



# Common Sense

A Journal of a wholly new type



# 1



BRIAN Mc GRAIL

# Common Sense

Issue No. 1 (May 1987)

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The second issue of Common Sense will appear in July 1987.

Note for contributors: send **articles** in clean typescript, single-space or space-and-a-half (not double-space). Leave wide margins on both sides.

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AN EDITORIAL OF A WHOLLY NEW TYPE

Common Sense has no editors and hence contains no editorial. Its aim is to challenge the division of labour in contemporary society according to which theoretical discussion is monopolised by universities and confined to the pages of trade-journals read by professional and academic elites.

The term "common sense" signifies: (i) shared or public sense, and (ii) the interplay of differing perspectives and theoretical views. These meanings imply one another. Both are undermined to the extent that a social division of labour prevails. For theory, the undermining of common sense means that philosophy becomes separated from empirical enquiry, to the impoverishment of both. The arid abstraction of analytical philosophy and the plodding boredom of positivism are the complementary results. For practice, the undermining of common sense means that political action is denied any space for self-reflection and so goes forward in terms which confirm the social status quo. Common sense admits of no fixed definition. No less elusive than it is intelligible, it exists only where criticism and self-criticism are the order of the theoretical and political day. A continuing development of critical theory is the only brief which the journal Common Sense holds.

The idea behind the journal is explained in the announcement published in Edinburgh Review No. 76, and reprinted overleaf. There is no reason why a whole number of similar journals should not be started in the same way. Found your own journal, or send contributions for our second and subsequent issues to: Richard Gunn, 13 Northumberland Street, Edinburgh. Issue no. 2 of Common Sense will appear in July, cost 2 pounds: send s.a.e. to the above address.

# Common Sense

## A Journal of a wholly new type

Problems of production, of sales/distribution and of editorial policy seem intrinsic to the publication of any journal, whether mainstream or alternative; these problems have stood in the way of the emergence of new alternative journals especially of a theoretical and therefore a relatively non-popular kind. The consequence of this is that universities and professional-academic journals retain their fateful monopoly on the life of the mind. In a period of recession, with universities becoming more restrictive and bureaucratic and with (as a result) increasing numbers of people being driven away from universities, whether into unemployment or non-academic employment, this monopoly seems even more vicious than it was before. A non-university based theoretical journal has thus a sound political point.

In order to minimise the problems of production/distribution/editing, such a journal must be of a wholly novel type. In fact, these problems can almost entirely be avoided if journal-production is thought of in a fresh way.

Technology, (word-processing, xeroxing, etc.) is increasingly on our side. Contributors to such a journal would submit their work in readable (which means: attractively readable) typescript, A4, single spaced, so that articles are not retyped but merely photocopied; the resulting bundle of different articles can then be stapled together and put between simple folded covers (a different colour for each issue, perhaps, but retain the same format each time in order to keep production-costs down). The *only* tasks confronting the production-group would then be photocopying, stapling and distributing. An editorial policy could *virtually be dispensed with* since there would be no fixed limit on the number of articles a given issue might contain; for the same reason, articles could be short or long. The journal could be published occasionally rather than regularly depending on material to hand. It would be sold at more or less cost price.

Initially, its circulation could be minimal: today, a readership of half a dozen and tomorrow the world . . . . Back-issues could be reproduced either as a whole or in part, depending on demand, simply by xeroxing a master-copy. Starting small would keep initial costs very low; we could build up a readership by means of a 'network' of personal contacts depending solely on the quality of the material carried; there could also be some local sales. Thereby, problems of distribution could be avoided no less than the other problems mentioned above. Financial risks would be minimal, and we would need to aim only at producing a 'readable-attractive' as opposed to a 'commercial-attractive' publication since it would only be the quality and interest of our contents that was germane.

The attraction of the scheme is its anarchism: it ignores all problems, all commerce, all professional boundaries, all academic establishments, all editorial anxieties. We could publish matter which was esoteric, heterodox, inflammatory and beyond every pale. Articles on anarchist collectives would sit side by side with articles on aesthetic theory; medieval theology could be juxtaposed with venomous political attacks. There would be absolutely no need to write in a popular or accessible way, and yet there would be no need to write in an academically respectable fashion either. The only material to be anathematized would be material which was boring. Through a minimalist approach to journal-production, we solve all problems by ignoring them and circumvent all authority by attacking it, not head-on, but from behind its back.

The first issue of Common Sense is now available, price (to cover costs only) £2. Contributions for next and subsequent issues welcome.

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Judith Squieres on:  
Feminist Epistemologies  
and  
Critical Political Theory

Feminism is overtly political; it aims - in all its many forms - to change social relations and theoretical assumptions to the benefit of women. It is also, I wish to argue, inherently critical. Feminist epistemologies provide, to varying degrees, a firm basis from which to develop a critical political theory.

On an epistemological level, the basic feminist premiss is that dominant theories of knowledge are not neutral but androcentric; not objective but interest-constituted. A second major premiss is that feminist theories of knowledge are equally interest-constituted, but have an interest in exposing and challenging the status-quo rather than perpetuating it - and therefore appear more overtly politically engaged. To the extent that this is the case feminist theories are critical in character.

Critical theory is to be distinguished from traditional theory along the lines originally drawn by the early critical theorists of the Frankfurt School. Critical theory, argued Max Horkheimer - one of its major exponents - is politically engaged; it has a practical interest in fostering self-consciousness and an understanding of existing social conditions in order that we may alter and improve them. It does not seek to be objective or abstract; yet it does seek to avoid relativism and scepticism. It is, argues Richard Bernstein, "the explicit recognition of the connection of knowledge and interests that distinguishes critical from traditional theory, and that justifies calling such theory critical." (1976 p.180)

Traditional theory, in contrast, is based on inductivist principles of observation and description, or deductivist principles of formal logic. It claims an objectivity for empirical and abstract analysis by asserting a strict fact/value distinction. Though its roots lie with 17th century Baconian inductivism and Cartesian dualism, traditional theory reached its ultimate form in the logical positivism of the Vienna Circle of the 1920s. The intellect, they argued, free from the prison of private concerns, could operate in one of two ways - by induction or by deduction.

Those statements which were neither a formal statement nor empirically testable were rendered non-sensical in a move entitled 'value non-cognitivism'. This left no place for political theory and philosophy was relegated to a second order discipline which could only analyse and criticise the theories of science. Critical thought was smothered by scientism.

Asked what, in retrospect, were the main defects of logical positivism, A.J.Ayer - whose work on linguistic analysis did so much to popularise it in this country (1936) - replied;

"Well, I suppose the most important of the defects was that nearly all of it was false." ( B.Magee ed. 1978, p.131)

Quite. But this has not stopped the spread of scientism, or led to a fundamental challenging of the principles of traditional theory amongst most political theorists today. Feminist theory, I shall argue, offers an important basis from which to issue such a challenge to traditional theory.

Feminist theories tend, to varying degrees, to be sceptical of scientism. Claims to objectivity are seen to entail subjective assumptions about gender, so the fact/value distinction is immediately undermined as an existing reality. And in using their own gendered experience as a basis from which to critique theories and develop new ones, the desirability as well as the reality of the fact/value split is challenged. This challenge is not specific to feminism, and has been made within male-stream theory. The point however is that women have a practical interest in pursuing these theoretical ideas.

Thus feminist theories offer a challenge to the ~~epistemo-~~ logical position which undermines critical political theory. This is so even if it is not the intention of the theorists - as in the case of liberal feminism. Feminist theory is as diverse as the experience of the women who produce it. In order to simplify the diversity I shall categorise the multitude of feminist positions into four main methodological groups - empiricist, woman-centred, marxist standpoint, and post-modernist. I shall outline the epistemological underpinnings of these theories and relate them to the project of developing a critical political theory.

### Feminist Empiricism

Feminist empiricists accept the legitimacy of positivistic claims about the objectivity and neutrality of empirical statements. They adopt the fact/value dichotomy and have no critique of scientism. Feminist empiricism does not intend to differ epistemologically or methodologically from traditional theory; only in the assertion of the importance of the social bias against women and its affect on the contingent results of this methodology does feminist empiricism differ from the traditional empiricists. Recognition of this bias results in a call for the stricter adherence to the existing methodological norms of inquiry in order to correct the manifestations of sexism - which are not thought to be inherent to the epistemology itself and can therefore presumably be distinguished and removed from it.

This form of feminist theory involves the pursuit of clear-thinking and rational argument based on actual observation rather than prejudice, in order to expel the sexist distortions from our knowledge. The assumption is that this process will take us closer to the realisation of the impartial observer - detached and rational, uninfluenced by the distorting prejudices of sexism - and hence provide the most objective theoretical stance available. This line of argument sounds not unlike an echo of the Baconian plea for inductive reasoning in the face of prejudice and mysticism. It works within the positivistic framework of analytic and synthetic ways of knowing; and it adopts the liberal tradition of assuming the existence of an Archimedean standpoint of a disinterested and detached spectator in a Rawlsian bid for neutrality.

Janet Radcliffe Richards displays just this sort of concern with the techniques of logic and induction in her argument for the importance of the feminist task of improving upon the existing mode and content of theoretical inquiry. There is, she bemoans, "undoubtedly evidence that feminism has some tendency to get stuck in the quagmire of unreason." (1983, p.32) And what is this reason that she endorses so strongly? It is a process of "collecting evidence and basing the conclusion on it." (1983, p.39) There is no critique of the process itself, only that women have failed to be a part of it.

If women were to enter into the scientific and philosophical communities, feminist empiricists argue, it would be possible "for people to see the world in an enlarged perspective because they remove the covers and blinders that obscure knowledge and observation." ( Millman & Kanter, 1975 p.vii) Women would improve the internal consistency of these disciplines by adding their perspective to them. They would not challenge the principles of the discipline. Furthermore, it is only by adopting the standards of synthetic and analytic knowledge, they argue, that feminist theory can be adequately. Thus it is that Radcliffe Richards argues that "feminists must learn the logic and science which have been the traditional preserve of men." (1983 p.49)

Now this mode of feminist theorising can be criticised in the same way as any other empiricism or abstract individualism should be criticised. But it can also be criticised - and this is very telling with regard to my claim about the inherently critical nature of feminist theory - from within its own frame of reference. This empiricist tradition which intends to refine rather than challenge traditional methodology, actually implicitly undermines it.

One of the basic tenets of empiricism is that the social identity of the inquirer is irrelevant to the logic and conclusions of research and knowledge. If this is the case, how can feminist empiricists argue that men have consistently biased their research away from women's concerns and why are they so adamant that more women need to participate in social and scientific research? If the identity of the inquirer is indeed irrelevant to the conclusions reached, the projects of most liberal feminists have no epistemological basis at all: there would be no need to involve more women in research, and no reason why research conducted by men might be androcentric.

The tendency of liberal feminism to imply conclusion that are more radical than the liberal feminists intended, or we expected, has been noted before, ( Z.Eisenstein The Radical Future of Liberal Feminism 1981). It is a charge that some liberal feminists have circumvented by insisting that what they are criticising is not 'science-as-usual', but 'bad-science'; that there is nothing wrong with the methods of inquiry, only with the per-



perceptions of the inquirer and the problems selected for inquiry. These, it is argued, can be overcome by stricter adherence to the empiricist model itself. Now this argument begins to sound very much like the Popperian claim that the individual scientist may well be prejudiced but that this in no way invalidates the objectivity of science because the rigorous testing of hypotheses by the community of scientists will ensure that such subjective elements are ironed out. But this feminist stance is different in that whilst it is also arguing that the Popperian model would indeed produce objectivity, it assumes that this objectivity does not actually exist. The monopoly of men in the sciences, and academia generally, has ensured that the androcentric bias has been magnified rather than rejected. The attempt to bring more women into scientific research could be viewed as an attempt to actually create the conditions for the model of scientific inquiry envisaged by Popper. The feminist empiricist description of the existing situation is more akin to the Kuhnian model of 'normal science', with the added dimension that feminist theorists are actually critical of the world-view that exists in the dominant paradigm.

Thus it is that feminist empiricists are politically engaged and cannot accept the claims about detached inquirers that their own methodological theory espouses. The abstract individualism of the theory to which they aspire cannot accommodate the implicit notion of patriarchy that their theory assumes. The attempts to bring a feminist aspect to empiricism is flawed because empiricism is itself inadequate. Whilst the feminist empiricists seek the more perfect realisation of the methodological norms of a science which is pluralistic, positivistic and Popperian, they are asserting an epistemological position which must be rejected if we are to develop a critical political theory. In direct contrast to this attempt to produce a more perfect objectivity is the tendency amongst some feminists to deny both the possibility and the desirability of neutral, objective knowledge.

#### Woman-centred Subjectivism

In contrast to feminist empiricism, woman-centered subjectivism revalues the very notions of objectivity and subjectivity.

Ruth Hubbard presents in her article 'Have Only Men Evolved?' (1983) the frequently expressed argument that;

"There is no such thing as objective value-free science. An era's science is part of its politics, economics and sociology; it is generated by them and in turn helps to generate them."  
(1983, p.47)

What is specifically feminist in Hubbard's argument is the claim that the dominant force shaping the values in our science - and our society - is patriarchal. What has been socially accepted as objective reality in our society is actually an androcentric perspective which interprets phenomena according to the sexual and social stereotypes of a patriarchal society. The inquirer is specifically not seen as neutral here. The fact that scientists and researchers have been predominantly men not only reflects patriarchal relations, it perpetuates them. Patriarchal interests have, according to this feminist position, shaped the very form and content of our most abstract knowledge.

This approach implicitly underpins radical feminism, and is also incorporated - along with a class analysis - into socialist feminism. It rests on a belief that in our patriarchal society men have imposed their own distorted and mystifying version of reality upon society, leaving women powerless to understand and articulate their own realities. Power is knowledge - and it is something that men have had in abundance over women.

That there is actually is 'difference of view' between the sexes, and that men have constructed the world in a way which leaves no place for the expression of women's consciousnesses is a notion found underlying many feminist arguments. Take, for example, the following statement by Sheila Rowbotham;

"All theory, all connecting language and ideas which could make us see ourselves in relation to a continuum or as part of a whole were external to us. We lumbered around ungainlylike in borrowed concepts which did not fit the shape we felt ourselves to be." (1973 p.30)

There is, it is asserted, a radical disjuncture between male and female realities: yet women's perspectives of reality have been denied, suppressed or invalidated. The position of power from which the androcentric perspective was based enabled its advocates to claim an objectivity and neutrality which denied the

legitimacy of other realities. This means that for women there exists a disjuncture between the forms of thought, the symbols, images, concepts and frames of reference available, and the world experienced at a level prior to knowledge of expression: It is a disjuncture that woman-centred feminists try to resolve. As Dorothy Smith, a feminist sociologist, reveals:

"As we explored the world from this place in it, we became aware that this rupture in experience, and between experience and the social forms of its expression, was located in a relation of power between women and men, in which men dominated over women."  
(1979, p.137)

Up until the rise of second-wave feminism and the development of a consciousness-raising process amongst women, women's experience had not appeared as an autonomous source of knowledge. But at this point a revolution in epistemology was initiated. Sandra Harding and Merrill Hintikka, in their book Discovering Reality (1983), relate this process to the Kuhnian notion of scientific revolution. Paradigm shifts frequently occur, they argue, in the context of broad social movements aiming for a redistribution of power (1983, p.314). The Kuhnian paradigm shift occurs with the dawning recognition that:

i) Known problems for available theories are unsolvable within the confines of those theories.

ii) Observation which could not be accounted for in a systematic way by existing theories enable us to grasp that they are too impoverished to explain important aspects of life.

