blood on the Forge*, they concur on one crucial point: Attaway's attribution to the dying Big Mat of an embryonic class consciousness figures simultaneously as a moment of political "truth," one articulating the author's "real" political beliefs, and a moment of formal disjunction, when the novelist has somehow overstepped the limits of his properly subdued role as political commentator.⁵

My own reaction to this passage is quite different. To be sure, Attaway's formal decision to confine himself to the consciousness of his protagonists—to show rather than tell—made it difficult for him to endow class politics with the same degree of immediacy possessed by the nationalist politics spontaneously espoused by the Moss brothers. Hence the novelist's decision to represent in free indirect discourse Big Mat's intuition that he is being duped by larger class forces does in a sense stretch the text's transparent realistic narration to the limits of its capacity to articulate a class-based political commentary that does not spring "naturally" from his materials. No literary technique—even such an apparently neutral device as free indirect discourse—offers itself to a writer free of political freight. In a text based upon a more or less hegemonic politics, a character can readily be shown to "realize" truths, because the reader can be posited already to espouse these, or at least not to be hostile to them. But in a text that, like *Blood on the Forge*, attempts to move its reader *toward* a new and different truth—here, the necessity for grasping racism from a class-based perspective—the use of such a seemingly apolitical device as free indirect discourse is in fact a somewhat chancy proposition, for writers run the risk of alienating certain readers by assuming what they are setting out to prove. It is therefore no wonder that the passage stands out, especially to

politically unsympathetic critics. But the formal anomalousness of the passage describing Mat's embryonic awakening does not, in my view, either endow it with privileged explanatory power or indicate Attaway's lack of aesthetic control over his political impulses. The passage may serve to complicate the novel's political vision, for it suggests the potentiality for moving "beyond" nationalism to a more multiracial and revolutionary struggle. But it by no means supplants or redefines all that has come before. Nationalist consciousness emerges from the novel as at once an inadequate and a historically inevitable response on the part of the deracinated African-American worker. In positing the simultaneous necessity for nationalist and integrationist politics, Attaway is therefore neither undermining his Marxism nor compromising his nationalism. Nor, moreover, is he clumsily destroying the aesthetic coherence of his text. Rather, he is pressing against the limits of the contradictory Marxism practiced by the U.S. left in 1940, as well as against the limits of a realistic narrative form that can only imperfectly convey the dialectical tensions of the political vision that he is attempting to articulate.

Wright's *Native Son*, which appeared less than a year before *Blood on the Forge*, was greeted by a barrage of largely favorable publicity that, according to Richard Yarborough, may have been the prime cause of Attaway's relative obscurity: in the early 1940s, Yarborough wryly remarks, the United States had room in its heart for only one Black writer at a time (1987, 297). Despite their different degrees of popular success, however, over the years *Blood on the Forge* and *Native Son* have both been the targets of critical discussion that focuses upon those passages where the texts' embedded politics come to the fore for explicit consideration. In Attaway's novel, as we have seen, this commentary singles out Mat's class-conscious epiphany; in *Native Son*, it invariably zeroes in on the courtroom speech in which Boris Max, the Communist lawyer representing Bigger Thomas, attempts to convince the court that, in view of his victimization by a racist society, his client deserves to have his sentence commuted from execution to life in prison.

Over the years critics have differed somewhat about the effectiveness of Max's speech. Ralph Warner, who reviewed *Blood on the Forge* somewhat negatively for the *Daily Worker* in 1941, invoked Wright's *Native Son* as a counterexample, noting that Attaway erred in providing "no Mr. Max to evaluate the significance of Big Mat's plight" (1947). Warner, who clearly approved the didactic maneuvers familiar to much proletarian fiction, differs from most subsequent critics in his positive assessment of Max's speech. The majority of Wright's

commentators have detested the speech as a didactic intrusion, James Baldwin condemning it as “one of the most desperate performances in American fiction” (1972, 65). Whether positive or negative in their judgments of its effectiveness, however, the discussions of Max’s speech have generally held that the speech does indeed corroborate the rest of the novel. Among the negative commentaries, indeed, the specific charge most frequently lodged against Max’s courtroom performance is that it is tautological, bludgeoning the reader with an explicit propositional summary of what the narrative has already rendered through the implicit commentary embedded in character, plot, and symbol (Brignano 1970, 82; McCall 1969, 93).

I have observed elsewhere that Max’s speech, rather than destroying the force or subtlety of the novel’s aesthetic impact, is crucial to its representational rhetoric: I will not rehearse my arguments here (Foley 1988). What I would like to stress, however, is the extent to which Max’s speech does not simply statically reproduce in different discursive form the principal political propositions built into the narrative of Bigger’s life. To be sure, Max’s speech illuminates the sociological causes of Bigger’s behavior and drives home certain points that have already been made though the narration, such as the Daltons’ inadvertent complicity in their own daughter’s death. But the speech also presents a new series of propositions about Bigger’s environment—such as the relation between the state’s attorney’s fervid prosecution of Bigger and the need of the city and state governments to distract attention from their failure to provide public relief, for example, or the theory that the twelve million Negroes in the United States “constitute a separate nation, stunted, stripped, and held captive *within* this nation”—that cannot simply be inferred from the rest of the text’s represented events (Wright 1966, 364). Moreover, Max’s narration of the world-historical drama of which Bigger’s tale is a microcosmic reenactment (a narration strikingly similar to that which would appear in Wright’s *Twelve Million Black Voices* a year later) places the drama of Bigger’s alienation within the context of slavery and then urban Negro migration, “a dislocation so vast as to stagger the imagination” (357). In Max’s speech, then, Bigger’s brief and tragic career comes to assume synecdochic status; he becomes, as Max puts it, “a tiny social symbol in relation to our whole sick social organism” (354). “Multiply Bigger Thomas twelve million times,” Max declares, “allowing for environmental and temperamental variations, and for those Negroes who are completely under the influence of the church, and you have the psychology of the Negro people” (364). Max’s address to the court thus occupies

a distinct discursive position in the novel, both internal and external to the story, addressing both the courtroom and the reader, that serves to corroborate the Marxist analysis embedded in the narrative but also to introduce for consideration a series of new propositions about the meaning of the protagonist's life that complicate and enrich the text's political discourse in a way simply unavailable through the straightforward narrative rendition of Bigger's struggle to understand "what this meant, what he was in relation to all the others that lived" (336).⁶ In particular, the speech not only underlines the objective class interests served by the frenzied press campaign against Bigger but also—and crucially—articulates and develops for the first time the "nation within a nation" position of the Communist Party—a position in no way inferable from the represented events of Bigger's life up to this point. Rather than recapitulate the political materials encoded in "story," the speech enables a dialectical move from the specific to the general that then requires the specific to be reconcretized and understood from a more complex and totalizing perspective. The rhetorical move to the level of "discourse," in other words, affords new knowledge.

Interestingly, however, even the opportunity offered by Max's speech apparently did not provide Wright with sufficient space for political argument. He therefore appended to the second—and every subsequent—edition of *Native Son* the essay "How Bigger Was Born," in which he detailed the process by which Bigger Thomas came to attain reality in his imagination. In one sense, the "How Bigger Was Born" essay recapitulates much of the political analysis implied throughout the novel and explicitly rendered in the courtroom address. But much of the essay is given over to analyzing an entirely new feature of Bigger's tale—namely, its synecdochic function in relation to the lives of alienated and disaffected youth of *any* race or nation. Where Max's speech makes only passing reference to the likeness between Bigger and the "millions of others more or less like him, black or white" (368), Wright's introductory essay dwells upon the ways in which "Bigger Thomas was not black all the time; he was white, too, and there were literally millions of him" (xiv). Contemplating the similarities between Bigger's angry alienation and that of German youth attracted to fascism, as well as the parallels between Bigger's sense of exclusion from the institutions of his society and Lenin's declaration to Gorky that Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament were "*their* Big Ben, *their* Houses of Parliament," Wright concludes that Bigger's sense of dislocation "transcended national and racial boundaries" (xvii). Max's speech largely

stressed Bigger's synecdochic relation to the oppressed nation of which he was a part. Wright's authorial commentary, by contrast, emphasizes Bigger's synecdochic status as an exemplar of *class*-based disaffection—possessed of “*sarled and confused* nationalist feelings” (xxiv), but nonetheless in essence a product of a quintessentially capitalist social process. The appending of the “How Bigger Was Born” essay thus enabled Wright to explore still another feature of the political landscape of which Bigger Thomas's tale was a part. In one sense, the class analysis offered in the essay supersedes the more nationalist analysis offered elsewhere, for it places Bigger's blind antipathy to whites, as well as the more expanded theory of Negro oppression offered by Max, into a broader explanatory context. Yet the essay does not thereby cancel out Bigger's responses or Max's analysis, for in it Wright confesses to his desire to examine Bigger's incoherent nationalist feelings from the standpoint of “*conscious and informed* [nationalist feelings] of my own” (xxiv). Rather, nationalist (both crude and sophisticated) and class-based perspectives upon Bigger's experience all claim rhetorical space in the novel, vying for the reader's consideration and judgment. As in the CP's more general line and practice on the “Negro question,” contradictory positions coexist in a state of considerable dialectical tension.

In sum, Wright and Attaway can fruitfully be seen as commonly committed to a Marxism that stressed the centrality of both nationalist and class consciousness to the project of revolutionary change. Wright, in my view, discovered a narrative form better suited to exploring the knotty political relation of race to class that he endorsed, since he managed to convey the depth of Bigger's inarticulate anguish, as well as the earnestness of Bigger's attempts to grapple with the meaning of his destiny, without requiring that his hero be portrayed as attaining a higher degree of class consciousness than the rest of the plot rendered plausible. Where Attaway relies almost exclusively upon contradictions internal to “story” to convey the conflicting forces acting upon his characters, Wright makes bold use of “discourse” to explore various ways of understanding his protagonist's destiny. In their insistence upon giving full play to nationalist and class explanatory frameworks, however, both authors called into question the capacity of transparent realism to encompass the complexity of the political issues they were addressing. One may choose to differ with these novelists' frames of social analysis, just as one may choose to criticize the left of the time for subscribing to a nationalism that now seems archaic, even separatist. But it is

important to grant the seriousness of these writers' attempts to grapple in a nonreductionist way with important historical and theoretical contradictions, as well as the artistic courage of their challenge to the constraints of inherited forms of novelistic discourse.

English Department
Rutgers University

NOTES

1. When I speak of Wright and Attaway as having been "conscious Marxists," I am on surer biographical grounds with Wright, whose CP membership and commitment are a matter of public record (see Fabre 1973), than with Attaway, about whom remarkably little is yet known (see Yarborough 1987). Attaway worked on the Federal Writers Project in Chicago, however, along with a number of radical writers, African-American and white, in the late 1930s. Moreover, the African-American Marxist novelist Lloyd Brown speaks of Attaway as having been "involved" with the 1930s left (Brown, "Interview"). I would maintain, too, that Attaway's full acquaintance with the contemporaneous Marxist analysis of the "Negro question" can be amply inferred from *Blood on the Forge*.
2. For examples of white writers see Page 1932, Spivak 1932, Lumpkin 1935, Endore 1934, Nearing 1932. For examples of other African-American writers see Tolson 1979, Walker 1960, Brown 1980, and Davis 1971, as well as a number of the women writers included in Nekola and Rabinowitz 1987.
3. Ford is particularly interesting for exhibiting some of the political contortions that Popular Front patriotism entailed for the Party's antiracist platform—as, for example, in his defense of Thomas Jefferson as a progressive antiracist against conservative Southern Senator Bilbo, who was claiming that Jefferson had anti-Black attitudes, or in his comparison of George Washington with Stalin (Ford 1938, 188–89, 139).
4. When I enclose the terms "story" and "discourse" in quotation marks, I am signifying the particular meanings attached to them by Suleiman. Using these terms in ways similar to the Russian Formalists' deployment of the terms "fabula" and

“sujet,” Suleiman signifies by the term “story” the sequence of notations conveying the essentials of action, and by the term “discourse” the various techniques (use of point of view, authorial voice, etc.) by which the author relays the “story” to the reader. When the terms are not enclosed within quotation marks here, I suggest their more routine usage(s).

5. For a more favorable reaction to the passage see Hamilton 1987, 160.
6. Not all of Wright’s critics, it should be noted, have endorsed the view that Max’s speech is tautological; some have noted a disjunction between the courtroom address and the rest of the text. Mostly, however, these commentators have argued that this disjunction is ironic, intended by Wright to signal his distance from Max and his disaffection with the Communist analysis of Black oppression (see the various interpretations in Baker 1972). To be sure, some elements in the novel suggest skepticism on Wright’s part about the CP’s ability to grapple with the phenomenon of a Bigger Thomas: his decision to portray only white members of the CP, as well as his final representation of Max as a “blind man” unable to come to terms with Bigger’s final declaration, “What I killed for I am,” suggest that Wright was intending to give a less than fully heroic portrayal of the Party. But biographical evidence, as well as Wright’s statements in “How Bigger Was Born,” strongly suggest that Wright saw himself as loyal to, if critical of, the Party at the time of his writing *Native Son* (Fabre 1973, 169–91). Moreover, Wright’s mixed portrayal of Max does not call into question the lawyer’s fundamental intelligence or honesty, nor does it refute the substance of Max’s speech, which contains enough similarities to Wright’s 1941 *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States* to suggest that Max was indeed functioning principally as a spokesperson for Wright.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Allen, James S. *The Negro Question in the United States*. New York: International Publishers, 1936.

- Aptheker, Herbert. *Negro Slave Revolts in the United States, 1526–1860*. New York: International Publishers, 1939.
- Attaway, William. *Blood on the Forge*. 1941. Reprint. New York: Monthly Review, 1987.
- Baker, Houston, ed. *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Native Son: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
- Baldwin, James. “Notes of a Native Son.” In *Twentieth-Century Interpretations of Native Son: A Collection of Critical Essays*, 57–67. See Baker 1972.
- Bell, Bernard. *The Afro-American Novel and Its Tradition*. Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1987.
- Bone, Robert. *The Negro Novel in America*. Revised ed. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1965.
- Brignano, Russell Carl. *Richard Wright: An Introduction to the Man and His Work*. Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1970.
- Browder, Earl. “For National Liberation of the Negroes! War Against White Chauvinism!” *Communist*, 11 April 1932, 295–309.
- Brown, Lloyd. Interview with Barbara Foley. New York, 24 January 1990.
- Brown, Sterling. *No Hiding Place*. In *The Collected Poems of Sterling Brown*, edited by Michael S. Harper, 153–85. New York: Harper & Row, 1980.
- Cruse, Harold. *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. New York: William Morrow, 1967.
- Davis, Frank Marshal. *I Am the American Negro*. 1937. Reprint. Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1971.
- “Editorial.” *New Challenge: A Literary Quarterly* 2 (Fall 1937): 3–4.
- Endore, Guy. *Babouk*. New York: Vanguard, 1934.
- Fabre, Michel. *The Unfinished Quest of Richard Wright*. Translated by Isabel Barzun. New York: William Morrow, 1973.
- Foley, Barbara. “The Politics of Poetics: Ideology and Narrative Form in Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy* and Wright’s *Native Son*.” In *Narrative Poetics: Innovations, Limits, Challenges*, edited by James Phelan, 55–67. *Papers in Comparative Studies*, Vol. 5. Columbus: Ohio State Univ. Press, 1988.
- Foner, Philip, and James S. Allen, eds. *American Communism and Black Americans: A Documentary History*. Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1987.
- Ford, James. *The Negro and the Democratic Front*. New York: International Publishers, 1938.

