

# NST

## Nature, Society, and Thought

a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

Vol. 4, Nos. 1 and 2

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### NST

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Nature, Society, and Thought

**NST**

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**a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism**

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## EDITORIAL

The publication of the complete works of Marx and Engels in their original languages, with notes and all auxiliary materials, is once again in peril as a result of action by the ~German government.

The project, first began in 1927, was halted in 1937 by the Nazis. The effort was resumed in the German Democratic Republic and the first volume was published in 1972. Forty-three volumes, about one-third of the entire projected collection, have now been published under the title *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels Gesamtausgabe (MEGA)*.

In June 1990, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) donated 27.5 million German marks to the International Marx-Engels Foundation organized earlier that year for continuation of the work. The German government seized the funds on the grounds that permission for the transfer by the PDS had not been sought. The PDS has apologized for not having followed the proper procedures and has indicated its readiness to fulfill all necessary formalities. The German government, however, will not allow the funds to be used for the MEGA project.

The matter is arousing widespread international concern. In Japan, a committee to support the project has been founded and it already has 428 members at various universities and research institutions. Letters of protest against blocking the MEGA project should be sent to the ~Federal German President Richard von Weizaeker, in care of the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, 4645 Reservoir Road, Washington, DC 20007-1998 (with a copy to *NST* if you wish).

### **1991 Korean-U.S. Scholars Interdisciplinary Colloquium University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 11–13 October 1991**

The colloquium, sponsored by Korean Association of Social Scientists and the Marxist Educational Press, will provide an unusual opportunity for faculty and students in the United States to discuss problems of mutual interest with scholars from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The colloquium program will include sessions on problems of scientific methods, Korean-U.S. relations, and cooperation between scholars of the United States and the DPRK. Papers or proposals for papers should be sent to Professor Gerald M. Erickson, Department of Classical and Near-Eastern Studies, 310 Folwell Hall, Univ. of Minnesota, 9 Pleasant Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455.  
spine

# **Adventures of a Marxist Outlaw: Feyerabend and the Dialectical Character of His Philosophy of Science**

**Kurt Jacobsen and Roger Gilman**

The publication of Feyerabend's *Farewell To Reason* (1987) revives controversies attending his previous work, particularly *Against Method* (1975) and *Science in a Free Society* (1978a). In this essay we argue that Feyerabend, despite his disavowal, is best understood as a "Marxist outlaw," and that his critical project is best understood by comparison with the Frankfurt School philosophers, another band of "Marxist outlaws." We argue that Feyerabend's arguments accord with Max Horkheimer's dictum that "in genuinely critical thought, explanation signifies not only a logical process but a concrete one as well," and that while "rational knowledge does not controvert the tested findings of science, unlike empiricist philosophy, it refuses to terminate with them" (Horkheimer 1972, 211).

A Marxist outlaw, according to Gouldner, is a sympathetic critic of Marxism who believes that Marxism is a powerful source of demystification yet is aware that Marxism may become a form of mystification itself (1976, 21). A Marxist outlaw "negates the negation," as Hegel or Adorno put it; rejects the reification of Marxism, to use Marx's and Lukács's terminology; he or she uses dialectic to study dialectics (Feyerabend 1975; 1978a, 191). This type of consistency, this universalness of procedure, gained for Feyerabend the silly epithet of "class-peripheral parasite" from certain scientific "leftists" who evidently believe that Marxism cannot lead to the same suppression of the presence of the speaker in his or her speech or of the observer in his or her observations as does the positivistic version of empiricism (which disguises our "attributions" as "properties" of the world, and transforms "contingencies" into "necessities").<sup>1</sup>

The "Marxist outlaw" rejects the absolute status of Marxism, or of any theory of rationality, for that matter, but does not regard the

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contradictions of Marxism as a necessarily deplorable condition—as a defect *per se*. The Marxist outlaw repudiates “normal science,” in the sense defined by Thomas Kuhn, as marking “precisely the abandonment of critical discourse” (Kuhn 1962). We argue here that Feyerabend promotes a strategy (a practice) in the form of an epistemology (a theory) which requires science to remain rigorously critical in a sense consistent with that of the Frankfurt School, and that he advocates use of internally subversive tactics as a “medicine” (a suggestion he picks up from dadaism) in order to achieve this goal. But his tactics of internal subversion differ in both troubling and illuminating ways from that of Critical Theorists who favor a fostering of external criticism. Habermas, for example, aims to reform the institutionalized “speech situation” within which scientific theories get debated, causing them to be subjected to alternative forms of rationality which will nourish the emancipatory project. But the shared goal of emancipation (if not specific tactics) animates the work of Feyerabend and the Frankfurt School critics.

Feyerabend’s work has not been sufficiently appropriated by those who labor on the left or, for that matter, even adequately understood in many quarters. In part, this is due to his acerbic prose and dadaist attitude, deliberately tempting readers to dismiss him as an anarchist” — though he cautions readers that he is actually a “flippant dadaist” rather than “serious anarchist” (1975, 21). Despite his lacing of his work with approvingly cited quotes from Lenin, Marx, Trotsky, Mao, and Althusser, his aversion to de rigueur Marxist terminology may not have endeared him to scholars to whom his work ironically is most closely akin.

Of the three main schools of Western (nonscientistic) Marxism,—(1) the Hegelian historicism of Lukács, Korsch, and Gramsci; (2) the Marxist humanism of Lefebvre, Sartre, Kosic, and Petrovic; and (3) the Critical Theory of, particularly, Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas, it is the Critical Theorists with whom Feyerabend’s views most clearly coincide. For the historicists, “there is something problematic in the fact that capitalist society is predisposed to harmonize with scientific method,” and Lukács points out that analytic positivism’s habit of breaking wholes into parts and then reifying them into “social facts” reflects the alienation and reification endemic to capitalist societies (Lukács 1971, 7). So historical materialism should be the “counterpoise” to positivism’s habit of converting contingencies to necessities. The humanists, on the other hand, are inclined—as is, perhaps, Habermas—toward a dualism of sciences: social sciences



requiring a hermeneutical method while physical sciences, in another tidy category, require an epistemic one. But it is comparisons with the Critical Theory group within Western Marxism that interest us most.

In what follows we shall (1) explain why Feyerabend's self-description as a dadaist is ultimately misleading (though initially instructive); (2) demonstrate not only the similarities of his and the Frankfurt school's critique of scientific rationality but show how both critiques stem from similar "emancipatory" projects; and (3) explore the scientific and social implications of their differing tactics by contrasting Feyerabend's work with that of Jürgen Habermas.

### ***Science and the structure of domination***

Alvin Gouldner summarizes the view, argued both by Feyerabend and the Critical Theorists, that there is an inevitable "politics of science"

not only in the trivial sense of who gets to be the government's science adviser but in the more profound sense of how diverging views are brought to a consensus, when and if they are. This means that the structure of domination will be found at the boundaries and limits of a culture of rational discourse. (Gouldner 1976,21)

In essence Feyerabend argues that the "mode of conception" in science is heavily dependent upon the "mode of producing" science—that is, institutions shape and confine the expressions of ideas. This proposition is not in itself controversial. For instance, in his study of the rise of science in England, Robert Merton emphasized the crucial role of the rising merchant class, which valued science and its technology as power-augmenting devices, believed in perpetual progress, and favored science as an advantageous solvent of aristocratic class domination (Merton 1938; also see Russel 1983). And Joseph Ben-David notes that scientists of the time, rather than place themselves at odds with the social structure, chose the path of least resistance in order to "fit in."

Under the conditions of ideological impasse that were reached in England in 1640, scientists found themselves in a situation in which it was increasingly useful to adopt Baconianism as a strategy of survival.... During the period from Puritan Revolution to the Glorious Revolution, natural science served as a symbol of a neutral meeting ground. Official support of science in France and elsewhere on the continent came from

absolutist conservative rulers. The insistence on the strict neutrality of science and the specificity which made it accessible only to experts was, therefore, a condition for the freedom of scientific enquiry. (1971, 74, 86)

The nascent Royal Society prohibited discussion of politics and religion. Lewis Mumford points out that a key effect of this policy was that “it not merely discouraged the scientist from critically examining his own metaphysical assumptions, it even fomented the delusion that he had none—a theme only recently, and reluctantly, opened up” (1970, 115). That the reductionist and mechanistic features of science were largely derived from religious presuppositions of order (Newton’s image of God as Divine Watchmaker, Kepler’s metaphor of the Music of the Spheres to express the harmony of the planetary system) was rapidly obscured in the wake of mounting technical successes. Scientists strove, as Lord Kelvin urged, to advance knowledge “one more decimal place,” substituting evolutionary optimism for any analysis of the relation of their activity to the social forms in which it occurred.

Feyerabend’s critique of this science is contained succinctly within his account of science as a social institution in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries:

In those years science was a liberating force not because it had found the truth, or the right method (though this was assumed to be the reason by the defenders of science), but because it restricted the influence of other ideologies and thus gave the individual room for thought. . . . The methods and achievements of science were subjected to a critical debate. In this situation it made perfect sense to commit oneself to the cause of science. *The very circumstances in which commitment took place turned it into a liberating force.* (1978a, 75)

Feyerabend argues that there is nothing inherently liberating in science or any ideology. They start deteriorating when they become successful, when they have driven other opponents from the field. Feyerabend’s elemental rule is that “no ideology or way of life is so perfect that it cannot be improved by consulting alternatives” (1978a, 138).

Feyerabend argues, citing Marx (among other sources), that facts are constituted by older ideologies whose origins have faded from awareness, and that prejudices are more effectively exposed by contrast than

analysis (see 1975, chap. 17; 1978a, 138, 146). Hence, he urges that obsolete theories be revived and contrasted rigorously with reigning theories in order to flush out the presuppositions and ideological components of the latter when investigators suspect hidden barriers to further knowledge (1978a, 138). Feyerabend does not recommend this procedure under all and any circumstances “but as a ‘medicine’ that may be withdrawn when conditions change.” Of course, some theories or paradigms will be judged superior for certain purposes of inquiry; the criteria for choice among paradigms are lodged in the “universal intent” (Polanyi) and the intersubjectively validated norms and procedures of the scientific community. But this depiction circles back to the point at which Feyerabend and the Critical Theorists commence their critiques. “By the objectivity of the data then,” Ian Barbour observes, “we can only mean its reproducibility within a scientific community sharing a common set of assumptions and concepts” (1963, 64).

The early Frankfurt scholars were alert to the implications. In the 1930s, the heyday of logical positivism, Max Horkheimer noted:

Because of existing conditions, the prevailing practice of science is in fact cut off from important insights and is outdated in form. The judgment on how far the total structure of science and the condition of individual sciences correspond to the knowledge now available is itself a complicated theoretical problem and cannot be decided once and for all. (1974, 34)

The problem concerns Mannheim’s paradox that the very principles in light of which knowledge is to be criticized are themselves found to be socially and historically conditioned, and Horkheimer implies that the paradox can be dialectically defused—though he fails to provide exact instructions.

In the dialectical theory, the fact that subjective interest in the unfolding of society as a whole changes continuously in history is not regarded as a sign of error, but as an inherent factor of knowledge. . . . To realize an explicit interest in a future rational society the prerequisite is that the individual abandon the mere recording and prediction of acts, that is mere calculation; that he learn to look behind the facts; that he distinguish the essential from the superficial without minimizing the importance of either; that he formulate conceptions that are not simple classifications of the given; and that he continually orient all his experiences to definite goals without falsifying them: in short, that he learn to think dialectically. (1974, 162, 181)

Despite a self-portrait as a “flippant dadaist,” we find that Feyerabend offers procedures by which scientists can “think dialectically,” and we contend that *Against Method* is so saturated with a shrewd Leninist sensibility that it amounts to a *What Is To Be Done* for seditious lab personnel. To Mannheim’s paradox, he responds in a manner quite befitting Critical Theorists (who posit an “other”):<sup>2</sup>

We need an external standard of criticism, we need an alternative set of assumptions or, as these assumptions will be quite general, constituting as it were, an entire alternative world, we need a dream-world in order to discover the real world we think we inhabit (and which may actually be another dream-world) (1975,31).

We must invent a new conceptual system that suspends or clashes with the most carefully established observational results, confounds the most plausible theoretical principles, and introduces perceptions that cannot form part of the existing conceptual world. Counter Induction...always has a chance of success. (1975, 31)

### ***Science and subversion***

Feyerabend elaborates “only slightly bowdlerized versions” of actual historical developments in science to establish this point: “given any aim, even the most narrowly ‘scientific’ one, the non-Method of the anarchist [i.e., the proliferation of methods and hypotheses] has a greater chance of succeeding than does any well-defined set of standards, rules, or prescriptions” (see 1975, 41, 47, 204). Epistemological anarchism (dadaism) is antimonistic and antiabsolutist: it is methodically anti-Method (is against one comprehensive, foundational, or exclusive Method). According to Albert Einstein, the facts of experience do not permit scientists to let themselves be too much restricted in the construction of their conceptual world by adherence to a single epistemological system.<sup>3</sup> They must be “opportunists.”

Significant research always violates major methodological rules. Galileo’s heliocentrism, Newton’s gravitational theory, and Bohr’s atomic model do not satisfy positivism’s sanitary criteria for science. In the case of Galileo, the traditional Ptolemaic theory not only paraded superior empirical content (though not simplicity, elegance, and consistency), but the only visible means of support of his hypothesis, the telescope, was at the time so primitive it did not provide decisive evidence (Feyerabend 1975, 117). E. A. Burt says that: “contemporary

empiricists, had they lived at the time, would have been the first to scoff out of court the new philosophy of science" (1954, 38). The triumph of Galileo's view is attributable, according to Feyerabend, to Galileo's cunning rhetorical skills, which enabled him to attract support from a rising commercial class, elude challenges to his new law of circular inertia, and thereby nurture the life of an empirically vulnerable view which absurdly claimed that the earth rotates on its axis. If Popper's demand for "retaining the theory with greater empirical content" had prevailed, worthy challengers like Galileo, Newton, and Bohr would have been smothered in their speculative cribs.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they set up new research programs, assembled new kinds of factual domain, created new ontologies and methodologies.

Feyerabend's examples show the counterfactual nature of the positivist's *critical rationalism* (Popper's: "try to falsify a hypothesis by increasing its balance of empirical content over its theoretical content and avoid all ad hoc hypothetical explanations of empirical phenomenon") and *logical empiricism* (Carnap's: "be precise by constructing theories exclusively on instrumental measurements and avoid all vague, non-formalized and non-operational concepts").

As in love and war, all's fair in science—especially when the rules favor, and the resources accrue to, the status quo. According to Feyerabend, stealth, guile, and cunning may be necessary if a new or revitalized theory is to insinuate itself into the presiding framework, until that framework is (or is not) displaced by a cumulative process of subversion. When afforded a "breathing space," a challenger may fail due to genuine inadequacies, but a promising theory would have been permitted a margin of safety in relation to its more powerful rivals.<sup>5</sup> Unscrupulous aspects aside, Feyerabend's analysis resonates with Horkheimer's combative lament that "in regard to the essential kind of change at which Critical Theory aims, there can be no corresponding concrete perception of it until it actually comes about" (Horkheimer 1972, 220–21).

Feyerabend's debt to dialectics becomes even more clear when one examines the similarity of his orientation with that of non-Frankfurt School Marxist Louis Althusser:

At its moment of constitution, as for physics with Galileo and for the science of the evolution of social formations (historical materialism) with Marx, a science always works upon existing concepts, "*Vorstellung*." . . . It does not work on a purely objective "given," that of pure and absolute facts. On the contrary its,

particular labor consists of elaborating its own scientific facts through a critique of ideological facts. To elaborate its own “facts” is simultaneously to elaborate its own “theory” since a scientific fact... can be identified only in the field of theoretical practice. (1970, 184)

In justifying Counter Induction, Feyerabend cites Marxist formulations of uneven development and of unequal relations between entities for which forms of guerrilla warfare are prescribed. Galileo is the prototypical subversive hero and the “epistemological illusion” (wherein “the problems and facts of the older theory are distorted so as to fit into the new framework”) is the strategic vehicle (1975, 178).

Like Wittgenstein and Marx, Feyerabend recognizes the necessity of connecting his counterinductive (alias dialectical) method to “forms of life” within which the theory may display its highest degree of utility. Even if the challenger fails, the contest improves the “older” theory by subjecting it to rigorous critique. “Knowledge so conceived is not a process that converges toward an ideal view.” Feyerabend writes in anti-Peircean fashion, “it is an ever increasing ocean of alternatives, each of them forcing the others into greater articulation, all of them contributing, via this process of competition, to the development of our faculties” (1981, 107).

Is Feyerabend advocating proliferation of theories out of sheer mischief, as so many critics imply or accuse? Has he crossed the thin line between scientific fecundity and frivolousness (or fraud), reducing science to relativistic drive? We argue that neither accusation is warranted because there is a dialectical core to his argument. A liberatory social motive guides his analysis: he argues a “historical thesis concerning the use of theoretical terms by scientists.” We contend that his project aims at restoring historical tension to a one-dimensional concept of reason. For Feyerabend there is a distinct and perhaps discomfiting identity of objectives with those of a Critical Theorist he judges to be a “third rate intellectual.” Marcuse says that:

given reality has its own logic and its own truth; the effort to comprehend them as such and to transcend them presupposes a different logic, a contradicting truth. When historical content enters into the dialectical concept...ontological tension between essence and appearance, between “is” and “ought,” becomes historical tension, and the “inner negativity” of the object world becomes understood as the work of the historical subject—man in his struggle with nature and society. Reason

becomes historical reason. It contradicts the established order of men and things on behalf of existing societal forces that reveal the irrational character of the order—for “rational” is a mode of thought and action which is geared to reduce ignorance, destruction, brutality, and oppression. (1956, 112)

In the following sections we discuss what we term Feyerabend's “rhetoric of relativism,” his dialectical link with the Critical Theorists, and the question whether there is any necessary connection between Feyerabend's procedural recommendations and the process of democratizing the scientific community and society as a whole.

### ***The rhetoric of relativism***

Feyerabend cautions critics about the logic of his argument:

There is no attempt on my part to show “that an extreme form of relativism is valid.” I do not try to justify “the autonomy of every mood, every caprice, and every individual.” I merely argue that the path to relativism has not yet been closed. (1978, 41)

He has considerable sympathy, of course, for this path and he regards it as the way to growth of knowledge and of political freedom, but that is a different story (and an important one to which we shall return). Let us note here that Feyerabend's narrow goal is to demonstrate that the path to relativism is not irrational; his broader goal is to show the rationality of democratizing science.

The “specter of relativism” no doubt motivates much of the misreading of Feyerabend. He writes: “Many of the political (as opposed to aforementioned ‘semantic’) problems of being a relativist are entirely imaginary. The assumption that these problems only plague relativists and resist solution except within the framework of a particular tradition is simply slander” (1978a, 82). We must distinguish between *political relativism* which affirms that all traditions have equal right (to protective institutions and laws) and *philosophical relativism*, which asserts that all traditions are equally true. *The first form of relativism is not dependent on the second. Feyerabend avows belief in political relativism, not philosophical relativism* (1975, 67).<sup>6</sup>

Protective institutions are historically, rather than theoretically, based. Hence, discussions of “justice,” “rationality,” and “freedom” are never completely abstract. Since different traditions embody different forms of rationality (and unreason), and since any standard of comparative

judgment may be derived from one of the traditions themselves, the exchange between traditions is an “open” exchange, not a “rational” one. This procedure does not engage in a comparative evaluation of content (factual claims) by an agreed-upon (neutral) value, rather it involves an exchange of incommensurate values (opposing concepts of rationality).

Scientific rationalists, Feyerabend argues, have imposed “instrumental reason” on human society as if it were the only kind of reason, thereby preventing more direct and democratic means of problem-solving. Scientific rationalists are just one group aggressively protecting its perceived interest, even if they are unconscious of their action. Note, however, that Feyerabend’s prescription “anything goes”—epistemological dadaism—does not consist of thinking or acting without rules (without any methods).

I argue for a contextual account. But contextual rules are not to replace absolute rules: they are to supplement them. My intent is to expand the inventory of rules and also to suggest a new use for all of them. It is this use that characterizes my position and not any particular rule-content. (1978a, 164)

Feyerabend’s recommendations to proliferate methods is based on historical case studies which show how standard methods were suspended by successful scientists and which describe the procedures revolutionary scientists substituted. He demonstrates how Counter Induction reveals the limits of induction, how proliferation discloses the limits of falsification, how redefinition shows the limitations of meaning invariance, and so on.

Now if this is the meaning of the phrase “anything goes,” then Feyerabend’s self-description as a dadaist is misleading. Dadaists are against all methods (rules). “Dada,” says Hans Richter, “not only has no program, it was against all programs” (1965, 13). The power of dada is negative—to expose meaninglessness: this capacity exceeds its power to create new meanings. Dadaism incinerates wheat along with chaff. It is the surrealists, iconoclastic cousins of the dadaists, who legitimate alternative methods (rather than deny the value of rules altogether) and who are more aptly invoked here. *In this sense Feyerabend is a surrealist, in the Bretonian tradition (wedding a liberatory motive to the disciplines of art and science)*. In his plan the “mode of justification” (the accepted standard) is not so much suspended as it is expanded to include “modes of discovery” (nonstandard standards) which increase the chance for detecting the role of



human interests in all disciplines of research.

It seems that Feyerabend's scheme bears greater resemblance to the surrealism of Andre Breton than to the dadaism of Tristan Tzara. "Surrealism in its first intent," explains the commentator Ferdinand Alquie, "may be defined as the denial of everything; always beginning again":

it endeavors to extend human experience, to interpret it outside the limits and framework of a narrow rationalism. . . . Rapt hope in the future, interpretation of the marvelous as sign of a beyond . . . concern to lift all prohibitions to attaining "the life of presence, nothing but presence," hope of changing the world by liberating desire—such are the motifs which lead Breton to condemn writers who speak of asceticism or dualism and to cherish those who promise the reconciliation of man with the world and with himself. . . . Revolution is for Breton only one of man's tasks a task that derives its sense only in the light of its end, which must be thought or felt independently of means to attain it. (1972, 42)

With its promotion of unorthodox means to emancipatory ends, surrealism is more akin to the strategies and tactics of Feyerabend's epistemology. *Not only does Feyerabend's tactic increase the latitude for action within scientific communities; the exposure of interests (an increase in emancipation and proliferation) may "spill over" into society and stimulate new alignments between science and society.* The overall strategy is to make science so conscious of the historical ways in which scientific knowledge is constructed and employed within systems of domination (modes of production) that this consciousness will nourish a wider social struggle. Feyerabend shares this goal with Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Habermas.

The humbling of science entails the democratizing of science ("including Marxist science," according to Feyerabend). Like Mill, Feyerabend believes that a proliferation of hypotheses and methods will encourage the protective institutions of a democracy. Feyerabend is careful to explain that protective institutions by themselves will not guarantee a creative science and free society—rather it is the habit of proliferation of ideas and methods that will guarantee (if anything will) the understanding and freedom we seek.

***Feyerabend and Critical Theory***

The goal of Feyerabend's internal critique of science—to disclose hidden and contradictory premises within prevailing theories—overlaps with the goals of the external critique of science propounded by the Critical Theorists. Both Feyerabend and Critical Theorists attack self-deceiving images of the scientific enterprise and point out how asymmetrical power relationships (both within and encompassing the scientific community) are disguised—even if unconsciously. Horkheimer and Adorno note in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1972) that if the “truth” of scientific knowledge must be tested by its pragmatic consequences (in Peircean fashion), then it ultimately is evaluated by the technology it produces—and science becomes an “instrumental” form of reason. But what counts as “instrumental” (as a “practical” consequence, as “useful” technology) is tied to human motives.

Human interests vary, as does the power to implement one set of interests over another. If the economic and political institutions (the social formation within which the technology of science is evaluated) are controlled by a skewed market of conflicting class interests, then scientific knowledge indirectly and unconsciously, but all the more powerfully, furthers (“rationalizes”) the interests of those who dominate the “exchange process.”

Like Feyerabend, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that the Enlightenment view of reason was initially a truly liberating belief that eventually became a stumbling block to the pursuit of knowledge and of other human interests which Critical Theorists deem “rational.” (Perhaps Michel Foucault—a Critical Theorist, to be sure, though not of the Frankfurt variety—has best analyzed, in contexts ranging from prisons to hospitals how instrumental reason contributes to the domination of human lives. Like Marx and the Critical Theorists, Foucault finds that the genesis and satisfaction of motives is historical; not universal, or timeless [1965, 1975, 1977, 1978a.]

Marcuse singles out Auguste Comte's *Cours de philosophie positive* as heralding the view of science as “the only positive knowledge of reality,” and the view of human beings and social institutions as “neutral objects” governed by “natural necessity” (Marcuse 1956, 343). Marcuse noted that this belief induced “people to take a positive attitude towards the prevailing state of affairs” such that any reform introduced into the society, including the institutions for the creation of knowledge, must be sanctioned by “the machinery of the established order” (Marcuse 1956, 343). This implies that the status quo is intrinsically rational—a verdict which Critical Theorists have always

found empirically and philosophically unwarranted. Critical Theorists find that the ethic of utility is built into the concept of instrumental reason: people are valuable if they are useful (to whom?); they are useful only if predictable (for whose benefit?); and so knowledge is useful only if its application makes people useful, that is, makes them predictable means to ends (which they may have had no part in determining). The value of ends which express nonutilitarian values is denied by positivist science.<sup>7</sup> The form of activity—its utility—becomes more important than its social purposes and historical consequences. This trend can be traced through the development of epistemology from Kant to Nietzsche to de Sade.

Feuerabend and the Critical Theorists reject this outcome as deeply flawed and repugnant. They argue in parallel that the world of objects is a world of *our* objects, of human interpretations. The “given” is mediated by a consciousness full of needs—full of human interests—a consciousness which has a specifiable and contingent history, which is a product of a whole social practice, a practice which includes noninstrumental values. Objects can be comprehended fully in the context of a welter of conditions and realities, some of which are social and historical. The knowledge-seeking process cannot be severed from the historical struggle of humans with nature or from their struggles with one another without distorting or impoverishing knowledge. But positivist method mistakenly confers ontological necessity to things that are historically contingent—to relations between the particular and general, the individual and society.<sup>8</sup> *What is suppressed here is the potentiality and possibility of things.* An exclusive use of instrumental reason systematically ignores the alternative meanings subjects can give to their actions; it ignores the alternative ways of organizing social life (including the social organization of science); it denies that evaluating is an intimate part of describing and explaining.

Science becomes ideology when it masks contradictions which work to the advantage of dominant social groups. Claiming to be “neutral,” to represent “a common interest,” to deal only in “facts,” and claiming that reality is basically harmonious and “natural” are disguises or distractions from inequalities and contradictions. The degree to which a knowledge form either mystifies or adequately reflects social forms must be determined on a case-by-case basis using a variety of alternative rational methods and a variety of nonknowledge values. Any alternative method, no less than the method challenged, inevitably will be bound by culture and time. *But this does not imply a radical relativism.* It simply means that neither the objects nor procedures of knowledge are singular and eternal: they are products of activity, not of

contemplation (Marx 1971, 226–27). “The processes of knowledge involve real historical willing and acting as well as experiencing and conceiving,” Horkheimer notes. “The latter cannot progress without the former” (“Zum Problem der Wahrheit,” n.d., 247). Only the actual practice of alternative ways of living and knowing can serve as proof of their value: there is no way simply by theory to evaluate them. Any form of knowledge must exist as a product of some politically and historically bounded method. Knowledge inevitably inheres in practice, in forms of life. Horkheimer concludes that a full-blown classless democratic society will guarantee the existence of a variety of these practices—a variety Feyerabend promotes (1972, 190). However, Feyerabend will not wait for perfectly democratic institutions and practices; he exhorts us to undertake a piecemeal subversion of hegemonic institutions. We find Feyerabend’s strategy aligns with the Frankfurt School’s own view of knowledge as a product of “real historical willing and acting.”

Despite differing strategies, we find striking similarities in the emancipatory motives, dialectical analyses and in choice of “targets” of Feyerabend and the Critical Theorists. So then, is Feyerabend a closet Marxist? Are the Critical Theorists (particularly Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse) better understood as “epistemological dadaists”? We argue that Feyerabend can be understood in an illuminating and legitimate way as a “Marxist outlaw”—even if he rejects the label. In the next two sections, we examine tensions between dialectical method (as it has been practiced) and democracy; and examine the tensions between the tactics advocated for promoting democratic and progressive scientific research by Feyerabend and Jürgen Habermas. In so doing, we will highlight how Feyerabend can revitalize debates within Marxism.

### *Dialectics and democracy*

Horkheimer and Adorno dismissed “Soviet science” as another instance of “the triumph of subjective rationality,” while Marcuse rued the perversion of a supple dialectical framework by Party hacks. The Critical Theorists, as did Feyerabend, judged both Western and Soviet scientific practices as being fettered by their respective social formations. Despite the historical debasement of dialectics in the USSR, Feyerabend finds dialectical materialism to be an extremely congenial means of advancing knowledge. This view is manifest in his admiration for this following passage from Lenin’s *Philosophical Notebooks*:

Human knowledge is not (or does not follow) a straight line, but a curve, which endlessly approximates to a series of circles, a

spiral. . . . The approach of the human mind to a particular thing, the taking of a copy (= a concept) of it is not a simple, immediate act, a dead mirroring but one which includes in it the possibility of a transformation, of which man is unaware, of the abstract concept into fantasy. . . . It would be stupid to deny the role of fantasy, even in the strictest science. (Lenin 1972, 372–73)

If dialectics is a “many-sided, living thing,” then “anything goes.” The need for “tenacity was emphasized by those dialectical materialists who objected to extreme ‘idealist’ flights of fancy,” Feyerabend adds, “And the synthesis, finally, is the very essence of dialectical materialism in the forms in which it appears in Engels, Lenin, and Trotsky” (1970, 211). Yet Feyerabend refuses to pledge allegiance to dialectical materialism because it, like any method, can become an oppressive orthodoxy. It is absolutely essential to understand that Feyerabend is as much concerned that his argument (and tactics) promote democratic diversity as scientific creativity; in fact, more so. While Feyerabend believes that dialectical materialism does not necessarily smother science, as some accuse (Polanyi, for instance), neither does he find any “necessary relationship” between the practice of dialectics and the promotion of “human happiness.” Thus he places his bets on proliferation instead of any single method. Science is for Feyerabend a “tradition,” one among many; neither good nor bad as such, and useful according to the values by which its role and contributions are assessed. Proliferation precludes the use of science as a legitimizing device for the designs of Central Committees or corporate boardrooms because (he hopes, like Mill) that this will exert a stimulating and educational effect on citizens outside the labs. Feyerabend is an iconoclast; he intends to smash not science, but an atavistic image of science.

