

\$5.00

NST

Nature, Society, and Thought

a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

Vol. 5, No.2

1992

NST

University of Minnesota
116 Church Street S.E.
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Nature, Society, and Thought

NST

a Journal of Dialectical and Historical Materialism

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

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

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

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:

Herbert Aptheker (history)

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

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

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

Angela Gilliam (anthropology, SUNY College at Old Westbury)

Viktoria Hertling (German, Univ. of Nevada)

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

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

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

Sara Fletcher Luther (political sociology)

Rinda Frye (theater arts, Univ. of Louisville)

April Ane Knutson (French literature, Univ. of Minnesota)

Philip Moran (philosophy, Triton College)

Michael Parenti (political science)

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

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

José A. Soler (journalism)

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

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

BOOK-REVIEW EDITOR: Doris Grieser

VOL. 5, NO. 2 (APRIL 1992)

Copyright ~ Marxist Educational Press

All rights reserved

Cover design by Prockat

VOLUME 5, NUMBER 2

APRIL 1992

NST: NATURE, SOCIETY, AND THOUGHT (ISSN 0890-6130). Published quarterly in January, April, July, and October by MEP Publications, University of Minnesota, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112. Second-class postage paid at Minneapolis, Minnesota. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *NST: Nature, Society, and Thought*, University of Minnesota, 116 Church St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112.

Subscriptions. U.S.A./Great Britain, one year, individuals \$15/£11, institutions \$28/£18.50; two years, individuals \$28/£21, institutions \$56/£37. Other countries, add \$4 for postage for each year. Single copies: individuals \$5/£3, institutions \$10/£6.

Subscription and editorial address: *NST*, University of Minnesota, 116 Church Street S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455-0112 (tel. 612/922-7993).

Contents are indexed in *Sociological Abstracts* and *Alternative Press Index*.

Information for Contributors

Nature, Society, and Thought welcomes contributions representing the creative application of methods of dialectical and historical materialism to all fields of study. We also welcome contributions not explicitly employing this methodology if the content or subject matter is in an area of special importance to our readers. Submissions will be reviewed in accordance with refereeing procedures established by the Editorial Board. Manuscripts will be acknowledged on receipt. Please note: manuscripts cannot be returned.

Submissions should be made in triplicate, typed, double-spaced, with at least 1-inch margins. Normal length of articles is expected to be between 3,000 and 10,000 words with an abstract of not more than 100 words. All citations should follow the author-date system, with limited use of endnotes for discursive matter, as specified in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, 13th edition. Manuscripts should be prepared in accordance with the MEP Publications Style Guide, which appears in *NST*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1990): 123–28. The *Chicago Manual* is the general guide on all other matters of style.

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

CONTENTS

Vol. 5, No. 2 (1992)

ARTICLES

- David B. Reynolds*, A Revolutionary Vanguard? Lenin's
Concept of the Party 133
- Claudia Schaefer*, From Tragedy to Farce: America Discovers
Columbus 161
- Anguel S. Stefanov*, Does Physics Reinforce Idealism? 175
- Rudy Fichtenbaum*, Changes in the Rate of Profit in the Postwar
U.S. Manufacturing Sector 183
- Michael Parenti*, Against Psychopolitics 201

MARXISTS AS TEACHERS

- Bill Livant*, A Focus on Dialectics: A Review Essay 229

BOOK REVIEWS

- Leonard Goldstein: *Shakespeare's America, America's
Shakespeare*, by Michael D. Bristol 237
- David Lethbridge: *The IQ Mythology: Class, Race, Gender,
and Inequality*, by Elaine Mensh and Harry Mensh 243
- Herbert Shapiro: *Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement*,
by Herbert Aptheker 246
- Betty Bacon: *Politics of Education: Essays from "Radical
Teacher,"* edited by Susan Gushee O'Malley, Robert C.
Rosen, and Leonard Vogt 249
- Arthur Zipser: *Three American Radicals: John Swinton,
Charles P. Steinmetz, and William Dean Howells*,
by Sender Garlin 251

Announcements

In the first issue of volume 4, *Nature, Society, and Thought* reported that the MEGA project (*Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels Gesamtaufgabe*) was in peril as a result of action by the German government. This ambitious project to publish the complete works of Marx and Engels in their original languages, with notes and all auxiliary materials, first begun in 1927, halted in 1937, by the Nazis, resumed in 1972 in the German Democratic Republic, was put in jeopardy again in 1990 when the German government seized its funds. An agreement was concluded on 20 February 1992 between the International Marx-Engels Foundation in Amsterdam and the Conference of the German Academies of Sciences to continue the project. According to the agreement, a principal editorial office is to be established in Germany with additional offices to be located in Moscow, Trier (Karl Marx's birthplace), and Aix-en-Provence. Marxists should be very pleased that this work will continue.

Volume 5, number 3 (1992) of *Nature, Society, and Thought* will be a special issue that will include an unabridged translation of the book *The Downfall and Future of Socialism* by the philosopher Hans Heinz Holz, together with critical commentaries about it. Holz's book, first published last year by *Neue Impulse Verlag*, a newly formed publishing firm associated with the German Communist Party (DKP), formulates what he considers to be the essential content of Marxism Leninism and argues for its validity. He supports the concept of a vanguard party and discusses the possibility of pluralism within the party. In his analysis of the "collapse of the first socialist societies" in Europe, he stresses the roles of bureaucratization, impoverishment of theory, and consequent alienation. He argues, however, against putting the blame directly on Stalinism alone, asserting that it is necessary to look beyond Stalinism to identify the factors that led to Stalinism as well as other negative historical developments. The issue will include several responses, beginning a discussion we hope to continue in subsequent issues.

We believe that Holz's sharp and provocative analysis can serve as a focus for open and vigorous discussion among Marxists. We invite our readers to take part in debates on these and other fundamental questions of Marxist theory by submitting articles and commentaries.

A Revolutionary Vanguard? Lenin's Concept of the Party

David B. Reynolds

ABSTRACT: The early history of Marxist political thought is frequently divided between Marx as the great philosophical, economic, and historical innovator and Lenin as a practical applicator and developer of the vanguard party. This article challenges the connection of Lenin with vanguardism. It argues that such figures as Marx, Luxemburg, Gramsci, and Lenin followed a Western Marxist tradition that placed the life experience and struggle of the working class as the engine of revolutionary consciousness and the class in general as the basic transformer of society. By challenging standard assumptions of Lenin's role in Marxist theoretical development, this article hopes to foster the rediscovery of the Western Marxist political practice long overshadowed by the "Leninist" specter.

Today socialists have entered a period of profound reevaluation and soul-searching. Part of this process entails a reexamination of our own intellectual history. With many of the old partisan loyalties and divisions now obsolete, we have the opportunity to view the classic Marxist intellectual figures in a new light. This paper offers a reading of Lenin that directly contradicts long-held assumptions. In doing so it hopes to sweep away misconceptions that prevent the Left from appreciating and regaining a healthy sense of its own intellectual tradition.

In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* David Lane offered a common definition of what we now call "Leninism:"

Leninists see Marxism as a revolutionary class praxis which is concerned above all with the conquest of power, and they stress the role of the communist party as a weapon of struggle. The

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

party is composed of class conscious Marxists and is centrally organized on the principle of principle of democratic centralism.###Rather than relying on the spontaneous development of class consciousness in the working class, Leninists see the party as a catalyst bringing revolutionary theory and political organization to the exploited masses.###For Marxist-Leninists, the seizure of power is the result of revolutionary struggle and initially the dictatorship of the proletariat is established under the hegemony of the party. (1983, 279–80)

For such conventional wisdom a vanguard represents a closed organization of revolutionary elites that organizes and directs the masses, and that ultimately takes state power.

According to this perspective, Lenin, as the originator of the vanguard model, represents the father of twentieth-century revolutions. As one textbook on revolutionary theory states:

While a heated controversy was generated by Lenin's theory of organization, this basic pattern was subsequently exported to a wide variety of countries and circumstances. Even in Lenin's lifetime, he argued for the applicability of the vanguardist approach under many different conditions—even in conditions where relative openness and democratic procedures existed.###

The vanguard approach laid down by Lenin has remained unchanged in these other countries and in its various applications. (Friedland 1982, 78–79)

Many U.S. radicals have spent a great deal of time and effort battling this “Leninist” specter. For example, Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel have stated that

Leninists argue that it is essential that socialists should be led by the most able leaders that can be assembled.###The idea of the “vanguard” follows directly. There is no need for a plurality of socialist parties because it is only the working class that is to become the new ruling class and therefore only the most able party representing the working class should exercise political leadership. Furthermore, since this leadership is rationalized and legitimated by the party's possession of “Marxist Leninist Science,” politics becomes the mechanical application of objective theory to problems of socialist construction. The vanguard party is simply a mass of individuals who are political experts due to their devotion to political practice. There is no need for a plurality of leadership because there is no need for a plurality of

options to be expressed and debated. (Albert and Hahnel 1981, 24–25)

While the above may be an accurate portrayal of Stalinism, it completely misrepresents the vanguard model and certainly has little to do with Lenin. In short, many on the Left have been battling the wrong person. As this paper will argue, Lenin was not a “Leninist,” but an orthodox Marxist who held the same basic political perspective as such other historic Marxist figures as Marx, Luxemburg, and Gramsci. Together such intellectuals represent a common Western revolutionary Marxist tradition—one that has very little to do with vanguard parties. Although many Third World revolutionaries may practice a form of organization that could be described as a “vanguard,” this owes more to the concrete and historical conditions within which these movements developed, rather than some “Leninist” paradigm. Viewing Lenin in a new light offers not simply a reevaluation of Bolshevik history, but also the possibility of viewing the Western revolutionary Marxist tradition in a new way.

This paper begins with the evidence that most directly contradicts the prevailing wisdom about Lenin's 1917 writings. It then explores in detail his two most famous supposed statements of “vanguardism”—*What Is To Be Done* and *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. Finally, the paper will return to 1917 to highlight the continuity in Lenin's theoretical perspective. It will close with some brief reflections on the implications of this new perspective.

Lenin and 1917

In 1917 Russia approached full-scale catastrophe. Capitalism had produced not only poverty and repression, but also barbaric war and impending economic collapse. In the summer of 1917 Lenin concluded that the overthrow of the Provisional Government and its replacement by socialism had become not simply desirable, but necessary to save Russia from further social catastrophe (1970g; 1970i). Although the historic events surrounding the October Revolution are clear, the intentions behind them remain shrouded in debate. What kind of system did Lenin imply by the term “dictatorship of the proletariat”? According to many prevailing interpretations, it meant exclusive rule by the revolutionary vanguard party. In light of subsequent Soviet history, such an interpretation may seem common sense (for an example of the standard account, see Thompson 1981). This perspective is directly contradicted, however, by Lenin's writings and speeches throughout the period between the February and October revolutions. An examination of this

material reveals a call not for an exclusive Bolshevik government, but for a literal seizure of power by the revolutionary class and its allies. As such, Lenin's dictatorship of the proletariat implied the same general political program that filled Rosa Luxemburg's writings one year later.

In 1917 Lenin devoted considerable attention to the issue of the state. In *The State and Revolution* he argued that the proletariat could not use the existing state, but had to create a new state based upon a new principles. What were these principles? For Lenin the Russian working class had provided the answer. In February, along side of the Provisional Government, mass activity had established the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. These bodies had developed spontaneously out of the population's attempts to confront a growing crisis. Lenin concluded that through these Soviets the Russian working class had developed the basis for a new state. These, and not the party, would take state power and constitute the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus the famous slogan "All Power to the Soviets" represented not simply a rallying cry, but a concrete political program. In "The Dual Power" Lenin associated the Soviets with the dictatorship of the proletariat in the following manner:

What is the political nature of this government [the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies]? It is a revolutionary dictatorship, i.e. a power directly based on revolutionary seizure, on the direct initiative of the people from below, and *not on a law* enacted by a centralized state power. [Unless otherwise stated all emphasis is from the original.] (1970e, 48)

For Lenin, the Soviets served as the modern equivalent of Marx's classic example of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the Paris Commune. Throughout his 1917 writings, Lenin routinely associated the Soviets with the Commune (for example, see 1970f, 76).

Lenin's writings on Soviet power seem to contradict volumes of scholarship devoted to his supposed elitism. However, did these writings represent Lenin's general political perspective or a utopian flight in the heat of mass upheaval? The next two parts will argue that the themes found above follow consistently from Lenin's classic theoretical perspective articulated almost two decades prior to 1917.

"What Is To Be Done?"

Of all Lenin's works, *What is To Be Done?* is by far the most commonly read. In class after class and book after book, it serves as a

primer text for the “Marxist” position on the party. That such employment actually misuses the work becomes clear from Lenin’s own words. In writing an introduction to a 1908 collection of his writings, Lenin stated:

The basic mistake made by those who now criticize *What Is To Be Done?* is to treat the pamphlet apart from its connection with the concrete historical situation of a definite, and now long past, period in the development of our Party.###

What Is To Be Done? is a *summary* of *Iskra* tactics and *Iskra* organizational policy in 1901 and 1902. Precisely a “*summary*,” no more and no less. (1960b, 101–2)

According to conventional interpretation, *What Is To Be Done?* signified Lenin’s decisive innovation on the issue of the formation of class consciousness. In *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought* Irving Fetscher portrayed Lenin’s position as follows:

According to Kautsky and Lenin an adequate, that is to say *political*, class consciousness can only be brought to the working class “from outside.” Lenin maintained further that only a “trade union consciousness” can arise spontaneously in the working class.###Political class consciousness can only be developed by intellectuals who, because they are well educated and informed and stand at a distance from the immediate production process, are in a position to comprehend bourgeois society and its class relations in their totality.###As the organizational instrument for transmitting class consciousness to the empirical working class, Lenin conceived a “new type of party,” the cadre party of professional revolutionaries. In contrast to this Leninist conception Luxemburg gave prominence to the role of social experience, the experience of class struggle, in the formation of class consciousness. Even errors in the course of class struggle can contribute to the development of an appropriate class consciousness which guarantees success, while the patronizing of the proletariat by intellectual elites leads only to a weakening of the ability to act, and to passivity. (1983, 80)

This portrayal reveals not only a misunderstanding of Lenin but also of Rosa Luxemburg. Contrary to volumes devoted to portraying the two as opposites, on the primary issue of class consciousness both shared the same orthodox Marxism. Their differences were tactical, not strategic in nature. (For a full discussion of Rosa Luxemburg’s views

on the role of the party, one that parallels this interpretation of Lenin, see Reynolds 1990.)

The language Fetscher uses owes much to the following famous passage from *What Is To Be Done?*

We have said that *there could not have been* Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness.###The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. (1970a, 143)

Many readers of Lenin interpret passages like this one as a clear and unambiguous position on class consciousness. The above language is actually unclear, however, and can be only understood in relation to the entire work. For example, what is “trade union consciousness,” and what does bringing consciousness from without actually imply? Fetscher, as well as many others, has read into Lenin’s language a number of assumptions that he did not hold. Three major areas of misunderstanding emerge in this regard: (a) Lenin’s critique of “trade union consciousness,” (b) his critique’s implications for the interaction of the working class and intellectuals (that is, the role of the party), and (c) the supposed link between Lenin’s position on consciousness and the organizational structure of the party.

***Lenin’s position on class consciousness
—the struggle against Economism***

When seen in isolation, numerous passages of *What Is To Be Done?* seem to attack “spontaneity.” Indeed, Lenin specifically implored Social Democracy not to bow to the “spontaneity of the working class.” What did Lenin mean by spontaneity? A careful reading of *What Is To Be Done?* reveals a critique not of the autonomous ability of the masses so much as of the limitations of a particular conception of the party’s role—one that he referred to as “Economism.” Lenin argued in 1908:

What Is To Be Done? I said, straightens out what has been twisted by the Economists.###[It] is a controversial correction of Economist distortions and it would be wrong to regard the pamphlet in any other light. (1960b, 107–8)

Indeed, rather than providing a new concept of class consciousness,

Lenin actually reasserted an orthodox Marxist position. *What Is To Be Done?* deals with the crisis and limitations of party leadership, not of the mass movement.

As the general argument of *What Is To Be Done?* makes clear, by “spontaneity” Lenin did not refer to autonomous action by the working class in any general sense, but rather isolated economic struggle within the capitalist firm. This struggle’s “spontaneity” grew from the inevitable nature of the conflict between capitalist and worker. The trade-union movement represented the highest form of this immediate conflict. Used in this manner, Lenin’s “spontaneity” left out a wide range of alternative autonomous working-class actions such as food protests, community organizing, political demonstrations, etc. Lenin referred to these, although they were just as “spontaneous” in the sense of arising autonomously, as “political struggle.” In short, for Lenin’s purposes “spontaneity” referred to “the inherent economic struggle of worker and capitalist,” or simply, as he would say, “economic struggle.”

Lenin rejected the Economists’ belief that the basic economic struggle—i.e., the “spontaneity of the working class”—would by itself guarantee revolutionary change. Lenin characterized the Economists’ position as follows:

The basic error that all Economists commit, namely, their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of workers *from within*, so to speak, from their economic struggle, i.e. by making this struggle the exclusive (or, at least, the main) starting-point, by making it the exclusive (or, at least, the main) basis. Such a view is radically wrong. (1970a, 182)

For Lenin, this Economist belief led them to a narrow vision of Social Democratic activity. The Economists saw their primary task as supporting the ongoing economic struggle by, for example, exposing factory conditions and providing concrete programs of economic demands. Even the so-called “political” side of Economist efforts revolved around the economic struggle. Certainly, Lenin did not reject the importance of economic struggle and trade-union activity. In a 1908 preface he wrote:

My views on the subject have been frequently misrepresented in the literature, and I must, therefore, emphasize that many pages in *What Is To Be Done?* are devoted to explaining the *immense* importance of economic struggle and the trade unions. (1960b, 108)

Lenin disagreed with the Economists, however, over the relationship between economic struggle and the proper role of the party. He feared that the Economists subordinated the activity of Social Democracy solely to economic concerns. For Lenin, the Economists held a one-dimensional vision of revolution and class consciousness. They believed that the experience of economic struggle would by itself generate full political consciousness. While at some fundamental level socialist consciousness was inherent within the contradiction between worker and capitalist, Lenin realized that the actual process of consciousness formation was far more complex. For example, because of their simplistic understanding of class consciousness, the Economists downplayed or ignored the importance of theoretical struggle. For Lenin, this lack of theoretical activity came as nothing less than disastrous. Lenin acknowledged that while life experience within the factories demystified many aspects of capitalism, it could not by itself automatically produce an entirely new and coherent system of beliefs. Ideologies are complex. They simply do not emerge spontaneously. The bourgeoisie, for example, had their Hobbes, Locke, and Paine. Lenin warned that by neglecting theoretical work the Economists failed to combat bourgeois ideology in its entirety. Exposing factory conditions and making economic demands were not sufficient. Bourgeois ideology existed as a complete theoretical system. Without exposure to an alternative ideological system, the working class would naturally tend to continue to use bourgeois ways of viewing the world. As Lenin argued:

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the lines of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal *immeasurably* more means of dissemination. (1970a, 152)

By not openly challenging this ideology at the level of a complete worldview, the Economists condemned the working class to not realizing the full potential of its own experiences. Lenin argued:

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement, the *only* choice is—either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course.###Hence to belittle the socialist ideology *in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree* means to strengthen bourgeois ideology.###

Hence, our task, the task of Social Democracy, is to *combat spontaneity*, to *divert* the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social-Democracy. (1970a, 150–51)

Lenin did not view the issue as a question of choosing or not choosing to “impose” an ideology upon the working class. The bourgeoisie had imposed its own. The question, for him, was whether or not Social Democracy would challenge this hegemony.

Class consciousness and the role of the party—a continuation of the struggle against Economism

The above discussion may seem to support an elitist interpretation of Lenin. One could argue that it only confirms Lenin's desire to carry the Truth to the masses. This section will argue, however, that Lenin sought to use party activity to enrich the class-consciousness-developing forces of life experience, not replace them.

Lenin actually attacked the Economists as having a low opinion of ordinary workers. For Lenin, Economist assumptions did this in two related ways. First, because they viewed their role as supporting current economic struggles, the Economists tended to orient their activity at the level of the ordinary worker's current understanding. Rather than estranging the workers with talk of a distant socialist future, the Economists felt they needed to promise concrete palatable results. Lenin, however, attacked this focus as “tail-ism.” The Economists sought to follow rather than lead the movement. Not only did Economist practice fail to support the more advanced workers, but it also failed to challenge ordinary workers with something beyond their current assumptions. For Lenin, such practices patronizingly disregarded the intellectual ability of workers to learn and master abstract ways of thinking.

Second, by supporting the current economic struggle the Economists merely wasted the efforts of Social Democracy, duplicating activity of which the working class was itself readily capable. In a passage quite indicative of Lenin's position on the party's role, he argued:

Our Economists, including *Rabocheye Dyelo*, were successful because they adapted themselves to the backward workers. But the Social-Democratic worker, the revolutionary worker### will indignantly reject all this talk about struggle for demands “promising palpable results,” etc.###Such a worker will say to his counsellors from *Rabocheye Mysl and Rabocheye Dyelo* you are busying yourselves in vain, gentlemen, and shirking

your proper duties, by meddling with such excessive zeal in a job that we can very well manage ourselves. There is nothing clever in your assertion that the Social-Democrats' task is to lend the economic struggle itself a political character; that is only the beginning, it is not the main task of the Social-Democrats. For all over the world, including Russia, *the police themselves often take the initiative in lending the economic struggle a political character*, and the workers themselves learn to understand who the government supports.###The "activity" you want to stimulate among us workers, by advancing concrete demands that promise palpable results, we are already displaying and in our everyday, limited trade union work we put forward these concrete demands, very often without any assistance whatever from the intellectuals.###the intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never expect to learn from our factory and "economic" experience, namely, political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your *duty* to bring it to us in a hundred-and a thousand-fold greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of discussions, pamphlets, and articles (which very often—pardon our frankness—are rather dull), but precisely in the form of vivid *exposures* of what our government and governing classes are doing at this very movement in all spheres of life. (1970a, 176–78)

In short, the Economists had not focused party activity upon the areas in which it could make the greatest contribution. Lenin argued that the party, rather than duplicating existing activity, should aid the working class where it genuinely needed help in the realm of political struggle and political development.

For example, one area of political development lay in an understanding of other classes. Lenin's orthodox Marxism placed the task of revolutionary leadership collectively upon the proletariat. To develop this political ability workers needed exposure to the life experiences of the other classes. Lenin argued:

Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to *all* cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter *what class* is affected.###The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the work-

ing masses learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe *every* other social class in *all* the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of *all* aspects of the life and activity of *all* classes, strata, and groups of the population. (1970a, 174)

In contrast to Economist positions, Lenin viewed the party's primary task as the promotion of such components of political consciousness.

Lenin's argument, however, can be interpreted in a number of ways. According to conventional wisdom, Lenin sought a party of intellectuals who first created the political consciousness that they then brought to the working class. The party emerges as the head of the movement—generating a program and organization—while the workers merely fill the ranks. According to such an interpretation, Lenin substituted the party for life experience as the catalyst generating class consciousness. This interpretation, however, is inaccurate. Lenin did not envision the party displacing life experience. Indeed the exact opposite was true. Lenin wanted the party to aid the working class by promoting broader and more effective forms of experience. Rather than bringing the proletariat the prepackaged Truth, Lenin's party cultivated specifically political experiences.

His use of language is quite indicative of this point. Lenin did not argue that the party should provide political consciousness or understanding. Rather he wrote that the party should promote political *exposure*. Exposure implies something different from a "vanguard" role. It implies fostering engagement in some kind of experience. When Lenin pointed out the limitations of trade-union activity, he did not reject experience as the main producer of consciousness. Rather he simply argued that by itself trade-union activity posed a narrow form of experience. The party needed to help expose the working class to other forms of experience—ones that were specifically political in nature.

Lenin quite explicitly argued that intellectuals could not teach political consciousness to the working class in some kind of direct sense, and reiterated his position on the value of broad exposure:

In order to become a Social-Democrat, the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant.###But this "clear picture" cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is

going on about us at a given moment; upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way; upon what find expression in such and such events, in such and such statistics, in such and such court sentence, etc., etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and *fundamental* condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity. (1970a, 175)

Unlike “vanguard” notions, Lenin’s promotion of political exposures did *not* entail complete direction of the movement. In a position remarkably similar to that taken by Luxemburg on the mass strike, Lenin argued:

As for calling the masses to action, that will come of itself as soon as energetic political agitation, live and striking exposures come into play. To catch some criminal red-handed and immediately to brand him publicly in all place is of itself far more effective than any number of “calls”; the effect very often is such as will make it impossible to tell exactly who it was that “called” upon the masses and who suggested this or that plan of demonstration, etc. Calls for action, not in the general, but in the concrete sense of the term can be made only at the place of action; only those who themselves go into action, and do so immediately, can sound such calls. Our business as Social-Democratic publicists is to deepen, expand, and intensify political exposures and political agitation. (1970a, 176)

How would the party promote political exposures? In 1902 Lenin argued for the establishment of an all-Russian newspaper as the party’s next logical step. This paper could reveal the class nature behind events and disclose state activities. It could also offer analysis of the current situation and the tactics of the movement itself. Thus, the party would provide the working class with exposure to those elements that it would not normally receive from its own daily factory experience (1970a, section 5).

In short, Lenin followed an orthodox Marxist position concerning class-consciousness formation. Life experience and struggle developed class organization and consciousness. The party played an important, yet bounded role in this process. Yet while Lenin agreed with such figures such as Luxemburg on general principles, organizationally his party looked nothing like the mass party of the German SPD. Unfortunately, Lenin’s tactical position on organization has been mistakenly linked to his supposed innovation on class consciousness. As the next section will argue, Lenin’s positions on organization grew not out of a

“vanguardist” perspective, but the conditions of authoritarianism in Russia.

Organizational questions—secrecy, professionalism, and centralism

Secrecy, professionalism, and centralism represent three supposed defining characteristics of a vanguard. These principles, however, have little to do with Lenin's position on class consciousness. As he pointed out in a reply to Rosa Luxemburg's 1904 article, his position on class consciousness was consistent with a variety of organizational forms (1960a, 474). The particular form was a tactical question based upon the actual conditions of struggle. In Russia these conditions were dominated by the atmosphere of autocracy. In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin argued that the Economists' narrow focus upon daily economic struggle led them to downplay the need for a competent organization of revolutionaries. As a result, Social Democratic activities and organization had fallen easy prey to the czar's police. As Lenin argued, the Economists practiced a revolutionary primitiveness that the movement needed to outgrow. Lenin advocated a party of a “new type” in order to adapt Social Democracy to autocracy.

Lenin's adaptation organizationally split the movement between legal and secret activities. By separating its secret functions the movement could develop a professional, well-organized group to carry out these activities in an effective manner. In an especially rich passage, Lenin encapsulated a number of points in this regard:

Yet we all complain, and cannot but complain, that the “*organizations*” are being unearthed and as a result it is impossible to maintain continuity in the movement.###I assert that it is far more difficult to unearth a dozen wise men than a hundred fools. This position I will defend, no matter how much you instigate the masses against me for my “anti-democratic” views, etc. As I have stated repeatedly, by “wise men,” in connection with organization, I mean *professional revolutionaries*, irrespective of whether they have developed from among students or working men. I assert (1) that no revolutionary movement can endure without a stable organization of leaders maintaining continuity; (2) that the broader the popular mass drawn spontaneously into the struggle###the more urgent the need for such an organization, and the more solid this organization must be###(3) that such an organization must consist chiefly of

people professionally engaged in revolutionary activity; (4) that in an autocratic state, the more we *confine* the membership of such an organization to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult will it be to unearth the organization; and (5) the *greater* will be the number of people from the working class and from the other social classes who will be able to join the movement and perform active work in it. (1970a, 217)

For Lenin, the party would serve as this organization of professional revolutionaries. In doing so it would provide an organizational continuity for the entire movement. In this respect Lenin did not differ from Luxemburg, who also envisioned the party as representing the unity of the struggle. However, Lenin's party had to conduct this function clandestinely. The party had to consist of professional revolutionaries *not* because they possessed some Truth that they would bring to the masses, but because they needed to conduct activities that made them ready targets of repression.

The need for secrecy partially explains Lenin's desire for a high degree of organizational centralization. Secret activity required a high degree of specialization. It reduced the risk of a participant being caught for subversive activity and prevented an entire network of people from falling into the hands of the police. It also made participation easier since each individual needed only to perform a limited set of tasks. Specialization, however, promoted organizational fragmentation. Lenin advocated centralization within the party to prevent this fragmentation from breaking up the entire movement.

Centralization and professionalism did not imply party domination or the patronizing of workers by intellectuals. Both workers and intellectuals could become professional revolutionaries. Indeed Lenin believed that an organization of revolutionaries would actually aid advanced workers develop leadership ability by teaching techniques for fighting the police and providing some degree of protection through the advanced stages of political maturation (1970a, 224).