- Foster, William Z. *Toward Soviet America*. New York: Howard- McCann, 1932.
- Frank, Richard. "Negro Revolutionary Music." *New Masses*, 7 July 1931, 14-15.
- Gayle, Addison. *The Way of the New World: The Black Novel in America*. Garden City, N.J.: Doubleday, 1976.
- Gordon, Eugene. "The Negro's New Leadership." *New Masses*, 7 July 1931, 14-15.
- . "Negro Novels and the Negro Masses." *New Masses*, 8 July 1933, 16-20.
- . "Social and Political Problems of the Negro Writer." In *American Writers Congress*, edited by Henry Hart, 141-45. New York: International Publishers, 1935.
- Hamilton, Cynthia. "Work and Culture: The Evolution of Consciousness in Urban Industrial Society in the Fiction of William Attaway and Peter Abraham." *Black American Literature Forum* 21 (Spring-Summer 1987): 147-63.
- Haywood, Harry. "Against Bourgeois-Liberal Distortions of Leninism on the Negro Question in the United States." *Communist*, 10 July 1931, 632-39.
- . *Black Bolshevik: Autobiography of an Afro-American Communist*. Chicago: Liberator Press, 1978.
- "Intellectuals Go Left." *International Literature* 1 (1933): 151-52.
- Keith, Allyn. "A Note on Negro Nationalism." *New Challenge* 2 (Fall 1937): 65-69.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. "'Comrades, Praise Gawd for Lenin and Them!'" *Science and Society* 52 (Spring 1988): 59-82.
- Klehr, Harvey. *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*. New York: Basic Books, 1984.
- Lieberman, Robbie. *My Song Is My Weapon: People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930-1950*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989.
- Lumpkin, Grace. *A Sign for Cain*. New York: Lee Furman, 1935.
- Margo, Edith. "The South Side Sees Red." *Left Front* 1, no. 1 (1933): 2, 3, 10; 1, no. 3 (1934): 4-6.
- McCall, Dan. *The Example of Richard Wright*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1969.
- Minor, Robert. "The Negro and His Judases." *Communist*, 10 July 1931, 632-39.
- Minus, Marion. "Recent Trends of Negro Literature." *Challenge* 2 (Spring 1937): 9-11. @PG

- Naison, Mark. *Communists in Harlem During the Depression*. New York: Grove, 1983.
- Nearing, Scott. *Free Born: An Unpublishable Novel*. New York: Urquhart, 1932.
- Page, Myra. *Gathering Storm: A Story of the Black Belt*. New York: International Publishers, 1932.
- Painter, Nell Irvin. *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life as Negro Communist in the South*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1979.
- Prokopec, Jos. "Negroes as an Oppressed National Minority." *Communist*, 9 March 1930, 239–45.
- Nekola, Charlotte, and Paula Rabinowitz, eds. *Writing Red: An Anthology of Women's Writing, 1930–1940*. New York: Feminist Press, 1987.
- Rampersad, Arnold. *The Life of Langston Hughes*. 2 vols. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987.
- Record, Wilson. *The Negro and the Communist Party*. New York: 1951; Reprint. New York: Atheneum, 1971.
- Spivak, John L. *Georgia Nigger*. New York: Brewer, Warren and Putnam, 1932.
- Suleiman, Susan. *Authoritarian Fictions: The Ideological Novel as a Literary Genre*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1983.
- Tolson, Melvin B. *A Gallery of Harlem Portraits*. Edited by Robert Farnsworth. Columbia, Mo.: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1979.
- Walker, Margaret. *For My People*. 1942; Reprint. New York: Arno, 1960.
- Warner, Ralph. "'Blood on the Forge' Is Story of Negro Brothers." *Daily Worker*, 8 November 1941, 7.
- Wright, Richard. "Blueprint for Negro Writing." *New Challenge*, 2 (Autumn 1937): 53–65.
- . *Twelve Million Black Voices: A Folk History of the Negro in the United States*. 1941. Reprint. New York: Arno, 1969.
- Yarborough, Richard. "Afterword" to *Blood on the Forge*, 295–312. See Attaway 1987.
- Young, James O. *Black Writers of the Thirties*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1973.

Land Use, Transportation, and Working-Class Politics in the Modern Metropolis

Morris Zeitlin

Introduction

The quality of urban life in our metropolises has lagged behind that of metropolises in most European capitalist nations, in part for the lack of comprehensive working-class political input in our urban affairs. In countries like Sweden, West Germany, England, and France, working-class parties have long integrated city and national politics with telling effect. In contrast, the U.S. working class has focused its politics mainly on economic, and only rarely on other, issues and exercised its political will through ad hoc coalitions and “friends of labor” in government and bourgeois parties, with clearly lesser success. Reckless suburban sprawl, traffic jams and accidents, air and water pollution, lack of affordable housing, and racist seclusion have constantly grown worse for monopoly capital having gone almost unchecked in exploiting the nation’s urban resources.

This appears to be changing. The growing political vitality of the working class, as manifested in the 1980s election campaigns, seems to be moving it on a road to political independence and comprehensive political action. Along that road urban issues will necessarily challenge its politicians at both the local and national levels. Knowing the causes underlying the problems in our metropolises is essential to setting labor’s own goals, strategy, and tactics in urban affairs. The basic urban twin issue of land use and transportation are a case in point.

Throughout our history, urban land use and transportation have been great sources of capital accumulation. So coveted have they been and so complex that they have long ago required national cabinet departments and daily haggling in federal, state, and local legislatures and

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 3, no. 3 (1990)

courts to settle disputes between quarreling rivals and keep their exploitative greed from running amok. Still, powerful monopoly corporations managed to turn transportation into a hypertrophied urban monster, warp urban land use into grotesque forms, and contort working-class life.

How have land use and transportation interacted? How has monopoly capital misused them? How may working-class politics work to correct the misuse in the further development of our metropolises?

Brief history

In the second half of the nineteenth century, industrialization concentrated rural populations in burgeoning cities where factories clustered close to ports and railroads their sources of materials and gateway to markets. The then slow urban movement by foot and hoof restricted city growth to a radius of about three miles and building heights to less than ten stories. Given these limits, cities grew interstitially, producing high densities and horrendous congestion (Blumenfeld 1979, 338–39). New York City, for example, reached a population density of 326 people per acre in 1870 or 23 percent higher than that of London, then ill-famed for its highest crowdedness in Europe (Gallion and Eisner 1950, 67). Overcrowdedness bred dreadful epidemic among the superexploited working masses crammed within the infamous slums of our nineteenth-century industrial cities. But narrowly limited mobility kept them confined there close to their jobs in the adjacent factory districts.

Not until the introduction of mechanical transportation in cities could the congestion subside. Outward heading railroad and trolley lines resettled populations beyond city limits and industries able to leave city central business districts (CBDs) were free to relocate on abundant cheap peripheral land lying along the new transport lines. Thus the outward movement on expanding rail networks began the process of metropolitanization. In the forming metropolises city, suburbs, and the country around them blended, physically and socially (but not politically) into expanding systems of urban units and open areas whose boundaries extended as their transportation systems improved.¹

From the beginning, however, transport companies used their lines as means to an end. For they profited less from transportation services than from the sale of the lands to which they built their lines. The fate of train and trolley-line service was therefore tied to the fortunes of land sales. Indeed, some even welcomed public takeover when

they sold their lands and milked the transport-lines profit dry.

Between 1890 and 1918—when competition between railroad and trolley companies sharpened—buyouts, line-wrecking disinvestment service cutbacks and fare hikes followed. This aroused public anger and demands to constrain the city-franchised public transport companies through public investigations, franchise checks, or takeover for public ownership and operation. Fear of the latter rushed corporate reformers to “convince” state governments that municipal ownership could be less desirable than corporate operation regulated by appointed, “responsible” public service commissions. Urban transportation was thus isolated from democratic control by elected city councils and locked within state-appointed authorities easily controlled by the dominant corporations (Whitt and Yago 1985, 43).

Prospering on electrification or expanding urban transport, electrical-equipment manufacturing corporations rose to industrial dominance in the first two decades of the twentieth century. But after World War I, the successful manufacturing of automotive equipment started a rivalry in transportation between the electric monopolies and the rising auto-oil-rubber industrial complex. Automobile sales steadily rose, weaning riders away from the trolleys (Yago 1984, 52).

Orthodox scholars and common wisdom have attributed the decline of public rail transport and the popularity of the automobile simply to technological advance and consumer preference. Historical evidence, however, indicates that the shift away from public to private transportation had been largely determined by the relentless struggle for hegemony between the two rival monopoly groups of the electrical-industry giants and the auto-oil-rubber complex. After a decade of mergers in the oil, rubber, automobile, and steel industries, their leaders joined in a plan to promote the sale of their products by stimulating market demand for automobile, buses, and trucks. But in spite of its decline in some cities, public mass transit continued to block the expansion of auto sales. The unyielding competition from public transit, economic stagnation in the 1920s, and the signs of an oncoming depression drove the auto-complex monopolies to embark upon an aggressive campaign to destroy public transit. Using aggressive means to induce or force cities to convert from trolley to buses, they literally demolished most urban public rail transportation. Thus bereft of their trolleys and repelled by poor bus service, increasing numbers of riders turned to buying and using automobiles (Whitt and Yago 1985, 4 and 47–48; Snell 1974).

The interests of the auto-oil-rubber monopolies coincided with those of local land developers, real estate, manufacturers and merchants seeking to profit from metropolitan growth. This led to powerful political “highway coalition” blocks in every metropolis pressing the national and state governments to promote metropolitan highway building, low-density suburban growth, and the use of autos and trucks. Their political successes produced the now obvious disharmony between cities and their transport systems. Land use and transportation—the two most interlinked elements in urban growth—went their separate way. The result? Metropolises grew slapdash. Public transportation rapidly declined. Many people lost access within their expanding metropolises. The need for travel has grown to the highest degree (Whitt and Yago 1985, 51–54 and 176–84).

The profits monopoly capital had gained from all this have been enormous. Weakening public transport had increasingly assured that urban transportation will no longer be produced, regulated, and utilized socially, but acquired and used individually and thus increasingly come under monopoly control; that transport workers’ unions will be left to attrition in a public-transport system doomed to decline; that private autos and roadways will be produced and built with low-wage unorganized labor; and that profit-making opportunities will be expanded beyond the limits of local transit operations to nationally and globally widening markets for auto, truck, and bus consumption and government-subsidized suburb and road building (Whitt and Yago 1985, 44; Yago 1983, 579).

The monopoly political strategy has indeed paid off. Today its victory is nearly complete. Dispersed, detached homes have given the private automobile nearly absolute reign and vice versa—one has reinforced the other. Many households have acquired more than one automobile, not necessarily because they liked to own and drive private cars, but because without them they could not get to work, to schools, to stores, and to other social facilities. Nor could they control the rising cost of their transport. Having little or no opposition, the monopolies constantly upped the price of locomotion with impunity (Edel 1973, 47; Whitt and Yago 1985, 49).

The social costs of private automobiles and detached homes

Monopoly conspiracy could not, of course, boost the automobile without the considerable advantages it clearly possessed. It gave the owner fast and flexible point-to-point transportation, large carrying capacity, the comfort of privacy, and the freedom to go at will

anywhere, any time. It also made it possible for many young families to raise children in spacious natural surroundings away from the danger of busy, crowded cities. Undeniably, given a network of roads and ample parking spaces, no other mode of travel can match the convenience of the automobile. Acclaiming its benefits, however, protagonists of the automobile had condoned its social malevolence.

The private automobile and its twin, the detached suburban home, are voracious land eaters and copious polluters. They have gobbled up huge tracts of precious metropolitan green land. Their network of highways and parking lots have taken enormous parts of metropolitan areas, stretching distances and increasing storm runoff, stream pollution, and flooding. Well over half of the air pollution in our metropolises issues from the exhaust pipes of automobiles (Altshuler 1979, 207–8).

Of all transport modes, the private automobile is the least efficient. It burns about one-quarter of the nation's oil consumption but bears only a fraction of the passenger load other transport modes can bear with the same energy input. Automobiles carry only 600 to 900 people per hour per street lane or 3300 per highway lane, at about 45 passenger-miles per gallon of oil. By contrast, rails move about 45,000 people per track per hour, at about 400 passenger-miles per gallon of oil, and buses about 20,000 people per bus lane per hour, at about 200 passenger-miles per gallon of oil (Altshuler 1979, 169). Moreover, the massing of private autos on roads, especially in peak hours and bad weather, impedes the movement of goods by trucks and passengers by buses at high costs to the local and national economies (Blumenfeld 1979, 295).

Atrophy of public transportation by the wide use of automobiles has diminished the mobility and access of hapless metropolitanites unable to own or drive a car due to low income, physical handicap, limitations of age, and those left waiting while the household car is used by others (Altshuler 1979, 316; Blumenfeld 1979, 296; Schaeffer 1975, 5; Cafferty 1973, 12–13).

Perhaps the greatest social cost of the automobile has been its terrible claim of life and limb on the road. In 1986 alone, it caused 33.3 million road accidents, took 37,800 lives, and injured 5,300,000 people, the highest casualty rate per miles traveled of all transport modes *Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1988*, table 997).

Low-density suburbs have manifestly squandered enormous natural resources. One study had shown the extent of their waste. Comparing the cost of a special suburban low-density development with that of a

comparable planned high-density one, it found that the latter saved 44 percent of total development cost, 43 percent of the land cost, 40 percent of street cost, 63 percent of utility costs, 11 percent of operating and maintenance costs, 13 percent of municipal operating cost, 50 percent in automobile pollution, 44 percent in energy consumption, and 35 percent of water consumption. "Sprawl," the study concluded, "is the most expensive form of residential development, in terms of economic costs, environmental costs, natural resource consumption, and many types of personal costs" (Real Estate Research Corp. 1974, 7, 21). Other studies have found that as density increases from 3 to 30 dwellings per acre (as in two-family houses on 30' by 100' lots) the use of public transportation increased fourfold, auto ownership drops by 35 percent, and miles driven per auto declines about 45 percent. Also, total energy consumption for all purposes—including lighting and heating—declines 20 percent (Pushkarev 1976).

Government Role in Metropolitan Transportation and Land-Use Development

Largely ignoring the high social costs, the federal and state governments, ostensibly adapting to technological progress and popular choice, aided and abetted the proliferation of automobiles and the sprawl of the suburbs. Dominated by monopoly corporate "technical" advisers, federal transportation policy avowedly pursued highway building to aid the national economy. While generous subsidies went to highway construction and maintenance, however, only meager assistance went to upgrading the equally economy-boosting but less profitable public mass transit. Starved of funds, the latter faced near extinction by the 1960s. With its infrastructure and services deteriorating, its ridership continually declined and auto sales steadily climbed (Yago 1984, 191).

In the 1960s and 1970s, however, the auto-oil-rubber monopolies were forced to yield to higher class interests. The federal government had to assuage the rebellious masses of the civil rights, antipoverty, antiwar, antihighway, and environmental movements in the cities with some mollifying measures. Among others, it shifted funds from highways to build modern transit lines between suburbs and cities to attract job-generating investments to the limping economies of central business districts (Altshuler 1979, 36; Dunn 1981, 78–79, 198).