In these terms we can see the rupture between women's subjective experience and dominant androcentric theories as the source of the creation of a new paradigm at a time when the women's movement was gaining social recognition. Asserting personal experience became a way in which women could challenge the claims of the 'androcentric paradigm'. Rationality itself was questioned, empirical and analytic logic appeared to be patriarchal constructs in both form and content, operating not to reveal women's realities, but to mystify them. In this context subjectivity became not a distortion to be avoided in the pursuit of sound knowledge, but an alternative way of knowing that was claimed as particularly female. The argument against objectivity was a twofold one. 'Male rationality', it is claimed, is not objective - it is a mask for patriarchal value-judgments and should be exposed as such. But

the second stage of the argument differs from the previous empiricist argument in criticising dominant androcentric theories not for their lack of objectivity, but for their claims to be objective. As a rejection of this hypocrisy women openly celebrated the subjectivity of their knowledge.

To summarise: the fundamental claims of this position are:

i) A radical or total disjuncture exists between male and female 'realities'.

ii) The possibility of objectivity must be denied and female subjectivity celebrated.

This celebration of women's subjectivity necessitates a third premiss:

iii) There is a need to 'name' female experience, to restructure our categories of perception.

Thus linguistic analysis is appealed to in the woman-centered critique of patriarchal rationality in much the same way as Wittgenstein developed his theory of language-games in response to positivistic epistemology (Philosophical Investigations 1953) and Winch used it to argue against the behavioural scientists of the 1950s (The Idea of a Social Science 1958).

The assertion of the existence of a disjuncture between male and female realities is closely bound up with the belief that rather than reflecting reality in a purely neutral manner, we actually construct different realities according to the categories with which we describe phenomena. This leads to an awareness of the importance of language as a tool for creating and denying realities. Thus it is that linguistic analysis has become an important facet of woman-centred theory - as can be seen in the work of Dale Spender and Mary Daly. Both argue that language determines the limits of our world and constructs our reality, (Spender 1980, p.139; Daly 1978, p.24)

The empiricist belief in the purity of knowledge is argued to be not only untrue, but impossible. The brain, argues Spender in an adoption of a Wittgensteinian thesis, can neither see nor hear - it can only interpret symbols. The programme for encoding and decoding those symbols is set up by the language which we possess.

"What we see in the world around us depends in large part on the principles we have encoded in our language." (Spender, 1980 p.140)

Language is not neutral, it is itself a shaper of ideas. We cannot impartially describe the world because in order to describe it we must first have a classification system of socially constructed categories.

This line of argument is clearly not specific to feminism, but what is distinctive is the claim that it is men who have created the world, invented the categories, constructed sexism and developed the language trap, (Spender 1980 p.142). In response to this state of affairs woman-centred theorists have begun the project of recategorising the world and renaming its objects. Thus we have a theory which assumes the existence of a 'man-made' language and a 'man-made' knowledge, and which struggles for the development of a women's language and knowledge through celebration. If Susan Griffin's book Women and Nature (1978) symbolises the celebration of subjectivity, Mary Daly's book Gyn/Ecology (1978) symbolises the belief in the importance of reclaiming and developing a women's language with which to express this subjectivity.

This account of the woman-centred thesis has simplified and unified what is a diverse collection of ideas for the sake of brevity; but I think that the following criticisms of the position can be generally applied.

The first claim that there is a radical disjuncture between male and female realities is deeply problematic for two major reasons. The first of these is that this move reflects a tendency to claim as essentially female - and then assert as a strength - many qualities which are actually the products of the patriarchal system itself. Thus to reclaim and revalue the experience and language that appears to be specifically female is not to develop a new form of knowledge, it is to revalue a form of knowledge allotted to women by a patriarchal system, and is itself part of that system. In assuming that this knowledge is inherently female rather than socially defined as such, the woman-centred theorists are open to charges of essentialism. The second problem with this

first claim is that it implies that there is a single category 'woman' and therefore that all women's experience is the same. Yet factors such as class, race, culture and sexuality are crucial in determining our experience and should not be down-played by the assertion of a unifying female experience. To the extent that it does this the theory is open to charges of patronising universalisation.

The second claim - that female subjectivity must be celebrated - is problematic in that it associates objectivity so closely with a patriarchal scientism that it requires the exaltation of a relativist subjectivity. Stanley and Wise, for instance, argue for an endorsement of radical relativism. They argue that there is no one 'true' social reality, but a multiplicity of different ones (1983 p.108); and they go on to claim that these 'world-views' are all equally valid. It is just this sort of pluralistic, relativistic position that Kuhn's scientific model implied; and it raises the same problem of denying us any criteria from which to judge between competing accounts of reality. Does this mean, asks Donna Haraway - historian of science - that the only way we have to decide between different accounts is on the grounds of gender loyalties? (in Harding 1986 p.137) If so the feminist task of trying to bring men to accept our world-view is thankless, and our claims to a superior, less-biased theory unsubstantiated.

The third claim about the importance of restructuring our language is important, but flawed by the tendency to conflate the argument about different perceptions of reality with an argument about different realities themselves. It is an important distinction which is not made clearly enough. It is Dale Spender's apparent adoption of the latter position that leads Lynne Segal to criticise her on the grounds that;

"All her writing collapses the idea of 'objective reality' into the subjective ways we see and describe it, and continually threatens to reduce the reality of women's oppression to little more than a set of ideas." (1987 p.9)

It is a tendency which leads to the discussion of the importance of restructuring our language at the expense of an awareness of the need for material change.

The attempt to replace 'male objectivity' with 'female sub-

subjectivity' is no real basis from which to criticise traditional theory and positivistic patriarchal ideologies. It provides us with no grounds from which to claim superiority for an alternative epistemology; and yet most woman-centred theorists do want to argue such a superiority for their theories. Indeed it is difficult to make sense of feminist criticism of androcentric theories without supposing that the latter have in some way misdescribed reality. "One cannot," argues Jean Grimshaw in Feminist Philosophers (1986) "do without notions such as improved understanding, a more adequate theory, a more illuminating perspective." (1986 p.102) I do not think that women-centred theorists want to give these things up - but their epistemology implies that they should.

The goal of a feminist epistemology ought to be the achievement of theories that accurately represent women's activities as fully social, and social relations between genders as a real component in human history. There is nothing particularly subjective about such a project. All theories - to the extent that they are built upon interest-constituted knowledge - have subjective and objective elements. It is not helpful to accept the patriarchal dichotomy of the two along a gender division and simply revalue the sides of the dichotomy. What we need is a feminist epistemological position which avoids individualism and empirical inductivism, without falling into essentialism and subjective relativism. It is just such a position that marxist standpoint theorists seek.

### The Marxist-feminist Standpoint Theorists

The feminist standpoint approach, one of many marxist-feminist positions, originates in Hegel's theorising of the master/slave relation and a particular reading of Marxist theory which it is worth briefly summarising.

"As individuals express their lives so they are. What they are therefore coincides with their production, both with what they produce and with how they produce it." (Marx and Engels, 1970 p.42)

In any society with systematically divergent practical activities we see the growth of logically divergent world views. The division of labour can be expected to have consequences for knowledge. Thus in a capitalist society there are two major ways of

seeing the world - of constructing reality; but the two are not equally influential or complete. In a class society the prevailing world-view supports the interests of the ruling class because they have the power to have their particular form of knowledge accepted as the norm and used as the basis for further structuring the material relations which originally structured the knowledge. The ruling class perspective is more pervasive as a result, but also more partial. The capitalist class do not simply hold an epistemological perspective in keeping with their relation to the mode of production, they also structure social relations such that no other world-view is easily held. They have an interest in mystifying reality. The task of the working-class is to reveal not only how the ruling-class perspective mystifies reality, but also how reality is structured such that it could not be expressed other than through these categories. If the engaged epistemological standpoint of the working-class gained dominance over that of the ruling-class, we could - in this theory - be said to have achieved a more objective form of knowledge.

The feminist standpoint theorists adopt this line of argument but note that the Marxist theory entails no analysis of gender - it is 'sex-blind' (Hartmann 1981 p.2). As a result Marxism posited that there are no significant social relations shared by women cross-class; and that there cannot be a distinctive 'women's experience' upon which a distinctive form of knowledge could be based. The standpoint argument is that this leaves Marxism with no categories or concepts with which to explain the source and operation of male domination, and that this analysis is therefore distorted and partial with regard to both men's and women's lives.

The main advocates of this position are Jane Flax, Hilary Rose, Nancy Hartsock and Dorothy Smith - all of whom adopt the same model of marxism. All argue that knowledge is a social construct, conceptual frameworks being limited by their social origins. The social position of women, it is claimed, gives them the epistemologically privileged position of Hegel's slave: it is closer to representing the interests of society as a whole as it has an interest in understanding the ruled, the rulers and the relation between them in a way that the rulers structurally do not. I shall outline this argument in more detail by following



the theory of Nancy Hartsock, (1983 pp.283-303).

Hartsock's explicit objective is to develop a feminist historical materialism which will extend a marxist analysis to patriarchy. She begins this task from the assumption that human beings and their theories of knowledge are shaped and limited by "socially mediated interaction with nature in the process of production." (1983 p.283) Where she diverges from the orthodox marxist position is in her claim that the position of women is structurally different from that of men, and that knowledge will be correspondingly different. Marx argues that the division of labour is the fundamental structuring criterion for the separate class standpoints; Hartsock extends this argument by asserting that the division of labour between the sexes is every bit as important and systematic.

"Women's work," Hartsock argues, "in every society differs systematically from men's." (1983 p.289)

In a capitalist society the difference lies in the fact that women contribute both production for wages and production of goods in the home. This work is quite distinct from that of men because, unlike men, women's lives are institutionally defined by their production of use values in the home. Women not only labour in the 'workplace', they also labour in the home - producing and re-producing people on both a long-term and a daily basis.

"This aspect of women's activity - the production of men by women and the appropriation of this labour of women themselves by men is the basis of the opposition between feminist and masculinist experience and outlook." (Hartsock 1983 p.293)

This type of argument offers a solution to the relativist dilemma of the woman-centred theorists. Whilst rejecting the abstract objectivism of the empiricists, the standpoint thesis avoids subjectivism and relativism by asserting that the feminist standpoint is politically engaged yet more objective and representative than other standpoints (see Alison Jagger 1983 p.384). This analysis represents an attempt to achieve the synthesis between objectivity and subjectivity called for by Hilary Rose. It presupposes that all knowledge reflects the interests and values of specific groups; that objectivity does not mean destitute of values, and that impartiality does not mean neutrality between

conflicting interests. Knowledge can be objective and impartial from certain standpoints - some of which must be struggled for. Epistemologies then, claims Sandra Harding in an endorsement of this position, are "justificatory strategies" (in conversation ICA 5.2.87). But if epistemologies are justificatory strategies how can we talk about truth? This is something that the standpoint theorists do not really address; but I think that Habermas's idea of a consensus theory of truth - as opposed to a correspondence theory of truth - could be the basis for resolving this problem. Thus we could argue that facts were intersubjectively - rather than objectively or subjectively - valid.

This standpoint epistemology does therefore provide us with a political theory which is both empirical and interpretive, and therefore critical. A standpoint is an engaged vision and carries political implications. A marxist-feminist standpoint is not readily accessible or immediately available - it must be struggled for and developed within a new theoretical framework. As such it has a historically liberatory role.

"A standpoint," claims Hartsock, "may be present on the basis of the common threads of feminist experience, but it is neither self-evident nor obvious." (1983 p.303)

Others have argued that a single feminist standpoint is not only not self-evident but actually not a reality. Whether there is a common thread of feminist experience, and whether this position escapes the charge of essentialism leveled at the woman-centred theorists are questions that have been raised increasingly with the development of feminist post-modernism.

### Feminist Post-modernism

This is an area which is still in its infancy - especially in this country - but which has gained a wide audience in recent years. Influenced by the work of such theorists as Derrida, de Saussure, Foucault and Lacan, feminist post-modernism develops the themes of semiotics and psychoanalysis and applies them to the question of gender difference. I shall refer briefly only to that aspect of post-modernism that concentrates on the analysis of the role of language of the structuring of gender and knowledge for this work addresses a crucial issue left unexplored by the

standpoint theorists - how it is that categories of masculine and feminine are constructed in a patriarchal society. For this reason the standpoint theorists are increasingly using aspects of this work within their own theories.

French theorists Cixous, Kristeva and Irigaray explicitly criticise the woman-centred theorists who tend to assert that there is some sort of essential nature of women which is distorted by society. Their work, based on a Lacanian rereading of Freud, offers explanations (for there is no single argument) of the place of language in, and its effects on, the construction of the child as a sexed subject.

The theory put forward by Lacan criticised the whole notion of a fixed identity: both the conscious and the unconscious are shaped by the structure of language. The human child is born into a world with a culture and language that pre-exist the individual. If the child is to put forward any demands it must acquire language. It is the acquisition of language which, with the necessary status for the use of that language, produce the conscious and the unconscious process.

This argument is epistemologically distinct from the standpoint thesis in that it asserts the primacy of language rather than labour in the determination of knowledge and ways of knowing. But it is also significant to the standpoint argument because it provides an account of the individual within society without suggesting that the individual is either a natural given or totally determined by material relations. It provides an account of how the sexed subject is produced in society, thereby indicating the precariousness of gender identifications.

The human being starts life with a universe which is initially undifferentiated; it cannot even differentiate itself from the universe. Yet the the child should be forced to do so is an exigency of culture. The child must be produced as a differentiated subject if it is to use language. For language, in these theories - which develop the insights made by de Saussure - is made up of difference. Signifiers gain their meaning through differentiation from other signifiers. Within patriarchal society

these differences have been characterised as binary (see Hélène Cixous La Jeune Née p.115). This assertion of binary opposition, endorsed by the structuralists, actually represents a denial of the complexity of difference; a denial which is reversed by the post-structuralists.

Gender itself, it is argued, is structured through language. Patriarchal language structures have constructed gender as a binary opposition; a non-patriarchal language structure would reject these simple dichotomies and allow for different ways of being male and female. Thus it is that Kristeva argues that there can be no single category 'woman', and no unified female experience or vision. There are a multitude of different ways of being a woman. To assert the existence of a feminist standpoint or a woman-centred vision is to accept the binary oppositions of patriarchal logic. There is no eternal feminine (Kristeva 'La Femme' 1974 p.20-21).

This mode of theorising is deeply interesting and has done much to develop the theoretical bases of feminism. But it has a tendency to lead us away from a politically engaged debate, and into the privileged self-absorbed individualism of so much psychoanalytic debate. If we are to retain a feminism which is political and critical without being essentialist, it is important to integrate the insights of post-modernism into the framework of the standpoint theorists. The categories of gender may be constructed through language, but the power relations which underpin the form of language have a material basis which we simply cannot ignore. The fact that patriarchy defines women and oppresses them accordingly, in very material ways, means that we cannot afford to give up the category of 'woman' as a political reality.