It is surprising that many critics miss Feyerabend’s declared values in their rush to take him at his word as a “flippant dadaist,” or worse. Even an otherwise insightful critic accuses Feyerabend of retreating towards “a conservative, relativistic position which tolerates everything, including the intolerable” (Krige 1980, 215).

### ***Science, democracy, and surrealism***

Feyerabend does not urge proliferation for its own sake; rather, he argues that the proliferation principle is compatible both with advancing the frontiers of knowledge and with enhancing human liberty and happiness. If one were to prove that proliferation conflicted with the humane social values Feyerabend espouses, clearly he would

sacrifice the former. (He notes, for example, that criticism is “dangerous unless we can show that a society enjoying criticism creates greater happiness” (1978a, 96–97). Anarchism is “excellent medicine for epistemology and the philosophy of science,” he says, but medicine “is not something one takes all the time”; yet there are times when one should “give reason a temporary advantage and when it will be wise to defend its rules to the exclusion of everything else” (1975, 22; see also 1978a, 32, 186 and 1987, 60). The minimum criterion for administering “medicine” is a researcher’s judgment that the action contributes to “a more enlightened and more liberal form of rationality” (1975, 308).<sup>9</sup> In the absence of an emancipatory interest, Feyerabend’s work would be repugnant (even to himself).

Feyerabend says he owes more to Mill than to Marx. Feyerabend begins as Mill does, by affirming that the social consequences of rationalism (or irrationalism!) are more important than any beliefs, doctrines, or practices concerning “truth” or “rationality.” Democracy, the right of people to arrange their lives according to their own traditions, is more valuable than any intellectual invention or endeavor. However, this does not mean that Feyerabend really means by “anything goes” that “everything stays,” or that he encourages pursuit of utterly trivial and perhaps odious lines of inquiry. In reviewing the Shockley-Jensen genetic hypotheses on race, Noam Chomsky expressed an objection applied by others to Feyerabend: “Of course, scientific curiosity should be encouraged (though fallacious argument and investigation of silly questions should not), but it is not an absolute value” (1973, 360). This is precisely Feyerabend’s point. He would reply that proliferation of hypotheses and methods would hasten the peeling away of ideological layers which obscure the social sources of motivation for trivial and pernicious lines of inquiry. The belief that critical discussion will suffice to deter naive commitments Feyerabend draws from John Stuart Mill, as does his proviso that pushing views to the limit to increase testability is a useful *command* only if it “does not conflict with more important commands elsewhere, such as *moral* commands” (1981, 145). Mill, eager to prick the “deep slumber of decided opinion,” drew the standard libertarian line at interfering with the liberty and harming the well-being of others: his key criterion for proceeding with an action was “utility *in the largest sense*, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being” (Mill 1971, 264).

Feyerabend’s alignment with Mill shows him to be a “dadaist” only in a most selective sense. To understand Feyerabend’s analogy of dadaism with “anything goes” as a preventive “medicine” for the

zealotry attending the embrace of a single method, substitute "Feuerabend" for "Tzara" and "science" where "art" appears in the commentary that follows:

As Tristan Tzara suggested, the aim of dadaism was to humiliate art, to put it into a subordinate place in the supreme movement measured only in terms of life. The moral and existential was considered to be superior to the merely aesthetic or scientific.... Unlike many Dadaists, Marcel Duchamp was not satisfied with the merely iconoclastic or anarchistic gesture, not satisfied with escaping from logic into the symbolic world of the irrational... he was... groping toward a radically new "language" of art that would inherently obey a whole structure of logic *that was yet to be invented*. (Couts-Smith 1973, 18)

Feuerabend, more akin to Duchamp than Tzara, is not so frivolous as to claim that everything the scientist spits or spills is science. His motive for action is certainly not that the individual please himself or herself, but rather Feuerabend wishes that the cumulative action of individuals contribute to the enrichment and "enfranchisement" of human beings in a rational society like the one envisioned by Critical Theorists. A crucial contribution to this "enfranchisement" is exposing and examining the influence of social structure upon scientific practice. Especially in this intensely competitive "high tech" era, when scientific resources are becoming ever more closely integrated within capitalist production structures, the "hidden substratum" of research should be exposed to a more informed citizenry and greater democratic control (see Dickson 1984, 310). And here the flippant dadaist and the serious Marxist merge in the tenacious testing of "what is prevalent."

Of course, the "groping" of a Marcel Duchamp surpasses the confident grip of lesser talents; there remains a difference between a "good" dadaist and a "poor" dadaist (though a devout dadaist doubtless would deny it). *The key point here is that in Feuerabend's work the "context of justification" is not suspended, as some critics infer, but rather is expanded to incorporate tests that will detect the role of human interests in research disciplines and scientific communities*. Some readers assume he is abandoning tests. Quite the contrary.

Therefore, we discard his "dada" label. Rather than the vacuous villainy of dada, the emancipatory intent of surrealism fastens inquiry to humane ends; and here Feuerabend and Critical Theorists fuse in a shared sensibility, one manifested in their investigations of both art and science. "The artistic universe is one of illusion, semblance, *Schein*," Marcuse argues, "However, this semblance is a resemblance to a reality

which exists as the threat and promise of the existing order” (1972, 60). Characterizing the Critical Theorists’ view of art, Bronner notes how the scope of the individual—his or her critical capacities and social consciousness—can be “broadened in unraveling of metaphysical and concrete alternatives”; science potentially can serve the same function (1975, 199). Feyerabend points out a procedure, counterinduction, and some avowedly devious tactics by which science can be pried out of the “affirmative culture.” The first step in creating an “emancipatory science”—whose design we cannot anticipate—is to make contemporary science conscious of domination, of its historical specificity, of its “insertion” into a mode of production so that ensuing debates stimulate democratic activity. Again, democracy is the key value.

When Lenin encountered ambitious souls attempting to apply Marxism like a universal solvent to any and all domains of knowledge, he reproached them for “Communist conceit”; conversely, scientists presumptuously promoting their own disciplinary codes into the political domain were reproved for “Chemical conceit,” “Physics conceit,” and so on. Why trust any explanatory “conceit”? Why allow an otherwise valuable mode of analysis to degenerate into a conceit? As Gouldner notes, Marxism exposed and illuminated the “limits of one form of *ideology*, that of idealistic objectivism; but Marxism itself also generated a materialistic objectivism and remains bound by the specific linguistic, nonreflexivity of a materialist ideology . . . ; ‘class interest’ was a special case that ignored other limits on rationality” (1976, 45, 51). Feyerabend would have conceits controlled by critical examination in the interplay of proliferating theories and methods; this will excavate conceits in any conceited scientific knowledge. Dialectical materialism is an intrinsic part of the scientific enterprise, yet should be barred from elevation to scriptural dogma. Feyerabend places his bets upon “Citizen’s Initiatives instead of on Epistemology.” He recommends that “duly elected committees of laymen” examine matters such as the theory of evolution, scientific medicine, the safety of nuclear reactors, and other issues so that “in all cases the last word will not be that of the experts but that of the people immediately concerned” (see 1975, 306 and 1978a, 96–97).

“Democratic relativism,” Feyerabend recognizes, will not materialize overnight. What Feyerabend’s “method” exposes is the role of power within institutional productions of knowledge. Feyerabend justifies the use of deceit in an “unevenly developed” milieu. Deceit is a regrettable necessity because people, as Mill writes, “are not more zealous for truth than they often are for error” (Mill 1971, 280). Feyerabend implicitly promotes “vanguardism” and promotes “cunning” as a



crucial tool of argument in cases where the opponents enjoy advantages in power. Ideally the practice of “democratic relativism” would approximate the conditions of “communicative competence” described by Jürgen Habermas, wherein scientific dialogue extends beyond competing scientific groups to the wider community which shares a “grammar of scientific discourse.” But we do not yet inhabit this world. People respond to what Marx called the (variable) “tasks of the epoch” with the material and conceptual resources at hand and do not choose or pursue those tasks “just as they please.” The viability of the vanguardist strategy is inadvertently endorsed in Ben-David’s observation that

there may be differences among individuals and groups in their perception of the breakdown (or exhaustion) of the paradigm [of science] due to either different location in the scientific community or to differences in their individual sensitivity. . . . It is possible, therefore, to envisage normative variation leading to as fundamental a change as revolution but issuing from the feelings of frustration and search for innovation by *only a small portion of the community* (emphasis ours). (1971, 110)

Feyerabend’s tactics nicely fit this situation. Once a group pries its view, by hook or by crook, into the scientific arena, “what changes, and how, is now either a matter for historical research or for political action carried out by those who participate in the interacting traditions” (Feyerabend 1975, 136). Despite the historical testimony to its usefulness, the role of deceit as a tactic remains troubling in that history also records how noxious means can pervert good ends.

While we have shown that Critical Theorists and Feyerabend share a purpose and strategy, we will now show that it is over tactics that they most dramatically differ. Finally, we will compare the implications of Feyerabend’s and Habermas’s dialectical tactics.

### ***Habermas and Feyerabend: dialectical tactics***

Like Feyerabend, Jürgen Habermas argues for a view of science that surpasses (and exposes flaws within) instrumental reason, and ultimately contributes to emancipation—to the making of history “with will and consciousness.” (Albrecht Wellmer describes Habermas’s project as “struggle for the critical soul of science” [1974, 53].) Habermas is as concerned with the degeneration of Marxist science into “strict deterministic explanations and technocratic management” as he is with a similar degradation of Western positivistic science (see 1971a; 1971b; 1974; 1976). Surveying the growing interdependence of

science, industry, and state power, Habermas concludes that a positivist conception of science has been used as an ideology to legitimate the prevailing distribution and use of power (1979; 1971, 102–95). The spread of instrumental reason affects not only specific class interests but also the general “structure of human interests.” In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1971), Habermas shows how cognitive interests condition the possibilities and shapes of knowledge, and describes a variety of motives for inquiry. Beyond instrumental purposes, Habermas emphasizes a cognitive interest in a reflective appropriation of life, without which the interest-bound character of knowledge could not itself be understood. In other words (like Feyerabend), Habermas argues that we have an interest in generating knowledge which enhances autonomy without that result being a means to other ends. Habermas grounds this assertion, in Marxist terms, in material interests.

Habermas distinguishes three basic human cognitive interests (technical, practical, emancipatory), each posing different vantage points from which to constitute reality. Habermas promotes creation— though he does not say how—of an “ideal speech situation” in which to evaluate the role these forms of reason should play in social life and public policy. The goal is to “reach a consensus” about the definition and relative value of truth, freedom, and justice (1972a; 1972b). The key value, according to the Critical Theorist, is reflective reason, the emancipatory interest which guides (or evaluates) the practical and the technical interests. For the sake of progressive human values deemed “rational” by the Critical Theorists, constraint-free discussions of science, technology and public policy (among other activities) must be institutionalized. Habermas finds that science is safe for society only if it is *both* internally democratized *and* subject to external democratic scrutiny. Precisely as Feyerabend contends. And like Feyerabend, Habermas insists that only when there is more than one basis for rationalizing actions is there human freedom (let alone truth). In *Legitimation Crisis*, for example, Habermas notes that modeling social problems exclusively by “decisions theory” or “game theory” is to restrict value to the computational or strategic; it attempts quite seriously to make value “technical” in nature (1971, 130–42). The result is to remove the judgment of lay people from what really may be conflicts of values (between alternative forms of reason or between priorities of values) by spuriously characterizing them as conflicts about technical procedures.

Further, Habermas calls attention to an unresolved tension in the thought of Marx between 1) valuing the necessary (reductive positivism) and 2) valuing freedom (dialectical social studies) (Habermas

1976, 45). This tension stems from an ambiguity in Marx's concept of human "productive action" defined both as 1) necessary technical acts of survival and as 2) free, self-defining acts which actualize species-being. This tension was, in the Soviet case, resolved—until recently—in favor of scientism. The emancipation of subjects was conceptualized as a purely technical problem (requiring the development of the material economic powers of society, and so on) rather than as a process (of making what invariably are value judgments). Scientism, according to Habermas, afflicts societies because there is a systematic relationship between a "knowledge form" and the uses to which it is put (1971b, 47; 1974, chap. 1 and 2). The project of creating an identity for the species is viewed by positivists, East and West, as irrational activity or, if rational, instrumentally so. This verdict assumes that the invention of meaning (identity) is always pursued for the sake of material power or gain. But it is only in self-reflection (critical reasoning) that reason grasps itself as interested in motives of power-augmentation or self-development, or both.

Thus Habermas views populations, East or West, as living with a "rationality deficit" to the degree they lack freedom to exercise all forms of reason. That is why Habermas, like Feyerabend, calls for free science in a free society, for (implicitly) a theoretical pluralism. Paradoxically, even the best dialectician cannot install dialectical materialism as hegemony without degrading it; as Feyerabend urges, alternatives to dialectical materialism are necessary to keep it "honest." We know how Feyerabend counsels scientists to proceed tactically: through counter-induction and cunning. Now let us look for what Habermas recommends regarding "praxis."

The disparate tactics of Habermas and Feyerabend derive from their analytical strategies: Habermas critiques science by focusing externally on social institutional coercion while Feyerabend launches his imminent critique by training attention upon the claims of science with regard to its own alleged practices and internal standards. Both critiques, however, imply the need, indeed the social imperative, for struggle to democratically reform and/or transform institutions. For Habermas the immediate locus of the struggle is in the class and social structure; for Feyerabend, the locus is within the scientific community. *Habermas wants first to democratize society in order to democratize science, while Feyerabend will go either way, but assumes that the struggle in all likelihood must begin within science, whatever the external political conditions.* Feyerabend's tactics ironically require a vanguard of scientists. Habermas exhorts grassroots citizens' movements to arise, and suggests that political tactics are theoretically

undecidable—can only be discovered in the field of “practice.” Thus he makes no scandalous noises about employing deceit, yet tacitly he makes such a wide allowance that he might be “trapped” into endorsing Feyerabend’s strategy.<sup>10</sup>

In the absence of an external liberatory movement, scientists get no clues from Habermas as to how to behave—how to proceed against the odds. Feyerabend identifies the scientific community as the key site for subversion and democratization.

Feyerabend is neither a “class peripheral parasite” nor is he caught in the “dead end of dadaism.” His motives, strategy, and concerns are remarkably, if sometimes troublingly, consistent with the tradition of dialectical materialism. He presents the Marxist tradition(s) with a lively and provocative challenge, an “anarchist” challenge. He certainly deserves closer attention.

### *Conclusion*

It is a typical irony that the “village atheist” is revealed upon scrutiny to be more moral in behavior and attitude than those who rue him. Feyerabend neither preaches “science for the hell of it” nor does he damn science. Rational standards are not denied or ignored; rather the range of testability is expanded to include a scouring and scrutiny of human interests. Though Feyerabend aligns himself with Mill as a polemicist for democracy, we treat him here as a “Marxist outlaw” in order to highlight the value of his work for those interested in dialectics. We find no trace of cynicism here (except for theatrical effect), unless one wishes to dub his critical enterprise (which presupposes standards and values, emancipatory ones in fact) as a purposive “cynicism.” If so, this is the stuff of which Critical Theory is spun.

Nor is Feyerabend merely a mischievous commentator. He decries the contemporary tendency “to dwell on what *is*” while ignoring the serious question of “what *should be*.” This questioning in his view, should occur under “ideal speech situations,” but in their absence he tells us how we might proceed. “It is time for philosophers to recognize the calling of their profession,” he writes, “to free themselves from exaggerated concern with the present (and the past) and to start again anticipating the future” (Feyerabend 1981, 105, n3). It is not Marx’s eleventh thesis on Feuerbach; but it is not a bad approximation either.

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## NOTES

1. Feyerabend (1978b, 154), referring to an attack by J. Curthoys and W. Suchting.
2. For Feyerabend's account of his own intellectual journey and of the motive behind his caustic, playful writing style see chapter 21 in the 1988 revised edition of *Against Method*. Also see chapter 12 in his *Farewell To Reason* (1987).
3. Schlipp (1951, 683), quoted by Feyerabend (1975, 18).
4. See Feyerabend (1975, 204). Also see chap. 9 in *Farewell to Reason* (1987) for his comments on Galileo.
5. For discussions of examples see Feyerabend (1978a, part 1, chap. 5 and 6 and part 2, chap. 6 and 9). See also Feyerabend (1975, chap. 1, 3, 4, 6, 8–11, and 13).
6. See also "Notes on Relativism" in *Farewell to Reason* (1987).
7. See Horkheimer (1972, x). See Kolakowski (1972) for an account of all the versions of positivism.
8. The Critical Theorists note that at some points their critique of positivism is similar to that of Edmund Husserl (1970). See Marcuse (1974) and Horkheimer and Adorno (1972, 25–26). Feyerabend snipes at Husserl in *Farewell to Reason*.
9. Subject, of course, to "citizens' initiatives."
10. Feyerabend, somewhat grudgingly, but approvingly, notes a very similar analysis in Habermas's work, finding it generally congenial and fostering "open exchange" (1987, 29, n13).

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# **“Underclass” An Inquiry into Its Theoretical Status and Ideological Dimension**

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## ***Introduction***

As the general crisis of capitalism deepens, the solutions to the social problems generated by the recurrent cyclical and structural crises become increasingly ineffective, given the structural limits imposed by the requirements of reproducing the existing relations of production. This, in turn, increases the social demand for social-science models of reality whose ideological function is obfuscation and the establishment of political parameters for retrogressive social policies. This, we shall argue in this paper, is what is at work in the current practice of employing the term “underclass” to describe the Black poor in the larger metropolitan areas of the United States.

Using the theoretical framework deriving from the Marxist political economy of social classes, I will argue that the so-called “urban Black underclass” should be theoretically considered to be part of the reserve army of labor. As such, the “underclass” should not be viewed as an anomalous accretion of the capitalist class structure in the United States, but rather a phenomenon which expresses the fundamental tendencies of the capitalist accumulation process and its contradictions.

I will discuss some mechanisms by which the reserve army of labor is formed in the context of the changing requirements of the capitalist accumulation process in the United States. This will then create a basis for examining the theoretical status of the term “underclass” and its ideological ramifications.

## ***Political economy of social classes and their extended reproduction***

In Marxist political economy, social classes are determined by the division of society into objectively antagonistic groups, based on relations to the means of production. No matter how complex and

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detailed the social division of labor is, it is the relations to the means of production that establishes the basic parameters for the existence of social classes. Furthermore, class relations are buttressed through political and ideological relations of domination, which are themselves conditions of existence of social classes and their reproduction in a concrete social formation.

The theoretical practice following from this conception of social classes means that social classes are not to be equated with income strata or other "indices" of socioeconomic status. These are the structural "effects" of class determination under the exigencies of capitalist production and its organization of the labor process.

Classes do not exist in a pure form within a given mode of production. Rather, they exist in a concrete form within a social formation consisting of several modes of production under the domination of one of them. In a capitalist formation, the primary classes are workers and capitalists, but the concept of "social formation" means the existence of a host of other social groups, which immensely complicates the task of class analysis. Despite this, if a capitalist society is to remain so, it has to reproduce the capitalist and the worker.

The process of reproduction of social classes involves: the reproduction of class "places" and the reproduction of the class "agents" who occupy the class "places" (see Poulantzas 1975, 28). In bourgeois social science, it is the reproduction of class "agents" through education and training that is often regarded as the determinant of "class standing." Furthermore, empirical indices based on the characteristics of individuals are usually used as "measures" of social "class." To be sure, one can conceive of an instance in which a person trained as an engineer establishes a company, thereby becoming a capitalist. But this proves nothing from the point of view of determination of class "places." For in order for the person to be a capitalist, there have to be workers whose unpaid surplus labor-time is appropriated in the form of profit.

The empiricist conception of social classes which emphasizes attributes of individuals reached its most absurd level in the fifties and early sixties, with the advent of the theories of the middling of the class structure (see, for example: Whyte 1956; Mayer 1959; Lenski 1961; Goldthorpe et al. 1968a, 1968b, 1969). These theories had it that social mobility engendered by post-World War II prosperity and the diffusion of middle-class life styles had greatly expanded the size of the "middle class," relative to the "working class." The latter was regarded as being made up largely of manual workers, while the "middle class" consisted

of white-collar workers. Today, while most bourgeois social scientists are not as enthralled by the “middling of the class structure” thesis, they still continue to use the same vulgar conceptualization.

In contrast, the Marxist theory approaches the question historically. That is, social classes are constituted initially by the historical process of the separation of a group of people from their means of production. Once the primary classes of a capitalist formation are established, it is the relations of production corresponding to this mode that exert a decisive influence on the further development of society. Characteristically, some outmoded relations are dissolved, while others are adapted to the new requirements of accumulation. In this sense, slavery in the Southern plantations had as its basis the initial development of capitalist production in the United States, through the methods of “primitive accumulation” (see Marx 1967, 1: part 8). With the further development of capitalism in the United States, the racism spawned in the area of slavery has come to be adapted to the requirements of the contemporary forms of a racist division of labor.

### ***Social classes, the reserve army, and primitive accumulation***

If it is true that the establishment of the capitalist relations of production required the separation of the worker from the means of production, it is equally true that this same process was the agency through which the reserve army of labor was initially constituted. Karl Marx referred to this process as “primitive accumulation,” and in very graphic language he wrote:

The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the aboriginal population, the beginning of the conquest and looting of the East Indies, the turning of Africa into a warren for the commercial hunting of black-skins, signalised the rosy dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic proceedings are the chief momenta of primitive accumulation. (1967, 1:751)

In the United States, the era of primitive accumulation saw the systematization of racism as a ideological component of the material practices accompanying the development of capitalism. Here, I am referring in particular to the following:

- a) the introduction of Africans as slaves in the Southern plantations and their subsequent marginalization into a relative surplus population;

- b) the conquest and annexation of the Southwest and the imposition of the migrant labor system on the Chicanos, who lost their lands through force and legal subterfuge and were reduced to a reserve army of labor;
- c) the conquest and isolation of the Native Americans into reservations;
- d) the conquest and annexation of Puerto Rico and the subsequent installation of a semicolonial system in Puerto Rico; the transformation of Puerto Rican men and women into a source of cheap labor for the sugar plantations in Puerto Rico and the garment industry in New York City.

The specificity of race in the initial creation of the reserve army of labor in the United States may be stated as follows. At the time of the incorporation of the European immigrants into the expanding economy, people of color already comprised an enormous relative surplus population. The main part of the European reserve army was in Europe, not America. The exception to this were those poor whites such as the Appalachians, who had been pushed into poor lands and mountainous areas following the expansion of the tobacco and cotton plantations (Wright 1978). It is no accident that these whites today form a disproportionately larger part of the “white” reserve army.

The existence of the “nonwhite” reserve army of labor has not only facilitated the creation of a racist division of labor, but also has far-reaching consequences for the working class as a whole. Among these consequences, we can cite the following:

- a) superexploitation of nonwhite labor, effected through such mechanisms as employment and wage discrimination (see Perlo 1975);
- b) depression of the wages of white workers;
- c) extension of management’s control over the labor process;
- d) weakening of the collective-bargaining power of unions and undermining of union-organizing drives;
- e) reduction of government expenditures aimed at mitigating the conditions of poverty among all people, particularly in the South—politically and ideologically, the costs of maintaining a larger reserve army among minorities have been minimized through racism and the racist division of labor.

***The reserve army, extended reproduction, and cyclical crises***

Beyond the formation of the reserve army through the brutal methods of “primitive accumulation,” capitalist society has to continuously reproduce both the active part of the working class as well as the reserve army. Marx writes:

The course characteristic of modern industry . . . depends on the constant formation, the greater or less absorption, and re-formation of the industrial reserve army or surplus-population. In their turn, the varying phases of the industrial cycle recruit the surplus-population, and become one of the most energetic agents of its reproduction. This peculiar course of modern industry, which occurs in no earlier period of human history, was also impossible in the childhood of capitalist production. (1967, 1:633)

Thus the reserve army has always been part and parcel of capitalist production and reproduction. However, beyond the fluctuations in the size of the reserve army which accompany the cyclical crises of capitalism, there is the long-term tendency for the reserve army to increase in the course of extended reproduction. On this count, Marx states that:

With the magnitude of social capital already functioning, and the degree of its increase, with the extension of the scale of production, and the mass of the labourers set in motion, with the development of the productiveness of their labour, with the greater breadth and fullness of all sources of wealth, there is also an extension of the scale on which greater attraction of labourers by capital is accompanied by their greater repulsion; the rapidity of the change in the organic composition of capital, and in its technical form increases, and an increasing number of spheres of production becomes involved in this change, now simultaneously, now alternately. The labouring population therefore produces, along with the accumulation of capital produced by it, the means by which itself is made relatively superfluous, is turned into a relative surplus-population; and it does this to an always increasing extent. (1967, 1:631).

As Marx points out in the above quotation, requirements of accumulation lead to technological change (rise in the organic composition of capital) and capital restructuring (changes in all spheres of production). These processes, in turn, tend to oust an ever-increasing

number of workers from the productive process. The operation of these processes has accelerated with the development of state monopoly capitalism and its aggravation of crisis phenomena such as the constant inflationary pressures (monopoly price-formation), capacity underutilization, unemployment and underemployment, monetary crises, fiscal crises, uneven development, and rivalries among capitalist nations.

***The structural crisis, capital mobility, and the reserve army***

So far, we have discussed three major mechanisms through which the reserve army is created and reproduced: the process of primitive accumulation; the “normal” economic cycles of capitalist production; and the process of extended reproduction under the influence of the technological progress. Today, we are witnessing the deepening of an ongoing structural crisis, whose adverse effects have been particularly severe for the racially oppressed groups.

With reference to this crisis, Victor Perlo writes:

A structural crisis is more prolonged than a “normal” business cycle and includes lasting structural distortion. Its resolution requires a qualitative change in the operation of capitalism.

The 1930s, with acute and prolonged economic disarray, was a period of such structural crisis. While the demands of war revived economic activity, the resolution of the structural crisis began before the war and was completed after the war. The main ingredient was the qualitatively new, greatly expanded level of government economic intervention, of state monopoly capitalism, which the capitalists required to save their social system. (1988, 444)

Victor Perlo enumerates the following “summary elements” that are particularly relevant for gauging the extent of the structural crisis in the United States:

the marked slowdown in industrial production;  
the weakening and decay of traditional basic industries;  
the marked imbalances in international trade and payments;  
financial frenzy and speculative excesses;  
the declining trend of the real wages and living standards of workers, alongside the unprecedented enrichment of the capitalist elite and their military and bureaucratic satellites (1988, 441–42).

The above manifestations of crisis phenomena are the workings of a complex set of factors which we cannot go into here (for an enlightened discussion of a number of these see Bluestone and Harrison 1982; Bowles et al. 1984; Perlo 1988). Below, we can enumerate the following as some of the more plausible explanations of the crisis: (a) the relative decline of the position of the United States in the world capitalist economy, occasioned by competition from Europe and Japan, not to mention Taiwan, South Korea, Mexico, and Brazil; b) national liberation of Third World countries, and the creation of peripheral capitalist nations, whose bourgeois class interests have not always been coterminous with the interests of imperialist domination. This was dramatized by the emergence of OPEC and the "oil crisis" of the early 1970s; (c) the existence of socialist nations was a critical counterforce in frustrating the imperialistic designs of imposing neocolonial dependence through military intervention and gunboat diplomacy; (d) the domestic upsurge of women, minorities, students, labor, and progressive groups—an upsurge which, among other things, increased state expenditures on programs designed to mitigate conditions of the working class (including the reserve army).

In the face of these contradictions operating at the domestic and international levels and their crisis manifestations, capital and its political surrogates in the form of Reaganism opted for a number of measures including: increase in military spending, tax cuts, accelerated depreciation, deregulation, budget cuts for social programs, shifting more responsibilities for social programs to states and local governments, and an escalation of the assault on labor and minority groups (see Piven and Cloward 1982; Palmer and Sawhill 1984; Katz 1986).

The capitalist class knows from its "class instinct" that it is labor that is the ultimate source of profits, despite the different forms which surplus value assumes. Therefore, the intensification of the assault on labor has become the chief method of resolving the structural crisis. In the repertoire of the methods used for this purpose, mobility of capital has become a very effective instrument for the "new class war." Barry Bluestone reiterates that corporate strategies have come to find out that:

the way to cut labor costs, add flexibility to the productive process, and reduce a tax liability was simple: move (or merely threaten to). Shifting capital from one corporate division to another was one tactic; disinvesting in one industry to invest in another was a second; moving from the North to the South was a third; moving from urban to rural was a fourth; and, of course, there was a rash of multinational activity with American corporations relocating domestic operations abroad. (1984, 36).

Capital mobility presupposes the existence of labor reserve areas, which are themselves a spatial articulation of the process of uneven development at the national and international levels. Monopolies constantly seek out labor reserve areas as part of the general strategy of counteracting the tendency of the declining rate of profit. The ongoing structural crisis in the United States has merely accelerated the process of capital mobility as well as exacerbated its effects on the conditions of the working class and its reserve component. Among these effects are the following:

- a) Enormous amounts of tax dollars are used to underwrite the costs of relocation;
- b) The threat to move is used to extract concessions in the form of reductions in wages and fringe benefits, and weakening worker control of the labor process;
- c) Due to the interdependencies of industries and commercial establishments concentrated in an area, the mobility of a major corporation triggers off a profound process of economic decline of the given area and the relative as well as absolute impoverishment of its inhabitants. This is all the more true when the declining sources of revenues for the local governments reverberate politically in the form of fiscal crises. Furthermore, these effects manifest themselves in an aggravated form in cities dominated by one industry such as the automobile industry in Detroit; the steel industry in Gary, Indiana; and the rubber industry in Akron, Ohio;
- d) Under the historic conditions of the racist division of labor in the United States, capital mobility affects nonwhite labor even more profoundly than its white counterpart.

