



# Common Sense

A Journal of a wholly new type

6



# Common Sense

Issue No. 6 (November 1988)

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The seventh issue of Common Sense will appear in March 1989. Deadline for contributions mid- January.

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

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## Common Sense Editorial

Previous editorials have explained in what sense Common Sense is 'a journal of a wholly new type'. The fundamental idea is that of a journal which is a relay-station for the exchange of critical ideas. Most journals (the trade-journals of academia, for example) derive their self-legitimation from resources of authority, finance or prestige. In other words they talk down. They encapsulate a division of labour as between the sacred space of academic discourse (most of which goes forward on increasingly narrow and conformist tracks) and the mundane space of the rest-of-the-world. Further, they reproduce a division of labour as between those who write and those who read.

Common Sense stands opposed to a social division of labour in all its forms. As a relay-station, it invites those who read to write and those who write to read. In the 1930's, Walter Benjamin (following Brecht) wrongly declared that the letter pages of mass circulation newspapers might have this function. Common Sense picks up where Benjamin left off.

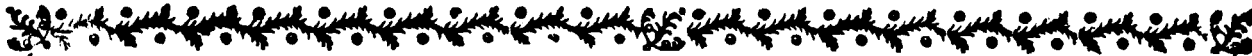
Breaking down the social division of labour between universities and society is now more necessary than ever before. This has been demonstrated not least by the sequence of suicides amongst Aberdeen academics during the Autumn of 1988. On the other side, it has to be recognised that Thatcher's education cuts, and her government's application of managerial criteria to universities has the effect of

driving university-based debate on to ever more conformist lines. If one's job depends on productivity as to publications, and if only the academic trade-journals count as publication-forums from this productivist perspective, then the temptation is of course to contribute to existing debates as a means of ensuring that the journals concerned are interested in what one writes. Changing the terms of debate becomes a more risky business, something that the aspiring career-academic cannot afford to do. This matter would be less serious if the debates in political theory to which academics are encouraged to devote themselves were critical ones. In the event, they are debates whose agenda has been set by Thatcherism itself. Hatred of market economies is unfashionable; all that is allowed is discussion of in what way markets can be either used or abused.

Common Sense responds to this conjuncture by setting its own agenda. Its agenda is that of 'critical theory' in all the various meanings of that term. It allows itself to hate what others, conformistically, feel they have to endorse. Thus it clears a space. It opens on to a terrain where neither academic/non-academic nor writer/reader distinctions apply. You can read Common Sense and/or write for it. Better still, found just such a minimalist magazine of your own. Prise the life of the mind away from those who should know better than to want to control it. Sever truth from careers. The project of Common Sense will have succeeded when a network of similar journals covers the land.







## An Introduction to Susanne Langer's *Mind: An Essay On Human Feeling*

Norah Martin

Susanne Langer is best known for her work in the field of aesthetics as developed in *Philosophy In A New Key* and *Feeling And Form*. Her final book, however, is *Mind: An Essay On Human Feeling*, the three volumes of which trace the evolution of mind from the earliest micro-organisms to man in the age of science and beyond. It is in this book that we find her "system" – the completed statement of her work which was only implicit in her previous works.

### I

Mrs. Langer is led to the enormous undertaking of *Mind: An Essay On Human Feeling* by her aesthetic theory. In *Philosophy In A New Key* and *Feeling And Form* she finds that there are rational forms of expression which are not discursive (i.e., not expressed in speech or speech in its written form). Non-discursive presentations do not express *thoughts* because thought is discursive (i.e., linguistic) by its very nature. Instead they express *feelings* and thereby make those feelings rational. The feelings expressed in non-discursive form – in poetry, dance, painting, etc. – are not the same as those *evoked* in the observer of such a presentation, nor is it necessarily a feeling in the artist's experience as such. A work of art concerning the death of a lover, for example, does not mean that the artist has necessarily lost a lover, or that he has ever even been a lover. It may simply be an expression of the feeling evoked by such a possibility.

We often judge a person's intelligence by how well he expresses himself in the discursive mode. But there are some people who express themselves poorly in speech who express themselves very well in non-discursive forms. Bruce Springsteen, for example, is seldom articulate in interviews but his music and performance belie this fact. How are we to understand such people and just what are these feelings that cannot be expressed discursively?