### Conclusion

Feminist epistemologies produce critical political theories; some more successfully than others. Feminist empiricism is internally contradictory because its abstract individualism gives no account of patriarchy and no critique of objectivism. Woman-centred subjectivism overcompensates and falls into essentialism. Standpoint theorists resolve these problems in a theory of epistemologies as historically and gender specific constructs. Post-modernism should be used to support, rather than replace, the standpoint position in its challenge of traditional theory.



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## TYPES OF THINKING Murdo Macdonald April 1987

### 1. Self and Object

In Tantra the distinction between self and object comes about in this order: (i) the all embracing whole of Reality; (ii) Reality divided as the sexual pair, Shiva and Shakti, unaware of their sexual difference; (iii) the sexual pair become aware of their distinction; (iv) the female "objective" separates from the male "subjective"; (v) the female "objective" performs her dance of illusion, persuading the male "subject" he is not one but many, in a differentiated reality of objects.

Let us approach it this way: soul (or, one might say, play, movement, etc.) enables the differentiation of the concepts of **self** and **other** (one might call this the proto-awareness of self and other); these two complementary ideas can combine in two ways, depending on which is regarded as the reference point, or touchstone, for meaning. If the touchstone is self, then that which is other is considered to be a kind of self. If the touchstone is other, then that which is self is considered to be a kind of other. The former view is **empathic**, the latter view is **objective**. This empathic/objective level might be called the **personal**. It leads on the one hand to art, on the other to science. These activities are usefully called **cultural**.

But do we really want to call a concept which complements self: "other"? Is this as obvious as it looks? A re-think with respect to **object**: call the initial condition something like "being" or "soul" or "arche" or "movement" or "action" or "play" or "one". According to whether one experiences continuity or discontinuity of relations the concepts of **self** and **object** (respectively) are formed. (NB "continuous vs discrete"). But all experience is characterised by both continuous and discrete relations. That is to say all experience of any phenomena is of both self and object. This duality gives rise to the concept of **other**. Essentially this is the world. This is reality. When self is the touchstone for judgements of other, we call it empathy. When object is the touchstone for judgements of other, we call it objectivity. On the one hand we have the world of other selves, on the other we have the world of other objects. But note that what is treated as self is not necessarily animate and what is treated as object is not necessarily inanimate.

### 2. The Personal and the Cultural: Art, Science and Libraries

The consideration of self and object in section one has its origin in research into their relations between art and science. This work has as its background two

books which I read at the time I was becoming consciously interested in thinking. These were Hesse's **The Glass Bead Game** and Koestler's **The Sleepwalkers**. The former describes a game in which all fields of knowledge come into play, the latter emphasises the role of aesthetic considerations in science. Two other works - Dirac's article **The Evolution of the Physicist's Picture of Nature** and Waddington's **Behind Appearance** - were significant in my early thinking specifically about art and science. The first because it again considered the importance of beauty to scientific theories, the second because in it Waddington makes a real contribution to keeping alive the topic of art's relation to science. By considering painting to be different but equally valid ways of seeing the world, he avoids what Aldous Huxley called the "bland scientism" of C.P.Snow and the "moralistic literalism" of F.R.Leavis, and enables one to look further.

The thing to consider is how human beings think. To look at two cultures without giving due consideration to what ways of thinking ~~are~~ are necessary to understand the creations characteristic of them, an essentially psychological question, is to bind oneself to pure observation in an unproductive way. One may attempt to answer this question from two perspectives. On the one hand, anatomical/physiological, on the other hand, linguistic/semiological. Thus one might take an interest in the differences between the cognitive functions of the two hemispheres of the brain, and also wonder whether, as Wittenstein suggests, we are still palying the same language game (in the broadest cultural sense) as was Plato.

But how can one get some grip on this broad subject area? In talking about art and science are we referring to a simple nominal distinction, a one dimensional continuum, or what? The need for a model is clear. The question then arises: should this model be of how we create works of art and science, or should it be of how we understand them? For the present I will concentrate on the latter problem, and suggest a model of the ways of thinking we make use of to understand these works.

One possible model is as follows. Imagine a planet the inhabitants of which have a passion for theory of knowledge. They decide to turn the surface of the planet into a map of knowledge, a kind of total college, library or encyclopaedia, made in such a way that one subject area is placed adjacent to all other subject areas closely related to it. Thus, on this surface one could go from social science to history to literature to myth, etc., or perhaps from mathematics to design to plastic arts, or from music to plastic arts to myth to history, etc.



The question is this: can a map of knowledge be made on a this spherical surface? My experience indicates that it can be. In my own thinking I used the surface of a cube (which is topologically equivalent to an sphere, but it is very much easier to know where you are on it, due to its corners and edges: it is thus a more convenient tool for thought) defined, eventually, by these three polarities: analysis/ambiguity; form/resemblance; development/space.

The first polarity contrasts the idea of meaning dependant on a set of internal relations, that is to say: form, with meaning dependent on comparison with something else - resemblance. This polarity enables distinction to be made between highly form dependent activities such as mathematics and music, and highly resemblance dependent activities such as biology and myth.

The third polarity contrasts meaning dependent on irreversible direction (developmental) with meaning dependent on reversible direction (spacelike). This polarity enables distinctions to be made between activities, such as social science and literature, which consider developmental systems, and activities, such as physical sciences and plastic arts, which consider spatial systems.

These last two polarities may relate to "other" as discussed in section one. Thus we have the intriguing idea of "other" or "world" being characterised by ideas of development, space, resemblance and form. This "world" (or, following William James, these "worlds") is then given either an analytical (objective, scientific) or an ambiguous (empathic, artistic) interpretation.

This insight stems from an observation that the central plane of the model, between the polar complements of analysis and ambiguity, consists of the subject areas: games, history, depiction and design. The resonance of this group with the essential materials of childhood: games, stories, drawing and building, cannot be ignored.

The claims I make for this model are, initially at least, simply that it is (a) coherent, and (b) useful. It is a kind of intellectual tin-opener.

In terms of understanding the model the analogy I have touched on above is useful. Imagine it as the basis of a library.

### **3. Rational, empirical, romantic, classical**

How are these words, which we use to describe styles of thought, related? As Bateson says, perhaps if we can see how they are related we will understand what

they mean. In terms of the model the words are related like this: (1) Rational and empirical are styles of scientific thought; classical and romantic are styles of artistic thought. (2) Rational and classical are styles of thought in which form is salient, empirical and romantic are styles of thought in which resemblance is salient. Thus we have a simple structure defined by the polarities analysis(science)/ambiguity(art) and form/resemblance. A rational style of thought is formal and analytical, an empirical style of thought is concerned with resemblance and analysis; a romantic style of thought is concerned with resemblance and ambiguity; a classical style of thought is concerned with form and ambiguity.

## The Spanish Collectives. - Kenneth Brady

"The collective should not be bigger than a band. The basic idea is to reproduce the collective not expand it. The strength of a collective lies in its social organization, not its numbers. Once you think in terms of recruiting you might as well join the army. The difference between expanding and reproducing... is that the first bases its strength on numbers and the second on relationships between people. Why should there be a limit to size? Because we are neither supermen or slaves. Beyond a certain point, the group becomes a meeting, and before you know it you have to raise your hand to speak. The collective is a recognition of the practical limits of conversation. This simple fact is the basis for a new social experience"<sup>1</sup>

The importance of an analysis of the Spanish collectives is that they throw light not only on the internal strengths and weaknesses of communities built upon anarcho-communist lines, but also on the problems of establishing relations between these communities without relying on either a market regime or on central planning. (It should be borne in mind that the Spanish experiments in collectivization were carried out under the unfavourable circumstances of the Spanish Civil war.) Although the anarchist inspired collectives were the most powerful single force in several areas of Spain at the outbreak of the Civil war, they had always to compete with other Republican factions - especially the Socialists at first and the Communists later on - and their influence was waning almost from the beginning of the revolution.<sup>2</sup> The collectives therefore had to contend with increasing hostility from the Republican government, and by mid - 1937 the experiment was more or less at an end, there barely being time to consolidate the internal arrangements of the communes and the factories let alone to develop institutions to co-ordinate their activities.

The unique feature of Spanish anarchism was a strange mixture of past and future with the relationship between these two tendencies being far from perfect. This double base of rural and industrial areas respectively, had turned the libertarian communism of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism in somewhat divergent directions, the one syndicalist the other communalist. The communalism was expressed in the more rural agrarian areas whereas syndicalism was more urban and unitarian in spirit. The rural areas identified very much with the Spanish tradition of the primitive peasant community borrowing from Kropotkin's idealization of the communes of the Middle Ages. Bakunin on the other hand was the founder of the Spanish collectivist, syndicalist, and internationalist workers' movement. Those anarchists who were more realistic, more concerned with the present than the past, tended to follow him and his disciple Ricardo Mella. They envisaged the economic structure of the future as a combination of local trade-union groupings and federations of branches of industry.

With respect to the collectivization of the rural areas, it is difficult to generalize across different regions of Spain, because the enthusiasm of peasants and workers for collectivization was strongly influenced by the previous pattern of landholding, which varied significantly between the regions.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Reinventing Anarchy" by Ehrlich, De Leon, Morris eds Ch31.

<sup>2</sup> The Revolution July 19 1936 - a lightning defensive action by the people to counter Franco's putsch.

<sup>3</sup> S. Dolgoff "The Anarchist Collectives"

Bearing this in mind evidence points to the fact that there were more than one thousand rural collectives formed in all; with about three-quarters of the land organized in this way in Aragon. The collectives varied considerably in size, from under a hundred persons to several thousand.<sup>4</sup> Authority was shared between the general assembly of the town or village and the political committee, formed under the auspice of whichever faction was dominant in the locality. The relationship was contentious, but it is uncontroversial to say that the day to day running of the collective was in the hands of the committee. Work itself was obligatory for all men between eighteen and sixty in good health, and was undertaken by teams of workers - usually about ten in number - who would choose a delegate who would represent them at the local committee. The management committee received the delegates from the groups every evening. With regard to local administration, the commune frequently called the inhabitants together in general assembly to receive reports of activities undertaken.

Land was acquired either by expropriating large estates or by collectivizing the small holdings of the peasantry, depending on the region in question. Everything was put into the common pool with the exception of clothing, furniture, personal savings, small domestic animals, garden plots, and poultry kept for family use. In most places individualist anarchists were allowed to continue to work their own plots of land provided they did not attempt to hire labour.<sup>5</sup> Relations between the 'collectivists' and the 'individualists' seem to have varied somewhat. From some places there are reports of peaceful co-existence, (and even of individualists being given access to the services of the collective) in other cases private owners were virtually forced by economic pressure to hand over their property to the collective. In most villages individualists, whether peasants or traders declined in number as time went on. They felt isolated and preferred to join the collectives.

All of the collectives moved some way towards the ideal of distribution according to need, but the schemes adopted varied greatly in their detailed functioning. In some places the community's goods were simply placed in a central store with each member being allowed to take what he or she needed - such as the poverty stricken village of Castro. But few villages were able to sustain such a system and practiced it only with respect to a few basic commodities. Other goods were distributed either by rationing, or more commonly, against an allowance paid to each family in the collective on the basis of the numbers of persons in the household. Many towns and villages decided to print their own currency or vouchers to replace the Spanish peseta. In this instance persons wishing to travel outside the village were provided with pesetas by the local committee.

The communes were united into cantonal federations above which were regional federations. Solidarity between villages was pushed to the limit, and equalization funds made it possible to give assistance to the poorest collectives. Tools, raw materials, and surplus labour were all on occasions made available to communities in need. The extent of rural socialization was different in different provinces. Catalonia for example was an area of small - and medium sized farms, and the peasantry had a strong individualistic tradition, so that there were no more than a few collectives. In Aragon, on the other hand, more than three quarters of the land was socialized. About 450 collectives were set up, with some half a million members. In the Levant region, the richest in Spain, some 900 collectives were established, covering roughly half of the geographical area.

4 M. Gilbert (ed) 'A Century of Conflict' 1850 - 1950 pp.156-60

5 Borkenau, The Spanish Cockpit pp.166-7

6 G. Levall 'Collectives in the Spanish Revolution' Ch 8.

In Castile, about 300 collectives were created with around 100,000 members.<sup>7</sup>

Most commentators agree that the agricultural self management was an undisputed success, with the internal economy of the towns and villages appearing to have functioned quite smoothly. Regular services such as medical care and hairdressing were supplied free, while requests for tools, machinery, and so forth, were passed to the local committee, which would then pass them on to the delegate of the appropriate trade. As far as the workforce is concerned there does not seem to have been much of a problem with slackers. No doubt revolutionary spirit and the need to combat the fascists played a part, but the assembly retained the ultimate sanction of expelling any member who failed to meet his obligations. This sanction was hardly ever used, with the community in effect being self-policing.

Although evidence about the economic performance of the collectives is hard to come by, seemingly overall production of agricultural goods rose between 1936 and 1937, and this is borne out by a study of one small town which left a detailed stock inventory.<sup>8</sup> Given the circumstances of the Civil War this was an impressive achievement. Clearly the collectives released the energy of the Spanish peasantry, and this showed itself in their willingness to cultivate the lands they had inherited more intensively. A number of modernizing projects were also carried through; new threshing machines were bought; fields were irrigated, roads and schools were built (with education being free) reforestation initiated, free nurseries started, and so forth.

The collectives succeeded internally because they evolved a form of organization - the local committee and the delegate system - which was adequate to its task. The relations between the collectives were, however, more problematic. Though it is difficult to form a completely accurate picture it seems that there were three ways in which inter-community relations might have been conducted:- through straightforward cash transactions, through bartering for goods, or through reciprocal giving (with the aim of equalizing the position of the various communities). All three methods were used but it is hard to say in what proportions. The bartering of surplus products had disadvantages in that not every village had a surplus which was desirable to other villages. There was a strong belief that a uniform national currency was after all a good thing as a medium of exchange and proposals were advanced for the establishment of a collective bank both in Aragon and the Levante. The main problem with the establishment of the C.N.T. proposed 'confederal banking' system was that the bourgeoisie Republican government retained control of the central banking system and the finance capital that went with it. The only solution would seem to have been a 'political' decision to place all the finance capital at the disposal of the 'collectives' but the C.N.T. was imprisoned by the 'Popular Front' alliance with the Republican government and failed to force this decisive step.

As far as gifts were concerned, in theory it should have been possible for the collectives to organize redistribution. In both Aragon and Levante (the two main areas in which collectivization was able to proceed unhindered) regional federations were created with this task in mind. Inter - village storehouses were established to hold food surpluses, and the federal committee informed of its contents.

<sup>7</sup> D. Guerin 'Anarchism' p134.