Lenin very clearly saw his organization of professional revolutionaries, while a central concern, as only one part of the struggle. Lenin did not intend for the party to displace or subordinate other forms of organization:

To concentrate all secret functions in the hands of as small a number of professional revolutionaries as possible does not

mean that the latter will “do the thinking for all” and that the rank and file will not take an active part in the *movement*.###.### Centralization of the secret functions of the *organization* by no means implies centralization of all the functions of the *movement*.###.### The active and widespread participation of the masses will not suffer; on the contrary, it will benefit by the fact that a “dozen” experienced revolutionaries, trained professionally no less than the police, will centralize all the secret aspects of the work—the drawing up of leaflets, the working out of approximate plans; and the appointing of bodies of leaders for each urban district. (1970a, 218)

For Lenin, the centralization of the secret functions broadened the movement by freeing other organizations from particularly dangerous activities. Because they no longer had to protect secret activity from the police, these organizations could adopt fully open and popular structures. Lenin denounced the Economists’ blurring of the distinction between open and secret activity as simultaneously restricting the scope of the movement while at the same time delivering it into the hands of the police.

To summarize: secrecy, professionalism, and centralism all grew out of the realities of czarist Russia. In anticipation of criticism, Lenin made clear that a mass party was not possible in conditions of autocracy. He argued:

Everyone will probably agree that “the broadest democratic principle” presupposes the following two conditions: first, full publicity, and secondly, election to all offices.###.### What then is the use of advancing “the *broad* democratic principle” when the fundamental condition for this principle *cannot be fulfilled* by a secret organization?###.### any attempt to practice “the broad democratic principle” will simply facilitate the work of the police in carrying out large-scale raids. (1970a, 228–29)

Conclusions on “What Is To Be Done?”

While not based upon an alteration of the orthodox Marxist conception of class consciousness, Lenin’s organizational adaptation did have two indirect consequences for class-consciousness formation. First, centralization of all secret activity engaged the party in a much higher level of directly organizational work. The party did not simply provide the masses with theoretical and political exposure, it also intervened directly in mass organization. Second, Lenin’s formal split between the

professional revolutionaries and the rest of the movement insulated the masses from participation in clandestine activities. Since much of this secret work involved leadership functions, this denied the masses the experience of certain forms of leadership activities.

Such problems, however, originate out of the contradictions of mass struggle under repressive conditions, not some distinctly “Leninist” position on class consciousness. *What Is To Be Done?* is perfectly compatible with Lenin’s position in 1917. While an organization of professional revolutionaries may have caused certain historical limitations for the development of the movement, it did not alter the fundamental roles of the party or the masses. It certainly did not prevent Lenin from envisioning the masses, themselves, from taking power themselves.

That Lenin’s model of organization was a tactical solution is reinforced by the ease with which he was able to abandon it when political conditions changed. In 1905 revolutionary mass activity established de facto, if not legally constituted, political freedom in Russia. With a temporary end of autocracy, Lenin openly called for a complete restructuring of the party. Lenin laid out his position in a 1905 article titled “The Reorganization of the Party.” In a passage that could serve as a reply to those who insist upon his “vanguardism,” Lenin wrote:

We, the representatives of revolutionary Social Democracy, the supporters of the “Majority,” have repeatedly said that complete democratization of the Party was impossible in conditions of secret work, and that in such conditions the “elective principle” was a mere phrase. And experience has confirmed our words.###But we Bolsheviks have always recognized that in new conditions, when political liberties were acquired, it would be essential to adopt the elective principle. (1970c, 564–65)

Lenin not only demanded that the party reorganize along popular lines, but also that the actual new structure develop through a popular process. The Central Committee had already called upon the entire party membership to elect representatives to the upcoming party congress. Lenin argued that these representative should have full voting rights:

For this purpose, it is necessary for all comrades to devise *new* forms of organization by their joint independent, creative efforts. It is impossible to lay down any predetermined standards for this, for we are working in an entirely new field: a knowledge of local conditions, and above all the initiative of *all* Party members must be brought into play. (1970c, 568)

“One Step Forward, Two Steps Back”

Although *What Is To Be Done?* has served as the most common text of the “Leninist vanguard,” *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* contains a stronger defence of “vanguardist” elements—centralization, top-down rule, and restricted membership. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, more so than *What Is To Be Done?* could serve as evidence of Lenin’s vanguardism. However, such a conclusion is possible only if the text is treated as a statement of universal principle. Lenin wrote *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* as an interpretation of the events at the 1903 Second Party Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party. His arguments can only be fully understood in light of the historical struggle within the movement. This struggle centered around two related issues (a) centralism within the party and (b) strict demarcation and restriction of party membership.

Centralism within the party

Many of Lenin’s opponents portrayed the Second Congress debates as a struggle between authoritarianism and democracy. According to this position, Lenin wanted the central leadership to assume control over the entire party and thus direct the movement. His opponents claimed to have fought a valiant defense of decentralization and democratic action. Lenin, however, described the issues in quite a different manner. In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* he portrayed his opponents not as defending lofty ideals, but rather their own individual and ideological interests.

In 1903 Lenin advocated centralization not as a universal principle, but as a necessary corrective to the excessive decentralization and fragmentation within the movement at that time. Lenin characterized the problem as follows:

In an autocratic state###the socialist workers’ party *could not* develop except from these circles. And the circles, i.e., close-knit, exclusive groups uniting a very small number of people and nearly always based on personal friendship, were a necessary stage in the development of socialism and the workers’ movement in Russia.###There was no contact between them; they had no authority over them in the shape of the Party in Russia, and it was inevitable that they should differ in their understanding of the movement’s main tasks.###A struggle between the circles was, therefore, inevitable. (1960b, 105)

By 1903 such fragmentation was no longer tolerable if the movement was to grow. To this end Lenin proposed to unify the party through a more centralized organizational structure and the adoption of formal rules. In terms of authority, local bodies would be subordinated to the central organs. In this way Social Democracy could present the masses with unified, coherent, and consistent social-democratic positions and actions.

Lenin interpreted many of the attacks upon his “bureaucratic centralism” and the “destruction of democratic principles” as simply attempts by the “circles” to defend the old ways. In commenting on the significance of the congress, Lenin wrote:

For the first time we succeeded in throwing off the traditions of circle looseness and revolutionary philistinism, in bringing together dozens of very different groups, many of which had been fiercely warring among themselves and had been linked solely by the force of an idea, and which were not prepared (in principle, that is) to sacrifice all their group aloofness and group independence for the sake of the great whole.###But in politics sacrifices are not obtained gratis, they have to be won in battle. The battle over the slaughter of organizations necessarily proved terribly fierce.###It is one thing to sacrifice the circle system in principle for the sake of the Party, and another to renounce one’s own circle. (1970b, 444)

For Lenin, the dispute over centralism also held a greater significance than simply the resistance of the “circle mentality.” It revealed a major split within Social Democracy between revolutionary and opportunist (Economist) camps. This split had been developing for quite some time. In *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin had confronted the opportunist wing over issues of tactics. At the congress he now found himself confronting opportunism over the issue of organization.

For Lenin, the opportunists were the natural defenders of the circle mentality. On the one hand, they tended to practice the intellectual’s inherent anarchism and distaste for discipline. On the other hand, the opportunists avoided questions of principle or theoretical clarity. They preferred to stick to “practical” questions that promised immediate results. Party unity threatened to bring issues of principles and tactics into open debate and resolution. According to Lenin, the opportunists opposed centralization because they feared their own weaker positions would lose to the *Iskra*-oriented majority (1970b, 287).

The subsequent history of Russian Social Democracy seems to support Lenin’s interpretation that the debate represented more a struggle

between two tendencies than over “democratic” organization. In his invaluable exhaustive study *Lenin's Political Thought*, William Harding points out that the Mensheviks, who opposed centralization at the Second Party Congress, ended up practicing as much centralization in their own organization as did the Bolsheviks (1977, 189–96).

The factional nature of the debate, however, does not completely resolve all questions concerning Lenin's centralism. Regardless of his motivation, did Lenin subordinate the entire party to the decisions of a few? In a general sense, a degree of discipline and unity is necessary for any organization. Some degree of centralism, by itself, in no way implies a rigid authoritarianism. Indeed, in her critique of *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Rosa Luxemburg accepted this general need for some degree of centralism. She did not attack Lenin's desire for organizational unity and discipline, but rather the specific way he sought to achieve it. She believed Lenin had substituted a bureaucratically imposed unity in place of the self-centralism that came from the base of the movement through open and vigorous debate (see Luxemburg 1971 and Reynolds 1990).

While correctly pointing to the dangers of bureaucratic centralism, Luxemburg's critique had several weaknesses. First, she often overstated Lenin's “ultracentralism.” In a 1904 reply, Lenin argued that Luxemburg had confused the final program of the congress with his original draft proposal. For example, she had accused him of making the Central Committee the only active body. Lenin claimed that his opponents gave the Central Committee the power to organize the local committees. Indeed his original draft had been criticized for not sufficiently upholding the independence of the Central Committee (1960a, 475). He did not envision it as the sole or even final authority within the party (1970b, 470).

Lenin's reply to Luxemburg is not, however, fully adequate. Clearly the Central Committee and the party organ's editorial board did have enormous authority. Luxemburg correctly warned that as control passed upward, the richness of experience at the lower levels would decline. Less and less people would benefit from involvement in important decision-making.

Luxemburg's alternative, however, was also problematic. She did not seem familiar with the arguments of *What Is To Be Done?* concerning the limitations of operation in a repressive environment. As she herself argued, her alternative of “self-centralism” required both a politically developed proletariat and open, democratic conditions. However, neither of these conditions existed in autocratic Russia. Lenin believed that Social Democracy could not wait till more favorable conditions.

To lead the democratic revolution against czarism successfully the proletariat needed an effective and coherent political organization. In response Lenin proposed a form of centralization consistent with the clandestine nature of the party.

Party membership

In *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*, Lenin devoted considerable effort to analyze the debate over membership qualifications. The minority wanted membership left open to all who accepted the party's program. Instead, Lenin argued that party membership be restricted to those who actually participated in a party organization. While the difference may have seemed trivial, Lenin saw a fundamental issue at stake—the party's boundaries. The minority's proposal implied a loose conception of membership. Lenin, however, advocated a sharp distinction between those who were in the party and those who were outside. Luxemburg criticized Lenin upon this point. For her Lenin's demarcation excluded many from valuable party experience.

Lenin's proposal did, however, address a number of real problems. First, it ensured accountability. Lenin did not see how those operating outside of any party organization could be subject to its discipline and authority and hence held accountable. Second, it helped protect clandestine activity. Unless the Party could ensure a minimum competency among its members, people would not feel secure in dealing with the organization. Finally, a loose definition of party membership risked lowering the party to the level of the ordinary worker. Lenin saw the Party as an organization of the advanced section of the working class. Its membership should reflect this identity.

Lenin's advocacy of restricted membership must be seen in light of the important, yet bounded role that he gave to the Party. The Party did not control the movement, nor did it encompass the entire body of activists who would actually seize and administer state power. Indeed, Lenin specifically reminded his readers that people could participate in other revolutionary organizations besides the Party. Lenin quoted from one of his own speeches:

We need the most diverse organizations of all types, ranks, and shades, beginning with the extremely limited and secret and ending with very broad, free, and loose organization (1970b, 321)

For Lenin, the revolutionary movement shared in a division of labor. Within this division the party directed clandestine activity and served

as the theoretical expression of the movement. To fulfill these functions it needed a tight concept of membership.

Conclusions on "One Step Forward, Two Steps Back"

Clearly, Lenin's arguments concerning the form of centralization and membership restrictions remain open to question. For example, was restricted membership the best way to combat opportunism and maintain party clarity? Given the conditions of autocracy was another method possible? *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* clearly raised important and fundamental organizational issues.

Rather than resolving these issues, the purpose here has been to argue for an accurate representation of the real terms of the debate. Contrary to conventional interpretations, Lenin did not establish further specifications for a "vanguard." Nor did he seek to establish some universal form of organization. The debate had nothing to do with the issue of class consciousness and the ability of the working class. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back* concerns party organization, not the role of the party in the overall revolutionary process. It deals with tactical issues, not questions of overall theory. Luxemburg debated Lenin specifically over his concept of organization and not over the role he assigned to the party. On this later question they were in general agreement.

1917 and the party

Lenin's 1917 writings are consistent with his earlier works. At both times he followed an orthodox Marxist vision that assumed the proletariat and its allies represented the driving force of the revolution. They, not the party alone, would assume state power. The party influenced the proletariat's actions by providing a theoretical perspective and general program. In addition, because of autocratic conditions, it also provided organizational support for clandestine and military activities. These two sets of functions lay at the base of Lenin's discussion of the party throughout 1917.

The beginning of this article offered evidence of Lenin's support for the Soviets, not the party, as the key mechanism for direct rule by the proletariat. At first glance this position may appear contradicted by a number of Lenin's major 1917 statements. For example, in *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* Lenin argued "I still maintain that a political party would have no right to exist if it refused to take power when opportunity offers" (1970m, 396). In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin wrote:

By educating the worker's party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and *leading the whole people* to socialism, of directing and organizing the new system, of being the teacher, the guide, the leader of all the working and exploited people in organizing their social life without the bourgeoisie and against the bourgeoisie. (1970k, 304)

Taken in isolation, these quotations appear to offer a "Leninist vanguard" conception of revolution. Is not Lenin clearly calling upon the party to take power itself? Such an interpretation oversimplifies a very complex reality. Lenin held a sophisticated vision of revolution that involved a complex division of labor. Within this division the party had an important, yet bounded role. This section will highlight three major issues: the split nature of power, the different vanguards, and the organizational requirements of insurrection.

The split nature of power

While Lenin foresaw the insurrection as placing certain components of the old state in Bolshevik party hands, assuming control of some top echelons of the old government did not imply control over the entire state. Indeed, he believed the revolution would dramatically restructure the composition of power within the state and society. The base of the new state would not rest on a centralized bureaucratic apparatus, but on the network of Soviets. In other words, the Soviets, as the new state apparatus, would exercise ultimate economic and administrative control.

Lenin saw the party's primary role as practicing what Rosa Luxemburg referred to as "political leadership." For example, in "Draft Resolution on The Present Political Situation" Lenin argued:

Events in the Russian revolution###have been developing with such incredible, storm- or hurricane-like velocity, that it can by no means be the task of the Party to speed them up. All efforts, in fact, must be directed towards keeping up with events and doing on time our work of explaining to the workers, and to the working people in general, as much as we can, the changes in the situation and in the course of the class struggle. (1970h, 233)

Even with the insurrection, Lenin stressed, first and foremost, the agitational and propaganda role of the party. In "Marxism and Insurrection" Lenin argued that the party needed to draw up a brief declaration of the

need for a revolutionary transfer of power and then dispatch itself into the factories and barracks to propagate the idea (1970l, 383). In short, political leadership implied influence by broad vision and coherent interpretation, not organizational control.

By October, the Bolsheviks led the Soviets not in an organizational sense, but simply by the fact that the majority leadership of the Soviets identified with the Bolshevik assessment of the situation and the need for a second revolution. Being a Bolshevik in 1917 meant having a revolutionary consciousness, not blind obedience to the party hierarchy. Indeed, many local Bolsheviks acted quite independently of the party's central organs (Sirianni 1982, especially part one).

The many vanguards

The term *vanguard* occurs frequently throughout Lenin's writings. For him the term signified a leadership function. Such a role, however, could apply to a number of social formations. The party did not encompass the only leadership group in the revolutionary process. In a passage quoted earlier from *The State and Revolution*, Lenin wrote, "By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat." At first glance Lenin appears to be referring to the party as the vanguard. However, an equally plausible interpretation is that Lenin's vanguard in this case was the advanced workers.

The pamphlet *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* serves as a good illustration of the problem of Lenin's use of terminology. The title seems to indicate that the party seizes control of the state. The body of the pamphlet, however, reveals something quite different. In it Lenin replied to six arguments *Novaya Zhizn* had raised in objection to a revolutionary seizure of power. Lenin argued against these points not, as would be assumed from the title, in terms of the viability of the Bolshevik party, but rather in terms of the political ability of the proletariat, the viability of a worker-controlled state. For example, *Novaya Zhizn* argued that the proletariat was isolated from the peasantry. Lenin replied that the majority of deputies in the Soviets of Workers, Soldiers, and Peasants already supported the peasants' two greatest demands, land reform and peace. *Novaya Zhizn* also objected that the proletariat did not have the technical ability to either take state power or set an administration into motion. In reply Lenin pointed to the Soviets. To charges that the Soviets lacked administrative ability, Lenin argued that the Soviets would only obtain such ability through the actual experience of full state power (1970m, 401–4). In short, Lenin placed the proletariat as a whole as his active subject, not the party.

Indeed, Lenin specifically attributed a vanguard role to the advanced workers and peasants. He wrote:

Fifthly, it [the Soviet apparatus] provides an organizational form for the vanguard, i.e. for the most class-conscious, most energetic and most progressive section of the *oppressed* classes, the workers and peasants, and so constitutes an apparatus by means of which the vanguard of the oppressed classes can elevate, train, educate, and lead *the entire vast mass* of these classes. (1970m, 407)

In short, Lenin did not view the revolutionary process in the simplistic dualism of party and mass. Rather, he made a complex distribution of differing levels of consciousness. Ernst Mandel, in an extensive discussion of Lenin's conception of the party, has argued for a three-way division of revolutionary elements: the revolutionary nucleus, the advanced workers, and the masses. The party aided the political development of the advanced workers. These in turn influenced the broader masses (Mandel 1970). As such, one could say, Lenin had two vanguards—the party and the advanced workers. To this scheme one could add a third vanguard—the proletariat as a whole. According to orthodox Marxism, the working class would lead the rest of the exploited classes. For Lenin, not the vanguard, but the vanguards took power during the October Revolution.

Organization of the insurrection

Lenin clearly followed orthodox Marxism's focus upon experience as the driving force of revolution. Not party training, but involvement in actual struggle would teach most people political skills. For example, Lenin concluded "One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution" as follows:

Power to the Soviets means the complete transfer of the country's administration and economic control into the hands of the workers and peasants, to whom *nobody* would dare offer resistance and who, through practice, through their own experience, would *soon learn how* to distribute the land, products and grain properly. (1970j, 282)

However, the insurrection itself required some degree of specialized preparation. Paralleling his argument from *What Is To Be Done?* Lenin foresaw the party as providing the crucial organizational skills needed to conduct a clandestine, and in this case, military activity. During the

fall of 1917, the party took concrete steps to organize and arm the workers for an insurrection. Just as in *What Is To Be Done?* the need to confront a coercive apparatus pulled the party into technical tasks of organization and leadership. Although originating in practical rather than theoretical considerations, the party's development of a military apparatus did have foreboding significance during the subsequent years after the insurrection.

Moving beyond the "Leninist" specter

This article has challenged the conventional wisdom that links Lenin's political writings with a vanguard model. In short, Lenin was not a "Leninist" but an orthodox Western Marxist who saw the actual struggle and life experience of the working class as the engine of revolutionary consciousness, and the class in general as the basic revolutionary agent and transformer of society. Lenin followed a tradition for which the expansion of democratic participation lay at the center. This is not to say that Lenin's conception (or that of his contemporaries) of democratic empowerment did not have its problems and contradictions. For example, Lenin's discussion of the split between the Soviets and the party remains quite vague on concrete issues of power and decision making. Indeed the lack of clarity on this subject left room for a rather substantial change of course during and after the Civil War. However, these represent contradictions, not an entirely new "vanguard" model of revolution.

Viewing Lenin as an orthodox Western Marxist and not as a vanguard innovator has three important ramifications. First, a supposed "Leninist" or "vanguard" elitism can not serve as a simple and easy explanation for early Soviet history. Contrary to many standard explanations, the destruction of Soviet democracy and the rise of Stalinism was not preordained in Lenin's early writings. To the contrary, the trajectory of Soviet history must be sought in the actual conditions and struggle of the time. These included the Civil War and economic collapse. In addition, when Lenin began to advocate the substitution of "rule by the Party" for "rule by the working class and its allies" he believed (rightly or wrongly) that violence and economic catastrophe had destroyed the Russian proletariat as a political force. Only after we have first grappled with these historical conditions, can the limitations of the political perspective and decisions of Bolshevik leaders undergo proper evaluation. The Soviet experience can teach us as much about the real physical limitations and contradictions of the revolutionary process as it can about the subjective limitations of Bolshevik leaders.

For example, issues of democratic self-emancipation in the revolutionary process become much more complex than a simple “democratic-socialists” vs. “vanguard elitists” dualism. (For discussion of Soviet history consistent with this approach see Lewin 1968, 1985; Medvedev 1981; Sirianni 1982; Farber 1990.) It is easy to denounce “Leninist” elitism and to extol the virtues of democracy. It is much more difficult to isolate and grapple with the very real and very messy issues involved in making democratic empowerment a reality.

Similarly, the “Leninist vanguard” cannot serve as a shorthand explanation for the experience of revolutionary insurrections in the Third World. While revolutions, such as in China or Cuba, did develop what could be accurately termed a vanguard model, such practice represents an adaptation to the concrete conditions of struggle not some adherence to a prepackaged “Leninism.” These conditions included a peasant revolutionary base—one that revolutionary leaders have assumed possesses less capacity for self-organization than orthodox Western Marxists have assumed of their own working class. Furthermore, many Third World revolutionaries have had to construct full-blown military organizations to engage in prolonged guerrilla warfare. These guerrilla organizations end up seizing and exercising state power.

Finally, the U.S. Left has tended to focus more upon the experiences of successful revolutionaries, rather than its own tradition. However, the Russian, Chinese, Nicaraguan, etc. revolutions have occurred in objective conditions quite different from our own. While I have argued that Lenin shared the common orthodox Marxist background of such figures as Marx, Luxemburg, and Gramsci, the later figures operated in conditions much more similar to our own (developed industrialization, a larger working class, and the relative presence of liberal freedoms). Thus, Lenin does not represent the most relevant intellectual source for understanding this tradition. Marx developed considerable insights into the revolutionary process—insights that have received little attention relative to other aspects of his work. Rosa Luxemburg offered an explanation of the role of the party much more familiar to our own experience, yet few students read her. In addition, U.S. history presents a radical tradition richly relevant to questions of organization and the development of consciousness. This includes not only our own contemporaries of Lenin (found in the pre-1919 U.S. Socialist Party—a democratically structured revolutionary mass party), but also among other experiences such as the populist and civil rights movements. In short, the Western and U.S. Left has its own traditions

steeped in democratic values. I hope that this interpretation of Lenin will help free us to rediscover our own intellectual past.

Department of Government
Cornell University

BIBLIOGRAPHY

All references to Lenin, *Selected Works*, are to V. I. Lenin, *Selected Works in Three Volumes*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970.

Albert, Micheal, and Robin Hahnel. *Socialism Today and Tomorrow*. Boston: South End Press, 1981.

Carlo, Antonio. "Lenin and the Party." *Telos*, no.17 (Fall 1973): 2–40.

Carnoy, Martin. *The State and Political Theory*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984.

Farber, Samuel. *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy*. London: Verso, 1990.

Fetscher, Irving. "Class consciousness." *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Edited by Tom Bottomore. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983.

Friedland, William. *Revolutionary Theory*. Montclair, N.J.: Allanel, Osmun, 1982.

Harding, William. *Lenin's Political Thought*. 2 vols. London: MacMillan, vol. 1, 1977; vol. 2. 1981.

Kelly, John. *Trade Unions and Socialist Politics*. London: Verso, 1988.

Lane, David. "Leninism." *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*. Edited by Tom Bottomore. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1983.

Lenin, V. I. One Step Forward, Two Steps Back: Reply to Rosa Luxemburg. In vol. 7 of *Collected Works* 474–85. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960a.

—. "Preface to the Collection *Twelve Years*". In vol. 13 of *Collected Works* 100–112. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1960b.

—. *What Is To Be Done?* In vol. 1 of *Selected Works*, 119–72. 1970a.

—. *One Step Forward, Two Steps Back*. In vol. 1 of *Selected Works*, 273–454. 1970b.

—. "The Reorganization of the Party." In vol. 1 of *Selected Works*. 564–72. 1970c.

- . “Lecture on the 1905 Revolution.” In vol. 1 of *Selected Works*, 779–94. 1970d.
- . “The Dual Power.” In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 48–50. 1970e.
- . *Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution*. In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 51–82. 1970f.
- . “Lessons of the Crisis.” In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 83–86. 1970g.
- . “Draft Resolution on the Present Political Situation.” In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 231–36. 1970h.
- . *The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It*. In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 237–75. 1970i.
- . “One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution.” In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 276–82. 1970j.
- . *The State and Revolution*. In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 283–376. 1970k.
- . “Marxism and Insurrection.” In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 380–84. 1970l.
- . *Can the Bolsheviks Retain State Power?* In vol. 2 of *Selected Works*, 393–434. 1970m.
- Lewin, Moshe. *Lenin’s Last Struggle*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968.
- . *The Making of the Soviet System*. New York: Pantheon, 1985.
- Lukács, Georg. *Lenin*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1974.
- Luxemburg, Rosa. *Organizational Questions of Russian Social Democracy*. In *Selected Political Writings*, 283–307. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.
- Mandel, Ernest. “Lenin and the Party: Its Relevance for Today.” *International Socialist Review* (Dec. 1970): 27–50.
- Medvedev, Roy. *Leninism and Western Marxism*. London: Verso, 1981.
- Reynolds, David B. “Rediscovering Western Marxism’s Heritage: Rosa Luxemburg and the Role of the Party.” *Research and Society*, no. 3 (1990): 1–34.
- Sirianni, Carmen. *Workers Control and Socialist Democracy*. London: Verso, 1982.
- Thompson, John M. *Revolutionary Russia, 1917*. New York: Scribners, 1981.

From Tragedy to Farce: America Discovers Columbus

Claudia Schaefer

ABSTRACT: The official celebrations of the 1992 Columbian Quincentenary offer a critical perspective from which to review the foundational myths on which the modern world rests, among them progress, prosperity, enlightenment, and democracy. This essay examines the ideological functions which Columbus mythology serves by juxtaposing the cultural, social, and economic relationships among contemporary Spain, the United States, and Spanish America. Using Marx's idea that real historical events are twice-told tales, the first time appearing as "tragedy" and the second as "farce," the essay contextualizes current images of Columbus within the contradictory panorama from 1492 to today's push for a "global village."

In *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, a well-known pamphlet written between the months of December 1851 and March 1852 (also the year of its publication in New York), Marx outlines some of the parameters of his theory of history, taking as the basis for discussion Hegel's ideas on the same subject as well as placing under scrutiny recent events in Europe. But whereas Hegel's point of departure lies in the premise that the historical process is, by nature, idealist—that is to say, it exhibits a constant movement toward perfection, a dialectical process toward some utopian sphere—Marx offers a reinterpretation of this concept (albeit without losing the momentum of the process itself). In the very first sentences of the text he writes, "Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance in world history occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce" (1979, 103).

Although Marx was referring concretely to the rise of the cult to

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

Louis Napoleon in nineteenth-century France, most specifically the weaving of a democratic legend and lore around the nephew of self-declared Emperor Napoleon as a new savior for the people, it occurs to me that this vision of history is intimately connected with the “Columbusmania” of 1992 as currently represented in the popular press, television, and the film industry. Let me clarify that I do *not* pretend to find even the most remote analogy between the publicly declared aspirations or claims of any one *single* contemporary “hero” and the historical figure of Christopher Columbus. Rather, I find myself drawn back to Marx’s essay as a suggestive point of reference from which to view the periodic revival of the specter of Columbus, his survival as one of (in Marx’s words) “the spirits of the past” (104) conjured up in the celebrations of the Quincentennial by groups such as the “Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Convention” in the United States and the “Sociedad Estatal del Quinto Centenario” [Official Quincentennial Celebratory Commission] in Spain. We must ask ourselves just *who* is reviving the ghost of Columbus and in what form(s)? Even more critical, however, is the need to question the ideological purposes these “celebrations” serve in their diverse cultural contexts in Europe, in the United States, and in Spanish America.

The process itself of going from tragedy to farce in Marx’s schema is a question of both context and tone. All of the drama (and egocentric melodrama), calamity, deplorable acts, and real tragedy of the voyage of “discovery” made by Columbus and his crew have been, and continue to be, proved and documented in more and more detail through the “discoveries” made by intellectuals in archives and museums on several continents—the Americas and Europe—and this is the first step (“tragic,” most certainly, in its cultural and economic consequences for the indigenous inhabitants) in the formation of an imperial identity founded on a strongly held and institutionalized belief in the innate primitivism, savagery, and inferiority of the colonized. (As an aside, it is interesting to note at this point in our discussion the correspondence between Columbus’s name in Spanish—*Colón*—and the act of “colonizing,” the proper name of the fundamental aspect governing historical relations between Spain and the Americas over the centuries.) Nevertheless, the Columbus cult, like the cult of the figure of Louis Napoleon cloaked in the robes of his “venerable” uncle to give credit and recognition to his own mission more than a century ago (let us remember it begins with a *coup d’état*), is built on the manipulation of such an identity, what we might refer to as a masquerade, in order to promote a series of ideas, beliefs, traditions, customs, or myths that at present are deemed to be fragmented, fragile, and in dire need of resto-

ration and fortification. All of this revival and anxious conjuring up from the past (see Marx 1979, 104) occurs with little or no examination of the functioning of these myths the first time around.