### II

Mrs. Langer says, "feeling in the broad sense of whatever is felt in any way, as sensory stimulus or inward tension, pain, emotion or intent, is the mark of mentality."<sup>1</sup> An examination of feeling could then only be an examination of mind and vice versa. She goes on to say,

...the phenomenon usually described as 'a feeling' is really that an organism feels something, i.e. something is felt. What is felt is a process, perhaps a large complex of processes, within the organism. Some vital activities of great complexity and high intensity, usually (perhaps always) involving nervous tissue, are felt; being felt is a phase of the process itself. A phase is a mode of appearance, and not an

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<sup>1</sup> Langer, *Mind*, v.1, p.4

added factor.<sup>2</sup>

The human mind is simply a greater intensity of feeling than is found further down the evolutionary ladder. Mind, like other forms of feeling, is a *process*, not a *thing*, it is an activity and *is* only in so far as it acts. In *Mind: An Essay On Human Feeling* Langer follows this process that will eventually become mind as we know it today beginning with the emergence of the first coazervates from the "primordial soup" and ending with the future of mind beyond the 20th century human mind for, according to Langer, the mind is still young and the process of its evolution will continue for a long time to come unless we end it by ending life on our planet.

### III

Such an investigation requires Langer to use a great deal of scientific evidence. She draws heavily from the fields of biology, biochemistry, ethology and anthropology. The principle that drives the evolution of mind is, however, the dynamic tension between the tendency toward individuation and that toward involvement - a principle that is as much philosophical as biological. The tension between these two tendencies is mediated by the act. We must therefore understand her concept of the act to be able to see how this tension can lead us from isolated chemical actions to the pleuthora of life as we know it.

Mrs. Langer says that an act, when viewed from its center, has to be treated as indivisible, otherwise its center as such would be lost. The act also cannot be homogeneous but must have an internal structure. "The many relations among acts," she says, "form the intricate dynamism of life which becomes more and more concatenated and intense, until some of its elements attain the phase of being felt..."<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Langer calls this phase of being felt "psychical" and says that "the domain of psychology develops within the wider realm of biology, especially zoology."<sup>4</sup> In other words, it is the increasing complexity and intensity of the relations between acts that gives rise to higher and higher forms of life, including man. She says that to ask where life begins is to ask what the most primitive full-fledged acts are.

In order to ask the question in this way the act cannot entail the assumption of an agent. The agent is, in fact, constituted by acts which are involved with one another. She says that to construe the agent in terms of acts "allows one to inquire into the origin and development of life, the rise of psychical phenomena in the animalian branch and the evolution of the ... mind, in a scientific way that the initial assumption of a physical, psychical or 'psychophysical' entity, the subject, agent or individual does not lay open."<sup>5</sup>

The question of how these acts become agents and how agents are able to acts gives rise to the concepts of individuation and involvement. She finds that to trace the

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p.21

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, p.261

<sup>4</sup>Ibid, p.261

<sup>5</sup>Ibid, p.307

mind from the earliest forms of life she requires a functional concept rather than a categorical one such as individual, self or organism. The most promising operational principles for this are individuation and its converse, involvement. Both of these are exemplified everywhere in nature in processes that eventuate in the existence of self-identical organisms.<sup>6</sup>

We can now see how agents are formed by the concatenation or linking together of acts. An agent is a complex of actions and all actions that belong to that complex are acts of that agent. Non-vital chemical transformations themselves are not acts because they do not enter into the constitution of an agent. The involvement of the acts at the same time individuates the agent from its environment. Such an involvement creates a structure or matrix which allows the newly constructed agent to individuate itself further by new acts which arise from the matrix of acts that is the agent. The principles of individuation and involvement are, as is already becoming clear, opposed, yet interdependent, in more ways than simply balancing each other or alternating. This rather complex relation will perhaps become clearer when we consider the origin of life.

#### IV

Mrs. Langer says, "The question of the origin of organisms is how some of the chemical actions on the surface of the earth or in its surrounding gaseous envelope ever became involved with each other so as to form centers of activity which maintained themselves for awhile amid the changes of forming and dissolving compounds around them."<sup>7</sup> In other words, how did these chemical actions ever become involved with each other so as to form agents (and thus become acts)?