In summing up the discussion in this section, we should state that the specific features capital mobility assumes reflect the contradictions of uneven development, in particular, in the way a given site becomes “obsolescent” from the viewpoint of monopoly profit. The temporary advantage that a monopoly gains by locating in a given area is soon eroded under the influence of monopolistic competition (nationally and internationally). In addition, a large corporation “locked” in a particular area tends to lose flexibility in its confrontation with the demands of labor. Costs of reproducing the ideological and political relations of domination also tend to increase—for example, costs of nurturing the



corporate image, political campaign contributions, and integration into the local power structure. These considerations prompt monopolies to plan their next move.

From the foregoing discussion, it is apparent that the structural mechanisms which reproduce the class relations of the capitalist social formation in the United States also reproduce the reserve army of labor or the relative surplus population. The latter segment of the population is essentially what a number of “mainstream” social scientists have come to refer to as the “underclass.” As we will show in due course, there is nothing new in this characterization, and its basic weaknesses are still the same as those given by the late Marxist writer, Hyman Lumer, in a little-known monograph entitled *Poverty: Its Roots and Its Future* (1965). In the discussion below, I will build upon Lumer’s criticisms by amplifying them along the line which takes into account current social-science theoretical practices and their underlying ideological predilections.

### ***The “underclass” and the theme of two Americas***

One of the first explicit references to the “underclass” as descriptive of those found at the very bottom of the U.S. class structure is to be found in Gunnar Myrdal’s *Challenge of Affluence* (1963). Here Myrdal talks of

a vicious circle tending to create in America an underprivileged class of unemployed, unemployables, and underemployed who are more and more hopelessly set apart from the nation at large and do not share in its life, its ambitions, and its achievements. (1963, 10).

He refers to this segment of the U.S. society as an “underclass” (14). Similarly, in *The Affluent Society*, John Galbraith uses the term “case poverty,” to describe the condition of those who were thought to be immune to ordinary forms of market-oriented intervention. Their poverty was said to be due to:

some quality peculiar to the individual or family involved . . . mental deficiency, bad health, inability to adapt to the discipline of modern economic life, . . . or perhaps a combination of several of these handicaps (1958, 325).

Besides individual deficiencies as an explanation of one category of poverty, Galbraith talks of “insular poverty,” which afflicts those who live in poverty areas or communities:

The poverty of the community insures that educational opportunities will be limited, that health services will be poor, and that subsequent generations will be ill prepared for mastering the environment into which they are born or for migration to areas of higher income outside. (327)

The theme of “two Americas” received its greatest popularity following the publication of Michael Harrington’s *The Other America* (1962). His characterization of the “new poor” is summed by the following statements:

the paradox that the welfare state benefits those least who need help most is but a single instance of a persistent irony in the other America. Even when the money finally trickles down, even when a school is built in a poor neighborhood, for instance, the poor are still deprived. Their entire environment, their life, their values, do not prepare them to take advantage of the new opportunity. (1962, 9)

Further down he continues:

The new poor of the other America saw the rest of society move ahead. They went on living in depressed areas, and often they tended to become depressed human beings. (1962, 10).

Running through the above characterizations of the “underclass” is the fundamental assumption that their poverty is an anomalous condition, rather than an expression of the structural tendencies endemic to capitalism. From this assumption derived the liberal credo that in an “affluent society,” even those who by virtue of their characteristics have fallen into the rut of poverty ought to be allocated a minimum level of income in cash or kind, in order to bring them up to some baseline level of well-being befitting an enlightened liberal society.

In his critical appraisal of these theories of the supposedly “new poverty,” Hyman Lumer offers some insightful remarks that are as cogent today as they were in the early sixties:

If the present differs from Marx’s day it does so, first of all, in that [the reserve] army is no longer fully absorbed during boom periods but persists throughout economic upturns, and in fact becomes larger in each successive one. Moreover, the current degree of displacement of workers by automation and other new techniques vastly outstrips that of Marx’s time. Today, for the first time in history, the rise of industrial production brings with it an absolute decline in the number of production workers. The

pronounced rise in living standards since the prewar years is thus not a permanent feature of our economy but a consequence of a particularly favorable phase in the history of American Capitalism. But now that the historical tendency has begun to reassert itself under the unprecedented conditions of the new technological revolution, the path from displacement to chronic unemployment to poverty looms before a growing number of Americans. (1965, 34–35).

***The "urban Black underclass" and the theme of two Black Americas***

The theme of "two Americas" in the early sixties is paralleled by today's theme of "two Black Americas." As early as 1965, Moynihan observed:

There is considerable evidence that the Negro community is, in fact, dividing between a stable middle class group that is steadily growing stronger and more successful and an increasingly disorganized and disadvantaged lower class group (1965, 5-6).

Andrew Brimmer lamented over the fact that:

A particularly distressing trend is evident in the distribution of income in the Negro community: the middle and upper income groups are getting richer, while the lowest income group is getting poorer. (1966, 267)

However, the theme of the polarization of the Black community received its greatest attention following the publication of William J. Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race* (1978). With reference to popularization of the academic discourse, Wilson's book did for the theme of "two Black Americas" what Harrington's *The Other America* did for the theme of the "two Americas."

In *The Declining Significance of Race*, Wilson evaluates the "empirical" evidence bearing on the question of the polarization of the Black community and concludes that

talented and educated Blacks are experiencing unprecedented job opportunities in the growing government and corporate sectors that are at least comparable to those of whites of equivalent qualifications. (1978, 15)

In contrast to the above economic situation of the Black middle class, the removal of "racial barriers" is said to have had little impact on the

plight of those found at the very bottom of the Black “class” structure. Wilson states:

Despite the passage of antidiscrimination legislation and the creation of affirmative action programs, the labor-market problems of inner-city blacks deteriorated rapidly during the 1970’s and have now reached catastrophic proportions. (1982, 113).

Wilson’s arguments are constructed along lines similar to as those of the liberal social scientists alluded to earlier—Myrdal, Galbraith, and Harrington. To reiterate, these writers argued that while the bulk of the U.S. population had benefited from government intervention in the form of the New Deal reforms and post-World War II macroeconomic policies, there was a segment of population that was immune to these measures. The characteristics of these people and their communities set them apart from the rest and, in consequence, rendered them incapable of taking advantage of expanding opportunities. These arguments, as is well known, lent plausibility to the “culture of poverty” perspective in dealing with the problem of poverty.

Similarly, Wilson argues that in the context of a changing economy (from goods producing to services), “race-specific policy programs such as affirmative action, which have helped in the advancement of trained and educated Blacks” will have very little effect in alleviating the problems of the “urban underclass” (1982, III). Once again, we find that such characteristics of the “underclass” as low level of education and training, not to mention a host of other “social pathologies,” present problems for participation in a “changing economy.”

Like its older genre going under the label of “culture of poverty,” the apparently new characterization of the “urban Black underclass” has become the cornerstone of the current retrogressive measures designed to address the problem of poverty. At the same time, writers of different academic disciplines and ideological persuasions have found themselves clamoring for academic distinction in the same conceptual universe of the “underclass” omnibus. This elasticity of the concept belies both its strengths and weaknesses. Its strengths lie in its capacity for obfuscating the “real” agendas that serve a multiplicity of ideological interests and career aspirations; while its weaknesses lie in the fact that it is grounded in a vulgar (bourgeois) conception of social classes and their reproduction in a concrete social formation. The latter, that is the bourgeois conception of social classes, actually provides the basis for the ideological constructions and uses of the term “underclass.”

***The "underclass" as a theoretical construct***

Most of the studies of the "underclass" either explicitly or implicitly employ the Weberian practice of subsuming under the same class category persons who share a common "class situation." The latter is defined by Weber as follows:

"Class situation" means the typical probability of:

1. procuring goods
2. gaining a position in life and
3. finding inner satisfactions, a probability which derives from the relative control over goods and skills and from their income providing uses within a given economic order. (1968, 302).

Adhering closely to this Weberian conception, Wilson defines a social class as:

any group of people who have more or less similar goods, services or skills to offer for income in a given economic order, and who therefore receive similar financial remuneration in the market place. (1978, ix)

Empirically, such criteria as education, income, and occupation, together with some intangibles like prestige, which are assumed to inhere in these criteria, are used to establish a person's class membership. Beyond this, class "cultures" or "subcultures" are regarded as being nested within strata of the socioeconomic hierarchy. One can therefore talk of upper-, middle-, and lower-class cultures or subcultures as symbolic universes that undergird certain behavioral modalities.

The logic of this conceptualization is carried even further, at the lower end of the socioeconomic hierarchy. Thus, within the lower-class, there is an even lower socioeconomic group comprising the "underclass," whose subculture is thought to include a "tangle of pathologies" such as extreme poverty, long-term unemployment, welfare dependency, crime and delinquency, and unwed motherhood. These characteristics are treated as deviations from middle-class norms and values. On this count, Ricketts and Sawhill write:

In American society, circa 1980, it is expected that children will attend school and delay parenthood until at least age 18, that adult males (who are not disabled or retired) will work at a regular job, that adult females will either work or marry, and that everyone will be law abiding. The underclass, in our definition,

consists of people whose behavior departs from these norms and in the process creates significant social costs. An underclass area is one where the proportion of people engaged in these costly behaviors departs significantly from the mean for the U.S. population as a whole. (1988, 319–20)

Some of the weaknesses of the above conceptualization become apparent when one attempts to map out the class structure of the Black community. Thus, in discussing the position of the “underclass” within the Black class structure, Wilson states:

I should like to conceptualize a black class structure that includes a middle class represented by white-collar workers and skilled blue-collar workers, a working class represented by semiskilled operatives, and a lower class represented by unskilled laborers and service workers. Within the lower class is a heterogeneous grouping at the very bottom of the economic class hierarchy. This underclass population includes those lower-class workers whose incomes falls below poverty level, the long-term unemployed, discouraged workers who have dropped out of the labor market, and more or less permanent welfare recipients. (1982, 115)

Even for those who follow the Weberian tradition, Wilson’s conceptualization elevates the empiricism of this theoretical practice to the level of absurdity. Who are the white-collar and skilled blue-collar workers who make up the “Black middle class”? While claiming to use the median income as a guide in isolating his “class” categories, Wilson does not follow his own methodological prescriptions, as Shulman points out:

The most glaring problem is inclusion of clerical workers in the middle-class category. Clerical workers have a lower median income than any other category except service and farm workers. In May 1978, for example, clerical workers had median weekly earnings of \$175. Instead of putting them in the working-class with operatives (\$191/week), Wilson chose to include them in the middle-class with managers and administrators (\$323/week). (1981, 25)

To get around the “anomalies” inherent in the correlation between occupation and income, Wilson simply ignored the incomes of women, who in 1976 made up 79 percent of the clerical workers, but earned only 63 percent of the comparable male incomes (Shulman 1981, 25). In short, if the correlation between occupational status and income is problematic for the general population, it is even more so for women

and minorities, not to mention the interaction between gender and race.

Wilson’s last class category of “lower class” includes the “underclass,” which consists of a heterogeneous mix of persons whose criteria for inclusion vary along several dimensions, as he observes. Their only truly definitive characteristic is that they are below everybody else!

Using this muddled conceptualization, Wilson proceeds to ascertain the impact of “race oriented” policies on the different “social classes” in the Black community. This conclusion, which has come to be celebrated by many scholars and politicians, particularly those on the right, is that the removal of “racial barriers” has had little impact on the dismal living conditions of the “urban black underclass.” This being the case, Wilson declares, class has become more important in addressing the problems of the “underclass”!

The theoretical weaknesses of the Weberian approach to the analysis of social classes in contemporary capitalism have already been discussed in the preceding sections. To reiterate, it was stated that classes are not simply determined by a hierarchical ordering of individuals according to their “market capacities” for income generation. Rather, classes are constituted initially by the separation of the worker from the means of production, a process which also creates the reserve army of labor as a necessary condition for capitalist production and its market mediations. Despite the complexity of the social division of labor, it is the relation to the means of production that is the essence of class determination and the historical role that classes play in the accumulation process and the class struggle.

Production on an extended scale (accumulation) requires the reproduction of social classes and the reserve army of labor. In this process, it is the reproduction of class “places” rather class “agents” that is primary in class determination. The distribution of “agents” and their movement in the different class strata is secondary. As alluded to earlier, the illusions of the “embourgeoisement thesis” of the fifties and the early sixties consisted of the fact that “social mobility” occasioned by post-World War II prosperity was said to be transforming the United States into a “classless society” by moving everybody into the “middle class.” It is no accident that this was the period in which the term “underclass” surfaced in reference to those who were said to have been by-passed by progress and were immune to market-oriented interventions due to their individual and community characteristics.

Continuities with the above bourgeois conception of social classes are found in Wilson’s conceptualization of the “black class structure” and the position of the “underclass” in it. If we take, for example, Wilson’s

skilled blue-collar workers, who are included in his “black middle class,” we find that it is these workers who have historically been the prime candidates for joining his “underclass,” as a result of being rendered technologically redundant. There is nothing new about this to warrant the social-science prognostications which claim to have found a new type of poverty in Black communities. As it turns out, the “black middle class” is not insulated from the structural mechanisms which reproduce the reserve army of labor.

The point here is that the threat of unemployment is a problem for the entire working-class, and not simply its reserve component. Racism in a class-divided society merely aggravates this problem for the nonwhite labor. All this was underscored by Hyman Lumer, more than twenty-five years ago, in his critical review of the liberal “underclass” studies of the late fifties and early sixties. Lumer remarked that:

Under capitalism, therefore, the introduction of more efficient machinery does not serve to lighten labor or to improve the lot of the laborer. Rather, it tends to render a growing part of the workers superfluous and to relegate them to a seeming surplus population of workers for whom there is no place in industry. (1962, 35)

The fact that the bourgeois conceptions of the “underclass” are predicated upon a false empiricist conceptualization of social class leads to yet another theoretical *cul de sac*, in isolating the definitive characteristics of the category and their underlying causes. If we take a catalog of the characteristics associated with the “underclass,” and attempt to establish a coherent universe of discourse, we will very quickly run into a quagmire in which commonalities are likely to reside in the mindset of those who subscribe to a similar point of view. Let us proceed here by posing the following questions: What do the poor, the unemployed, drug addicts, pushers, pimps, welfare mothers, high school dropouts, unwed mothers, criminals, juvenile delinquents, and the like, have in common? What structural mechanisms account for the existence of these traits? Are “underclass” traits acquired through economic dislocations or socialization in a particular social milieu?

A recent article which reviewed a number of studies, with the objective of establishing a common universe of discourse for measurement purposes, concluded in resignation that:



Thus, we can remain agnostic about the fundamental causes of these behaviors and still direct our efforts to the definitional and measurement issues that must be resolved if meaningful progress in the underclass debate is to be made. (Ricketts and Sawhill 1988, 318)

As it turns out, in their search for the magic key that would unlock the mystery of the "underclass," most studies of the "underclass" invariably revert back to the old "culture of poverty" logic—the constellation of negative characteristics constitutes a symbolic universe within which problematic traits are reproduced. The traits are problematic because they are at variance with "middle-class" values and norms, and hence they "inhibit social mobility." A corollary of this is that if individuals live long enough in "underclass" communities, they are likely to contract social pathologies. Therefore, the length of time one languishes in a particular "socially undesirable" status such as poverty, unemployment and welfare, is regarded as a strategic operational definition of "underclass status."

Once again, it is not the persistence of endemic tendencies of capitalism that are regarded as crucial in reproducing the "underclass," but, rather, the persistence of problematic community and individual traits. The closest that some of the "underclass" studies come to offering an explanation of the genesis of the "underclass" is the simple assertion of "dislocations" occasioned by the "movement from goods producing to a service economy," which is said to have had a particularly severe impact on a substantial number of the Black blue-collar workers, especially in the North Central and Northeast regions. In addition, it is claimed that in today's "high tech information society," the low levels of education and skills of these displaced workers and the rest of the members of the "underclass," make it difficult for them to find any decent jobs, paying livable wages.

While the above explanation does have some merit, the reality of the matter is not that simple. For one thing, one would be hard put to explain why a number of industries have relocated in the cheap labor reserve areas in the United States and the Third World, where the levels of education, skills and incomes are low. We have already indicated what is at work here in the discussion of capital mobility and restructuring.

The problem with any of these partial explanations is that they do not go far enough, due to the fact that they are grounded in a bourgeois political economy. Characteristically, they take the existing capitalist

society with all its contradictions as unproblematic, except for such flaws as the negative consequences of capital mobility, which can be dealt with through reform (in the short run) and economic fine tuning (in the long run). These analyses, therefore, are constrained by a universe of discourse that does not permit the examination of social problems with reference to the structures and processes which reproduce relations of class exploitation and race/gender oppression.

In this regard, if one were to assume a radical posture in the analysis of the “underclass,” the theoretical coding of the relevant categories would not only be different, but would also reflect a different class content, namely that of the working class. The so-called “culture of poverty” would become the “culture of oppression”; “problematic” community and individual characteristics would be taken as indices of race/class/gender oppression; inordinately high crime rates would be an index of criminalization of society under capitalism; and so on.

The absence of a sound theoretical framework for grounding the category of “underclass” as a label applied to a definite constitution of social reality, leads to the conclusion that the term has meaning mainly in the realm of ideological practice. We shall now proceed to examine the logic underlying this practice.

#### ***The ideological dimensions of the “underclass” construction***

We stated at the beginning of this paper that the structural limits inherent in the capitalist solutions for the major social problems create the social demand for characterizations whose ideological function is to obscure the fundamental causes of problems. Here, we shall reiterate that the term “underclass” is but one of the many social-science categories that serve this function.

In the late sixties and early seventies, the term “new ethnicity” gained currency as part of the “white backlash” directed at the “anti-discrimination” measures of the sixties. The “new ethnicity” movement was a response to the onset of the current structural crisis of capitalism, which had begun to take its toll on the blue-collar white ethnic communities in the larger metropolitan areas of the North Central and Northeast regions. In his presidential bid, Nixon rode the crest of this wave reaction, using the “ruling myth” of a mandate from the “silent majority.” It remained for the social-science ideologues such as Glazer and Moynihan (1975) to systematize the new usage of “ethnicity” as an intellectual rationale for treating antidiscrimination measures as “affirmative discrimination” (see Edari 1984, 11-13).

Beginning with the Nixon years, there was a constant decline in the

political will to fight against racism and discrimination. In fact the anti-discrimination measures themselves were added to the repertoire of the explanations which attributed the structural crisis to too much government intervention (see Gilder 1981).

For the working class as a whole, the entire decade of the seventies was one of retrogression on many socioeconomic fronts. With the focus of the debate on minorities, this fact was obscured by the "zero sum" logic that pitted one group against another. At the same time, the arguments of "affirmative discrimination" shifted the frame of reference in the conception of racial injustices, from the level of institutions to individuals. This right-wing coup d'état was completed in the Reagan years, and its effects on the socioeconomic conditions of minorities have been devastating (see Center on Budget and Policy Priorities 1986, 150–52). The report shows that Blacks of all income strata registered a significant decline in disposable income.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the term "underclass" gained its greatest popularity in the Reagan years. Its ideological essence derives from the fact that the term sets a segment of the reserve army apart from the rest of the working class, and treats the group as "peculiar" inasmuch as its members are said to have fallen into the rut of poverty, despite some "sweeping antidiscrimination measures." In effect, reality is stood on its head, and the direct association of Reaganism with intensification of racism (both institutional and subjective) is distilled into thin air by a conceptual fiat. Once the terrain of the new discourse on poverty is thus defined, the process of legitimation of a whole series of studies on the "underclass" is set into motion. Research "establishments" such as the Social Science Research Council, announce with so much fanfare the launching of "a new, interdisciplinary program to develop an improved understanding of America's urban underclass and to recruit and nurture a pool of talented and well-trained scholars who will carry out research." (see Gephart and Pearson 1988, 3).

The ideological dimensions of the "underclass" construction become even more apparent when we examine some of the proposed solutions to the "problems of the underclass." These solutions may be ordered into two broad categories: (a) the subcultural diffusion strategy, aimed at cultivating such presumed "middle-class" virtues as the work ethic, abstinence, and other forms of deferred gratification, and respect for the law; (b) social mobility strategy, involving increased investment in "human capital" (education, skills, and experience). Thus, in the typical Weberian tradition, the focus is on "class agents" rather than "class

places,” and, characteristically, the measures are aimed at changing individuals, and not the institutions of a capitalist society.

The question we should pose here is whether it is possible to institute measures that would move a substantial portion of the “underclass” into the “middle class” without a drastic change in the operation of the capitalist mechanisms which continuously reproduce and expand the reserve army of labor. The history of capitalism bears testimony to the fact that such a solution is beyond the structural limits of this type of social system. In commenting on the petty-bourgeois illusions of reform, Engels remarked more than one hundred years ago that:

It is the essence of bourgeois socialism to want to maintain the basis of all evils of present-day society and at the same time to want to abolish the evils themselves. (n.d., 46)

We have already seen that in the course of accumulation, capital may move into socioeconomically backward areas, where the levels of education and skills are low, as is the case in the border towns of northern Mexico. This means that the “labor-market” problems of the “underclass” cannot simply be attributed to the deficiencies in “human capital.” Similarly, if the lack of “work effort” is one of the definitive traits of the “underclass” elements, then why do workers resist speedups and overtime? The reason is simple: workers know from their “class instinct” that the greater the “work effort” as measured by an increase in output per person hour, the greater the tendency for a part of the labor force to be rendered redundant. As for the alleged “middle class” virtues such as the work ethic, individualism, thrift, abstinence, and activism—these actually constitute ideological supports for the institutions of a capitalist society. As such, they can hardly be thought to be the perquisites of the “middle class”!

Despite the fact that the “underclass” represents a motley aggregate of individuals whose specific life-cycle trajectories defy any simplistic characterizations, we find that conceptual homogeneity is usually created by treating the category as a part of a unidimensional “class” hierarchy, in the Weberian sense. Corresponding to the gradations of the class hierarchy are subcultures and their behavioral modalities. If by some misfortune a “middle-class” person descends into the “underclass,” then by default he or she will be presumed to have acquired the objectionable characteristics of the group.

Taking as a reference group some skilled Black male auto workers in Kenosha, Wisconsin, who were once paid well enough to qualify for inclusion into Wilson’s “middle class,” but are today unemployed, the

question arises as to what point in their life cycle should they be included in the "underclass." When they are living on unemployment compensation? Or when their unemployment benefits run out and they start collecting welfare benefits? Or when they begin to soak their blue collar blues and start "taking it out" on their wives and children? Or when in a fit of anger they shoot a spouse or a relative, following a domestic quarrel? We can continue hopelessly in this human labyrinth that expresses the reality of race and class oppression under capitalism, and in the end, we will have learned nothing any more profound than what was documented by Engels more than one hundred years ago in his classic work *The Conditions of the Working Class in England* (1973).

The point here is that the question of the "definitive characteristics" of the "underclass" cannot be resolved by dissecting the attributes of individuals or their communities. Rather, the question has to be posed at the level of structures as materializations of class practices in the concrete terrain of the class struggle. For it is precisely because the capitalist class has the upper hand in a capitalist society that a large part of the working class finds itself in the reserve army. Furthermore, all the members of the working class are always at risk of joining the reserve army, despite the variations in the relative risk within the class.

As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, the "underclass" omnibus attempts to mystify the realities of class/race/gender oppression under capitalism by focusing attention on that part of the reserve army which manifests the extreme forms of the effects of oppression. Moreover, if the mechanisms of the reproduction of the reserve army apply to all people who have to live by selling labor power, the term "underclass" is racist to the extent that it is applied selectively to non whites, especially the Black people. This underscores the centrality of racism in ideological relations of domination. In the seventies, "ethnicity" was used to whip up racist sentiments which were used to dismantle antidiscrimination measures and launch an assault on labor by galvanizing the support of the reactionary power blocs (see Edari 1984).

'When "ethnicity" had run its course, the old wine of racism was put into new bottles labeled "underclass," which became the social-science alchemists' formula for addressing the problems of the so-called "inner-city Blacks." If other Blacks have benefited from the race oriented programs, so the argument runs, what is wrong with the "underclass"? Alas, racism cannot any longer be used to "explain" the dismal socioeconomic conditions of the "underclass." They are

thought to be afflicted by a new type of poverty for which it is the moral obligation of social scientists to discover causes and prescribe cures by inquiring deeper into the characteristics of the “underclass” individuals and their communities. The outcome of this exercise is studies conducted at the level of mindless empiricism, with the following being regarded as strategic variables in explaining the problems of the “underclass”: migration of poor Blacks, concentration in urban areas, length of time spent in a “problematic status,” decline in eligible Black males, unfavorable age structure, the flight of the Black middle class, and so on. The inanity of such explanations is evident in the following statement by Wilson:

The higher the median age of a group, the greater its representation in higher income and professional categories. It is, therefore, not surprising that ethnic groups, such as blacks and Hispanics, who average younger than whites, also tend to have high unemployment and crime rates. (1984, 97–98)

Further down, Wilson states that:

Age is not only a factor in crime, it is also related to out-of-wedlock births, female-headed homes, and welfare dependency. (1984, 99)

As for solutions, Wilson asserts that:

The changes brought about by the cessation of migration to central city and the sharp drop in the number of black children under age 13 may increase the likelihood that the economic situation of blacks as a group will improve in the near future. (1984, 107)

The above type of empiricism takes us full circle to the empiricism of yesteryear. In the early sixties, Michael Harrington had this to say about the “underclass” of that era:

Some of those who failed did so because they did not have the will to take advantage of new opportunities. But for most part the poor who were left behind had been at the wrong place in the economy at the wrong moment in history. (1962, 8)

### ***Conclusion***

Throughout this paper, I have discussed the theoretical status of the “underclass” construction by focusing mainly on the ideas of Wilson,

for two reasons: (a) he exemplifies the best that can be attained by assuming a Weberian perspective in the analysis of the problem, and (b) Wilson's observations on the "underclass" have constituted a point of departure for a number of subsequent studies.

By way of summation, let us reiterate that Wilson's ideas on the "urban Black underclass" have served as a bridgehead to the more self-consciously reactionary conceptions found in the works of such writers as Gilder (1981) and Murray (1984), not to mention the journalistic flirtations of Auletta (1983). While Wilson disavows his association with these reactionary characterizations, his limited empiricist explanations lend plausibility to their portraits of the underdog. This is because he shares the same Weberian universe of discourse in which the problematic of class determination in a capitalist society is posed in terms of "market capacities for income generation." Characteristically, social mobility is regarded as a strategic mode of intervention. To Gilder and Murray, it is state intervention that has been instrumental in blocking the movement from "underclass dependencies," destroying the incentive to work and the entrepreneurial spirit of the poor, and encouraging immediate gratification. For Wilson, the problems of the "underclass" are partly due to a constrained opportunity structure (loss of better paying semiskilled and unskilled manufacturing jobs) and partly due to self-perpetuating "underclass" behaviors. But since the current opportunity structure is not particularly problematic to the Black middle class, the challenge of public policy consists of devising programs that would deal with behaviors which inhibit mobility from "underclass dependencies." From this position, it is but an easy step to the "social pathology" perspective, whose undercurrent runs through Wilson's *Truly Disadvantaged* (1988). This, in turn, crystallizes the missing link straddling the liberal and conservative modes of discourse on poverty.

The upshot of "underclass" studies is the time-honored exercise in the art of "blaming the victim." The intractability of the problem of poverty under capitalism is construed as the hopeless incorrigibility of the "underclass" individuals. It remains on the part of the public officials to elicit desirable behaviors through more punitive measures which discourage "underclass dependencies" and a blase attitude towards deviant behavior. It is in this light that the much touted "welfare reform" in Wisconsin must be viewed. Two ingredients of this new recipe are particularly germane to this discussion. One of them is the stipulation that the parents or grandparents of an unwed teen mother be required to bear the cost of raising the child. The other one, labeled "learnfare," stipulates that AFDC teenagers who have not graduated from high

school have to attend school regularly if their families are to receive benefits. The logic in use in these measures is simple: if the sins of the parents visit upon their children through intergenerational transmission of traits, it is only fair for the sins of the children to visit upon their parents!

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# **“Their Proper Share”: The Changing Role of Racism in U.S. Foreign Policy since World War One**

**Michael L. Krenn**

United States imperialist involvement in the underdeveloped world did not proceed in a smooth uninterrupted growth. While the long-range goals of this imperialism have never been much in doubt, the march toward those goals has often been diverted, sometimes by short-term necessities and opportunities, but more significantly by the appearance of new and varied challenges which have necessitated new and varied means of advancing the U.S. empire. These twists and turns have been mirrored in the role of one of the bulwarks of U.S. policy toward the nations of Latin America, Asia, and Africa racism. Racism on the part of U.S. policymakers, like the policies themselves, has been adapted during the twentieth century to meet the exigencies of, and the challenges to, imperialism. The purpose of this essay is to subject this largely ignored topic to historical analysis.

In the concluding bibliographic essay to his excellent 1987 work, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Michael H. Hunt suggested, “Perhaps no topic in recent decades has engrossed historians of the United States more than race and ethnicity. The phenomenon has been broken down and examined from a dizzying variety of perspectives” (204). An examination of the available resources, however, indicates that while historians of U.S. foreign relations have not ignored those developments, it would be safe to conclude that we have been far from “engrossed” with the issue of racism and its impact on U.S. diplomacy. Diplomatic historians have chosen to examine some facets of racism’s impact, but have given little attention to broader and perhaps more relevant implications. This has been particularly true of studies dealing with the years of World War I and after.

For any historian doing research into U.S. relations with underdeveloped and undeveloped nations during those years, the

discovery of examples of racism on the part of U.S. policymakers is an unpleasant and, unfortunately, unavoidable experience. Perhaps due to the fact that such evidence is so repugnant to our present-day sensibilities, U.S. diplomatic historians have not often directly confronted the issue. When the issue is addressed, it is often done so along too narrowly defined lines of inquiry or relegated to the periphery of scholarly investigation and treated as a regrettable constant of U.S. diplomacy.

This essay will suggest that racism, far from being a peripheral issue, is central to an understanding of U.S. post-World War I foreign policy toward the underdeveloped world. And far from being a static constant of U.S. policy, racism's role changed during that period to meet new demands and issues. Using the example of U.S. relations with Latin America during the postwar decades of 1919-29 and 1945-54, it will be seen that the role of racism in U.S. foreign policymaking underwent subtle changes which mirrored the changed relationship between the two regions.