<sup>8</sup> H. Thomas 'Anarchist Agrarian Collectives' pg's 253-7

H. Thomas's critical enquiry (cited earlier) reveals that despite these measures living standards varied a great deal between communities. The average person in the Madrid region for example was much better off than a citizen in a collective near Cuenca. These variations no doubt reflected historical inequalities of wealth, but at the same time illustrated the shortcomings of the federations' redistributive impact. Despite these distributive problems the rural collectives were by all accounts a great success with Fenner Brockway then of the British Independent Labour Party reporting from the collective of Segorbe that "The spirit of the peasants their enthusiasm, and the way they contribute to the common effort and the pride which they take in it, are all admirable".<sup>9</sup>

The problems of collectivization in the cities were in many respects greater than those encountered in the countryside. Collectivization at the points of industrial production took two forms depending upon whether the previous owner(s) stayed on or fled. If 'he' stayed the C.N.T. (Confederation National de Trabajo) encouraged 'him' to continue with his management functions while installing a 'control committee' of its own members to supervise the general running of the enterprise. If the previous owner left the union quickly developed its own management structure, promoting technicians and skilled workers to positions of responsibility. Eyewitness accounts testify to the success of these measures. After visiting the workshops of the Barcelona bus company for example an observer stated that "it is an extraordinary achievement for a group of workers to take over a factory, under however favourable conditions, and within a few days to make it run with complete regularity".<sup>10</sup>

As far as the internal organization of the collectivized factories were concerned they were generally directed by a managerial committee of five to fifteen members representing the various trades and services nominated by the workers. The committee appointed a manager to whom it delegated all or part of its own powers. The management committee would be recalled, either by the general meeting of the workers or by the general council of the particular branch of the industry (composed of four representatives of management committees, eight of the trade unions, and four technicians appointed by the supervision organization). The wage system was maintained intact in the socialized factories. Each worker continued to be paid a fixed wage.

In spite of the considerable powers which had been given to the general councils of branches of industry, it appeared in practice that workers self-management tended to produce a sort of parochial egoism, with each production unit concerning itself with its own interests. The disparity of rich and poor collectives continued. Some could pay relatively high wages while others could not, and some had plenty of raw materials, while others were very short etc. This imbalance was remedied to a large extent by a central equalization fund created in December 1936 by a trade union assembly. At this point the trade unions undertook the systematic reorganization of large sectors of industry, concentrating production in those that had the best equipment. However, industrial centralization under trade union control could not be developed as rapidly and completely as the anarcho-syndicalists would have wished. This was because the Stalinists and reformists opposed the appropriation of the property of the middle class and showed scrupulous respect for the private sector.

9 D. Guerin "Anarchism" pg135

10 Borkenau "The Spanish Cockpit" pp90-1

In spite of its success industrial collectivization was sabotaged by the administrative bureaucracy and the authoritarian socialists. The Republican central government refused to grant any credit to Catalonian self-management. In June 1937 the Stalinist Comera took over the portfolio of the economy, and deprived the self-managed factories of raw materials which he lavished on the private sector. He also failed to deliver to the socialist enterprises supplies which had been ordered for them by the Catalan administration. The central government in effect had a stranglehold over the collectives as the nationalization of transport made it possible for it to supply some and cut off deliveries to others.

The final blow came to the collectives with a decree on August 11 1938 which militarized all war industries under the control of the Ministry of War supplies. The result of this was that a throng of Stalinist Communist Party bureaucrats took over the factories and the workers were deprived of control - the defeat of the Republic followed soon after by the Fascists.

In spite of this however the collectives have left behind an inspired legacy, as models of non-power based forms of production and organization. In 1938 Emma Goldman wrote "The collectivization of land and industry shines out as the greatest achievement of any revolutionary period. Even if Franco were to win and the Spanish anarchists were to be exterminated the idea they have launched will live on."<sup>11</sup>

As Andre Gorz talks of a dual society, and Rudolph Bahro emphasizes the importance of local autonomous productions; the lessons learnt from the anarchist collectives became all the more relevant when faced with the challenge of organizing and producing without unnecessary power relations in a world where international capitalism is becoming increasingly unacceptable in its economic and political forms.

<sup>11</sup> D. Guerin "Anarchism" pg 142

MARX OR MUESLI, by Julie Smith

Am I alone in being a carnivorous smoker? Or are there a lot of you getting a wee bit pissed off with the 'get thee behind me' approach of the soya-eating clean air brigade. Although it is very easy to make cheap jibes at vegetarians, vegans and people genuinely concerned with health, when the Tory junior minister for health starts talking about such 'alternatives' it is surely time to examine the underlying philosophy.

Health has become a potent political 'issue' - not only the decline of NHS, but our whole approach to the matter has been subject to debates for quite some time. Healthy eating and healthy living are the buzz words of the 80s. Actually, to suggest that the subject has been a topic of debate is quite misleading when all we have witnessed is a proliferation of 'experts' telling us what not to eat, how much exercise to take, and generally how to live our lives. Big Macs are out, vegeburgers are in - and the yuppies of this world are in their element.

What is so awful about suggesting improvements in the diet of the majority of the population? Basically, the dangerous fault lies in the premise that an individual can improve her quality of life by sticking to a few simple rules. The philosophy is still individualism - the same bourgeois ideology underlying present health care methods. The problem lies within the individual as does the solution. Thus by cutting out fat, sugar and red meat from our diet, not smoking and reducing our alcohol intake, according to the 'experts' we should increase our life-chances.

Funnily enough, I can't honestly believe that encouraging someone to stop smoking when they spend eight hours a day down a pit breathing in lungfuls of coal dust and often working waist-high in water is really going to increase their life-chances. Telling the populace that they'll feel a lot better if they cut out chips and beer when they have three screaming kids, a house with galloping damp and the DHSS hounding them, is somewhat missing the point.

These 'alternative' health care methods do not acknowledge that health problems are a product of society - they are social problems.

I've never yet heard an 'expert' encourage tenants to form an association in order to force the council to rid them of their damp housing.



Ms. Currie can encourage healthy eating - 'health', foods are big business and somebody somewhere is making a profit. Who is going to make a profit out of repairing council houses?

Alternative medicine, championed by HRH Charlie, is being given more credibility. Acupuncture, homeopathy, hypnotherapy are presented as a genuinely radical move away from traditional medical practice.

These methods are indeed different from accepted methods - which treats illness as something wrong with a particular part of a body, not a person. Alternative medicine will treat a patient as an individual, and probe into a person's emotional and family life, say, as well as merely examining the physical symptoms. However, none seem to suggest that the problem lies outwith the individual.

These alternative methods seem to have discovered the cure to the disease of the 20<sup>th</sup> century - STRESS. In 'The Vegetarian' - the official magazine of the vegetarian movement - an article suggests that 'Stress inevitably arises when people battle through life with conflicting goals, for a person who is not at peace within himself can never learn how to be at peace with the world'. And then, of course the cure - 'Learn to recognise your own symptom pattern and you can ease off - reduce your work load or take a holiday ...'. I'm sure nurses, bus drivers, mothers, miners, the unemployed, would really love to reduce their work load and take a holiday - unfortunately they usually need a weekly wage packet or fortnightly giro just to pay the rent and food bills, never mind a week in the sun. And as for being at peace with the world - WHY???

The history of the world is the history of struggle. It is the history of a dominated class refusing to lie down and 'be at peace' .

The language of the vegetarian movement - at least the language in their magazine - is reactionary. Hence the article, specifically aimed at their younger readers, informing us - us being their 'carnivorous friends' - that by eating meat we are 'shutting out our instincts ... instead of allowing the natural response of revulsion'. This constant stress on our instincts, to our returning to what is natural (if we ever were there) is meaningless. Humans are not simply creatures of instinct. - we are creative and above all self-conscious beings. And as for 'natural' - would somebody please explain what this word actually means - and, supposing it has a meaning, why has it come to be

synonymous with 'good'?

What these so-called radical movements are suggesting is that, in order to overcome the horrors of life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we all establish 'alternative' lifestyles. So we all troop out to the country, renovate a quaint little cottage somewhere, stuff the garden with chickens, goats, and vegetables and create our own electricity from manure. Bliss. Of course, we'd still need our cars to run us to Sainsbury's for our monthly supply of tofu and vitamins - not forgetting that all-important appointment with our homeopathist - and for carrying the bottles of claret back from the wine merchants - as well as those odd trips out to dinner or the theatre.

This 'lifestyle' view of politics neatly dovetails with the marketing strategies of the latest 'in' companies i.e. 'Next'; 'Mothercare'; 'Habitat'. These firms are selling lifestyles, lifestyles that the bourgeoisie will pay for while convincing themselves that they are presenting an alternative to 'Thatcher's Britain'. Their dream lifestyle depends on money, on an individualistic philosophy and on capitalism. It is no alternative.

It is no alternative as it leaves class out of the neat little dream. People are not just 'people' - there are workers and parasites. And the only way yuppies can support their lifestyle is because of their living off the backs of the majority of the population. There is only one solution to the 'health' problem, as to most others, and that is struggle - it is for the working class to shed the burden from their backs with an almighty scream. Utopian? There are strikes, pickets, riots, people organising and because you don't hear their screams on your T.V. doesn't mean they're not there. We will not be conned into believing that by eating soya and taking yoga classes that our quality of life will be improved. It won't. But we have the ability to take control of our lives - and it has sod-all to do with chick-peas.

NO PASARAN

OPEN MARXISM. - Werner Bonefeld

What is Marxism? Is there anything existing which could be regarded as the truthful identification of Marxism? Was Marx himself a Marxist, a notion he strongly rejected?

Is Marxism a system of answers, analyses, academical records and party politics?

Regarding the last decades of marxist discussion, it seems more than obvious that Marxism was/is identified with structuralism: Althusserian over and superdetermination and Poulantzarian sociologism. Class struggle was/is identified as a dysfunctionality of structures, whose essence was truth—the truthful identification of politics in itself as a matter of academical analysis light years away from the question: On which side are you standing?.

Thus, the crisis of structuralism is necessarily regarded as the crisis of Marxism (Althusser).

In this paper I argue that, conversely to structuralist presupposition, the crisis of structuralist Marxism shows the strength of Marxism. It bears the chance to recognise once more the force of history, which was somehow veiled in previous marxist discussion: class struggle.

Marxism is a revolutionary theory, which inherently unites theory and practice. The politics of Marxism thus consist necessarily of the unity of critique and destruction, denunciation and decomposition, demystification and destabilisation. This mutual interplay of critique and destruction emphasises the revolutionary project of social emancipation: the abolishing of all forms of oppression, political power and exploitation. It thus aims to substitute for bourgeois society in all its ramifications "an association, which will exclude classes and their antagonism" (Marx a). With reference to Bloch, this association names the future goal of nonalienated existence whose final word is 'homeland'. Homeland inherently excludes political power, since political power "is precisely the official expression of antagonism in civil society"(Marx b).

Marx explicitly insists on the structurally given crisis-ridden transformation of the historical forms of capitalist relations, by which an ever changing pattern of social composition within capitalist society and the conditions of struggle are constituted. The permanent decomposition and recomposition of the 'enchanted and perverted world' (Marx) of bourgeois society is thus inherent within capitalism, due to the presence of labour within capital.

The permanent and dynamic effort of capital to restructure its control over labour is the precondition of the stability of the capitalist system and vice versa. As for labour, it is the action of destabilisation of capital, which immediatly leads to the action of destruction (see Negri, 1979). The historical form within which the transformation of this antagonism is promoted is crisis.

Referring back to Marx, it is possible to work out an history of the inventions which are made solely for the reason of 'supplying capital with weapons against the revolts of the working class' (Marx c). The whole story about the so-called historical obstacles

to the increase of the productive forces and the crisis-ridden transformation of these relations promotes a profound theoretically illuminated account of the changes within capitalism. Thus, the 'state, as the concentrated and organised force of society' (Marx d). is developed by defending property, freedom and equality against social unrest. It is precisely this freedom of resistance which is as productive for the development of the forms of state power as strikes are for the invention of machinery (see Marx e). The process of decomposition and recomposition appears to be a historically changing form of primitive accumulation, by which capital permanently transforms the social preconditions of control (see Negt/Kluge 1981).

Despite these general characteristics, the state, the bourgeois society, the historical pattern of capitalist relations never did, don't and never will exist. Although it should be a commonplace that "it is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers ... which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure, and with it the political forms of the relations of sovereignty and dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of state". But, as Marx continues, "this does not prevent the same economic basis - the same from the standpoint of its main conditions - due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc., from showing infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by analysis of the empirically given circumstances" (Marx f).

Within the context of persisting national development patterns, the permanent revolution of the relations of production alters the capital relations, profoundly, towards a 'higher state of social production' (Marx) and thus reproduction, although the basic pattern remains: the capitalist relation of necessary and surplus labour.

Considering this structurally given permanence of change, the marxist concepts have to be open to the changes in the composition of the social relations which occur during the process of transformation. This is ever more obvious, since it is marxism that analyses the permanent decomposition and recomposition of bourgeois society as a structurally given mediation of its social antagonism and thus as a means of its existence. Further, marxism's concepts have to be dynamically open in order to add to the critique of political economy new social phenomena which for their part inevitably relate to the historically asserted forms of struggle.

This openness of categories is very much insisted on by Marx. Capital is the 'general illumination which bathes all the other colours and modifies their particularity' (Marx g). Marx's concept of abstract and concrete is thus the methodological metaphor for the continuity of the discontinuous development of the concrete within the abstract and vice versa (see Marx Grundrisse).

In short, the politics of critique and destruction has to be reconsidered and has to be readjusted to the changing forms taken by political power within capitalism, to different forms of extracting surplus labour, to changing forms of obscuring exploitation and to the changing composition of capitalist relations themselves.

In this sense capitalist reality constitutes a permanent challenge for the marxist concept of politics. The dynamic decomposition and crisis-ridden recomposition of social relations and conditions adds new social phenomena to its existence throughout the history of capitalism. 'The heresy of reality' (see Agnoli in M/A 1980), thus implies the incompleteness of categories insofar as the basic pattern of the social structure appears in various forms and within changing empirical circumstances.

Open Marxism thus applies the concept of abstract and concrete mentioned above to the decomposing reality of the enchanted and perverted world of capitalism. It necessarily contains, and is founded on, the principle of doubt: instead of the certainty of the orthodox manner of making use of concepts, it reclaims the incompleteness of the process of thinking, it readopts the unpredictability of the 'legitimacy of chance' (Marx) and it reconsiders the historically adequate policy of critique and destruction.

The principle of doubt is a prerequisite of the politics of Marxism as well as for its explicit historical target of 'homeland'. It is an explosive force which challenges the orthodox preservation of classical politics in a world of permanent change.

The orthodox explanation of the changes having taken place since the form of capitalist relation which Marx envisaged is partly concerned with the fear 'that empirical evidence might occur, that wasn't discussed by the classics' (Agnoli, in M/A 80). Instead, open Marxism regards the appearance of new empirical evidence as a necessary development which has to be analysed as a dynamic transformation of the concrete totality of the perverted world within the 'general illumination' of 'the all-determining power of capital' (Marx-Grundrisse). This should be common sense since capital is a dynamic relation of antagonism.

Open Marxism contrasts with a 'purely contemplative knowledge' (Bloch), adopted by dogmatism which relates the present to an isolated past and which entirely loses the connection with the process of history. It thus challenges the relevance of referring, with profound knowledge, to certain hitherto somehow hidden or minor interesting arguments of marxist classics, in order to analyse new forms of capitalism purely by quoting from their work. It challenges the exposition of a certain type of understanding of capitalism, which substitutes for the concrete application of a marxist analysis a recollection of quotes.