In other words, Columbus is brought back to life in 1992 in terms of a historical cycle, as the answer to a felt, or feared, demonic evil in the body politic of the United States: the crisis of the family,¹ the loss of a work ethic, the failure of the American dream, the lack of new horizons to “conquer,” or (given the “tarnish” on the patina of a “harmonious” U.S. culture after the Rodney King verdict in California) the need for a compensatory image of shared values. At the same time, his image is used to rejuvenate (by removing it from the context of the “Black Legend” of the Inquisition—from the rotting trash heap of its own history, to paraphrase Marx) and jump-start a European country on the very threshold of a long-desired assimilation into a social community from which it always was excluded.² And instead of revealing (uncovering) or admitting the details of the cultural destruction visited upon native populations—what former Minister of Culture in Nicaragua Ernesto Cardenal terms the “cultural genocide” (1985, 43) of the first tragedy (or “encounter,” “discovery,” “conquest,” or whatever one chooses to call it)—we are presented with the triumph of farce in the official version of the history of the last five centuries: centuries of parody, caricature, and burlesque imitation. With regard to this vision of events, Tomás Borge, intellectual and political theorist of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, alleges that García Márquez was wrong: there have not been *one hundred years* of solitude in Latin America, as the title of his popular novel suggests, but *five hundred years* because of the constant imposition of foreign myths and utopias on the continent since its “discovery” (1992, 101). The cultural myth of Columbus—at the service of the forces of “civilization” and “enlightenment” in their multiple historical incarnations—has turned him into another Count Dracula, a vampire who comes back to life each time the colonizing phantom (or the ghost of empire) needs to renew itself by feeding off living things. It (the myth) is a monster that threatens the societies of the Americas whenever the leaders in turn become aware of the possibility of dissidence or inconformity or the questioning of a supposedly collective national project (such as the Free-Trade Agreement currently being promoted in Mexico), or when these leaders wish to reaffirm (usually by force) social consensus. Let us not fool ourselves: this occurs as much in North America as it does in the south; we “discover” or uncover Columbus (I am tempted to say “unwrap” since in the majority of cases we are literally congregated around public statues and monuments) every time he is felt to be

needed in the coherent narrative of our nation (the narrated story of our origins, destiny, and future; our national genealogy).

On February 14 of this year, Valentine's Day or Friendship Day or Lovers' Day, depending on your cultural perspective, the statue of Columbus in the port of Barcelona was wed to the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor. The fiancée was represented in Spain by a train designed in the latest style by the Spanish artist Miralda; the wedding cake was decorated with a replica of the earth and a model of the Eiffel Tower. The ceremony was celebrated and "consummated" (that is, brought together) by representatives from transnational conglomerates of various countries through the use of television screens, satellite hook-ups, and banks of computers under the neon lights of the quintessentially U.S. city of Las Vegas. Although the official commission for the Quincentennial, established by Congress during Reagan's presidency with a budget of eighty-seven million dollars, did not publicly sanction this spectacle, its aspect of popular ritual embodies the excesses of the national celebrations which promote Columbus as an uncontroversial and universal icon. Within this ideology, the statues of Columbus and Lady Liberty share identical significance and symbolic meaning: the couple is united under the signs of democracy, progress, the conquest of utopian spaces, and the pioneer spirit in search of the promised land. North America's image of Columbus is derived from the American Dream, which it, in turn, supports and sustains one hundred percent.

According to this myth, in the 1992 version of the voyage, Columbus was the first great entrepreneur, an individual whose spirit of adventure dared to confront the last frontier of the known world of his time; he was the first European immigrant to what later would proudly be called the "melting pot" of the United States (or the "continente mestizo" [hybrid continent], if we cast our eyes a bit farther south). This version of the United States—and of Columbus—is being commemorated today with a series of souvenirs available to all (with money) who want to show their support of and participation in this event (see Murray 1992, 50): there are statues of Columbus, sword in hand, taking possession of the newly found land in the name of God and the Spanish monarchs; plastic torches just like the real ones to be used in the cross-country relay race planned by the Sons of Italy for next October; parades filled with local celebrities; movies filmed in the United States and Europe that reveal the "human" side of the heroic character who overcame all obstacles;³ academic fellowships and grants sponsored by the Socialist government of Spain; and a plan in the works by the U.S. government to send three space ships to the "New World" of Mars in

the not-so-distant future, ships whose names will be, one imagines, the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María.

Both of the statues in February's ceremony represent the utopian vision of a nation, but neither of them really suggests the polyglot, multiple cultural nature of the societies that created them. Instead, the statues seem to emphasize—in the grandiose all-encompassing gesture of Columbus's arm extended toward the horizon, and in Liberty's lamp held aloft to illuminate a trail of promises leading to the world of freedom and equality for all those who "become Americans" by leaving their diverse origins behind—the unanimity of a nation's project, be it expansion or religious conversion or Manifest Destiny. The Iberian world from which Columbus came was made up of Arabs, Berbers, Jews, Black Africans, Moslems born in the peninsula, and Christians. But in today's Columbus this panorama is reduced to the Catholic Monarchs and their desire for unification and evangelism; few if any mention the Hispano-Arabic or Judeo-Arabic aspects of that culture, of its philosophical tradition, or even of the maritime advances that contributed to make the "voyage of discovery" a plausible undertaking. The recognition of such diversity or the tolerance of multiple cultures does not correspond ideologically to the desires of empire. When he sets out for parts unknown, Columbus makes a frank declaration that he—in complete allegiance with Queen Isabella—proposes to exclude Jews permanently from whatever lands he lays claim to in the name of the unified thrones of Castile and Aragon. Little did the native peoples know what was in store for them given these precedents, and they knew even less of the dramatic parallel between the surrender of Boabdil (the last Caliph of the kingdom of Granada) and that of Moctezuma II in the land of the *mexica* that same year. Accused of not "being men" when confronted by the invading forces, their subjects reject being "handed over" (we may note that neither group *ever* uses the word "encounter," by the way), and they respond to the actions of their defeated leaders in terms of gender: each is exhorted, the first by his citizens and the second by his mother, to weep like a woman for what he could not defend like a man (see Carew 1992, 4; León-Portilla 1990).

The statue of Columbus suggests in addition all the social, cultural, and economic apparatus used first to establish and then to maintain the empire. Take for example the first Inquisitor General of Spain, confessor of the Catholic Monarchs, defender of the expulsion of Jews, Moslems, and gypsies from the Iberian peninsula, and the primary vehicle for the breaking up of the coexistence of ethnic communities therein. Fray Tomás de Torquemada embodies a historical past filled with intolerance whose intransigent spirit has survived into the twenti-

eth century in the form of fascism, racism, and xenophobia (an individual or collective fear and loathing of those who represent cultures different from or “foreign to” one’s own). Torquemada’s Inquisition implemented an apparatus of systematic repression and a fundamental instrument for the creation of an authoritarian state exercising physical and psychological control over a terrorized population. As if forced conversion were not enough, the next step was to separate and isolate the sources of cultural contamination, those groups identified as dangerous and not conforming to homogeneous standards of conduct or values. In modern times, vestiges and remnants of this exclusionary politics exist, from the urban slums (as much north of the Rio Grande as south of the Río Bravo) to the barbed wire of disputed borders, and from the boycotts or economic actions of retaliation against Cuba or until recently against Nicaragua to the genocide of indigenous tribes of the Amazon area whose land is “discovered” and appropriated for the grazing of cattle destined to be used as sources of fast-food hamburgers. Columbus himself does not survive, but the inquisitorial mentality that demonizes the “foreign” or “different” does.⁴ This mentality informs and impregnates the acts of torture committed in the name of the health of the nation in the prisons of Latin America; it also gave rise to McCarthyism and the witch hunts of the 1950s. And these are just two examples of intolerance. So where is the culturally democratic hybrid? Do we really wish to commemorate the historical tragedy with the farce of today? Is a synthesis—a hybridizing—a mere compendium of already-existing elements in a perpetually static relationship, or is it more? Perhaps the Mexican humanist scholar Alfonso Reyes approaches the same question in a much more elegant manner when he suggests the following in an essay entitled “Notes on American Intelligence”: “H₂O is not only a union of hydrogen and oxygen; it is, moreover, water” (cited in Fernández Retamar 1989, 37). How *does* one go from the basic elements to the dynamic process that is cultural history? Just what is the glue that keeps the whole community together?

Discovering Columbus again today therefore becomes a metaphor for the triumph of progress (a specific *type* of progress, of course) and of modernity (identified with “developed” countries), the celebration of what Spain’s dictator Francisco Franco (another “specter of history”), who proclaimed his identification with an earlier era in the guise of a knight of the Crusades, created as “The Day of the Race” [El día de la raza] (there is no doubt as to which race he meant, I imagine) and what in today’s democratic Spain is called “The Day of the Spanish World” [El día de la Hispanidad]. Is there really such a big difference underlying this superficial change of title? “The Day of the Spanish World”

glorifies a homogeneous cultural totality of nations sharing what official Spanish government propaganda terms “a single language and culture in common” under the *fiat* of King Juan Carlos to maintain their collective gaze on the future and not on the past. The reason is clear since who—if not the vanquished and the colonized, of course—would voluntarily turn their gaze backward to witness the destruction of the mental and spiritual economy of the indigenous cultures (the tragic destruction of their systems of belief and cosmovisions), deeds that cannot and should not be reconciled with heroic images when we are now faced with formation of new hegemonies such as the European Community or the Americas Trade Agreement. Therefore, the metaphorical figure of Columbus has two countenances (in spite of official attempts to cover one). The first faces the medieval Spanish world, whose incipient imperial voice yearns to establish itself once and for all in history in the name of the triumph of humanity and enlightenment over barbarism (in the name of *all* humanity, not just a portion of it). The second face of Columbus looks toward modernity, which is seen as a complete and inclusive whole united in the advantages and opportunities it offers its citizens, one single community or global village whose inhabitants—it is supposed—share the same vision of history. The two countenances of Columbus are tragedy and farce, respectively.

In a special issue of the publication *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* dated April 1 of this year, an issue dedicated entirely to “the Spanish Americas” (a popular topic of late), there appears an article by Samuel Francis entitled “The Jungle of Empire.” In this piece Francis discusses the proposals of Vilfredo Pareto, the Italian economist and sociologist whose theories later influenced the fascists, to divide society into two elite classes (Class I and Class II) vying for control over a natural social hierarchy. When Class I dominates there is “innovation and manipulation,” “cultural brilliance,” and “intellectual and artistic expression,” while the predominance of Class II yields “unimaginative” results, a persistence of “appeals to group solidarity” and a reliance on the use of force and the most visible exercise of power to resolve issues and impose responses to crises. The rise and fall of these alternating agendas and social visions, in particular the brutal force frequently exercised by members of the Class II typology, have produced as result Francis considers exciting literary works whose greatest value is that “they###offer a lot of entertainment.” Francis bitterly laments the fact that nowadays the boring “foxes” of Class I, with their manipulative managerial skills, prevail and that there are no longer such swashbuckling empires based on the brute force of the “lions.”

One of the redeeming features of imperialism is that it makes for great adventure stories.###Empires offer all the standard fare of blood, guts, intrigue, romance, and action: villains plotting to overthrow civilization, heroes striving to protect it, crumbling cultures and uncharted jungles that house mystery, danger, and immense rewards for those bold enough to seize them.###It is precisely because contemporary globalism is so uninspiring and because its power is not acquired through the combined exertions of muscle, bone, and brain that it produces few compelling tales. (1992, 11)

What are the indispensable elements for “entertaining” the reader avid to resuscitate the specter of imperialism, then? In brief, they are narratives of adventure and action, violence, intrigue, romance, villainous characters pitted against heroic ones, and mysterious jungles that hide incalculable and almost unimaginable riches for those with sufficient audacity and courage to go in and take them. Does not this language sound remotely like that of Admiral Columbus? Or perhaps it reminds us more of the letters (*Cartas de Relación*) of Hernán Cortés? Can one not hear echoing in these words a nostalgic lament for the loss of the possibility of being like Robinson Crusoe in the world of the 1990s, someone who can “take possession” of an island or an “uncharted jungle” (one not *yet* on any map), with the same control over language, geography, and the indigenous inhabitants as Crusoe exercises over Friday? (We should remember as well that Friday was baptized with the name of the day marking Crusoe’s arrival, to signal the symbolic beginning of history.) In other words, this is the suffering of the loss of the dream of being “the first” in virgin territory (see Naipaul 1991, 659); and if I may be permitted the reference to Star Trek, this is also the arrogance of living only to go “where no man has gone before.”

With the drastic reduction of geographic distances effected by technological access to the last corners of the world, the borders between the “known” and the “unknown” have become more problematic. I do not mean to suggest in the least that a perception of the “strangeness” (perhaps akin to the “estranged” sense of the “uncanny”?) of “others” has ceased to exist for “us.” But rather than finding “them” distant or remote—literally far away, removed from all maps and documentation—“they” are right here at home, among us, on our nearest borders, too close for comfort. (How else are we to understand the question posed by Enrique Fernández [1992] to newspaper readers in his article about the cultural stereotypes of Hispanics in the United States media if not in terms of two cultures that, like oil and water, can never mix. He asks, “Is Hispanic culture just too hot to cross over into

the American mainstream?" He later responds in the affirmative: even with a rapidly growing population of Hispanics in the United States, "Latin culture remains [for the Anglo] a culture of otherness.") So an imagined distance is constructed between one and the other: some insist on erecting and defending barriers between "different" cultural groups (although as potential market consumers of our merchandise this is not so); some seek in the culture of the "other" a primitiveness or exoticism which is then used to confirm one's own culture's superiority or modernity (measured in terms of the quantity of McDonald's or Pizza Huts in a given city, or how many television programs in English flash across the screen daily); some take refuge in an egoism not far removed from that demonstrated by Columbus, interested only in his own aggrandizement and exercise of authority; and some—like the Genoese sailor himself obsessed with the narratives of Marco Polo about the Orient for their superabundance of luxurious and exotic details about, for example, "dates, pistachios, and apples of Paradise" (Gil 1987, 29)—are bent on confirming in the real social geography of Latin America the mythic and fantastic geographies presented in literary texts. The English writer Salman Rushdie, for instance, alleges that in the poverty of Matagalpa, Nicaragua (with its ice cream stands and toy stores devoid of any merchandise) the magical realism of García Márquez is obviously alive and well (75). On the other hand, some affirm the pure absence of culture—the cultural void or zero degree of culture witnessed by Joan Didion (1983) during her visit to Central America—when they no longer recognize their place (they lose their sense of stable or permanent identity) in what they encounter, and they maintain the urgent need to destroy (in 1492) or to homogenize (in 1992) what threatens them by its "difference." "Others" are invisible, they are outside history, until we see ourselves in them (or we see our *distance* from them); as Columbus writes in the diary of his first voyage on 16 December 1492: "Besides, the Indians [being brought back on board the ship as exotic specimens], and even their king himself, had no beliefs whatsoever." Inasmuch as the "Indians" were not Christians,

this is the equivalent of stating the proof of a pure *absence*, one which had to be filled with the pure *presence* of European culture (just as the laws of nature, we are all taught, tend to fill a vacuum). There is no doubt that the history of Columbus is a monologue (see Naipaul 1991, 659)—not a conversation but one lone voice directed at others who are perceived as mute and passive recipients; no interest whatsoever is shown in what the “others” could possibly contribute to a real democratic *mestizaje* (hybrid/mixture)—something perhaps hardly possible in these particular historical circumstances.

The most interesting aspect of Samuel Francis’s lament is that in reality imperialism has *not* disappeared; it has merely altered its appearance, much like a chameleon adapting to a hostile environment. Instead of overt bloody wars or brutal repression (the “blood, guts, intrigue, and romance” he finds lacking in adventure narratives), although one might well argue against *their* disappearance as well, everything depends today on the art of manipulation and the conquest of public opinion by means of an administrative system, publicity and propaganda, communication networks, mass spectacles, and the inertia of consumption (that is, the constant “discovery” of new products to acquire). With good reason Francis states that there are no longer heroic adventures to tell since today’s protagonists are corporations or anonymous investors of capital, leaving the individual in search of the “new” or the “untouched” filled with the romanticized impact of Columbus’s revived image. The reader does not feel the same effect, for example, when opening a magazine to find the story of how the Spanish carrier Iberia “discovers America” (Guerrero 1992, 54) in order to become, beginning in 1992, the first non-U.S. airline in the world with a center of operations in Miami, a city paradoxically described as “the capital of Latin America.”

According to the *New York Times*, the “discoveries” of today revolve around the food and rhythms of Latin America to contribute new and innovative elements to the culinary and musical democracy of the United States, a democracy which devours its constituents but absorbs their edibles into a hybrid “melting pot” of sorts called a “panethnic amalgam” of cultures by some (O’Neill 1992). This process of searching for novelties (in other words, “discovering” tastes and flavors already recognized and used in other lands) is described in dramatic terms (or maybe they belong yet again to the realm of farce) as “the largest revolution in eating habits since Columbus brought the two hemispheres together” (Sokolov, cited in O’Neill 1992).

In the tragic version of the history of 1492 human flesh took the

place of the gold that never appeared in quantities sufficient to satisfy the appetites of the European conquerors; five hundred years later the humanity of the current inhabitants of the “other” Americas is being replaced with the consumption of *salsa* (be it in music or in food), as if in this manner one could return to the utopian adventure of exploring “the riches hidden in exotic jungles,” ready and available for the daring and courageous palate. Perhaps we have finally come full circle and discovered the spices so coveted by Columbus and his men (or by their myth, at least). Perhaps the hunger for empire is being revived in yet another form. Or perhaps, along with the popular singer and current candidate for the presidency of Panama, Rubén Blades, we must keep on “Buscando América” [Searching for America], an America kidnapped by a tragic event of history and threatened by “dictatorships and shadows” (as the lyrics of this song suggest) as well as by the farce of the Quincentennial. Just maybe the alternative ceremonies—planned by indigenous and pan-American cultural organizations—are as good a place as any to begin this search to turn the monologue into a conversation.

*Department of Foreign Languages, Literature, and Linguistics
University of Rochester*

NOTES

1. In George Bush’s recent foray into the burned-out shell of South Central Los Angeles, for instance, the President remarked not on the racial and class issues igniting such violence but on the “tragedy” of an experience so “unfamiliar” to him, concluding that what the country needs is “to bring the family [back] together, the American family” (Rosenthal 1992). National celebrations thus become the pretext for promoting/imposing “universal” values.

2. A clear example of Spain’s desire to “modernize” itself into the community of European economies can be found in EXPO ’92, a world’s fair intended to launch Spain into the future by developing Seville and its environs into the best copy of California’s Silicon Valley possible (see Wagman 1992, 12).

3. One of the scheduled films will be directed by Greek-American George Pan Cosmatos, with Timothy Dalton (of 007 fame) as Columbus; a second film is being prepared by Ridley Scott with Gérard Depardieu in the central role. Both are due in theaters by fall 1992. Spanish entrepreneurs have already produced a costly opera entitled “Cristóbal Colón” whose financing came from the official government commission. Not to be left out, Japan and Italy have united

with Portugal and the United States to create a series of animated cartoons for television based on "Columbus and the Era of Discovery" (see Cristóbal and Samper 1991/1992, 16).

4. In an excellent recent article on the survivals of this mentality of persecution, Judith Laikin Elkin covers both historical and contemporary instances of racism in Latin America, including the use of anti-Semitic stereotypes during the "dirty war" in Argentina to assign blame for political and economic troubles. She writes:

In an eerie replay of the Inquisition, the old charge of being a Jew and therefore a subversive was levelled against numerous people, the most famous of whom was journalist Jacobo Timmerman. If the generals did not burn anyone at the stake, they did use instruments of torture identical to those used by the Inquisition against suspected subversives, including Jews who constituted a suspect category in themselves. (1992, 5–6)

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Borge, Tomás. "The Reality of Latin America." *Race & Class* 33, no. 3 (Jan.-Mar. 1992): 96–102.
- Cardenal, Ernesto. "Democratization of Culture in Nicaragua." In *Cultures in Contention*, edited by Douglas Kahn and Diane Neumaier, 43–49. Seattle: Real Comet Press, 1985.
- Carew, Jan. "The End of Moorish Enlightenment and the Beginning of the Columbian Era." *Race & Class* 33, no. 3 (Jan.-Mar. 1992): 3–16.
- Colón, Cristóbal. *Los cuatro viajes. Testamento*. Edited by Consuelo Varela. Madrid: Alianza, 1986.
- Cristóbal, Ramiro, and Daniel Samper. "Cristóbal Colón: un producto de consumo." *Lo mejor* 3, no. 22 (Dec. 1991/Jan. 1992): 16–17.
- Didion, Joan. *Salvador*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983.
- Elkin, Judith Laikin. "Quincentenary: Colonial Legacy of Anti-Semitism." *Report on the Americas (NACLA)* 25, no. 4 (Feb. 1992): 4–7.
- Fernández, Enrique. "Spitfires, Latin Lovers, Mambo Kings." *The New York Times*, 19 Apr. 1992. Arts and Leisure 1, 30.
- Fernández Retamar, Roberto. *Caliban and Other Essays*. Translated by Edward Baker. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1989.

- Francis, Samuel. "Principalities and Powers: The Jungle of Empire." *Chronicles: A Magazine of American Culture* (Apr. 1992): 11–13.
- Gil, Juan, ed. *El libro de Marco Polo anotado por Colón*. Madrid: Alianza, 1987.
- Guerrero, Teodoro. "Iberia descubre América." *Cambio* 16, no. 1061 (23 Mar. 1992): 54–55.
- León-Portilla, Miguel, ed. *The Broken Spears*. Boston: Beacon, 1990.
- Márquez, García. *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. New York: Avon, 1976.
- Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*. In vol. 11 of *Karl Marx, Frederick Engels: Collected Works*, 99–197. New York: International Publishers, 1979.
- Murray, Nancy. "Columbus and the USA: From Mythology to Ideology." *Race & Class* 33, no. 3 (Jan.–Mar. 1992): 49–65.
- Naipaul, V. S. "Columbus and Crusoe." In *The Oxford Book of Essays*, edited by John Gross, 656–59. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991.
- O'Neill, Molly. "New Mainstream: Hot Dogs, Apple Pie, and Salsa." *New York Times*, 11 Mar. 1992. The Living Section.
- Rosenthal, Andrew. "Bush Finds 'Horror' on Los Angeles Tour: He Promises to Unite 'Family' of America." *New York Times*, 8 May 1992.
- Rushdie, Salman. *The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey*. New York: Penguin, 1988.
- Wagman, Dan. "Spanish Socialists Set Their Sights on Fair Mirage." *Guardian* (New York), 6 May 1992, 12.

REPLACES AD PAGE.

Does Physics Reinforce Idealism?

Anguel S. Stefanov

ABSTRACT: Why is quantum theory baneful to realism? The most widespread factor is that it is at odds with causality. There are, however, two other principal reasons. The first involves the methodological commitments of the standard interpretation of quantum mechanics. The other reason relies on Bell's theorem, which denies the possibility of local hidden variables. Both of these reasons are considered and the possibility of a nonclassical model of the quantum object is examined. The question in the title is then answered in the negative.

In the prolonged struggle between the main philosophical trends in the history of human thought—materialism and idealism—proponents of both sides often resort to arguments taken from the natural sciences. They have done this most deliberately during the last three centuries, when European science became a respectable enterprise and the flirtation with it could be of benefit to the philosopher. Thus, French materialism was nourished by natural science. Natural science then continuously engendered an antidogmatic, antireligious, materialistic worldview, shared since then by the majority of natural scientists. At the end of the nineteenth century, things changed with the new discoveries in physics that still lacked an adequate interpretation. Thus, e.g., Hermann Cohen wrote in 1896 in the foreword of the fifth edition of Friedrich Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus* [History of Materialism] that the new physics was impregnated with idealism, that the theory of electricity was destined to establish the greatest revolution in the understanding of matter, and that acceptance of the transformation of matter into force would lead to the victory of idealism (Lange 1896, xxix). Indeed, if electricity is some kind of motion and if the material entity that moves could not be found, then there is a motion without

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

matter; matter is transformed into force. Unfortunately, this thesis could only be sustained for a short time, since the elementary carrier of electric charge, the electron, was discovered by J. J. Thomson only a year later.

Idealism also gained at that time from Ostwald's energetism, formulated as a more general viewpoint on the basis of a variety of physical phenomena. But this was a philosophical attempt to re-create idealism, rather than a scientific conviction about the dematerialization of physical processes. Such an exaggeration could be no lasting challenge to materialism.

After 1926, the situation changed fundamentally owing to the appearance of the new theory of the microworld—quantum mechanics. A persistent, though not commonly accepted, assertion is that "*quantum mechanics has been the bane of realism for more than half a century*" (Brown 1985, 149—emphasis mine). If this is true, then the answer to the question in the title should be a positive one. My aim in this paper is to show that the negative answer is to be preferred.

The complexity of the problem is certainly reflected in the unceasing discussions ranging over the entire spectrum of philosophical schools, trends, and subtrends, from solipsism and subjective idealism to naive realism and mechanistic materialism. The discussions have never petered out, and today they have become even more animated.

The quantum-mechanical descriptions reveal a strange world of microphenomena not conforming to our ordinary image of a demarcated and deterministic reality. Richard Feynman said that nobody understands quantum mechanics; Daniel Greenberger considered quantum mechanics to be magic. Similar statements are no more than honest confessions about the difficulties our creative imagination encounters in rationalizing the quantum formalism and the associated experimental evidence. The situation in regard to the unfathomable quantum mechanics is somewhat analogous to that at the end of the last century, when the flow of electricity in a conductor was considered a victory of idealism because the underlying material process had not yet been discovered.

Why has quantum mechanics been the bane of realism since the time of its formulation? Perhaps the most widespread factor is that quantum mechanics is at odds with causality. If the ideal of a causal account is discarded, then the score is undoubtedly changed in favor of antirealism. Let us see what arguments are made for such a change.

According to John von Neumann, quantum theory is found to be in logical contradiction with causality; today there is neither reason nor

excuse for speaking about causality in nature (1955; Russian translation 1964, 243). The buttress of such a definite view may be nothing else than the theorem known under his name stating that no quantum ensembles without dispersion exist. (The dispersion of a statistical variable, a physical quantity in this case, is the average value of the square of its deviation from its average value.) This is very important for the interpretation of Heisenberg's uncertainty relations, which are often pointed to as a clear example of the indeterministic character of quantum theory.

If we cannot measure and cannot know simultaneously the values of the momentum and the position of a quantum particle, say an electron, then, according to the popular argument, we can have no causal description of the history of the electron's motion.

At least two counterarguments can be made against such a conclusion.

The first springs from a logically consistent analysis of Heisenberg's uncertainty relations. They are often interpreted as establishing a relationship between intervals of two mutually incommensurable physical quantities such as the position and the momentum of the electron. If we know the position more precisely, then the momentum is known with less precision, and vice versa. What really follows with certainty from the *theory* of quantum mechanics is not such an uncertainty relation, but a relation between the square roots of the dispersions of these quantities, that is, not a relation between some indeterminate intervals of the quantities themselves. The dispersion of a quantity is a purely statistical concept. That is why Heisenberg's relations must also be given statistical meaning. *The presence of the inevitable dispersion should not be perceived as the absence of causality.*

The second counterargument is based on the very *notion of the state of an object*. In the domain of classical mechanics, the state of a material object is characterized by the set of its coordinates and the components of its momentum vector. These variables can be unproblematically assigned values simultaneously; a change in the spatial motion of the object is completely described by the changes in these variables. If we know the state of a system (which may, of course, consist of more than one object) at a given initial instant of time and if we know the forces acting on it, then we can calculate its state at any other instant as well.

The state of the quantum-mechanical object is not represented by the same set of variables, so its "trajectory" can never be known. Does it follow, however, that the motion of the electron is indeterminate in the sense that something "happens" to its state? The answer would be

“yes” if we assume that by “state” we always mean the classical description. If, however, we consider “state” to be a broader concept and regard the classical-mechanical state as only a representation of it, then the answer to the question can quite naturally be “no.” The dynamics of an electron is represented by an equation of a type different from the differential equations of classical physics. This equation is Schrödinger’s equation, the solution of which describes the *state* of the electron as it evolves in time. In relation to this state, the same normal determination between states holds true: if we know the state of the electron at a given instant, then we are able to determine its state at any future instant as well. Here again, from this point of view, the motion of the electron can hardly be characterized as acausal.