By and large, historians dealing with racism and U.S. foreign policy have focused on the nineteenth century, primarily on periods of territorial expansion. The Mexican War, Spanish-American War (and the subsequent acquisitions of the Philippines, Guam, and Puerto Rico), and the annexation of Hawaii are the topics of greatest concern. Reginald Horsman, for example, has investigated the development of what he refers to as Anglo-Saxon racism during the mid-and late-nineteenth century (1981); Rubin Weston has looked at the racial influences on U.S. expansionism during the 1890s (although he also looks at some early twentieth-century examples such as the U.S. interventions in Haiti and Santo Domingo) (1972); Philip Kennedy has also concentrated on the U.S. territorial acquisitions which came out of the Spanish-American War (1966; 1971); and Michael Hunt, as part of his study of the ideology behind U.S. foreign policy, has traced the importance of racism throughout the nineteenth century (1987).

These studies are essential in establishing the history and meaning of racism in the making of U.S. foreign policy. All agree that the nineteenth century witnessed the development of a racist outlook on the part of U.S. policymakers broadly based on a philosophy of Anglo-Saxon superiority. They agree as well that U.S. racism had two faces. On one side was the spirit of "mission" which Anglo-Saxonist superiority implied: the "tutelary obligations superior races owed lesser ones," as Hunt has put it (1987, 91). The superior political, economic, and social systems of the U.S. were to be spread around the globe as

the best, and only, hopes of the “inferior” races. The other face of U.S. racism, however, revealed, as Horsman claims, that “The Anglo-Saxonism of the last half of the century was no benign expansionism, though it used the rhetoric of redemption, for it assumed that one race was destined to lead, others to serve one race to flourish, many to die” (1981, 303). Thus, U.S. expansionism, as evidenced after the Mexican War, after the Spanish-American War, and after the various other outward thrusts of the nineteenth century, was often cloaked in the language of “uplift” and “civilization.” That language, however, “represented an effort on the part of responsible political spokesmen to justify control over dependent peoples” (Kennedy 1966, 205).

All of this is helpful in forming some preliminary ideas about racism as a part of U.S. foreign policy. Yet some obvious dissimilarities between nineteenth-century and post-World War I U.S. diplomacy leads one to believe that these works do not fully explain racism’s role in the latter period. First, the circumstances of the two periods are quite different. During the time of Manifest Destiny of the mid-nineteenth century and, later that century, overseas imperialism, U.S. policymakers were intent on building, as Walter LaFeber has stated, a “new empire” (1963).<sup>1</sup> Racism’s role, as described by Horsman, Hunt, and others, was as a justification for seizing territory and markets which would have been seized in any case. The same could not readily be said of the time since World War I. That period saw no territorial aggrandizement by the United States; no calls to a new Manifest Destiny; no subjugations of “inferior” peoples which raised ticklish questions about assimilation. It seems clear that the postwar period cannot be lumped in with the eras of international belligerency which surrounded the Mexican and Spanish-American Wars.

Second, the specific situations in which racism’s role is analyzed in those earlier works serve to partially negate their value. Since most center around periods of conflict (the Mexican and/or Spanish-American Wars, the Filipino Insurrection, etc.) the question arises as to whether such analyses could apply to U.S. policies carried out during peacetime. As John W. Dower has revealed in *War Without Mercy*, warfare and conquest can heighten and sharpen racist perceptions, just as the resulting peace settlements can witness a softening of those same perceptions (1986). In other words, would racism’s role, in noncombative situations such as that existing between the United States and Latin America during the post-World War I period, be the same as in those earlier episodes?

The basic problem with these works, however, is the refusal to

consider racism within its proper political and economic context, and instead see it in primarily biological terms (Anglo-Saxons looking down on certain peoples simply because of their color). By treating racism as an unfortunate human failing, as simply an ugly strain running throughout the history of humankind, they have reduced racism to a sort of moral virus which, they imply, we seem to have kept in check ever since the dark ages of the nineteenth century. Such treatment obscures the obvious facts: first, that racism has played, and continues to play, a major role in U.S. foreign relations; and second, that racism, far from being a regrettable constant in the history of those relations, has been adapted and refined during the past two hundred years to meet both the dictates of capitalist imperialism and the immediate challenges to that system. By considering the impact of racism on U.S. foreign policy toward Latin America during the twentieth century, we can begin to chart those changes.

We must first, however, find an appropriate framework for a discussion of racism and its role in U.S. diplomacy. Racism itself has been an issue of contention for Marxist analysts. Some find agreement with Oliver Cromwell Cox, who, in his classic work, *Caste, Class, & Race: A Study in Social Dynamics*, directly linked racism with class:

So far as ideology is concerned, the capitalists proceed in a normal way, that is to say, they develop and exploit ethnocentrism and show by any irrational or logical means available that the working class of their own race or whole peoples of other races, whose labor they are bent upon exploiting, are something apart: (a) not human at all, (b) only part human, (c) inferior humans, and so on. (1959, 485–86)

However, as Ira Katznelson points out, “Colour has been a mark of oppression related to, yet quite independent of, class.” Bernard Magubane explains this idea more clearly when he observes that once racist ideologies had been “widely disseminated,” they then “tended to take on a life of their own. . . . Racism, though it certainly falsifies reality . . . has become a real force and the ‘true’ consciousness of a large majority of whites in capitalist societies” (Katznelson 1973, 6; Magubane, cited in Marable 1985, 6).

Such views are certainly correct: racism, even when analyzed by those who believe the economic factor to be dominant, must also be seen in its impact beyond purely class, as it penetrates every facet of a capitalist society. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this essay which deals with the relationship between the expansive capitalism

of the United States and the underdeveloped nations of Latin America Cox's observations provide us with a useful jumping-off point. Political sociologist Manning Marable, who finds general agreement with Katznelson's and Magubane's caveats about too sweeping an acceptance of Cox's thesis, concludes that racism

is a historically specific concept, which coincided with the unequal racial division of labour within the expansion of capitalist social formations, and, more generally, with the capitalist modes of production as dominant within the West. (1985, 5)

As Marable's statement intimates, however, it is not simply that racism reflects a "division" in international labor; it is also a reflection of the power differentials between those divisions. Sociologist John Stone has posited that "it is differences in *power*, and the dynamic change of power resources over time, that provide the key to an understanding of racial and ethnic conflict." In accounting for the "striking differences in treatment" that are the results of racism, one must look to the "variations in the economic, political, and social balance of power." How else, Stone asks, would one explain the different treatment accorded the Japanese and Chinese in South Africa? The former "have been accepted as 'honorary whites,' while the Chinese are classified as a distinct and subordinate group" (as are blacks). The apparent contradiction can be explained by examining the power relationships between the Japanese, Chinese, and Black "racial groups" and the governing white minority of South Africa. The Japanese, who have no intention of actually settling in the country, represent a highly industrialized society with valuable economic connections to South Africa; their power represents not a threat, but a necessary adjunct to the economic livelihood of the nation. "As a result, their acceptance by the dominant white group does not pose any threat to the established racial [and economic] hierarchy." The small group of Chinese, who live in South Africa, and the much larger population of black citizens, however, must be racially designated and separated from the economic and political mainstream of the nation, for if they did acquire equality in such matters the basis of white rule and prosperity (power) would be in serious jeopardy (1985, 37).

Of course, if the "power resources" discussed by Stone were to remain in a static condition, the issue of racism would be of only slight interest in our analysis of U.S. imperialism in the underdeveloped world. It would merely be one more justification (and, as time went on, perhaps a less and less important one) for the existence of the system.

Yet, if one believes that racism is a manifestation of class division, then one must also agree with Marable that “in all societies divided by classes, conflict is permanent and inevitable.” The antiracist input into the conflict has clearly defined goals: “to affirm one’s humanity and to abolish racist culture, racist political institutions and racist exploitation in the productive processes [which] is a manifestation of class struggle” (1985, 6–7).

In such a struggle (and Marable uses the specific example of Black protest in the United States), “The capitalist class, especially in a racist social formation, takes every small manifestation of class consciousness and militant protest among Blacks with a seriousness that is sometimes missing among Black leaders” (1985, 23). Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward have outlined the strategies the capitalist class may employ when faced with such challenges: “They may ignore it; they may employ punitive measures against the disrupters; or they may attempt to conciliate them” (1979, 22–23). This rather wide-ranging discussion of racism now needs to be focused on the specific case of U.S. imperialism in Latin America after the world wars. As we shall see, racism will serve in U.S. ideology as one of the justifications for the world economic division of labor. Racism also served as a reflection of the “power resources” of both the United States and Latin America after 1918, when the former found itself in a much more advantageous economic position than it had ever enjoyed before, and after 1945, when the United States gained near economic hegemony in the region. Finally, the challenges posed by Latin America to those situations, as well as the varied responses of the United States (in which racism would play subtly different roles) will also be made clear.

By the time World War I ended in 1918, the power relationship between the United States and Latin America had indeed undergone “dynamic change.” The war had opened to U.S. interests many markets and investment opportunities in Latin America, opportunities which had previously been dominated by European nations. This especially held true for the relatively more developed nations of South America. By 1927, for example, total U.S.–South American trade had reached nearly \$1 billion a 160-percent increase since 1913. United States investment in South America climbed by a spectacular 1226 percent to \$2.29 billion from 1913 to 1929 (Winkler 1929, 274–85).

In the eyes of U.S. policymakers and businessmen, the growth of their nation’s economic interest in Latin America was based on a very simple premise, perhaps best summed up in 1920 by the director of the Commerce Department’s Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce



(BFDC) Roy MacElwee: “The tropical and subtropical raw materials that they [Latin America and Asia] produce are indispensable to our factories. On the other hand, they are in need of our manufactured products, and an exchange is therefore mutually profitable” (U.S. Department of Commerce 1921, 252–53).

MacElwee’s observation is important for two reasons. First, it demonstrates the much greater importance U.S. policymakers had begun to give to U.S. trade with the “underdeveloped” regions of the world. Second, and perhaps more important in our study of racism’s role in all of this, his views are an indication of the growing feeling among U.S. statesmen during and after World War I that the world economy had become more interdependent and more specialized; that a distinct division of labor was at work. A representative of the National City Bank of New York (the precursor to Citicorp) was more explicit when he wrote in 1918 that:

for food and manufacturing material man had already developed the producing power of the Temperate Zones, especially the Northern Temperate, and now he is demanding that the Tropics shall perform their proper share of the task of supplying the food and manufacturing material required by the 1700 million people of the globe. (Austin 1918, 25)

For U.S. policymakers, it was a marvelously efficient and logical system as long as the “Tropics” performed “their proper share” of the work. They were therefore appalled to find that the Latin Americans were somewhat less than thrilled with their assigned duties in the world economic system. As they were to discover, the changes wrought by World War I did not limit themselves to U.S. economic expansion into Latin America. The increase of U.S. power in that region brought the United States face-to-face with its inhabitants, which in turn brought it face-to-face with a challenge to that increased power: economic nationalism.<sup>2</sup> The growth of economic nationalism in Latin America during and after World War I manifested itself in a number of ways: Mexico’s 1917 constitution which, among other things, aimed at giving the Mexican state more control over the nation’s land and subsoil minerals; Colombian efforts during the period 1919–1921 and again during the years 1927–1929 to gain greater oversight of the exploitation of their oil reserves; Chilean attempts at state intervention in the nitrate industry.<sup>3</sup> In the eyes of U.S. policymakers, such actions threatened to throw a nasty monkey wrench into the operations of the new interdependent world economy.

Beyond the fact that U.S. policymakers would naturally see such an ideology as poor economics in any case, it was the idea that the Latin Americans would be attempting to direct their own economic destinies that seemed to most disconcert those officials. United States ambassador to Mexico Henry Fletcher best summed up this view when he reported in 1919 that article 27 of the Mexican constitution (which put the control of subsoil minerals, such as oil, in the hands of the state) “practically closes the door to future foreign investments and threatens those already made in that country.” That “would be of little importance if Mexico and the Mexicans were able to keep themselves going,” but he did “not see that they can. They have not the genius of industrial development, nor have they had the training required” (Fletcher 1919).

For many U.S. officials and businessmen, the lack of industrial “genius” (apparently a monopoly of the “temperate zones”) was directly attributable to the racial inferiority of the peoples to the south. Implicit in their views was the belief that the Latin Americans were racially incapable of carrying out any programs of economic development, especially those involving economic nationalism, on their own. Banker Thomas Lamont, for example, took a paternalistic stance in a letter to Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes in 1923, explaining that in dealing with the Mexicans one had to keep in mind that “ignorant as they are, unwise as they are, untrusty as they are, nevertheless, if you once take time and patience, one can handle them.” In a memo prepared some time later, Lamont referred to Plutarco Calles as “the dark man in the woodpile who will probably be the next trouble maker in Mexico” (Lamont 1923; c. 1924).<sup>4</sup>

More vocal, and virulent, in his views was the U.S. ambassador to Mexico during the years 1925–1927, James R. Sheffield. In 1925 he spelled out his views on what the real problem in dealing with Mexico was: “The main factors are greed, a wholly Mexican view of nationalism, and an Indian, not Latin, hatred of all peoples not on the reservation. There is very little white blood in the Cabinet—that is it is very thin.” “I expected to find corruption, ignorance, and cruelty,” the ambassador concluded. “I have not been disappointed in my expectations.” In March 1926, Sheffield gave vent to his exasperation with trying to deal with the Mexican government. He raged about the “futility of attempting to treat with a Latin-Indian mind, filled with hatred of the United States and thirsty for vengeance, on the same basis that our government would treat with a civilized and orderly government in Europe” (Sheffield 1925; 1926).

For oil-company lobbyist Chandler Anderson, the Mexicans were a

people “so ignorant and of such a low mental capacity that they are utterly unfitted for self-government . . . easily dominated [by the] unscrupulous and selfish half-breed Mexicans who are in control of the Government today.” Eventually, discussion of the Mexicans witnessed their transformation from the subhumans described by Sheffield and Anderson to simply a variety of animal. In 1926, Anderson met with Assistant Secretary of State Robert Olds, Secretary of State Frank Kellogg, and Judge Delbert Haff, another oil-company lobbyist. According to Haff, “the situation [between the United States and Mexico] was much like that of the relationship between a vicious animal and its trainer; if the trainer showed fear, the animal would attack him, but if he showed courage and force, the animal would submit” (Anderson 1926; 1926a).

These comments, and others like them, indicated that not only did the United States oppose Mexico’s nationalistic economic policies, it opposed the idea that such ignorant and corrupt “half-breeds” should attempt to determine their own economic and political pathways, especially since the United States had so clearly marked the proper road. Race also served to clearly set out the “proper share” of peoples such as those inhabiting Latin America. Their lack of industrial “genius” would not hinder them in performing the tasks required of them by the new interdependent world economy, as was graphically noted in a 1918 U.S. business journal. Commenting on workers in Uruguay, it stated, “The peons are mostly Italian and Spanish mixed with Indian blood and they make excellent workmen.” Indeed, they did the work even more cheaply than the machinery imported by their U.S. employers: “Trenching machines and the steam shovels found it hard work competing with this labor. . . . Six and one-half cubic yards of deep excavation in eight hours for one dollar is hard to beat.” To illustrate its point, the article proudly displayed a picture of a “Six Footer who dug 19 1/2 cubic yards in a day and who drove away 40 strike agitators” (*The Bulletin of American International Corporation* 1918, 34). Even “half-breeds” had their place in the system. And for those who had not adequately learned their place, racism also provided a base of support for U.S. policies designed to impart the proper lessons. One such policy developed during the post–World War I period was the support of antinationalist/antiradical dictators. Former Secretary of State Elihu Root had commented in 1926 that the Mexican Revolution reminded him somewhat of U.S. efforts to grant political rights to the ex-slaves following the Civil War—it was a “dismal step.” Perhaps Mexico should look to Italy’s shining example. There, democracy had been

tried following the world war, but the Italians had “undertaken to govern themselves without quite having learned the hang of it.” Mussolini had brought dictatorship, but also “prosperity, contentment and happiness” (Root 1926).

That kind of logic guided U.S. policy toward the dictatorship of Venezuelan tyrant Juan Vicente Gómez. A 1929 report from the U.S. legation in Caracas put its nation’s support of the brutal ruler in perspective. Gómez was indeed an iron-fisted ruler, but he was what the people needed— they suffered from “political immaturity” and “racial inferiority.” He was friendly to the United States and its investments and trade, and had no sympathy for events in Mexico. Gómez had “wisely decided that a benevolent despotism was preferable to an anarchical democracy” (Engert 1929). The “inferior” people of Venezuela could hardly be trusted to understand what their roles were in the complicated world system. With the brutal Gómez in control, they need not bother to try—which seemed all the best as far as U.S. interests were concerned.

Racism on the part of U.S. policymakers and business leaders was therefore instrumental in guiding their responses to economic nationalism in Latin America. That ideology at work anywhere was a great economic annoyance, for it meant control over natural resources U.S. factories needed and thus higher prices for those material (Hoover 1925).<sup>5</sup> In an underdeveloped region such as Latin America, it went beyond that: the peoples of those regions were incapable of understanding the complexities involved in controlling those resources and by attempting to use them for their own ends were courting disaster. Unable to adequately exploit those raw materials, lacking the “genius” for internal developments, those nations would collapse and the machinery of the world economy would begin to grind to a halt. They would fail in carrying out their “proper” roles. Like the giant Uruguayan laborer, they were perfect for those roles and, with U.S. guidance, could fulfill them quite nicely. The change in that situation which economic nationalism seemed to call for was labeled according to the racist precepts of U.S. policymakers: childishness at best; racially inspired ignorance at worst.

The “dynamic change of power resources,” as Stone might view it, which affected the U.S.-Latin American relationship during and after World War I—in which the United States acquired tremendously more economic power in that region than it had ever had before and then came to confront a new challenge in the form of economic nationalism (the Latin Americans’ own flexing of their limited economic

power) also resulted in some subtle changes in racism's role in U.S. policy toward Latin America. Unlike their counterparts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, U.S. policymakers during the period of World War I and after were not seeking to grab more territory to use for settlement, strategic purposes, or canals. Nor were they dealing with colonies (Cuba, Puerto Rico, etc.) or with nations in their first years of development (Mexico during the 1830s and 1840s); instead, they were confronting countries which had maintained their sovereignty for nearly a century. In those earlier times, racism had been part of calls to action colonies or undeveloped areas of nations (in the case of Mexico) were to be protected from evil outsiders or incompetent leaders and, under U.S. tutelage, would be led to the ranks of "civilized" nations, or even become part of the United States itself. Whether this "uplift" side of racism was mere justification, as Horsman and Kennedy have claimed, or, as William Appleman Williams has argued, was part of the uneasy alliance which exists in U.S. foreign policy between altruism and self-interest, it nonetheless existed and was one of the basic characteristics of racism's role in those periods (Horsman 1981, 303; Kennedy 1966, 205; Williams 1959, *passim*).

During and after World War I, however, changes in the power relationship between the United States and Latin America changed the role racism would play in that relationship. There was no longer a pressing need to "protect" the peoples of Latin America. The Spanish had been driven out in 1898; World War I had marked the departure of the Germans as an economic force; and British and French interests had seen better days (Winkler 1929, 274–85). More and more during the years after the war the question became one of protecting the United States, and the world economic system which it was coming to dominate, from the peoples of Latin America—people seen as distinctly inferior. To be sure, the rhetoric concerning the U.S. "mission" in such regions as Latin America was still in use; even Ambassador Sheffield, after another of his racist outbursts, wrote that "the United States with its power and its wealth and its well ordered civilization owes to Mexico as well as to itself from a moral point of view all the help it can render to uplift and set on its feet this backward people" (Sheffield 1926).

Yet, such talk of the "obligations" of the United States to "uplift" lesser peoples was increasingly running into some hard realities. Behind such observations lurked the reality—that "development" for Latin Americans was discussed privately in vague terms (if at all) and was always linked to their continuing efforts in the production of raw materials. As the president of the United Fruit Company explained in a

1929 speech before the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), the nations of Latin America “must sell their raw materials, oil, wood, minerals, and agricultural products” in return for the necessities of “development.” Nevertheless, it was quite clear that these “largely undeveloped” nations would continue to serve as extractive economies “for some years to come” (Cutter 1929).

United States businessmen and policymakers had come face-to-face with the Latin Americans, and had also come face-to-face with the contradictions posed by the “uplift” side of their racism. If indeed the peoples of Latin America were vicious, cruel, greedy, ignorant, racially inferior, and unblessed with the “genius of industrial development,” how were they ever to advance beyond their monoresource, export-based economies? Perhaps U.S. “tutors” would aid them along the road? Ignoring the fact that this does not explain exactly how the Latin Americans were to be taught to be less racially inferior, such a suggestion flies in the face of the worldview of U.S. policymakers of that time. Taken as a whole, it posited a world in which racial differences and economic functions dovetailed nicely to form a plainly (and, as U.S. policymakers viewed it, quite logically) divided world. The changing power relationship, involving as it did more concrete and vital U.S. interests in Latin America, also changed racism’s role in U.S. perceptions from one in which “uplift” was the supposed ideal, to one wherein racism served as a justification for the maintenance of the status quo especially when it was challenged by lesser peoples under the influence of disastrous economic philosophies, such as economic nationalism.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, the United States once again found itself emerging from another war to end all wars. The vast death and destruction engendered by the conflict did nothing to shake the concepts of U.S. policymakers concerning their nation’s relationship to the underdeveloped world. Indeed, in the decade after 1945, U.S. officials were more convinced than ever that an interdependent capitalist world economy was essential. As a State Department memorandum put in 1948, “World prosperity would seem . . . to depend on each nation manufacturing those things it can most efficiently produce and trading with other nations to get what they can best make.” Secretary of the Interior Oscar Chapman was more explicit about what the United States needed from this system in the 1950s: “More and more, the United States and other highly industrialized nations are having to turn to other parts of the world for the supplies to keep their industries and their ways of life going” (U. S. Department of State 1948; Chapman 1951).

As they had after World War I, U.S. officials delineated the role that Latin America had in this even more interdependent system. A 1953 report from the Central Intelligence Agency put it bluntly: "The Free World is vitally dependent on Latin America for supplies of strategic materials," and then went on to note eight resources provided in abundance by Latin America. Milton Eisenhower, after his trip to Latin America at the behest of brother Dwight following his 1952 election to the presidency, noted that "Latin America, as a market for our commercial exports, is as important to us as is all of Europe, and more important than Asia, Africa, and Oceania combined" (Central Intelligence Agency 1953; Eisenhower 1953).

Once again challenges in Latin America were seen as a threat to the working of this interdependent system. Now, however, there was not one single threat, but three: instability, nationalism (increasingly with an economic bent), and Communism. Separately, each of these would pose serious problems for U.S. policymakers. More ominously, at least for those officials, was the fact that they were increasingly intertwined. Instability, due to corruption and substandard living conditions in most Latin American nations, fed nationalism as foreign interests were branded as the root of the region's underdeveloped status. Communism, which was seen as having little indigenous basis, thereupon attached itself to the nationalistic movements, using them for its own revolutionary ends (Department of State 1952). This triple-headed challenge brought forth new responses from U.S. officials; in these responses, racism's role would change from that which it played in the years following World War I.

Communism was seen as the most dangerous problem in Latin America, but since its existence was viewed as merely an outgrowth of the problems of instability and nationalism, U.S. policymakers publicly declared that their nation's policies would be directed toward increasing the standard of living in Latin America (thereby decreasing instability and the appeal of nationalism). One such program was Point Four, announced by President Harry S. Truman in his inaugural address in 1949. As historian Thomas G. Paterson explains it, "Point Four of the Inaugural Address was stated crisply in characteristic Truman style: The United States 'must embark on a bold new program' to provide technical assistance to poor peoples in the 'underdeveloped areas' whose 'economic life is primitive and stagnant.' The President extolled self-help, the expansion of private foreign investment, and greater production to achieve 'prosperity and peace'" (1988, 147).

Yet, the private assessments of such foreign aid reflected a very

different point of view. A 1956 report by a presidential advisory group dealing with foreign assistance concluded, "It [foreign aid] can help to make the underdeveloped countries what the United States would like them to be—more efficient suppliers, more prosperous customers, more responsible neighbors" (Fairless Committee 1956). In essence, aid to areas such as Latin America was not intended to bring about anything more than the dependent development already in place. What it offered was more: more efficiency—to produce raw materials for the United States; more prosperity—to buy more U.S. consumer products; more responsibility—to forego ideologies and movements which might upset the system. In place of the larger slice of the economic pie being demanded by many Latin Americans, the United States undertook the baking of a bigger pie (but one that used the same tried and true recipe demanded by its theories of economic interdependency). This point was made crystal clear by Edward Mason, dean of Harvard's Graduate School of Public Administration, at a 1952 study group meeting of the CFR:

Changing the relationships now existing between manufacturing nations and raw material producing nations would cause economic difficulties for some of the manufacturing nations. . . . Therefore, it might be beneficial to consider the validity of the thesis that the balance now existing between manufacturing and raw material producing nations contributes more to the economic strength of the free world than some other arrangement.<sup>6</sup>

Once again, such views dovetailed nicely with racist perceptions on the part of U.S. officials. These views left little doubt that many U.S. policymakers believed the Latin Americans to be incapable of advancing much beyond the present "arrangement." A 1949 State Department report made it clear that race still played an important role in determining the views of U.S. policymakers. In a chart detailing the differences in "development, resources, and power" between the United States and the nations of Latin America, one of the eight criteria is listed as "% white population." Argentina scored highest with ninety-seven percent, while Honduras could do no better than two percent (the "comparable figure" for the United States was ninety percent) (Department of State 1949). Another report, in commenting on the problems facing Latin America, noted the "great variety of breeds of people reacting in their own way to our public and diplomatic behavior (origins, including European and African, Moorish and indigenous,



and complex crisscrossing)” (Walmsley 1952). And there were, of course, the usual derisive comments about Latin Americans from a number of official sources. According to various State Department memoranda, Costa Ricans were “not a logical people and have short memories”; Guatemalan statesmen were noted for their “mental deviousness and difficulty of thinking in a straight line”; another note concluded that to approach the Latin Americans on the subject of discontinuing showy U.S. special missions to presidential inaugurations would be “rather like consulting with babies as to whether or not we should take candy away from them”; and, upon being informed that Tegucigalpa was perhaps the only world capital without railroad service, one department official wrote “maybe it’s just as well,” in the message’s margin (Johnson 1946; Schoenfeld 1952; Miller 1952; Cochran, 1945).

With these views in mind, it is not surprising that racism served as a further argument in defense of maintaining the interdependent system as it was. Former State Department official Spruille Braden (who had served as U.S. ambassador to three Latin American nations) responded to a query from Assistant Secretary of State Edward Miller concerning inter-American economic cooperation as follows: “Not infrequently, I have had a feeling that some of our Latino friends were playing at economics, just as a child will pretend in his games to be something he isn’t and has no immediate possibility of becoming.” Another State Department official, in an oral interview held in the early 1970s, reflected on why U.S. economic aid to areas such as Latin America was futile. Admitting that in Greece, South Korea, Taiwan, and Israel, U.S. aid had had some success, he continued, “But those four that I have mentioned deal with people who are not disadvantaged [this word was inserted after the word “tribal” had been scratched out], just out of the palm trees, and our experience has been that the closer to the palm tree the object of American aid is, the less likely it is to utilize American assistance to his or our advantage” (Braden 1950; Briggs 970/72).<sup>7</sup>

One of the most detailed example of such views was a 1948 paper prepared by a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Employment. Labeling Latin American economic proposals as “unreal,” “wild,” and “irresponsible,” the paper went on to examine “Latin American Conference Tactics.” The first trait of the Latin American delegations was a “disconcerting absence of statesmanship,” among whom there was a “lamentable tendency on the part of many to talk in direct ratio to their ignorance.” The Latin Americans were also overemotional “to an extent greater than any other delegation.” They also showed more “personal and official irresponsibility” than any

other delegation to the conference (Schaetzel 1948). Certainly there was little in such views to indicate that the Latin Americans (by themselves or even with U.S. aid) were capable of rising much beyond their present status. And, as Dean Mason had pointed out at the CFR, perhaps that was all for the best.

Nevertheless, the power relationships in Latin America (at least as perceived by U.S. officials) had changed dramatically. Racism on the part of U.S. officials, therefore, assumed a relatively lower profile than during the post–World War I period. The reason lay in the fact that the United States faced a new and, as it saw the situation, much more serious challenge to its interests in Latin America—Communism. This distinctly external challenge (as opposed to the internal challenge posed by economic nationalism), required new strategies to keep Latin America within the U.S. political and economic orbit. And so, during the post–World War II decade, the United States embarked on efforts to “befriend” and “educate” the Latinos. As a State Department official put it in 1950 (using some vaguely haunting terminology), “A lot of people assume that Latin America is in the bag. . . . Throughout the Hemisphere we are presented with very serious problems in our efforts to extend the American ideology—to reach the minds and hearts of our fellow Americans, so as to solidify them against our common enemy” (Miller 1950).

In such an atmosphere, the blatant racism of the 1920s would not do; certainly it was no way to reach the “minds and hearts” of the Latin Americans. Therefore, the publicly proclaimed purpose of U.S. policy became the encouragement of “maturity, self-reliance and self-respect” on the part of the Latins. In discussing the peoples of Latin America, the United States should “avoid actions and statements which emphasize their inferior economic and social status,” according to a 1953 State Department memorandum. Another department report suggested adopting an “attitude of patience and Christian tolerance, rather than lofty judgment of their [Latin America’s] culture and achievements and the character of their political leaders” (Department of State 1953). Louis Halle, of the department’s Policy Planning Staff, was more blunt (but no less condescending) when he wrote that policy makers should look back to the early diplomacy of Franklin Roosevelt’s “Good Neighbor Policy”:

The most important principle that was applied by the United States in this diplomacy was a principle that is commonplace in

dealing with children....More specifically, the United States based its diplomacy during this period on the principle of consultation. That is to say, however burdensome it was, and however little we actually may have felt the need for the guidance of our Latin American neighbors, we associated them as equals (at least formally). (1952)

Informally, of course, the Latin Americans were not seen as equals in either economic or social terms (and the two were increasingly intertwined). The “proper” workings of the interdependent world system and the inferiority of the Latin Americans worked against the demands of the latter for equality. Despite privately expressed opinions to that effect, the face of U.S. racism had subtly changed. The “uplift” side had again come into vogue, with the prevailing notion being that certainly the Latin Americans were inferior, but perhaps if that fact was not mentioned to them then they could be won over to our way of thinking. This kind of thinking was reflected in the rhetoric of Point Four—working together, the United States would help Latin America rise above its present poverty-stricken state through real development. Such a change was necessary, for the battles against economic nationalism had been pushed into the background. A far more serious threat to U.S. power in the region—an “outside” force—made it necessary to reorient racism’s role. The economic roles of the Latin American nations were still the same; the division of labor operated even more concretely in the minds of U.S. policymakers. But in the cold war days of the post–World War II period, it was good politics and good economics to tell the Latinos that it need not always be so. If they showed “maturity” and “self-reliance,” then they too could enjoy the fruits of capitalist enterprise. As to how and when that would be worked out later.