The principle of doubt inherently forms part of the concept of an open Marxism which reconsiders the open and contingent process of

class struggle, its changing forms and conditions. It thus reconstitutes Marx's understanding of politics and undermines the certainty of orthodox Marxism which seems to possess a profound analysis of the course of transformation of society under the effect of class struggle while also sharing in the knowledge of its unpredictability. Hence - a matter of quoting.

Taking into account the changing forms of the presence of labour within capital, the project of marxist politics has to be reconsidered as continuously as the the decomposition of society itself takes place. Both the concept of an open Marxism and its principle of doubt promote the vitality of Marxism, corresponding to its object of critique and destruction, by avoiding pure contemplation and its inability to cope with the process of change.

Open Marxism analyses the continuous discontinuity of capitalist development, that is, the dialectic of the relation between abstract and concrete. By doing so it reflects on the reality of change within, or as a means of existence of, the abstract structure of capitalism. As such, open Marxism is densely interwoven with the process of past-present-future. Although it doesn't share the (arrogant) certainty of (and thus the complacent politics of conservation adopted by) dogmatism, it promotes the politics of Marxism through the 'militant optimism' (Bloch) whereby 'homeland' is to be achieved. Hence its practical strength.

The explosive force of the principle of doubt, which contributes to open Marxism, challenges the widely shared assumption of a crisis of Marxism. This recurring assumption seems to be fashionable in times of capitalist restructuring and offense. Despite Marxism's allegedly final exhaustion, it should be clear from what has been said so far, that Marxism is not in crisis as long as it provokes and produces crises of historically developed 'schools' or of Marxists themselves.

Metaphorically, Marxism is the theoretical concept of practice and the practical concept of theory which provokes crises of itself as a matter of its inherent strength and validity.

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- |        |   |
|--------|---|
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PRACTICAL REFLEXIVITY IN MARX

Richard Gunn

The aim of the present paper is to elucidate Marx's understanding of the relationship between theory and practice and to explore, briefly, some of the issues to which it gives rise. No claim is entered to the effect that Marx's conception of the theory/practice relation is original to him: rather (although space prevents a defence of this view here) I would contend that it originates with Hegel, who urges that true theory and free, or mutually recognitive, practice are internally linked.<sup>1</sup> If this is so, then Marx's reading of Hegel as an idealist who severs theory from practice, preparatory to reducing the latter to the former,<sup>2</sup> wholly misses its mark. So too (although again I do not argue for this) does Marx's polemic against the Young Hegelians,<sup>3</sup> who carry forward Hegel's conception of the theory/practice relationship rather than succumbing to "idealism", as Marx thinks. More important than the fairness of Marx's criticisms, however, is the substantive view of the theory/practice relation which he advances on his own behalf. And, even if he does not originate this view, he enunciates it in an especially clear and succinct way. To this substantive conception I now turn.

I

Marx develops his characteristic understanding of the theory/practice relationship<sup>4</sup> in the course of the polemics which, in the 1840s, record the successive stages of his break with his Young Hegelian erstwhile allies. From his scattered comments and programmatic assertions both then and later, a rich and systematic conception of the relation between theory and practice emerges: the task of the present section is to bring his conception into clear view.

Marx's anti-Young Hegelian polemics argue for both a distinction between and a unity of theory and practice. I shall suggest that the main point of interest lies in how he regards these two aspects of his position as combined.

The thesis of the distinction between theory and practice is urged by Marx against the Young Hegelians who, in his view, had in effect denied it. The Young Hegelians are said to postulate a 'mystical identity of practice and theory' which conflates the former with the latter: 'The act of transforming society is reduced to the cerebral activity of critical criticism' (CW, 4., pp.193, 86; cf 5, pp.100-1, 431). Marx stresses that social relations are not 'ideas' which can be overcome by theoretical means alone, in the way that for example bad arguments can be destroyed through refutation, but exist in practice and can be changed only through practice (CW, 4, pp.82-3; 5, pp.4, 30-1, 91, 379). 'Ideas can never lead beyond an old world order but only beyond the ideas of the old world order. In order to carry out ideas men are needed who can exert practical force' (CW, 4., p.119). Marx's relatively straightforward distinction is thus between theory, which can change only one's own interpretation of the world, and practice, which is alone capable of effecting changes in the world itself: 'The real subject retains its autonomous existence outside the head just as before; namely as long as the head's conduct is merely speculative, merely theoretical.'<sup>5</sup> Of course, a simple theory/practice distinction of this sort is not sufficient to establish what sort of practice is necessary to change social relations - this latter, of course, being Marx's central concern.



For example, even if social relations are practical in the sense of constituting, at any given time, a distinctive 'mode of life [Lebensweise]' (CW, 5, p.31), it might still be possible to change them, not through the threat or exercise of force, but through a practice of rational persuasion. (Insofar as rational persuasion effects changes in the world it counts as 'practice' in terms of Marx's distinction.) For Marx, there is a presumption that in changing social relations force is directly or indirectly involved, theory itself becoming force (Gewalt) 'as soon as it has gripped the masses' (CW, 3, p.182). This, however, is a function not of the theory/practice distinction as such but of an understanding of existing social relations as ones wherein issues of domination are at stake. Marx's view of his Young Hegelian erstwhile associates might be summarised by saying that Young Hegelian criticism is impotent as propaganda, and retreats into the idealist illusion to the effect that refuting social relations for oneself is the same as destroying them for others, because existing power relations are such as to undermine the possibility of an effective public sphere. The suppression of the Rheinische Zeitung, edited by Marx in 1842-43, signals for him the end of the illusion that merely puolistic activity (as distinct from political organisation) is a sufficient lever of social change.

Besides social relations, ideological forms (which are of course bound up with and, as we shall see, an important aspect of, social relations) fall, for Marx, on the side of what is changeable only through practice ('Theses on Feuerbach', IV: CW, 5, p.4). Thus, for example, Marx criticises Max Stirner for destroying, not an ideological category 'itself' (which is to say, in its public or social existence), but only 'his emotional personal relation to it' (CW, 5, p.36). There is, to be sure, an evident distinction between destroying a category's hold on oneself and destroying its hold on others; but there is, in addition, a further sense in which a turn to practice may be relevant here. For it may be the case that even for oneself the grip of a specific ideological form or category can be broken only through a practical change in social relations: one's 'emotional personal relation' to the category, or in other words the grip upon one of the categories as "obvious common sense",<sup>6</sup> may survive one's "scientific" refutation of it as false. A passage in Capital appears to be to this effect: Marx's contention is apparently that even a category which has been seen through by means of 'scientific discovery' retains its grip upon one who thus knows it to be misleading.<sup>7</sup> So to say, once the 'scientist' leaves his or her study, and functions not as a theorist but as a nouseholder or a bureaucrat or a citizen, the ideological "hermeneutical atmosphere" of society re-asserts itself with full force.

What I have called the "further sense" in which a turn to practice is needful if the grip (even in the face of 'scientific' insight) of ideological categories is to be destroyed becomes clear if we turn to the second thesis advanced by Marx, viz., the thesis of the unity of theory and practice.

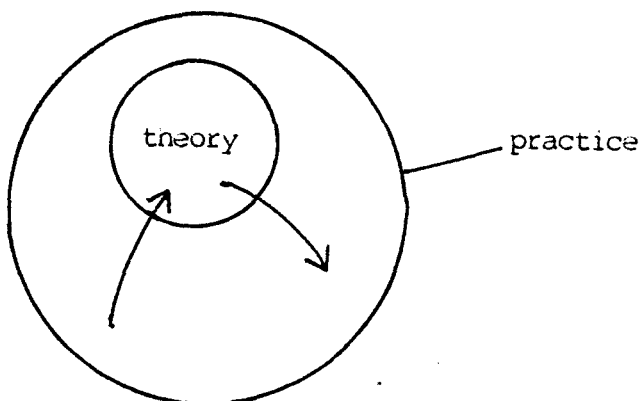
Marx urges the unity of theory and practice by affirming the necessity both of theory to practice and of practice to theory. The necessity of theory to practice is implied in his characterisation of revolutionary practice (in 1844) as involving a unity of philosophy and the proletariat, and (in 1845) as "'practical-critical" activity' (CW, 3, p.187; 5, p.3).<sup>8</sup> It is implied also in his characterisation of human as opposed to animal production in the 1844 Manuscripts - 'Man makes his life the object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity' (CW, 3, p.276) - and also in Capital.<sup>9</sup> The necessity of practice to theory, on the other hand, is affirmed directly: 'Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious being, and the being of man is their natural life-process' (CW, 5, p.36).

The necessity of practice to theory is likewise implied when Marx tells us that 'scientific' activity is 'social' activity (CW, 3, p. 298) and also that 'All social life is essentially practical' ('Theses', VIII, CW, 5, p.5). For Marx, neither thoughts nor language form a 'realm of their own' but are, rather, 'only manifestations of actual life' (CW, 5, p.447).<sup>10</sup> But, if theory and practice are thus mutually necessary and so form a unity, it remains to determine what form this unity has and how it is to be understood.

An answer to this question is suggested by two further passages in Marx. In one, he rejects the view - its exponents are unspecified - which 'does not include philosophy in the circle of German reality' (CW, 3, p.180). In the other, he urges his point in the form of a rhetorical question: "Can the [Young Hegelian] critic live in the society he criticizes?" It should be asked instead: must he not live in that society? Must he not be a manifestation of the life of that society?' (CW, 4, p.160). In short, theory is socially real - it is located in society - but at the same time 'All social life is essentially practical' (CW, 5, p.5). Thus it can be suggested that the best way to characterize Marx's view of the distinction between, and the unity of, theory and practice is to say that, for him, theory is a real and necessary moment or aspect of practice as a totality or whole. Thus practice is theory-inclusive just as theory, for its part, is practice-related and subsists only on a practical terrain. Just such a view of theory as a moment of practice is expressed in the already-quoted phrase "practical-critical" activity', 'critical' being understood here as indicating the theoretical moment in practice, or 'activity', taken as a theory-inclusive whole. Thus, theory for Marx is neither external to practice (a 'realm' of its own: CW, 5, p.447; cf. 'Theses on Feuerbach', IV) nor yet - as in Marx's view it was for the Young Hegelians - the sole and true form of practice, nor yet again something socially and practically inessential or unreal. Theory is distinct from practice in that it forms a moment (rather than the whole) of practice: there are things practice can do - e.g. 'changing the world' - which theory on its own cannot. And theory is in unity with practice since that of which it is a moment is a practical whole.

Thus the theses of the distinction between, and the unity of, theory and practice - which at first sight might seem mutually exclusive - elegantly and lucidly combine. Moreover, the view of theory as a moment in, and of, practice provides the further sense in which the destruction of an ideological category, even for oneself, must be accomplished practically. Borrowing Wittgenstein's terminology<sup>11</sup> one might say that, for Marx, changing (again, even for oneself) a form of language - or of "theory" - involves changing, in practice, a form of social life.

The conception of the theory/practice relationship here ascribed to Marx can be summarised in the form of a diagram (the arrows indicate paths of reciprocal interaction as, over time, practice constitutes theory which in turn informs or guides practice):



The disadvantage of the diagram is that its shape derives from a logical theory of sets and subsets, and thereby fails to render clearly the notion of an internal relation - a relation of reciprocal mediation - between theory (as moment) and practice (as totality) which is central to Marx's account. In Hegel's terms, it belongs at the level of abstract 'understanding' and not at the level of dialectical 'reason'. Because of this, I should like the diagram to be seen on the model of a Zen koan rather than as a definitive version of what has been said. Once the point of the diagram is appreciated, its form should be forgotten: the ladder should be cast away immediately it has been climbed.

## II

Some implications of this account of the theory/practice relationship as sketched above can now be made clear. From what has been said it follows that, for Marx, there can be no question of viewing the thesis of the unity of theory and practice as a simple political imperative or ought-to-be. For in Marx's view theory already just is, qua theory, a moment of practice: the only question can be whether this unity, which already exists, has an adequate form. "Adequacy", here, refers to theory's mode of self-understanding. Theory which understands itself as forming a practice-independent 'realm of its own' forms an inadequate unity with practice, since such a self-understanding is blind to - and indeed precludes awareness of - theory's practice-relatedness which nonetheless (though denied) obtains. Marx's rhetorical question - 'Must the critic not live in the society which he criticizes?' - suggests that an adequate unity exists only when theory grasps, or is at least capable of grasping, itself as a moment of a practical ("practical" in the theory-inclusive sense) whole. Marx takes the Young Hegelians to task for lacking just such a grasp of their theorising as practice-related: 'It has not occurred to any one of these philosophers to inquire into the connection between German philosophy and German reality, the connection of their criticism with their own material surroundings' (CW 5, p.30). This passage imposes on theorising the requirement, not merely that it look to its own practical effectiveness, but that it take account of its constitution in and through practice, i.e. its inherence in a practical and social totality which is present in and hence constitutive of each of its moments or parts.<sup>12</sup>

We can summarise this by saying that Marx requires theorising to be practically reflexive. Theory is reflexive when it reflects upon the constitution, and hence the validity, of its own categorial terms or (what is the same thing) its truth-criteria. Theory is practically reflexive when it understands the constitution of its terms and truth-criteria to be a practical and social constitution, i.e., when it understands that practice and society impinge on theory at the level of the categorial terms it employs, and when, accordingly, it thematizes this practical constitution (or practice-relatedness) in the course of posing to itself the question of the validity of its terms.

To be sure, theory might reflect on its own practical preconditions without, at least explicitly, raising in the course of this reflection the question of its categorial validity. For example, it might ask after the conditions of its own possibility in a purely causal or "sociological" way. However, Marx's assertion that theoretical 'mysteries...find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice' (CW, 5, p. 5) implies a view of theory's practice-relatedness as impinging on its substantive validity. And it is certainly theory's categorial (as distinct from its merely "empirical" or first-order) validity which he has in mind when he claims, of Young Hegelianism, that 'Not only in its answers, even in

its questions there was a mystification' (CW 5, p.28) and, of course, mystification at the level of questions is mystification at the level of truth-criteria or categorial terms. The thrust of his polemic is to assert that practical reflexivity is needful in order to gain purchase on the question of the validity of categories and that, conversely, practical reflexivity brings the question of category-validation into theoretical view.

From Marx, the notion of practical reflexivity passes into the mainstream of all Marxism which is "non-vulgar" or, in other words, which articulates itself in a conceptually rigorous way. Habermas summarises a lengthy tradition of Marxist and 'critical' thinking when he refers (favourably) to theories which 'incorporate reflexively the fact that they themselves remain a moment of the objective context which, in their turn, they subject to analysis'.<sup>13</sup> The theme of practical reflexivity is signalled, likewise, by Lukacs<sup>14</sup>, Gramsci,<sup>15</sup> Horkheimer,<sup>16</sup> Kojève<sup>17</sup> and Sartre.<sup>18</sup> The specific questions raised by each of these varying formulations of a common theme fall outwith the bounds of this paper, which deals with the notion of practical reflexivity itself, generically, and with issues to which it gives rise. Why should practical reflexivity be needful, and what theoretical requirements does it entail?