There are two other principal reasons for holding the view that quantum mechanics is baneful to realism. The first is the *identification of the theory with a definite interpretation*, the so-called Copenhagen interpretation, bearing a strong antirealist flavor; the second relies on *Bell’s theorem*, which denies the possibility of hidden variables. I shall now discuss both.

The identification of quantum mechanics with its Copenhagen interpretation is often taken to be so natural a step that almost nobody is uncomfortable with the contention that a scientific theory directly contradicts a philosophical position, although in other situations such a methodological difficulty would immediately raise questions. This state of affairs is common even to some philosophers associated with the dialectical-materialist tradition who in other cases would reluctantly, if at all, relinquish materialist assumptions. It must be accepted, writes such an author, that “the contradictions between quantum mechanics and materialist philosophy are quite natural at the given historical stage” (Petrov 1988, 42). It must be accepted, indeed, if by “quantum mechanics” we understand the familiar mathematical formalism entrenched in the Copenhagen-school interpretation (minor differences among the proponents of that interpretation not being important for this discussion). The three principal tenets of the Copenhagen interpretation that conflict with materialism can be summarized as follows:

(1) The electron (or at least its properties) is not a part of a really existing objective world. Its properties are created by measurement.¹

(2) The reduction of the wave function (the state function of the electron) can take place only through the active role of a conscious observer; minds collapse the wave functions (von Neumann 1964; Wigner 1970).

(3) A space-time theoretic model of the electron is impossible because the quantum particle is inseparable as an independent reality from the agencies of observation (Bohr's so-called *quantum postulate*) and because of the complementarity condition concerning space-time coordination and the claim of causality (Bohr 1928, 580–90; Bohr 1958, 39–40).

Tenet (1) is apparently an explicitly subjectivist thesis. It is as much a part of quantum mechanics itself as the Berkeleian thesis giving significance to our perceptions only is a part of classical physics. If the Berkeleian interpretation is not the dominant paradigm for classical physics, why must we automatically incorporate the Copenhagen interpretation (1) as a paradigm for quantum mechanics? Even if (1) were to prove to be true one day, we should not precipitously adopt it without looking for a more realistic alternative, especially since it is pregnant with paradoxes. According to (1), for example, the electric charges of atomic particles will not have an existence independent of the interaction with a conscious observer; if so, then the wall behind me could not exist when somebody is not doing an experiment with it (or at least is looking at it), since without electrical charges the atoms would disintegrate.

Tenet (2) is linked to (1) insofar as it provides an explanation for the creation of the microproperties by the observer. When the wave function of the electron undergoes reduction, the electron passes out of its previous superposition of states and is found to be in one definite state, corresponding to a definite observable quantity. But (2) can hardly be called an arguable explanation. No proponent of (2) has yet explained *how* the mind of a conscious subject can reduce the superposition to a single state—at least two problems remain to be solved: the instantaneous collapse of the wave function and the paradox of Schrödinger's cat.² A materialist alternative rejecting (3) can deal with the difficulties associated with (1) and (2).

Tenet (3) has never been proved theoretically, remaining simply a prejudice in the form of a natural presumption. Its plausibility has been recently enhanced by experimental tests of Bell's theorem, casting a shadow of doubt over the hope that quantum mechanics could be completed as a theory through the invention of local hidden variables. Bell (1964) considered a thought experiment with a pair of spin one-half particles prepared in the singlet spin state and moving freely in opposite directions. Measurements by Stern-Gerlach magnets specify the spin component of each particle along previously fixed orientations. The gist of Bell's theorem is that the expectation value of the product

of the results of the two measurements in the case of the introduction of a (hidden) parameter does not equal the quantum-mechanical expectation value. Bell's own conclusion is as follows: "In a theory in which parameters are added to quantum mechanics to determine the results of individual measurements, without changing the statistical predictions, there must be a mechanism whereby the setting of one measuring device can influence the reading of another instrument, however remote. Moreover, the signal involved must propagate instantaneously, so that such a theory could not be Lorentz invariant" (199).

Bell's theorem and the "spooky actions at a distance," as Einstein called the instantaneous correlations, are ostensibly in full agreement with (3). In 1976, Alain Aspect proposed an experiment with polarized photons (1976). The experiment was carried out in 1981 and 1982 and the results were in conformity with the predictions of quantum mechanics. This was said to imply the rejection of separate hidden-variable theories. More recent papers, however, have claimed that the scope of Bell's theorem is restricted to a definite class of hidden-variable theories (see, e.g., Klotz 1988) and that a separable hidden-variable theory can account for the results of the experiments of Aspect et al. (Bhave 1986). I shall not deal with these claims here, but choose a direct way of criticism.

The most direct way to criticize a thesis denying the possibility of constructing a model is simply *to propose* such a model. In other words, the rejection of (3) is implied by the construction of a space-time theoretic model of the electron. The model I have in mind does not rely on local hidden variables, so that Bell's theorem is naturally circumvented, but not the "spooky actions at a distance," which must be explained by the model. This explanation is based on the *firm materialist assumption* that there is something in the outer objective world, a real entity, registered by the observer as a quantum particle. Its properties are *revealed*, but *not created* through measurements.

The electron is grasped as a nonlocal, but localizable, structured entity, represented by a generation of "particles" called quantons. The model is introduced in the four-dimensional space-time of the theory of relativity. The quanton generation for a free electron is uniformly distributed over the whole space. Otherwise, the usual wave function determined by the boundary conditions describes the quanton generation. Thus, a measuring instrument is represented as a trap such that if a quanton appears in it, all the other quantons from the generation fall into the same volume as well. A more detailed and formal picture of this theoretic model is given elsewhere (Anastassov and Stefanov

1986). This model explains the instantaneous quantum effects like the reduction of the wave function, the instantaneous correlations between measurements on remote quantum particles, and other quantum-mechanical paradoxes that have still remained unexplained. As might already be clear, the reduction of the wave function is no longer interpreted as an acausal event engendered by the mind of the observer, but as a shift of the boundary conditions over the volume of the detector so that a change occurs in the distribution of the generation of quantons of the quantum particle. Correlated particles have correlated generations. Independently of the mutual distances between the spatial regions in which measurements are performed over previously correlated quantum particles, a change in one generation of quantons is equivalent to the corresponding change in the other.

This model implies no subjective or idealist assumptions and surmounts the difficulties arising from the antirealist tradition. For this reason, I answer the question in the title in the negative.

*Institute of Philosophical Sciences
Sofia, Bulgaria*

NOTES

1. See, e.g., Bohr 1936, 279; Frank 1936, 308; Heisenberg 1947, 86.
2. See Brown 1985 for a discussion of this paradox.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anastassov, A., and Anguel S. Stefanov. "On the Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics: Complementarity and Beyond." In *Struktur und Dynamik wissenschaftlicher Theorien*, edited by Christfried Tögel, 65–90. Frankfurt on Main: Peter Lang, 1986.
- Aspect, Alain. "Proposed Experiment to Test the Nonseparability of Quantum Mechanics." *Physical Review D* 14 (1976): 1944–51.
- Aspect, Alain, Philippe Grangier, and Gérard Roger. "Experimental Tests of Realistic Local Theories via Bell's Theorem." *Physical Review Letters* 47 (1981): 460–63.

- . “Experimental Realization of Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen-Bohm Gedankenexperiment: A New Violation of Bell’s Inequalities.” *Physical Review Letters* 49 (1982): 91–101.
- Aspect, Alain, Jean Dalibard, and Gérard Roger. “Experimental Test of Bell’s Inequalities Using Time-Varying Analyzers.” *Physical Review Letters* 49 (1982): 1804–7.
- Bell, J. S. “On the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen Paradox.” *Physics* 1 (1964): 195–200.
- Bhave, S. V. “Separable Hidden Variables Theory to Explain the Einstein-Podolsky-Rosen Paradox.” *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 37 (1986): 467–75.
- Bohr, Niels. “Kausalität und Komplementarität.” *Erkenntnis* 6 (1936): 293–303.
- . “The Quantum Postulate and the Recent Development of Atomic Theory.” *Nature, Suppl.* 121 (1928): 580–90.
- . “Discussion with Einstein on Epistemological Problems in Atomic Physics.” In *Atomic Physics and Human Knowledge*, by Niels Bohr, 32–66. New York: Wiley, 1958.
- Brown, James R. “Von Neumann and the Anti-Realists.” *Erkenntnis* 23 (1985): 149–59.
- Frank, Philipp. “Philosophische Deutungen und Mißdeutungen der Quantentheorie.” *Erkenntnis* 6 (1936): 303–17.
- Heisenberg, Werner. *Wandlungen in den Grundlagen der Naturwissenschaften*. Zurich: 1947.
- Klotz, A. H. “On the Nature of Quantum Mechanics.” *Synthesis* 77 (1988): 139–93.
- Lange, Friedrich A. *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*. Leipzig: Baedeker, 1986.
- Petrov, S. “A Spectrum of Possible Interpretations of Alternatives to Quantum Mechanics.” *Filosofskie nauki*, no. 10 (1988) [in Russian].
- Von Neumann, John. *Mathematical Foundations of Quantum Mechanics*. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1955.
- Wigner, Eugene P. *Symmetries and Reflections*. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1970.

Changes in the Rate of Profit in the Postwar U.S. Manufacturing Sector

Rudy Fichtenbaum

ABSTRACT: This study examines the rate of profit for the U.S. manufacturing sector since World War II. In addition to measuring the rate of profit, this paper also examines the impact of turnover of capital on the rate of profit. One of the major findings is that there has not been a secular decline in the manufacturing rate of profit. Rather the rate of profit has exhibited what might be termed intermediate cycles. This finding reveals one of the fundamental insights of Marx that crises are not permanent but rather periods in which contradictions are forcibly resolved, thereby setting the stage for new crises.

Introduction

In recent years there have been numerous studies of the rate of profit both by mainstream and by radical economists. Most, although not all, economists agree that a significant decline in the rate of profit began in the mid-1960s (for an exception see Wolff 1979). Mainstream economists and some radical economists argue that the decline in the rate of profit can be attributed to excessive growth in wages and a slowdown in productivity growth (Weisskopf 1979; Holland and Myers 1984; Feldstein and Summers 1977).

More recently, Dumenil, Glick, and Rangel (1987); Michl (1988); and Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf (1989) studied the rate of profit through the mid-1980s. Their studies show a decline in the rate of profit beginning in 1966, continuing until about 1982, and then an anemic recovery. Other radical economists have argued that the decline in the rate of profit was due to the rise in the organic composition of

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

capital, and again their studies show only a slight recovery in the rate of profit after 1982 (Shaikh 1987; Moseley 1987). One exception was Perlo (1987), who argued that there has been an upward trend in the rate of profit throughout the postwar period.

For Marxists and other radicals the decline in the rate of profit has been the major factor in explaining the economic crisis in the 1970s and early part of the 1980s. The fact that the rate of profit has shown a secular decline led most to believe that the crisis would continue throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s (Moseley 1987; Bowles, Gordon, and Weisskopf 1989).

The purpose of this paper is to present new evidence on the rate of profit in the postwar period. Unlike previous studies, this paper will not only measure the rate of profit but also examine the impact of the turnover of capital on the rate of profit. In particular, this paper will argue that there has not been a secular decline in the rate of profit in the postwar period. Rather, in two periods the rate of profit has shown a secular increase and in one period it exhibited a secular decline. The next section will present estimates of the rate of profit in the manufacturing sector for the U.S. economy. In the following section, changes in the rate of surplus value, the organic composition of capital, and the turnover of capital will be examined in order to explain the underlying movements in the rate of profit. In another section the differences in real wages, productivity, and the capital-labor ratio will be examined and their relationship to the trends in the rate of profit in the postwar period will be discussed. Finally, the paper will conclude with a discussion of the implications of the movements in the rate of profit for understanding the process of capitalist accumulation.

Measuring the rate of profit

In order to define the rate of profit we begin by examining the circuit of capital. In the first stage the capitalist converts a sum of money capital into productive capital, which takes the form of labor power and means of production ($M - C$). In the second stage, the commodities purchased by the capitalist are put to work and engage in the process of production. In the third stage, the mass of commodities that have been produced must be returned to the market and sold so that the process can begin anew: $C' - M'$.

Marx describes this process in the following manner:

$$M - C \dots P \dots C' - M',$$

where the dots indicate that the process of circulation has been interrupted (1967, 2:23). The interruption before the completion of the production is reflected in production time, which is ultimately deter-

mined by technological factors (3:70). The interruption after the process of production is reflected in circulation time, which, in the long run, depends on improved transportation and communication and, in the short run (over the course of the business cycle), on the ability to sell or realize the commodities produced (1967, 2:317).

The amount of time involved in production and circulation determines the turnover of capital, that is the number of times during a given period that a particular outlay of capital is needed to create a certain value (1967, 2:155, 248). Thus, Marx defines the annual rate of profit in its simplest form as follows:

$$r = s/(C + V), \quad (1)$$

where s is the flow of surplus value produced in a year, C is the stock of constant capital, and V is a wage-fund also (measured as stock), i.e., the outlay necessary to complete one circuit of production (1967, 3:70–76).

Most recent studies of the rate of profit attempt to measure the rate of profit for the economy as a whole. In this study, however, the rate of profit is estimated only for the manufacturing sector. The main reason for concentrating on the manufacturing sector is that data on both stocks and flows of capital are not available for the economy as a whole, but are available for the manufacturing sector.¹

To measure s , the flow of surplus value produced in a year, we take value added in manufacturing, as reported in the *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, and subtract from it depreciation, measured at current cost, as reported in *Fixed Reproducible Tangible Assets 1925–85*, and the cost of hiring production workers. The cost of hiring production workers includes wages of production workers and an estimate of fringe benefit costs. Specifically, the cost of hiring production workers was calculated by multiplying the wages of production workers, as reported in the *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, by the ratio of total compensation of employees to wages of employees in manufacturing, as reported in the *National Income and Product Accounts* (NIPA). The data in the NIPA cannot be broken down into production and nonproduction employees and therefore cannot be used directly. However, under the assumption that the ratio of fringe benefits to wages for production and nonproduction workers is the same, then this ratio can be used to estimate the cost of fringe benefits of production workers.

To measure C we start with the net capital stock valued at current cost, as reported in *Fixed Reproducible Tangible Assets 1925–85* and the *Survey of Current Business*. Net capital stock is the gross capital

stock minus accumulated depreciation and represents the amount of money the capitalist has tied up in fixed capital at a given time. To this are added the inventories of materials.

Inventories of work in process and inventories of finished products have three components: (1) direct materials, (2) direct labor, and (3) factory overhead, which includes wages for factory supervision, taxes, insurance, depreciation, and maintenance. The portion of these inventories of work in process and inventories of finished products that consists of direct materials and depreciation should also be included in C .

Variable capital consists of a wage fund that the capitalist has tied up at a given time, i.e., the outlay that is needed to meet the capitalist's payroll until the value created by workers is realized. Thus, the stock of variable capital V could be measured as the direct labor portion of the inventories of work in process and inventories of finished products. The remainder, consisting of factory overhead, with the exception of depreciation, represents surplus value and should be excluded from the measurement of the capital stock.

Unfortunately, there is no easy way of directly dividing the value of inventories into its constituent parts. However, for purposes of measuring the rate of profit we are interested in $C + V$ and therefore do not need to separate the various components. In fact all that we need do is subtract out the portion representing factory overhead.² To do this we take as a proxy for the overhead rate o the following:

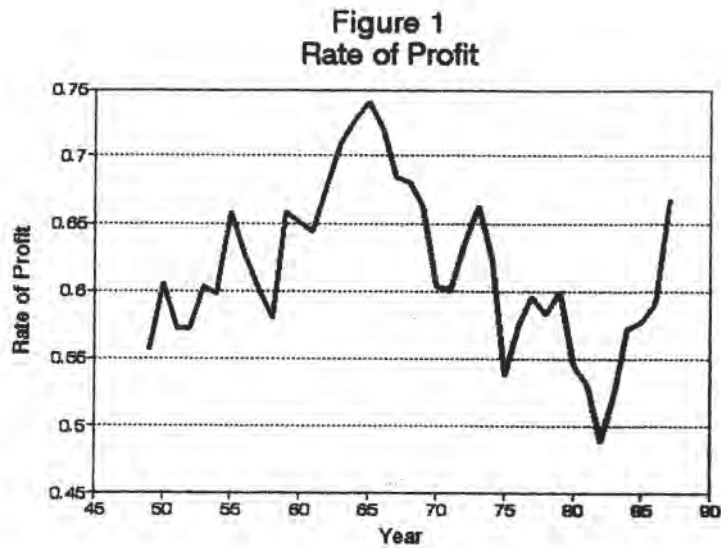
$$o = w_{np} / (\delta + m + w_p), \quad (2)$$

where w_{np} is the compensation of nonproduction workers and the denominator is the total cost of production, i.e., the sum of depreciation δ , cost of materials m , and wages of production workers w_p .³ Thus,

$$C + V = FC + M + (1 - o)(WP + FP), \quad (3)$$

where FC is the net capital stock, M inventories of raw materials and $(1 - o)(WP + FP)$ is the nonoverhead portion of inventories of work in process and inventories of finished products.

Figure 1 shows the rate of profit estimated from 1949 until 1987. No overall trend for the rate of profit in the postwar period appears discernible. Rather, three trends are visible. An upward trend beginning in 1949 and lasting until 1965, a downward trend from 1966 until early 1982, and then another upward trend from early 1982 until 1987. From 1949 until the early 1980s there were ups and downs in the rate of profit superimposed over these general trends. These ups and downs represent the various cyclical crises in the postwar period. Ever since the last cyclical downturn, which ended in 1982, the rate of profit has



risen steadily without interruption and has nearly reached the level it attained in the early and late 1960s. In fact, the only time the rate of profit has been higher in the postwar period was from 1963–1968.

To test the hypothesis that there was no overall decline in the rate of profit but rather two expansion periods and one period of decline, punctuated by short-term business cycles, we ran the following models for the regression r :

$$r = 0.194 + 0.005CU + 0.00008t, \quad (4)$$

(1.83) (6.42) (0.07)

adj $R^2 = 0.47$;

$$r = -6.56 + 0.005CU + 0.30t - 0.004t^2 + 0.00002t^3, \quad (5)$$

(3.47) (5.73) (3.51) (3.43) (3.33)

adj $R^2 = 0.75$,

where CU is capacity utilization and t is a time trend.⁴ As expected the coefficient of CU is positive and statistically significant at the .01 level

(*t* statistics in parentheses). This implies that an increase in capacity utilization is associated with an increase in the rate of profit. Equation 4 indicates that after controlling for changes in capacity utilization we find that there is no significant secular trend in the rate of profit. The addition of the second and third degree polynomials in equation 5 significantly increases the explanatory power of the model and increases the efficiency of the estimator on the time trend, as evidenced by the decrease in the standard error on the time-trend coefficient. This result is confirmed by calculating an F statistic, where equation 5 is the full model and equation 4 is the restricted model. The F statistic is 17.98, which is statistically significant at the .01 level and demonstrates that the squared and cubed terms add significant explanatory power to the model. The alternating signs on the trend variables indicate the three distinct trends in the rate of profit: (1) an increasing rate of profit from 1949 to 1965, (2) a declining rate of profit from 1966 to 1982, and (3) an increasing rate of profit from 1982 to 1987. These results imply that one cannot simply conclude that there has been a tendency for the rate of profit to fall in the postwar period.

Decomposing the rate of profit

The movement in the rate of profit can be explained by decomposing the rate into its component parts. In order to decompose the rate of profit, we rewrite equation 1 in the form:

$$r = (s/V)[V/(C + V)], \quad (6)$$

where s/V is the annual rate of surplus value and $V/(C + V)$ is the composition of capital. Thus far, it has been assumed that the turnover of capital is equal to one. To see how turnover affects the rate of profit, equation 6 is decomposed by using the relationship between the stocks and flows of capital. Let $n_v V = v$ and $n_c C = c$ where n_v and n_c is the turnover of variable and constant capital, upper case V and C represent the stocks of variable and constant capital, and the lower case v and c represent the flow of variable and constant capital, respectively. From this it follows that:

$$r = [s/n_v V][n_v V/(n_c C + n_v V)][(n_c C + n_v V)/(C + \quad (7)$$

The first term in equation 7, $s/n_v V$, represents the rate of exploitation e , which is the ratio of surplus value produced in a year to the flow of variable capital. Marx refers to this ratio as the "real rate of surplus value" to contrast it with the annual rate of surplus value (1967, 2:305). The annual rate of surplus value is simply the ratio of surplus value

produced in a year to the stock of variable capital advance. However, the amount of surplus value produced in a year depends on the variable capital advanced and the number of turnovers of that variable capital.

The second term in equation 7, $n_c V / (n_c C + n_v V)$, is the composition of capital k , which is the ratio of the flow of variable capital to the flow of total capital (Foley 1986). This definition of the composition of capital is different from that used by most Marxist economists because it is a ratio of flows rather than the ratio of the flow of variable capital to the stock of variable and constant capital. In most studies the composition of capital is approximated by looking at the ratio of wages to fixed capital, i.e., the inverse of the capital-labor ratio.

The final term in equation 7, $(n_c C + n_v V) / (C + V)$, is the turnover of capital n , which is the ratio of the flow of total capital to the stock of total capital. Clearly this turnover is a weighted average of the turnover on variable capital and the turnover on constant capital. In the short run, over the course of the business cycle, turnover is related to the time of circulation, that is, the length of time needed to sell a product. In the long run turnover depends on production time, the time needed to transport a product to the market, and the composition of capital.

Thus, the rate of profit can be written as:

$$r = enk. \tag{8}$$

To calculate e , we take the ratio of s as defined in the previous section to w_p , which are the wages paid to production workers, adjusted for fringe benefits.

The number of turnovers n is calculated as follows:

$$n = (\delta + m + w_p) / (C + V), \tag{9}$$

which is the ratio of the flow of constant and variable capital (depreciation δ , plus cost of materials m , and the wages paid to production workers w_p) to the total capital stock (net fixed capital plus inventories of material plus nonoverhead portions of inventories of work in process and inventories of finished products). Finally, k is calculated by dividing wages by the sum of depreciation, the cost of materials, and wages.

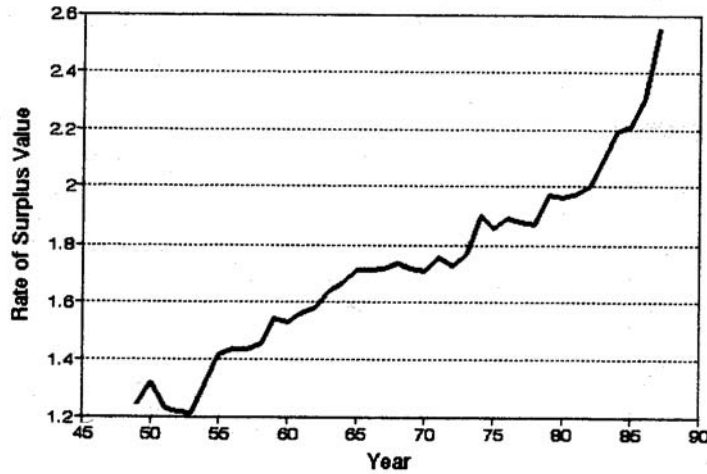
Table 1 shows all of the Marxist ratios. Figure 2 shows the rate of exploitation, which has been increasing throughout most of the postwar period. To explain the movements in the rate of surplus value it is necessary to examine the trend movements of the various ratios over the postwar period. This can be done using a piecewise regression, where the dummy variables and dummy time-trend interactions are estimated to see if there are significant changes in the trends of various ratios that explain movements in the rate of profit.

Table 1. Marxist Ratios

Year	<i>e</i>	<i>k</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>
1949	1.24	.253	1.78	.56
1950	1.32	.240	1.93	.61
1951	1.23	.227	2.06	.58
1952	1.22	.236	2.00	.58
1953	1.21	.248	2.02	.61
1954	1.31	.242	1.88	.60
1955	1.42	.242	1.92	.66
1956	1.44	.231	1.89	.63
1957	1.44	.233	1.80	.60
1958	1.45	.229	1.74	.58
1959	1.54	.239	1.79	.66
1960	1.53	.240	1.78	.65
1961	1.56	.220	1.87	.64
1962	1.58	.222	1.92	.68
1963	1.64	.225	1.93	.71
1964	1.67	.225	1.94	.73
1965	1.71	.222	1.95	.74
1966	1.71	.224	1.87	.72
1967	1.72	.228	1.74	.68
1968	1.74	.228	1.71	.68
1969	1.72	.229	1.67	.66
1970	1.71	.228	1.54	.60
1971	1.76	.223	1.53	.60
1972	1.72	.223	1.64	.64
1973	1.77	.217	1.72	.66
1974	1.89	.196	1.67	.62
1975	1.85	.188	1.54	.53
1976	1.89	.189	1.60	.58
1977	1.88	.189	1.67	.60
1978	1.87	.190	1.64	.58
1979	1.97	.184	1.66	.60
1980	1.97	.174	1.58	.54
1981	1.98	.172	1.56	.53
1982	2.00	.174	1.40	.49
1983	2.10	.174	1.43	.52
1984	2.19	.173	1.50	.57
1985	2.21	.176	1.48	.58
1986	2.32	.182	1.40	.59
1987	2.55	.179	1.46	.67

Sources: U. S. Council of Economic Advisors 1990; *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, *Fixed Reproducible Tangible Assets 1925–85*, *National Income and Product Accounts of the U.S. 1929–82*, *Survey of Current Business* (U. S. Department of Commerce).

Figure 2
Rate of Surplus Value

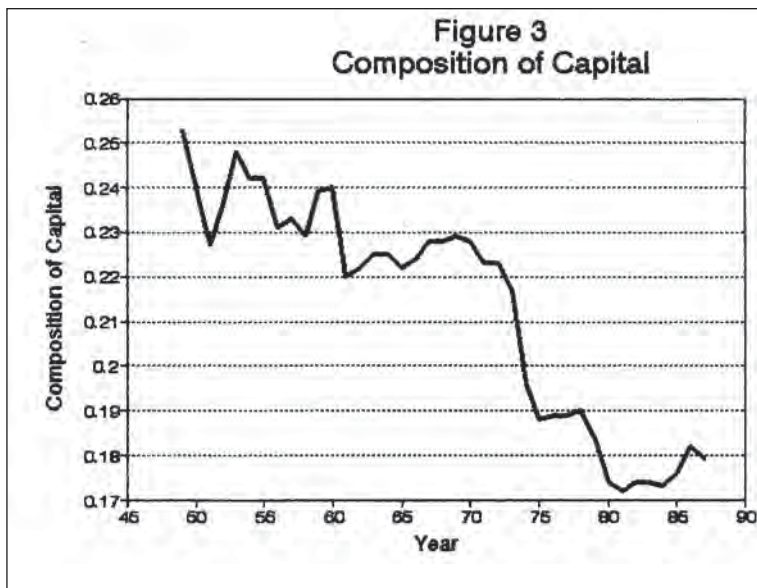


Equation 10 shows the trends in the rate of surplus value for three time periods, 1949–1965, 1966–1978, and 1979–1987. The variable $D66$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 for the years between 1966 through 1978, and $D79$ is a dummy variable equal to 1 beginning in 1979. Although 1979 is not the low point in the rate of profit it was chosen because it was the peak of the business cycle.

$$e = -0.04 + 0.0008CU + 0.031t + 0.92D66 - 0.015Dt66 - 3.15D79 + 0.037Dt79, \quad (10)$$

(1.63) (0.41) (9.39) (2.22) (2.36)
 (4.51) (4.22)
 adj $R^2 = 0.96$.

The coefficient of the time-trend variable is positive and statistically significant at the .01 level, indicating an upward trend in the rate of surplus value. For the period from 1966 through 1978 there appears to have been a significant slowdown in the growth of the rate of surplus value. This is indicated by the negative sign of the $Dt66$ variable, which is a dummy interaction term showing the change in the trend during this period. This undoubtedly is an important factor in explaining the decline in the rate of profit during this period. The positive sign and the



magnitude of the coefficient of $Dt79$ indicate a sharp increase in the growth of surplus value, in comparison to the pre-1966 period. This change, which is statistically significant at the .01 level, was a major factor contributing to the sharp rise in the rate of profit during the 1980s. Finally, it is interesting to note that equation 10 shows no significant relationship between the rate of capacity utilization and the rate of exploitation. This result is extremely important because it is a direct test of the profit-squeeze hypothesis. The profit-squeeze hypothesis argues that business cycles are the result of rising and falling costs due to changes in wage rates and productivity. The fact that there is no significant relationship between the rate of exploitation and the level of capacity utilization indicates that changes in the rate of profit cannot be explained by a profit squeeze.