As U.S. policy toward Latin America progressed through the 1980s, it may be argued that racism has again undergone a transformation. As more and more Latin Americans have rejected the means and goals of U.S. imperialism in their nations, the racial views of U.S. policymakers have once again hardened. Apparently believing that since the sugar-coated imperialism of the post–World War II years did not adequately persuade the Latin Americans to accept their proper roles, recent analysts, such as Jeane Kirkpatrick, have reverted back to the 1920s for their answers. The Latin American people, largely illiterate and ignorant, and their governments, which suffer from “institutional weaknesses,” must “rely on force to put down challenges to authority”

(Kirkpatrick 1981, 29–40). Such thinking helps explain the continuing U.S. relationship with Latin American dictators and especially with the armed forces of that region an institution that does not seem to suffer from the same “weaknesses.” The implication is that the peoples of Latin America need such guidance, since they are apparently unable to govern themselves in a responsible fashion.

As the United States sees more and more challenges to its interests throughout the world (some political, some economic, some religious, some nationalistic), we can expect to see even more changes in the role racism will come to play in its foreign policy. Those changes will likely correspond, as they have in the past, to the economic necessities of U.S. imperialism and the challenges that arise to that system. The racist component in determining those necessities and meeting those challenges will provide one constant during those changes: it will supply an easily defined guide for measuring the underdeveloped world’s “proper share.”

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## NOTES

1. The “new empire” differed from the “old” in a number of ways, the most significant being that U.S. policymakers during the period following the Civil War were primarily concerned with market expansion, whereas territorial designs had characterized the years prior to the war. This new imperialism was also characterized by an increasingly important export of capital from the industrialized nations (that is, foreign investments). The classic study of this development is found in Lenin’s *Imperialism*. Magdoff examines the steady growth of U.S. capital export, especially after World War II (1969, 54–62). The impact of foreign capital in terms of retarding balanced and equitable economic development in Latin America is discussed in Cockroft, Frank, and Johnson (1972, 3–111). A recent overview of the debate on dependency and development in Latin America is found in Abel and Lewis (1985).

2. For the purposes of the following discussion, I will be using the definition of economic nationalism put forward by Tancer (1976, 12): “the desire of a nation . . . to control its own economic destiny and, within its territorial limits, to exercise its sovereign right over who may exploit natural resources and participate within various sectors of the economy.” Tancer’s book is also the best introduction to this topic.

3. For a brief discussion of the development of economic nationalism in Latin America in the early twentieth century, see Krenn (1990), 21–36. A translation of the most relevant portion of article 27 of the 1917 constitution can be found in Baily (1971, 98–110). Colombia’s experiments with economic nationalism are reviewed in Krenn (1990, 71–98) and Randall (1977). On Chile, see Monteon (1982).

4. Smith (1972) has considered the role of racism in determining the U.S. reaction to economic nationalism in Latin America. Although he makes a promising beginning in chap. 2, Smith does not attempt to integrate fully the question of race into his overall analysis. He concludes that moderate approaches like Lamont’s played a larger role than racism in shaping a paternalistic approach to Mexican development. (In view of his racism, however, perhaps Lamont cannot be considered a moderate.)

5. In this speech, Hoover decried the efforts of the other industrialized nations to monopolize natural resources.

6. Mason’s views were shared by Arthur Goldberg, General Consul of the CIO.

7. Briggs was also a three-time U.S. ambassador to Latin America and had served as director of the Office of American Republic Affairs after World War II.

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# From Lukács to Brecht and Gramsci: The Moment of Practice in Critical Theory

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Taking stock, historically, of the significance of In the wake of the poststructuralist transvaluation of texts as the ceaseless play of difference, of the unchoreographable dance of signifiers, which one may interpret as a historically specific reaction in the Western milieu to dogmatist leftism in its various manifestations economistic, sectarian, mechanical, empiricist, etc. I would like to reaffirm once more the occluded, yet irrepressible, matrix of art in the Marxist concept of practice and political struggle. Enunciated by Marx in his “Theses on Feuerbach” (1976) and *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, in particular, this inscription of the esthetic in transformative action I would call the “Leninist moment,” the hegemonic or ethico-political crux in Marxist critical theory.

In *The Aesthetic Dimension*, Herbert Marcuse attempts to posit and validate the crucial divorce between esthetics and politics in late monopoly capitalism by suggesting that Lenin and the Bolshevik revolutionary tradition originating from Marxism-Leninism rejected the transcendental and liberating “truth of art” (1978, 56–57). From within a revisionist perspective, the Polish esthetician Stefan Morawski distorts Lenin’s dialectical conception of art by defining it as narrowly concerned with “the popularization of culture” and thus guilty of “Utilitarianism” (1974, 261). Even for the sophisticated British critic Terry Eagleton, Lenin’s “epistemological theory of reflection” generates more problems than it solves. In sum, the putative reflection theory ascribed to Lenin and orthodox Marxists has become the favorite whipping boy of bourgeois theoreticians ranging from academic Marxologists like Peter Demetz (1967) to liberal commentators like Edmund Wilson (1948) and George Steiner (1967).

With the renaissance of Marxist critical theory in the late sixties, especially the recovery of certain fundamental insights into the constitution of the subject by ideology facilitated by Althusser’s

“structuralist readings,” it seems appropriate to re-situate the necessary task of Marxist critical theory on artistic production within a revolutionary dialectical strategy of cultural politics. This strategy would not simply be a deconstructive scholastic reading of texts to disclose their metaphysical fallacies or rhetorical virtues, a practice inspired by leftist followers of Derrida and Foucault. It would also not be a revival of a utopian or prophetic strain in Marxism as an alternative to bureaucratic conservatism or social-democratic opportunism, an approach exemplified by Maynard Solomon’s instructive anthology *Marxism and Art* (1974). What this strategy hopes to encourage is the active intervention of the critic or theoretician in the social practices of everyday life.

In Lenin’s critical practice of deciphering texts, particularly in his appraisal of Tolstoy’s works, we can discern the model of an interrogatory hermeneutic praxis. Lenin focuses on the organic yet mediated linkage between knowledge and action, cognition and organized will—a new radical conception of textuality and signifying practice which would be elaborated later on by Christopher Caudwell, deepened by Antonio Gramsci, and actualized by the *Lehrstücke* of Bertolt Brecht.

As Pierre Macherey has pointed out in his *A Theory of Literary Production* (1978), Lenin demonstrated the internal contradictions in Tolstoy’s writings between the critical-realistic protest embodied in the texts and the quietist reactionary doctrines thematized by the allegorizing tendencies in narrative. He pointed out how these contradictions spring from the ideological position of the artist himself and the inherent limitations of such a position. While defining the limits of his ideology through narrative form, Tolstoy’s art distances itself from its intrinsic ideology by foregrounding the principle of conflict. Such distancing or decentering opens up the space for critical intervention, an opening seized by Lenin. This can be illustrated by Lenin’s remark in “Leo Tolstoy as the Mirror of the Russian Revolution” (1908): “But the contradictions in Tolstoy’s views and doctrines are not accidental; they express the contradictory conditions of Russian life in the last third of the nineteenth century. The patriarchal countryside, only recently emancipated from serfdom, was literally given over to the capitalist and the tax collector to be fleeced and plundered” (1967, 30). Tolstoy’s views, Lenin urged, should be appraised from the standpoint of democratic protest against advancing capitalism, a protest embodied in nonviolent religious language permeating the consciousness of Russian peasants and landlords “at the time the bourgeois revolution was approaching mankind.” Further, “Tolstoy is original, because the sum

total of his views, taken as a whole, happens to express the specific features of our revolution as a peasant bourgeois revolution” (1967, 30; also 48–62).

Tolstoy’s landlord/patriarchal ideology, characterized by a sharp awareness of conjunctural class conflict and a specific resolution proposed for this conflict, finds itself objectified and interrogated by the structure of his texts which metamorphoses illusions (enabled by ideology) into visible objects and practices. In this process, the ideology is internally displaced or redoubled, thereby exposing its limits and inadequacies (for example, the social framework of beliefs informing the protagonists in *Anna Karenina*). For these limits, silences, or absences to reveal their presence, a dialectical reading is required. In Lenin’s reading, we see the analysis of the historical contradictions in Tolstoy’s class position vis-à-vis the 1905 bourgeois democratic revolution manifest as the preaching of Christian quietism, an ethicopolitical position which hides the complex totality of the material contradictions. In the same breath, the intrinsic lack in the text expresses the historical deficiency or insufficiency of the historical situation, namely, the ambiguous role of the peasantry in the emerging socialist revolution. One can perceive this problematic of Tolstoy’s ideology being interrogated and demystified (its false claims to totality and naturalness exposed) in a narrative like “The Death of Ivan Ilyich,” where the existential anguish suffered by Ivan exceeds the social corruption afflicting his petty bourgeois stratum. At the same time, his predicament erases the subjectivities of women and the servant Gerasim—not erases but rather neutralizes them in conformity with the pietist or moralizing closure of the text.

While the symptomatic diagnosis which Macherey (1978, 105–35) recommends tends to privilege the text as a displacing mechanism that reveals the incongruities and dissonances marking the limits of ideological incorporation, I would like to stress here that Lenin’s own critical practice operates within and outside the text-bound, purely hermeneutical method. By situating Tolstoy’s texts at the juncture of class alignments (Gramsci’s relation of historic forces) and focusing on the problematic role of the peasantry in the revolutionary process as a whole, Lenin anatomizes the contingencies of literary form itself. In other words, the text is articulated by multiple determinations, not just by the purely linguistic or rhetorical. In effect Lenin decentered the organic formal unity of texts, elucidating their “political unconscious” (Jameson 1981) in the conflicted historical totality subsuming them.

This argument concerning the textual production of meaning, the

discursive process of signification as a dialectical transaction in which ideology is cognized as a social practice, not a transcribed “false consciousness,” is not Lenin’s innovation his intervention takes the form of articulating a conjunctural theory of revolutionary strategy and tactics outlined in *What Is To Be done?* It is actually Marx’s, specifically in his critique of religion where the notion of what Lukács later on calls “reification” as derived from commodity-fetishism is first formulated (Lukács 1971, 83–222). In general, religion as an “inverted world-consciousness” provides the heuristic model for the unity-in-conflict of the real and the illusory. Marx associates praxis with discourse in *The German Ideology* and in his critique of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*:

Religion is, in fact, the self-consciousness and self-esteem of man who has either not yet gained himself or has lost himself again. . . . It is the fantastic realization of the human being because the human being has attained no true reality. . . . The wretchedness of religion is at once an expression of and a protest against real wretchedness. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people.

The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is a demand for their true happiness. The call to abandon illusions about their conditions is the call to abandon a condition which requires illusions. Thus, the critique of religion is the critique in embryo of the vale of tears of which religion is the halo. (1970, 131)

Here Marx grasps the superstructure (religion) not as epiphenomena but as an integral element of an all-pervasive social practice. In conceptualizing the contradictory relation between intellectual objectification and social reality, Marx laid the groundwork for the active, dynamic, and creative intervention of transformative agents. Such agency, relative to varying historical sites, can be instanced by Lenin’s Bolshevik party, Gramsci’s “organic intellectuals” functioning in the ideological apparatuses of civil society. Or it can assume the guise of Brecht’s avant-garde epic gesture aimed at destroying the habit of organic idealist thinking and its roots in the Kantian fetishism of categories.

Before pursuing the development and ramification of this Leninist moment of cultural politics in the Brecht-Lukács debate over socialist realism and its implications, it would be instructive to summarize here Christopher Caudwell’s argument in *Illusion and Reality* (1937) that

poetry, art in general, is a specific mode of production of “historically necessary forms of social consciousness,” in short, of literature as politically defined signifying practice.

Caudwell’s controlling insight that the concept of bourgeois freedom is premised on the ignorance of social relations—an instance of the working of commodity fetishism—stems from his thesis of the dialectical unity of subject and object. This thesis is an epistemological axiom implied in Marx’s concept of the subject as sensuous-practical activity, “theory as the outcome of practice on the object” (1978, 143; also 113–14, 117–18). Marxist theory is oriented toward “concrete living,” toward the realization of freedom (development or fulfillment of the human’s species-being) by society, collective or associated producers, mastering and directing the forces of nature. Engels conceived of freedom as lived in the appreciation of the necessary inscription of humans in nature and society. Caudwell, however, construes the notion of species-being in a rather narrow economic sense. Because of the reduction of all experience to the dualistic opposition between people and nature, instinct and environment, affect and cognition, Caudwell equates art and emotion, thus annulling the distinction between esthetic and nonesthetic effects, as Mulhern has persuasively argued (1974, 57). Caudwell is therefore unable to construct a theory of art free from psychology or immediate pragmatic exigencies.

What is original and relevant for us in this context is Caudwell’s articulation of the esthetic function, his view that art is not just a mere transcription of subjectivity (as in formalist idealism) nor a representation of objective reality (as in mimetic naturalism) but a production of a “mock world” where the “I,” the transindividual subject of culturally determinate discourse (not the self-present “I” of phenomenology) the “I” as a socially constituted ego of the “common affective world” actualizes itself in comprehending and transforming the real world. “Poetry is . . . the sweat of man’s struggle with Nature” conducted in history: “the phantasy of poetry is a social image” (1937, 130, 194; see also Duparc and Margolies 1986, 27).

For Caudwell, individual consciousness always appears as a social product. Since the dream or fantasy in art unfolds itself as the mobilizing of collective energies in which human thought and will (the genotype) act on the objective world, subject and object are posited as interacting dialectically. Poetry functions through the “conditioning of instinctive responses by the relations of society. . . . Because it must use the collective world of language, it focuses all the emotional life of society in one giant ‘I’ which is common to all” (1937, 72).

Consequently, “poetry is public . . . for consciousness is a social construction” (1937, 244). Mulhern summarizes Caudwell’s poetics of collective dream in a succinct way: “Poetry is the psychological agent in a general historical movement: by harmonizing instinct and environment, it facilitates the struggle of man against Nature” (1974, 47).

In the concluding chapter of *Illusion and Reality*, Caudwell translates the ethical and practical implications of his poetics as a call for petty-bourgeois artists to “take the difficult creative road that of refashioning the categories and technique of art so that it expresses the new world coming into being and is part of its realization” (1937, 289). This new world is socialist society where the poet, conscious of internal as well as external necessity (causality), becomes a figure for the fulfilled will and freedom of each individual in society. The radicalization of the petty-bourgeois artist, for Caudwell, occurs through proletarian cultural hegemony, a synthesis of the progressive elements in bourgeois art and a transitional, evolving revolutionary art. Examples today would range from the poetry workshops of Ernesto Cardenal in Nicaragua to the grass-roots theater in the Philippines, from the feminist testimonies from El Salvador and South Africa to the resistance writing by Palestinian underground militants.

Caudwell’s analysis confronts directly the naturalizing and mystifying effect of bourgeois ideology, its positing of a unified autonomous ego. He tries to decenter the ego through positioning it within the dialectical interaction of the collective and nature, a praxis mediated by historical sedimentation and changing human desire. What Caudwell does not clearly spell out is the praxis of change on the level of art’s content, a content somewhat unrelated to technique: “A revolution of content [in poetry], as opposed to a mere movement of technique, now begins, corresponding in the social sphere to a change in productive relations as opposed to a mere improvement in productive forces” (1937, 127).

Caudwell rejects the modernist resolution of the crisis in art’s function—“the tragedy of the will of Joyce’s Ulysses and Proust’s ‘I’ living in a world wholly of personal fantasy”—because this is merely symptomatic of an escape from “content” and “social form” into the unconscious, privatized sphere of dream. In its systematic upholding of individual freedom as a transcendence of necessity (reversing Engels), surrealism fetishizes technique and thus privileges the bourgeois notion of freedom which conditions it. This is also Caudwell’s criticism of George Bernard Shaw, D. H. Lawrence, and H. G. Wells (1971, 1–95). In his schematic history of bourgeois English poetry, Caudwell notes



that in the final capitalist crisis (beginning in 1930), “the question of form now tends to take a second place until the problem of social relations has been solved poetically” (1937, 138, 297; see Margolies 1969, 101–19). How exactly the problem is solved in poetic art, Caudwell does not explain.

It remained for Brecht, in his decisive contestation with Lukács in the thirties over the methodology for achieving the goal of socialist realism, to elucidate not so much the objective moment the historicity of phenomena, commodities as frozen or “dead” labor; life as “human sensuous activity” or praxis as the subjective moment or pole of the dialectic. In the context of a historical materialism challenged by fascist violence, Brecht theorized the mental and perceptual categories through which, in the art-work and in the audience, the social totality is mediated and the opportunity for action drawn. In the meantime, the mode of nineteenth-century realism valorized by Plekhanov, Mehring, and early Marxist critics prevented the exploration of other alternatives to register the subtle mutations of middle-class consciousness in the post–World War I era.

How can a revolutionary practice of writing combat the lure of bourgeois ideology and what Lukács calls “reification” if it employs the mode of classic expressive realism? The tendency of such realism is precisely to conceal the historical specificity of the production of meaning and the reality-effect of prevailing codes of representation. Realism generates the notion of a subject as a given presence without history, self-identical, free and homogeneous: the bourgeois illusion Caudwell tried to exorcise. If subjectivity is a discursive construct, as Caudwell may be read to imply, and the forms of discourse vary relative to specific formations and class positions, then the key to producing politically effective art lies in a critical/creative practice where the signifying process is foregrounded and interrogated. Is the code of realism itself an immutable formal criterion? Or are the means of unfolding social totality and enabling access to it a matter of conventions determined by concrete historical conjunctures the convergence of ideological, political, and economic instances to which Althusser called attention? Is there just one realist style or form? Or is realism the epistemological and cognitive perspective within which a variety of forms (semiotic styles, signifying practices) can operate?

While it is obligatory to contextualize the famous Brecht-Lukács debate in order to account for Lukács’s privileging of the “intensive totality” of critical realism (evinced in Thomas Mann) and Aristotelian catharsis (Lukács 1970, 25–88), and for Brecht’s dialectical

conceptualizing of realism, it would be instructive to rehearse the nodal theoretical points in this exchange. At the outset, I would express my partiality for Brecht's arguments in the light of my commitment to Third World anti-imperialist struggles where esthetic problems and cultural tasks are overdetermined by strategic political needs. On the other hand, my work on Lukács (San Juan 1973) testifies to his enduring value as a heuristic guide to renewing the immense creative potential of Marxism in a time when the old paradigms and formulas can no longer elucidate postmodern reality.

In emphasizing the criterion of typicality (of character and situation), whereby the "spontaneous unity of essence and appearance," the particular and the general, crystallizes, Lukács lapses into a mechanical one-sidedness which hypostatizes the "organic, rounded and closed" form of nineteenth-century critical realism as the permanent model or standard of socialist realism (Lukács 1980, 45–75). I agree with Werner Mittenzwei in exposing this formalist error in Lukács. This positive ideal contradicts the principle in materialist dialectics that the contradictory character of essence and appearance, not their relative unity, functions as the determining force within the complex (1973, 225). In this regard, Lenin himself stresses the primacy of contradiction in his *Philosophical Notebooks*: "In the strict sense, dialectics is the investigation of the contradictions in the essence of the things themselves; it is not only the appearances which are ephemeral, mobile, flowing, limited only by certain milestones, but also the essences of things" (Selsam and Martel 1963, 131).

Precisely in focusing on contradiction as the dynamic motivation behind any materialist theory of reflection, Brecht rejects the contemplative and utopian (in the pejorative sense) thrust of Lukács's cognitive rationalism (see Lovell 1980, 68–76; Jameson 1971, 160–205). Brecht follows Lenin in situating the text (literary form, technique, genre) within the practical exigencies of the class struggle. In a totalizing view, he takes "into account the degree of education and the class background of their public as well as the condition of the class conflicts" (Lang and Williams 1972, 227).

While the contemporary poststructuralist critic may discount Brecht's preoccupation with alienation-effect as merely an offshoot of his project of unfolding the causal nexus, "the network of social relationships," constituting any event, Brecht cannot be classified simply as an exponent of "epistemological conventionalism." He certainly does

not subscribe to the tenet of the undecidability of meaning premised on the alleged disappearance of the referent. Brecht's esthetics includes a rhetorical or pragmatic moment within the cognitive: because what is represented in theater is not empirical montage of phenomena but the laws of social motion, to accomplish this task successfully it is necessary to enforce a critical distance, to remove the plausible and familiar elements in life which hide the possibilities for change in the nexus of events and actors (1964, 91–99, 179–205). The knowledge induced by this syncopated or stylized realism involves the recipient's perception of such possibilities, a perception indistinguishable from a learning process where pleasure coincides with the critical questioning of reality. This critical response entails a desire to play or experiment and thus transform the given situation according to the dictates of the "collective fantasy," to use Caudwell's evocative phrase (1964, 69–76).

It is clear that Brecht's overriding purpose is to mobilize individual energies for collective intervention in changing society, a goal to which the choice of forms or technical means is subordinate. Revealing the historicity of social relations, disclosing forms and ideas as constructs informed by alterity and difference, requires the will to subvert one-dimensional homogenizing thought. It implies the production of meaning through the act of demythologizing public consensus and demystifying received norms. Historicizing texts—making visible the dynamics of ideological production in shaping them—demonstrates and confirms the capacity of humans to collectively shape their world and realize their unique species-being. Brecht's materialism re-inscribes the reader or spectator as potential revolutionary agency in the interstices of a conflicted totality, a society in process of change.

In a well-known polemical essay "The Popular and the Realistic" (circa 1938), Brecht proposed a definition of realism which I think possesses flexibility and lucidity:

free from aesthetic restrictions and independent of convention. Realist means: laying bare society's causal network / showing up the dominant viewpoint as the viewpoint of the dominators / writing from the standpoint of the class which has prepared the broadest solutions for the most pressing problems afflicting human society / emphasizing the dynamics of development / concrete and so as to encourage abstraction. (Craig 1975, 424; see also Bloch 1977, 68–85)

While the semantics of realism is chiefly conditioned by class and historic conjuncture, “popular” here may be conceived as an interpellation of a united front or historic bloc somewhat analogous to Gramsci’s notion of “national-popular culture” (which I discuss later). In an article dated 12 August 1953, “Cultural Policy and Academy of Arts,” Brecht reiterates his demand for art’s “broad intelligibility,” its harnessing of the progressive elements in a national tradition, and its project of socialist realism as “a deeply human, earth-oriented art which will liberate every human capacity.” Polemicizing against dogmatic and bureaucratic pontifications issued by Party officials, Brecht summed up his conception of socialist realism with which I am broadly in agreement. Socialist realism embraces two central themes: first, socialist realist works reveal characters and events as contradictory, historical and alterable, laying bare “the dialectical laws of movement of the social mechanism” so that the “mastering of man’s fate” is made easier; and second, socialist realist works provoke “pleasure at the possibility of society’s mastering man’s fate,” pleasure confluent with “socialist impulses.” Underlying this second proposition is the primacy of a working-class viewpoint that strives “to raise human productivity to an undreamt-of extent by transforming society and abolishing exploitation” (Lang and Williams 1972, 226–27).

What Brecht adds to Caudwell’s notion of the genotype (the collective impulse of human desire) and to Lukács’s axiom of typicality is a more thorough dialectical grasp of dissonance or conflict as the driving force behind social processes (see, in particular, number 45 of “A Short Organon for the Theater” [1965, 193]). He also exhibits an unprecedented emphasis on socially shared pleasure which transposes the utopian or prophetic vision that Bloch and Benjamin appreciated in Marx—the “becoming” and “disappearance” of contradictions—into a sensuous, “earthly” performance. Brecht seems to re-articulate in his own language Lenin’s hermeneutic discovery of the lacunae and discrepancies in Tolstoy’s texts when Brecht foregrounds the pleasure-yielding effect of learning solidarity and struggle, as suggested in the concluding passage of his “Organon”:

Our representations must take second place to what is represented, men’s life together in society; and the pleasure felt in their perfection must be converted into the higher pleasure felt when the rules emerging from this life in society are treated as imperfect and provisional. In this way the theater leaves its spectators productively disposed even after the spectacle is over.

Let us hope that their theater may allow them to enjoy as entertainment that terrible and never-ending labor which should ensure their maintenance, together with the terror of their unceasing transformation. Let them here produce their own lives in the simplest way, for the simplest way of living is in art. (Brecht 1964, 77; see Arvon 1973, 104–12)

The antinomies of form and content, style and theme, the popular and the realistic qualities in art works, which took center stage in the debate between Lukács and Brecht in the thirties, can be traced in the fractured and unresolved texts of Marxist cultural politics from Trotsky's *Literature and Revolution* (1936) to Mao's influential *Talks at the Yanan Forum on Literature and Art* (1942) (Solomon 1973, 251–52). Questions about which has primacy—form or content, authorial will or audience reception, political correctness or technical efficacy—can perhaps be clarified by examining next Gramsci's theory of hegemony as a political-ideological strategy founded on a recovery of the authentic Marxist conception of praxis (1957).

Let us recall that in *Theses on Feuerbach* Marx not only stressed the centrality of “practical, human-sensuous activity,” which defines the substance of social life; he also pointed out that “the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual” but is in fact indivisible from “the ensemble of the social relations.” Further Marx underscored in the tenth thesis that “the standpoint of the old materialism is ‘civil’ society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or associated humanity” (1976). Contrary to the one-sided culturalist reading of Gramsci's thought which privileges the sphere of ideology outside the political, I submit that the site of hegemony is not just civil society but the totality of social relations where production and the state, economic base and ideological superstructure, constitute an ongoing process of changing power relations: class subordination and dominance (Merrington 1977; Mercer 1978; Mouffe 1979; Sassoon 1980).

We can then define Gramsci's concept of hegemony as a totalizing revolutionary strategy motivated by his emphasis on Marxism as “the philosophy of praxis,” “the historicist conception of reality,” which Gramsci elaborates in reaction to the Crocean problematic of art as intuition.

If one cannot think of the individual apart from society, and thus if one cannot think of any individual who is not historically conditioned, it is obvious that every individual, including the artist and all his activities, cannot be thought of apart from society, a specific society.

Hence the artist does not write or paint—that is, he does not externalize his phantasms—just for his own recollection, to be able to relive the moment of creation. He is an artist only insofar as he externalizes, objectifies and historicizes his phantasms. Every artist-individual, though, is such in a more or less broad and comprehensive way, he is “historical” or “social” to a greater or lesser degree (1985, 112).

By contextualizing the individual artist in a historically specific milieu, Gramsci qualifies all esthetic questions as ultimately political in character insofar as they are inscribed in culture grasped as a lived process of experience, not an abstract or simply functional institution. The English critic Raymond Williams provides us with the most precise description of what in Gramsci involves a whole range of ethico-political activities. For Williams, hegemony should be comprehended as “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and our world. It is a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which as they are experienced as practices appear as reciprocally confirming” (Williams 1977, 110).

But this process of establishing hegemony is not a spontaneous phenomenon. It is mediated by a new category of organic (as opposed to traditional) intellectuals whose command over material and intellectual knowledge endows them with a “directive” power to fashion ideologies which gradually become “common sense” through a complex network of consensus formation. Public and private spheres thus fuse in the project of cultural mediation where critical intervention transpires.

Gramsci’s purpose in articulating the prospect of proletarian hegemony inheres in his goal of creating a national-popular culture where the hegemony of the working class is embodied. This culture serves as the key to translating “the philosophy of praxis” into common sense.

Conversely such a project also organizes and refines common sense into a scientific world-view. Put in orthodox terms, the hegemonic drive for a national-popular culture will eliminate the division between mental and manual labor, between city and countryside, which Marx envisioned in the *Manifesto*, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, and in the *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

Two passages indicate how Gramsci seeks to transpose the purely

esthetic problem into a cultural-ideological mode of radical transformation:

The premise of the new literature cannot but be historical, political, and popular. It must aim at elaborating that which already is, whether polemically or in some other way does not matter. What does matter, though, is that it sink its roots into the humus of popular culture as it is, with its tastes and tendencies and with its moral and intellectual world, even if it is backward and conventional. (1985, 102–03)

Concretely “genuine” and “fundamental” humanity can mean only one thing in the artistic field: “historicity,” that is, the “national-popular” character of the writer, but in the broad sense of “sociality,” which can also be taken in the artistic sense so long as the social group that is being expressed is historically alive and the social connection not of an immediate “practico-political” nature. In other words, it must not be predicatory and moralistic, but historical and ethico-political. (cited in Boelhower 1981, 585)

In the first quote, Gramsci grounds the terms “historical, political and popular” in the realm of everyday life, of “common sense” however corrupted or distorted by the prevailing unjust social relations. In the second quote, he equates “historicity” with “national-popular” and “sociality,” emphasizing the mimetic or representational task of the artist who “realizes” the immanent direction of the historical process. In this way he avoids the recalcitrant form-content dualism of traditional esthetics to which I have alluded. By means of the category “national-popular” as applied specifically to Italian conditions, Gramsci historicizes the concept of hegemony by liberating it from class essentialism or economic reductionism. He sutures the theory of hegemony with the long-range project of nation-building peculiar to Italy’s condition. Gramsci envisages the task of national liberation against foreign occupiers, or its spiritual counterpart, cosmopolitanism, pursuing the route via the formation of a popular historic bloc of various classes in another context, the route of the Frente Sandinista in Nicaragua, for example.

From this point it is only a short step to reconceptualizing the dialectical linkage between form and content by their thorough historical grounding in specific conjunctures. The metaphysical problematic of Kant, Hegel, and Croce is thereby displaced or resituated in concrete

social predicaments. Gramsci contends for a dialectical interpretation of the polarity: "Can one speak of a priority of content over form? One can in this sense: the work of art is a process and changes of content are also changes of form. . . . Therefore, 'form' and 'content' have a 'historical' meaning besides an 'esthetic' one. 'Historical' form means a specific language, just as 'content' indicates a specific way of thinking that is not only historical" (Boelhower 1981, 586). Caudwell's dilemma of how to correlate technique and content is resolved here by Gramsci's translation of abstract terms into specific social practices.