But the new rail lines built in the Miami, San Francisco, Atlanta, and other metropolises met with limited success. Designed primarily

as commuter lines, they failed to achieve their planners' intent to cut auto traffic and stimulate high-density growth around suburban stations. For they attracted few auto-riding upper-income suburbanites, and exclusionist suburban governments saw no reason to change their restrictive low-density mandating zoning laws. Unlike in the pre-auto era early in the century, when living and doing business near rapid-transit stations was highly prized, in the era of automobile dominance the scatter of homes and work places had turned access to rapid-transit lines into a marginal good (Yago 1984, 202–3).

In sum, submitting to the will of the auto-oil-rubber monopolies, government had pushed the process of metropolitanization into negative directions. Boosting suburban sprawl, it had blocked efforts to channel metropolitan growth toward land-saving rational-density development (Dunn 1981, 87). Building thick highway networks around big cities, it encouraged the scatter of homes and work places. Increasingly motorized transportation of people and goods had totally changed the metropolitan ring pattern created by radiating rail transit lines. Carrying settlement into the green wedges between the urban finger, roads and motor vehicles filled them with subdivisions, forcing the decentralization process to shape the developing metropolis into an amorphous orderless mess (Blumenfeld 1979, 342–43).

Trends toward concentration in suburbia

Economic and population growth after World War II increased the momentum of decentralization from cities. But the completion of the metropolitan highway networks in the 1960s opened the flood gates to mass relocation. City industries, offices, population, and services rushed to resettle in and around mass-produced suburbs that speculative builders erected on vast peripheral tracts cleared of their farms and forests. In the 1960s, the suburbs gained 29 percent of the nation's manufacturing and 67 percent of clerical jobs while the central cities lost 13 percent of factory jobs and gained only 7 percent of office jobs; 75 to 90 percent of all new metropolitan jobs landed in the suburbs. In the 1970s, decentralization intensified, with the suburbs pulling ahead of the cities in total employment. They absorbed three-quarters of all new manufacturing and retail trade, and a rising proportion of office jobs. By the early 1980s, 57 percent of all office space was located in the suburbs and only 43 percent in central cities.

The rising economic activity in the suburbs gave suburbanites increasing independence of central-city employment. In the 1980s

over 40 percent of all metropolitan work trips took place among suburbs and only 20 percent between suburbs and cities (Cervero 1986, 389; Muller 1981, 131–36). In some metropolitan areas the ratios were even higher. Of the total commuters in New England, for example, 61.4 percent moved among suburbs and only 3.4 percent between suburbs and central cities, 85 percent of those who lived in the suburbs also worked there (Conzen 1983, 98).

At first, suburban firms located at random along the network of highway. Soon, however, they began to concentrate. Responding to the same agglomerative forces that concentrated activities in the city's CBD, they tended to seek economies of agglomeration in their suburban locations. In response, enterprising developers built large industrial parks offering convenient linkages between related firms and the economies of scale gained from sharing a large industrial site and the services of a management able to cut the cost of utilities, waste disposal, financing, insurance, and local taxes. The accessibility of industrial parks within the highway network, their concentration of jobs, modern plant, and ample parking facilities invariably attracted a reliable supply of suburban-based workers (Muller 1981, 131, 138–39; Ferbers 1986, 148–49).

Retail, office, and service activities, too, have tended to cluster for their mutual good within and around huge regional shopping centers whose metropolis-wide drawing power turned them into focal points in suburbia, attracting a growing variety of social as well as economic activities. Increasingly, high-grade apartment buildings have sprung up around these shopping, service, social-recreational centers in the hitherto centerless suburbia (Muller 1981, 162–65). Over time, such multifunctional suburban cores have grown into large auto-oriented metropolitan subcenters, and some even into sizable satellite cities containing shopping centers, industrial parks, office towers, hospitals, colleges and universities, hotels, restaurants, and theaters, rivaling the business districts of central cities (Conzen 1983, 98; Mills 1987, 7).

In residential land uses, too, trends have developed away from suburban sprawl to concentration in suburban subcenters and satellite towns. Urban demographers expect these trends to intensify. The growing numbers of childless, two-worker, and aging households, they reason, coupled with the rising costs of buying and maintaining detached homes on large lots, will cause many suburbanites to see low-burden or burden-free homes in more densely populated communities, closer to work, shopping, social and recreational facilities (Hirsch 1977, 277–78; Dunn 1981).

Thus, the mounting agglomeration of economic, social, and residential land uses within suburban centers has seemingly begun to form a polynucleated settlement system linked mainly along metropolitan belt roads (Muller 1981, 169–79). In historical perspective, the deconcentration of cities into suburbs may not have been simply a process of random, desultory distribution of production, population and commerce over their rural peripheries, but rather a stage in the evolution of the modern metropolis from a monocentric to a polycentric configuration (Greene 1980, 29; Hicks 1985, 137–38).

This apparent process, however, may contradict the auto-oil-rubber monopoly designs. Barring intervention by working-class politics, the monopolies and their allies in business and government will probably continue to encourage limitless sprawl. Some metropolises have already extended into an orbital region 100 miles from their central cities (Blumenfeld 1986).

Were metropolitan formation controlled, however, to promote the people's interests, new growth might be channeled to encourage urban concentration, and a chain of urban subcenters might be created along metropolitan belt highway, forming transportation corridors dense enough to warrant public transportation and planned attrition of automobile use (Greene 1977, 281). If at the same time the quality of central-city life were significantly improved with high-quality city services and an ample supply of good affordable housing, outward migration of people and jobs would be slowed and metropolitan growth kept within rational bounds (Masetti 1973, 535–36).

Suburban development and working-class politics

Lest it be doubted that this is possible because monopoly dominance and inveterate dependence on automobiles preclude it, let us note that working-class politics has made it possible in various European capitalist countries, above all in Sweden. Although Sweden has the highest per-capita car ownership in Europe and a large automobile industry, its labor unions and governments have long pursued a national urban policy of orderly decentralization of crowded cities into a system of rail-transit linked satellite suburbs. It has successfully expanded its metropolises through public planning and building on publicly acquired land of medium- and high-density suburbs around commuter-railroad stations. Each station opens unto a pleasant pedestrian shopping and town square behind which stretch the suburb's residential and work districts served by roads and buses converging upon the square. Other capitalist countries—West Germany, Holland,

France—have also been building satellite towns to concentrate suburban growth along public-transit corridors (Dunn 1981, 163). The European, especially Swedish, experience has shown that orderly, beneficent metropolitan growth can be achieved and maintained, by means of public land use and public transportation, within an automobile-weighted capitalist political economy, through persevering working class political pressure (Gakenheimer 1978, 69; Popenoe 1977, 15–16).

Why has the U.S. working class not tried to achieve it? The answer lies in its largely apolitical history. But even in its current political awakening, the labor and people's movements still underrate their stakes in the evolution of the modern metropolis and the extent and significance, for that matter, of working-class suburbanization. The mass media, bent on showing off the suburban lifestyles of the rich and famous, has fostered the notion that the suburbs are peopled mainly by the well-off upper and middle classes. The suburban working class is seldom seen or heard on screen or radio or written about in the popular press. The fact is, however, that since the 1960s the nation's working class has increasingly moved to the suburbs. Back in 1967, a trade union survey found that half of it lived outside central cities and almost three-quarters of workers under 40 lived in suburbs (Bollens and Schmandt 1975, 52). In 1977, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that while 28 percent of all employed in the United States lived in central cities, 41 percent lived in suburbs and 31 percent outside of metropolises. By 1980, 60.2 percent of metropolitan workers lived in suburbs, and by 1985, fully 37.4 million lived in suburbs, up from 28.9 million in 1970, compared with 24.7 million who lived in central cities, down from 33.2 million in 1970 (Mills 1987, 7). The salient, if underrated, facts about the modern metropolis are that most of its workers today are suburbanites; that many suburbs are predominately higher-paid but not affluent working-class; and that the inner ring of suburbs is almost totally populated by low-income, mostly African-American, working class (Levison 1974, 39–43; Hamilton 1972, 163–66).

To a large degree, this breakneck suburbanization has been fueled by the racist bias gnawing at the innards of our national life. Racism also pushed many to flee to lily-white suburbs before the influx of African-Americans, dispossessed by technological progress in the rural South, into the cities. It motivated suburban governments to adopt rigorous zoning and building laws excluding construction of low-cost housing to keep out the poor and the African-American. This concentrated unemployment and poverty in the central cities

while suburban workplaces have had a hard time getting workers because workers have had a hard time getting to work for lack of cars they could not afford and of public transportation that automobile dominance had practically ruined. Suburban racist exclusion has warped the metropolitan population distribution into a pattern of virtual apartheid.

Suburbanization has improved the housing and environments of most resettled working-class families, but it exacted an inordinate price: it weakened the political strength of the class and put its long-range interests in jeopardy (Ashton 1984). Bourgeois writers have acclaimed suburbanization for its having taken the edge off some of capitalism's acute political problems. Providing private homes for millions of working-class families, they gloated, sapped their class consciousness and the pressure for public housing; the thinning of the central city's high concentration of workers through suburban dispersal lowered working-class fighting ability.

Admittedly, this has been true to a considerable degree. Although the main factors of the class struggle lies, of course, in the nation's social economic-political relations, the contributing spatial and physical factors that have emerged with the development of our metropolises cannot be dismissed. Home ownership has tended to turn many a worker toward petty property speculation in hopes to profit from reselling their homes in the heat of a booming suburbia. Caught up in suburban real-estate politics, many house owners have been willy-nilly driven to conservative views on property ownership and neighborhood change (Walker 1981, 394). Their support, much less struggle, for rent control, public housing, and racial equality has tended to go by the board. It is also true that it is more difficult to organize and rally them to struggle. Physical and psychological isolation from progressive currents in the central city's active political life left many suburban working-class families exposed to unchallenged bourgeois indoctrination by reactionary local politicians and the mass media. What unifying influences the compact central city has had on the several strata of the class have been diluted in the sprawl of the suburbs. In balkanized suburbia small local governments tended to coopt and strengthen local elites of conservative politicians. Various working-class strata have tended to bunch within homogeneous communities, accentuating their differences and obscuring their common class interests.

It is also true that it is more difficult to organize spatially scattered workers and rally them to struggle. Costly, tiring automobile commuting

in bumper-to-bumper peak-hour traffic inevitably lowers worker participation in organizational, educational, cultural, and political activities. Workers tend to trim their tight money and time budgets by first cutting the expenditure of energy and money on civic and cultural pursuits. Such cutbacks tend to sap the civic, cultural, and political life of communities. Considering the millions of suburban working-class households inhabiting the suburbs, their mass withdrawal from progressive civic action is no small loss for their class and to the national welfare. For the working class has the obligation of taking political initiative in metropolitan affairs not only on its own behalf. As the historical heir to its future political leadership, it owes this initiative to the nation.

From either the viewpoint of its class unity or that of saving the nation's land and resources, the trend toward concentration in suburbia into metropolitan subcenters is a positive one. To defend its class interests effectively and play its progressive role in the nation, the working class must concentrate in large numbers not only in work places but in living places as well. While working-class consciousness develops most intensely with worker-employer interaction in the workplace, worker organization develops most intensely in off-hours interrelations within family and friendship circles, in clubs, bars, community organizations, and at social functions. And these are most numerous and ardent in the highest, but fewest and weakest in the lowest, residential densities. The slogan "in numbers there is strength" applies equally to home grounds as to work-place floors. Furthermore, the working-class can advance its class issues most forcefully where classes confront each other in large politics. It cannot pit its broad social views within the petty parochial contests of small suburbs.

Gradual contraction of suburban land use from sprawl into higher concentrations can reduce the spatial-physical deterrents to working-class consciousness and political maturing in suburbia. Certainly the experience of European labor movements shows that politics toward this end can bear desired results in our metropolises as well. From the viewpoints of either the individual working-class household or the class as a whole, it is wise for working-class politics to press for a federal urban policy that would encourage formation of medium- and high-density metropolitan subcenters in suburbia—a policy that would promote public, and restrain private, transportation, provide high-quality affordable private homes and apartments, enforce equal opportunity, and expand access to jobs and social

facilities for all working people living in metropolises (Downs 1973, 131–35).

Clearly, the main obstacle to national reform in urban land use and transportation remains the power the auto-oil-rubber monopolies wield over federal and state urban policy. Not until working-class politics forces that power to recede can cities and suburbs be free to plan and integrate their land-use and transportation systems under their own democratic controls.

Center for International Studies
University of Pittsburgh

NOTES

1. Metropolitan areas are not to be confused with the Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs). The Bureau of the Census has based its SMSAs on county and local government boundaries which do not necessarily represent the real, and changing, areas of metropolises.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Altshuler, Alan, with James P. Womack and John R. Pucher. *The Urban Transportation System: Politics and Policy Innovation*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1979.
- Ashton, Patrick J. "Urbanization and the Dynamics of Suburban Development." In *Marxism and the Modern Metropolis: New Perspectives in Urban Political Economy*, edited by William K. Tabb and Larry Sawers, 2d ed. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1984.
- Baerwald, Thomas J. "The Emergence of a New 'Downtown'." *Geographical Review* 68 (July 1978): 308–18.
- Blumanfeld, Hans. *The Modern Metropolis: Its Origin, Growth, Characteristics, and Planning. Selected Essays*, edited by Paul D. Spreinegen. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1967.

-
- . “The Rational Use of Urban Space as National Policy.” In *Urban Planning in Transition*, edited by Ernest Erber. New York: Grossman Publishers, 1970.
- . *The Metropolis and Beyond. Selected Essays*, edited by Paul D. Spreiregen. New York: Wiley, 1979.
- . “Metropolis Extended: Secular Changes in Settlement Patterns.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 52 (Summer 1986): 346–48.
- Bollens, John C., and Henry J. Schmandt. *The Metropolis: Its People, Politics, and Economic Life*. 3d ed. New York: Harper and Row, 1975.
- Cafferty, Pastora San Juan. “Who Pays for Poor Public Transit?” *Planning* (Nov. 1973): 12–15.
- Cervero, Robert. “Unlocking Suburban Gridlock.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 52 (Autumn 1986): 389–406.
- Cheape, Charles W. *Moving the Masses: Public Transit in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia, 1880–1912*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1980.
- Conzen, Michael P. “American Cities in Profound Transition: The New City Geography of the 1980s.” *Journal of Geography* 83 (May–June 1983): 94–102.
- Daniels, P. U., and A. M. Warnes. *Movement in Cities: Spatial Perspectives on Urban Transit and Travel*. London: Methuen, 1980.
- Downs, Anthony. *Opening Up the Suburbs: An Urban Strategy for America*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1973.
- Dunn, James A., Jr. *Miles to Go: European and American Transport Policies*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1981.
- Edel, M. *Economies and the Environment*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1973.
- Ferbers, John. *The New Heartland: America’s Flight Beyond the Suburbs and How It Is Changing Our Future*. New York: Times Books, 1986.
- Fishman, Robert. *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia*. New York: Basic Books, 1987.
- Fulton, William. “Office in The Dell.” *Planning* 52 (July 1986): 13–17.
- Gakenheimer, Ralph A., ed. *The Automobile and the Environment: An International Perspective*. Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1979.
- Gallion, Arthur B., and Simon Eismer. *The Urban Pattern: City Planning and Design*. New York: Van Nostrand, 1950.