Figure 3 shows the composition of capital. As expected, the composition of capital displays a downward trend, indicating that variable capital, as a proportion of total capital measured on a flow basis, is declining. Again, to further explore the movements in the composition of capital, we considered the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned}
 k = & 0.29 + 0.0002CU - 0.0014t + 0.017D66 \\
 & - 0.0024Dt66 - 0.19D79 + 0.002Dt79, \quad (11) \\
 & (9.38) \quad (1.01) \quad (2.89) \quad (3.09) \\
 & (2.93) \quad (1.71) \quad (1.47) \\
 & \text{adj } R^2 = 0.94.
 \end{aligned}$$

The sign of the trend variable t is negative and statistically significant, as expected, confirming a decline in the composition of capital. The

coefficient of $Dt66$ is negative and statistically significant, indicating an increase in the rate of decline in the composition of capital during the period from 1966 through 1978. This finding would seem to indicate that part of the decline in profitability during the period from 1966 through 1978 can be explained by changes in the composition of capital. The coefficient of the variable $Dt79$ is positive but not statistically significant at the .05 level. This indicates that k decreased at the same rate in the 1980s as it did in the period from 1949 through 1965. The return to the slower rate of decrease in k helped revive the rate of profit in the 1980s. In fact, result of adding together the coefficients of t and $Dt79$ indicates that there was no downward trend in k during the 1980s. The positive sign of capacity utilization is what would be expected on the basis of theory; this variable, however, is not statistically significant. It thus appears that no significant cyclical movements in the composition of capital are present.

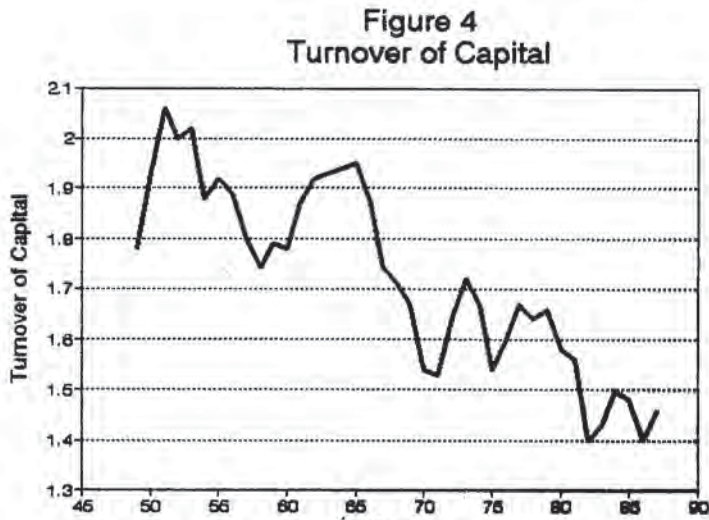


Figure 4 shows the rate of turnover in the postwar period. Aggregate turnover n is a weighted average of turnover of constant and variable capital. Since constant capital, which is largely composed of

fixed capital, has a lower turnover rate than variable capital and k is declining, it is not surprising to find a downward trend in the turnover of capital. To further explore the dynamics of turnover the following regression was run:

$$\begin{aligned}
 n = & 1.23 + 0.011CU - 0.005t - 0.01D66 - 0.002Dt66 \\
 & + 1.15D79 - 0.017Dt79 \qquad (12) \\
 (5.13) & (6.57) \quad (1.24) \quad (0.03) \quad (0.34) \\
 & (1.55) \quad (1.78) \\
 & \text{adj } R^2 = 0.86.
 \end{aligned}$$

The coefficient of the CU variable is positive and statistically significant at the .01 level. This indicates that increases in the rate of capacity utilization are associated with increases in the rate of turnover. This result supports the overproduction or inadequate demand hypothesis, which asserts that business cycles are caused by periods in which productive capacity expands beyond the capacity of the market to absorb products. The coefficient of the time-trend variable is negative, indicating a decline in the rate of turnover. The small value of the t statistic, however, indicates that the decline is not statistically significant. The coefficients of the time-trend variables for the two subperiods (1966–1978 and 1979–1987) are both negative, but neither are statistically significant. The fact that there is a clear downward trend in the data and that the model has a high degree of explanatory power, combined with the finding that none of the time trends seem to be statistically significant, is an indication of severe multicollinearity. To eliminate this multicollinearity, equation 12 was reestimated with the dummy variables and dummy interaction terms eliminated.

$$\begin{aligned}
 n = & 1.70 + 0.011CU - 0.01t, \qquad (13) \\
 (9.10) & (6.61) \quad (6.58) \\
 & R^2 = 0.72.
 \end{aligned}$$

The results show a downward trend that is statistically significant at the .01 level. This would seem to indicate that there has been no change in the overall trend in turnover during the postwar period. Moreover, although a decline in turnover may have contributed to the initial decline in the rate of profit during the mid-1960s, it cannot explain why this decline continued throughout the 1970s.

Real wages, productivity, and the capital-labor ratio

The previous section examined movements in the rate of exploitation, the composition of capital, and the rate of turnover as explanations

for the movement in the rate of profit. This section will examine some of the reasons behind the movement in the rate of exploitation and the composition of capital.

The rate of exploitation is determined by two factors: real wages and productivity. This is shown by the following:

$$\sigma = 1/(1 + e), \tag{14}$$

where σ is labor's share of value added and e is the rate of exploitation. Labor's share of income can also be written as follows:

$$\sigma = wH/PQ = (w/P)[1/(Q/H)], \tag{15}$$

where w is the hourly wage rate, H the number of hours worked, P the price of goods produced by manufactures, and Q the real value added in manufacturing. Equation 15 shows that with the level of productivity held constant an increase in the real wage raises labor's share and results in a decline in the rate of exploitation. Conversely, with real wages held constant, an increase in productivity lowers labor's share and results in an increase in the rate of exploitation.

To calculate the real wage rate, wages adjusted for fringe benefits are divided by the total hours worked by production workers. This wage rate is then divided by the implicit price deflator for the manufacturing sector.⁵ To calculate the level of productivity, the real wages (the hourly wage rate times the number of hours worked divided by the implicit price deflator for manufacturing) are divided by labor's share of value added. Table 2 shows the average annual percentage change in the real wage rate and the growth of productivity.

Table 2. Average Annual Percentage Changes
in Real Wages and Productivity 1949-87

Years	Real Wage Using Manufactures Prices	Real Wage Using Consumer Prices	Growth in Productivity
1949-66	2.68	2.31	3.55
1967-78	3.04	1.09	3.65
1979-87	2.10	-0.78	5.99

Source: *Annual Survey of Manufactures* and U.S. Council of Economic Advisors 1990.

Between 1949 and 1966 productivity grew at an annual rate of 3.88 percent and real wages, calculated from the perspective of the manufacturer, grew at an average annual rate of 2.69 percent. During the period in which the rate of profit was declining, 1967 through 1978, productivity grew at an average annual rate of 3.57 percent and real wages increased at an average annual rate of 3.00 percent. These relatively small changes in productivity and real wages had the impact of slightly slowing the growth in the rate of exploitation and thus contributed marginally to the decline in profitability between 1966 and 1979. Thus, most of the decline in the rate of profit from the mid-1960s through the 1970s was due to the changing composition of capital.

From the workers' perspective the real-wage picture was somewhat different because real wages are calculated with the use of the consumer price index rather than the implicit price deflator for manufacturing products. Since consumer prices, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, rose faster than the price of manufactured products, the real wages of workers declined even though the real wage cost to the manufacturer was increasing.

In the period from 1979 through 1987 there was a dramatic increase in manufacturing productivity and a marked slowing of the rate of increase in real wages for workers. These two factors together account for the sharp increase in the rate of exploitation in the 1980s and in large measure explain the increase in the rate of surplus value and consequently in the rate of profit.

The other major factor explaining the different trends in the rate of profit were the changes in the composition of capital k . Specifically, a large part of the decline in profitability from 1966 to 1979 is largely attributable to a substantial decline in the composition of capital.

Two possible explanations for the decline in the composition of capital are: (1) the price of constant capital rose more rapidly than the wage rate; and (2) a sudden increase in labor-saving technology increased the use of capital relative to labor. Table 3 shows the average annual percentage decline in k for the three time periods. In addition, it also shows the average annual percentage increase in the price of constant capital.⁶ From 1949 through 1966 the composition of capital fell at an average annual rate of 0.72 percent and the price of capital increased at an average annual rate of 1.79 percent.

In contrast, from 1967 through 1978 the composition of capital fell at an average annual rate of 1.17 percent and the average annual increase in the price of capital accelerated dramatically to 5.72 percent. This increase in the price of capital during the period from 1967

Table 3. Average Annual Percentage Changes in Composition of Capital and the Price of Capital 1949–1987

Years	Composition of Capital	Price of Constant Capital
1949–66	-0.72	1.79
1967–78	-1.17	5.72
1979–87	-0.63	4.06

Sources: *Annual Survey of Manufactures*, *Economic Report of the President 1989*, *Business Statistics*, *Fixed Reproducible Tangible Wealth 1925–85*, *National Income and Product Accounts* and the *Survey of Current Business* (U.S. Department of Commerce).

through 1978 is largely attributable to the general acceleration of inflation and the rapid increase in energy prices in the 1970s. In the 1980s the price increases slowed slightly, causing the decline in the composition of capital to slow. This slowdown, combined with the dramatic increase in the rate of surplus value, helped revive the rate of profit in the 1980s.

Conclusion

This study has examined the rate of profit for the manufacturing sector in the postwar period. A major finding is that there has not been a secular decline in the manufacturing rate of profit. Rather, the rate of profit has exhibited what might be termed intermediate cycles. These intermediate cycles are longer than business cycles but shorter than what are considered to be long-wave trends.

The rate of profit grew rapidly in the aftermath of World War II. This growth was accompanied by significant increases in productivity and real wages. The main factor contributing to this increase in profitability was a rising rate of exploitation.

The rate of profit peaked in the mid-1960s and began a secular decline lasting into the early 1980s. During this period a minor slowdown in the productivity growth occurred and real wages, as calculated from the perspective of the manufacturer, increased slightly. These changes imply a slight slowdown in the growth of exploitation. An acceleration in the decline of the composition of capital, which was the major contributing factor to declining profitability, accompanied the

slowdown in the growth of exploitation. Thus, the decline in profitability beginning in the mid-1960s was largely caused by the rapid increase in the cost of constant capital and the failure of manufacturing prices to keep up with these rising costs.

In the 1980s the rate of profit recovered dramatically, largely as a result of an increase in labor productivity, which was coupled with cuts in real wages, thereby leading to a rapid increase in the rate of exploitation. Moreover, a slowdown in the rate of decline in the composition of capital also contributed to the revival in the rate of profit.

Another important finding of this study is that cyclical or short-term fluctuations in the rate of profit are explained entirely by changes in turnover. These changes in turnover reflect changes in the circulation time and support the notion that cycle crises are caused by overproduction or a lack of aggregate demand.

The process of capital accumulation is driven by the rate of profit. From 1949 until the mid-1960s the U.S. economy experienced a period of rapid growth. Beginning in the mid-1960s, capitalism experienced a series of crises slowing the process of accumulation. Since the last cyclical crisis the U.S. economy has been expanding. The movements in the rate of profit for the U.S. manufacturing sector mirror these movements of the economy as a whole.

Although the economy is now in another recession, this downturn needs to be seen in the light of the overall revival in the rate of profit in the manufacturing sector. Given the restructuring of the late seventies and early eighties, termed deindustrialization by many, it is likely that the upward trend in the rate of profit will resume once a recovery begins.

This conclusion, however, does not imply that capitalism has solved its problems. The period of rapid accumulation in the early part of the postwar period took place in an environment characterized by rising real wages for workers. The period of rapid accumulation in the 1980s is fundamentally different in that respect since real wages have been declining. This, along with the tremendous growth of debt, has the potential to undermine the expansion, thereby giving rise to a series of new and deeper contradictions.

Marx noted in his economic writings that under capitalism crises were inevitable. At the same time he argued that there was no such thing as a permanent crisis, but rather that crises were periods in which contradictions were forcibly resolved. The resolution of these crises then set the stage for new contradictions to emerge and hence set the stage for new crises. This fundamental insight into the process of

capitalist development appears to be borne out in the experience of the U.S. manufacturing sector in the postwar period.

*Department of Economics
Wright State University
Dayton, Ohio*

NOTES

1. From a Marxist perspective the turnover of capital is a major determinant of the rate of profit (see Foley 1986). Turnover is the ratio of the flow of capital to the stock of capital.

2. This measure of overhead expense probably understates the true markup for overhead since it excludes taxes, insurance, maintenance. However, the major portion of overhead is accounted for by wages and salaries of nonproduction workers. Therefore, wages of nonproduction workers as a proportion of the cost of production would seem to be a reasonable proxy for overhead.

3. Data on cost of material have only been published since 1961. For the years before 1961 cost of material was estimated by using the following regression:

$$COST = -141754 + 11.7862INV - 1624t,$$

(0.61) (12.86) (0.42)

$$\text{adj } R^2 = 0.99 \quad 1961-87 \quad DW = 1.45,$$

where *COST* is the cost of material, *INV* is the value of inventories, and *t* is a time trend.

4. All regressions are corrected for autocorrelation when appropriate.

5. This represents the real wage rate as perceived by the manufacturer, i.e., the real cost of hiring labor from the perspective of the capitalist.

6. The price of constant capital is estimated as a weighted average of the price of fixed capital and the prices of materials.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bowles, Samuel, David Gordon, and Thomas Weiskopf. "Business Ascendancy and Economic Impasse: A Structural Retrospective on Conservative Economics 1979-87." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 3 (Winter 1989): 107-34.

Dumenil, G., M. Glick, and J. Rangel. "The Rate of Profit in the United States." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 11 (1987): 331-59.

- Feldstein, Martin, and Lawrence Summers. "Is the Rate of Profit Falling?" *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 1 (1977): 211–77.
- Foley, Duncan. *Understanding Capital: Marx's Economic Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986.
- Holland, Daniel, and Stewart Myers. "Trends in Corporate Profitability and Capital Costs in the United States." In *Measuring Profitability and Capital Costs: An International Study*, edited by Daniel Holland, 43–115. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, 1984.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital*. 3 vols. New York: International Publishers, 1967.
- Michl, Thomas. "The Two-Stage Decline in U.S. Nonfinancial Corporate Profitability, 1948–86." *Review of Radical Political Economics* 20 (1988): 1–22.
- Moseley, Fred. "Marxian Crisis Theory and the Postwar U.S. Economy." In book 1 of *The Imperiled Economy*, edited by Robert Cherry et al., 105–14. New York: Union for Radical Political Economics, 1987.
- Perlo, Victor. *Superprofits and Crises*. New York: International Publishers, 1987.
- Shaikh, Anwar. "The Falling Rate of Profit and the Economic Crisis in the U.S." In book 1 of *The Imperiled Economy*, edited by Robert Cherry et al., 115–26. New York: Union for Radical Political Economics, 1987.
- U.S. Council of Economic Advisors. *Economic Report of the President, 1989*. Washington D.C.: GPO, 1990.
- U.S. Department of Commerce. *National Income and Product Accounts of the U.S. 1929–82*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1986.
- . *Fixed Reproducible Tangible Assets 1925–85*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1987.
- . *Survey of Current Business*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1983–1988.
- U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970*. Part 2. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1975.
- . *Annual Survey of Manufactures*. Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988.
- Weisskopf, Thomas. "Marxian Crisis Theory and the Rate of Profit in the Postwar U.S." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 3 (Dec. 1979): 341–78.
- Wolff, Edward. "The Rate of Surplus Value, the Organic Composition of Capital, and the General Rate of Profit in the U.S. Economy 1947–67." *American Economic Review* 69 (June 1979): 329–41.

Against Psychopolitics

Michael Parenti

ABSTRACT: A critical examination is made of political psychology, specifically psychoanalytic and “depth” psychology as applied to the study of politics. I argue that psychological explanations for political leaders and movements (a) tend to be reductionist and based on interpretations that slight or ignore political data, (b) carry hidden political presumptions that prefigure the kind of analysis made, (c) offer no guidance for understanding the substance and process of public policy as such. Specific case studies are critically examined, including treatments of Lenin and Herbert Hoover. I conclude that we would do better to reverse the political psychologist’s formula and see family and childhood not as the great determinants of political events but as being crucially influenced by political and social forces.

Many great public issues as well as many private troubles are described in terms of the “psychiatric”—often, it seems, in a pathetic attempt to avoid the large issues and problems of modern society.

C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*

In recent decades, some political scientists, historians, and journalists have increasingly relied on psychology to explain political phenomena. In doing so, they tend to treat political realities as surface phenomena, under which there lurk deeper, more compelling dynamics. It is that kind of approach I wish to contest, focusing especially on psychoanalytic or “depth” psychology theories of personality. I will argue that political psychology reduces the significance of political life and retards our understanding of it.

Among the foremost pioneers in political psychology looms the

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

figure of Harold Lasswell, a political scientist by training but heavily influenced by Freudianism, and himself a lay analyst. Over sixty years ago Lasswell postulated “a general formula which describes the developmental history of political man,” specifically: $p \rightarrow d \rightarrow r = P$. The private motives of the individual, p , “nurtured and organized in relation to the family constellation and the early self” are displaced, d , onto public objects. The displacement is then rationalized, r , in terms of public interests to produce political man, P (1930, 74).

As an example of political displacement Lasswell notes: “The prominence of hate in politics suggests that we may find that the most important private motive is a repressed and powerful hatred of authority, a hatred which has come to partial expression and repression in relation to the father” (1930, 75). And “the repressed father hatred may be turned against kings or capitalists.” Individuals who condemn “the merciless exploitation of the toolless proletariat by the capitalists” may be just voicing “the rational justification” of earlier unresolved family animosities (75–76). Not just individuals but whole “political movements derive their vitality from the displacement of private affects upon public objects” (173). Eighteen years later Lasswell (1948, 38) repeated the formulation, speculating further that the political type “is characterized by an intense and ungratified craving for deference” that is “both accentuated and unsatisfied in the primary circle,” and is displaced upon public persons and practices “connected with the power process.”

I do not wish to take on the whole field of political psychology, which since Lasswell’s early efforts has grown considerably. Instead, I will treat only representative samples of those tendencies that more or less follow the Lasswellian displacement-rationalization model. Consider the following: In 1969, the noted psychologist Bruno Bettelheim ascribed the student antiwar protests that were sweeping the nation’s campuses to the influence of a permissive society and to the “guilt” the students suffered because they had avoided military service. In a word, the students were not really bothered by the Vietnam war as such but by the fact that they had been able to evade their moral obligation to participate in it. (The protest movement actually involved not only students but hundreds of thousands of people beyond draft age.) As Bettelheim (1969) explained to a special House education subcommittee: the guilt-ridden students, having evaded military service, “feel like parasites of society and hence come to hate a society which they think makes them feel this way.”

Reaching beyond Bettelheim, Lewis Feuer diagnoses practically every student rebellion in the twentieth century as suffering from irrational hostility toward surrogate parental figures. Thus Feuer

observes that Fidel Castro, who developed his rebellious ways during his student days, “repeatedly blamed others, that is, his father, for his own entry into legal study,” a field he did not really wish to pursue. “This repetitive theme,” Feuer concludes, “suggests some of the roots of Castro’s own generational conflict and indirectly his anti-Americanism. In his blaming of others for having misled him, the United States became a surrogate father to be blamed” (1969, 250). Not all student rebellions have pursued such “pseudo-goals,” however. According to Feuer, student rebellions in Communist countries were the exception; they represented a “quest for real freedom” (311). One could go on with examples of this kind of political psychology and more examples will be provided in the discussion to follow, but let us move to the criticisms.

Depoliticizing the political

Psychopathological explanations tend to ignore the manifest political content of the phenomenon in question and conjure a latent apolitical need that is presumed to have a predetermining hold over the political actor. Thus Lasswell does not deal with the seemingly more evident possibility that people hate kings or capitalists not because of filial conflicts but because they find the social conditions imposed by autocracy and plutocracy to be hateful. We may ask: Is the presumed psychological cause of sufficient scope or linkage to explain momentous political effects? In a Cuba ruled by a much-hated U.S.-backed tyrant like Fulgenico Batista, where the major industries, markets, land, labor, and capital were dominated by U.S. corporations and a large segment of the populace lived in poverty, are we really to believe that a Cuban’s grievances toward the detested “Yanquis” were primarily a displacement of filial hostility anchored in a resentment about being required to go to law school? And what of the many thousands of others who join revolutionary ranks? Are they bestirred not by larger realities but principally by unresolved familial antagonisms—as Feuer (1969) claims was the case with the Chinese students who joined Mao? If so, history owes quite a remarkable debt to the deficiencies that might exist in father-son relationships.

Armed with the displacement model proffered by Lasswell, investigators presume that the filial relationship not only precedes but supersedes the experiences of later life and that a conflict in “the primary circle” weighs more heavily than the oppression witnessed or experienced in the wider social sphere. But that premise remains unexamined; it is a self-determining psychologism in that it reduces the motivating forces of human behavior to psychology and expands psychology into something of an all-permeating social force.

That kind of explanation not only *fosters* political ignorance by offering a reductionist apolitical explanation of phenomena that we would otherwise consider grounded in the total configuration of political history, it also *relies* on political ignorance for its credibility. For only when one ignores the mountain of political data does the molehill of psychological speculation win a moment's plausibility. To illustrate: those who listened to the outrage that students expressed against the Vietnam war, who read the literature disseminated by student protesters, and who witnessed the teach-ins, seminars, speeches, demonstrations, arrests, and sit-ins directed against the war may well hesitate to accept Bettelheim's contention that students were motivated by a resentment toward their society borne of guilt feelings about not being drafted to fight in the very war they detested. For Bettelheim's explanation to have any plausibility one must be unburdened by any direct knowledge of what the students were actually saying, reading, writing, feeling, and doing. The observable evidence of their words and deeds suggests that they opposed the war because they believed it to be unjust and destructive of innocent lives. What is missing from Bettelheim's view is just such observable evidence. All we have are imputations that deny the manifest content of political struggle and ascribe some psychic motive best known to Bettelheim through a process of discovery he does not reveal.

Hidden political presumptions

While these kinds of psychological explanations tend to depoliticize political reality, they do so in a politically selective way. Those who maintain that the rebel is in need of psychological study are likely to assume that the more conformist political actor does not need such treatment. Bettelheim has never thought it necessary to sift through the psyches of those who ordered and conducted the B-52 carpet bombing of Indochina. Nor did the anti-Communist Feuer ever consider searching for hidden motives among dissident students in Communist countries—whose rebellions he supported and deemed free of psychopathology. Similarly, Rogow seems to equate political deviancy with psychological abnormality when he writes: "While most political leaders neither require nor merit a psychobiography, the form is particularly appropriate when we are dealing with odd or deviant political careers, . . . right and left extremists" (1968, 605). A political judgment is being made here. The leaders referred to by Rogow are "odd and deviant" *politically* speaking, not psychologically. That political deviance is in special need of psychological investigation is the thing that has to be demonstrated rather than assumed. Alexander George, himself a psychobiographer, warns us:

The investigator's own political values can easily color his judgment as to whether a leader copes successfully with stressful tasks.####[A] leader who takes a firm stand and draws the line in disputes with political opponents may be judged to be engaged in highly adaptive behavior by an investigator who believes that such behavior is required by the situation; but the same behavior may be judged to be irrationally aggressive by a different investigator whose system of values leads to a different perception of the requirements and dangers implicit in the same situation. (1974, 235–36)

In a word, what is or is not a psychological displacement may often be determined less by the psychology of the political actor than by the politics of the psychologist.

Prima-facie guilt

By definition, rebels are people who are not accepting of society's conventional beliefs and dominant interests. In turn, society's view of who is psychologically disturbed rests to a great extent on existing standards of normality. Not surprisingly, those who challenge society's prevailing beliefs and practices are more likely to be diagnosed as driven by aberrant private motives than those who do not (Szasz 1974). Rycroft observes that many "world-shakers" and other exceptional people have been "manhandled by psychiatrists and [psycho]analysts.####[Jesus Christ has been diagnosed schizophrenic, Beethoven paranoid, the Old Testament prophets (collectively) schizophrenoid, Leonardo da Vinci schizoid-obsessional, etc., etc." (1971, 8).

Some of us believe that people usually rebel because all is not well in the world. In contrast, the psychopolitical belief is that people rebel because *they* are not well. Rebels are diagnosed as troubled because they are so troublesome. Because they see a particular authority as unjust, it is concluded they oppose all established authority—which is not the case with most political dissidents or revolutionaries.

Political psychologists of the Lasswellian strain maintain that a rebellion against state authority is sometimes really a displacement of "unresolved" rebellion against parental authority (Lasswell 1930; George and George 1964; Wolfenstein 1967). On the face of it, there would seem to be only specific authorities in the world, bound to socially defined contexts, some of which we like and some we dislike. Not so for the political psychologist, who proposes a disembodied authority—or rather a displaced parentally embodied authority—that predefines all other authorities in the individual's psyche.

Rebellion against authority then becomes prima-facie evidence of rebellion against parental authority once removed. There is no need to demonstrate the linkage; it has been established by a reference to “clinical evidence” that has no command over political data unless one assumes it does. The psychological explanation, then, harbors the fallacy of “affirming the consequent”: the political rebel is really rebelling against parental authority; proof? the rebel is rebelling. This problem obtains in all “innate drive” theories that purport to explain observable behavior. Thus we are told that people are impelled by a drive for power or love or wealth. Evidence for such claims is then found in instances of people pursuing power, love, and wealth. The theory uses the very phenomenon it is trying to explain as evidence of its explanation.

Dubious clinical data

Along with challenging the way psychology has been applied to political phenomena, we might question the science of clinical depth psychology itself. In so doing, we share the company of none other than Harold Lasswell. In the preface to *Psychopathology and Politics*, he notes that his formulations are asserted in “rather dogmatic fashion” and rest on “the highly unsatisfactory nature of the materials and methods of contemporary psychopathology” (1930, xxv). After thirty years of psychoanalytic labor, notes Lasswell, there still did not exist a body of documents that might be consulted by specialists who could resolve their differences about what went on in treatment session.¹ Notes taken of interview sessions are often inadequate and inaccessible. Nobody knows “the value of the published scraps” or what processes distort the reporting practices of different clinical investigators. And there is no follow-up data on posttreatment conditions of clients (1930, 205).

As Lasswell was not the first to observe, patients tend to produce the kind of material the analyst suggests. Hence, they dreamed of anima figures if analyzed by Jung, relived birth traumas when treated by Rank, talked of their inferiority feelings for Adler, and dealt with their oedipal anxieties and castration fears under Freud’s supervision. Lasswell does not dwell on the problems of replication raised by the prefiguring tendencies of the clinical discovery process, that is, how different investigators, using the same methods and dealing with the same data, arrive at such widely varying conclusions.

The rules for attributing meaning to data remain obscure, as Lasswell points out. Thus when someone reports he was warned during childhood that his nose would be cut off if he persisted in “handling himself,” Lasswell asks: “How do we know what importance to assign

to this alleged reminiscence? Are we to accept this as a historical statement? Are we to construe it as a fabrication that, however, shows what he wanted to have happened, or supposed would happen, if he disobeyed orders?" (1930, 206). Is the recollection just a sign of the patient's fear of the therapist couched in the memory of the past? or maybe a self-inflicted fantasy to punish himself for hostile feelings toward the therapist? or an attempt to win approval by producing what he thinks the therapist finds important? or an original trauma that once uncovered will decrease the patient's anxiety? (206–7).

Regarding the clinical discovery process, I would raise other concerns. Consider the question of "reaction-formation," one of the defense mechanisms of the ego that political psychologists refer to (e.g., Greenstein 1975, 84). This concept might be singled out as emblematic of the dubious nature of much clinical data. Through reaction-formation a person who might be expected to show one form of behavior may react away from that form even to the point of showing the very opposite behavior. For instance, one might be expected to manifest hostility and jealousy toward a sibling for one reason or another but through reaction-formation will show friendliness and loyalty—supposedly a compensatory psychological cover-up for unconscious negative feelings. Thus the clinician can assume an underlying motive exists, and then can find evidence for it in contrary behavior patterns (Eysenck 1953). Both *A* and the opposite of *A* stand as evidence of the same thing. Diametrically opposite patterns can be treated as supportive of the prevailing theoretical claim, making the theory nonfalsifiable. But how do we know when actions and attitudes harbor unconscious motives that relate to earlier experiences? When are they, if ever, what they seem to be? (Even Freud, a heavy cigar smoker, noted that sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.) Behind such questions looms the problem of validation: how do we know we are observing the thing we say we are observing?—a question of special pertinence when dealing with things supposedly submerged in the psyche, which by their nature are not observable. Furthermore, can we ever think of individual action and attitude as existing apart from the larger configuration of social relations? Can we think of personality as something outside society (Porshnev 1970, 114)? If a given behavior is a response to both the imperatives of social reality and interior psychic motives, how much weight do we ascribe to larger social forces and how much to family relations? For instance, how much to oppressive class conditions and how much to filial conflicts?