What unfolds in Gramsci's reflection is a materialist contextualization of the content-form duality in a process of discursive production: "historical form signifies a determinate language, while 'content' signifies a determinate way of thinking" (Dombroski 1984, 52). For Gramsci, then, the objectification or historicization of what is imagined (fantasy activity, for Caudwell) not only proceeds in the mind but, more decisively, coincides with the "forming" process (*poiesis*, in Greek) which necessarily operates with material, sensorily apprehensible media, channels, devices, etc. Not only are forms of thinking already structured by socially determinate values, but forms of expression or representation are also given beforehand, that is, before creative appropriation begins. This is because techniques and other linguistic or formal elements are not pure schemata or empty categories but are in fact constituted by functional, culture-bound semantic values. In short, form is ideological in essence and thus political in its wider implication. For Gramsci, however, content is not the experience but the writer's attitude to it, an attitude which ultimately shapes style: "'technical' stands for the means by which the moral content, the moral conflict of the novel, the poem, or the drama is made comprehensible in the most immediate and dramatic way possible" (1975, 943).

While Gramsci's performance of a dialectical reading of texts such as Manzoni's *The Betrothed* or Canto X of Dante's *Inferno* can be upheld as a model for a Marxist *explication du texte*, I would rather focus here on what I call the moment of praxis in which the critic's theoretical intervention is not just hermeneutic but also transformative in effect. In the context of literary theory, Gramsci effects a decisive change by anchoring the activity of the imagination in the intellectual's specific, concrete milieu as well as in the integrally hegemonic function that the knowing mind as creating mind enacts: "An historical act can only be performed by 'collective man,' and this presupposes the attainment of a 'cultural-social' unity through which a multiplicity of dispersed wills, with heterogeneous aims, are welded together with a single aim, one



basis of an equal and common conception of the world, both general and particular, operating in transitory bursts (in emotional ways) or permanently (where the intellectual base is so well rooted, assimilated and experienced that it becomes passion)” (Gramsci 1971, 349). Ideologies or world-views as lived experience or “passion,” in Gramsci’s felicitous phrasing, are the climax of a hegemonic process in which the function of criticism free of “unilateral or fanatical ideological elements” is that of grasping the contradictions in the critic’s own position in society. That is to say, the critic committed to a revolutionary vision “not only grasps the contradictions, but posits himself as an element of the contradiction and elevates this element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action.” Praxis—unity of thought and action—results from this reflexive moment. The critic incarnates the historic task of the revolutionary class and activates a principle of transformation. This principle entails the systematizing and refinement of “common sense,” the socialization of philosophical and scientific concepts that can move society forward by releasing suppressed human potential: “That the mass could be led to think about a current reality coherently and systematically is a philosophical fact much more important and ‘original’ than the discovery by a philosophical ‘genius’ of a new truth that becomes the property of small groups of intellectuals” (Gramsci 1971, 325).

Because Gramsci seeks to think through the complex oscillation of “identity” and “difference” in the thickness of the historical process, especially that gravitating around the Italian conjuncture of an industrialized North and a predominantly rural South, his cultural theorizing takes as its point of departure the Marxist—more precisely, the Leninist—category of unequal and combined development. This complex happening obtains, according to Ernesto Laclau, “when a synchronic articulation occurs between stages which Marxist theory considers as successive (for example, the articulation between democratic tasks and the socialist leadership of those tasks)” (1987, 332). Given the fact of a dislocation in the normal development of society where the bourgeoisie fails to exercise its hegemonic mission, it devolves on the working class and its organic intellectuals (in alliance with the peasantry and the middle strata) to carry out the democratic tasks of national unity and development as a crucial flank of an all-encompassing socialist project, hence the national-popular thrust of the historic bloc. Laclau emphasizes the “logic of unevenness and dislocation,” that is, the logic of the signifier which “presides over the possibility/impossibility of the constitution of any identity.” While Laclau

follows this metonymic pattern of ideological constitution of the subject to the point where all categories, being historically contingent, resist totalization in a higher rationality and remain fluid in their negativity and opaqueness, Gramsci, though cognizant of the dislocation, insists on fulfilling the necessary task of constituting or identifying the historical agent (the national-popular will, the historic bloc) that will release potential human energies stifled by repressive social relations. The mediating or catalyzing force in this project is the organic intellectual of the working class. History, for Gramsci, does not move in a linear one-dimensional fashion where base and superstructure always coincide, especially in peripheral or dependent zones of global capitalism. Precisely because Gramsci perceives the diverse, uneven and unstable mentalities that comprise any given social formation, he is compelled to postulate the mediating subject that will attempt totalization and coherence of the social process. I refer here to the hegemonic collective subject—in esthetics, the revolutionary artist or dialectical critic—in whose action coalesce the economic, political, and ideological moments. We confront here the praxis revolutionary transformation.

To illustrate the unique relevance of Gramsci's analysis to Third World formations where unequal and combined development obtains (as it did in Russia in 1917, China in 1949, Cuba in 1959, and Nicaragua in 1979), Gramsci differentiates between the sensibilities of the politician and the artist. Here he is able to affirm the relative autonomy of the artistic from the programmatic imperatives of political action:

The literary man must necessarily have a less precise and definite outlook than the politician. He must be less "sectarian," if one can put it this way, but in a "contradictory" way. For the politician, every "fixed" image is a priori reactionary: he considers the entire movement in its development. The artist, however, must have "fixed" images that are cast into their definite form. The politician imagines man as he is, and at the same time how he should be in order to reach a specific goal. His task is precisely to stir men up, to get them to leave their present life behind in order to become collectively able to reach the proposed goal, that is, to get them to "conform" to the goal. The artist necessarily and realistically depicts "that which is," at given moment (the personal, the non-conformist, etc.). From the political point of view, therefore, the politician will never be

satisfied with the artist and will never be able to be: he will find him always behind the times, always anachronistic and overtaken by the real flow of events. If history is a continuous process of liberation and self-awareness, it is evident that every stage (historical and in this case cultural) will be immediately surmounted and will no longer hold any interest. (1985, 110-11)

In discriminating between the political movement and the esthetic (although it should be stressed that both are fused in the hegemonic strategy of a social bloc), Gramsci rejects the narrow sectarian dogmatism of the French Communist Paul Nizan, who condemned fellow-travelers like Malraux and others prior to the inauguration of the Comintern's Popular Front in 1932. Gramsci's instinct for the necessarily heterogeneous, diverse, temporally layered fabric of any society, any complex conjuncture, enables him to conceive of multiple strategies in achieving proletarian hegemony:

Moral and intellectual renewal does not develop simultaneously in all of the social strata. On the contrary, it is worth repeating that even today many people are Ptolemaic and not Copernican. There are many "conformisms," many struggles for new "conformisms" and various combinations of that which already exists (variously expressed) and that which one is working to bring about (and there are many people who are working in this direction). It is a serious error to adopt a "single" progressive strategy according to which each new gain accumulates and becomes the premise of further gains. Not only are the strategies multiple, but even in the "most progressive" ones there are retrogressive moments. Furthermore, Nizan does not know how to deal with so-called "popular literature," that is, with the success of serial literature (adventure stories, detective stories, thrillers) among the masses, a success that is assisted by the cinema and the newspapers. And yet, it is this question that represents the major part of the problem of a new literature as the expression of moral and intellectual renewal, for only from the readers of serial literature can one select a sufficient and necessary public for creating the cultural base of the new literature. (1985, 101-2)

From this passage, one can perceive what unifies Gramsci's ad hoc cultural reflections in prison, namely, the overriding task of moral and intellectual renewal of the whole society premised on the integration of

the most highly developed philosophies, *Weltanschauungen* with popular common sense, folklore, and other subaltern or marginal forms of cultural production.

Gramsci's controlling agenda is precisely the articulation of the intellectual's hegemonic vocation. This can be described also, following Debray's formulation, as the historical "implantation" of Marxism in a given national-popular tradition (Debray 1970, 48–52), the "translation" and at the same time transformation of concrete life (common sense) into philosophy (Marxism as the unity of the theory and practice of class struggle). This is the locus of synthesizing form and content, thought and action. Confronting the materiality of ideology and its specific modes of inscription, negotiation, and appropriation by social groups, Gramsci is not blind to cultural movements originating from the petty bourgeoisie. Witness his acclaim of Futurism as a decisive rupture in bourgeois hegemony generating a revolutionary effect which the socialists of his day refused to acknowledge because of their productivist bias and narrow-minded class reductionism. In this touchstone of Gramsci's poetics, which I consider a high point in Marxist critical theorizing, Gramsci distinguishes between the logically plotted seizure of state power and the kaleidoscopic convergence of various lines of transition which defies rational calculation. We discern here the trope of uneven/combined development:

The battlefield for the creation of a new civilization is... absolutely mysterious, absolutely characterized by the unforeseeable and the unexpected. Having passed from capitalist power to workers' power, the factory will continue to produce the same material things that it produces today. But in what way and under what forms will poetry, drama, the novel, music, painting and moral and linguistic works be born? It is not a material factory that produces these works. It cannot be reorganized by a workers' power according to a plan. One can not establish its rate of production for the satisfaction of immediate needs, to be controlled and determined statistically. Nothing in this field is foreseeable except for this general hypothesis: there will be a proletarian culture (a civilization) totally different from the bourgeois one and in this field too class distinctions will be shattered... What remains to be done? Nothing other than to destroy the present form of civilization. In this field "to destroy" does not mean the same as in the economic field. It does not mean to deprive humanity of the material products that it needs to subsist and to develop. It

means to destroy spiritual hierarchies, prejudices, idols and ossified traditions. It means not to be afraid of innovations and audacities, not to be afraid of monsters, not to believe that the world will collapse if a worker makes grammatical mistakes, if a poem limps, if a picture resembles a hoarding or if young men sneer at academic and feeble-minded senility. The Futurists have carried out this task in the field of bourgeois culture. . . . [The Futurists] have grasped sharply and clearly that our age, the age of big industry, of the large proletarian city and of intense and tumultuous life, was in need of new forms of art, philosophy, behavior and language. This sharply revolutionary and absolutely Marxist idea came to them when the Socialists were not even vaguely interested in such a question. . . . In their field, the field of culture, the Futurists are revolutionaries. (1985, 50–51)

Brecht would be in complete sympathy with this essentially historical judgment. After World War I, however, Futurism in Italy changed and broke up into different trends; it ceased to play a regenerative role. Gramsci informs Trotsky in a letter circa 1923: “The workers, who had seen in Futurism the elements of a struggle against academic Italian culture, fossilized and remote from the popular masses, had to fight for freedom with weapons in their hands and had little interest in the arguments” (1985, 54).

When we examine next Gramsci’s assessment of Pirandello as another illustration of a dialectical mode of reading, we observe an analogous focus on the cultural rather than the narrowly artistic dimension of textuality. Given Gramsci’s belief that “a national-cultural unity of the Italian people does not yet exist, that ‘provincialism’ and particularism are still deeply rooted in their customs and in the way they think and act,” Gramsci contends that “Pirandello’s importance seems to me to be more of an intellectual and moral, i.e. cultural, than an artistic kind. He has tried to introduce into popular culture the dialectics of modern philosophy, in opposition to the Aristotelian-Catholic way of conceiving the ‘objectivity of the real’” (1985, 138, 135)

Viewing Pirandello’s plays as organic extensions of the “physical personality the writer,” a personality which amalgamates the Sicilian, the Italian, and the European, Gramsci apprehends the artist’s self-conscious rendering of this heterogeneous sensibility as the source of “his artistic weakness along with his great ‘cultural’ significance.” The latter inheres in Pirandello’s anti-Catholic (as opposed to the

humanitarian and positivist bourgeois world-view) conception of the world and its fertile “dialectical conception of objectivity.” Gramsci further argues that because Pirandellian ideology is not bookish or tendentious but “linked to lived historico-cultural experiences,” it succeeds in deprovincializing and modernizing the Italian public’s taste (the petty bourgeois and Philistine culture of the late nineteenth century) and combatting both Catholic idealism and bourgeois positivism. Gramsci thus estimates any modernist or avant-garde impulse within the parameters of the hegemonic obsession to invent and mobilize a national-popular identity: Pirandello “has done much more than the Futurists towards ‘deprovincializing’ the ‘Italian man’ and arousing a modern ‘critical’ attitude in opposition to the traditional, nineteenth-century ‘melodramatic’ attitude” (1985, 139).

One conclusion emerges from this brief survey of the nodal stages in the vicissitudes of Marxist critical theorizing on the politics of esthetics: without the focus on the moment of praxis—the artist’s or critic’s intervention in the concrete arena of political struggle for hegemony, any reflection on the nature of art and its function will compulsively repeat the metaphysical idealism it seeks to overcome. It is in the arena of political and ideological conflict that consciousness is grasped in its overdetermined trajectory as a complex of material practices functioning in conserving or disintegrating a determinate conjuncture, a lived situation. Without positing this moment of rupture or opening for intervention, we shall reproduce the predicament of the bourgeois intellectual Caudwell and Lukács (in *History and Class Consciousness*) acutely diagnosed: the division of mental and manual labor; the antinomy between subject and object, society and individual, nature and history, which revolutionary socialist practice hopes to gradually and eventually resolve, despite setbacks and mistakes in the itinerary of struggle. One way of blocking this compulsion to repeat mechanical or essentializing practices is to compose a totalizing, more or less coherent narrative, a space (cognitive and pragmatic at the same time) where values/meanings compete; where a kind of Marxist self-recognition of its authentic vision may crystallize in the struggle of antagonistic interpretations consonant with the concrete ideological problems ushered in by the era of glasnost and the collapse of “actually existing socialism” in Eastern Europe. Such a task commands priority in the agenda of socialist intellectuals everywhere.

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# Toward a Marxist Analysis of Subjectivity

Tom Meisenhelder

## *Introduction*

Much has been written about Marxist social psychology, the concept of alienation, and the place of subjectivity within theory. Some argue that the idea of alienation is crucial to Marx's early work but becomes much less significant in his more "mature" writings. Others argue that the concept remains a crucial idea in all of Marx's writing. In addition there have been numerous book-length studies of Marx's use of alienation and its usage in philosophy and the social sciences after Marx. Still Marxist sociologists have not developed a comprehensive conceptual model for deciphering the interrelations of subjectivity and society. Perhaps one way forward here is provided by the Habermasian procedure of "rational reconstruction" (1979, 8–10). Rational reconstruction refers to the explication of a concept through an analysis of its formal structure including its "hidden presuppositions." Referring primarily to the study of human abilities, Habermas says that the end result of this kind of analysis is the systematic reconstruction of "the intuitive knowledge of competent subjects" (1979, 9). Later he writes that reconstruction lays bare the generative structures underlying an activity (1979, 13). If we make this method applicable to theorizing as an activity, it leads us to look for the "deep" structure of a concept or idea as it has been used by theorists. Then reconstructive study becomes a form of conceptual explication that serves to uncover the meaning of an important theoretical notion. My goal here is to decipher the structure of a set of concepts that can form the basis of a Marxist theory of subjectivity.

## *Marxist analysis of subjectivity since Marx*

### *Lukács*

A most important figure in the modern development of a conceptual scheme for studying human subjectivity is Georg Lukács. Lukács

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argued that the form of the commodity fetish represents “the central structural problem of capitalist society in all its aspects” (1971, 88). For Lukács the specific experience that reflected the problematic of the commodity form was reification, “the necessary, immediate reality of every person living in capitalist society” (1971, 197). Lukács is quite clear that in his mind the problem of reification is specific to the age of modern capitalism (1971, 88, 232). Indeed it is Lukács who first refers to the consequences of the commodity fetish as “reification,” which he defines as the tendency for “a relation between people [to take on] the character of a thing” and thus acquire a “phantom objectivity” seeming to exist independent of human relations (1971, 83). In other words, reification involves accepting as natural what is in reality mere historical appearance. As Arato demonstrates, Lukács used reification to understand the difficulty of successfully achieving revolutionary class consciousness (Arato 1972, 91). Although Lukács seems to have written about the problem of reification even in his early literary pieces (Arato and Brienens 1979, 25), his most complete treatment of the subject is in the central essays of *History and Class Consciousness* (1971). By and large, Lukács accepted Marx’s classical description and explanation of the commodity fetish in capitalism. Lukács presumed that reification is grounded in the increasing division of labor called forth by capitalism as it “spatializes” the basic temporality of the labor process. He also adopted the idea that reification results from the alienation of the worker from, most importantly, the product of his or her labor (Arato 1972, 96–97). That is, reification is a product of, but not identical to, alienation (Lukács 1971, xxv). As a consequence of the division of labor, property relations, and exchange relations of capitalism, the product becomes an external force dominating those that produce it. Or, more abstractly, things rule humans and quantity dominates quality. Lukács believed that in the reified world of capitalism individuals see themselves as objective and isolated things functioning according to the laws of nature. That is, no image of historical social relations, the social totality, exists within the reified world view of capitalism.

Perhaps Lukács’s most significant contribution to the development of a Marxist theory of subjectivity was his insistence that reification is a complex moment that encompasses all capitalist social relations. It is visible in the alienation of labor, the disposition of the product, the transferal of human properties to things and of thingness to human relations, the rule of exchange value (quantity) over use value (quality), the spatialization of time, the rule of the past (capital/dead labor) over the present {labor}, and the bureaucratic rationalization of social life.

Finally, and most crucially for Lukács, reification also involves the subjective acceptance of these aspects of capitalist society as if they were part of nature. Beyond the many objective aspects of reification Lukács discovered a subjective side to the phenomenon. This subjective component occurs when individuals take for granted the relations produced by capitalism and become passive observers unable to conceive of changing society.

The subjective side of reification, Lukács argued, can add greatly to the understanding of the historical resilience of capitalism. Capitalism's predictable economic crises create only the *objective possibility* of a revolutionary transformation of society. The actualization of that historical possibility may be prevented by the power of reification to convince the proletariat that the existing set of social relations are "natural," necessary, and unchangeable. To bring the economic crisis to its revolutionary conclusion, on the other hand, requires the "de-reification" of the proletariat as the objectively revolutionary class in capitalism. That is, workers must develop their class consciousness and throw off their false—or reified—consciousness (Arato and Brienes 1979, 104). So, contrary to Weber and Simmel, Lukács believed that de-reification is possible and humans can escape from the "iron cage" of history and "objective culture" by becoming aware of the historical genesis of capitalist society.

From this analysis Lukács concludes that revolutionary change occurs first within the consciousness of workers as they go beyond their empirical reified world view and develop true class consciousness.

The struggle... is not just a battle waged against an external enemy, the bourgeoisie. It is equally the struggle of the proletariat *against itself*: against the devastating and degrading effects of the capitalist system upon its class consciousness. (1971, 80)

Like Lenin, he argues that revolutionary consciousness is "ascribed or imputed" to the proletariat by the "vanguard party." Yet, at the same time, he agrees with Luxemburg that the party must work with the spontaneity of the masses and develop it into a mature class consciousness. This connection to mass spontaneity will protect the party from reification in the form of bureaucracy. It is Lukács's position that the beginnings of a class conscious and revolutionary working class lies at the limits of the powers of capitalist reification. It is within the proletariat's real experiences of alienation and reification that theorist and activist alike find the raw materials that inform ascribed class

consciousness

Forced by capitalist social relations to experience themselves as commodities within the capital-wage labor marketplace, workers—perhaps unconsciously—live the fallacy of reification. At the same time that they experience their own commodification they also know themselves to be active and creative beings that produce commodities. That is, workers experience themselves as both objects and subjects. In becoming conscious of themselves, then, workers also see into the basic contradictions of capitalist society and in that very act begin to become empowered as subjects able to make history (1971, 178). This experience underlies the proletariat's minimal consciousness of alienation and grounds the possibility of revolution. Here lies the origin of the working class's naive but real subjective resistance to their commodification by capital. With the help of party theorists these beginnings can lead to a fully de-reified understanding of the capitalist social totality. The "vanguard party" armed with the emancipating truths of historical materialism enables workers to understand capitalism as a historical social organization that can be changed. Thus, Lukács posits the controversial idea that the working class can become the identical subject object of history when it becomes fully conscious of society as a historical totality open to revolutionary transformation.

#### *Reification and critical theory*

As many have noted, the critical theorists of the early Frankfurt School owe a great intellectual debt to Lukács. While they rejected Lukács's political positions on the revolutionary leadership of the vanguard party, they adopted and extended Lukács's focus on consciousness. Horkheimer and Adorno, for instance, extend the idea of reification by arguing that even precapitalist societies were "reified" (1972). Indeed, they seem to believe that reification is a universal characteristic of human thought (Habermas 1984, 378). The critical theorists ground alienation and reification in the general forms of hierarchal social relations of domination and instrumental rationality rather than in the specifically capitalist commodity form (Habermas 1984, 54–55). Thus, as Habermas (1984, 379) puts it, Horkheimer and Adorno generalize reification temporally to cover the history of the species and substantively to all kinds of domination. In the end they follow Weber rather than Lukács in portraying humankind as trapped within the iron cage of reification evidenced historically by fascism, Stalinism, and advanced capitalism.

***Contemporary Marxist thought***

Since the writings of Horkheimer and Adorno, several neo-Marxists and critical theorists have written specific studies of alienation and reification. Here I will briefly discuss only the most significant of these: the alienation theories of Mészáros, Ollman, and Walliman and the reification theory of Israel, a student of Lukács, begins his study of Marx's concept of alienation by distinguishing it from externalization or objectification. He notes that it is this very distinction that is missed by Hegel and leads him to universalize and idealize alienation (1970, 169–72). Mészáros argues instead that alienation specifically means being opposed by hostile powers of one's own making as presented by Marx's 1844 manuscripts.

Mészáros traces the modern origins of the idea of alienation to Rousseau's commentary on money and human relations (1970, 39–55). However he argues that it is Marx and Lenin who create the conceptual complex now current in social theory (1970, 95). Mészáros reads Marx to be saying that alienation involves three processes, objectification, alienation, and appropriation. It is a historically given form of objectification in which the workers are alienated from labor, its products, social relations, and therefore from themselves. That which is alienated from the worker is, in turn, appropriated by the capitalist. He sees this as the subordination of a human universal (objectification and labor) to historical particulars such as private property and the division of labor. Mészáros says that Marx's theory of alienation posits that man "naturally" interacts with nature and thereby makes things that are useful in satisfying human needs and this activity constitutes the self. In capitalism, this "natural" interaction is alienated; that is, it results in both a form of labor and a product that dominates the human being itself (1970, 104–8).

For Mészáros, reification is a consequence of alienation. In particular reification occurs when the things made through labor appear as independent entities fully external to the human beings who in fact created them (1970, 81–82). Mészáros also argues that Marx discovered that money was central to reification and represented the "alienated ability of mankind" and the dominance of having things over being in capitalist existence (1970, 971–98). Reification begins, according to Mészáros, when the worker is turned into a commodity (1970, 144–46). Alienated from the means of production and forced to sell their labor power by the institutions of private property, workers begin

to understand this situation as part of the very nature of human reality (1970, 147–59). Individuals conceive of themselves as the private possessors—through their alienated ability (money)—of commodities including their own labor power.

Defining alienation in an orthodox fashion, Mészáros places both the apparent independent existence of the product of labor and its domination over its maker under the rubric of reification. This excludes the logical and empirical possibility that the product may appear external to the producers as a thing, yet not dominate them through the institutions of society. This is a possibility that a conceptual structure for studying subjectivity must not preclude. Although Mészáros describes precapitalist societies as characterized by political, not economic, alienation (1970, 137), his ability to distinguish between historical types of societies, as well as between positions within a single society, would be improved if his conceptual scheme was more differentiated.

Bertell Ollman is a second important contemporary alienation theorist, with a slightly different interpretation of Marx. Ollman presents a “relational” model of alienation which begins with the argument that Marx conceived of human nature in general as composed of human needs and related powers; that is, potentials or capacities connected to desire (1971, 64). These potentials exist empirically as human tendencies consciously moving toward the objects necessary for their actualization (1971, 74–77). These activities in turn create new human needs and desires. Thus, humans are a self-conscious and self-created species.

Ollman believes that objectification is common to all mediation between humans and the natural world (1971, 126). He says that when Marx uses alienation he is referring to “any state of human existence which is ‘away from’ or ‘less than’ unalienation” (1971, 132). So alienation and unalienation are dialectically related. Ollman defines reification as “alienated life elements” such as property, industry, and religion, wherein things appear to become human by taking on needs of their own and appearing to have powers through which they can force human beings to act to satisfy those needs. Thus Ollman argues that what Marx means when he says that things take on human qualities and human relations become “thingified” is that things take on their own needs and powers and deny those of human beings.

According to Ollman’s Marx, alienation occurs in capitalism in four related “moments.” First, workers are alienated from the activity of labor; that is, from the ability to use their human powers to transform nature and to create themselves. Workers are also alienated from

others, from their species-being, and from the product of their laboring activity. It is the final moment of alienation that is most crucial to Ollman's discussion of reification. He states that Marx's analysis of capitalism includes the observation that workers encounter the products that they create as alien objects exercising powers over them. That is, the products of labor appear to exist as independent empowered objects fully external to their creators. This can be seen, Ollman suggests, when one looks at the means of production in capitalism as "dead labor" which is in no way under the control of the workers or even recognized as "theirs" (1971, 143). Here the thing or product gains powers at the expense of the human worker.

This displacement of certain relations from the worker to his product is responsible for the illusion that the inanimate object is a living organism with powers and needs of its own. (1971, 144)

Next, the workers become subservient to the products that now confront them as something to which they must adjust their needs such as when the means of production direct the actions of the worker and commodities create needs to be satisfied (1971, 146). Ollman seems to be arguing that Marx revealed that reification results from the worker's alienation from the product of labor.

In his interpretation of Marx's analysis of the "commodity fetish," Ollman writes that money is in a sense the "medium" of reification for it hides the ties between people that underlie all value (Ollman 1971, 195–200). As capital, money hides the will and intent of the capitalist; as price, it hides the social relations of production and consumption; and, as rent, it hides the landlord. It is the granting to money of human powers and qualities that, for Ollman, is "the outstanding instance of capitalist fetishism" (1971, 197). Although Ollman nicely highlights and clarifies the meaning of reification, like Mészáros, he fails to directly consider estrangement as a separate phenomenon.

This important emphasis is provided by Isidor Walliman (1981). His study provides a critique of previous interpretations of Marx's writing on alienation and presents a new point of view built around the concept of "estrangement." Walliman argues that estrangement is a process quite distinct from alienation and reification. Walliman's position is that Marx's use of two different German words to discuss the consequences of the capitalist division of labor indicates that he had in mind two distinct processes. While Ollman explicitly denies this possibility by stating that "for most purposes, 'alienation' (*Entäusserung*) and

‘estrangement’ (*Entfremdung*) may be taken as synonymous” (1971, 132), Walliman’s position is that Marx produced a theory of estrangement rather than a theory of alienation. He argues that this theory is based in Marx’s biological model of human beings as a species distinct from other animals due to its intelligence, will, and activity (Walliman 1981, 11–13). Workers are estranged, according to Walliman, as a consequence of a division of labor that forces them to sell their labor power, a central aspect of human nature, as if it were simply one more commodity controlled by the capitalist (1981, 28). Further, workers have no claim to the products they create and thus are estranged from them when they are appropriated by the capitalist (Walliman 1981, 31–32).

Walliman suggests that Marx uses estrangement to refer specifically to the alienation of workers from the product that results in their loss of control over the activities that define human being (1981, 40). He suggests that Marx believed that estrangement was founded upon the existence of an “involuntary division of labor” in society (1981, 36–37). Walliman also argues that this theory of estrangement contains reification which results from estrangement when “man under capital [is] dominated by an alien will and alien forces, by the products of his own labor” (1981, 149).

If as Walliman suggests, Ollman errs by failing to distinguish between alienation and estrangement, Walliman himself commits a parallel error by conflating estrangement and reification. Even though Walliman recognizes a distinction between estrangement and its consequences such as the domination of capital, he seems to take reification to be part of estrangement. This error—the neglect of the separate status of reification—is corrected by theorists who focus particularly on the idea of reification. One of the most significant of these theorists is Joachim Israel.

The most extensive recent study of reification as a concept in Marxian social theory is Joachim Israel’s *Alienation: From Marx to Modern Sociology* (1976). Israel argues that Marx’s development as a theorist moved him from alienation to reification. That is, he suggests that the “young Marx” centered his work on the subjective and philosophical notion of alienation while the “mature Marx” worked with the more historical and structural concept of reification. This, he argues, explains why the 1844 manuscripts analyze alienation while *Capital* opens with a discussion of the commodity fetish or reification.



Our central hypothesis is that the change from a theory of alienation to a theory of reification was a necessary consequence of the shift in point of departure from “labour” to “commodity.” (Israel 1976, 13)

According to Israel, this maturation stems from Marx’s rejection of his own youthful essentialist discussion of human nature for empirical analysis.

Israel argues that Marxist theory takes *praxis* as its point of departure. Rather than being subjective or objective, Marxism is dialectical; that is, it is based in the practical material and cognitive activity of concrete human beings living as a class during a specific historical time (1976, 42). So Marxism posits as foundational neither the subject nor the object, rather it begins with the dialectical interplay of the creating subjects and created objects.

The subject is always a subjectified object and the object always an objectified subject. This means that on the one hand objects produced by man are the expressions of his potential and essential forces and abilities: they are objectifications, i.e. subjective forces transformed into objects. Man as subject, on the other hand, is produced by the objects and institutions of his social world. (1976, 42)

Alienation involves the denial of this aspect of human being and, according to Israel, originates with capitalist industrialization, where private property and the division of labor transform the essence of humanity—its life process of labor—into a mere commodity (1976, 45–46). As a consequence workers become alienated from their product, their activity, themselves, and from one another. This is, according to Israel, the early Marx. Israel argues that in *The German Ideology* Marx jettisons his youthful Feuerbachian essentialism and develops a fully sociological description of human nature as the totality of social relations in a historical society (1976, 47–6). He also believes that this break underlies Marx’s shift from alienation to reification. Israel submits that the mature Marx describes use value as the embodiment of the unique qualities of the laborer; however in capitalism exchange value—an abstract quantity—dominates use-value and products become commodities. Likewise, consumption in capitalist society does not reflect the social relations of humans but instead is determined by the power of exchange. Israel argues that, at the level of consciousness, capitalist organization of production and consumption

produces reification; that is, the tendency to abstract from human qualities and thereby transform social reality into mere things. It also is apparent in the creation of needs by exchange value and the transformation of people into objective “consumption-powers.” Finally, reification is seen in the domination of humans by their noneconomic products such as the corporate bureaucracy and the state (1976, 53).