### III

There is a difference between saying that theory's terms must be compatible with a reflexive grasp of itself as a moment of practice, and saying that such a grasp must actually be present in any given theoretical case. The latter is, as I understand it, Marx's claim at least where social or "human" theory is concerned. The need for actual (and not merely, so to say, potential) practical reflexivity is clearest in the case of social theory which is intended as social critique in an explicitly oppositional or "revolutionary" sense. This is so because failure explicitly to thematize practical reflexivity means that theory lacks the distance or detachment from its object which would enable its object to be called in question. That is, theory would lack the distance which enables its object's claims about itself - the "ideologies" or (as it were) the hermeneutical and categorial "atmosphere" which forms the socially real theoretical moment of any society as a practical totality or whole - to be bracketted or, so to say, placed in quotes.

An object-lesson is once again provided by the Young Hegelians as pilloried by Marx. Lacking practical reflexivity, and thus critical distance, the Young Hegelians merely 'recognize', and hence reinforce and confirm, the existing social world by means of a seemingly different interpretation of it; as a result the Young Hegelians, 'in spite of their allegedly "world-shattering" phrases, are the staunchest conservatives' (CW, 5, p.30; cf. pp.293, 300, 304, 415, 432). Behind Stirner's allegedly utopian alternative to existing social relations (his proposal of an anarchic 'Association of Egoists'), the outlines of, precisely, existing ideological categories and social relations can be discerned (CW, 5, pp.392, 398, 406, 409, 411; cf. Engels, CW 4, pp.329, 564). The hermeneutical atmosphere of a society is functionally necessary (or at least advantageous) to the reproduction of the society through time; to breathe that atmosphere unthinkingly, and so to reproduce its categories in one's allegedly oppositional works, is accordingly self-defeating because it contributes to the continuing maintenance of the social status quo. Lacking a sense of how practice constitutes theory - that is, failing to grasp 'the connection of their criticism with their own material surroundings' - the Young Hegelians are unable to address the issue of the practice to which, in its turn, their own theorising leads: these two failings go hand in hand, and 'conservatism' (a

reinforcement of the status quo) is the outcome. Only if we reflect on the practical constitution of our theory's categories, or in other words on our place as critics in the society we criticize, can we make a question out of whether our theory's categories merely copy down, and thus reinforce, the social relations to which we stand opposed.

What of social theory which holds no overt brief for opposition but which aims, merely, to achieve truth? (Most "social science" is of course theory of this kind.) I propose that even theory of this non-oppositional sort must be practically reflexive, i.e., that it must pose to itself, explicitly, the question of the practical and social constitution of the terms which it employs.

The object-lesson, here, is supplied in Marx's critique of political economy. Marx's later work makes it clear that explicit practical reflexivity is needful in order that description of structures of social practice should not merely reproduce - as, for example, does 'vulgar' political economy<sup>19</sup> - 'appearances', that is, the ideological claims as to its own nature which form a real part of society and which society makes about itself. Such 'appearances' are the theoretical moment of society as a practical structure or whole: in other words, a society's mode of self-presentation is, itself, a real part of that society (in the sense that practice "includes" theory).

The point is that such appearances may be systematically misleading as to the character of the practice (the social structure) in which they inhere. In other words, they may mediate to itself a social reality which exists in a perverted and mystificatory form. This, in Marx's view, is the case with the way in which capitalist society presents itself, or "spontaneously" appears. The sphere of exchange gives rise to ideologies of individualism - 'freedom, equality, property and Bentham', as Marx has it<sup>20</sup> - and these ideologies make up a realm of appearance (a realm of functionally necessary mediation) directly contradicted by the structure of the capitalist production process, which structure is in Marx's view decisive for the character of capitalist social relations (and hence practice) taken as a whole. The sphere of exchange is for Marx a 'surface process, beneath which, however, in the depths, entirely different processes go on, in which...apparent individuality and liberty disappear'; when we explore the process of production we find that 'exchange turns into its opposite and the laws of private property - liberty, equality, property - turn into the worker's/propertylessness and the dispossession of his labour'.<sup>21</sup> The "vulgar" economist merely copies down the appearances of liberty, equality, etc., and takes them at their face value; only a critique of political economy can pose the question of the reliability of these appearances as accounts of the social practice which they mediate and help to perpetuate and within which they stand. The vulgar economist lacks the practical reflexivity which allows Marx himself to pose (and to answer in the negative) the question of whether capitalism's appearance-ideologies are indeed trustworthy theoretical guides.

Of course, Marx's stance vis-a-vis capitalism is oppositional: sarcasm, anger, mockery, and vitriolic wit are Capital's ever-recurring motifs. But the above sketch of his interrogation of the ideologies of 'freedom, equality, property and Bentham' shows that it is not merely his stance of opposition which brings the theme of practical reflexivity to the fore. For the very possibility that social appearances may be misleading - that a society's theoretical moment may conceal, and contradict, the nature of social practice - is sufficient to make a "bracketing" of these appearances (of society's "hermeneutical atmosphere") incumbent on any social theorist who aims to present a true account of the nature of the social practice

concerned. And from this it follows that social theory which aims at truth, and not merely social theory which aims at opposition, must be practically reflexive; for only a practically reflexive theory (a theory which construes the social theorist as him or herself socially situated) can make a question out of the way in which society as it were "spontaneously" presents itself to theorist and to non-theorist alike. Accordingly all social theory, and not merely oppositional theory, abandons the requirement of practical reflexivity at its peril.

Horkheimer makes this point when he condemns theory for which 'subject and object are kept strictly apart...If we think of the object of the theory in separation from the theory, we fall into quietism or conformism'.<sup>22</sup> The theorising 'subject' must grasp, reflexively, his or her presence in theory's subject-matter or 'object', viz. society as a practical totality, if 'quietism and conformism' or in other words an unquestioning endorsement of extant ideological categories is to be avoided. Certainly, the term 'quietism' underscores Horkheimer's oppositional stance; but the 'conformism' which is also to be avoided is a conformism inimical to the interests of social truth itself. To be sure, it may so happen that social 'appearances' turn out to be reliable guides to the nature of social practice: by definition, this would be so in an 'emancipated' society where alienation and estrangement no longer prevailed. But the theorist (or indeed the citizen) can never know in advance whether this is so: hence 'critical' consciousness - "critical" in the sense of "interrogative" and not necessarily in the sense of "oppositional" - is always needful. Critique indeed must become (it must lead to) opposition if it turns out that benign appearances conceal, and inhere in, oppressive and dehumanising practice: but, in the first instance, what is needful is the interrogative stance whose possibility practical reflexivity supplies. And this interrogative stance (therefore, practical reflexivity also) remains needful in all possible social formations whatever - and so, too, in a society where emancipation prevails. For society can know that it is emancipated - it can guard against regression, distortion, and the re-emergence of estrangement - only if interrogative and practically reflexive consciousness forms its sensus communis or, in Gramsci's meaning (which is also the classical one), its "common sense". Far from it being the case that emancipation abolishes the need for practical reflexivity, an emancipated society is one where, precisely, practical reflexivity comes into its own.

In sum: practical reflexivity is needful for all social theory because it is not the case that "spontaneously" common-sensical ideas come from nowhere. They come from practice or, rather, they inhere always-already in society as a practical totality; they form the theoretical moment in and through which that practical totality secures a conviction of its legitimacy and so reproduces itself. In this sense society (the totality) is present in them (in society's theoretical moment). All social theory is thus required to be on guard against false obviousness, just because this obviousness - the seemingly self-evident and self-explanatory character of categories like 'individuality' and 'rationality' - may possibly be "mystificatory" or false: and the practice-constitution of theory penetrates, without remainder, all theory whatsoever - even theorising of the most rarified and conceptually esoteric kind. No theory forms a practice-independent 'realm of its own'. But if all theory must be practically reflexive, the requirement of practical reflexivity applies to oppositional theory with a redoubled force. For not only must such theory (like all theory) aim at truth; in addition, it must inform and guide a practice which differs from that which carries forward, and so reproduces, the status quo. And it can do this only if it loosens the grip - the 'mental cramp', in Wittgenstein's phrase - of those categories, and

ideologies, which ensure that practice flows in socially approved channels and in those alone. What remains valid in Lenin once the suspect notion of a "vanguard party" has been rejected is his insistence that, without a theory which calls in question received appearances, the possibility of a revolutionary movement cannot be entertained.<sup>23</sup>

#### IV

What, for theory, does the requirement of practical reflexivity entail? I suggest that, with good reason, this question admits of being answered only in the most general terms. For what practical reflexivity does is place at issue, without remainder, the categorial framework which a given body of theorising employs; and this means that the terms in which practical reflexivity itself goes forward must, themselves, be placed at issue if theory is to be on guard against taking ideological categories at their face value at the very moment when, reflexively, it interrogates itself. Thus, categorially, nothing is, or can be, given in advance of the interrogation of truth-criteria which practical reflexivity mounts. There is therefore no one set of terms which count (in advance) as constituting "valid practical reflexivity". In other words practical reflexivity is the very opposite of a "method" or "methodology" which can be established prior to, and independently of, the project of social inquiry in any given case. Practical reflexivity is thus an attitude rather than a method: but it is an attitude which changes everything. To see the point of practical reflexivity is to accomplish a "Gestalt-shift" after which nothing in social theorising can ever look the same.

Practical reflexivity is never a method which can be "applied"; or, rather, if we are to talk of its "application" then we must say that it is to be applied inter alia to itself. How is this possible, without vicious circularity or, as Hegel expresses it, without attempting 'to know before you know'?<sup>24</sup> The answer to this question lies in the unique relation between first-order theory and second-order metatheory which practical reflexivity entails.

We have seen how the requirement of practical reflexivity comes into view whenever theory asks after the validity of its truth-criteria or categorial terms. Traditionally, reflection on truth-criteria is seen as going forward at a metatheoretical level distinct from that of first-order theorising, for vicious circularity seemingly results if categorial validity is made a topic for first-order theorising itself. Thus, for example, vicious circularity is certainly in play when Althusser declares that 'theoretical practice [or 'science'] is...its own criterion, and contains in itself definite protocols with which to validate the quality of its product, i.e., the criteria of the products of scientific practice'; for the application of this thesis is restricted (as it must be if it is to be plausible) to sciences 'once they are truly constituted and developed' whereas, of course, the real question is that of what the criteria for identifying a 'truly constituted' science might be.<sup>25</sup> The ascent to a meta-level of theoretical reflection is supposed to (and indeed succeeds in) avoiding this vicious circularity by distinguishing between theory and theory which reflects on theory much in the fashion of Russell's theory of logical types.<sup>26</sup> But, if the danger of vicious circularity is averted, a further danger - that of an infinite regression of meta-levels - looms; for a theory which reflects on the theory which reflect on theory would be needful to establish this latter theory's categorial validity, and so on without hope of halt.

Practical reflexivity avoids both vicious circularity and infinite regress by showing how reflection on a theory's categorial validity can go forward

within the first-order theory itself. So to say, the same body of first-order theory can play both "metatheoretical" and "theoretical" roles. That there is no division between discrete "metatheoretical" and "theoretical" values is actually entailed by the notion of practically reflexive social theory because to ask after the social and practical constitution of ones categories just is to develop, already, a first-order social theory; and, conversely, to develop a first-order social theory just is to arrive at results which can and must, be applied "in the first person" to one's own theoretical self. For this reason, the requirement of practical reflexivity does not merely impinge at the start of one's social theorising - as, so to say, the first "methodological" chapter of ones thesis or book - but rather accompanies one's theorising throughout and, indeed, just is one's theorising seen from a different (a reflexive) point of view. Non-practical reflexivity admits of construal or theorising at a distinct metalevel; specifically practical reflexivity admits of no such construal because it locates the theorist, and the constitution of his or her theoretical categories, within the social world which the first-order theorising explores.

Hence the infinite regress of ascent through metalevels is halted or, rather it never gets started or comes into play. But what of the vicious circle of 'knowing [categorially] before you know'? Vicious circularity would indeed be entailed if practical reflexivity amounted to the recommendation that social theory be conducted heedless of questions pertaining to truth-criteria, those questions being in some way "automatically" answered by simple inference from first-order theorising itself. Such a recommendation is, in effect, Althusser's. It also seems to be Marx's when, in one of his weakest passages, he claims that 'One has to "leave philosophy aside"... one has to leap out of it and devote oneself like an ordinary man to the study of actuality'.<sup>27</sup> But the recommendation entailed by our earlier discussion is, rather, that first-order theorising be imbued throughout, and at every stage, with a practically reflexive awareness or "attitude". One's practical reflexivity and one's social theorising develop, as it were, together and hand in hand. Each of them just is the other (so that infinite regress is avoided); but also each is the other seen in a distinctive light and so the vicious circle entailed by an "Althusserian" approach is overcome. First-order social theorising, when informed by practical reflexivity, does not "automatically" answer categorial questions: rather, it is developed with an eye to these questions and with a view to showing how they might be resolved. Vicious circularity is avoided because practical reflexivity affects the first-order results at which first-order theorising arrives. This might seem like a dogmatic and a priori theoretical closure; on the contrary, bringing practical reflexivity into play represents a categorial openness superior to any other just because it refuses to take the validity of any categories whatever simply as read. Precisely here, we should stress again that practical reflexivity presupposes, not an oppositional, but an interrogative theoretical stance: it leads to opposition where it turns out that theoretical 'appearances' contradict the practical 'reality' of which they form a mediating part (i.e. where alienation prevails); but no oppositional commitment is presupposed. Were an oppositional commitment presupposed then, in effect, we should be claiming to know in advance of knowing the results to which one's theorising would lead; either vicious circularity would be entailed or one's first-order theorising could never gain purchase on the categorial validity of the theory informing one's oppositional stance - and so the infinite regression to higher and higher metalevels would be unleashed.

The claims raised in the present section of this paper require, of course, a discussion that is a good deal more extensive than, here, I have been able



to attempt. The general conception offered is of a theorising which advances, simultaneously, on a reflexive (categorially interrogative) and a first-order front. An analogy or point of reference for such theorising might be found in Scottish eighteenth-century "common-sense" philosophy, which locates a capacity to address issues of categorial validity (a capacity, in other words, for 'critical theory') within the first-order experience and self-awareness of, so to say, everyman rather than in the privileged meta-awareness of a philosophical elite.<sup>28</sup> In sum, practical reflexivity amounts to more than a being on guard against categorial error and ideological delusion. It also offers, programmatically, an approach to the question of how claims as to the validity of one's categories and truth-criteria might be discursively redeemed. As we have seen, Marx casts practical reflexivity in precisely this categorially redemptive role when he declares, in the eighth of the 'Theses on Feuerbach', that 'theoretical mysteries' - by which I understand inter alia the 'mystery' of category-validation - can find their solution 'in human practice and in the [reflexive] comprehension of this practice' (CW 5, p.5). The following-through of this programmatic statement lies outwith this paper's bounds. All that we have established, here, is that practical reflexivity provides purchase on a manner in which, minus infinite regress and vicious circularity, the question of category-validation might be addressed. And, indirectly, this proposal returns us to Hegel and the unity between true theory and mutually recognitive practice.<sup>29</sup> For it may be - and here the allusion is to so-called 'consensus' accounts of truth<sup>30</sup> - that the 'human practice' which a practically reflexive account of redeemed truth-criteria must invoke is the practice of an emancipated society, or in other words, of mutually recognitive freedom itself. In order to have purchase on the issue of validating categories, the "common sense" of everyman must needs be the public and interactive sensus communis of an emancipatory and non-alienated social world.