- Greene, David L. "Urban Subcenters: Recent Trends in Urban Spatial Structure." *Growth and Change* 11 (Jan. 1980): 29–40.
- Hamilton, Richard F. *Class and Politics in the United States*. New York: Wiley, 1972.
- Herbers, John. *The New Heartland: America's Flight beyond the Suburbs and How It Is Changing Our Future*. New York: Times Books, 1986.
- Hicks, Donald. *Advanced Industrial Development: Restructuring, Relocation, and Renewal*. Boston: Oelgeschlager, Gunn & Hain, 1985.
- Hirsch, Z. Warner. "The Coming of the Polynucleated Metropolis." In *Small Cities in Transition: The Dynamics of Growth and Decline*, edited by Harrington J. Bryce. Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger, 1977.
- Hoover, Edgar M. "Motor Metropolis: Some Observations on Urban Transportation in America." *Journal of Industrial Economics* 13 (June 1965): 177–92.
- Levison, Andrew. *The Working Class Majority*. New York: Penguin Books, 1974.
- Masotti, Louis H. "Epilogue: Suburbia in the Seventies . . . and Beyond." In *The Urbanization of the Suburbs*, edited by Louis H. Masotti and Jeffrey K. Hadden. *Urban Affairs Annual Review*, vol. 7. Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1973.
- Mills, Edwin S. "Service Sector Suburbanization." Paper presented at the Urban Policy Research Conference, America's New Economic Geography: Nation, Region, and Central City, Washington, D.C., April 1987.
- Muller, Peter O. *Contemporary Suburban America*. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1981.
- Pollens, John C., and Henry J. Schmant. *The Metropolis: Its People, Politics, and Economic Life*. 3d ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
- Popenoe, David. *The Suburban Environment: Sweden and the United States*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Pushkarev, Boris. Paper presented at the 1976 Congress of the American Institute of Planners.
- Pushkarev, Boris, and Jeffery M. Zupan. *Public Transportation and Land Use Policy*. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana Univ. Press, 1977.
- Real Estate Research Association. *The Costs of Sprawl*. Report prepared for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974.

- Schaeffer, K. H., and Elliot Sclar. *Access for All: Transportation and Urban Growth*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1975.
- Snell, Bradford C. *American Ground Transports: A Proposal for Restructuring the Automobile, Truck, Bus, and Rail Industries*. Presented to the Subcommittee on Antitrust and Monopoly of the Committee on the Judiciary of the U.S. Senate. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1974.
- Statistical Abstracts of the United States, 1988*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Commerce, 1988.
- Steiner, Henry Malcom. *Conflict in Urban Transportation: The People against the Planners*. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1978.
- Walker, Richard A. "A Theory of Suburbanization: Capitalism and the Construction of Urban Space in the United States." In *Urbanization and Urban Planning in Capitalist Society*, edited by Michael Dear and Allen J. Scott. London: Methuen, 1981.
- Whitt, J. Allen, and Glenn Yago. "Corporate Strategies and the Decline of Transit in U.S. Cities." *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 21 (Sept. 1985): 37–65.
- Yago, Glenn. "The Coming Crisis of U.S. Transportation." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 7 (Dec. 1983): 577–601.
- . *The Decline of Transit: Urban Transportation in German and U.S. Cities 1900–1970*. London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1984.

Presenting The Ideas of Karl Marx in the Freshman English Course: The Limitations of Great Ideas Anthologies

Philip J. Lutz

A fair number of freshman writing programs in the United States base their courses around anthologies that emphasize the “great ideas” of Western culture. Although I distrust the cultural bias of such “great ideas” anthologies, it is not my purpose to enter into that argument here. Unquestionably, there is value in students understanding the nature of the institutionalized ideas of the culture in which they find themselves situated.¹ What I want to argue here is that in general, “great ideas” anthologies, besides their other failings, even do not present the ideas of so-called Western culture to their audience in a genuinely constructive manner.

Teaching the work of an influential thinker like Marx to freshman writers, many of whom already hold prejudices hostile to his ideas, presents obvious problems. These problems are generally exacerbated by the way in which “great ideas” anthologies distort Marx’s work through insensitive editing and inept introductory material. More pervasively, they distort Marx’s ideas by obsessively elevating persuasive techniques over content, thus separating content from its historical context. For my present purposes, I wish to concentrate on the problems I have encountered with the presentation of *The Communist Manifesto* (which Marx coauthored with Engels) in the anthology used for several years in our freshman composition course at Lehigh University. I believe this anthology, St. Martin’s *A World of Ideas*, edited by Lee A. Jacobus,² is a fair example of its type, and I shall contrast it with a very different type of anthology, Oxford’s *Nature and Industrialization*. Edited by Alasdair Clayre, *Nature and*

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 3, no. 3 (1990)

Industrialization was designed for use as a reader for an Open University Arts Foundation course in the United Kingdom. Whereas Clayre's anthology stresses the dialectical nature of ideas as responding to historical and material conditions, Jacobus's emphasizes the importance of persuasive rhetoric and views "great ideas" from an idealist, essentialist standpoint.

To begin, let us consider *A World of Ideas* in Jacobus's own terms. Jacobus's stated objective in *A World of Ideas*, tellingly subtitled "Essential Ideas For College Writers," is to introduce students to what he defines as the "significant ideas of our culture" (v) from Plato to the present day, that "extend their influence through time and beyond national frontiers to help unite us in a community of learning and awareness" (2). Examples of these significant ideas are ordered within sections according to discrete, institutionalized disciplines: politics, economics, psychology, philosophy, religion, and art (in that order). *The Communist Manifesto* is presented in the section on politics alongside work by Machiavelli, Rousseau, Jefferson, Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Martin Luther King, Jr. What Jacobus claims sets his text apart from other "great ideas" anthologies, similar at least in their suprahistorical eclecticism, and what on the surface certainly seems commendable, is his attempt to represent "every writer . . . by as complete a selection as is practicable" (v). Jacobus seeks to present full essays as opposed to one- and two-page excerpts; for, as he claims, "developing a serious idea takes time" (v).² Presumably, Jacobus's purpose in this is to respect what he sees as the integrity of each selection. However, Jacobus's "as complete . . . as is practicable" proviso covers a multitude of sins, and the anthology abounds with editorial cuts which actually distort the nature of the ideas in many of the selections. In the case of *The Communist Manifesto*, where Jacobus cuts the whole of the section on "Socialist and Communist Literature," such arbitrary excisions show that he has failed, even on his own terms, to respect or understand the integrity of the ideas before him. Above all else, I believe this failure is a consequence of Jacobus's emphasis on rhetoric.

Take for example what Jacobus does with Marx and Engels's argument in the section "Proletarians and Communists," where Marx and Engels entertain the objections of a hypothetical bourgeois antagonist. The passage ends with Marx and Engels's statement that "the charges against Communism made from a religious, a philosophical, and, generally, from an ideological standpoint are not deserving of serious

examination” (105, paragraph 116). Jacobus sees this statement merely as part of a “fascinating rhetorical strategy” (87) through which the authors have “brushed aside” religion.⁴ However, to claim that their statement is merely a brushing aside, suggesting a rhetorical ploy to dismiss religion hastily, is to fail to give credit to the complex interweavings of Marx and Engels’s argument, and it is to fail to acknowledge that they only make this statement after establishing that “the bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation” and converted, among others “the priest” into “its own paid wage-labourers.” Jacobus seems oblivious here to the thrust of Marx and Engels’s critique, which is aimed not at religion as such but religion as it has been appropriated by the bourgeoisie. After making their point about the charges against communism not deserving serious examination, Marx and Engels offer a substantial explanation of why this is so, which culminates in the statement that “communism abolishes absolute truths.” Marx and Engels move on to deconstruct the idealist nature of “absolute truths” in the third section of the *Manifesto*, “Socialist and Communist Literature,” a section cut by Jacobus on the grounds that it is “the least important to the modern reader” (86). But it is in this “least important” section that Marx and Engels establish why bourgeois objections to their argument are illegitimate. Their rejection of bourgeois objections in the second section depends entirely upon their analysis in the third of the appropriation, into the realm of metaphysics, of the ideas of the French Revolution by the German idealist philosophers. Without the benefit of this omitted section, Marx and Engels’s statement, “But let us have done with bourgeois objections to Communism” is left contextually stranded and can be reduced to what Jacobus describes as a “rhetorical signal.” In reality, and in context, Marx and Engels’s statement here is far more than a signal; it is a direct articulation of a complex argument that is carefully developed throughout the *Manifesto* as the basis of its entire dialectical materialist conception of history. Jacobus misunderstands their argument, and he misunderstands it because his concern is more with style than with content—a concern which is part and parcel of a bourgeois idealist view of history.

Jacobus’s violence to the substance of the materialist dialectic in the *Manifesto*, then, permits, or is permitted by, his emphasis on the presentation of “great ideas” as examples of persuasive rhetoric. In general, the result of such an emphasis in an anthology like *A World of Ideas* is the encouragement of habits of misreading in students. By emphasizing persuasive techniques, Jacobus tends to

exclude an adequate historical context for ideas so that “great ideas” become situated in a mystical context that is provided by other “great ideas.” In such a context they come to be read as not being about the authors’ response to certain specific historical conditions, but about “Human Nature...Man in general, who belongs to no class, has no reality, who exists only in the misty realm of philosophical fantasy.” If my criticism here sounds familiar then it is because these are Marx and Engels’s own words criticizing the rhetoric of the German idealist philosophers, taken from the third section of the *Manifesto*, edited out by Jacobus. Jacobus’s presentation of the *Manifesto* as an example of rhetoric in a section on “politics,” and set against other works unconnected with the *Manifesto*’s immediate historical context forces students into an idealist reading that suppresses Marx and Engels’s materialist dialectic. And such a reading ensures that what remains of the *Manifesto* after editing is virtually unintelligible as a critique of idealism.[]

Jacobus’s obsession with rhetorical style reaches absurd heights when he claims in his general introduction to the selections that “the most interesting rhetorical achievements of the selection are identified and discussed with an eye toward helping the student discover how rhetorical techniques can achieve special effects” (vii). Such preparation for reading the *Manifesto* is like watching the opening credits for *E.T.* And, of course, as people who have an obsessive penchant for cinematic special effects will explain in all seriousness, according to a horribly inverted logic, the special effects in *E.T.* occur as consequences of the practices of benign space aliens; neither do the special effects result from, nor are they determined by, corporate practices and capitalist modes of production—practices and modes of production that are situated outside of the fictional plot and within a historical reality that has determined the very existence of the medium of film. And “great ideas,” spread thinly from Plato to Marx and Engels in *A World of Ideas*, can appear to freshmen as two dimensional as a Hollywood film at the Shopping Mall Cinecomplex.

An overambitious attempt at providing historical “scope” in an anthology is self-defeating: it simply erases the dynamics of real history. Jacobus makes Thoreau, Jefferson, Machiavelli, Stanton, King, and Marx and Engels into strange bedfellows. Their individual works, formed in relation to highly specific contexts, tend to lose concretion as a result of their unnatural proximity. We can easily establish tenuous, abstract connections that allow our students to interpret and judge the *Manifesto* in “universalist” terms, but what

concrete, specific connections can be established to allow students to understand the *Manifesto* in its complexly determined specificity as a product of real history? Quite simply, the answer to such a question is that Jacobus's anthology fails to provide a context adequate for a reader to understand the relationship between ideas and real processes of human history from which these emerge.

Ideas reproduced without such an adequate context tend to be seen as "inadequate" in the minds of students who are generally not knowledgeable enough to provide such a context from their own limited consciousness of the details and processes of history. For them Marx and Engels are "off the wall," their ideas are simply seen as irrelevant to their notions of life in either the twentieth or nineteenth centuries because of their generally limited geopolitical and historical awareness. If you are not aware of the horrible conditions of working-class life in midnineteenth-century Europe and the reasons for those conditions then you cannot understand why Marx and Engels are so critical of the bourgeoisie. The inadequate biographical background on Marx provided by Jacobus ends up irrelevant and destructive to any hope of bringing about a better understanding of Marx's ideas. We are told that Marx "came into conflict with Prussian authorities because of his radical social views" (85), but we are left in the dark about the profound conflicts from which these views arose. Again, we are told, "A very scholarly man, Marx studied literature and philosophy, ultimately earning a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Jena. He was denied a university position and was forced to begin making a livelihood from journalism" (85). Students thus guided toward crassly simplistic psychoanalysis come to believe from what details they are given here that Marx's views grew out of a chip on his shoulder originating in his being "denied" a university position. This denial "forced" him into journalism and then "absolute poverty" in London, a city to which he "found his way" (was Marx, perhaps, a stressed-out somnambulist?). The possibilities for such oversimplifications are increased by the *Instructor's Manual*, in which Jacobus states, "Most students are familiar enough with the author and title of this work that little preparatory effort is needed before discussing what Marx has to say" (17). But what does it mean to be "familiar" with Marx and the *Manifesto* if you know next to nothing of either the material conditions of life in nineteenth-century England or the intellectual background of Marx's ideas? Marx, bearded and making off with private property in a jolly red swag-bag on a state-owned reindeer,

is little more than a sinister inversion of Santa Claus.

The lack of an adequate historical context is the general failing of “great ideas” anthologies. In *A World of Ideas*, such a context is excluded primarily as a result of Jacobus’s emphasis on rhetoric. This emphasis raises a question with which *A World of Ideas* seems unable to engage: what has a recognition of the effectiveness of persuasive techniques to do with a recognition of the real historical value of ideas? We all know of Ronald Reagan’s legendary persuasive abilities—from practical experience we also know the extent of the “greatness” of his ideas. There is absolutely no indication in *A World of Ideas* or in any similar “great ideas” anthology I have seen that the value of an idea is contingent upon real conditions or that ideas are formed in a dialectical process. Such a blindness to overdetermination and process in the production of ideas is a characteristic problem that bourgeois academics have in dealing with the valued products of their culture; and, by closing a route for critical enquiry in the freshman composition class, the main product of such a blindness is the reproduction of bourgeois thought.

There is, then, a desperately important need to present ideas to our students in an adequate context, so that we may teach Marx effectively to his modern audience—so that we can teach any “idea” effectively. The need for radically new types of anthologies to replace the present “great ideas” texts is clear, and models for such anthologies do exist. Consider the anthology used in the United Kingdom for an Open University Arts Foundation Course, aimed at students new to study at the undergraduate level. In contrast to *A World of Ideas*, *Nature and Industrialization* is historically and culturally very specific.⁵ The ideas of the last forty years of the eighteenth century and the first sixty years of the nineteenth in England are presented, with a reasonable acknowledgment of their antecedents and legacy. *Nature and Industrialization* certainly does not abandon the notion of great ideas and influential thinkers, presenting excerpts from the work of “major writers,” among them Marx, Smith, Arnold, Mill, Ruskin, and Carlyle. However, these are presented alongside an abundance of other contemporary texts, such as poems, excerpts from novels, letters to newspapers, broadside-ballads, parish records, proceedings of parliament and so on. Included are even selections in local dialects—for instance, the experiences of farm laborers and city workers. Apparently the editor, Alasdair Clayre, felt that such discursive sources, including sub- and counter-cultural ideas, have their place alongside “great ideas,” modifying them and being modified by

them. By contrast, Jacobus is openly hostile to sub- and counter- cultural ideas, claiming in his second edition of *A World of Ideas* to have “never intended” his new edition to be “more trendy” than the first. Jacobus leaves us virtually in the dark as to what qualifies as “trendy” beyond his vague but brisk refusal to include “current in writers” (vi). Evidently, the editorial policy of *Nature and Industrialization* is to demonstrate that it is of the very nature of ideas that they develop dialectically out of the full complexity of their interdetermined material and intellectual environments. The material conditions of life in the towns and country of midnineteenth century England, and the intellectual background of that period, are sufficiently realized in the selections to make quite clear that the ideas of nineteenth-century social critics result from reasoned reactions to those conditions and that background.