In drawing evidence from the clinical sessions of relatively minor political figures who feel troubled enough to seek treatment, as does

Lasswell in both his books on this subject (1930 and 1948), are we not stacking the deck in favor of pathology, reaching conclusions based on a population that is markedly unrepresentative of the larger political universe? And what are we to make of psychological pronouncements about presidents, prophets, revolutionary leaders, and other such notables about whom the psychological data are fragmentary and the possibilities of clinical investigation are nonexistent? Even Rogow notes that, while the psychoanalytic strategy is dubious enough when dealing with a living patient, “there is even more doubt that it can be effectively applied to the deceased statesman in his tomb who literally has taken his dreams and fantasies, his Oedipus complex and identity crisis with him” (1968, 605).²

Since almost anything about a person can be endowed with psychopathological significance, including ostensibly positive features and seemingly casual utterances, what decides the process of selectivity and embellishment? What role do such things as ideology, a desire for justice, economic self-interest, and religious and ethical teachings play? Can we make a reliable interpretation of pathology by treating the individual as someone relatively untouched by these wider forces?

Some political psychologists try to solve these problems by wedding social and cultural forces to psychological ones in what is a rather unequal marriage. The objective world is experienced by subjective individuals, Greenstein notes (1967, 632). Since individuals express and act out social realities through the prism of their personal psychologies, then social “characteristics” should be thought of as psychological as well. Quoting Allport (1950), Greenstein concludes that “background factors never directly cause behavior”; they just create “mental sets” and attitudes that in turn determine behavior (1967, 632). If so, we might wonder whether the psychological has any boundaries. Seeming to permeate everything, it loses much of its discriminating value and explanatory power.

Greenstein points out quite correctly that social and psychological characteristics are not mutually exclusive but complementary. Social forces can cause psychological characteristics but are no substitute for them (631). But that observation cuts both ways: psychological characteristics are no substitute for social ones. Regarding many political phenomena, social characteristics have an explanatory power of their own, which is largely independent of the personal psychologies of the actors involved. Thus people often perceive reality and act upon it in accordance with the position they occupy within the social structure, frequently because there is no other way they can act, even if they are persons endowed with exceptional personalities. It remains an unresolved

question whether individuals who do act in exceptional ways are doing so because of rationalized emotions displaced from early life needs, or because of a host of other reasons having to do with talent, intelligence, family advantage, or whatever. In other words, when acting with exceptional courage, skill, and insight, or for that matter, exceptional stupidity, recklessness, and blindness, they are indeed *acting* not *acting out*.

Lenin as Oedipus

By way of illustrating some of the problems already touched upon, let us consider Victor Wolfenstein's psychological study of Lenin from his book on Lenin, Trotsky, and Gandhi, three leaders who "came to have revolutionary identities as a result of essentially interminable conflicts with parental authority" (1967, 49). Lenin was raised in a family "not bothered by unusual stress or disruption." It consisted of a "considerable brood of children" who got along well together (1967, 36–37). Lenin's father is described by Wolfenstein as a warm, patient, loving parent, "who devoted substantial time to gently teaching his children how to behave. He taught his children to play chess, and played other games with them as well" (34). Lenin's mother also comes off rather well, being of steady disposition, relatively well educated, and "devoted to the well-being and advancement of her children." She too spent a good deal of time with the children, teaching them to read, play the piano, leading them in family singing, and helping them compose a weekly handwritten family magazine (35). Wolfenstein's picture of Lenin is also generally positive. As a child Lenin appears to have been jovial, humorous, loud, a practical joker, "given somewhat to boasting and bullying, but on the whole well liked and likeable." He easily performed well in school work and was esteemed by teachers. In all, Lenin, was "a bright assertive but not unusual lad" (37–38).

Whence the pathological revolutionary?

The problem, it turns out, was that Lenin's father occasionally was kept away from his family for long periods of time by his official duties. Wolfenstein thinks this pattern of a loving attentive parent suddenly absenting himself "must have had a strange effect on young Lenin's mind" and "probably produced strongly ambivalent feelings" (39). Wolfenstein does not consider the likelihood that while Lenin and the other children may have missed their father during his job-related travels, they seemed securely enough placed in his affections not to have reacted with deep feelings of abandonment and betrayal.

Wolfenstein discerns another problem. Lenin's father never used corporal punishment on him but resorted to "firm moral suasion" that "left little room for anti-paternal rebellion with a clear conscience." Apparently, Lenin would have been better off had his father beaten him occasionally. The gentle father's "high moral rectitude undoubtedly resulted in an unusually demanding superego for the son, so that young Lenin probably was unable to think or express the feelings of resentment which seem sure to have followed his father's absences and disciplining without experiencing guilt as a consequence" (39).

Even before all this, when Lenin was but eighteen to twenty months old he "had already developed a basically mistrustful nature" (40). He was a late walker, a condition supposedly caused by the desire to emulate the behavior of a newly born sister in order to get the maternal attention she received. This slow walking demonstrated an early mistrust for his environment and shows that "Lenin's adult behavior, above all his mistrustfulness and the aggressiveness which grows out of mistrust had deep roots indeed in his life experiences. A predisposition would exist towards viewing the world in kill-or-be-killed terms" (41).³ Wolfenstein does not reveal how he arrived at these breathtaking conclusions.

Lenin's admiring and loving identification with his older brother and father—frequently expressed by him both verbally and in the way he emulated each—becomes yet another source of pathology in Wolfenstein's hands. The death of both father and brother, it seems, evoked intense guilt feelings in Lenin who, according to Wolfenstein, harbored a love-hate ambivalence for both older men that was "the central problem of his life" (46). Wolfenstein eventually lowers the Freudian boom: "Lenin, it must be remembered, felt he bore the double responsibility for the deaths of his father and brother—whom he had wished dead in order that he might possess his mother" (113).

What is missing is any evidence that Lenin nursed such compelling

feelings of guilt, aggression, ambivalence, hate, incest, and murder toward his brother and father. Nor, for Wolfenstein, is any evidence needed since the Oedipus complex has been declared a universal thing, part of every son's psychic heritage. Thus a common affliction is used to explain a most uncommon man. One wonders why Wolfenstein bothered to construct the other interpretations when all along he could apply, as if by fiat, the prefabricated oedipal judgment.

Wolfenstein seems to suggest that revolutionary Marxism was the therapeutic cure for the oedipal psychopathology Lenin suffered. If so, psychopathology owes a lot to the curative powers of revolutionary thought, and revolution owes even more to psychopathology. But it's better if we let Wolfenstein tell it:

In Marx, Lenin found a benevolent, omniscient father, a wise and methodical teacher, a fit repository for his feelings of love and respect for his real father. And in the Tsar, the perfect embodiment of the vengeful Oedipal father, he found his dangerous opponent, over whom, however, Marx promised victory. (117)

This treatment of Lenin invites the criticism offered earlier that almost anything about a person can be endowed with psychopathological significance and then weaved into his or her political life. Both *A* and the opposite of *A* can be treated as evidence of pathology. Both a loving, gentle father and a harsh unloving one, both a positive identification with familial figures and a negative one. And at times no data at all will do quite well as when we invoke the universal oedipal curse. Behavior in later life is presumed to be motivated not by a quest for justice or a desire for a better world, but by an acting out of earlier unresolved scenarios. Even if an individual like Lenin creates a new and greater drama in his engagement with life, in the psychopathological view, he is still bound to an old script, a hapless victim of an interior demonology that needs a lifetime and sometimes a whole revolution for its proper exorcism.

The generic fallacy

The ostensible purpose of psychopolitics is to further our understanding of politics by telling us about the inner motivations of political actors. But discovering a hidden psychological need in the political actor tells us very little about the meaning of the act itself as a policy reality. The *political* significance of the act is not unearthed by a motivational analysis, especially since the motivations of the actors are

supposedly derived from distinctly prepolitical psychological sources.

Nevertheless, the psychopathological explanation does cast a pall on political things. Once convinced that revolutionaries are impelled by unresolved feelings about their fathers, we cannot help but wonder about the value of the revolution itself—even though the analysis tells us nothing about the revolution’s substantive issues. When Bettelheim or others reduce the student protest movement to a collective guilt trip or to some infantile or adolescent disorder, the inevitable impact is to devalue the protest, making the protesters the issue rather than the thing they are protesting.

This kind of *argumentum ad hominem* tells us very little if anything about the political worth of an issue or action. We might decide that people opposed the Vietnam war because they had (a) an irrationally displaced hatred of authority or (b) a sense of justice and a love of peace. And we might conclude that people supported the war out of (c) love of country and a concern for “freedom” or (d) a taste for violent activity. But none of this brings us to an informed position regarding the war itself, for the question of whether to support or oppose armed intervention as a *policy* rests on a body of data that extends beyond the interior motives of particular social actors. That a U.S. Navy pilot who flew missions in Vietnam is quoted as saying, “There are a lot of nice buildings in Haiphong. What their contributions are to the war effort I don’t know, but the desire to bomb a virgin building is terrific” (*New York Times*, 20 January 1968), tells us nothing either way about the worth of the bombing as policy, although it may invite speculations about one navy pilot.

A common criticism made of persons involved in public protests is that they are guilty of personal indulgences, that is, they are really just seeking to escape boredom or vent their anger, or whatever. Indeed, politically active people do sometimes feel more engaged with life. Communists, revolutionaries, radicals, liberals, centrists, conservatives, reactionaries, and fascists have all testified to the personal invigoration experienced in active political engagement, especially when the effort brought results, but this tells us nothing about the political value of their particular actions and ideologies. In sum, intrapsychic motivations—as opposed to political ones—are, if not irrelevant, then certainly of marginal importance for evaluating public policy.

The compulsive Hoover

Psychopolitics is not just a matter of psychologizing about rebels. Presidents and conservative leaders of the United States have also been analyzed. The results are hardly more encouraging than the treatment

accorded radicals.⁴ Let us consider one of the best of the political psychologists, James David Barber, specifically his treatment of Herbert Hoover, a man he categorizes as an “active-negative president.” The active-negative president is one who experiences severe deprivation in childhood and who subsequently tries to wring from his environment a sense of self-worth through achievement and a search for power over others (Barber 1972, 99–100). According to Barber, Hoover (like Wilson, Johnson, and Nixon) suffered from a fatal flaw of character that caused him to discard an earlier flexibility for a latter-day self-defeating rigidity and compulsion.⁵ Who would have anticipated, Barber asks, “that Herbert Hoover, the pragmatic miracle worker who negotiated relief for war-torn Europe in the midst of World War I, would freeze in opposition to relief for jobless Americans” (Barber 1973)?

In a chapter entitled “The Origins of the Presidential Compulsion” we learn that Hoover was orphaned at the age of eight, lived with relatives, liked the outdoors, and had an upbringing that stressed “a close restraint of emotions” (Barber 1972, 128). Barber maintains that as a child Hoover was scarred by the loss of his parents and experienced “a sense of powerlessness, an inability to guide his own fate, a vulnerability to sudden externally imposed radical changes in his life” (1972, 129). To overcome these feelings he strove to establish control over the world around him, a pattern that persisted into college, where he also supposedly manifested an “extreme individualism.” Actually, based on the data Barber presents, one could conclude that Hoover showed himself able to work in close unison with schoolmates, had a normal number of friendships, displayed exceptional skills as a student organizer, and exercised an effective campus leadership. If anything, at Stanford, Hoover developed his exceptional gifts in seemingly creative and self-rewarding ways.

Barber believes the fatal flaws in Hoover’s character surfaced most pronouncedly when he was in the White House. As a president, Hoover appeared to be trying “to make up for something, to salvage through leadership some lost or damaged part of himself” and to struggle “against an inner sense of inadequacy.” “His power-seeking reflected a strong compensatory need for power” (1972, 78).

Like other active-negative presidents such as Wilson and Johnson, according to Barber, Hoover harbored “a felt necessity for the denial of self-gratification” (a trait I find hard to imagine in Lyndon Johnson). Hoover “struggled to control aggressive impulses” and was a perfectionist who was “supposed to be good at everything all the time.” Actually Hoover himself had a rather nonperfectionist view of his own

limitations. Thus he refused to try to excel in the presidency's every role. He made no attempt to fulfill the dramatic needs of the office, remarking on one occasion, "You can't make a Teddy Roosevelt out of me" (Barber 1972, 69).

Barber tells us Hoover was an emotionally blocked man, taciturn, humorless, reserved, and seldom capable of crying. But the sparse evidence he offers seems to contradict this picture. Hoover could express anger, as on the occasion he threatened to fight a heckler in the 1932 campaign. Hoover could cry. Barber cites two instances when he was moved to tears in public (77). (How often might a less emotively blocked president be expected to cry in public?) And Hoover was profoundly moved, both emotionally and to action, when visited in the White House by three children who were pleading to have their unemployed father released from jail (77–78). Curiously, the one contemporary testimony Barber offers is that of Eugene Lyons, who said that Hoover was not cold, but "a sensitive, soft-hearted person who craves affection, enjoys congenial company, and suffers under the slings of malice" (77).

In sum, the data Barber offers on Hoover's life are not only sketchy and selective but lend themselves to a contrary interpretation. Barber fails to make a convincing case that the traits he ascribes to Hoover are the dominant components of his character or are endowed with the significance Barber attributes to them. The consequence is that one comes away with the feeling that Barber *tells* rather than *shows* us. And we are left asking: how does he know that? In the pages to follow I will argue that there were factors of a political nature, relating to Hoover's ideology and his commitment to a particular social and economic order, that explain the "mystery" of his political behavior.

The political Hoover

Barber's question remains: how could Hoover, the man who administered relief to the children of war-torn Europe, refuse to allocate relief funds to alleviate the hunger of millions of people at home during the Great Depression, thus helping to bring down his own presidency? Before proposing some psychological compulsion, let us investigate the political Hoover, for therein may rest the clues to his political behavior.

When Hoover was president he once said: "The sole function of government is to bring about a condition of affairs favorable to the beneficial development of private enterprise" (Barber 1972, 74). Indeed, a look at Hoover's career reveals a consistent lifelong dedication to the private-enterprise system at home and abroad. As head of the private organization, the Belgian Relief Commission, and later as director of

the American Relief Administration, Hoover administered aid in a highly political way. The Belgian distribution program had the aura of a business enterprise. The Belgian population paid for most of the food it received. The food donations made in the United States and elsewhere were sold to the Belgians at wartime prices for cash, as though they had been bought on the open market. Belgium was drained of funds in exchange for food (Knox 1932, 115) Among the Belgians who could not pay, drastic shortages arose by 1916, followed by hunger riots among the poorer classes (Hamill 1931, 327–28).

By the war's end Hoover was concerned with more important things than feeding Belgians. As early as November 1918 he made it clear that food was to be used as a political weapon "to stem the tide of Bolshevism" (Weissman 1974, 29). When Hoover's American Relief Administration sent aid to Russia, it was for a purpose never intended by Congress, to areas occupied by General Yudenich's White Guard army and, in the Baltics, to areas held by General von der Goltz's German expeditionary corps. Both these armies were dedicated to overthrowing the Soviet government and both engaged in widespread pillaging and execution of civilians. By 1919 Yudenich's army subsisted totally on Hoover's aid (Weissman 1974, 36–37; Sayers and Kahn 1946, 106). In a report to Congress in January 1921, Hoover admitted that he had used U.S. relief funds to supply the White armies (Liggett 1932, 260–267). Hoover's manner of distributing relief moved the *Nation* to comment editorially:

We have Mr. Hoover's word for it that eight ships with 20,000 tons of supplies are in the Baltic, awaiting only the fall of Petrograd in order to feed its starving inhabitants. The Russians are to starve because four men in Paris do not like their politics.###On the day when they surrender to the ideas and armies of the Big Four, then they have bread. (7 June 1919)

Similarly Hoover withheld financial aid and food intended for Hungary until the short-lived revolutionary Béla Kun government was overthrown—even though the supplies had been purchased with funds advanced by that government. Aid was forthcoming only after the reactionary Admiral Horthy was installed, backed by the bayonets of the Romanian army, which instituted a "White terror," executing hundreds of Hungarian revolutionaries and Jews (Liggett 1932, 255; Weissman 1974, 215). In similar spirit, Hoover characterized his relief efforts in support of the Allied-sponsored government in Austria as "a race against both death and Communism." He had posters plastered up all over Vienna announcing that food shipments would cease should an

uprising occur (Weissman 1974). Hoover also placed large sums at the disposal of the rightist Polish militarists during their invasion of Soviet Russia in April 1920. Senator James Reed of Missouri charged on the Senate floor that \$40 million of relief funds voted by Congress to feed the hungry “was spent to keep the Polish army in the field” (Sayers and Kahn 1946, 93; Weissman 1974, 37). The political psychologist Alexander George (1974, 257) describes Hoover as a “a sincere humanitarian.” He might better be described as “a selective humanitarian,” capable of using or withholding funds as political ideology dictated.

While hailed as someone who did good, Herbert Hoover did well. Frequently described as an “engineer,” he was in fact a multimillionaire with business ventures in Burma, Nigeria, Australia, South Africa, Nicaragua, the United States, and czarist Russia (Hamill 1931). Prior to World War I he had secured a major interest in no less than eleven Russian oil corporations, along with major concessions in Russian timberlands, mines, railroads, factories, refineries, and gold, copper, silver, and zinc reserves (Hamill 1931, 298–300; Knox 1932, 97–99). Had the October Revolution not happened and the Bolshevik government not canceled the vast concessions, Hoover would have been one of the world’s top billionaires. Whether motivated by concern for his personal investments or a more generalized class interest or an ideological conservatism or some blend of these—and there is no reason to assume they are mutually exclusive—Hoover manifested an unswervingly militant opposition to communism and to any revolutionary change that might limit the prerogatives of private enterprise. During the period after the Russian Revolution, he remained a persistent supporter of the military campaigns against Soviet Russia.⁶

During his tenure as president, Hoover repeatedly voiced his opposition to public ownership and government regulation of the economy. At the time of the Depression, political and corporate leaders were divided as to what strategy to pursue in the face of economic collapse and growing public unrest (Piven and Cloward 1979, 44–45). There were those who advocated reforms in the hope that by giving a little they could keep a lot. Others feared that such concessions would not stem the tide but open the floodgates and inundate their world. They

believed that the private-enterprise system should not be tampered with in any serious way, that reports of popular suffering were greatly exaggerated, and that the economy was basically sound and would soon right itself.

Hoover was firmly in this latter camp. What Barber considers to be his “freeze,” “inflexibility,” and “compulsion” were attitudes not personal to him. In his refusal to spend the billions needed to ease the plight of the destitute, Hoover had the support of most of the business community right up to 1932 and beyond. Indeed, at least until mid-1932, even the American Federation of Labor, “consistent with its historic emphasis on voluntarism,” opposed government assistance to the unemployed (Piven and Cloward 1979, 72). In short, attitudes that Barber treats as symptomatic of Hoover’s inner character, in fact were the prevailing opinion within most of the business community and even among some prominent trade-union leaders.

Like so many other conservatives then and now, Hoover preached the virtues of self-reliance, opposed the taxation of overseas corporate earnings, sought to reduce income taxes for the higher brackets, and opposed both a veteran’s bonus and aid to drought sufferers. He refused federal funds for the jobless and opposed unemployment insurance and federal retirement benefits. He repeatedly warned that public-assistance programs were the beginning of “state socialism” (Liggett 1932; Warren 1959). Toward business, however, he suffered from no such “inflexibility” and could spend generously. He supported multimillion-dollar federal subsidies to shipping interests and agribusiness, and his Reconstruction Finance Corporation doled out a couple of billion dollars to banks and corporations.

The above information, all a matter of public record, provides us with a picture of Hoover different from the one sketched by Barber. Rather than moving from flexibility to rigidity because of some psychological flaw, Hoover maintained a position that was consistently in line with his class ideology, one shared by other sectors of the public, including most of the business community. As an administrator of emergency relief he used aid to buttress autocratic capitalist governments and armies, while starving out revolutionary governments and movements in Central and Eastern Europe, yielding very little even in the face of repeated criticisms from Congress and the press.

The man who could assist the likes of General von der Goltz and General Yudenich would have no trouble ordering General MacArthur to drive out the unarmed Bonus March veterans, in an action that left

two killed and many wounded. The man who, for political reasons, could withhold funds from starving populations in Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia, could, for political reasons, deny relief to U.S. workers. Having fought but a decade before against socialist revolutions in Austria, Hungary, the Baltics, and Russia, President Hoover was not about to introduce what he and many of his supporters considered to be insidious forms of socialism at home. (Even here, Hoover's "characterological rigidity" gave way to political expediency when, faced with a national election, he belatedly moved in the direction of federal relief in the summer of 1932.)

In sum, the mystery about Hoover's character—when placed in a fuller context of political data—appears not to be a mystery at all. Herbert Hoover was very much a political animal. Unyielding and uncompromising he could be, but this pattern was evident from the earliest days of his public career, and in a politically consistent manner. The "pragmatic miracle worker" who supposedly was suddenly beset by a compulsion when in the White House was all along a hard-line, anti-Communist, multimillionaire conservative, who operated in an ideologically consistent way, taking positions that even today are not unfamiliar ones among sectors of U.S. political leadership. On behalf of the things he believed in and cherished, Hoover knew what he was doing.⁷ Once again we see that the psychological explanation achieves plausibility only by slighting, rather than explaining, important political realities.

Reversing Lasswell: The political affects the personal

Making explicit reference to Lasswell, Wolfenstein argues for a connection between personality and politics. To deny such a linkage is to maintain that "political participants are people who live in two unconnected psychic worlds, that of their childhood and private life and that of their public life" (Wolfenstein 1967, 164). To be sure, it is not unreasonable to think a connection exists between the personal and the political, but must it be the one set down by Lasswell? The Lasswellian model assumes that since childhood antedates adulthood it creates a more compelling and enduring nexus than the experiences of adult life. This presumed progression from apolitical-formative childhood to political-reactive adulthood treats the individual as the generic entity, a notion compatible with the liberal model of the market society as an aggregation of individuals acting out their desires and demands, thereby shaping the larger reality in accordance with their private desires.

But what is primary in time sequence is not necessarily primary in formative power. Chronological primacy may not be a sure indication of an affecting primacy. For many important political phenomena one might do better to reverse the Lasswellian formula and argue that the causal progression goes the other way. For instance, there are numerous studies indicating that the anxieties generated during times of nuclear escalation and cold war confrontations penetrate the unconscious minds of children in the United States, investing many youngsters with unnervingly pessimistic prognoses about humanity's survival (Beardslee and Mack 1982, 1983; Yudkin 1984; Escalona 1965). Other political developments like recession, unemployment, poverty, loss of family income, police repression, political assassination, and war have a discernible impact on the psychic dispositions of whole populations of adults and children (Brenner 1973; Bernstein 1970; Brown and Harris 1978).

To posit an apolitical childhood as the crucial antecedent to political adulthood is to ignore the fact that childhood is likely to be no more apolitical than the rest of life. That U.S. children are not usually active in political life does not mean they are insulated from its formative effects. In fact, they undergo an early political and ideological socialization from television, movies, grade school, community, and from the social experiences and prejudices to which they are exposed in the family itself. Much of the political socialization literature indicates that the family is far from apolitical and that it has an important impact on political loyalties—not through the circuitous route of a psychopathological ontology but more directly as a socializing mediator of political opinions, social images, gender roles, racial attitudes, and class values.

All this suggests that *socialization* and *internalization* rather than displacement and rationalization may be the crucial mechanisms linking private and public worlds. Putting Lasswell in reverse, our formula might read: $P \rightarrow s \rightarrow i = p$. Political forces, P , have a socializing effect, s , on individuals who through a process of internalization, i , embrace particular images and interests of political life so that these become compelling components of their private motives, p . I submit that the explanatory power of this model is greater and less mysterious than the Lasswellian one. In the spirit of Occam's razor it requires one to make fewer and less embellished assumptions and it is supported by more readily manifest evidence and by interpretations devoid of the attenuated extrapolations found in psychopolitics. Rather than reducing complex social configurations to intrapsychic motives, the alternate

model recognizes that neither individuals nor their families antedate the social reality into which they are born.

To demonstrate that things political affect things personal does not mean that Lasswell's formula is without application, but it does raise questions about theories that deny or thoroughly minimize the powerful socializing forces of political life itself. We might challenge any formula that treats family and childhood as existing in a prepolitical vacuum.

For politics

My intent here has not been to call for the elimination of political psychology. Greenstein (1967) notes areas in which personality can have relevance for the study of politics. He asserts, following Inkeles (1963), that there is a great deal of evidence suggesting that particular institutional statuses attract or recruit particular personalities. But there is also evidence suggesting that institutionally defined roles and statuses will prefigure individual behavior and that persons of different personalities will act in roughly similar ways given prescribed modes of performance and other institutional imperatives (Parenti 1978). Focusing too closely on personality causes us to overlook the wider institutional imperatives of power and interest that shape our options and our performances. But a purely structuralist view leaves out the crucial role that individual personalities or group psychology might play. In other words, we should have no argument with Greenstein and others when they assert that differing personalities may under certain circumstances effect different outcomes in social and political interplays.

But it is one thing to say that personality may affect political reality—who can deny the impact of a Lenin or a Gandhi?—and quite something else to argue that political actors, both leaders and masses, are really displacing upon the manifest content of political life their unresolved hidden psychological agendas. It is this latter assertion that I have taken to task without wishing to dismiss in toto the role of psychological factors in the timing, formulation, and expression of political actions. After doing correlations of political, social, and psychological attitudes, Sutherland and Tannenbaum conclude that:

political scientists who study mass political preferences in relation to "basic" personality dimensions###are mining an area of negligible potential.###Political preferences will more likely be shown to arise from rationally held "cognitions" about

how society itself functions, than from deep seated personality needs ###. It seems obvious that “personologists” in political science have been hasty in focusing on supposed universal effects of “personality” variables like political efficacy and authoritarianism, which have turned out on reflection to be class-based. (1984, 177, 194)

Yet these authors (and I) refuse to jettison all of political psychology. They do not deny its value but urge that our research try “to link particular environments with particular personality predispositions, with social views, and with political views and actions.” (196).

In sum, psychopolitics tends to reduce large social phenomena to simple personal causalities. It is reductionist, although in a tortuously indirect manner, for psychopolitics takes an elaborately convoluted path, preferring explanations that are far removed from the events and realities to which the explanations are directed. Psychopolitics tends to underplay manifest content. It is simplistic in its interpretation yet highly esoteric and rarified in the nature of the evidence (or nonevidence) upon which it rests. At the heart of all psychologistic explanations is the denial of Occam’s razor. The direct cut is never made.

In reversing Lasswell I am not claiming that the formative causality goes only from the political to the private but that we give a new definition to the private, recognizing its social dimensions. Certainly people are not passive absorbents of politico-economic forces. People synthesize, challenge, and even create anew their social experience. All I am saying is that the existing literature on psychopolitics is too deeply flawed to be of much help in telling us what to think about the role of the psyche in politics.

Having taken note of the inaccessibility of reliable data and the plenitude of questionable interpretations, both in the science of depth psychology and in its political applications, and having noted the tenuous and seemingly arbitrary linkage of causalities, the way sweeping conclusions might rest on frail suppositions, and the way political data are slighted, we might be forgiven if we choose not to tread the path opened by the practitioners of psychopolitics. They promised us a secret garden and instead gave us a swamp.

Berkeley, California

NOTES

1. Fifty-nine years after Lasswell made this observation, the American Psychiatric Press published a four-volume reference work intended as a manual for treatment. It contains contributions by more than four hundred experts, mostly psychiatrists, and seems close to being the body of documents that Lasswell thought specialists should have available for consultation in order to resolve their differences about clinical treatment (Task Force on Treatments and Psychiatric Disorders 1989). But even before the work appeared it evoked heated controversy, including complaints from various psychologists who believed certain theories were slighted and new approaches would be discouraged. The manual was published with a disclaimer saying that it was not an official publication of the American Psychiatric Association (Goleman 1989).

2. The same problem of dubious data exists for psychohistory as well as psychopolitics. Thus we are warned about “the inherent evidentiary problems of psychohistory: the difficulty of gathering data on childhood; the resultant danger of circular reasoning in hypothesizing antecedents from adult words and actions; the absence of personal contact enjoyed by the psychoanalyst; the misuse of subjectivity; the danger of reductionism; the question of whether psychoanalytic theory is valid for other times and places (and, indeed, whether the application of any contemporary model can illuminate the special mentalities of earlier periods)” (Cocks and Crosby 1987, x).

3. For a much different view of Lenin’s adult personality see the contemporary portraits by Krupskaya 1960 and Trotsky 1971.