Notes

1. Relevant passages include Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit (Oxford 1977) pp 44, 104 and esp.490-1; also his Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences para. 382.
2. Cf. Marx/Engels Collected Works (Lawrence and Wishart 1975-) [henceforward: CW], 3, pp. 326-46.
3. N.Lobkowitz Theory and Practice (Notre Dame 1967), Part III, and D. McLellan The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx (Macmillan 1969) contain useful overviews; see also L.S.Stepelevich (ed.) The Young Hegelians: An Anthology (Cambridge 1983).
4. Except where the context indicates a more specific meaning, 'theory' in what follows indicates consciousness in general while 'practice' refers to any action which effects, or might effect, changes in the world.
5. K.Marx Grundrisse (Penguin Books 1973) pp. 100-1; cf. CW, 4, p. 193. Further passages which deploy the theory/practice distinction against Young Hegelianism occur at CW, 3, pp. 181, 302, 313; 5, pp. 5, 24, 77-8, 126, 173, 237, 282, 286, 384.
6. I use the term "common sense", here, with the meaning given it by Gramsci: see A.Gramsci Selections from the Prison Notebooks (Lawrence & Wishart 1971) pp. 134, 323ff.
7. K.Marx Capital Vol. I (Penguin Books 1976) p. 167. The qualification 'apparently' is needful because, in the passage cited, 'scientific discovery' may possibly refer only to the view, shared by Marx and the "classical" as opposed to the "vulgar" political economists, that labour-time is the content of value, and not to the analysis of the form of value which Marx regarded as his own, novel, contribution (ibid pp. 173-4). In this case, the circumstance that an ideological category retains its grip even in the face of 'scientific discovery' of its falsity might be due to the incompleteness of the scientific discovery concerned.
8. The difference between the two passages here cited is that, in 1844, Marx thinks of the unity of theory and practice in terms of, so to say, a "united front" between discrete social groups (namely, Left-Hegelian intellectuals and the working class), whereas in 1845 a much closer integration (whatever its precise character) is envisaged both in conceptual and political terms.
9. Capital, Vol. I, pp. 283-4. A difference between these passages, dating from 1844 and from 1867 respectively, should be noted: the former invokes not merely consciousness in general but self-consciousness, and thereby points towards a conception of free self-determination, while the latter invokes only consciousness of purposively-addressed goals. The former implies that, as human, we choose our purposes while the latter is compatible with, although it does not entail, the view that our purposes are predetermined. Are humans distinct from animals because we choose our purposes whereas they do not, or (surely a less plausible view) because we alone act in a purposive way?
10. In Marx's view, theory's estrangement from practice - its understanding of itself, in the manner of traditional philosophy (CW, 3, p. 331), as a practice-independent 'realm of its own' - has its roots in contradictions and estrangements obtaining within practice itself. See

'Theses on Feuerbach', IV, and also CW, 5, p 45 which signals this point by referring to the emergence of the distinction between mental and manual labour.

11. Cf. L.Wittgenstein Philosophical Investigations, para. 19.
12. This formulation implies the notion, criticised by Althusser, of a totality as a unity which is present (wholly present) in each of its moments or parts: L.Althusser and E.Balibar Reading Capital (New Left Books 1970) p. 96 and passim. For reasons which it falls outwith the present paper to discuss, I consider that Althusser's objection to the effect that this concept of totality is reductionist misses its mark.
13. T.W.Adorno et al. The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology (Heinemann 1976) p. 134; cf. p. 162.
14. G.Lukacs History and Class Consciousness (Merlin Press 1971) pp. 19-24.
15. Selections from the Prison Notebooks, pp. 404-5, 436.
16. See note 22, below.
17. A.Kojève 'The Idea of Death in the Philosophy of Hegel', Interpretation, Vol. 3 (1973), p. 115.
18. J.-P.Sartre Critique of Dialectical Reason (New Left Books 1976), p. 47.
19. See e.g. Capital Vol I, pp. 174-5; also K.Marx Theories of Surplus Value, Part Two (Lawrence & Wishart 1969), pp. 266-7.
20. Capital, Vol. I, p. 280; cf. Grundrisse pp. 239ff.
21. Grundrisse pp. 247, 674.
22. M.Horkheimer 'Traditional and Critical Theory' in his Critical Theory: Selected Essays (Seabury Press n.d.) p. 229.
23. V.I.Lenin Selected Works (Lawrence & Wishart n.d.), Vol. 2, p. 47; cf. the critique of "spontaneism" (in bourgeois society, spontaneity will be spontaneity conditioned by bourgeois ideology) at p. 62
24. Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences para. 41.
25. Reading Capital p. 59.
26. The classic statement is the third essay in B.Russell Logic and Knowledge (Allen and Unwin 1956). The line of argument sketched in the remainder of this paper is indebted to G.E.Davie's interrogation of Russell in his The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect (Polygon Books 1986), Part 3.
27. CW, 5, p. 236; the passage is weak because refusing to philosophise in no way resolves the problems, including that of categorial validation, which philosophy has traditionally addressed. And if a problem is badly formulated this is not shown by choosing to ignore it. Arguably, Marx lapses into this mistake by taking philosophy to address theorising on latter's own, allegedly practice-independent, terms and concluding that a break with philosophy tout court and a wholly 'empirical' mode of theorising (CW, 5, pp. 331, 37) becomes needful if practice (as theory-inclusive) instead of merely theory (as supposedly practice-

independent) is to be theoretically addressed. However, a more promising account of the implications of the thesis of the unity of theory and practice for philosophy - one more in keeping with the eighth of the 'Theses on Feuerbach' as construed in the final paragraph of the present paper - is sketched at CW, 3, p. 181: philosophy can only be transcended by actualising it in practice. Here, echoes of the Hegelian linking of truth to mutual recognition sound.

28. See G.E.Davie The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect, ch. 10; also his The Social Significance of the Scottish Philosophy of Common Sense (Dow Lecture, University of Dundee, 1973) and 'Berkeley, Hume, and the Central Problem of Scottish Philosophy', McGill Hume Studies (1981).
29. Hegelian theory is, without doubt, practically reflexive. In the sixth chapter of the Phenomenology, Hegel tells the story of the history in which, or rather at the end of which, he himself stands. His eighth chapter, on absolute knowledge, states explicitly that 'until spirit has completed itself...as world-spirit [i.e. until it has completed itself historically] it cannot reach its completion as self-conscious [i.e. truthfully self-aware] spirit' (Phenomenology, p. 438). Thus Hegelian truth has practical preconditions, viz., the appearance at the end of history of a mutually recognitive audience who, as free, are capable of acknowledging it. Truth thus appears when its post-historical 'time' has come and when it can exist in, and for, a mutually recognitive 'public' (ibid, p. 44); on this condition, it 'is at once exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appropriated by all' (ibid, p. 7). Thus the Phenomenology reflects on the emergence, at the end of history, of the practical totality (that of mutually recognitive freedom) of which it itself, as true, forms the theoretical moment; in doing so, it reflects upon its own categorial validity as well.
30. See e.g. T.McCarthy The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas (Polity Press 1984) pp. 291-310; M.Hesse Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science (Harvester Press 1980) ch. 9; also the remarks on 'objective', or categorially valid, theorising in relation to 'universal' subjectivity in Gramsci, Selections from the Prison Notebooks, p. 445.

John Holloway

## A Note on Fordism and Neo-Fordism

it is the beat of the heart,  
this pulsing of blood  
that is a bubblin bass,  
a bad bad beat  
pushin gainst the wall  
whey bar black blood.

The beat of the heart, this pulsing of blood: how else can one begin to talk of neo-Fordism in a world still not dead?

Yet too often the concepts of Fordism and neo-Fordism are used to provide an analysis of society that kills life and promotes death.

### **Marxism**

If Marxism is not about the "beat of the heart", it is nothing. If it is not "pushin gainst the wall", it has no meaning. "A bad, bad beat pushin gainst the wall", life against death, labour against capital, class struggle.

The struggle of labour against capital is literally the fight of life against death. Not just in the sense that capitalism threatens the obliteration of all life, but also in the sense which Marx emphasises time and time again in **Capital**: capitalism is the rule of dead labour over living labour, the subjection of creative life to the deadening, uncontrolled dictates of "necessity". Marxism, as a theory of working class struggle, is above all a theory of life. Bourgeois theory, in assuming the permanence of alienating necessity, is a theory of death.

Pushing against the wall is more effective if we understand the wall. But one thing is to understand the wall as mere bricks and mortar; another is to

understand it as a wall that is being pushed and is pushing.

Yet the more we stand aside from the pushing, the more we look at the wall as academics, the deeper we go into a time of reaction: so the more obvious it appears that we can understand the wall simply as bricks and mortar. The distinction between Marxism and bourgeois theory evaporates. We see only the wall, no pushing, no pulsing of blood that is a bubbling base, no life.

This "Marxist" analysis that rubs shoulders so easily with the bourgeoisie is sometimes called fractionalism (see Clarke 1978). Fractionalism, that deadly, deadening sin of academic Marxism, tries to understand the dynamic of capitalism in terms of the conflict between different groups of capitalists. By referring to groups as "fractions", it thinks that the distinction between bourgeois and Marxist theory has been overcome. It leaves no room for the heartbeat, "the sheer unrest of oppressed life" (Hegel), for class struggle. Ultimately, fractionalist analyses are wrong very simply because they are dead and deadening. Not only are they wrong, but they have little to do with Marxism beyond the pretensions of their authors and the names of the journals in which they can sometimes be found: they are superficial whereas the whole point of Marx's analysis in **Capital** and elsewhere is that it is only by looking beneath the appearances that we can discover the life of living labour and the possibility of a socialist future. The problem is not to understand capitalism as it exists, not as something that is but as something that is becoming, to see it from the point of view of its transcendence, from the perspective of the Not Yet, as a wall being pushed

for the time is nigh  
when passion gather high  
and the beat just lash  
when the wall must smash.

## **Fordism**

Why all this preface to a discussion of Fordism? In the last few years the

concepts of Fordism and Neo-Fordism have emerged as providing an influential and potentially valuable framework for the analysis of current changes in capitalism. Yet it is becoming clear that ambiguities in the concepts leave them open to use in a very determinist fashion, in a manner which not only leaves struggle completely out of the analysis of capitalism, but is actively used to argue that no struggle is possible in the present situation.

The basic merit of the concept of Fordism is that it points to the fact that the crisis we have been living through for the last ten years and more is not just a crisis of capitalism in general, nor a crisis of a particular type of state or state policy (Keynesianism), but a crisis of a particular pattern of capitalist domination. This pattern, associated with the strategy introduced by Ford in the production of the Model T and subsequently spreading to the rest of the United States and then, after 1945, to the rest of the advanced capitalist world, was characterised by the close articulation of mass consumption with the mass production of standardised commodities by a semi-skilled workforce working in large factories. This pattern of production and consumption provided the basis for and was sustained by the regulation of conflict through collective bargaining between employers and trade unions and the development of the welfare state. Since the late 1960s / early 1970s, this whole economic-and-political pattern of domination is visibly in crisis, and the outline of a new pattern can be discerned, a pattern variously referred to as neo-Fordism, post-Fordism or flexible specialisation. The new pattern is based on the automation of production and distribution, the break-up of large factories into smaller production units, to the creation of new and more rigid divisions between core skilled workers and peripheral unskilled workers, the development of new and more direct forms of mass integration to replace the withered structures of social democracy, etc. The transition to Neo-Fordism involves not just a reorganisation of production but a total reorganisation of society.

The analyses of Fordism and neo-Fordism vary enormously, both in their sophistication and in their political implications, but they all share a common conclusion: the emergence of a new pattern of capital accumulation necessitates a

complete reassessment of the strategy for socialism.

But what kind of reassessment? The problem is that over the last couple of years the idea of reassessment and particularly the analysis of neo-Fordism have come to provide the theoretical supports for a "new realism", which argues that socialists must abandon many of their more ambitious demands and more militant behaviour and come to terms with the "new realities" of capitalism. On this ground, for example, the unrealism of the miners' strike was widely condemned, from the moment, that is, that it became clear that it was time for all wise rats to abandon a sinking ship. In Britain this analysis of the "new realities" of capitalism has been put forward most consistently by a journal with the rather unlikely name of "Marxism Today". But in West Germany too, the concept of neo-Fordism has been linked with a condemnation of the unrealistic militancy of the miners by one of the leading theorists of the Fordist state (Esser 1985).

Once revulsion leads on to reflection, it becomes clear that there is something wrong with these analyses. Under the guise of "creative Marxism", old-fashioned crass determinism seems to be creeping in through the back door.

## **Crisis**

The central weakness of most of the discussions of Fordism is the absence of any concept of crisis.

Yet crisis is life showing through death, the beat of the heart, the material basis of hope. The concept of crisis is central to the Marxist analysis of capitalism, because it is crisis which lays bare the the limits of capitalism. In crisis the impermanence of capitalism becomes clear, the inherent instability of capitalist domination: capital comes up against its limits. And it is on this inherent instability that the whole structure of Marxist thought is grounded: Marx's categories only make sense if capitalism is looked at from the point of view of its transcendence, as a historically specific form of social organisation. Anger too, life. rebellion make sense only in the context of a form of oppression which is



too, life. rebellion make sense only in the context of a form of oppression which is unstable, crisis-ridden. If crisis is not at the core of capitalism, we would do better all to become well-integrated bourgeois and citizens and to cope with our frustrations in the privacy of our homes.

Capitalist crisis is a crisis of the capital relation. It is not a "recession" or a "downturn in the economy" although it may appear as such: it is a crisis of the relation between the ruling class and the exploited class. The relation of domination comes under strain: it has to be restructured if capital is to remain in command. This is the fundamental point that is so often forgotten in the discussions of the mechanics of crisis.

Why is capitalist domination subject to periodic crisis? Firstly, because domination is never easy, because it is never easy to contain the sheer unrest of explosive life, the "pulsing of blood that is a bubblin bass". The dominated are never simply victims: they are alive and they resist. Workers are not just variable capital, they are living labour. Domination is never an easy matter, and any ruling class must constantly struggle to impose its own will, to harness life for its own deadly purposes. Crisis is central to Marxist theory because it expresses the failure of dead labour to harness the forces of life.

all oppression  
can do is bring  
passion to de heights of eruption,  
an songs of fire we will sing.

The second reason why capital is subject to periodic crisis is the insatiability of capital itself. Unlike any previous ruling class, capital is compelled by the very form of the relation of domination to constantly move on and find new ways of exploiting labour. Its werewolf thirst for surplus value means that it can never be satisfied for long with any pattern of exploitation: this is the significance of relative surplus value and its corollary, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall.

## **Crisis of Fordism**

Fordism is an important concept because it describes a pattern of domination, a mode of controlling the working class. Submit to the dead boredom of assembly-line work and receive five dollars a day in return, with which to enjoy the "life" of mass consumption and buy our cars: such was the original deal made by Ford with his workers in the Highland Park factory. For a period, Fordism achieved control successfully, not only in the factory but throughout society, by shaping the discontent of the workers into the motor force of capitalism. Through the structures of collective bargaining, discontent became expressed as demand, to which capital's reply was: demand management, the management of discontent through the bureaucratic apparatuses of the trade unions and the social-democratic parties, the social-democratisation of the state.