In place of Jacobus’s reductive disciplinary categorizations of ideas we have in Clayre’s anthology interdisciplinary, but far more specific, categories such as “Nature and Romantic Literature,” “The Factory System,” “Transport,” “The North and the Big City,” “Poverty, Unemployment and Protest,” “Poets on Work and Civilization,” and “English Folk Songs and Industrial Songs.” While Marx in *A World of Ideas* is presented only in the section on politics, here his ideas are presented in four different sections. And, while the bulk of anthologies in the United States, examples of which are legion, do at least arrange their selections in less rigidly orthodox categories than Jacobus’s, they still ignore historical context, define writers as unproblematic “types” of thinkers, and segregate them into rigidly designated sections. Although the selections in *Nature and Industrialization* are diverse, its eclecticism works to establish the dialectical nature both of ideas and of the identities of their “authors”—in other words it reconstructs effectively the dynamics of real history. This anthology is also carefully focused on constructing a specific dialectical, historical argument, the conflict between ideas of nature and of industrialization in England during the industrial revolution. Students are introduced to a specific debate developed in the depth of an interdisciplinary context, without facile divisions being made between ideas on the strength of pedagogic “disciplines.” There is an attempt here to recreate the dynamic experience of a culture, to present and define ideas as produced largely in response to the material conditions and historical complexities of a specific time and place. In what other capacity could ideas be legitimately considered to have significance?

I believe that an anthology like *Nature and Industrialization* is a viable model for what is needed to replace those in the mold of *A World of Ideas*. In classes at Lehigh University, I have, along with other teachers, attempted to bring the essays in *A World of Ideas* to life in various ways and had some reasonable success in getting my students to understand ideas as dialectically constructed.⁶ But this is inefficient and uphill work. It would be useful to see a new generation of anthologies presenting influential writings in the context of their specific era.⁷ Although some teachers can make a text like *A World of Ideas* work with some reasonable adequacy, I am convinced that its effect is generally counterproductive. Often I see its selections being taught, in true idealist fashion, as texts sufficient in themselves, addressing “universal” human issues. “Great ideas” anthologies that try to cover the “scope” of what is “important” in “human experience” lend themselves to—in fact demand—such an intellectually facile and fraudulent approach. They have no place in the classrooms of serious academic institutions. In their place it would be heartening to see anthologies that concentrate on a specific topic in depth, say: conservatism versus radicalism; authoritarianism versus liberalism; or corporatism versus socialism, and to set this in a specific historical and cultural context.

Finally, we need to question the teaching of writing as simply a tool to persuade, as if persuasive facility is what makes great communicators in some way equally great in terms of their ideas. The ultimate irony of teaching persuasiveness over critical judgment and expressiveness over introspection is that we are turning out students equipped to trap themselves within an ideology. What is more, we are turning them out confidently ready to impose their system of thought, half-baked, upon the rest of the world. In order to educate our students we need to help them, not to defend, but to challenge their received assumptions about the world. You cannot teach ideas that have arisen out of the contradictions and struggles of history to people who cannot recognize, and will not struggle with, the contradictions inherent in their own lives and beliefs. We should be turning out self-interrogating, questioning, critical thinkers, rather than self-satisfied, smug, con men.

This paper formed part of my master's thesis at Lehigh University.

Department of English
Lehigh University

NOTES

1. I do not discuss “rhetorical modes” anthologies in this paper. These seem to form the bulk of freshman readers. Generally I think that these anthologies share many of the problems of “great ideas” anthologies. However, given the great “diversity” of such readers, they deserve a more thorough critique than I can offer in the my present analysis.
2. At Lehigh, from 1985 to 1988 inclusive, we had over 1,000 freshmen using *A World of Ideas* each fall semester. St. Martin’s Press kindly provided me with the following information: About 500 institutions adopted the second edition of *A World of Ideas*. Annual sales of this edition ran at around 60,000. St. Martin’s suggested that the second edition, including resale copies, would have been used annually by over 100,000 students.
3. Ideas, for Jacobus, seem to share the same mystique in their genesis as does a famous beer which the advertisements claim has “matured slowly over beechwood.” But, like another watery beer, the “silver bullet that won’t slow you down,” Jacobus’s description of what goes into the making of an idea is decidedly lite, reductive in its exclusivity of other factors and more likely to produce quantities of stale air than a mind-altering experience.
4. Why does Jacobus make the singular claim that Marx and Engels dismiss religion in this line? He appears to be misreading badly here, oblivious to Marx and Engels’s claim that religion and philosophy can be embraced as manifestations of ideology in general.
5. Of course, it might be objected that the Open University Arts Foundation course is not a writing course. However, the Arts Foundation course is concerned with preparing students for writing at the undergraduate level. Unlike other British universities, the Open University stipulates no formal academic entry requirements at the foundation level. To qualify, prospective students must simply be British and over eighteen. The course is writing intensive, requiring the submission of nine 1500-word essays over a period of nine months. The early assignments are discipline-based, the later ones interdisciplinary.
6. When teaching the *Communist Manifesto* in the fall semester of

1988, I used Engels's description of Manchester from *The Condition of the Working Classes in England, 1844–45* (from *Nature and Industrialization*) together with articles on the maquiladora industry in modern Mexico (from newspapers, magazines, and other sources of the political right and left). These provided an effective context for demonstrating the reality of the conditions the *Manifesto* refers to, relating them to capitalist practices and showing their historical development.

7. *Rereading America* (Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle 1989), is one of the very few anthologies that attempt to present their selections in a historical context.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Clayre, Alasdair, ed. *Nature and Industrialization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Colombo, Cullen, and Lisle, eds. *Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989.
- Jacobus, Lee A., ed. *A World of Ideas*. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.
- . *Instructor's Manual to Accompany A World of Ideas*. 2d ed. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Conference Reports

U.S.-Cuban Scholars Conference in Havana

Some thirty U.S. philosophers, social scientists, and educators participated with Cuban scholars in a one-week conference in Havana, 14–18 May 1990, entitled “The Human Being and Social Progress: The View From Cuba” Approximately sixty papers were presented within five commissions examining such topics as problems of philosophy; the construction of socialism; women, education, and society; Marxism and religion; and Cuba-United States relations.

The conference was sponsored by the University of Havana and three U.S. organizations: the Radical Philosophy Association, the Marxist Educational Press, and the Society for the Philosophical Study of Marxism.

In addition to the diverse paper presentations and vigorous dialogue among the scholars present, the U.S. guests were given the opportunity to observe a variety of Cuban social institutions, receive briefings from Cubans and North Americans, and travel freely in and around Havana to meet with Cubans not affiliated with the university. The U.S. participants visited a psychiatric hospital, a women’s prison, a cooperative farm, a science-oriented high school, and a cigar factory. Delegates met with representatives from the Cuban women’s federation and the Communist Party of Cuba, and two U.S. journalists covering Cuban affairs. A full recreational program included a visit to places of historical interest at the University of Havana and Old Havana and a day at the gorgeous Veradero beach.

As a result of what was learned from the rich interaction at the conference and around Havana, the U.S. participants were convinced of the necessity of returning home to work for a change in U.S. policy toward Cuba.

The U.S. participants met separately to discuss the need to build a newly invigorated solidarity movement with the Cuban people. The discussion evolved out of three central facts that were impressed on the U.S. delegation.

First, the delegation learned that the Cubans regard the current climate of U. S.-Cuban relations as extremely dangerous. During the

first week of May, the U.S. military carried out large and threatening maneuvers in such a manner that it was not possible for the Cubans to distinguish the maneuvers from preparations for an actual invasion, forcing the Cubans to declare a costly alert, thereby displacing scarce resources from health, education, and housing construction.

Second, the delegation saw the extraordinary social and economic benefits that the Cubans had achieved since 1959: excellent health care (a life-expectancy rate almost as high as in the United States); a superb educational system from elementary school to postgraduate education; adequate, if modest, housing for the population at large; and a basic diet of healthy foods that meets the minimum daily requirement as prescribed by United Nations agencies.

Third, the delegation learned of the strong desire of the Cuban people to have improved relations with the United States. While fiercely patriotic and generally supportive of their revolution, the Cuban people have no animosity toward the U. S. people and see better relations with the United States as of mutual benefit to both countries.

The U.S. delegation adopted a resolution calling for a dramatic change in United States policy toward Cuba, including normalizing diplomatic and economic relations, ending threatening military maneuvers and interference with Cuba's national television air waves, and abolishing laws that limit cultural and tourist exchanges between the United States and Cuba.

The Cuban philosophers and educators who hosted the conference urged their North American colleagues to stimulate more professional interaction in the future. They were particularly interested in U.S. scholars organizing other conferences with Cubans in the next year and for U.S. scholars to visit Cuba for research, professional exchanges, and teaching during their sabbatical leaves. For more information about prospective U.S.-Cuban scholarly exchanges write to Professor Howard L. Parsons, Department of Philosophy, University of Bridgeport, Bridgeport, CT 06601, or Professor Harry R. Targ, Department of Political Science, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907.

The Cuban publishing house, Editorial José Martí, will arrange housing and support for persons interested in an extended stay in Cuba to work as translators, editors, and proofreaders for its publications in English. Write to Editorial José Martí, Apartado postal 4208, 10400 Havana, Cuba.

Korean-U.S. Scholars Interdisciplinary Colloquium (Pyongyang) and Chinese-U.S. Scholars Meetings (Beijing and Shanghai)

The Korean-U.S. Interdisciplinary Colloquium was the first meeting between a group of scholars from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and a group of their counterparts from the United States. Although individual scholars from U.S. universities had previously visited the DPRK (North Korea), this was the first conference in which there was exchange of research and philosophical positions between scholars of the two nations.

The occasion for this meeting was the conference/tour, 13–26 June 1990, sponsored by the Marxist Educational Press (MEP), that brought a delegation of twelve to one day in Shanghai, another day in Beijing (largely for the purpose of obtaining visas for travel to the DPRK, because they cannot be obtained from within the United States), then to seven days for the colloquium in the DPRK, and another four days of conferences and touring in the Beijing area.

The MEP delegation was quite diverse, composed of progressive activists and intellectuals as well as university and college professors. In addition to the academic representation (two in philosophy, three in sociology, one in history, two in humanistic fields, one in physics, there were a labor artist, a labor historian, and a longshoreman-union activist. This diversity of backgrounds contributed significantly to the success and value of the experience. Discussions and assessments of issues raised by the conferences and meetings continued within the group, often until late at night.

Pyongyang: In Pyongyang the MEP delegation were the guests of the Korean Association of Social Scientists of the DPRK. The hospitality extended to our group was gracious, almost overwhelming, as we were whisked to meetings and banquets with various groups, and to institutions and accomplishments of which the Koreans are justifiably proud. In the following paragraphs we shall attempt to recapitulate some reactions and observations, which, although they reflect discussion with members of the MEP delegation, are our own.

Most striking to a first-time visitor is the utter modernity of Pyongyang with its clean, wide streets, efficient public transport including an extensive metro system, and the many impressive public buildings and monuments. The realization that this city (current

population of about 500,000) was totally destroyed by U.S. bombing during the Korean War (1950–53) engenders admiration for the difficult work of reconstruction accomplished by the people of the DPRK, and a sense of shame at the brutality of the destruction wrought by the indiscriminate bombing of civilian population centers during the war. The one aspect of the DPRK that elicited the greatest admiration was the attention given to the educational and cultural needs of children and youth. This concern is demonstrated by free day care, well-equipped and staffed primary and middle schools, free university or other continued education, and by the Students and Children's Palace. This is indeed a palace, a sumptuous building of 500 rooms with 200 activities taught by qualified teachers. Students who wish to participate are brought by bus after school to take part there in activities of their choice. During the tour of the various activities, we also seemed to share a perception of something that may seem intangible and immeasurable yet was very real: the aura of self-confidence, genuine involvement in the activities, and exuberance that these children radiated. The contrast between these successful efforts being made by a nation that had undergone calamitous devastation and the current failure to provide for even the minimal needs of a large segment of our youth in our own "wealthy" society was not lost on our group. Also included in our Pyongyang itinerary were: Kim Il Sung University, the Grand People's Study House, a public library equipped with advanced learning aids and media for information retrieval, the University of the National Economy—an institution for the preparation of managers and planners in the economy—and the Academy of Juche Studies, which has functions comparable to academies of philosophy and science.

We also had the opportunity to inspect the West Sea Barrage, an eight-kilometer-long sea barrier at the mouth of the Taedong River constructed to provide 200,000 acres of desalinated farm land. This barrage, one of five dams on the Taedong River, which flows through Pyongyang, was built in five years. It was interesting to note the pride that the Koreans take in the rapidity with which construction projects are completed. Significantly, one does not see many partially completed projects languishing in the city or countryside.

A rail trip to Kaesong and the truce village of Panmunjom, site of the armistice negotiations during the Korean War, provided us with the opportunity to become better acquainted on a more informal basis with our Korean hosts, several of whom accompanied us. We

were met by the mayor of Kaesong. She also hosted a fine dinner for our group. The visit to Panmunjom and the wall separating North and South Korea, which was constructed by South Korea with U.S. aid, made palpable the tragedy of divided Korea. Travel of Koreans between the South and North is under stringent interdict by South Korea; some families, separated when family members were sent to the South to escape the depredations of the U.S. bombing, have never been reunited. When we reflect on the attention that had been given by the capitalist media to "the shame of the Berlin Wall," we realize that the failure of the same media to bring this shameful barrier to public attention and condemnation reveals the tendentious and hypocritical nature of much of the news coverage that we receive. The desire for reunification of Korea was constantly reiterated. Surprisingly, there seems to be little apprehension about the incompatibility of the two contrastive economic and political systems. Kim Il Sung has succinctly expressed the DPRK's proposal for reunification as follows:

Our five-point policy is: to remove military confrontation and lessen the tension between north and south, to achieve multi-lateral collaboration between north and south, to convene a Great National Congress comprising representatives of people of all levels, political parties and social organizations from the north and south, to institute a north-south confederation named the Confederal Republic of Koryo, and to enter the UN under that name.

The colloquium, jointly sponsored by the Korean Association of Social Scientists and MEP, attracted a great deal of attention. Papers accompanied by concurrent translation were given by both delegations. The conference papers fell into three categories: application of dialectical and historical materialism in scholarly research, characteristics of socioeconomic development in the DPRK, and the contribution of scholars to the reunification of Korea and the improvement of Korean-U.S. relations. Discussion of the papers followed. A particularly lively exchange took place around the Juche philosophy, which had permeated many of the papers presented by the Korean scholars. We shall discuss the Juche idea later in this report.

The accomplishments of the DPRK, which were achieved under adverse conditions, are indeed impressive and we saw much there that provided a basis for optimism about the further development of socialism.