A.P. Oparin, in his *Origin Of Life* (1936), made three novel hypotheses:

1. The origin of vital processes was a heightening of chemical actions rather than a "living spark"
2. Past, not present, conditions of the earth's surface was the environment for such changes
3. The phenomenon of "life" is a wide, varied and unbelievably complex functional pattern rather than a single attribute or essence which either is or is not possessed by any given physical object.<sup>8</sup>

Oparin says that the first pre-requisite for complex structures is an isolated and bounded region in which chemical changes can happen to a self-identical substance. The first such particles are called 'coazervates' and are a sort of colloidal gel (which is a non-crystalline substance with very large molecules forming a viscous solution). According to Oparin, as recounted by Langer, coazervates are quite likely to have

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid, p.310

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p.315

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, pp.316-17

formed in the earth's early hydrosphere and to have possessed many properties and potentialities to make them forerunners of primitive living things. In coazervates, unlike other colloidal particles, the water molecules are drawn to and collect around their envelope of equilibrium liquid thus creating a real shell around the little two-phase particle.

Here we have a bounded, inwardly active particle - a self-identical substance that eventually increases in complexity. We then have the formation of "patterned activities and their more and more perfect integration until they constitute a matrix in which their own form becomes modified or even entirely blurred, so it can only be found again in analytic abstraction."<sup>9</sup> These are living matrices and are self-sustaining and self-propagating systems in which every "event is prepared by progressively changing conditions of the integral whole. Every distinguishable change, therefore, arises out of the matrix, and emerges as an act of an agent, for such a vital matrix is an agent."<sup>10</sup>

At this stage the principle of involvement was clearly dominant. Mrs. Langer goes on to say,

there must have been strong ruling tendencies toward organization, which led to increasing formation of biological mechanisms. The most important factor in that process, the main source of all functional continuity, must have been the establishment of rhythms. Rhythmic concatenation is what really holds an organism together from moment to moment, it is a dynamic pattern, i.e. a pattern of events, into which acts and act-like phenomena readily fall: a sequence wherein the subsiding phase, or cadence, of one act (or similar event) is the take up for its successor. It occurs in non-vital as well as vital processes, but in the latter it is paramount, and reaches degrees of differentiation and intensity unrivaled by anything in the animate realm.<sup>11</sup>

Mrs. Langer calls this rhythm "dialectical rhythm" - it is characterized by contradictory actions such as push and pull. "Dialectical rhythms," she says, "are the essential mark of living form in nature."<sup>12</sup> From the moment of initiation the agent performs vital acts in systematic ways thus making its more and more deeply involved matrix, its life (as agent).

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid, p.322

<sup>10</sup>Ibid, p.322

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p.323

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, p.324



V

Heredity is the primary involvement of every organism with other organisms; not with a 'kind' distinguished by characteristic traits, but with a stock defined by its own actual descent and its resultant common ancestry with some - possibly all - others of its taxonomic 'kind.' The stock is the largest natural unit of life.<sup>13</sup>

In the dynamism of these continuous stocks the act form exhibits not only the principle of progressive involvement, but also the converse principle of individuation because each 'member' of the stock has to some extent individuated itself. The history of the stock proceeds by cycles of successive individuations all exemplifying the general pattern of acts.<sup>14</sup>

"The internal involvement of acts, with each other, known as 'integration of functions,' is the most important factor in individuation, i.e. in the establishment of self-contained, stable, vitally active systems."<sup>15</sup> There is often, however, debate as to the single or colonial status of an organic complex. A Portuguese man-of-war, for example, is thought of by the layman as a single creature but it is actually a complex of separate creatures working together. A termite colony, on the other hand, is considered a colony of separate organisms even though the functions of the individual termites are so specialized that they can exist only as a community. The termites are, in fact, only semi-individuated organisms.

Progressive individuation is not the sole principle of evolution. Individuation can only occur in a framework of active involvements with the generating stock and with the ambient world. The means of individuation, such as aggression against other individuals, often lead to new involvements which become paramount, as with organisms that exploit others to the point of becoming completely dependent on them.