4. See for instance, Wolfenstein 1967, Chesen 1973, Abrahamsen 1977, Brodie 1973, Clinch 1973, Mazlish 1972. For a critique of Clinch and Mazlish, see Cole 1987, 96–99, 102–04. Barber (1972), to be treated in the pages to follow, is, I believe, one of the stronger efforts in political psychology. Another work worthy of respectful attention, but deserving of some of the same criticisms made herein, is George and George 1964; see the critiques of George and George in Tucker 1977 and in Weinstein, Anderson, and Link 1978–79 and the response by George and George 1981–82, all reprinted in Cocks and Crosby 1987.

5. The assertion that presidents as ostensibly different in personality as Wilson, Nixon, Johnson, and Hoover are “strikingly similar in character” (Barber 1973) raises a question about the use of “character” as a psychological construct and its relation to personality. If we think of “personality” in the lay sense to mean the observable expressions of temperament and attitude, and “character” in the more clinical sense of “the form of the typical reaction” used by individuals to mediate reality and psychic conflict (Reich 1949), or the enduring and early developed structured “stance toward life” (Barber 1972, 10), then the claim that these four rather different presidential personalities are of similar character is not an impossible one. But it could be established only by an in-depth character analysis of all four presidents, something that of course has not been done. Barber’s character typology deals not only with surface manifestations of activity-passivity and positive negative expressions but

deeper psychodynamic patterns. As George points out, “the data are not always good” in supporting Barber’s contention that a particular presidential style also contains the deeper psychodynamics that Barber associates with it (George 1974, 251). Both Lasswell and Barber sometimes emphasize the biographical specificity of some displaced and rationalized childhood sentiment or experience, and other times refer to the habituated, structured modes of response that are what Wilhelm Reich called the individual’s “characterological” way of mediating between outer life and inner self (Reich 1969). In a word, the political psychologists are dealing with both developmental psychology and ego adaptive psychology, relying now on the idiosyncratic features of the individual’s psychic history and now on the generalizable forms of character defenses. Greenstein (1975) notes that these are interrelated but conceptually separate approaches. But as applied to political psychobiographies it is not always clear why and when it should be one or the other.

6. Hoover eventually did offer relief to Soviet Russia during the famine of 1921, a move designed to undermine the Bolshevik government “in a form more devious than frank counterrevolution” (Filene 1967, 78). Hoover believed that the Bolsheviks were about to lose their grip on the reins of power. The hope was that some large international relief body would be able to take over economic control in Soviet Russia, in what became known as a “bread intervention” (Weissman 1974, 44–45, 49–51). In a memorandum to President Wilson (one that seems remarkably contemporary in its counterinsurgency approach), Hoover demonstrated that the containment of communism was uppermost in his mind. He mapped out how aid might serve to moderate the militancy of a new revolutionary government, especially “after bitter experience has taught the economic and social follies of present [revolutionary] obsessions” (Fisher 1927, 11–14). Within two years after the food program began, when it became evident that the Soviets were not about to collapse or be subverted, Hoover abruptly canceled all aid to Russia while continuing to assist conservative regimes in Austria, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

7. That Hoover acted rationally does not mean he acted infallibly. It certainly can be argued that subsequent events demonstrated how wrong he and his supporters were about both economic conditions and the popular mood.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrahamsen, David. *Nixon vs. Nixon: An Emotional Tragedy*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.
- Allport, Gordon. Review in *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 45 (1950): 173–74.
- Barber, James David. *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House*. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1972.

- . “The Things We Might Have Seen.” *New York Times*, 8 Nov. 1973.
- Beardslee, W., and J. Mack. “The Impact on Children and Adolescents of Nuclear Developments.” In *Psychological Aspects of Nuclear Developments*. Task Force Report no. 20, Spring 1982. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association.
- . “Adolescents and the Threat of Nuclear War.” *Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 56 (1983): 79–91.
- Bernstein, Irving. *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920–1933*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1970.
- Bettelheim, Bruno. Testimony before Special House Education Subcommittee. Reported in *New York Daily News*, 21 Mar. 1969.
- Brenner, M. Harvey. *Mental Illness and the Economy*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1973.
- Brodie, Fawn M. *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate History*. New York: Norton, 1973.
- Brown, George W., and Tirril Harris. *Social Origins of Depression: A Study of Psychiatric Disorder in Women*. New York: Free Press, 1978.
- Chesen, Eli. S. *President Nixon’s Psychological Profile: A Psychodynamic-Genetic Interpretation*. New York: P. H. Wyden, 1973.
- Clinch, Nancy G. *The Kennedy Neurosis: A Psychological Portrait of an American Dynasty*. New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1973.
- Cocks, Geoffrey, and Travis L. Crosby, eds. *Psycho/History: Readings in the Method of Psychology, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1987.
- Cole, Robert. “On Psychohistory.” In *Psycho/History*. See Cocks and Crosby 1987.
- Escalona, S. “Children and the Threat of Nuclear War.” In *Behavioral Science and Human Survival*, edited by Milton Schwebel. Palo Alto, Calif.: Science and Behavioral Books, 1965.
- Eysenck, Hans J. *Uses and Abuses of Psychology*. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1953.
- Feuer, Lewis S. *The Conflict of Generations*. New York: Basic Books, 1969.
- Filene, Peter G. *Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917–1933*. Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1967.
- Fisher, Harold H. *The Famine in Soviet Russia, 1919–1923: The Operations of the American Relief Administration*. Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1927.
- George, Alexander L. “Assessing Presidential Character.” *World Politics* 26 (1974): 234–82.

- George, Alexander L., and Juliette L. George. *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study*. New York: Dover, 1964.
- . “Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Reply to Weinstein, Anderson, and Link.” *Political Science Quarterly* 96 (1981/82): 641:65.
- Goleman, Daniel. “Manual on Treatment Under Professional Fire.” *New York Times*, 14 Dec. 1989.
- Greenstein, Fred I. “The Impact of Personality on Politics: An Attempt to Clear Away Underbrush.” *American Political Science Review* 61 (1967): 629–41.
- . *Personality and Politics*. 2d ed. New York: Norton, 1975.
- Hamill, John. *The Strange Career of Mr. Hoover under Two Flags*. New York: William Faro, 1931.
- Inkeles, Alex. “Sociology and Psychology.” In *Psychology: A Study of a Science*, edited by Sigmond Koch. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.
- Knox, John. *The Great Mistake. Can Herbert Hoover Explain His Past?* Revised ed. Baltimore: Grace Press, 1932.
- Krupskaya, Nadezhda K. *Reminiscences of Lenin*. New York: International Publishers, 1960.
- Lasswell, Harold. D. *Psychopathology and Politics*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1930.
- . *Power and Personality*. New York: Norton, 1948.
- Liggett, Walter. W. *The Rise of Herbert Hoover*. New York: H. K. Fly, 1932.
- Mazlish, Bruce. *In Search of Nixon: A Psychohistorical Inquiry*. New York: Basic Books, 1972.
- Mills, C. Wright. *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1959.
- Parenti, Michael. *Power and the Powerless*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978.
- Piven, Frances F., and Richard A. Cloward. *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage, 1979.
- Porshnev, Boris F. *Social Psychology and History*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970.
- Reich, Wilhelm. *Character Analysis*. 3d ed. New York: Noonday Press, 1969.
- Rogow, Arnold. Review of *The Revolutionary Personality*, by E. Victor Wolfenstein. In *American Political Science Review* 62 (1968): 604–6.
- Rycroft, Charles. *Wilhelm Reich*. New York: Viking Press, 1971.

- Sayers, Michael, and Albert E. Kahn. *The Great Conspiracy*. San Francisco: Proletarian Publishers, 1946.
- Sutherland, S., and Tannenbaum, E. "Irrational Versus Rational Bases of Political Preference." *Political Psychology* 5 (1984): 173–97.
- Szasz, Thomas S. *The Myth of Mental Illness: Foundations of a Theory of Personal Conduct*. Revised ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1974.
- Task Force on Treatments and Psychiatric Disorders. *Treatment of Psychiatric Disorders*. 4 vols. Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1969.
- Trotsky, Leon. *Lenin: Notes for a Biographer*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1971.
- Tucker, Robert C. "The Georges' Wilson Reexamined: An Essay on Psychobiography." *American Political Science Review* 71 (1977): 606–18.
- Warren, Harris G. *Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression*. New York: Norton, 1959.
- Weinstein, Edwin, James W. Anderson, and Arthur Link. "Woodrow Wilson's Political Personality: A Reappraisal." *Political Science Quarterly* 93 (1978/79): 585–98.
- Weissman, Benjamin M. *Herbert Hoover and Famine Relief to Soviet Russia, 1921–1923*. Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1974.
- Wolfenstein, E. Victor. *The Revolutionary Personality: Lenin, Trotsky, Gandhi*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967.
- Yudkin, M. "When Kids Think the Unthinkable." *Psychology Today* (Apr. 1984): 18–25.

REPLACES AD PAGE.

REPLACES AD PAGE.

Marxists as Teachers

A Focus on Dialectics: A Review Essay

Dialectical Materialism: Its Laws, Categories, and Practice. By Ira Gollobin. New York: Petras Press, 1986, 608 pages, cloth \$30.00, paper \$13.00.

1. This is a book to be used, and Ira Gollobin tells us by whom and what for. He opens with a chapter on why workers should learn scientific philosophy. Good question. Why should they, when most of them never heard of it? We shall expect an answer in the way the author develops that philosophy.

And Gollobin closes with a chapter on what for. The goal of philosophy is wisdom, the unity of knowledge and value. This is inspiring; when was the last time we read about such an aim?

Between the first and last chapters are some four hundred pages of exposition of the three laws of dialectics and their many interrelated categories. And every exposition is an argument. Gollobin first traces the prescientific development of a category, which often contains seeds that will flower later. Then he takes up the scientific view, the most correct and comprehensive knowledge of the topic we presently have. Finally, he considers current antiscientific views, those which he feels separate knowledge from value, which mystify the goal of philosophy. So when Gollobin calls dialectical materialism a scientific philosophy, he means it. He places philosophy within a revolutionary tradition that aims to bring the findings of the various sciences, the arts, and more into its philosophy.

And he does. One of the most astonishing delights of this book is the great range of materials Gollobin has brought into his exposition, drawn from many people over many centuries, and from all over the world. In *Nature, Society, and Thought*, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

an author's introduction, he apologizes for slighting Asia and Africa, but he need not apologize. This book was composed by moonlight over thirty-five years by a man who was occupied full-time as a lawyer and civil rights activist. Others will fill in what he began. As it stands, Gollobin's range is already enormous, his writing is clear, and his care for each example is evident.

This wealth of riches has a cumulative effect, placing readers inside a world of people who have struggled for this philosophical knowledge. It gives readers courage (at least I found this to be so) in the struggle to think for themselves—an important achievement.

It is not only the wealth of examples that is impressive, but also the way Gollobin handles the problems that the subject matter presents for teaching. Dialectical materialism is a philosophy to be practiced; that means in learning it too. What it is about and how it is taught cannot be neatly separated. It is in handling such problems that one can see Gollobin thinking on the page. An especially fine example is chapter 5, which he devotes to developing a transition to the first law of dialectics, the unity and conflict of opposites (chapter 6).

One of the most difficult tasks in teaching anything is to develop transitions, so that in the movement of our minds in learning the material we become aware of the movement of the material itself. It is these transitions, more than anything else, that lead us to experience materialism, to feel our mental activity *working inside matter*. And to feel the dialectical movement of our process of work Gollobin cites Lenin: "Ordinary imagination grasps difference and contradiction, but not the *transition* from one to the other; *this however is the most important*" (Lenin's emphasis).

In his examples, his transitions, and his evident feeling that philosophy matters to working people, Gollobin succeeds in bringing the reader into the philosophical world of his concern. What kind of a world is it?

2. The most interesting fact about this book as a whole is the proportion of its parts. Gollobin opens his philosophical exposition with two dozen pages on materialism, followed by 350 pages on dialectics. He concludes with a dozen pages on dialectical materialism as a whole, followed by a summation of two dozen pages on wisdom.

In short, here is a book called *Dialectical Materialism* that is almost all about dialectics. As we already mentioned, Gollobin devotes creative effort to expounding the laws of dialectics. But where are the laws of materialism? Are there none? Yet Gollobin calls materialism "foundational," the basis of the whole philosophy. If so, why is there so little to say about it?

The whole account gives an impression a bit like Aristotle's view of fertilization: the "passive egg" of materialism is necessary, to be sure. But it is boring in itself; it must be "inseminated with the sperm" of dialectics to make it move.

There seems to be a widely shared prejudice that materialism is the "easy part"; the "hard part" is dialectics. Everybody starts life as a spontaneous materialist, but nobody starts as a spontaneous dialectician. Dialectics takes depth. Materialism is there for the taking, dialectics requires a long struggle to acquire.

We should not be so sure. Has anybody remembered that the emotions are a great garden, if not a jungle, of dialectics? Where is the emotion without its opposite? And not any old opposite, but *its* opposite. Where is the emotion that cannot, under the proper conditions, *turn into* its opposite? Why is the hairline between the comic and the tragic so delicate—and so dangerous? And why is it, as Spinoza wrote, that love betrayed may turn into a hate *greater* than the former love? Where did that that "greater" come from? Where do we most profoundly experience contradiction?

This point is not trivial, for the emotions are central to Gollobin's goal of wisdom. They are the foundation of values, one of the two great constituents of wisdom. For Gollobin, wisdom is composed of "knowledge structured in logic (the outcome of the constructive development of the intellect) and values (structured in the constructive development of the emotions)."

There is no ground for the prejudice that materialism is easy and dialectics is hard. Both are easy, both are hard. Where, then, does this prejudice come from that about materialism there is so little to say?

3. To look for the answer, we can start with what Gollobin does say about materialism in his two dozen pages. He locates materialism within its perennial struggle with idealism, over the relation of human consciousness to the world. And he holds a classical formulation of materialism: there is an objective world outside us, independent of our thought.

But there is something peculiar with the terms of the debate itself, the relation of consciousness to the world. For, first of all, humans are *bodies*. We were bodies at our phylogenetic beginning, and every baby shows us we still are. Above all, we are *walking-handling bodies*, and there are no other kinds of bodies on earth like that.

We do not move like salamanders or cows, or even chimps, though we find great fun in imitating their movements. We do not *move around in the world* like them. We do not *move material* around in the world like them. We do not move *other human bodies* around like

them. We do not even give birth like them; the women have recently reminded us that we've almost forgotten what we *do* do, ever since Louis XIV had his birthing mistress immobilized on a table so he could have a better view.

If we did move like other animals, one could see a justification for starting philosophy with the question of the relation of human consciousness to the world, for then we would have to look for the source of consciousness elsewhere than in these movements. If we did—but we don't.

The singularity of the human body as a specific level of organization of material motion in the physical world is largely absent from our philosophy, dialectical materialism included. Gollobin has a few sociological remarks on the head and the hands—characteristically omitting the feet—but the human body does not enter his *philosophy*; it has no effect on its categories. We hear a bit about the human body in historical materialism, but not in dialectical materialism, and I believe that is the reason why, presently, they don't hang together.

Recall how central to Gollobin's goal of wisdom is emotion, feeling. We argued that people are just as much spontaneous dialecticians as they are spontaneous materialists. Here we come full circle—better, full spiral. Where would we begin to look for emotions if we did not look for human bodies? Emotion is embodied; it exists as a specifically human form of material movement. Emotion is not called e-motion for nothing.

From these specific capacities and necessities of bodily movement arises the specific form of human activity in the physical world: labor. Labor is our species-specific form of the *way we are in nature*. We are in nature *as labor*. We are *in labor*. And it is in labor that consciousness arises.

But not everybody is in labor, not since the beginning of exploitation, and this is the clue to the disappearance of the human body from philosophy. Who took it out? Those who took themselves out of the body's characteristic activity in nature, who took their bodies out of labor. It will then *seem* that the philosophical problem is the relation of consciousness to the world.

From this alienation from labor, this escape from labor in nature arises the philosophy of idealism, of a consciousness outside nature, and outside the human body. This is a transition to the view, of course, that nature itself is but an idea. But it is the transition that is important, for it shows us that there is a form of *alienated materialism* too. And it lies precisely in that "outsidedness."

A materialism that does not *begin* with human bodies and with their singular form of movement in nature—in short, that does not begin with physical labor—is an alienated materialism. It is the materialism Gollobin has inherited. This is why he finds so little to say about it; the more one tries, the less one can. Then there is no choice but to pass materialism by. This is just what we see in *Dialectical Materialism: Its Laws, Categories, and Practice*.

In a number of places Gollobin notes the historical function of idealism for the class rule by those outside labor over those inside it. But he does not discuss how our bodily existence inside labor-in-nature *is reflected and developed within the philosophy* of dialectical materialism; how its laws and its categories elaborate just this form of our existence.

Surely this is the only convincing answer to the question of why workers should study scientific philosophy.

4. Once we put the body back into labor, and labor back into philosophy, there is a great deal to say about materialism. Just for a start, we can reexamine its classical proposition. Is there an objective world outside the body and independent of it? Yes, but that is only the *way it appears to the body*. It is the body's realist epistemology, its subjective dialectics. It is just a beginning, but from this beginning we can arrive at the objective reality that it reflects.

Gollobin reminds us that the very word *epistemology* comes from the Greek "to stand upon." Good, let us stand, let us walk, and what does it show us? We walk *in* something, in the city, in the factory, in the forest. *In*. This notion of *inside* is central to materialism. There is a real world which *we are inside, and on which we depend*. We all experience this dependence when we lose our footing—or our jobs. This is the materialist ontology that our realist epistemology reflects,

If we study this proposition, we can see that we do not have to "inseminate" materialism with dialectics. *The fundamental proposition of materialism is dialectical from the beginning*, for the notion of "inside" is a notion of inclusion, of parts and wholes. And the notion of "depends on" is a notion of active relation. This is the beginning of dialectical materialism but hardly the end. Without the human body, without labor, all this becomes invisible.

5. Gollobin's omission of labor from philosophy bears directly on the topic to which he makes a genuine substantive contribution: the dialectics of the subject. A check of the index shows that he draws on six sources far more than any others: Hegel, Marx, Engels, Lenin, Mao, and the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Piaget left an immense body of

work, most of it translated into English, and Gollobin has read just about all of it. He threads this work on the development of children's cognition through almost every topic in treating its prescientific stage, but in the dialectics of the subject, he draws on it to characterize its scientific stage of development as well.

This is an important contribution, and to the best of my knowledge, a unique one. Every teacher, in any field, who has been touched by Piaget will find his work placed here in a broader context of Marxist philosophy. This is reason enough to read this book.

But Gollobin's philosophical neglect of labor leads him to use Piaget's experimental results without clarifying the limitations of his basic categories, something a scientific philosophy should try to do. Piaget's fundamental concepts—equilibrium, interaction, accommodation, assimilation, etc.—are grounded in a logic of biological exchange, a logic of circulation, not of production. And so they lack just those logical features grounded in social labor that give to consciousness its specifically human form.

For this reason, Piaget can partially show us how the *products* of human history become the possession of the child, but not the *process by which such products are made*. He cannot put history into the child because he cannot put the child into history.

It is too bad that Gollobin does not draw on the work of Soviet psychology associated with the names of Vygotsky, Leontyev, and Luria, for this is just what they tried to do. Theirs was the first effort in the history of psychology to put the labor process at the center of the study of the mind. As Vygotsky put it, they took the stone which had been neglected and made it into their foundation. Of course, the Soviet school only made a beginning, but it is a beginning we need for a dialectics of the subject.

6. The development of a philosophical materialism appropriate to our conditions ought to get more attention than it does. The local habitat, the planetary one, the problems of human bodies and what they actually do—all the problems that demand a philosophical reinsertion of space into time—call for a further development of materialism.

One of the virtues of Gollobin's book is that he reminds us of how much Lenin has to offer us. Lenin was the first *global* thinker of the twentieth century, perhaps the first ever. He grasped both the social and material concreteness of the planet from the point of view of changing it. His philosophical legacy is found not only in what he wrote about philosophy, but in all his writing, and in his practice.

I believe it was Lenin's great philosophical insight to see the

twentieth-century struggle for materialism. For it was matter that was being destroyed on a global scale by capital. Capital's endless destruction of the material world found its philosophical expression in the endless deconstruction of the concept of matter.

Any materialism today must be ecologically adequate. Lenin has an ecology, but we have to look into his *Imperialism* to find it. He anticipated the closure of the world and the intensification of its contradictions. All this is happening today, inscribed in physical nature. It is time for philosophy to go forward to Lenin.

7. Now we can come back to Gollobin's first question. Why should working men and women study dialectical materialism? Because it is theirs. Because it belongs to them and should be returned to them. For it arises as a reflection of the singular process of human bodies: labor in nature. Working men and women are within this process, they depend on it for their existence, and all the rest of us depend on them for ours.

And it is through reflection on this process that the goal of wisdom becomes possible. Wisdom is the philosophical expression of the real process of bodily creation, in labor, of value. A theory of wisdom is a philosophical generalization of a labor theory of value.

8. I owe a real debt to this book. It would not do to write a polite, pleasant tribute to the philosophical moonlighting of a man who has battled the bourgeoisie in the courtroom for half a century. Nor would it do to score some philosophical debating point. Philosophy is too important to be left to the philosophers. Mao understood that and so does Gollobin. And so I had to struggle with this book to write this review. It has been worth the struggle; I hope everyone does it. Gollobin deserves our thanks for his political and his philosophical labors.

Bill Livant

Department of Psychology (retired)
University of Regina

REPLACES AD PAGE.

Book Reviews

Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare: Literature, Institution, Ideology in the United States. By Michael D. Bristol. New York: Routledge, 1990, 240 pages, cloth \$42.50, paper \$13.95.

For the first time the prospect of demonstrating that Shakespeare in the shape of a national institution serves hegemonic states in the maintenance of their political power becomes more than notional: Bristol approaches the Shakespeare Establishment with murderous intent.

Bristol argues that Shakespeare is an American institution, defined as "an organization, a structure, or a codification of social practice" (3), and as such is central to American culture. That he "represents durable literary value" has been offered as "natural fact"; that Shakespeare's reception in America presupposes "an identification of his work with cultural goodness, wise teaching, and civilization" (1) is an unquestioned premise. All this, Bristol shows, gives support to present-day U.S. economic and political hegemony. He argues that Shakespeare's works "are included in the general curriculum of socialization because they are a codification both of norms and of practical consciousness within a political economy based on individualistic social ideals. Shakespeare as an institution or significant practice in the United States thus has a long-term continuity in that it helps to valorize those ideals."

He argues further that "the interpretation of Shakespeare and the interpretation of American political culture are mutually determining practices." Those who study or enjoy Shakespeare share in this institutional ethos. Shakespeare validates the political institutions that valorize the Shakespeare project. The relationship is symbiotic, mutually beneficial. To love Shakespeare confers high cultural respectability, and she or he who does so possesses an aura of humanistic good will, intellectual competence, and refined taste that induces respect, invites esteem and emulation, and commands obedience, which is the purpose

Nature, Society, and Thought, vol. 5, no. 2 (1992)

of the whole project in the first place. The president of a powerful capitalist country in Europe who chooses to occupy a conspicuous box at the annual performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with its hymn to brotherly love cannot be bad even if he regrets his inability to effectuate a moratorium on a loan to a third world country, where the interest on the debt consumes almost the entire GNP and everyone except the rich is hungry.

Bristol selects out for critical examination certain scholars, editors, and curators who explicitly articulate this institutional ethos. The "latter also reveal the operation of an institutional pathos, or structure of feeling prompted by underlying social contradictions that Shakespeare presumably helps to reconcile" (3). Here, I imagine, Bristol has carefully chosen the word "reconcile"—not the same as *to solve* "the underlying social contradictions," which, like the tragic, are always with us. To allow a didactic function in Shakespeare is precisely what these institutionalists accuse Marxists of wanting to find in art. Reconciliation, as reformers have long been telling us, is much better than solution. In any case, it's not Marxist.

Feminist criticism differs in that it takes issue with the patriarchalism of the text, and "as in other types of critical social theory, it is imperative to work against cultural tradition and to reveal its ideological character rather than simply promote loyalty to it" (7). In a context in which he indicates some of the complexity of the critique of any institution, in this case Emerson's notion that Shakespeare is the founder or creator of a specifically American individuality and collective life (3), Bristol examines the argument that to critique Shakespeare is aberrant, since it implies that "Shakespeare might be something to become emancipated from rather than something to be emancipated by" (5). It would follow, then, that if Shakespeare's writing contains a constitutive patriarchalism that puts women at a serious disadvantage, including masculine sexual harassment and violence, the patriarchalism should be exposed and perhaps the plays not performed. Shakespeare thus becomes something to be emancipated from.

This analysis recalls John Berger's emphatic statement that "art is *not* timeless," and that "only if we recognize the mortality of art, shall we cease to stand in such superstitious awe of it—only then shall we consider art expendable and so have the courage to risk using it for our own immediate, urgent, only important purposes" (*Permanent Red* [1960], 142). The implications of Berger's plea are startling. What is implied is not only that we should use art for our own immediate purposes, but that when it can no longer be so used, we should forget it, just as Thomas Aquinas as a living philosopher has been forgotten by

all except a cranky few. The performance of old plays, including Shakespeare's, becomes pointless. It might thus be argued that Shakespeare's history plays are today irrelevant as politics because the political problems of the past on which they comment were resolved in the civil war of 1640 with the establishment of parliamentary democracy and universal suffrage. Similarly, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a comment on patriarchal marriage and the nature of sexuality is pointless for us in view of the decay of patriarchal marriage and the emergence of scientific theories of human sexuality. Bottom as Golden Ass was less clear to the Elizabethans than to the Romans, quite apart from the consideration that neither Dr. Timothy Bright nor Robert Burton are the last words on heroic love and its pathological states. In this project of determining the viability of past art, Bristol's book is a major achievement.

My discussion here gives, I hope, some indication of the hard-hitting nature of the book and the thinking it induces. It is, accordingly, one that should be read by everyone.

The book is divided into two parts: 1) Shakespearizing America: The Institutional Infrastructure, and 2) Americanizing Shakespeare: Critical Discourse and Ideology. It begins with a critique of traditional humanist scholarship, which includes a discussion of what scholarship is in the first place, though it does not extend into a discussion of modern intellectuals in their academic environment, and ends with a discussion of the significance of the attempts to establish an authoritative text. The second part begins with a discussion of Ralph Waldo Emerson's efforts to establish Shakespeare as a representative man: the analysis and celebration of individuality and of the values of expressive autonomy (123), and ends with a detailed and subtle critique of the work of critics like Stanley Cavell, Richard Levin, and Stephen Greenblatt.

Then comes a short coda in which Bristol quotes the Soviet Shakespearean Alexander Anixt (by some editorial fluke misidentified as A. Smirnov) to the effect that Shakespeare was not an apologist of the ideology of the nobility but that he expressed the progressive tendencies of the democratic strata of society. Bristol comments that these words from a Soviet scholar "may indeed evoke an exasperated and indignant response in view of the Stalinist model of socialism prevalent at the time [1959] Anixt wrote his essay." Bristol poses the pertinent and hard questions: "Are these descriptions of Shakespeare's democratic tendencies the expression of a deluded but persistent hope that the thwarted expectations of the October Revolution will at some future date be fulfilled? Is this simply a matter of complicity in the evils of

Stalinism, not the least of which is the composition of faked or distorted cultural history? Or is it a truthful and far-sighted intuition as to the historical meaning of Shakespeare here?" (210). And he concludes by arguing that Emerson's "Great Shakespeare"

belongs, for Americans at least, to a moment whose historical truth has been exhausted. The autopoietic subject, the isolated, self-determining consciousness that must always interact only with strangers has lost its social being; the critics I have discussed reveal very clearly that there is no longer any question of idealizing that subject. A cultural\intellectual dispensation oriented to the conservation of that experience of autopoiesis cannot envision any future for itself. (211)

The Anixt quotation shows that for Bristol the notion that Shakespeare serves the interests of class domination is not the whole story (61). The implicit claim that Shakespeare belongs to the people indicates the complexity of Bristol's critical analysis, although this position, recently argued by Kiernan Ryan, leaves Shakespeare as institution intact. Thus although not all questions are answered directly, they are raised, and some are answered by implication.

And the implications cannot be evaded. In all his analyses, whether of the "Political Economy of Scholarship" or of particular critical positions, Bristol shows the underlying values of the critics to be profoundly conservative politically, with all of the practitioners totally unaware of the fact that their views are egregiously tendentious. It is thus startling to see the assessment of the scholars whom one read assiduously as a student: Charles Mills Gayley as aggressive free enterpriser; Hardin Craig as genteel racist; A. O. Lovejoy as militant anticommunist in the McCarthy era. What one might forgive in the learned arrogance of the established Old Historicists cannot be forgiven in the New Historicists like Greenberg, Orgel, or Goldberg. If the Old Historicists were totally unaware of or antagonistic to Marx, the New Historicists cannot make such a claim. Consequently, Bristol can legitimately put Cavell, Levin, and Greenblatt under the rubric "Subversion and its Containment" when they come by a devious route to a position not unlike the Old Historicists, namely that the lower social strata may have something to complain about, but their position is one about which they can do nothing. This is perhaps another way of characterizing a modern form of the *trahison des clercs*, for are not all of these scholars in one way or another products of the Vietnam war and the popular resistance that brought the incursion to an end, and therefore should have learned better? John Dover Wilson may not have been

fully aware of the political function of English literature, but he was aware enough, as Terry Hawkes has shown, of the political conservatism of the curriculum.