There are, however, some considerations that tend to temper this

sanguine view. The focus on self-reliance in economic development has served the DPRK well. Every effort has been made to reduce dependence on resources and technology from other nations; they have been successful in this to a considerable extent, but the absence of advanced technology and mechanization was clearly visible in the rural areas where most of the twenty million North Koreans live. With many unfinished tasks facing them, the changes now taking place in the USSR, Eastern Europe, and China must certainly be disconcerting as the supporting roles that these nations have played are being either attenuated or eliminated altogether. Nevertheless, the policy of self-reliance has somewhat shielded the DPRK from the consequences of the economic crises that developed in Eastern Europe and the USSR. During our visit we met several specialists from the United Nations Development Agency who have been working in the DPRK for several years. They felt that the conditions they have observed in the countryside were far better than any Third World country in which they have traveled, that despite extensive rationing the North Korean citizens are assured the satisfaction of their minimum needs for food, housing, health care, and education. A question which naturally arises in our minds is whether the political and economic structures are flexible enough to unleash the decentralized initiative required to apply effectively the achievements in science and technology to the problems of further economic development. A brief visit to the country could not put us in a position answer this question.

The image of Kim Il Sung is virtually ubiquitous in the DPRK, and whenever his name is mentioned it is accompanied by some formulaic expression such as “the great leader “ or “the iron-willed leader.” There is no doubt that Kim Il Sung is an outstanding figure in Korea; he led the resistance to the savage occupation of Korea by Japan, organized the basis for the development of a socialist society after World War II, led the North in its struggle with the “United Nations “ and South Korean forces to a virtual stalemate against superior military and economic resources, and provided the inspiration for the phoenix-like “rise from the debris” after the Korean War. Although we did not discuss the unique role of Kim Il Sung within the framework of the colloquium, we did discuss the matter informally with our Korean colleagues, who denied that the phrase “cult of the individual” was an appropriate characterization of this role. Their position was reflected by the present Party secretary, Kim Jong Il (son of Kim Il Sung), in his answer to questions put to him by the Cuban newspaper *Granma*:

A party is a collective of revolutionary comrades who share the same ideology and the same ideals and fight in a common cause. Unity and cohesion based on a single revolutionary ideology are the lifeblood of the party. Each party must achieve its unity and cohesion on the basis of its guiding ideology. It must on no account allow disparate ideas to enter. If such ideas are tolerated within the party, the party will be undermined ideologically and torn to pieces organizationally. In party activity, unity of action based on a single ideology can be realized only through monolithic leadership. Only when the uniqueness of ideology and leadership is fully guaranteed can the party achieve rock-firm unity and cohesion and carry out its mission properly.

The leader is the centre of the party's unity and leadership. Ensuring the uniqueness of ideology and leadership means, in the final analysis, achieving the unity of the entire party in ideology, purpose and action centering on the leader. The work of establishing the monolithic ideological system, which our party has consistently maintained as the fundamental principle of party building, is the very work of uniting the entire Party behind the leader in one ideology and moving it as one. (1989, 2-3)[

In the contemporary discussions among those coming from the Marxist-Leninist tradition, a primary focus of discussion is on whether a monolithic position on political and economic policies is a necessary requirement for unity in the implementation of political and economic decisions. Is it possible to implement policies in a united way, once they have been decided upon, even if there were widespread differences of opinion over the policy to be adopted? The issue is not whether decisions are made in a process dominated by the views of a respected leading political figure or as the collective product of a monolithic political bureau, however benevolent the intentions may be, but whether or not the decisions are based upon the results of discussions open enough for the various viewpoints on the subject to receive adequate consideration and whether or not the leading decision-making body is ultimately accountable to, and recallable, by the rank-and-file of the Party or state. Acceptance of the concept of monolithic unity of the leadership with the entire Party makes it impossible to implement the principle of accountability of the individuals chosen for leadership to those who are to have chosen them, since the expression of any disagreement will be seen as a breach of this unity.

In the Democratic People's Republic of Korea the guiding ideological

principle of social life is referred to as *Juche*, first put forth by President Kim Il Sung. The term *Juche* has the literal meaning “master of the body.” This literal meaning, however, does not convey its philosophical essence. According to Kim Il Sung:

The *Juche* idea is a man-centered philosophy. This means that the *Juche* idea is a philosophy which puts man in the centre of its study and regards it as its mission to give an answer to the question of man’s destiny. (cited by Pak Sung Dok 1990, 6)

In his paper “The Present Era and the Creative Development of the Materialist Dialectics,” Pak Sung Dok maintains that Marxist materialism considered that matter was an objective entity distinct from human consciousness and that this concept of matter could not be altered in any way regardless of advances in the scientific cognition of matter (1990, 16). He then writes:

The concept of matter asserted by Marxist materialism as [an] objective entity limits itself to the fact that everything from the simplest particle to the most complex and developed human being consists of matter, whereas it fails to be a concept characterizing the degree and course of development of matter. (16)

He also notes a similar shortcoming in materialist dialectics:

Even though Marxist dialectics proved that everything in the world moves and develops and that [the] world constantly changes and develops by interaction of objectively existing things, it, nevertheless, could not take the influence of the activities of man, the only creative being in the world, as its main consideration for world change and development [original English syntax corrected for intelligibility]. . . . As a result, Marxist dialectics could not present the practical course through which [the] world changes and develops by man’s creative role. (30)

In his *Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, Engels formulated the fundamental question of philosophy as the relation between thinking and being. According to Pak Sung Dok this was due to the eagerness to “prove the primacy of matter over consciousness and that subjective dialectics reflects objective dialectics.” Li Song Jun writes:

In sharp contrast with the former philosophies which took the relations between matter and consciousness as the fundamental question, the *Juche* idea considers the world in relation to man,

putting the main stress on him and, thus, raises the question of his position and role in the world as the basic question of philosophy

And the Juche idea answers the question of man's position and role in the world with him as the central factor, on the basis of his independent demand and creative activity, and thus put forward the philosophical principle with the main stress on man, that man is the master of everything and decides everything. (1986, 6)

Continuing this line of reasoning, Pak Sung Dok asserted that humans, as the masters of the world, are the highest product of evolution of the material world, and that with the emergence of humans, "matter reaches to the stage at which it cognizes and transforms itself" (1990, 22):

The Juche idea...based on the principle that man is the master of [the] material world, raised a stand that man should approach things and phenomena in an independent manner as befitting [a] master. The independent stand signifies that priority should be given to the independent demand and interests of man, the only independent being in the world. (24–25)

Pak Sung Dok stresses that the Juche idea is not in opposition to dialectical materialism but nevertheless there is a difference. "Marxist dialectics restricted itself to proving that [the] world changes and develops." According to the Juche idea, "man plays the decisive role in changing and developing the world" (27).

From the philosophical papers alone, it was difficult for the U.S. participants in the colloquium to discern how this theoretical discussion of the Juche idea could lead to any practical consequences. From the papers on the problems of socialist construction in the DPRK, peace, and the problem of reunification of Korea, it became evident that our Korean colleagues view the creative use of human skills and abilities for the solution of immediate social needs and for the continuing improvement of social well being as an integral part of the application of the Juche idea. It also became clear that the principle of self-reliance, according to which the socioeconomic development of the DPRK has proceeded with a minimal dependence on other nations, was also inseparable from the Juche idea (in the sense of the Korean people's being the masters of their own lives).

In the lively discussions which ensued, the U.S. participants questioned the need for regarding the Juche idea as a supplement to traditional dialectical and historical materialism. Several of us argued

that the struggle for socialism was never viewed merely in terms of the objective, spontaneous motion and development of social matter, but the transition to socialism required an understanding of the role of the conscious activity of the working class and its allies in the revolutionary transformation of society and that a high level of ideological commitment is needed to effect this transformation. We recalled Marx's words that the working class would be the class that in liberating itself would liberate all of humanity. Therefore, while humans have not until now played a role in the evolution of the natural sphere, Marxists have long viewed the laboring human being as the central factor in the development of human society. The assertion that the *Juche* idea—humans are the master of the world—is necessary as a concept separate from but not in contradiction to traditional Marxism led most of us to view it as a form of philosophical idealism readily transformable into a vaguely religious belief in the unlimited power of human creativity.

Contrary to some obviously prejudiced apprehensions carried by us to the colloquium from the United States, the honest and open exchange of views on this subject with our Korean colleagues enhanced the cordiality of our meeting and stimulated discussions on the possibility of another colloquium in the fall of 1991, at the University of Minnesota. The U.S. participants were very pleased with the discussions and the visit to the DPRK. Our Korean colleagues likewise expressed their satisfaction with the meeting and even characterized it as “an event of historic proportions.”

Toward the end of the visit, the U.S. participants gathered separately to put their signatures to a statement expressing concern over the presence of 40,000 U.S. troops and tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea. The statement urged the U.S. government to reevaluate its present policy toward the DPRK and set in motion a process of change that will remove all U.S. troops and nuclear weapons from South Korea and lead to the normalization of diplomatic, trade, and cultural relations between the United States and the DPRK based on mutual respect for sovereignty and adherence to peaceful resolution of the differences that separate them. The statement further urged the establishment of structures to encourage cultural and educational exchange, to help U.S. citizens learn from, and share our own achievements with, the Korean people. Finally, the statement noted that dialogue and contacts, including scholarly conferences, are advantageous to both U.S. and Korean scholars, and urged the government of the DPRK and the Korean Association of Social Scientists to take positive steps to help more U.S. scholars from various academic and educational

institutions visit their beautiful country. It was agreed that the next Korean-U.S. Scholars Interdisciplinary Colloquium will be held 11–13 October 1991 at the University of Minnesota.

Shanghai and Beijing: During our nearly week-long tour of Shanghai and Beijing, we had discussions with faculty and research scholars at the East China Normal University in Shanghai, the Institute of Philosophy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. We also met with members of the board of the Chinese Association for International Understanding, which had arranged these meetings for us and held a banquet in our honor. In Beijing, trips to the Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Ming Tombs, and the Great Wall were, of course, *de rigueur*.

Unlike the colloquium in Pyongyang, our meetings in China had no preplanned agenda. Our Chinese colleagues told us that while they have had many opportunities to meet with faculty from various U.S. universities, this was their first time they had met with a group of Marxist academics from our country. They expressed great interest, and surprise, in the scope of Marxist research in the United States and were eager to learn more about the various research areas under study by U.S. Marxists. They indicated that though they had been familiar with the research done in other socialist countries, Marxist scholarship in China had not received the attention it needed and that the events last year made it clear that they had not been giving adequate attention to ideological questions.

Our Chinese hosts felt that these first contacts were productive, and they expressed a desire for expanding their interaction with Marxist scholars from the United States. We arrived at a tentative agreement to hold a conference in Beijing, 17–19 June 1991, on Marxist critique of methods in the social and natural sciences (which we are now proposing to extend to include any of the humanities). The conference is to be sponsored by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Marxist Educational Press.

During our visit to the Chinese Association for International Understanding we were briefed, at our request, on the current political and economic situation in China. Owing to the limited time available, this briefing provided a valuable supplement, but could not substantially add to, the information available to us previously from various sources in the United States.

Gerald M. Erickson and Erwin Marquit[
University of Minnesota

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Kim Il Sung. *On the Five-Point Policy for National Reunification*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1990.
- Kim Jong Il. *Answers to Questions Raised by the General Director of "Granma," the Organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1989.
- Li Song Jun. *The Philosophical Principle of the Juche Idea*. Pyongyang: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1986.
- Pak Sun Dok. "The Present Era and the Creative Development of Materialist Dialectics." Paper presented at the Korean-U.S. Scholars Interdisciplinary Colloquium, Pyongyang, 17–21 June 1990.

Book Reviews

South Africa Belongs to Us: A History of the ANC. By Francis Meli. Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1989, 258 pages, cloth \$35.00, paper \$12.95. Originally published by Zimbabwe Publishing House, P. O. Box 350, Harare, Zimbabwe, 1988.

In 1985, the *New York Times* reporter for South Africa, Joseph Lelyveld, published a much-acclaimed book, *Move Your Shadow*, in which he chastised the African National Congress for being possibly the least effective guerrilla force in the world. Though Lelyveld forecast the eventual demolition of apartheid, in his vision of the future, the ANC was an irrelevant and spent force. Yet, even while Lelyveld's book was going through the press, South Africa had erupted into the largest series of protests since Soweto and these protests, by any account, were largely inspired by the ideology of the ANC. At virtually every funeral for slain protesters, the ANC's banned black, green, and gold tricolor was unfurled, Nkosi Sikelel' i Afrika ("God bless Africa"), the ANC anthem, was sung in open defiance of white authority, and Umkhonto we Sizwe ("Spear of the Nation"), the ANC army, was publicly praised for its continuing efforts to keep a low-intensity war alive along the northern frontier. After almost twenty-five years of being banned, the ANC had returned with a vengeance. Today not even the South African regime envisions a stable future without an active role for the ANC. Were Lelyveld a political analyst rather than a journalist, he would have had to do much to rescue the remnants of his professional reputation. Rarely has an allegedly expert commentator been so completely off-base.

Lelyveld's case, however, is atypical only in its extremity. Though the ANC is Africa's oldest national liberation movement, its ideological development and its internal history, from an African advocacy organization to South Africa's predominant national liberation movement, remain only sparsely known. There are several reasons for this. Western liberals, especially in the United States, have

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 3, no. 3 (1990)

consistently been uncomfortable with the ANC's close relations with the South African Communist Party and its refusal to participate in the usual anti-Communist hysteria. These liberals have preferred, instead, to concentrate on the allegedly "moderate" views of figures such as Desmond Tutu, somehow failing to notice the open agreement between most of these figures (including Tutu) and the ANC. Meanwhile black "radicals" have been sometimes equally uncomfortable with the ANC's "moderation" and nonracialism, preferring, instead, some sort of racial exclusivism. Academics have paid considerable attention to these "radical" perspectives and have emphasized black disunity (e.g., Gerhart 1978). That these criticisms of the ANC have been around for over half a century and have been addressed in many of the ANC's platforms has largely gone unnoticed (Sarkar 1988). Furthermore, security considerations during a guerrilla war have forced the ANC to maintain considerable secrecy about its internal developments since the 1960s. Consequently, few outsiders have had significant access to the information requisite for any systematic analysis. Finally, South Africa's apartheid regime has understandably done its best to prevent the dissemination of information about the ANC, especially about the extent of its success in guerrilla warfare. This success has been underscored in a recent book by Davies (1987). However, even that book pays virtually no attention to the internal ideological developments of the ANC and the role that they played in determining its strategy and practice.

It is in this context that the importance of Francis Meli's new history of the ANC must be understood. Meli was born in 1942 in South Africa and grew up as an orphan. In school he became involved in ANC youth politics and the African Student Association. In 1963, while still in college, he left South Africa on the ANC's instructions. He continued with his education in the German Democratic Republic, obtaining a doctorate in history. In 1977 he became the editor of *Sechaba*, the ANC's official organ, and in 1985 he was elected to its National Executive Committee. Few are in a better position to write an authoritative history of the ANC; the possibility of "bias" will be addressed later.