VI

Evolution is then primarily a development of acts which are always both individuating and involving. An organism is built up by its own acts and any situation in which it finds itself is the result of all previous acts while its present acts create a new or changed situation. Langer says that the living organism is not a "pre-designed object" but an "embodied drama of evolving acts, intricately prepared by the past, yet all improvising their moves to consummation."<sup>16</sup>

The outer surface of an organism is what both separates it from, and connects it with, its surroundings. This outer surface is kept in constant action. Mrs. Langer says that this constant activity is probably what engenders the first acts of such intensity that

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid, p.330

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, p.328

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, p.342

<sup>16</sup>Ibid, p.378

they enter a psychical phase, "a moment of intraorganic appearance as sensation."<sup>17</sup> Sensory acts are then the first acts to be felt and it is here where feeling, which was implicit from the beginning, becomes explicit as sensation.

With the increase of acts which at some point in their passage enter a psychical phase, a creature's behavioral actions fall under the influence of its felt encounters and become organized to anticipate repetitions of such episodes; more and more behavior comes to be guided and developed by feeling, which at this level Langer thinks would be better termed 'awareness.'<sup>18</sup> The growth of behavior is the growth of acts beyond the development of the matrix of acts which is the organism itself and its internal functions. 'Consciousness' is "not an entity at all, let alone a special cybernetic mechanism. It is a condition built up out of mental acts, especially a qualitative aspect shared by all the mental acts of a particular life episode..."<sup>19</sup>

With this Langer takes us through the animal world of felt sensation, of behavior, of 'consciousness,' of instinct, leading us from feeling to mind, which is a more concatenated and intense activity than is feeling. For Langer mind is a specialization just as the elephant's trunk or the opposable thumb are specializations. Mind is a specialization of the brain.

According to Langer, the difference between man's mentality and that of the beast is

the production and use of symbols and their paramount value in all our further mental functions, their distinction from the alleged 'signals' of animalian communication and from symptoms or other indicators, and the subjective-objective dialectical pattern that builds up 'experience' of the human sort.<sup>20</sup>

Mrs. Langer describes a bi-pedal hominid whose brain has grown and re-organized to the point where images appear to him in sleep because he is able to take in more sensory data than he is able to process during the day. These images are sometimes suddenly remembered during the waking hours. This is the first moment at which these hominids become qualitatively different from any other animal, for "in animal mentality, objects seem to figure essentially in situations, and derive their characters from them and the acts they implement or hinder. Otherwise they may not be noticed, certainly not touched."<sup>21</sup> Once the pure form is abstracted from these images and remembered, "it may be suggested by actual perceptions of waking life; the identity of form is seen in all possible concrete instances, even such as depart somewhat from the model. That recognition of sameness or similarity is an intuition, as form perception itself is; but while the latter is just practiced in sleep, the logical intuition of similarity, which involves sameness and differences, seems to occur only

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p.424

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, p.425

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, p.438

<sup>20</sup> Langer, *Mind* v.2, p.261

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, p.290

in non-dreaming states."<sup>22</sup> The symbolic character of a dreamer's involuntary fantasies is carried over into waking envisagement. The significance of such fantastic objects is felt at first as a power rather than a symbolic value. It is around such objects, Mrs. Langer says, that the hominid hordes first gathered in a state of excitement. The tendency to formalize runs through all acts and those of the excited hordes are no exception. It is this formalization of the emotionally engendered movements of the horde that gives rise to ritual action and speech.

## VII

Geza Revesz draws a distinction between the physical contacts of animals and the mental contacts which men strike and maintain by symbolic communication. Contact between animals is almost a physiological condition, a felt communion of action, emotion and desire;

in man that communion is progressively weakened by the growing tendency to individuation which comes with the increase in mental activity that eventuates in dream, fantasy, memory images and the mechanisms of symbolic transformation, the fatal specialty of the human brain.... But even as we lost the old empathetic bonds, the symbolic function has moved into the place of our broken instinctive unity.<sup>23</sup>

Mrs. Langer believes that speech is born in high reaches of proto-human activity, such as ritual dance, and "gathered form when one individual knew by the symbolic utterance of another what the other was thinking about. For with such concentrated expression came real envisagement, the beginning of reflection, thought."<sup>24</sup> With the development of language came its quotidian uses which contributed to further development. "The rise of language in the Homindae," says Langer, "marked the completion of the 'Great Shift' from animal to man. The power of speech transformed the genus *Homo* and every aspect of its ambient; for with speech came thought and remembrance, intuition, conception and reason."<sup>25</sup>