Israel describes reification as one specific part of the general process of alienation in capitalist society (1976, 61 and 269). It is anchored in the commodity which he defines as a thing given a “second” function or meaning as for example when a product is seen as exchange value rather than use value or human beings are taken as objects.

But—and this is one of the central points in Marxist thinking concerning reification—the very phenomenon does not appear to the individual as something abnormal, as something “alien” to his nature. Instead, the process of reification acquires the characteristic of a “natural” relationship. (1976, 59-60)

Israel notes that the idea of reification exists informally within even early Marxism in the discussion of the alienation of the worker from the product of labor which in turn appears to dominate and control those that create it (1976, 41–52). Thus, commodities seem to exist independent of persons in society. Products are made and consumed within marketplace relations that obscure underlying social relations. The fetish of commodities, then, stems from the social organization of production in capitalism where

use value is substituted by exchange-value, . . . human relations between individuals are substituted by object relations between buyer and seller. (1976, 279)

Like Lukács, Israel goes on to draw further sociological implications from Marx’s analysis of reification by applying it to the workings of bureaucracy (1976, 279–82).

Next Israel turns to the “psychological processes of reification.” It is important to note that Israel conceives of reification as both an objective and a subjective process. Combining the idea that humans are the totality of their social relations with the notion of the centrality of the processes of production, Israel concludes that the subjective component of reification occurs when people take their powerlessness (as objects) as the normal state of affairs (1976, 314). So reification is a social condition that, depending on how and where it is experienced, may be said to have certain consequences in human consciousness.<sup>1</sup>

*Marx and subjectivity*

The remainder of this paper applies some of the ideas developed by these analysts to reinterpret Marx. This reinterpretation culminates in a reconstructed conceptual complex useful for a Marxist analysis of human subjectivity.

The immediate origins of Marx's thoughts about human subjectivity lie with Hegel.<sup>2</sup> Thus in order to really get at Marx's theory it is first necessary to glance back at Hegel. Here, with Hegel, we find two basic ideas that, as seen above, have remained important throughout the development of Marxist theory. These are alienation and objectification which, together with reification and estrangement, form the core of Marxist theories of human subjectivity. Hegel felt that in thinking and producing ideas human beings externalized or *objectified* their spirits. These external ideas, or thought-objects, seem to exist independent of any individual in the forms of science, politics, and religion. That is, these institutions and the related ideas that formed them were in actuality alienated ideas. Further, Hegel believed that this condition of alienation was inevitable and natural for human beings. Humanity was forever condemned to live by objectifying its spirit and thereby creating the external world as an alien surround. Alienation could only be overcome, according to Hegel, when spirit recognizes itself in the world it has created and declares its identity as a subject with the objects it has created. Then the object as a negation of human consciousness would itself be negated. Still, in terms of the limits of human history, alienation is universal.

The influence of Hegel on Marx was mediated by the materialism of Feuerbach. Feuerbach criticized Hegel for remaining an idealist and simply making religion philosophical (1957). He also argues—without using the word—that Hegel indulges in reification by conceiving of ideas, the products of material individuals, as if they were the forces that caused human behavior. That is, Feuerbach posits that Hegel confuses subjects and objects by treating real individuals as if they were the creations of ideas, and ideas as if they were the causes of history. Thus he provides a materialist critique of Hegel's philosophy. Feuerbach then goes on to apply this critique to religion and declares that "god" is the projection of material human potentiality onto an independent and alien being. He proposes that it occurs due to the fact that finite individuals are removed from the general possibilities of humankind. That is, to use a term Marx borrows from Feuerbach, they are alienated from their species-being. When humans become aware of

themselves as a species and claim their potential through material social relations, religion will die out. For Feuerbach, contrary to Hegel, alienation was a facet of history not an inevitable condition for humanity. This of course was an idea very significant for Marx. So with Feuerbach's critique of Hegel, Marx has in nascent form three key ideas: objectification, or the process of externalization involved in creating some thing or idea; alienation, the separation of the object from its origin or maker; and, reification, or the domination of the creator by that which it created.

Marx adopts the Hegelian idea that human self-creation is a process of alienation and disalienation, but he rejects the argument that all human objectification is alienating. He also rejects Feuerbach's one sided and crude materialism. He does not believe that humans are pure objectivity or passive materiality, rather Marx sees the need for a materialist theory of human subjectivity. He argues that the subject of Feuerbach's analysis, religious alienation, was only one of many kinds of alienation. In understanding human subjectivity, the first step is to recognize that it is historical and thus, given a particular kind of society, alienation may be religious, political, economic, or all of these at once. Still Marx seemed to feel that underneath all these historical forms of alienation lay one common moment, the alienation of labor. It is here that Marx finds the key to the separation of human essence from human existence. By studying the social organization of production, Marx hopes to produce a material theory that can lead to a nonalienated society where labor can fulfill rather than deny human potentiality.

Marx agreed that labor is a process of objectification in which the object created is the externalization of its creator's species-being and mode of life (1973, 300).

The product of labor is labor which has been embodied in an object, which has become material: it is the objectification of labor. (Marx 1959, 63)

Further, labor is self-creative activity and freely created objects are the externalization of human species-life (1973, 89; Marx 1959, 69). But, Marx continued, while it is true that objectification through labor is a necessity for human survival, alienation is historical (1973, 831–32). It emerges only when the products of labor, as commodities or things valued more for their exchange value than their use value, come to master rather than develop human beings (Avineri 1968, 86). This occurs when the value, or amount of labor, embodied in a commodity begins to be seen as a real external thing existing independently from

human social relations (Marx 1959, 57–60).

Marx details the internal fourfold structure of capitalist alienation.<sup>3</sup> Capitalist society is based upon private property, that is, the means of production are owned by the capitalist as capital. In order to survive, workers, who by definition do not own the means of production, must sell their labor power to a capitalist for a wage. Then the capitalist puts the workers to work at the means of production, making a product that will become the property of the capitalist. Indeed some of these products may be additional means of production to be used in further processes of production. In this basic relationship, workers are separated from the products that they produce, both in the sense that they do not own the commodity that they make and in the sense that they do not own the tools, or means of production with which they work. Further, they also are forcibly separated from the process of laboring due to the fact that they have sold their very labor power to the capitalist. It is the capitalist who controls and directs how and for how long work is done in the factory. Workers in capitalism are alienated from the activity of production. Their own labor becomes a mere commodity. Marx goes on to state that it follows from these two experiences of alienation that workers are also alienated from other human beings and from their own species-being. The former means that within the capital–wage–labor relation the working class is separate from the capitalist class. Also, in capitalism workers are separated from the community of humanity and its common potentiality for self-conscious social activity. Instead they compete with each other individualistically for the opportunity to do menial specialized tasks. Even their cooperation in the workplace is structured and directed by capital rather than themselves (Marx 1973, 306–470); that is, in capitalism, workers are alienated from their species-being.

Marx suggests that alienation arises from three particular features of the social organization of production in a capitalist society. For one, the division of labor in the workplace between mental and manual work bisects the essential core of human being, its capacity for creative labor. Within capitalism this capacity, which involves designing and executing a project of action, is separated into two distinct kinds of activity and each activity becomes the province of a particular social group. Management performs mental labor while workers perform manual labor and neither partakes of the whole of their humanity. This division of labor is itself based in a second factor that is another source of alienation in capitalism, the institution of private ownership of the means of production. In fact, Marx argues that the relationship between

private property and alienation is that of mutual determination such that alienated labor produces commodities as private property while at the same time the existence of private ownership of the means of production realizes alienation (1959, 72–73). In capitalism the means of production are not owned by the workers who use them but by the capitalist who controls the process of production. Historically, this means that in the transition to the capitalist mode of production the “tools” of labor were violently torn from the workers by the capitalist. As a result of this simple accumulation, workers no longer control their work or even the resources and instruments they work with, rather these are owned as capital by the bourgeoisie who as a result also claim ownership of the product. Finally Marx also attributes alienation in capitalism to the domination of all social relations by the forms and structures of marketplace commodity exchange. Dispossessed of the means of production, in order to live, workers must sell their labor power to the owners of capital. Dispossessed of the product of their labor, in order to live, workers must use the wages they receive from the sale of labor power to buy necessary commodities. In both ways the worker is surrounded by the social relations of the commodity exchange marketplace. In this sense, money comes to regulate human activity. The cash nexus is the predominant form for capitalist social relations. Thus, for Marx, alienation is caused by the division of labor, the rule of capital, and the dominance of exchange relations in capitalist society. Alienation in turn reproduces each of its “causes” and contributes to the maintenance of the mode of production. Marx emphasizes that the core of alienation is a forced dispossession that reverses the order of things so that

the realization of labor appears as loss of realization for the workers; objectification as loss of the object. (Marx 1959, 63)

Marx also argues that, in capitalism, the alienated object takes on the appearance of an independently existing thing. That is, the workers are “estranged” from the products of their labor.<sup>4</sup> Products in the market place appear to “move” according to forces and powers of their own even if that means moving against those that made them. The objects appear in the guise of capital and money, seem to exist independently of human beings, and seem to operate according to “natural” economic laws so that “everything is itself something *different* from itself” (1959, 110).

Although he sometimes describes the capitalist workplace as structuring the activity of labor in a way that makes labor appear independent

of the laborer, when speaking of estrangement Marx refers most often to the alienation of workers from the product of their labor. It is this that is central to estrangement. In capitalism

the alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labor becomes an object, an external existence, but that it exists outside him, independently, as something alien to him. (1959, 64)

Capitalism is characterized by processes of objectification that are both alienated and estranged. Or, more clearly, in capitalism alienated objectification leads to estrangement as the product/commodity appears to have a life of its own.

In capitalism relationships between human beings take on the characteristics of relations between things as when, for instance, worker and owner meet in the marketplace as capital and labor and exchange money for labor power. Also the relations of things take on the qualities of human relationships as when, for instance, people talk of capital's productivity or its legal rights. The ultimate medium of the reversal of human and object and the domination of the object is money.

Money is simply the thingification of human labor and human relations but, in capitalism, money takes on a life of its own and, as price or profit, dominates human beings and their activities. Money as capital is also a product of human labor derived from the sale of commodities on the basis of their exchange value. Money, as a symbol of abstract and alienated exchange value, represents the labor-time required to make some commodity. When this exchange value takes on a life of its own through money, it is called "price." This value-symbol, money, comes to dominate its producers by turning the laborer—as either worker or consumer—into a thing that moves at the demand of wages and prices; that is, individuals are sold as a commodity to capital for a wage and reproduce their lives through purchasing commodities for a price.

The power to dominate its creators combined with their acceptance of this slavery as part of the nature of things forms Marx's description of what has come to be called "reification." It follows closely, but *not necessarily* (1973, 196–97), upon estrangement in capitalist society and seems to have both an objective side (the domination of the estranged product) and a subjective side (acceptance of this domination as "natural"). The former is materialized in the rule of capital, the domination of labor by its alienated and estranged products, where the worker "falls under sway of his product, *capital*" (1959, 104). With

estrangement, this product has taken on independent existence and now, “the creative power of his labour establishes itself as the power of capital, as an *alien power*” (1973, 307). In describing capital in the *Grundrisse*, Marx describes it as the alienated product of labor, or objectified labor, appearing as the independent, self-sufficient property of another in the form of capital, the very condition of labor itself. In other words, now labor

exists as surplus value, surplus product, in a word as capital, as master over living labor, as value endowed with its own might and will . . . as a power independent of [the laborer], which moreover rules over him. (1973, 453)

### ***A conceptual complex for a Marxist theory of subjectivity***

There exists within Marx’s commentary four separate concepts—objectification, alienation, estrangement, and reification—that too often are collapsed under the notion of alienation alone. A Marxist theory of subjectivity must be developed from a dialectical complex composed of these four different yet strongly related processes. Such a complex is displayed below in Figure 1.



Figure 1: The Four Moments of A Marxist Analysis of Subjectivity



The first term of this analytic is objectification. It is “first” in the sense that it is the most abstract and broad of the terms to be discussed. Objectification is a universal and necessary moment in human consciousness and action. It is the process of externalization through expression and/or labor that produces objects in the world. These objects in turn represent some human intent or need even if they do so in a distorted or unclear fashion. All human history, society, and individuality is built from the process of objectification. Objectification refers to the human capability for transforming nature and making oneself. Objectification entails only creation; that is, it is not necessary that the objects created be separated, or separate from, their creators. Indeed, nonalienated objectification may be the most pure example of the subject-object dialectical relation that forms the human condition. Reflecting the tie between creator and created, consciousness and object, activity and the inert, objectification is a universal process common to what might be called “human nature.”

The second, more concrete and historical, term of the analytic is alienation. Sometimes taken as the whole of Marxist theory, alienation refers to the dispossession of the subject from its creations, including itself. It implies objectification and coercive separation from one’s creations. So alienated objectification is the forceful breaking of the ties between subject and object. In alienation one is coerced into fashioning an object and then that object is forcefully removed by another. As such it is one possible form for the social organization of objectification. It is a historical structuring of the human condition. Alienation exists in noncapitalist societies but seems to reach its full range and impact as a way of structuring social life and a concretization of objectification under capitalism.

The third term in the conceptual complex is estrangement. Estrangement describes the form of alienation specific to capitalist society. It occurs when forcibly alienating humans from the products of their labor results in the now alien product taking on the appearance of an independent and fully external force or thing. Based in the dispossession of the product, estrangement occurs when the thing produced or consumed—the commodity—appears to exist independent of and external to human beings. As an elaborated form of alienation, estrangement specifically refers to economically structured dispossession of the worker from the product. Human labor in capitalism, then, is not simply organized as alienated objectification but also as the estrangement of the product. The specific source of estrangement is the capitalist marketplace’s organization of production and consumption. It

is in the marketplace that the commodity, whether labor power or its products, seems to move and acquire characteristics as an independent object no longer fundamentally tied to, or expressive of, its creators. All this is solidified in the social institution of money.

The last moment in a reconstructed Marxist theory of subjectivity provides a final enhancement of what has gone before. The specific form of estrangement fully experienced only by the proletariat within capitalism can be called reification. Reification has both an objective and a subjective side. As an objective social process reification occurs when the already alienated and estranged object dominates, controls, and constrains its makers. Based, like estrangement, in alienation from the product of labor, objective reification occurs when that product—in the form of capital or commodity—is empowered over human beings. Subjective reification occurs when people take for granted alienation, estrangement, and the objective side of reification. So, reified workers accept as “natural” and inevitable their situation within capitalism. In particular, they accept as necessary their own domination by the very things they themselves make. They do not understand their situation historically but perceive it as a necessary and universal aspect of the human condition. Reification is specific to capitalism and only reaches its full proportions in the life-world of the proletariat.

Ending reification then goes hand-in-hand with changing the organization of society. In this sense reification is the ultimate expression of the capitalist totality and perhaps its most important bastion. The transformation of capitalist society will be signaled by the beginnings of the process of dereification. With dereification, people in capitalism can think about winning their freedom by transforming society. They will be able to learn how to appropriate their own creations as the free expressions of their human intersubjectivity through a revolutionary transformation of society that reinstates free objectification and ends the domination of capital and money.

### ***Implications***

This new conceptual complex can, I think, help to solve some knotty problems in contemporary Marxist theory. For instance let us look at the question of which social classes are “alienated” in capitalism? Objectification is experienced differently by the different social classes. Workers work; that is, they are involved directly in the fashioning of objects and manipulating “nature.” Still, the subjective spirit that is externalized through their labor is not their own but the owners’. After all workers make products at the behest of the capitalist. So workers

experience objectification directly as manual laborers but only indirectly, if at all, as creative “designers.” On the other hand, capitalists only indirectly make objects although the objects they see the workers make express their own subjectivity rather than that of the workers. That is, the capitalist indirectly externalizes subjectivity through control over the embodied subjectivity of workers. In this sense the capitalist’s experience of objectification is mostly intellectual and wholly indirect. This is of course a point central to Hegel’s analysis of the master-slave dialectic. It may also help explain the tendency for capital to perceive the world and think about it in idealistic terms for it experiences the universal human process of objectification abstractly and indirectly through mental ideas. Likewise, this may help gain an understanding of the concreteness and fatalism of the working class for they experience objectification, materially or manually, as an experience forced upon them.

Alienation refers to the forced separation of subject from object common to all societies with a division of labor and private property. Obviously the proletariat is alienated for they are forcibly separated from both the processes of laboring and the products that they make. But, are capitalists alienated as well? According to this schema, capitalists are alienated for they too are forcibly separated from the products they appropriate within the structures of capitalism. They are not free—if they are to remain capitalists—to appropriate for personal use and at personal whim all the surplus value produced by their workers. The market separates them from some of that profit recirculated and reinvested as constant and variable capital. So capitalist and worker alike are forcibly separated from the products of their efforts. Of course workers are exploited by these processes while the successful capitalist is advantaged. And, workers have no control over their own labor while capitalists have more control over their own efforts and the work of the proletariat. But beyond these differences of degree and particularity, it remains true that, in capitalism, both workers and capitalists are alienated. Indeed alienation is a common experience of all who live in divided societies of whatever mode of production. These differences in degree of alienation within capitalist social relations do however point to a more fundamental parting of experiences of capitalist and proletariat.

In capitalism, workers and capitalists also experience estrangement. Estrangement occurs when the products of labor appear to their makers as if they were independent and alien external forces. It is clear that workers in capitalist society experience their own creations, in the

forms of commodity, exchange value, capital, and the means of production, as independent and external forces that seem to move according to nonhuman laws of their own. The capitalists also are estranged for, although they own and control the products of the workers' labor, capitalists must operate within the parameters of the marketplace. And the marketplace seems to operate independently of the wishes of any particular capitalist. The capitalists' power in society comes from their position as the owners of the commodities, capital, means of production, and value created by the proletariat. Still, capital is estranged by the fact that relations in the capitalist marketplace seem to exist independently of its will. All this even though the capitalists are empowered by the structures of marketplace and the privileges of ownership. In the marketplace relations central to capitalism, it is capital that dominates labor through its ownership of its products. Yet individual capital and labor move within the parameters of the market place.

Reification indicates the processes specific to the working class in capitalism whereby the product dominates the producer who takes this domination for granted as part of the very nature of things. In a sense reification occurs when workers are alienated, estranged, dominated, and removed from objective knowledge of that situation. The reified consciousness has lost sight of the social relations that form the experience of capitalism and instead takes it all as natural and inevitable. Contrary to workers, capitalists are not in any meaningful sense dominated by the products they indirectly produce and directly own. As we have just seen, capitalists, at least in part, are estranged in capitalism but are also empowered through their position of ownership. As owners, capitalists control products and not *visa-versa*. And, they do not take capitalism for granted but know that their powers of ownership and dominance are contingent upon history and society. On the other hand, workers are dominated by the things they produce. Living in the midst of capitalism, they come to believe that their subordination is part of the inevitable and unchangeable nature of the world.

I realize that this position on the reification of the capitalist contradicts Lukács' assertion that the capitalist is objectively reified but experiences this falsely as empowerment (1971, 166). In my terms, his argument amounts to saying that the capitalist is objectively reified but fails to understand it correctly. Lukács falls into the position of nearly equating the power of the capitalist and the powerlessness of the laborer. I think it better to recognize the validity of the capitalist's subjective experience of power. It seems clear that capitalists do—through

the institutions of private property, the division of labor, and the marketplace—control commodities including the labor power of workers. And, owners—unlike workers—self-consciously promote the ideology of capitalism as a way of organizing themselves and manipulating the behavior and ideas of the working class. It is naive to argue that capital thinks fetishistically and thereby fails to correctly understand its own position in society. The capitalists feel secure in the rule of capital because they understand the origins of the power of capital and how to defuse the rage and resentment of the working class. Workers experience both processes of reification in capitalism; that is, they are dominated by the objects they produce and see this domination as “natural.” But capital has dominion over these objects and sees that this dominion is historical and political and therefore must be self-consciously protected and maintained. This amounts to nothing more or less than arguing that capital is a politically conscious class for-itself while—presently—workers are not.

A second controversy that can be investigated anew with the reconstructed conceptual complex is the question of whether or not working classes in societies other than capitalism are alienated. Of course the question will have to be rephrased to include objectification, estrangement, and reification. The key to answering this problem is based on our knowledge of these aspects of experience in their fullest bloom within capitalist society. Following the descriptions already given and using the familiar Marxist characterization of the “modes of production,” it seems that “primitive communism” contains only objectification. In ancient slave societies, to continue this brief outline, some alienation exists. Neither society is characterized by estrangement. That is, slaves experience alienation but the products of their labor most often are not likely to take on a seemingly independent existence due to the absence of a developed exchange market. Nor would slaves live in a reified world. Feudalism is in these terms very much like ancient society. It is with capitalism that one finds workers who experience alienation, estrangement, and reification.

Socialism, taken to be a society with social ownership, a marketplace, and a division of labor, will be a society in which all are workers of one rank or another and in which workers experience some alienation and estrangement but no reification. Alienation will exist in socialism because even though capital has been socialized there still exists a division of labor in the workplace. Workers will be estranged through the necessity, given the social division of labor, of an exchange market. But the processes of production and distribution will be socially and

democratically controlled so workers will not perceive this experience as part of the very nature of human existence. Rather they will know that collectively they control society. Thus workers in socialism will not experience reification. In the ideal communist society, human beings will work as they desire to and things will be distributed by need. This society will contain—like its primitive predecessor—only objectification. Communism does not contain alienation, estrangement, or reification.

What this brief review reveals is that the distinctive elements of the experience of capitalism are estrangement and reification. Capitalism can be described as a society whose key structural elements are the domination of the commodity, capital, and exchange value through the social practices of the division of labor, private property, and the marketplace. Socialism removes the middle practice and thereby ends reification and the domination of humans by things. It puts things under human control and works toward the demise of the division of labor and the marketplace. This would result in a communist society in which people do not find themselves estranged or alienated. Communist society would be structured around free, self-conscious human activity.

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## NOTES

1. Isidor Walliman (1981, 148–60) provides a thoughtful critique of this part of Israel's interpretation of Marx.

2. My description of Marx's use of Hegel relies heavily on Ollman (1971).

3. As Walliman has uncovered, the German word *Entäusserung* refers to a transferal of a thing to another (1981, 40–42).

4. Walliman interprets *Entfremdung* to imply a loss of control and subsequent subordination due to the coercive estrangement of a thing from its producer (1981, 40–42).

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## Early Background of Liberation Theology

Toby Terrar

The Princeton historian Robert Palmer (1956–65) has called the period of the late eighteenth century the age of democratic revolution. This was because during this period popular forces in Europe and America, including people of color and women, made religious as well as political and economic advances against landlords, slaveowners, and imperialists.

Palmer might have been more accurate to have called it the age of Catholic democratic revolution. Revolutions took place in much of Europe and America during the period. Most of the nations were Catholic and most of the revolutionaries were Catholic. They included clergy and nuns, some of whom played leading roles. Bishops and even a pope sided with the revolutionary movement.

Catholics led democratic revolutions in France, Ireland, Poland, Brazil, Mexico, Peru, in Belgium at Liege, in Italy, which included the Cisalpine, Liguarian, Parthenopean, and Roman Republics, in the Caribbean in St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Grenada, Guadeloupe, Hispaniola, which included Haiti and the Dominican Republic, and New Grenada, which included uprisings in Columbia, Venezuela, and Ecuador.

Some historians, especially prior to the Second Vatican Council, maintained that the democratic revolutionaries were revolutionary in spite of their Catholicism.<sup>1</sup> This view was prominent because a small but dominant sector of the church was opposed to the revolutionary ideals of democracy and human rights. This sector, mainly European landlords and monopolists, had the Roman establishment, which was itself a landlord, and many historians under its influence. They incorrectly taught that democracy, human rights, and the Catholic revolutionaries who lived by these ideals, were not part of the Catholic tradition. The landlord and monopolist version of Catholicism has often been repudiated in recent years as in the 1965 Vatican Council declaration on religious liberty (*Dignitatis humanae*) and in the 1986 United

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States bishops' pastoral letter on the economy (Quelquejeu 1989, 118). Some still maintain, however, that there is no relation between current democratic church activity, as in the liberation theology movement States bishops' pastoral letter on the economy (Quelquejeu 1989, 118). Some still maintain, however, that there is no relation between current democratic church activity, as in the liberation theology movement or base Christian communities, and the eighteenth-century revolutions; that is, while the democratic ideals of the earlier revolutionaries may have been compatible with Catholic tradition, the eighteenth-century ideals were not based in the gospel (Charentenay 1989, 133). This article will submit evidence that many of the eighteenth-century revolutionaries were revolutionaries because of their Catholicism and that their activity was based in the gospel. In other words there is a good bit of continuity between the eighteenth-century revolutionary tradition and present-day revolutionary movements. Catholic revolutionaries of today, in looking to the eighteenth century, have a tradition worthy of emulation.

There is a Catholicism of landlords, monopolists, and monarchies that teaches obedience to the established order and that is hostile to human rights. But there is also a popular, humanist Catholicism that teaches democracy, social justice, and the overthrow of the unjust established order.

This article will focus on one aspect of the eighteenth-century democratic revolutions, the advances made in democratizing the governmental structure of the church. The analysis has two parts. First, there will be a discussion of some of the constitutional, common law, natural law, martial law, and measures of direct action which brought church government under popular control. Second, some achievements associated with church democracy will be mentioned.

### ***Church democracy***

Most late eighteenth-century revolutions took an interest in and established representative government in the church as well as in the state. The enactments directed toward democratizing church government included praemunire-type legislation that prevented Roman interference in the local churches and preserved the fraternal, not paternal, relation between Rome and the national churches. Fraternity, along with liberty and equality, was part of the democratic ideal. Antimortmain legislation was also enacted. This prevented the monopolization of national church property by bishops. Examples of this were the systems embodied in the French Constitution of the Clergy of 1790, that in the Cisalpine constitution of 1797, and that in the Haitian constitution of 1805.<sup>4</sup>

Typical was the French Constitution of the Clergy. It was inspired in

part by the social justice ideals of the Jansenist movement and of theologians like Edmund Richer (1559-1633).<sup>2</sup> The Constitution of the Clergy reduced the 134 dioceses of France to eighty-three, abolished many ecclesiastical offices, required bishops and priests to keep residence in the place of their ministry, mandated that they perform their ministerial duties, abolished the jurisdiction of foreign canon law, and required the bishops to take an oath to support the popular government.<sup>3</sup>

Bishops and pastors had to be elected by the populace, with voting power restricted to “active” citizens, Catholics and non-Catholics, who paid the required taxes. A newly elected bishop could solicit his canonical investiture not from the pope but from the first or oldest bishop of the metropolitan district. Bishops were to administer dioceses with a council of vicaires. The clergy was paid by the state, since their own landholdings were expropriated. In return, they had to provide religious services gratuitously. Finally, the constitution allowed for religious toleration.

About half the French clergy took the oath of allegiance to the constitution, including seven of the bishops. Among the bishops who took the oath were Étienne Loménie de Brienne (1727–94), who convoked the meeting of the Estates-General on 1 May 1789 and Charles M. Talleyrand-Périgord (1754–1838), the bishop of Autun in the department of Saône-et-Loire. Talleyrand was chosen by the clergy of his department to represent them. He was a member of the Constitutional Assembly in 1789 and proposed the confiscation of church property for raising funds to meet the expenses of government (Greenbaum 1970; Ruskowski 1940; Aulard 1927; Sloane 1901). The French constitution also restored to the people a regular vote in the election of bishops and priests. This had been their right for the first thousand years of church history.

In France, among the ninety clergy who were elected representatives to the National Assembly and whose beliefs were incorporated by the Constitution of the Clergy was Emmanuel Sieyès (1748–1836) (Forsyth 1987, 201).<sup>4</sup> He was a member of the constitutional drafting committee.<sup>5</sup>

In promoting democratic government in church and state, one of Sieyès’s goals was to overturn the institutionalized landlord hatred against labor and laboring people. In 1789 he wrote:

What a society in which work is said to derogate; where it is honorable to consume, but humiliating to produce, where the

laborious occupations are called vile, as if anything were vile except vice, or as if the classes that work were the most vicious. . . . During the long night of barbarism and feudalism, true relationship among people was able to be destroyed, all nations upset, all justice corrupted. But with the darkness past, medieval absurdities must disappear. Social remnants of this ancient savagery must be destroyed. Social order, in all its beauty, must take the place of the old disorder. (1975, 71–73)

In France royalist clergy who sought to undermine church democracy by calling on Roman intervention were ordered by a decree of the legislative assembly on 30 November 1791 to leave the country. At least 30,000 fled or were driven from France. Those that remained or returned were liable to deportation, to ten years' imprisonment, or to the death penalty. After the outbreak of war between France and the governments of Europe, some 1,400 royalists were executed in Paris, including 400 clergy (Ruskowski 1940, 1–2).<sup>6</sup>

The Polish constitution of 3 May 1791 was one of the enactments that helped promote church democracy in Poland. It had a praemunire measure that prohibited antipopular interests from making appeals to the Roman Curia and provided for the investigation of all church disputes by Polish tribunals. Bulls and other papal epistles could be read in Poland only by the consent of the national authorities (Piekarski 1978, 42). One of those who provided the inspiration for the Polish constitution was a Piarist priest, Stanislaus Konarski (1700–73) in his book, *On the Effective Conduct of Debates* ([1760–63] 1923; see also, Rose 1929, 122).

Church democracy in the Americas was advanced by the Haitian revolution of August 1791. As part of its democratic constitution, Haiti's church officers became subject to popular election (Guilday 1969, 2:273).<sup>7</sup> The clergy that had identified with the overthrown slaveowners were deposed. Church relations with Rome were suspended in order to stop slaveowners from using that establishment against the people. It was only in 1860 that relations were restored, after Rome agreed to recognize the same right for the nomination and appointment of bishops that the former French king had possessed (Guilday 1969, 2:313).<sup>8</sup>

Constitutional enactments in behalf of church democracy were supplemented by the common law and direct-action measures. Illustrative was the 1794 common law action taken in Poland against those landlords who sought clerical aid to overthrow the 1791 democratic

constitution. These landlords also fought to prevent taxation of the landlord class and the emancipation of the serfs. Among Poland's biggest landlords and serf owners were three bishops who owned 160,000 of Poland's 215,000 villages (Bain 1971, 11). These bishops called upon the Russian and Prussian landlord monarchies to invade Poland in order to aid Polish landlords against the democratic forces. The three bishops used their offices to instruct the Polish people not to carry out orders of the democratic authorities. They told the clergy to refuse the sacraments to peasants fighting on the democratic side (Piekarski 1978, 47).