Meli emphasizes that the book is intended as a popular history. Its targeted audience is as much the young ANC cadre, ignorant of the movement's traditions, as outsiders. Meli bases much of the book on a detailed study of ANC documents. His unique access to the ANC archives made this process relatively easy. However, Meli also inter-

prets these developments in the ANC's platforms and ideology in terms of the social and economic forces that constrained and influenced them. He observes that "it could be said that the arguments [in the documents and speeches] are . . . only self-serving justifications made by the actors themselves, not historical explanations of the processes that produced policies. Are the explanations of the actors acceptable, valid or are they not post-facto rationalizations? Is it not the task of a historian to interpret, instead of merely quoting the explanations of the motives given by the participants in events? A synthesis of the two approaches seemed to me the solution to avoid the problem of projecting a subjective or detached history of the ANC (p. viii)." What emerges is a well-written history with a wealth of detail. For the first time the entire development of the ANC is presented as a coherent whole. No one interested in the politics of Southern Africa can afford to ignore this book.

The book begins with a masterly, though necessarily short, account of African dispossession of land by Dutch and British colonialists and of African resistance, which cut across long-standing ethnic barriers. The myths of white occupation of unsettled lands and of African acquiescence to white paternalism, so much part of apartheid mythology, are perfunctorily swept aside. The beginnings of organized resistance by the so-called "Coloureds" of mixed race and by Indians are also analyzed. These discussions provide the background to the founding of the ANC in 1912 thanks, to a very large extent, to the efforts of Pixley ka Isaka Seme. Meli then recounts the fairly well-known story of the repeated attempts by the ANC to influence official policy in both Pretoria and London through deputations and petitions. More importantly, he also describes the attempts by the white radicals of the International Socialist League to cross racial barriers and organize on the basis of class in the period immediately following World War I. This episode is, unfortunately, not well known enough, especially because it is arguably the most significant attempt by whites to organize with blacks in the entire history of South Africa.

The working relationship between white radicals and blacks, always uneasy, ran into problems in the 1930s. Meli's treatment of this period is perhaps the only genuinely controversial interpretation in this book. He emphasizes the unity—in practice, if not in theory—between the newly formed Communist Party and predominantly black organizations such as the ANC and Clement Kadalie's Industrial and

Commercial Workers' Union, which, after phenomenal success in the early 1920s, collapsed ignominiously thanks to irresponsible leadership and inflated expectations. But Meli fails to record that, at one point, the Communist Party even campaigned for a white workers' South Africa and that its history during the 1920s is filled with contradictions. This failure is important for at least two reasons. First, though Meli clearly recognizes the importance of the 1928 Sixth Congress of the Communist International, he does not seem to appreciate how important it was to liberation struggles throughout the colonial world because of its emphasis on the issue of national liberation before socialist revolution, usually known as the two-stage theory of revolution. In the South African case, it forced white Communists to abandon all racist pretensions. Indeed, it drove the point home by coining and affirming the slogan of a "Black Republic" to describe the immediate ends of the struggle. Moreover, throughout the colonial world, it emphasized that international communism, at least, had a more sophisticated understanding of the struggle for liberation than the economic reductionism of those who harangued for class warfare over everything else. Second, an appropriately critical appraisal of the Communist Party during this period would have better illustrated its differences from the later South African Communist Party (SACP) which truly managed to achieve a symbiotic relationship with the ANC, a relationship that persists to this day.

The 1930s and 1940s saw a steady decline in the fortunes of the ANC. It was only revived in the late 1940s through the dynamism of the newly formed ANC Youth League under the charismatic leadership of Anton Lembede. The Youth League emphasized "Africanism," which it initially interpreted as an assertion of African pride and power. It was hesitant about collaboration with other groups, even black groups such as the "Coloureds" and Indians. However, Lembede, as well as other Youth Leaguers such as Walter Sisulu and Nelson Mandela, gradually came to broaden their vision and endorsed the collaboration of the ANC with the Coloured Peoples' Organization, the South African Indian Congress, and the white Congress of Democrats. This collaboration was crucial to the remarkable organizational success of the "Defiance Campaign" of civil disobedience in the 1950s. The crucial event of this period was the adoption of the "Freedom Charter" in 1955, which outlined the ANC's vision for a nonracial, liberal democratic South Africa with mixed ownership of property. Meli's analysis of

the role of the Youth League, especially of the broadening of its Africanism, is perceptive and important, particularly because this Africanism was later illegitimately used as the source of the racially exclusivist ideology of the splinter Pan-Africanist Congress (PAC), which left the ANC in 1959. The PAC never obtained significant mass support inside South Africa, in spite of the international recognition afforded to it, and Meli does well not to harp much upon it.

Following the Sharpeville massacre in 1961, the ANC was banned inside South Africa. Subsequently, some ANC and Communist Party members, under the leadership of Mandela, decided to begin armed struggle. The underground army, Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) began operations on December 16, 1961, with a few attempts at sabotage of official installations. The motivation behind the formation of MK was a perception by its leaders that black violence was inevitable in the face of escalating white repression and that this violence needed to be constructively channelized through a responsible organization. Inside South Africa both MK and the ANC virtually collapsed after the arrest of the most important leaders in 1962. The focus of the movement shifted to the ANC External Mission. Organizing from outside was not easy particularly because, at this time, South Africa had no "African" borders. It was buffered by colonies of Britain and Portugal, countries that consistently colluded with the apartheid regime. Organizational problems were immense. Lower-level cadres had become disillusioned with much of the leadership. Furthermore, the relation of the ANC to non-African organizations, some of which were not yet banned inside South Africa, had to be addressed. All of these problems were tentatively resolved in a crucial conference in Morogoro (Tanzania) in 1969 where, among other important changes, all South Africans, irrespective of race, were admitted into the ANC. The last change had been a major demand of the guerrillas of MK, which had always been organized nonracially. This is the period of the ANC's history that is least known and Meli provides a superb discussion of these developments using to full advantage his access to the ANC archives. Indeed, until the ANC archives can be made fully public after liberation, this chapter of the book is likely to remain an important primary source for historians and political analysts.

The final chapter of the book discusses the period from 1969 to 1985. In the mid-seventies the Portuguese empire in Mozambique and Angola collapsed. Inside South Africa, the militant Black Consciousness movement emerged. After the Soweto revolt there was a mass exodus

of youths, most of whom joined the ANC. Meanwhile the labor unions resurfaced with vastly enhanced powers thanks to the increasing reliance of South African industry on black labor. The ANC's armed struggle also intensified after 1975, putting additional pressure on the apartheid regime. These developments culminated in the uprising that began in 1984 and continues to some extent to the present day. Meli describes these events, and the ANC's role in them, though this chapter is too short to do full justice to its subject. He does provide, however, long quotes from affidavits dealing with the rape and abuse of women and children by the South African police in the last few years. These document the continuing brutality of the apartheid regime while it speaks of "evolution" and "reform" to international audiences in an attempt to end its diplomatic and economic isolation. Unfortunately, Meli's historical analysis ends with 1985 and does not even deal with the critical ANC conference held in Lusaka that year. The more recent attempts by the ANC to spell out its program for a postliberation South Africa are also not analyzed. Perhaps it is too early to provide a historical assessment of these developments but any reaction of a historian who is also a participant in these processes would have been more than welcome. One leaves this chapter with a desire to read more.

Meli observes in the preface that, though his book is not an official history of the ANC, it is yet self-consciously a partisan history. He argues that history writing is always partisan, not neutral. Further, he explicitly claims that he has "attempted to formulate, explain and spread the ideas of the ANC" and that "this book is also an attempt to transform theoretical knowledge into mass consciousness (viii)." This partisanship, however, has not resulted in distortion. Though always sympathetic to the aims of the ANC—a sympathy that the present reviewer shares—Meli has not hesitated to provide critical appraisals of errors and failures of the ANC at different stages of its evolution. This book amply demonstrates that partisan history can yet be objective. All that is required is that the partisanship be in the cause of justice and liberation and, more importantly, that it be uncompromising in the analysis of the underlying social and economic bases that constrain the directions of history. Support for the ANC, accompanied by an unromantic appraisal of the overwhelming odds impeding the liberation of South Africa, easily satisfy these criteria. This book is clearly the most important one written on South Africa during the last decade.

Sahotra Sarkar[
Boston University

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Davies, Stephen M. *Apartheid's Rebels: Inside South Africa's Hidden War*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987.[
- Gerhart, Gail M. *Black Power in South Africa; The Evolution of an Ideology*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978.[
- Lelyveld, Joseph. *Move Your Shadow: South Africa Black and White*. New York: Times Books, 1985.[
- Sarkar, Sahotra. "Black Politics in South Africa: Ideological Aspects of the Liberation Struggle," *Nature, Society, and Thought* 1 (1988): 201–19.

Union Brotherhood, Union Town: The History of the Carpenters' Union of Chicago, 1863–1987. By Richard Schneirov and Thomas J. Suhrbur. Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1988, 230 pages, cloth \$24.95, paper \$14.95.

For many years the field of labor history was dominated by an approach that focused on histories of organizations and institutions. In the early 1970s, a new approach, influenced by the British Marxist historians, swept the field. The new "social history" shifted attention from institutions to the individuals and groups comprising organizations like unions. New methods of study also emerged which displaced the reliance upon organizational records with a greater utilization of more popular sources and oral histories of rank-and-file unionists.

Schneirov and Suhrbur write a *social* history of an organization, the Chicago Carpenters' Union (The United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, UBCJ), thereby combining aspects of the old and new labor historiography. They also break convention by bringing their account up to the present, which enables them to address recent issues such as the struggle of Blacks, Latinos, and women to break into the trade and the Carpenters' withdrawal from the Washburn Trade School. These features, combined with a very readable style, make this a useful and enjoyable addition to the growing list of books on Chicago's workers.

The carpenters' union that emerges from this account is vastly more interesting and complex than the exclusive and conservative monolith it is commonly perceived to be. The authors identify the influence of socialists and anarchists in the union's formative nineteenth-century years and the ethnic basis for the union's political factions. We learn that "the grass-roots foundation of the carpenters' union in Chicago has always been the many neighborhood-based, ethnic locals that together comprised the Chicago District Council. . . The old union hall was a place for carpenters to socialize with fellow members between jobs. Many locals had small libraries and reading rooms and loaned money to members in need" (145–46). The character of the Jewish Local 504 (now merged into Local 1539) is nicely developed in a one-page side bar.

To account for important developments in the union's history, the authors sometimes resort to old-school, top-down explanations. For example, it was the "adroit, two-fisted leadership" of Martin (Skinny) Madden of the Steam Fitters Helpers Union which forged the unity of Chicago's building trades for a crucial struggle with the city's contractors during the 1890s. Similarly, the union's defeat of the employers open-shop drive during the 1920s is credited to the union's attorney for winning a conspiracy suit against manufacturers. These lapses stand out, however, only because Schneirov and Suhrbur generally succeed at providing more sociological explanations of history.

The central theme of this book involves the origins and development of the division between "inside men," the mill workers, and "outside men," those whom most of us would today think of as carpenters. The early nineteenth-century carpenter fashioned his windows, doors, moldings, and stairs in his own shop. He worked as much "indoors" as "outdoors," where the assembling of the building actually took place. Employers were loath to "rush" this indoor work because quality was important and few workers had the skill to do it. Gradually, however, more and more of the indoor work came to be done by machines in factory settings, which allowed semiskilled workers to perform the tasks (5). By 1908, the carpenters' newspaper noted that "all the doors, the window frames, the wainscotting, the ceiling and the flooring came ready to be put [in skyscrapers] with the smallest amount of trouble" (86).

The division of labor and deskilling of the indoor work produced a division in the industry's workforce between the mill workers and the carpenters. Could the same union represent both groups of workers

when the mill workers represented a threat to the job security and craft integrity of skilled carpenters?]

Schneirov and Suhrbur's portrayal of the growing tension between the skilled and semiskilled carpenters is excellent. The authors point out that despite that tension the Carpenters' Union was able to organize at least some of the mill workers between 1904 and 1920 (87–88). On this basis, the authors contend that the common perception of the Carpenters' Union as elitist and anti-industrial worker is inaccurate.

But Schneirov and Suhrbur also point out that by 1915 half the mill work had left Chicago. This is an important fact, but the authors have so narrowed their study to Chicago that their ability to pursue the meaning of capital's departure is limited. Did employers move those operations out of Chicago *because* their workers were organizing? Why were the Carpenters not able to meet the employers' flanking move with their own organizing campaign in the western states where much of the work was relocating? How did the westward movement of capital during the early twentieth century set the stage for the industrial union movement in wood products during the 1930s? Is it possible that what is really important about the struggle of Chicago woodworkers during the first decades of the twentieth century is best revealed in the intense conflicts between the UBCJ and the CIO's International Woodworkers of America (IWA) in the Pacific Northwest during the 1930s?]

By the last question I mean to suggest the following. There may have been two stages to the historical process by which wood-products workers were divided. The first stage, thoroughly described by Schneirov and Suhrbur, divided the workforce by skill level. But is there not a second stage, one which relocated the semiskilled fraction of the workforce to the western states? By the 1930s, didn't the different skill levels have specific and separate geographic locations? In other words, wasn't the workforce divided by space as well as by skill, which meant that organizing efforts had to overcome both dimensions of the separation? Organizing both fractions meant the UBCJ would have to overcome its antipathy for the semiskilled *and* deploy its considerable organizing resources to geographic regions which were historically foreign to it.

Schneirov and Suhrbur devote only a few pages to the CIO period, but had they given it the attention it deserves, I think we would see that the UBCJ wanted jurisdiction *over* the industrial workers, but it really did not want to organize them. Moreover, as Robert Christie

found in *Empire in Wood*, the legacy of the UBCJ's protectionism was etched in its organizational structure. That structure protected certain workers not only because of their skill level but also because they were concentrated in specific geographic locations that were traditional strongholds of the UBCJ.

But my observations on this point, whatever their merit, should not detract from the well-written and insightful case study Schneirov and Suhrbur have provided. Their social-history approach to the traditional subject of organizational and institutional development is imaginative and promising. It is a methodological approach to labor history that deserves further consideration.

Jerry Lembcke
Holy Cross College

Peace and Communication: Media Contribution to Worldwide Security and Peace. By Tapio Varis. San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad para la Paz, 1986, 300 pages, paper \$7.

Tapio Varis, Finnish scholar and peace researcher, has long been identified with studies that link peace promotion to media responsibility. In 1974 his documentation of the hugely imbalanced flow of television—from the United States to the rest of the world—helped give rise to what became a movement for a global restructuring of news dissemination (*Television Traffic—A One-Way Street?* Paris: UNESCO, 1974).

Recently available in this country is Varis's new book on peace and communication, published in Costa Rica, where Varis was for three years the rector of the University for Peace, a United Nations related institution that concentrates on environmental and peace studies. The book is a collaborative effort by some sixteen scholars from eight countries, and provides U.S. peace activists and students of journalism a remarkable opportunity to assess the ongoing struggle to alter contemporary media structures and their power to interpret the world.

The possibility of peaceful resolution of human conflict has occupied scholars and writers and theologians for as long as there

has been war. (Though I cannot forget my sociology professor's admonition that issues like peace and war were simply not appropriate topics for sociological investigation; they could not be "measured." I decided to become an "antisociologist.")

Spurred by the horrors of World War Two and the waste and dangers of a continuing nuclear arms race, institutes and academies and peace activists have increasingly turned their resources to the study of how negotiations can replace force. Sometimes, but not often enough, they have even taken up the study of the social and economic roots of war.