For Langer language is essential for society and social organization. The influence of language on human life goes much deeper than communication; it is intrinsic to thinking, imagining and even our ways of perceiving. Language "affects the whole mentality of each individual, making him the human being that he is..."<sup>26</sup> "The power of language," she goes on to say, "not only to designate things and communicate facts, but to formulate and establish what is a thing or a fact and define what perception henceforth is to illustrate, gives the human world entirely different dimensions from those of any animals present."<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p.291

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, p.313

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, p.314

<sup>25</sup>Ibid, p.316

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, p.319

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, p.331

VIII

Langer's anthropological discussion of these speaking hominids makes it clear that they are not self-conscious, that is, they had no concept of "I". They were at one with their group mentally while separate physically. These "men," if we may call non-self-conscious hominids "men," had no idea of death as the end. To die was simply to take on the new role of ancestor to the group. Death was also not a necessity of life, for these people "life appears as an indefinite course of adventure with no foreseeable end but, like a battle, with a constant chance of death..."<sup>28</sup> These unreflective minds impose the same image on the living individual as on the deathless tribe.

The realization that death is inherent in human life is what gives rise to self-consciousness. Mrs. Langer says that the brain tends to individuate establishing "a dependent yet distinct pattern of mental life within the physical life of the organism, even while it serves that organism as a vital part."<sup>29</sup> The brain achieves partial individuation appearing subjectively as the mind. The mind has a tendency to become an individual being, "to emancipate itself from the organism in which it developed." But complete emancipation would, of course, be fatal so the mind can never achieve more than a partial individuation which "produces a peculiarly non-physical appearance of what seems to each person the essential agency within his own body."<sup>30</sup> With the development of the mind the basic feeling of life becomes centered there and "attains a distinct holistic form."<sup>31</sup> Each person comes to feel the rise and expansion of his life but also its decline. The individuated mental life begins to seem like a single all-embracing act. The sense of life of the subject starts to take shape as a sense of personal agency and this becomes concentrated and reduced to a sense of selfhood. With this comes the knowledge of the limit of the self - death. "A human individual feels his own agency no longer as the stream of tribal life flowing through the limbs but as his unique, autonomous self living its unique inviolable life."<sup>32</sup> The change in feeling and outlook is radical for now the prime interest of each individual is no longer the communal act of the tribe but his own life.

IX

The individual life has now attained a unity that allows it to be judged as one act. With the progress of cultures towards civilization, the judging of a life gradually becomes a pattern of moral action with religious performances as its framework. Here we find the "primitive" societies that anthropologists have discovered in the last few hundred years still living in kinship groups where the unquestioned rule of custom keeps the individual from individuating to the detriment of the group. The equilibrium of such societies is what Langer calls the "ethnic balance" and societies can exist, unchanged, in such a balance for thousands of years. Indeed many societies have, for change (and thus history) requires individual action beyond that allowed by the rule of

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<sup>28</sup>Langer, *Mind*, v.3, p.86

<sup>29</sup>Ibid, p.95

<sup>30</sup>Ibid, p.99

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, p.101

<sup>32</sup>Ibid, p.107

custom. But "the higher the cultural expression of a society rises, the more tenuous becomes the balance.... Every behavioral act carries with it the possibility of upsetting the equilibrium of the social order..."<sup>33</sup> The social organization must retrieve the balance every time some act upsets it and, of course, extreme circumstances (natural disasters, etc.) would call for individuating acts beyond the norm.

The rise of civilization - of cities not based on the kinship tie - is the result of individuation from which, according to Langer, the social organization can no longer recover its balance. And it is with this individuation that self-consciousness became able to act without adhering to the rule of custom that kept it tied to acting in and for the group.

In the modern world the evolution of man has come to be primarily the evolution of his mind. One manifestation of this has been the phenomenon of physical science. At this point, however, Mrs. Langer fails to recognize that such a phenomenon of the modern world is just as much one of involvement as of individuation. She fears that with the age of science individuation has leapt forward in rapid bounds leaving involvement far behind and unable to temper these acts of individuation that have led to, among other things, the ability to destroy the world at the touch of a button.