In response, the popular Catholics in Warsaw and Vilnius, on 9 May and 28 June 1794 sent two of the bishops, Josef Kossakowski of Warsaw and Ignacy Messalski of Vilnius, to the gallows. The primate Michael Poniatowski was accused of spying. He ended up committing suicide. The third bishop, Wojciech Skarszewski, was sentenced to death, but spared when the papal nuncio, Archbishop Ferdinando Maria Saluzzo, told popular leadership that the execution of yet another bishop would be "treated by Rome as persecution of religion" (Piekarski 1978, 47).<sup>9</sup>

The defense of the Polish popular church was headed by the American revolutionary hero Thaddeus Kosciuszko (1746–1817), whom one historian called "a Catholic Jacobin" (Bain 1971, 254). He returned to Poland in 1784 and was soon involved in the democratic movement there. Some of the Catholic clergy who served as chaplains under Kosciuszko were Joseph Meier, Franciszek Ksawery Dmochowski, and a Rev. Jelski. A Carmelite friar, Jakabowski, was said to be an admirer of Robespierre (Piekarski 1978, 47).<sup>10</sup> The Rev. Hugo Kollataj (1750–1812) helped prepare the serf emancipation proclamation contained in Kosciuszko's Polaniec Proclamation of 7 May 1794 (Palmer 1956–65, 2:148, 182).

In the Irish democratic struggle against the British and Irish landlords, it was revolutionary organizations like the White Boys, the Agrarian Defenders, the Volunteers, and the United Irish that appealed to natural rights in enforcing democracy in church and state. For example, John T. Troy was the bishop of Dublin and a puppet of British and Irish landlords. He sought in the 1770s to excommunicate those in armed struggle against the established order. But the Gaelic and most of the Anglo-Irish parish priests refused to read Troy's circular of excommunication from the altar or read it in an inaudible voice (Edwards 1976, 152). The main excommunicating was that decreed by the revolutionaries against those clergy who abused the people with

excessive fees for officiating at marriages, baptisms, and funerals. The White Boys used tarring, feathering, and other direct action to remove several clerics (McCracken 1986, 97–98; Murphy 1965).

The various advances in church democracy at the national level often grew out of advances at the parish level. In France the churches became the meeting places for the neighborhood assemblies and democratic clubs. In Paris virtually all the people attended such assemblies and had a direct voice in governing the city and the church.

Women voted in these assemblies and spoke on economic, political, educational, military, and religious issues. They helped direct the revolution by their “sanction en masse” vote by acclamation (Soboul 1988, 158). Some nuns defended the social justice ideals of the Jansenist movement and aided its program of democratizing church government (Forsyth 1987, 201–2).

Women like the peasant Théroigne (1762-1817) collaborated with Abbé Sieyès and took part in the assault on the Bastille on 14 July 1789 (Sokolnikova 1932, 200). Catholics were part of the march of women on Versailles in October 1789, part of the soap riots of the laundry women against profiteering in soap in June 1793 and April 1794 at ports throughout France, and part of the strikes against monopolistic pricing of bread and housing (Soboul 1988, 159, 164). These women quoted the church council at Macon, which recognized the existence of the mind and soul in women, in defense of the right of free public education for women (Sokolnikova 1932, 28; Soboul 1988, 165). They questioned why the Declaration of Rights did not apply to them (Soboul 1988, 161).

Revolutionary Catholic women helped form women’s clubs that provided forums for developing propositions on the vital religious issues of the day. Women who had been killed by Royalists while serving as couriers for the democratic army were held up as heroes. Their funeral masses were revolutionary liturgical celebrations. They were depicted as rising to heaven on the tricolor flag. Their graves became sites of pilgrimage (Soboul 1988, 134; Ozouf 1988; Agulhon 1981).

#### ***Achievements associated with church democracy***

The first part of this article has mentioned some of the measures, constitutional, common law, and direct action, which helped advance democracy in church government. The second part of this article will describe the achievements associated with church democracy. These achievements center on how the church was mobilized in the service of revolution and of ecumenism.

The essence of church democracy and religious freedom is the mobilization of the church in the service of democracy. This was the point made by the 1981 United Nations Declaration on Religious Freedom (United Nations General Assembly 1981). The declaration states that religious freedom has a positive duty to become a fighter for world peace, social justice, and the elimination of colonialism and racial discrimination. It is a violation of religious freedom not to work actively for these goals. The eighteenth-century revolutionaries demonstrate the church actively engaged in constructing religious freedom by working for these goals.<sup>11</sup>

One illustration of the relationship between church democracy and the mobilization of the pulpit as a force for democracy was the case of Pope Pius VII (Luigi Chiaramanti, 1742–1823). In 1797 as a bishop he collaborated with the establishment of the Cisalpine Republic, which was made up of Bologna, Ferrara, Imola, Milan, Lombardy, and Tuscany. He put “Liberty and Equality” on his letterheads and in between where the civil authorities put “In the Name of the Cisalpine Republic,” he put “The Peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” He gave up the Gregorian calendar in his episcopal documents and adopted the Republican calendar, which one of his nineteenth-century successors tried to label as a blasphemy against the Incarnation. In the pulpit his sermons abounded with quotations from Jesus, St. Paul, and St. Augustine to support his belief that “the spirit of the Gospel is founded on the maxims of liberty, equality, and fraternity and in no way in opposition to democracy.” Napoleon Bonaparte remarked with approval that the citizen cardinal “preached like a Jacobin” (Leflon 1958, 434).

In France the theology of the popular party was taught in “civic sermons” by priests such as Alexandre Dubreuil, a Babouvist, Métier of Saint-Liesne in Melun, Petit-Jean of Épineuil, Dolivier of Mauchamps in the Étampes district, Louis-Pierre Croissy of Étalon in the Montdidier district, and Abbé Carion (Dolivier 1967; Soboul 1988, 145–53). The popular theology was that Jesus had been a “sans culotte,” “the most fervent democrat,” that there could be no political equality without economic equality, and that freedom did not consist in starving your fellow creatures (Soboul 1988, 145–53; Palmer 1956–65, 2:358; Lesnodorski 1965, 246). The democratic bishop of Calvados, Claude Fauchet (1744–93), gave sermons which proclaimed the right of agrarian tenants to overthrow their landlords and take full ownership of the land they cultivated (Comby 1989, 22; see also Fauchet 1790; 1791).

Jacques Roux (1752–94) was a member of the lower clergy whom

Camilo Torres, the Colombian priest who died as a guerrilla fighter, took as his patron saint (Torres 1971). Roux preached that “liberty is only a vain phantom when one class of people can starve another with impunity. Equality is only a vain phantom when the rich people, through monopoly, exercise the right of life and death over their fellow humans” (Christophe 1986, 162). Part of his saying mass included passing around petitions to be signed and leading the congregation out into the streets to demand lower prices for bread or to tear down the hedges of landlords (Soboul 1988, 151).

The placing of the pulpit in the service of the revolution was a similar achievement associated with church democracy in Italy. Some fifteen of the popular clergy of the Parthenopean Republic in Naples continued to preach the revolutionary gospel even after being captured and condemned to death in 1799 by a landlord army led by English Protestant, Russian Orthodox, and Turkish Muslim generals.<sup>12</sup> These Italian Catholic revolutionaries included Bishop Michele Natale of Vico; Francesco Conforti, who besides being a priest was a professor of canon law; and Carlo Laubert (also spelled Lauberg), who was a monk, teacher, and chemist. Laubert became chemist-in-chief of the French army and later was elected president of the Parthenopean Republic.

One of the priests of the Parthenopean Republic was Nicola Pacifico. He was a mathematician, botanist, poet, and antiquarian. He had been jailed for many years until the revolution freed him. He then served as a chaplain and soldier in the popular militia. After his recapture, Cardinal Fabrizio Ruffo (1744–1827) offered to save him if he would say, “Viva il Re” as token that he renounced democracy (Giglioli 1903, 124, 352). He stood on his principles and died. One hostile contemporary account of the church in Naples read:

The revolutionary fanaticism in Naples has been more ardent, atrocious, and universal among the clergy than in France itself. . . . Ninety-year old priests, on being hanged, have preached democracy and invoked the French at the steps of the gallows. (Maury 1891, 1:206, 233)

In Ireland the mobilization of the pulpit in the service of revolution was led by the clergy within the United Irish, the revolutionary party during the 1790s. Some of the priests who made contributions were Henry O’Kane, Francis O’Hearne, James Burke, and John Murphy.

O’Kane, at the time of the French Revolution in 1789, had been teaching at Nantes, France. He took the constitutional oath of the clergy and joined the revolutionary army as a chaplain. He was with Jean J.



Humbert's (d. 1823) military expedition to Mayo, Ireland, in 1798. Their flag had a harp, without a crown, and the inscription "L'indépendance d'Irlande." O'Kane worked in Mayo as an agitator and propagandist for the United Irish, addressing enthusiastic crowds in his native Gaelic. He took up arms in the battle of Castlebar and Ballinamuck (Simms 1986, 652–53; Hayes 1932, 49–65).

At the time of the Irish Revolution in 1798, John Murphy was a priest at Wexford who agitated from the pulpit against the enforced economic poverty of his people. He also gave military leadership, as described in the following:

The insurrection began in Ulster in April 1798. It soon spread to the other parts of the island with all sorts of people, such as the Agrarian Defenders taking part. . . . The most serious fighting was in the southeast, in Wexford. Fr. John Murphy emerged as a military leader of some talent, guiding a host of poorly armed peasants into battle. (Palmer 1956–65, 1:501)<sup>13</sup>

In the Haitian revolution beginning in August 1791, fifty African, French, Spanish, and Corsican clergy identified with, and put the pulpit in the service of, the revolution. These included the Spanish Capuchin, Corneille Brelle; an ex-slave named Felix; a mulatto priest, Salgado; and a white Cuban, Juan Gonzalez (Leyburn 1948, 119, 122; Alexis 1949, 112, 121; Guilday 1969, 2:276, 281; Cole 1967, 145, 253; Hardy 1919; James 1973). Brelle was a chaplain in General Touissant L'Ouverture's (1743–1803) command and later a bishop (Cole 1967, 145).<sup>14</sup>

In defending theologically the right of the people to govern themselves, these abolitionist clergy had a hand in the defeat of the decade-long aggression by English, Spanish, and French landlords, who were bent on restoring the old order. More than fifty thousand European mercenaries lost their lives and twenty-five million pounds sterling were spent in these unsuccessful attempts against Haiti (Leyburn 1948, 30; Fick 1980). Henri Grégoire described the nature of the slavocracy aggression:

These people wish to rule over servile men, over cadavers and rubbish. They are rulers who prefer burned villages to villages in rebellion, who would sacrifice thousands of soldiers rather than abandon an assault. These bloodthirsty beasts lead armies into butchery with impunity. (1975,45)

Catholic abolitionists in Europe made the pulpit a support for the

antislavery and anti-imperial cause in Haiti. These clergy helped in gaining the abolition of slavery by the French Republic on 14 February 1794. Among the clergy who were active in international abolitionist organizations were Guillaume Raynal (1713–96), Antoine de Courmand (1747–1814), and Henri Grégoire.

Raynal's *A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlements and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies* (1783) went through fifty-five editions in six languages by 1800 (see also Raynal 1776). It recited the evils brought upon the world by European colonialism and its religion of obedience. Among the passages from this work which General Toussaint admired was the following:

If there is no power under heaven that can change my organization, and convert me into a brute, there is none that can dispose of my liberty. God is my Father not my master. I am his child, not his slave. How then, could I accord to political power that which I refuse to Divine omnipotence?

These are immovable and eternal truths—the foundation of all morality, the basis of all government. Will they be contested? Yes! And it will be a barbarous and sordid avarice which will commit the audacious homicide. Cast your eye on that shipowner in Europe, who, bent over his desk, regulates, with pen in hand, the number of crimes which he may commit on the coast of Guinea; who, at his leisure, examines what number of muskets will be needed to obtain a negro, what number of chains to hold him bound on board his vessel, what number of whips to make him work: who coolly calculates how much will cost him each drop of the blood with which his slave will water his plantation; who discusses whether the negress will give more or less to his estate by the labors of her feeble hands than by the dangers of child-birth.

You shudder? ah! if there existed a religion which tolerated, which authorized, if only by its silence, horrors like these; if, occupied with idle or contentious questions, it did not ceaselessly thunder against the authors or the instruments of this tyranny; if it made it a crime for the slave to break his chains; if it suffered in its bosom the unjust judge who condemned the fugitive to death; if this religion existed, would it not be necessary that its altars should be broken down? (Beard 1853, 31)

Another of the French abolitionists was Henri Grégoire (d. 1831), who was a member of the National Assembly. The Vietnamese revo-

lutionary Ho-Chi-Minh, at the bicentennial of Grégoire's birth in 1950, hailed him "the apostle of liberty of all people" (Plongeron 1989, 38). Grégoire proposed legislation that would require the clergy to use the pulpit to teach against racism and slavery. He wrote:

Religion teaches people to look upon one another as equals. I propose the following decree to the National Assembly: the clergy are to use all the influence which their ministry gives them in order to efface racial prejudice. Let us obliterate all the degrading distinctions which nature rejects and religion prohibits. . . . Equality should be the sole measure of rights. To live is nothing, but to live free is everything. (1975, 36, 49–50)<sup>15</sup>

Catholic African-Americans made revolution and insurrection a pulpit in which to teach the doctrine of antiracism. In Buenos Aires, Argentina, they revolted in 1795; in Bahia, Brazil, they led the Tailors' Rebellion of 1798 (Maxwell 1973, 218–24, 237), and the Eugenio Santana uprising of 1798 (Schwartz 1977, 70; Schwartz 1986, 473). They were involved in Cuba in the 1795 Nicolas Morales conspiracy (Rout 1976, 120), the Puerto Principe rebellion of July 1795, the rebellion in central Cuba in 1798, and the Maracaibo conspiracy of 1799.

In Dominica, Catholic Afro-Americans led the 1791 and 1795 insurrections (Craton 1980, 2–5; Schuler 1970, 382–84; Synnott 1977). The revolt of 1795 in Grenada was led by the Catholic Julien Fédon (Cox 1984) and the 1795 revolt in Guadeloupe was led by Victor Hugues (Geggus 1989, 113). Black Catholics fomented the Pointe Coupée plot of 1795 in Spanish Louisiana (Holmes 1970, 353; Liljegren 1939, 47–97), the Martinique slave revolt of 1789, and the larger one on that island led by Jean Kina in 1802 (Geggus 1980, 49). The 1795 Aguadilla conspiracy in Puerto Rico (Dominguez 1980, 170–76), the St. Vincent insurrection of 1795, the Boca Nigua rebellion on Santo Domingo in 1796, and the revolt on Tortola in 1790 were the work of free and slave Black Catholics. Finally, the 1795 Coro rebellion in Venezuela was led by the Catholics José Chirinois and José Caridad Gonzalez (Dominguez 1980, 56, 159, 161).

In Canada some of the popular clergy who mobilized the pulpit in the service of revolution were Claude Carpenter, Joseph-Hypolite Filiau-Dubois (1734–88), Pierre René Floquet (1716–82), Peter Gibault (1737–1804), Joseph Hugué (a former Jesuit), Louis Eustache Lotbinière (1715–86), and Pierre Huet de la Valinière (b. 1732) (Griffin 1907–11, 44, 75, 78, 104, 112). Gibault helped the American forces take Kaskaskia, Illinois, from the British in 1778. For this he was given

a formal expression of gratitude by the Virginia legislature, which stated, "To have taken so bold a stand in favor of American independence undoubtedly cost the valiant priest his post."

Valinière was deported by the British from Quebec to London, where he escaped, made his way back to America, and served as a chaplain to several Canadian regiments in New York (Guilday 1954, 85). These regiments were led by Moses Hazen and James Livingston, and won revolutionary victories at White Plains (29 October 1776), Staten Island (22 August 1777), Brandywine (11 September 1777), and Germantown (4 October 1777) (Griffin 1907–11, 57, 67, 79, 119, 122, 160).

Along with the mobilization of the pulpit, the mobilization of the church press for revolution was among the achievements associated with church democracy. In Italy, each republic had its own Catholic newspapers to teach social justice. Milan's newspaper was called the *Gospel Republican* (*Respublicano Evangelico*). It was edited by the priest Giuseppe Poggi. Poggi described the ministry of the democratic clergy in one of his editorials:

In a well ordered republic, the priest, being reduced to a citizen equal to others, restricted to a public administration of the sacraments and preaching the Gospel... is no longer harmful to the state, but does his part in making a republican government, such as ours, loved and cultivated as a matter of conscience. (Palmer 1956–65, 2:314)

One of the leading papers in Paris, *La Feuille Villageoise*, was edited by a former Jesuit, Joseph A. Cerutti. Similarly, Warsaw's revolutionary newspaper was edited by former Jesuit, Peter (Piotr) Switkowski. Switkowski's newspaper translated and published the first Polish language editions of the American and French Declaration of Rights, and the international revolutionary hymns, the "Marseillaise" and "Ça ira." In Peru and New Grenada, former Jesuit Juan Pablo Viscardo y Guzman was a propagandist for revolution against Spain.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Ecumenism***

Along with the pulpit and press being a force for revolution, church democracy was associated with ecumenism. The revolutionary program mandated that Jews and Protestants be given religious and political equality with Catholics. At Venice and Warsaw, for example, revolutionary Jews and Catholics joined together to tear down the ghetto gates, hack the hinges to pieces, and plant liberty trees (Palmer 1956–65, 2:308). Poland's revolutionary constitution of 3 May 1791

was typical in guaranteeing religious freedom to all sects (Bain 1971, 290).

In Ireland church democracy was associated with ecumenism between the Protestants and Catholics. Religious toleration was the rule in the United Irish party. Its program was to unite Ireland's three million Catholics and one million Presbyterians against some 450,000 landlords. It was so successful that it took England 140,000 troops to put it down. Only 26,000 English troops were involved at Waterloo (Fortescue 1910–30, 4:666, 8:630, 10:430).

Presbyterian ministers and Catholic priests were part of the United Irish membership (Palmer 1956–65, 2:502). The ecumenical theology of a Catholic priest named Ryan is described in the following passage.

Ryan was a member of the Catholic Committee in Dublin:

The Catholic Committee, a kind of self-help organization formed many years before, fell into new hands in 1792 when the Catholic bishops and gentry were outvoted by a more militant group of Catholic laity. "What prevents you," asked a certain Rev. Ryan in the Committee, "from coalescing with your Protestant brethren? Nothing! Not religion. It is the spirit of the present times to let religion make its own way by its own merits. . . . Let us lay down the little character of a sect, and take up the character of a people." (Palmer 1956–65, 2:494; see also, Tone 1831, 1:266)

One of the leaders of French ecumenism was Henri Grégoire, whose abolitionist work has already been mentioned. He was elected by popular vote to be the democratic bishop of Blois (Carol 1975, 1, 5–6). He was a member of the Jacobin Society and, as a delegate to the National Assembly, wrote a pamphlet, *Motion in Behalf of the Jews* [1789].<sup>17</sup>

It stated the program around which democratic Catholics helped contribute to the Jewish emancipation struggle. It detailed how Jews were denied rights, such as entry into many professions and occupations, burdened with special taxes, forced to pay protection money to towns and nobles, and required to live in ghettos. In attacking the French law which prohibited marriage between Jews and Catholics, Grégoire pointed out that in England marriage between Catholics and Jews was legal and that in the early years of the church, these unions were common. The impediment to mixed marriages founded on a difference in belief was not introduced by a general decree of a church council, but by custom. Therefore, Grégoire observed, it could be abrogated without

violating any dogma (1975, 23).

At another point Grégoire wrote that it was wrong for the landlords “to cover their avarice with the mantle of the Catholic religion in order to harass the Jews” (Grégoire (1789). He based his ecumenism on the Gospels:

The Savior was far from giving his religion a character of violence which would make it hateful. He condemned some of his disciples whose overzealousness led them to ask that the fire from heaven should be visited on a city which would not receive him. It has been said many times that submission to the truth is an act of free will. . . . You cannot force anyone to follow a cult which his heart will not accept. To love your religion, it is not necessary to hate or persecute those who do not share it. That which we have the good fortune to possess embraces all men in all countries at all times through the ties of charity. “Charity” is proclaimed by the gospels. When I see Catholics as persecutors, I am tempted to believe that they have not read the gospels. (1789)

### ***Conclusion***

In the late eighteenth century popular revolutions took place in many Catholic nations. These revolutions had a democratizing effect on the religious, as well as the political and economic, life of these nations. This article has discussed one aspect of the democratic revolutions, the expansion of democracy within church government and some of the achievements associated with this democracy.

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### **NOTES**

1. The French historian François Furet is an example of a recent scholar who maintains that the democratic revolutions were revolutionary in spite of their Catholicism. In the *New York Times Book Review* (10 July 1989) he is quoted as saying, “The French Revolution broke at the same time with the Catholic Church and with the monarchy, that is, with religion and with history.”

2. Sieyès (1987, 201) commented that the Ecclesiastical Committee which drafted the Constitution of the Clergy was composed in part of “those who seem to have seen in the Revolution simply a superb occasion to advance the

theological importance of Port-Royal and to bring about at last the apotheosis of Jansen on the tomb of his enemies.” Important Jansenist Catholic laity who served on the Ecclesiastical Committee included Armand G. Camus (1740–1804) and Jean Baptiste Treilhard (1742–1810). Camus authored *Resumé de l’opinion de M. Camus, dans la séance du 13 Octobre 1789, au sujet de la motion sur les biens ecclésiastiques: suivi de quelques observations sur ce qui a été dit à l’appui de la motion, dans les séances du 23 et du 24* (Paris: n.p., 1789). He became president of the Council of Five Hundred in 1796–97. Treilhard later became a member of the Directory and helped draft various legal codes.

3. The French Constitution of the Clergy was enacted by the Constituent Assembly on 12 July 1790. It embodied the recommendations of the Ecclesiastical Committee, which had been appointed 20 August 1789 by the Constituent. The Civil Constitution was a lengthy document with four sections: (1) ecclesiastical offices, (2) appointments of benefices, (3) payment of ministers of religion, and (4) obligations of ecclesiastics as public functionaries. See “The Civil Constitution of the Clergy,” in Steward (1951, document 31, 169–81). It made ecclesiastical boundaries coincide with the new administrative divisions, with one diocese per department and one parish for 6,000 people. The sole ecclesiastical functionaries recognized were bishops, pastors (curés), and curates (vicaires). The law suppressed chapters and ignored religious congregations.

Bishops and pastors had to be elected by the populace, with voting power restricted to “active” citizens, Catholics and non-Catholics, who paid the required taxes. A newly elected bishop could solicit his canonical investiture not from the pope but from the first or oldest bishop of the metropolitan district. Bishops were to administer dioceses with a council of vicaires. The clergy was paid by the state, since their own landholdings were expropriated. In turn, they had to provide religious services gratuitously. Finally, the constitution allowed for religious toleration.

About half the French clergy took the oath of allegiance to the constitution, including seven of the bishops. Among the bishops who took the oath were Étienne Loménie de Brienne (1727–94), who convoked the meeting of the Estates-General on 1 May 1789 and Charles M. Talleyrand-Périgord (1754–1838), the bishop of Autun in the department of Saône-et-Loire. Talleyrand was chosen by the clergy of his department to represent them. He was a member of the Constitutional Assembly in 1789 and proposed the confiscation of church property for raising funds to meet the expenses of government (Greenbaum 1970; Ruskowski 1940; Aulard 1927; Sloane 1901).

4. Sieyès, in his 1790 “Draft of a provisional decree on the clergy,” warned that mortmain relationships, that is, religious corporations, were a political danger:

How can one prevent a religion common to a great number of people from being politically dangerous? Forbid it any kind of public organization and all connections with any other religious assembly. Do not

permit the existence of a . . . religious corporation, but the most complete freedom for local, independent associations. (cited in Forsyth 1987, 35)

Sieyès suggested the abolition of all religious corporations over a ten-year period, while the system of bishops, curates, and vicars would be retained.

5. The influence of Sieyès was initially significant because of his pamphlet, *What is the Third Estate?* (January 1789). It was to the French Revolution what Tom Paine's *Common Sense* was to the American Revolution. It laid out the revolutionary program in clear terms. It described what the people were fighting for and how to get it. It sold thousands of copies (Carol 1975, 1, 9–10, 17; Sieyès 1789; 1791).

Among those with whom Sieyès corresponded and collaborated were George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. He was in the same Masonic lodge with Lafayette. He served with Tom Paine on the constitutional committee of the National Convention beginning in April 1792 (Carol 1975, 12–13, 15). Sieyès co-authored the decree abolishing royalty on 21 September 1792, and in 1795 was chosen one of the five members of the Directory. In 1799 he was one of the three members of the consul, along with Napoleon Bonaparte (Campbell 1963, 7, 14, 15, 20–21).

6. Soboul writes in justification of the armed force in 1792 that the people, especially the twenty-two million peasants in France's total population of twenty-six million, had a right to defend their right to self-determination. Without force there would have been a restoration of the land to the episcopacy and nobility, and a resumption of tithes. The permanent fruit of the revolution was that the episcopacy lost its land, which in some areas was twenty percent of the total, and the nobility lost up to one-half of its land. Peasant holdings on the other hand grew from thirty to forty-two percent (1988, 243, 271–72):

In recent years the justification for popular armed force has been made by liberation theologians like the Salvadorian Jesuit priest Ignatius Ellacuria. He points out that the existing order, where the economic, political, and religious resources are monopolized by the wealthy, is violence. This violence is a social sin. From the biblical perspective, this violence is different from the use of force to redeem the established violent order. Ellacuria writes:

The prevailing violence calls for extreme remedies. Any moral evaluation of the remedies cannot start from the assumption that the situation is normal, that it is not violent. In any cases of established violence, we may be not only permitted but even required to use the force that is necessary to redeem the established violence. The good being sought does not justify the evil entailed in the means to achieve. But if evil is an achieved and concrete fact already, it must . . . be reduced and eventually eliminated.

The Bible message offers us many concepts that will help us to evade the danger of disembodied solutions. . . . The eradication of violence in all its forms is an urgent task that cannot be postponed. Stress must be



placed on that form of violence which is protected by legal forms, which entails the permanent establishment of an unjust disorder, which precluded the conditions required for the human growth of the person. Our rejection of violence calls for attitudes and lines of action that can not help but be extreme. (1976, 225, 228–30)

7. Native clergy were given church offices (Guilday 1932, 2:286); appeals to Rome were outlawed, as was foreign canon law (Geggus 1989, 119–121; Geggus 1983).

8. Rome agreed to the Haitian right to elect its own clergy.

9. See also Kukiel (1941, 2:166); Wolff (1988). At the dissolution of the Jesuits in 1773, their wealth was expropriated and supposedly set aside to subsidize public education. Bishop Ignacy Massalski, however, had diverted the property to his family (Bain 1971, 101–5, 147–48).

10. The victory at Zielence on 17 June 1792 against the Russian Army was one of Poland's great achievements of Poland's bourgeois-democratic forces (Dmochowski and Wybicki 1794; Dmochowski and Potocki 1793).

11. Current liberation theology, like the eighteenth-century movement, is also characterized by making the pulpit a force for social justice. The Salvadorian Jesuit revolutionary Ignacio Ellacuria writes about the church as a sign of justice:

At the insistence of Deschamps, Vatican I affirmed that the church is a sign by its very nature; that it is supposed to prove its credibility. The church, itself a sign, must work for the full liberty of human beings. First of all, this liberation must be from every form of injustice and from everything that can be regarded as unjust oppression that demeans human dignity and fulfillment. It must also be liberation from the pangs of basic human needs. It must be liberation from the objective shackles of hunger, sickness, ignorance, and helplessness.

... The liturgical texts are perfectly suited to fight our situation of institutionalized violence... Classes do not exist because there is conflict, but conflict exists because there are classes... From a biblical perspective it may well be that the root sin is grounded on the twin notions of profit and private property. The quest for profit and for more and more private property represents a serious form of idolatry.

... The conditions of life are inhumane; most people suffer from hunger, insecurity, poverty, and lack of education... We must recover the social dimension of sin... There can be no salvation without the eradication of sin; as if it is to be pardoned, sin must be wiped out. Like Christ, the church is here to take away the sin of the world, not just certain individual sins... We must promote Christian confrontation with everything that is sin. (1975, 122, 152–55, 159, 242)

12. These generals had come to the aid of the Catholic landlords in Naples. The British bridge History of Poland: From Augustus II to Pilsudski; edited by executed, along with the Italian republican clergy, some 119 laity.

In this they conducted themselves as they did in Ireland, North America, and Haiti (Giglioli 1903, 63).

13. For further discussions of the Ulster insurrection see Dickson (1956) and Stewart (1843–1853), 1:219).

14. In the 1830s, a South Carolina antiabolitionist, Bishop William Clancy, visited Haiti and reported on the democratic clergy, which he associated with schism, heresy, and vices. As quoted in Guilday (1969, 2: 303), he reported:

With few exceptions their moral and literary characters are as low as is possible to imagine. In fact I have some evidence that a portion of them are men who have been suspended and excommunicated for schism, heresy and vices.

15. Kennedy details Grégoire's influence among the Jacobin clubs, of which he was a member, in having them adopt the abolitionist program (1982, 204–9).

16. In 1790 Guzman, wrote:

The valor with which the English colonies of America have fought for their liberty, which they gloriously enjoy, covers our indolence with shame; we have yielded to them the palm with which they have been the first to crown the New World by their sovereign independence. (cited in, Rodriquez 1976, 114)

(See also Russell Wood (1975, 3–4).

17. Another pamphlet in behalf of Jewish rights authored by Grégoire was *Essays on the Physical, Political, and Moral Enfranchisement of the Jews* (1788);<sup>1</sup> On behalf of Protestant rights, he wrote *Histoire des sectes religieuses qui se sont nées, se sont modifiées, se sont éteintes dans les différentes contrées du globe depuis le commencement du siècle dernier jusqu' à l' époque actuelle* (1828–1845).

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