It is of course a mistake to identify the study of peace and the avoidance of war as though it were a separate "discipline." War is a catastrophe that can only be understood when examined in relation to its context—a society's cultural beliefs, patterns of social differentiation and class tensions, concentrations of political power, and the presence of economic interests and motivations. Some of the tensions in the peace movement of the eighties well illustrate the rocky shoals that stand between the yearning for peace and unwillingness to study and project the structural changes that are needed to make peaceful international relations possible.

Varis's book concentrates on one major segment of the larger context: the media. In calling attention to how the media influence the pursuit of international harmony, Varis builds on the work of the United Nations and UNESCO, which in recent years have vigorously formulated and advanced the idea of the press as bearing a responsibility to educate for peace, against war, and on behalf of the survival needs of people everywhere. It is a controversial concept, at least in the United States, where mainstream researchers have been reluctant to acknowledge that such a responsibility exists; it is not in conformity with the vaunted Western journalistic ethic of neutrality. And certainly the broadcasting and newspaper-publishing corporations and giant international news agencies have shown their revulsion at any kind of international mass-media declaration which would commit them to a peace agenda. The U.S. withdrawal from UNESCO is illustrative.

Writing from non-U.S. perspectives, Varis's collaborators provide detailed studies of how newspapers around the world help legitimate weaponspeak, enemy-imaging, and perceptions of "security." They also take up the matter of research traditions, asking, in effect, "Who will research the researchers?" For example, during the 1950s, when U.S. mass-communication researchers turned their

attention to issues of development in the poorer nations and to the techniques of psychological cold war, how was it that they neglected the armament culture?

A major contribution of the book is the attention it directs to institutional structures. In our time we have seen an incredible acceleration in information-transmission capability—much of it centered on the meshing of the satellite with the computer. Increasingly, this capability is vested in multinational media corporations which also have a stake in the armaments industry. Several essays in the Varis book examine how such structural conditions affect the “presentation of reality”—whether in the press, broadcasting, book publishing, film distribution, or school textbooks.

Peace and Communication is a useful text for students of journalism and mass communication and will acquaint them with the reasons behind the call for a New International Information and Communication Order. It could be coupled with some of the considerable empirical evidence of biased and propagandistic reporting in U.S. media, including Mark Hertsgaard's *On Bended Knee: The Press and the Reagan Presidency* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1988), and the publications of the Institute for Media Analysis, FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting), and New York University's Center for War, Peace, and the News Media.

Sara Fletcher Luther
Poughkeepsie, New York

White Violence and Black Response: From Reconstruction to Montgomery. By Herbert Shapiro. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988, 565 pages, cloth \$14.95.

This history of race relations and interactions in the post-emancipation era is more an analysis of a process than a chronological survey. The intricate relationship between racism, politics, and economics is well developed. Herbert Shapiro's own experience in the civil rights movement has no doubt contributed to his insightful understanding of the nature of race relations in the United States.

Racist violence is shown to have been an important and commonly

used tactic in maintaining white social and political domination. Through the use of numerous, well-researched examples, the nature of this phenomenon in the U. S. society is demonstrated. There are many examples often-overlooked by historians. The Danville, Virginia, and the Copiah County, Mississippi, episodes in 1883 are good cases in point. In both cases the critical issue was the attempt to fuse Black and white workers politically against the white Bourbon Democrats. The institutional violence and injustice committed against Mrs. Rosa Lee Ingram and her two sons in 1948 provides another excellent example of an often overlooked event which gained international support. In this case, Mrs. Ingram was sentenced by an all-white jury to be electrocuted for not submitting to the assault and forced sexual advances of a white man. After the white man grabbed her, Mrs. Ingram's seventeen-year-old son came to his mother's rescue and struck the white man, causing the man to release his mother and to drop dead. After a one-day trial, Mrs. Ingram and her seventeen- and fourteen-year-old sons were convicted for killing a white man. Because of the effectiveness of international support the Ingrams were released from prison and had their civil and political rights restored. A final example of a topic overlooked by historians is the 1949 vigilante style attack on a small group of concertgoers who had arrived early in Peekskill for a scheduled performance by Paul Robeson. It was not the attack itself (which included a cross burning), but the reaction of the subtle but pervasive fostering of racial violence that served as a cornerstone of racial oppression. Local officials and the F. B. I. ignored "the racial symbolism of the act," and the local newspaper called the event "anti-Robeson and anti-Communist rather than anti-Negro," shifting the guilt to acceptable targets that were part of the open agenda of the establishment, belying the actual agenda which included white supremacy.

The great strength of *White Violence And Black Response* is the thorough documentation of the horrendous violence unleashed against Black Americans by white individuals and institutions and the diverse strategies and tactics of the Black responses to such violence. From the exodus movement in the 1870s, to the antilynching crusade, to individual self-defense efforts, to building a myriad of effective organizational efforts, the Black response to white violence has been both varied and courageous.

Shapiro's successful attempt to center attention on acts of direct violence repeatedly and in a most detailed fashion dispels the myths

that Blacks' responses to oppressive violence have been passive and submissive. A shortcoming of this approach, however, is that it may leave the reader with the impression that Black initiatives for justice were never proactive but always a reaction to a specific act of white violence. So that while considerable attention is given to the Garvey movement, which emerged out of a period of intense racial conflicts signaled by the pogrom-like East St. Louis riot of July 1917, not a single word was written on the diversity of religious cults whose very existence represented the Black response to an entire cultural system which was historically rooted in racial violence. Such sects as the Crossbearers, who were mostly women; the Ordeal-by-Fire Disciples, who licked flames with their tongues; Daddy Grace and the radio artist, Mother Horne; as well as the Black Jews and the two Supreme Godsmen of the early 1930s, George Wilson Becton and Father Divine, are nowhere mentioned in the book. The movement of Father Divine is of particular significance to the theme of Black responses because in many ways it filled the vacuum left by the decline of the Garvey movement. While Garvey inspired Black race pride by merely saying that everything Black was superior and not inferior, Father Divine actually created a network of integrated heavens presided over by himself, a Black God.

He encouraged his followers to register and vote. The potential might of his voting bloc was of such significance that candidates of every caliber sought his endorsement, including Fiorello La Guardia in the 1933 mayoralty election of New York City. Moreover, the political structure recognized the voting strength of his kingdoms and waived the stipulation that people use their given names as they registered to vote, and allowed Father Divine's followers to use such names "Mother's Delight," "Brother of Good Faith," and "Sister Who Stood by the Way." His followers, referred to as Angels and Disciples, were not just Blacks but whites from every social strata. Thus, in response to an entire cultural system based on racial violence, Father Divine created a society based on the fundamental principle of the brother/sisterhood of humankind by bringing people of different races to live together and work in peace under his will.

While Shapiro's approach to the historical tribulations of African-Americans is direct and hard hitting, another shortcoming could be a heavy reliance on the traditional Eurocentric scholarly perspective in providing an analysis of the "accommodationist" strategy of Booker T. Washington. After demonstrating that "at a number of points in his career Washington dealt explicitly with the theme of

violence in black-white relations,” Shapiro proceeds to portray Washington as one who had “been injured by racism” to the extent that he “lacked the capacity for righteous public anger against injustice.” Rather than viewing Washington’s approach as a nonviolent one based on building human character and developing institutions, which is in some ways similar to the approach of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Shapiro argues that “the power to lose his temper with a white man had been schooled out of him.” Thus Washington’s philosophy of self-restraint and moral discipline is juxtaposed against losing his temper as the most appropriate form of conduct for a Black man during the times of unprecedented lynchings of African-Americans. That the Tuskegee Institute continues after more than one hundred years to be one of the most important institutions of higher learning for Black Americans is somewhat attributable to Washington not losing his temper with a white man.

A more balanced coverage of the post-Civil War period and of Black women’s organized efforts to resist racists violence would strengthen Shapiro’s argument considerably. The role of populists, for example, is dealt with in insufficient detail as are the political maneuverings of the 1870s when most of the reforms of Reconstruction were gutted. Also, while the efforts of well-known Black women activists such as Ida B. Wells and Mary Church Terrell are discussed, the tremendous role of women in the struggle against racist violence is minimally treated. For instance, the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs (NACWC) spread over the progressive political scene during the 1890s and the early twentieth century with the motto “Lifting As We Climb.” By 1916, 50,000 women in 28 federations and over 1,000 clubs were members. They defined the primary function of their clubs as an ideological as well as an activist defense of Black women and men from the ravages of racism. Yet, the only mention of NACWC by Shapiro is the support it provided to the Ingram case (mentioned above) during the post-World War II period.

Despite these criticisms of Shapiro’s approach and methodology, *White Violence And Black Response* represents a brilliant synthesis of a vast body of research and scholarship on racial violence and makes an outstanding contribution to both U.S. and African- American historiography.

Wylie Jones and Michael H. Washington[
History and Geography Department
Northern Kentucky University

"My Song is My Weapon": People's Songs, American Communism, and the Politics of Culture, 1930–1950. By Robbie Lieberman. Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1989, 201 pages, cloth \$23.95.

This story was waiting to be written. Robbie Lieberman, the director of the Peace Studies Program at the University of Missouri, has written a spirited and scholarly account of the relationship between the U.S. Communist movement and the folk music revival of the 1940s and 1950s. It is for all of us who have wondered how Pete Seeger came to do what he does or who have sung "Joe Hill" on the picket-line. Her book describes how Communists in the United States began to rediscover and transform U.S. folk music in the 1930s and 1940s. They believed that folk music was the key to creating a popular, democratic, and radical culture. Lieberman places this cultural process in the context of Communist politics during the Popular Front period and World War II. She then traces the changing character of U.S. politics in the 1950s as the period of the New Deal and the Roosevelt coalition gave way to the Red scare and the cold war.

What is most important about this book is that Lieberman shows that not only did the Communists popularize folk music and use folk-inspired forms to get across their political message, but that it was out of the theoretical debates and discussions in the Communist Party that folk music was made accessible to people in the United States whose own experiences and backgrounds were often very far removed from the rural communities in which this music was originally created.

Lieberman begins her story in the mid-1930s with an account of Communist Party organizing among musicians and composers, forming the Composers Collective and the Pierre Degayter Clubs. Members of these organizations included Elie Siegmeister, Marc Blitzstein, Aaron Copeland, Charles Seeger, and Herbert Haufrecht, all of whom later became significant figures in U.S. music and musicology. They were searching for an appropriate form for "proletarian" music, much like the writers and poets who were creating "proletarian literature" during the same period. Some found a model for a new radical music in the songs then emerging in the Communist-led struggles among miners in Appalachia, tenant farmers in Arkansas, and textile workers in Southern cotton mills.

In 1936, in response to the victories of fascism in Germany and

Italy, the Communist International called for Communists to ally themselves with their former enemies among “bourgeois” democrats in order to defeat fascism. In the cultural arena, this meant that Communists were to look to a “progressive” national-democratic tradition in their own countries. In the United States, folk singers in the more traditional sense, such as Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly, joined with politically oriented musicians such as Pete Seeger, Lee Hays, and Sis Cunningham to write and sing songs for Communist Party events and rallies for the Spanish Republic and the labor movement. Out of this intertwining of political struggle and musical change, folk and folk-oriented songs came to be the most important musical expression for the left in the New Deal and World War II periods.

At the end of the war these singers created an organization, People’s Songs, dedicated to using “folk music” to advance left-wing, “progressive” political causes. The first issue of the *People’s Songs Bulletin* was published in 1946 and it continues to this day as *Sing Out* magazine.

The postwar era and the 1950s, however, were very different from the earlier period. At the same time as their variety of folk music was reaching wider audiences, the repression, combined with a turning inward on the part of the Communist Party itself, made the People’s Songsters increasingly marginalized. Indeed, by the 1950s the blacklist denied most left-wing performers access to concert halls, stages, and the ever-more-important mass media. The People’s Songs movement became a repository for the continuation of a left-wing culture, and the songs helped what remained of the left get through the hard times. The influence of People’s Songs was strong enough, and the appeal of the music powerful enough, so that when a new left emerged in the civil rights and student movements of the late 1950s and the 1960s these activists turned toward the personalities and songs of the earlier period for inspiration. The oft-told story of young Bob Dylan’s pilgrimage to Woody Guthrie’s hospital bedside is symbolic of what was a more widespread homage paid to the People’s Songs movement on the part of popular folk performers in the 1960s.

Lieberman argues persuasively that the relationship between People’s Songs and the Communist movement is key to understanding the role of the Communist Party in the culture of the United States and the continuing popularity of folk music. Central to her analysis is the concept of hegemony developed by the Italian Marxist

theorist, Antonio Gramsci, and Laurence Goodwyn's definition of "movement culture," which Goodwyn developed in his work on U.S. populism. Both Gramsci and Goodwyn develop the idea that radical movements need to develop their own culture, in opposition to that of the dominant classes. For Gramsci and Goodwyn this counterhegemonic or "oppositional" culture is central to the development of any serious political challenge to the established order. Lieberman uses these ideas to explain why the People's Songs movement was a critical link between the Communist Party and its intended political audience, at times appealing to a broader constituency than more narrow political appeals and programs. Indeed, People's Songs emerges in this book as one of the more important linkages between the Communist movement and the non-Communist population during the 1940s and the 1950s.

Yet all too often the relationship between the Communist Party itself and the Communists and the Communist sympathizers who made up the People's Songs movement is simplified. Lieberman allows herself to be too influenced by the view, all too common in recent radical analyses of Communist Party history, that there were "good" Communists and "bad" Communists in the leadership of the CP. The "good" Communists were broad-minded, nonsectarian, Popular Fronters, while the "bad" were sectarian, Russophilliac, and authoritarian. This dichotomy leaves unanswered why different sectors within the Communist movement developed differing perspectives on U.S. political life; why some sectors remained totally alienated from U.S. society while others came to find some space in U.S. culture for a left-wing outlook.

The very success with which People's Songs were able to reach a wider audience than the left could also neutralize the political impact of the songs. Thus Woody Guthrie's "This Land is Your Land" has found its way into public school song books with its more radical verses excised. [

Furthermore, it is a problem for the recent historical celebrations of the Popular Front that the "sectarians" understood the strength of U.S. imperialism and its world role in the post-World War II period better than their "nonsectarian" left critics. The Popular Fronters often, as Lieberman points out, held illusions about the beneficial qualities of U.S. capitalism left over from the New Deal and the alliance against fascism. If the New Left owed much of its free-wheeling nonsectarian style to the "old left" of the Popular Front, the trenchantness of its critique of U.S. imperialism and its

sense of alienation from U.S. political culture has more in common with the views of the Communist “hard-liners.” My argument, here, is that it is necessary to go beyond these dichotomies if we are to truly gain an understanding of the history of the left in the United States, including that of the Communist Party.

This book is a welcome addition to the growing body of scholarship which breaks down the old cold war analyses and explicitly argues for a more complex understanding of the history of the Communist Party. It places the history of the folk-music revival and its role in U.S. culture in its proper political and historical context. Today one can hear Latin American *Nueva canción*, African-American rural blues, and Celtic traditional music in most major cities. Each of these forms of folk culture has a popular audience, much of which is *leftish* politically. It is important for all of us, musicians, listeners, and scholars alike, to know how we came to have these cultural opportunities and the role of the left in fighting for a multicultural, democratic musical tradition in this country.

Paul C. Mishler[
History Department
Vassar College

REPLACES AD PAGE.