But the system of control could not (and did not) succeed for ever. The pulsing blood, always present, gathered strength, became more explosive, formed new demands which could not easily be managed, threw up forms of organisation which could not easily be integrated into the bureaucratic structures of demand management. Demand management became too costly, too ineffective and too disruptive. Capital too, in its drive to accumulate more and more, came up against the inefficiencies and bottlenecks of Fordist production methods.

The crisis of Fordism was manifest internationally from the late 1960s / early 1970s. It was expressed in falling profits, rising social unrest, the rising costs of state measures to contain discontent (fiscal crisis) and the increasing ineffectiveness of those measures. Far from being simply an economic crisis, it was a crisis of the whole Fordist pattern of domination, of Keynesian demand management and of the social-democratic structures which were its supports. It was a crisis of control, a crisis of class rule. This is not to say that it was a revolutionary situation, but there was a crisis of authority: the capitalist class was no longer able to harness the living force of labour in the way that it had done previously. The capitalist could no longer speak with the confidence of the centurion in the gospels: "I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come,

and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it" (Luke 7, viii).

The crisis of Fordism, then, was a crisis of control. The new "Neo-Fordist" patterns which are beginning to become clear can be understood only as an attempt to establish a new pattern of control. New technology, new managerial structures, new state policies: it makes no sense at all to speak of these "new realities" of capitalism in abstraction from capital's struggle to reassert authority. Neo-Fordism can be understood only if we start from the crisis of Fordism as a particular crisis of the relation of domination.

### **"New Realities"**

Curiously (or rather, not at all curiously, since the tradition of "Marxist" determinism is a long and bloody one, and since, in the university context, the weeds of academic thought so easily suffocate the categories of struggle), most of the recent discussions of neo-Fordism glide over the question of the crisis of Fordism. In most contributions, the crisis is either not mentioned or is simply referred to as an external economic factor, whereupon the author moves on to the "emergence" of the new pattern of accumulation or to the gradual "overtaking" of the working class by the new changes (Hall, 1985, p.16). Just as in bourgeois analyses, Neo-Fordism just emerges, new technology "develops", the "new realities" of capitalism are given. The working class appears only as object, as victim: no room here for the bad, bad beat pushin gainst the wall. The problem is that too often theories that treat the working class as victim lead actively to the victimisation of the working class.

It just is not true that Neo-Fordism is "emerging", or that the new changes have "gradually overtaken" labour. Why do would-be Marxists treat workers as victims, when capitalists themselves have said so loudly and so clearly that from the mid-1970s their struggle was for the arrogantly proclaimed "right to manage", the right to rule, the right to impose boredom and death on living labour? Neo-Fordism is not just "emerging": it is being established through the hard-fought struggles of Edwardes, MacGregor, Murdoch and their ilk to establish

the right of manage, to establish a new pattern of control, a new method of subjugation. Neo-Fordism is not just bricks-and-mortar: it is domination-and-struggle. New technology, new styles in management, new state structures: all are interwoven strands in the struggle to establish a new pattern of domination. As struggle, this pattern is inevitably full of cracks, fissures, contradictions, never just a "new reality".

Theoretically and politically, it makes a world of difference to the analysis of neo-Fordism whether we place crisis at its centre. If we forget that the new structures are an attempt to solve a crisis of domination, it becomes all too easy to look for hope in the new industrial and political structures rather than in the history of struggles which were at the core of the crisis in the first place. This new Marxism teaches us to turn our eyes upwards for salvation, even towards the possibility of a new Labour government, God help us, just at a time when it is becoming clear that Labour may be the most effective agent for the imposition/consolidation of the new patterns of domination. All too easily, the analysis of neo-Fordism, deprived of crisis, deprived of life, becomes part of the imposition of neo-Fordism itself. Those who preach the "new realities", those who preach the integration of the left into a Kinnock-led state, are preachers of death.

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John Holloway

WHAT IS EDUCATION?

Summerhill today is in essentials what it was when founded in 1921. Self-government for the pupils and staff, freedom to go to lessons or stay away, freedom to play for days or weeks or years if necessary, freedom from any indoctrination whether religious or moral or political, freedom from character moulding. **A.S.Neill(1962,p9)**

Moreover there is much evidence that the task of assessing essays was done in public, being one of the principal occupations of these examination hours, and sometimes involved a co-operation between students and professor. The author would be asked to read aloud a portion of his essay, or else the professor would do it for him, and, if the impression it made was good, a large part, perhaps the whole, of the essay was read out, but, in the case of an essay of average merit, five minutes or so would be given to the reading of it and then it would be discontinued by common consent. **G.E.Davie(1961,p17)**

The more ambitious plan may have more chance of success. This sounds paradoxical, yet when passing from one problem to another, we may often observe that the new problem is easier to handle than the original problem. More questions may be easier to answer than one question. The more comprehensive theorem may be easier to prove, the more general problem may be easier to solve. **G.Polya(1957,p121)**

... as [Geddes] said in his pamphlet on co-operation in 1888, "it is only by thinking things out as one lives them, and living things out as one thinks them, that a man or a society can really be said to think or even live at all." **LMumford(1944,p387)**

In our present school system, the minor hemisphere of the brain gets only the barest minimum of formal training, essentially nothing compared to the things that we do to train the left, or major, hemisphere. **R.Sperry(1983,p58)**

Break the pattern which connects the items of learning and you necessarily destroy all quality. **G.Bateson(1979,p8)**

It is the capacity for rising to a clear perception of structures of thought and knowledge, of their similarities and differences, of their methods of discovery and invention and their criteria of truth and validity; above all a grasp of their central principles - and therefore of what is the nerve and muscle and what the surrounding tissue in any human construction, what is novel and revolutionary in a discovery and what is development of existing knowledge - that lifts men intellectually. It is this that elevates them to that power of contemplating patterns, whether permanent or changing, buried in, or imposed on, the welter of experience, which philosophers have regarded as man's highest attribute; but even if they are mistaken in this, it is surely not an unworthy goal for what we like to call higher education. **I.Berlin(1969,p20)**

But first I must give a definition of what I mean by independent study ... It is that the student should have significant control over the purpose, direction, content, method, pace, location, monitoring assessment, and criteria of final assessment of their studies. Variations in the scale of independence can be gauged by the extent to which a student has control of each of the above, and to what proportion of the student's total educational experience it extends. **J.Stephenson(1985)**

One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect that, after I had passed the final examinations, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year. **A.Einstein, quoted by P.Goodman(1962)**

The invention of logarithms came on the world as a bolt from the blue. No previous work had led up to it, foreshadowed it or heralded its arrival. It stands isolated, breaking in upon human thought abruptly without borrowing from the work of other intellects or following known lines of mathematical thought. **From: 'John Napier' in R.Marks(1964,p96)**

Indeed, it sometimes even appears that it doesn't matter what teachers do as long as they do it with commitment and enthusiasm and as long as they do it frequently enough. **G.Thomas(1985)**

Setting himself to the task, he began a volume which he mentally knew as "Mont Saint-Michel and Chartres: a study of Thirteenth-Century Unity". From that point he proposed to fix a position for himself, which he could label: "The education of Henry Adams: a Study of Twentieth-Century Multiplicity". With the help of these two points of relation, he hoped to project his lines forward and backward indefinitely, subject to correction from anyone who should know better. Thereupon, he sailed for home. **H.Adams(1918,p435)**

The theme of violence in school is linked to a wider pair of themes; imposed order and self-regulation. Awareness of these themes is shown by interviewees in various ways. A small number have or are close to some sort of overview of the school as a coercive system, in which a few adult figures of authority force a mass of children into regimented moulds, using methods of bellringing, registration, checking up, and examination, with the belt as the main physical sanction. **C.Kirkwood & S.Griffiths(1984,p21)**

Faraday's ignorance of mathematics contributed to his inspiration ... it compelled him to develop a simple, non-mathematical concept when he looked for an explanation of electrical and magnetic phenomena ... **Marshall McLuhan(1967)**

Amateurism seeks the development of ... the critical awareness of the ground rules of society. The amateur can afford to lose. The professional tends to classify and to specialise, to accept uncritically the ground rules of the environment. The ground rules provided by the mass response of his colleagues serve as a pervasive environment of which he is contendedly ... unaware. The "expert" is the man who stays put. **Marshall McLuhan(1967)**

Both of them thought:/"How many areas of specialisation there are in/the world, and how broad each specialisation is!"/The night was morose and foggy. **Andrey Bely(1903)**

The solution which I am urging, is to eradicate the fatal disconnection of subjects which kills the vitality of our modern curriculum. There is only one subject matter for education, and that is Life in all its manifestations. **A.N.Whitehead(1932)**

Let aa tochts be lichthooses,/Aa wyrds dir baems./Hit isna as it seems,/Dis nummers irna random,/Dey ir wir meid. **R.A.Jamieson(1986)**

I think there is a moral to this story, namely that it is more important to have beauty in one's equations than to have them fit experiment. **P.A.M.Dirac(1963)**

I inquire, I do not assert; I do not here determine anything with final assurance; I conjecture, try, compare, attempt, ask .... motto to the *Adumbratio Kabbalae Christianae* quoted by C.G.Jung(1954,p163)

The school was what could euphemistically be called a "teaching college". At a teaching college you teach and you teach with no time for research, no time for contemplation, no time for outside affairs. Just teach and teach and teach until your mind grows dull and your creativity vanishes and you become an automaton saying the same dull things over and over to endless waves of innocent students who cannot understand why you are so dull, lose respect and fan this disrespect out into the community. The reason you teach and you teach and you teach is that this is a very clever way of running a college on the cheap while giving a false appearance of genuine education. R.M.Pirsig(1974,p140)

... but as far as education went, the happiest hours of the boy's education were passed in summer lying on a musty heap of Congressional Documents in the old farmhouse at Quincy, reading "Quentin Durward", "Ivanhoe", and "The Talisman", and raiding the garden at intervals for peaches and pears. On the whole he learned most then. Henry Adams(1918,p39)

Nature has no outline, but imagination has. William Blake, quoted by Read(1931)

What is nature? An encyclopaedic, systematic index or plan of our spirit. Novalis, trans. Hamburger(1945)

The conclusion is that there is no inconsistency between the method whereby the poet writes, the method whereby the actor forms his creation within himself, the method whereby the same actor acts his role within the frame of a single shot, and that method whereby his actions and whole performance, as well as the actions surrounding him, forming his environment (or the whole material of the film) are made to flash in the hands of the director through the agency of the montage exposition and construction of the entire film. At the base of all these methods lie in equal measure the same vitalising human qualities and determining factors that are inherent in every human being and every vital art. Eisenstein(1943)

In some respects, the Scottish Enlightenment, in the eighteenth century, had been an anticipation of later developments in Vienna: the same desire to systematize, to overthrow outworn structures, to rationalize. The secularization of the Calvinist mind, and the secularization of the Jews, gave early twentieth-century intellectual life its characteristic stamp. Stone (1984, p411)

In truth, constant or frequent questioning is the first key to wisdom .... For through doubting we come to inquiry and through inquiry we perceive the truth. Peter Abelard quoted by Norton(1909,p19)

Many grownups have made up their minds that there is no purpose in asking questions and that one should accept the facts as they are. Isaac Bashevis Singer (1984,p337)

I should demand the introduction of compulsory practical work. Every pupil should learn some handicraft. He should be able to choose for himself which it is to be, but I should allow no one to grow up without having gained some technique, either as a joiner, bookbinder, locksmith, or member of any other trade, and without having delivered some useful product of his trade. Einstein (1979,p201)

Comenius also utters words of warning. Foundations are being laid by these new investigations into nature [by the Royal Society], but is it being considered what is going to be built upon these foundations? If ends beyond the cultivation of the natural sciences for themselves alone are not being envisaged, the work might turn out to be 'a Babylon turned upside down, building not towards heaven, but towards earth'. Yates (1972,p191)

Toward 1250, when a French poet, Henri d'Andeli, wrote his **Battle of the Seven Arts**, the classics are already the ancients, fighting a losing battle against the moderns ... Haskins (1957,p29)

The universities which are at present indistinguishable from their surrounding culture, might well identify [themselves] more courageously where their espousal of rational enquiry contrasts with the values and practices of the world around them. Post war there have been very few examples of universities taking a principled stand on important issues. Graham Carey

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Leaflet handed out on picket line, Princes Street, Edinburgh,  
14th May 1987:

# LAURA ASHLEY MADE IN A SWEATSHOP

21 Women from Ardbride Products in Ardrossan have been on strike since September 1986.

The two factories owned by Ardbride boss Stuart Ross have been paid for largely by public money. He has been called a "Model Entrepreneur". In fact conditions in his factories, one making lampshades and the other pottery, are terrible.

Workers in the lampshade factory have fainted due to glue fumes. The extractor fans don't work properly. There are no safety guards on the machinery. In the pottery, dust levels are 12 times the permitted levels.

The workforce are largely women and Y.T.S. trainees. Top wages are £1.70 an hour. Workers have complained about conditions for years. In March 1986 3 young men who went to the Transport and General Workers Union (T.G.W.U.) were sacked.

When Mr Ross discovered that other workers were joining the union he stopped a 10p an hour pay rise. The T.G.W.U. called in the Health and Safety Executive who hadn't even been aware of the factory's existence. They declared that the working conditions were illegal. Ross was furious and harassed the workers even further, making their lives hell.

On September 15th the workers voted for strike action demanding that conditions be made safe, the right to join a union and an hourly rate of £2.50. On September 17th they were all sacked.

At first the T.G.W.U. gave some support but refused strike pay because they had only been in the union for 26 weeks not the 32 weeks required in the rule book. The D.H.S.S. also refused them any money. Two strikers have since lost their homes.

The women organised their own pickets. They have been repeatedly harassed and threatened by the owner, Ross. The police have taken Ross's side, and three pickets have been arrested. Two people picketing Laura Ashley in Edinburgh have been arrested.

## WHY LAURA ASHLEY?

Ardbride supplies Laura Ashley, his biggest customer, with lampshades. They are sold as "handmade" for between £15 and £80 each. In fact they are machine made by workers who take home just over £40 a week. This contract is up for renewal. Due to picketting of their shop, Laura Ashley have threatened to cancel it. To date there have been pickets of Laura Ashley shops in Bristol, Bath, Shrewsbury, Cambridge, Coventry, London, York, Newcastle - upon - Tyne, Leeds, Peterborough, Manchester, New York, Paris, Cologne, Stuttgart and Bochum. Pressure put on Laura Ashley will increase the possibility that the workers will regain their jobs and win better wages and safe working conditions.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Because of lukewarm union support, police harassment and no state benefits the strikers need the support of ordinary working class people. You can:

Boycott Laura Ashley products.

Complain to Laura Ashley management

Join the picket, every Thursday, 5-6pm Laura Ashley, Princess St.

Send donations and letters of support to Anna Druggen, 28d, Montgomerie St., Ardrossan, KA 22 8EQ

If wealthy Mr. Ross wins it will be the green light for other bosses to get rich on the backs of workers. If the strikers win it will be a blow against exploitation everywhere.

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More information: write to - Pigeonhole ■, c/o 43 Candlemaker Row, Edinburgh.