Physical science, however, like all other human products, can only be created and advance through social effort, within a framework of active involvements - the achievements of the individual mean nothing if they are not *recognized* and taken up by his society. The products of physical science and modern technology have served to involve the peoples of the world to greater and greater extent, making the idea of one world society a real possibility.

x

The final volume of *Mind: An Essay On Human Feeling* was left incomplete because of Mrs. Langer's increasing blindness and advanced age (she was over 90 when the third volume was published). Her last chapter is but a summary of what she planned to undertake in the final section of the work. Had she been able to write the section she may well have seen the contradiction that I have pointed out. But whatever the case, this last chapter in which she voices her fears that should not have been fears at all, does not detract from her theory of mind. Indeed, to fully understand her aesthetic theory one must understand her mature system as set forth in *Mind: An Essay On Human Feeling*.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid, p.124

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# DISCOURSE

THE GLASGOW JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY

AUTUMN/WINTER 88

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***The Protest against the World Bank/IMF meeting in Berlin - An Interview***

**EDITORIAL COMMENT**

**This interview was communicated to Common Sense from Berlin. It discusses the protest against the IMF meeting in Berlin (26th to the 29th of September 1988) from an autonomous point of view.**

***Hermann:*** I think that there is no need for a discussion about the international role of the IMF and the World Bank in the international system of exploitation and domination of capitalism. I would like to start the interview by asking you about the different groups engaged in the protest against the IMF meeting in Berlin and their objectives.

***Herbert:*** The groups engaged in the protest cover a wide range of political organisations from the church to the autonomous spectrum. I think it would be rather boring to mention them all in their own respect.

***Hermann:*** All right, fair enough. What then about the different

political perspectives which divided the autonomous spectrum from the other groups?

**Herbert:** I think it is possible to systematise the different approaches into two radically different ones: the autonomous and reformist. The latter was very much criticised by us since it supposed the possibility of reforming the IMF and the World Bank. It thus attempted to get into dialogue with the international moneybags in order to constitute a new world economic order, in terms of a new international mode of capitalist integration under the cover of ecological transformation, international equality and freedom. We think that this position reproduced the mystification of capitalist society. Capitalism is not about freedom, ecological concern and equality but about profit, that is the creation of capital out of capital. Money is the most rational and elementary expression of the capitalist relations of exploitation and domination. You cannot change exploitation and domination just by attempting to change the mode within which the destructive character of death appears. Our position, that is the position of the anti-imperialist forces, was and is that the only solution possible is to revolutionise the system as a whole and not to modify the way its destructiveness appears. We think the World Bank and the IMF were quite keen to normalise the expected protest in Berlin by presenting themselves as bodies capable of reform and reasoning.

**Herbert:** Were there any attempts to organise such a dialogue and what was the motivation of the World Bank and the IMF to achieve an atmosphere of readiness to talk with its critics?

**Hermann:** The TAZ\* tried to organise a run-up dialogue with representatives from either side. As we know, the World Bank and the IMF were desperate to get this dialogue going. This attempt failed due to not only our protest against it. However, the reformist forces and the World Bank/IMF attempted to organise an other meeting after the congress in Berlin. This meeting didn't happen either. To answer your second question, we think that the attempt to get into dialogue and to signal the willingness to listen and to reform was most of all a strategy aiming to undermine the

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\*TAZ stands for 'Tageszeitung', an international newspaper produced and edited in Berlin (W). The TAZ is closely related to the new social movements.

protest by dividing the critics. The World Bank presented itself as a progressive organisation capable of learning, while it indicated that the real baddy is the IMF. On the other hand, a dialogue between the supposedly progressive fraction of capital and the critical 'Left' tried to integrate the apparently responsible part of the critics whereas, at the same time, the so-called 'uncompromising' positions, represented by the autonomous spectrum, would have been marginalised and transferred to the particular strategy of social normalisation by the police. In the event, the strategy of disintegration/integration failed.

**Hermann:** Why do you think it failed? What did your spectrum do to make it fail?

**Herbert:** First of all, the system of exploitation and domination for which the World Bank and the IMF stand and from which they gain and which they reproduce made it more than obvious that there is only one real alternative: to make it plain that we detest the system and hence its institutional forms and that the representatives of domination and exploitation are not welcomed in Berlin and elsewhere. Secondly, we, as well as other groups, long before the meeting of the World Bank and the IMF took place, organised discussions about the role of these institutions in the international system of exploitation and domination. Thirdly, in our discussions we came to the conclusion that in order to present our view independently and strongly on the streets we are not going to make any compromises with reformist proposals and activities.