There is much in the book with which one can disagree and argue: the whole discussion of the individual and collective author of the epic, with results that are similarly fruitless, which is not to say that the problem of the manner in which a people creates its myths, epics, or for that matter its literature, science, and political theory is unimportant; it is, rather, that here Bristol does not see the need to go beyond Louise Pound's irritation with the folklorists. The related discussion of the authentic text, based on a difficult analysis of what Bristol calls the "Deuteronomic program" is spread out over very many pages and does not come to so clear a conclusion as Bristol manages elsewhere—for example, with his discussion of tradition.

Bristol's discussion of the historicity of texts is part of a polemic against "the dispersal and disintegration of stable meanings" (114) such as we find in Stephen Orgel's discussion of *Hamlet*, picking up earlier denials, as by Jean Howard and Marion O'Connor (via Derrida) that there is a "true meaning" of an "unchanging text." They argue that critical interpretations or living performances "are the text: it lives in history, with history itself understood as a field of contestation" (*Shakespeare Reproduced* [1989], 4). In a complex argument Bristol insists on the historicity of texts, arguing that there is a difference between historicity and textuality (116). He also argues against Jonathan Goldberg's notion that because there are a multitude of determinations of a text it cannot have a determinate meaning (115). Bristol shows that while these arguments militate against the old textualist discussions of a Gregg, Pollard, Hinman, or Bowers, there is epistemologically nothing new in the modern bibliographical approach. Furthermore, the post-structuralist critic might join the new textual scholarship in combating the common enemy, namely, the carriers of the older notion of a humanist ethos of the exceptional subject and the curatorial preservation of priceless artistic values. But Bristol argues that while something might be gained here, a good deal is lost.

Over a period of many years that common enemy has exercised an autocratic control over many aspects of scholarly research, and it is understandable that many people might want to adopt the slogans of "free play" and "undecidability" as battle cries of a cultural resistance. But there are important negative consequences to this. The first is that if "all is permitted" then there are no grounds for maintaining that the overthrow of the humanistic dispensation constitutes any kind of progress, social,

intellectual or otherwise. Further, if everyone can “do his own text” so to speak, then what are the reasons for excluding a conflated text that claims to represent a “lost original”?#.#.#The alternatives of a rigid policing of the redemptive media and of a complete freedom that has no substantive social content seems in the end an absolutely futile and pointless dilemma. And indeed, hidden within these choices is the same tyranny of the exceptional private judgement, construed either as a sovereign, princely ego or as an equally sovereign principle of free expressivity. Both the doctrine of the ideal text/lost original and the doctrine of textual free play are regressive in that they reinstate the argument from authority, though in quite different ways. (117–18)

What this seems to suggest is that without a clearly stated method that includes the social position from which one is viewing matters, such a return to bourgeois individualism is inevitable.

The analysis of “The Function of the Archive” could have been shorter: much of the chapter is pedestrian and carries less critical clout than the chapters on the individual critics, which are very good indeed.

Bristol’s prose can at times be very trying; for example, in a critique of Jonathan Goldberg’s discussion of the historicity of a text, Bristol writes: “Nevertheless, the presence of indeterminate elements in the text sets a limit to the possibilities of such reification. The indeterminacies reveal that an indefinitely large number of concretizations could be actualized in real social time and space. However, it does not follow that a critical doctrine must be espoused that would accord equivalent ontological importance to those concretizations that could have existed or that might exist some day with those that have actually existed.” The ideas here are too important to be made very difficult to understand. If Bristol himself could not see that this type of prose will not do, then the editor was asleep at his\her word processor.

It is a pity that a good book, full of stimulating, even provocative ideas, should have an index that is almost useless. Also, Bristol has the annoying habit of blanket references: a statement is made in the text and the footnote refers to half a dozen books and articles that all too often have no page references. But this is a mere annoyance. Bristol’s is a book with a difference, and well worth having.

Leonard Goldstein
Zeuthen, Germany

Portions of this review appeared in *Shakespeare Jahrbuch* 128 (Weimar: Deutsche Shakespeare-Gesellschaft, 1992).

The IQ Mythology: Class, Race, Gender, and Inequality. By Elaine Mensh and Harry Mensh. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991, 228 pages, cloth, \$19.95.

The Menshes have written a book that purports to destroy the scientific mythology surrounding the use and formulation of IQ tests. To some degree they have succeeded. It is indeed necessary to condemn in the strongest terms the use of IQ testing in ways that reinforce racist stereotypes, and give pseudoscientific justification to the categorization of entire population groups as inferior. The use of such tests for categorizing and their employment for specific diagnostic purposes must be clearly distinguished. To the extent that this book aids in this clarification, it serves a useful purpose. It must be said, however, that the book is also philosophically naive, refuses to come to grips with much contemporary research, and is frequently nasty and unprincipled—attacking other authors by misrepresenting their claims or by quoting them out of proper context. It would not be unfair to regard it as a species of “left-wing infantilism” and, therefore, harmful to more legitimate work in this field written from a left, progressive perspective.

Consider the following exchange in an early chapter devoted to the original intentions of the founder of intelligence testing, Alfred Binet. The authors quote Stephen Jay Gould on Binet’s work as an attempt to “develop techniques for identifying those children whose lack of success in normal classrooms suggested the need for some form of special education” (20). They claim to find this description “ambiguous” and “difficult, if not impossible, to understand.” They wonder if Gould, and Binet, could mean that the tests are supposed to identify children who lacked success in school, and conclude: “Obviously not; they were already identified by their school performance. Could the purpose be to identify those requiring special education? “Apparently not; unsuccessful school performance, it seems, suggests a need for special education” (20).

There are two points here that the authors appear to have overlooked. The first is that lack of success in school might be the result of any number of factors. For example, it might simply reflect sheer laziness. No special education would be required; perhaps a little parental discipline might be all that would be needed. In other words, a test might well reveal whether a child was capable of doing scholastic work, but was simply lacking in motivation. Surely, such information would be useful.

Second, and far more seriously, the Menshes seem to have totally

overlooked the importance of time. The early identification of a child who is unable to profit from the regular curriculum would certainly be of enormous benefit not only to the school and to the parents, but to the child as well. Yet the authors claim to find it tautological that a test should want to measure a child's lack of success in school when the child's recorded poor performance in the classroom would already reveal the same information. Two chapters later they make the same absurd point: "There was no need for him [Binet] to identify children with scholastic difficulties, since these children had already been so identified by their grades" (45).

The point of testing, of course, is to find the problem *before* the child has wasted years in unsatisfactory performance. Simply because a test may measure a child's intellectual potential is no reason whatever to assume that it must be used to perpetuate social inequality. The Menshes appear to be blinded to these obvious truths since they are determined to see nothing at work within the testing but racism, sexism, and class oppression.

When Gould suggests that the proper use of "tests of the IQ type" (60) was helpful in diagnosing his son's learning disability, the Menshes imply that such a diagnosis carries no stigma for children of higher socioeconomic status—as if this highly dubious remark had anything to do with the value or lack of value of the test itself! They then go on to suggest that learning disability is frequently simply "attention deficits—or, properly speaking, lack of attention in class" (61). They suggest further that the attention deficit may mean not that there is something wrong with the child, but that there is something wrong with the school. They then state that school authorities shun such a conclusion and that this indicates that "the learning disability thesis is yet another means for carrying out###the systematic misclassification of black children as retarded" (61).

What a distance the Menshes travel in less than two pages! Gould's remark that the proper use of intelligence testing may reveal learning disabilities is met not with any argument that this claim might be mistaken—and certainly no citation of any appropriate research—but with a series of meandering twists that end up with their usual refrain that any such testing always leads to racist conclusions. One wonders: in a society that had done away with all social inequality would there be no learning disabilities?

Or consider their critique of Cole's use of the concept of cultural relativism. Cole maintains that the intellectual and reasoning powers of a culture should not be compared to U.S. or European thought processes, but should be understood within the context of the culture being

studied. His intent is clearly and explicitly to reverse and deny cultural imperialism. The Menshes invert and twist Cole's logic by asserting that this would mean the acceptance of the racist culture of white South Africans. Having turned Cole's anti-ethnocentric and anti-imperialist position against him, they are then able to assert that all cultures are clearly not equal, but that the thought processes, the cognitive processes, of all peoples are universal (121–22).

But how do we know this? The Menshes offer not a shred of evidence that this is so. No research, typically, is ever discussed. They simply assert that the cognitive processes of all cultures must be identical since any other position is inherently racist, sexist, classist, or all three. No mention, of course, is made of Tul'viste's work that showed that some cultures engaged in animistic thinking while others did not; nor of the studies of Luria and Vygotsky that demonstrated that the Uzbeks—living under feudal conditions—neither made use of, nor even appeared to understand, logical syllogisms, but that the same peoples living a few years later under presocialist conditions both understood and made frequent use of formal logic.

But it is James Lawler, a Marxist philosopher, for whom the Menshes reserve their deepest bile, most peculiar twists of illogic, and most egregious examples of quoting out of context. They assert that Lawler “bypassed the question of whether IQ tests do in fact measure intelligence and simply assumed that they do what they are claimed to do” (40). Yet, on the contrary, Lawler devotes an entire chapter to precisely this issue. They quote Lawler as maintaining that IQ tests are “a stage in the development of intelligence theory” (39); but when the quotation is read in context one discovers that Lawler was in fact criticizing Jensen and Eysenck for not realizing that their strictly operational definition of intelligence (i.e. that intelligence is whatever the IQ test measures) was simply a primitive stage of development and for mistaking that stage for objective reality.

Or again, the Menshes quote Lawler as pointing out that Galton discontinued the use of his early intelligence tests because the tests did not confirm Galton's prejudice that the wealthier classes of English society were possessed of greater intelligence. The Menshes note that IQ testing is riddled with a priori assumptions about race and class, and then manage to make the outrageous claim that Lawler supports these prejudices (41)!

Or again, on page 59, they assert that Lawler explicitly produces a rationale for the practice of “tracking” within the school system. Turning to the pages of Lawler quoted by the Menshes, one may easily observe that Lawler is overtly and thoroughly opposed to any tracking

or “rigid rank order” and that he goes on to describe how such an unwelcome practice is engendered by competition within the U.S. school system. In short, once again, these authors accuse Lawler of holding views that are precisely the opposite of those he states.

In a later chapter they quote Lawler as pointing out that since Terman standardized his version of the IQ test entirely on white, native-born Americans, it would necessarily be unrepresentative of populations not included in the sample. The Menshes—apparently unaware of elementary statistical laws and principles—would have it that “Lawler accepted the premise that underlies either inclusion in or exclusion from a sample: that each population has its own level of intelligence” (78). Once more they have tried to make Lawler appear as what he is not, a racist, and, on top of the bargain, revealed their own ignorance.

One could go on citing example after example of the twisting of words to mean their opposite, quotation out of context, and willful misunderstanding, but what would be the point? There are only two conclusions: either the Menshes are incapable of the basics of scholarly research, or they are deliberately guilty of misrepresentation. I suspect both possibilities are true.

David Lethbridge,
Okanagan College,
Kelowna, British Columbia

Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement. By Herbert Aptheker. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1969, 196 pages, cloth \$26.95, paper \$12.95.

In this volume Herbert Aptheker has provided a well-researched, incisive affirmation of the revolutionary nature of the abolitionist movement. The book takes account of the various reform movements that arose in the pre-Civil War period but perceptively observes that only abolitionism sought a basic transformation in the social order, the ejection from power of the slaveholding oligarchy. Before the mid-1850s and the creation of the Republican Party, the slaveholders dominated both the Whig and Democratic parties as well as the legislative, executive, and judicial arms of the federal government. The planter gentry also exercised domain over the ideological structures of society.

Abolitionism, in its championing of uncompensated emancipation, signified the overturning of this domination. Aptheker stresses the revolutionary nature of abolitionist policies and activities and also develops the theme that the movement was highly organized, sustained by the mechanisms needed for effective action. Comparing the revolution that ended slavery to the first American Revolution, Aptheker concludes that the second revolution was more democratic than the first, more democratic in that it was a Black-white movement, a male-female movement, and also characterized by a greater consciousness of its challenge to property rights.

The book is further distinguished by penetrating portraits of the many courageous persons who made up the movement. This is no mechanistic consideration of abstract forces but rather a study that underscores the role of individual and collective human activity. Contrasting the positions taken by supporters and opponents of abolitionism, Aptheker notes that many on both sides were aware of abolitionism's revolutionary implications, its antagonism to existing property relations. Aptheker takes sharp issue with those scholars who see basic conflict in the relations between abolitionists and labor-movement activists. On this issue he stands with a number of contemporary historians who focus upon the extensive cooperation existing between the two movements. The evidence cited by Aptheker confirms the views set forth by such figures as Wendell Phillips and Thomas Wentworth Higginson that "the propertyless, the workers, artisans, and poorer farmers formed the vast majority of the mass following without which Abolitionism would have been inconsequential" (46). The book notes that some abolitionists were impatient with views that equated the conditions of wage workers with those of slaves and that there was racism to be found among workers and labor leaders. But Aptheker, taking a rounded view of the matter, concludes that abolitionism "was afire with egalitarianism, democratic fervor, and hatred of injustice" and finds that workers "in facing their own problems did come to see the mutuality of the fight against chattel slavery and against the untrammelled exploitation of the wage worker that characterized capitalism in the nineteenth century" (41). He is unequivocal on the point that generally the most fervent opponents of abolition were the rich. Propertied leaders, Aptheker writes, manifested their contempt for elementary democratic rights.

The book insightfully relates abolitionism to the resistance to bondage mounted by slaves. Without that resistance, demonstrating that slaves did not accept their status as "natural," there would have been no abolitionist movement. African-Americans resisted in a multitude of

ways, and Aptheker's work here, as always, ably conveys the flavor and texture of that struggle for freedom. Within the abolitionist movement, Black people asserted their right of independent self-expression and challenged tendencies toward paternalism exhibited by some white abolitionists.

Aptheker, differing markedly from scholars who view abolitionists as steeped in racial prejudice, gives considerable attention to the antiracism characteristic of the movement. Again and again, Aptheker focuses upon whites in the movement who denied the inferiority of Blacks and fought against racial discrimination. Along with opposition to slavery, support for equal rights was at the core of the movement.

The book discusses at some length the theme of women and abolition. Aptheker finds that antiracism was particularly evident among women in the abolitionist movement. We are introduced to such noble figures as Sojourner Truth, Lydia Mario Child, Angela and Sarah Grimke, and Harriet Beecher Stowe. Women abolitionists were outstanding in their contribution to antislavery campaigns and in the holding of innumerable antislavery bazaars. Aptheker writes that women had a "special motivation" for involvement in the movement as their oppression as women strengthened their commitment to abolishing oppression in the form of slavery. Aptheker points to the similarity in the content of racism and of male chauvinism.

Aptheker writes in some detail about the many political prisoners and martyrs to be found among the abolitionists. He answers the question posed by Russell B. Nye as to why various reform activities could be pursued without meeting violent opposition, while abolitionism was immediately to be put down. The answer was that these other efforts were indeed reformist rather than truly revolutionary. They did not directly threaten the power of the ruling class. Especially noteworthy is Aptheker's account of John Brown and his valiant assault upon slavery. Aptheker sees Brown as perhaps unique in the completeness with which he and his family divested themselves of feelings of white supremacy. Brown played a key role in forcing this nation to confront the evil of slavery. A true revolutionary if ever there was one, Brown stands forth in these pages as one of the great heroes of democracy and humanism. He accurately understood the basic realities of his time and so his actions at Harper's Ferry had an enormous impact. Aptheker is on the mark in his judgement that John Brown was "acutely sensitive to the point, I think, of genius." His discussion of Brown is a forceful rejoinder to those historians such as C. Vann Woodward, who have perpetrated the slander that Brown was some sort of aberrational madman.

The book makes mention of scholarly works by Eric Williams, Thomas L. Haskell, and Seymour Drescher that illumine the connections between antislavery and the rise of industrial capitalism. But Aptheker's treatment of this matter is somewhat cursory, and the book would have been strengthened by a more extensive probing of how abolitionism and the rising new industrial order interacted with each other. It is to be hoped that in future writing Aptheker will return to this topic.

Abolitionism: A Revolutionary Movement is a major contribution toward a better understanding of a force that pioneered in moving U.S. society beyond the confines of a slaveholding republic. Abolitionism left a record of success in ridding this nation of slavery and in creating the conditions for placing the realization of actual equality on the U.S. agenda. Aptheker's work reveals that achievement in all its magnitude and in so doing he has again enriched our knowledge of the democratic heritage, enabling the present generation to draw inspiration from the dedication and effectiveness of the abolitionist movement.

Herbert Shapiro
Department of History
University of Cincinnati

Politics of Education: Essays from "Radical Teacher." Edited by Susan Gushee O'Malley, Robert C. Rosen, and Leonard Vogt. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990, 357 pages, cloth \$54.50, paper \$17.95.

Even after years of rereading it, I am still moved by Virginia Woolf's hypothetical account of why Shakespeare's genius sister could never have written plays like her brother. To this day, I am sad and indignant when I remember it, but I have often comforted myself by thinking that it is all different now. But it is not so different, as Evelyn Hammonds's interview with Aimee Sands proves. Here is a young African American woman who struggled to get training as a physicist, fought her way through racism and sexism, and got a Ph.D. at M.I.T. She ended up working at M.I.T. *not* as a physicist but as a computer consultant—because she could not be accepted as an equal colleague with the other scholars in physics. This essay in *Politics of Education* is entitled "Never Meant to Survive: A Black Woman's Journey."

The general tone of the book is more practical and less emotional. The thirty essays are drawn from a single journal characterized by the word “radical.” In the field of education, “radical” has a wide variety of meaning, covering both Ivan Illich and Paolo Freire, and in earlier days John Dewey as well as Lucy Sprague Mitchell. Some of this variety is reflected in the essays, but a common thread runs through them all, as discussed by Michael W. Apple in the foreword:

In the current conservative restoration, we are witnessing—*living* is probably a better word—a number of battles for the heart and soul of education. Pressures have been building to make the needs of business and industry into the primary goals of all our educational institutions. Furthermore, there have been well-organized attempts to return us to a romanticized past in which all students learned a “common culture,” where the corpus of the “western tradition” was “real knowledge,” and where cultural and economic hierarchies were not dirtied by the cultures of real people. In the face of all this, curricula and teachers at all levels have been under attack. The very idea of an education that is emancipatory in both ends and means is threatened.

In positive terms, this means that the essays share a point of view on both the method and the content of teaching that is feminist, multicultural, vaguely socialist, and strongly democratic. The first part of the book deals with unconventional ways of teaching the standard subjects—literature, science, math, social science, and (in a special section) women’s studies. The second part discusses working conditions and the limitations placed on teachers who are women, gay, and/or nonwhite.

Some of the essays delve into philosophical and social concepts; others are more down-to-earth, dealing with day-to-day teaching, even presenting course outlines and bibliographies. Manning Marable, for instance, proposes a “Third World peace studies curriculum.” Several essays examine the use of popular culture to catch the imagination of undereducated students. In each case the teacher then brings in a progressive point of view, whether in science fiction (where it is obvious), westerns, soap operas, or working-class novels. Science and math are related to concepts of critical thinking not merely about objects and numbers, but about the “conditions of society.”

Five essays confront working conditions for teachers in a broad sense—encompassing salaries, unions, student empowerment, homophobia, and feminism, among other burning questions. The settings range from a state-college branch in Brooklyn to a special-education program in southeast London.

Throughout, the emphasis is strong on women's equality (or lack of it), combating persistent racism, encouraging critical thought, and leading up to a vision of socialism. Some teacher/writers are sternly objective; others display a passion for their craft. While not, by and large, particularly theoretical or profound, the book does give a broad picture of current problems in education in the United States and some creative ways of approaching them. "Radical" becomes "real" in the classroom.

Betty Bacon
Emeryville, California

Three American Radicals: John Swinton, Charles P. Steinmetz, and William Dean Howells. By Sender Garlin. Foreword by Howard Zinn. Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1991, 234 pages, cloth \$19.95.

These brief but pithy biographical essays on three U.S. radicals were written by a fourth U.S. radical—as radical and as "American" as any, who grew up in the foothills of the Adirondacks. The author's pen has, over a long lifetime, certainly earned him his own full biography. Certainly Sender Garlin ranks as one of the twentieth century's greatest pamphleteers.

Garlin's lifetime experience as a journalist and a writer of pamphlets possibly led him to write the three items in the present fine volume in a short form—on Swinton as a "crusading editor," on Steinmetz as "scientist and socialist," and on Howells "and the Haymarket era." All were originally published in a fragile format as "occasional papers" by the American Institute for Marxist Studies more than a decade ago. In the sturdy and handsome format Westview has given them, they are ready to cope with the rough handling of scholar or student. Howard Zinn has contributed a foreword. A full set of notes is supplied together with an enhanced bibliography and a full and useful index. The author has also supplied a preface in which he expresses his wish to "share with a new audience part of the untold history of radical America." He has not chosen his "radicals" for their adherence to party labels but because they "shared a belief in the possibility of human progress and justice" and they proclaimed this "in their writings and deeds." All made a mark in the nineteenth century and all were contemporaries of other "American radicals" such as Mark Twain, Walt Whitman, and Jane Addams.

John Swinton was born in Scotland in 1829. He was fourteen when his family settled in Canada, where he mastered the printer's trade and then moved to New York in 1849. He spent some time at medical school, then studied law, then traveled the country as a journeyman printer. He returned to New York in 1860 and was soon employed as a writer on the *Times*, where he became chief editorial writer and functioned as managing editor during the frequent absences of the editor.

This was at a time when the *Times* paid much attention to developments in science, mostly handled by Swinton. He reviewed Darwin's new book *On the Origin of Species*, recognizing it as "one of the most important contributions ever made to philosophic science."

Swinton worked on the important *Sun* from 1875 to 1883, his specialty then being Central American affairs. Charles A. Dana was the *Sun's* editor. A historian writes that Swinton "delighted to denounce the 'capitalistic *Sun*' in a speech at night and to tell Mr. Dana about it the next morning."

John Swinton, who had been an ardent abolitionist during slavery days, had evidently become an equally militant supporter of the rights of the working class. It was the brutal, unprovoked attack on a demonstration of unemployed at New York's Tompkins Square in March 1874 that drove him into strong partisanship for labor's cause for the rest of his life. In 1880 Swinton met Karl Marx at Ramsgate, England, and conducted an interview that was soon after published on page one of the *Sun*. This meeting led to a warm correspondence between the two men during the few remaining years of Marx's life, and Swinton was one of the speakers at the memorial meeting for Marx held at the Great Hall of Cooper Union in New York on 20 March 1883.

In October of that year John Swinton reached into his own pockets and started a labor journal that he called *John Swinton's Paper*, to which he dedicated all his time and fortune. Though the paper was well received, the costs drained his funds, and after about four years he was obliged to suspend publication. Eugene Debs, the great Socialist, said it was "by far the best radical paper then in existence."

Appendix D of Garlin's volume (95–96) bears the title "Steinmetz's Recipe for Meat Loaf." It was not Charles P. Steinmetz's skill at cookery, which was reputed to be considerable, that won him a place in this book. Although Steinmetz, in the first quarter of the present century, had a reputation as an "electrical wizard" that placed him alongside Thomas A. Edison, that too would not have made him one of the chosen three radicals. It is rather that this remarkable person, who was chief consulting engineer for the General Electric Company from 1892 to 1923 and professor of electrical engineering at Union College,

made important reforms in education as a member of a Socialist administration in Schenectady, New York, and wrote freely on social and political issues (including a hitherto unpublished article on the sinking of the *Lusitania*, included in this book) and, starting in 1922, carried on a correspondence with Lenin.

Steinmetz was born on 9 April 1865, in what is now known as Wrocław, Poland (formerly Breslau, Germany). Born with curvature of the spine, when he was fully grown he was barely five feet tall.

At the University of Breslau he studied mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, economics, and political science. But as editor of an illegal socialist newspaper he was forced to flee from Germany just before he was confirmed in his doctoral degree—and he never did receive it.

After a year studying mechanical engineering in Switzerland, Steinmetz, now twenty-four years old, arrived in New York. By 1893 he was working in Schenectady as chief consulting engineer for GE, a post he held for thirty years, until his death. Garlin points out that though “Steinmetz’s inventions had none of the popular appeal of Edison’s, he nevertheless solved hundreds of problems that had puzzled engineers for years.” To a large extent these accomplishments made possible the enormous expansion of the electrical industry during the first twenty years of this century.

General Electric certainly appreciated the tremendous economic value to the company of their emigré scientist—to the extent that they blandly overlooked his socialist activity, even boasting a little in a brochure of how their man had defied Bismarck’s anti-Socialist laws in Germany. In 1911 Steinmetz was on the victorious Socialist ticket of George R. Lunn, who was elected mayor of Schenectady. In 1915 Steinmetz was elected president of the Common Council and used his office to help put through an advanced program for the city’s schools.

In 1922 Steinmetz was fascinated by Lenin’s interest in promoting electrification in Soviet Russia and started an exchange of letters with him in which he offered his assistance in developing the technology.

But time ran out. Although Steinmetz was only in his fifties, a trip to California in October 1923 proved more taxing than expected, and he did not feel well on his return to Schenectady. His doctors expected that a few days’ rest would lead to recovery, but after a four-day illness he died.

It had generally been supposed that a large salary and wise investments must have left the engineer a very rich man. Not so. He left a will with bequests totaling some \$25,000, but there was not enough in his estate to cover them.

Any student of U.S. literature will surely recognize the name of William Dean Howells, and any student of U.S. labor history will know what is meant by “the Haymarket Era.” But few who have not read the third essay in Sender Garlin’s book will know the relevance of one to the other.

Here we have the most conservative-looking of men—dressed in a sedate three-piece suit, a starched shirt collar, a neat necktie, a well-placed pocket handkerchief, a pair of gold-wire spectacles, a fine watch-chain spanning his ample chest—here we have Howells who, if he were an actor, might have been cast to play the part of the international banker J. Pierpont Morgan!

But he was no Morgan, no banker. He was all the *New York Times* said of him when he died in 1920 at age 83, a man of “charm, geniality, and versatility, the most distinguished purely U.S. literary figure of his time.” But, as Garlin points out, “the *Times* entirely failed to mention Howells’s social concerns—his deep sympathy with working people, his interest in socialism, his condemnation of imperialism, his efforts to promote racial equality, and his valiant stand on behalf of the Haymarket martyrs.” As Garlin further says, “It frequently happens that a person’s radicalism, once he is dead and unable to defend himself, is publicly ignored, and an acceptable stereotype is substituted.” (This doctrine may have guided the U.S. Postal Service in issuing a commemorative stamp honoring W. E. B. Du Bois in February 1992.)

Howells’s formal education did not extend past grade school, but self-study turned him into a highly cultured person, one who served many years as editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. From 1886 to 1892 he wrote “The Editor’s Study” for *Harper’s Monthly* and “The Editor’s Easy Chair” from 1900 until the year of his death. He wrote over a hundred books and encouraged numerous young authors. His fiction and nonfiction reflected his advocacy of literary realism and social reform.

The Haymarket affair occurred in Chicago on 4 May 1886 at a meeting called to protest the shooting of strikers the day before at the McCormick Harvester plant. The meeting was almost over and the crowd dwindling away when a police captain ordered a police detachment to disperse the remnants of the gathering. As they did so, a person unknown threw a bomb that killed seven policemen and wounded sixty.

Eight men, including the militant Albert Parsons, who had made good his escape but surrendered himself because he knew that his comrades were going to suffer for a crime of which all were innocent, were arrested. Four were hanged. They had not been charged with throwing the bomb but for inciting by their writings and speeches some unknown person to commit the crime. Four of the eight were not even

at the scene. Howells dared to appeal to the governor of Illinois for clemency for the innocent men and urged other illustrious literary people to join his appeal. For this boldness he was abused in journals from coast to coast.

Sender Garlin has labored over his three sketches more diligently than some writers have toiled over full biographies. He located and interviewed a woman who had been a secretary to Steinmetz; he found and interviewed a grandson of Howells (who showed little understanding of his grandfather's character); he had interviewed Lucy Parsons in 1934 and evidently squirreled away notes for later use. He has created a book that throws light into some dark corners of United States history.

Arthur Zipser
Labor historian
New York

REPLACES AD PAGE.