**Hermann:** When did you actually start organising the resistance?

**Herbert:** Our first meeting was at about mid 1986, two years before the World Bank/IMF meeting was scheduled to take place in Berlin. At our meeting in January 1987 we came to the conclusion not to make alliances with other groups but to pursue our own steps, resistance and radical criticism. At about mid 1987 we had a national meeting where we elaborated our discussions and plans for action. In between those meetings there were numerous smaller

meetings and discussions.

**Hermann:** What kind of solutions did you come to and were they generally accepted? I mean, were there any frictions or divisions within your own discussions?

**Herbert:** Naturally, different approaches and theses appeared and were sustained during the process. However, our main thesis was shared without exception: We do not make any alliances, we pursue our own protest and radical criticism. Everybody was invited to participate in our actions and everybody from our spectrum was free to participate wherever s/he wanted to. Of importance was, however, that we, as the autonomous spectrum organise our own stuff. It was further agreed that the focus of our protest should thematise exploitation and domination where we are living. Division occurred between internationalists and new-internationalists; autonomous women and operianistic.\* The latter position was quite close to the new-internationalist position.

**Hermann:** What kind of division? What were the political consequences?

**Herbert:** As a matter of fact, I was just coming to this. The operianistic standpoint is quite similar to that of the new-internationalists. The internationalists concentrated on exploitation and domination in countries of the so-called periphery and the guerilla as the adequate form of resistance. The new internationalists argued that since capital is international, resistance has to be international as well. The consequence is that resistance cannot be confined to either the periphery or the metropolitan countries but has to take place in both. Further, the guerilla has to be seen as one form of resistance among others. On our meeting in Bremen in 1987 we concentrated on these questions. After long discussions and floods of papers we reached the conclusion which I articulated above: that we concentrate

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\* This position is strongly related to the practical and theoretical experiences of working class struggle in Italy in the late 1960's and 1970's.

during the protest on exploitation and domination in metropolitan countries. The autonomous women concentrated in their contributions on female exploitation, population policies and subsistence labour which is mostly done by women and not discussed under the topic of wage labour.

**Hermann:** Can you say more about the position of the autonomous women?

**Herbert:** I am not prepared to do that. If you want to know more about their position and discussions why don't you contact one of them? It was their discussion, their input and their politics. Why should I give an account of their argument?

**Hermann:** All right, all right. What were the political consequences?

**Herbert:** We reached the conclusion that the autonomous women would do their own stuff within the autonomous protest. However, we did not regard this as a division but as an expansion of our protest against the World Bank/IMF. The feminist and lesbian days of action were very successful and challenged radically the concentration on the white and male wage labourer. That improved our campaign and protest a lot.

**Hermann:** How did you prepare your protest? Were there any run-up demonstrations? How did you consolidate your position in contrast to reformist forces?

**Herbert:** Since we attempted to do our own stuff independently from other groups we had to prepare a signal for ourself and other groups that we are in the position to mobilise effectively and in great numbers under our own declarations and political aims. We organised a 1<sup>st</sup> of May demonstration this year for the first time ever independently from the German Trade Union movement. In previous years we marched with the trade unions which resulted sometimes in a bit of a confrontation with trade union officials and eager trade union members. This year, however, we mobilised for an independent demonstration. Here too, the preparation started a long time before the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. The result of our discussions was that we sought to express our disgust about the capitalist system in the area where the regular working class (employed) and

the irregular working class (unemployed) are actually living. This is quite in contrast to the organised labour movement which marches in the centre of the City, a place their members are hardly familiar with. Our declaration was 'fight against imperialism, exploitation and domination'.

**Hermann:** What happened?

**Herbert:** Despite considerable provocation by the police we achieved a strong and successful demonstration. Approximately 8000 comrades took part in our demonstration compared with 8000 to 12.000 at the official trade union march in the City.\* We regarded the demonstration as a major success signalling that we were in a position to mobilise independently with our own declaration of a radical criticism of domination and exploitation. The 1<sup>st</sup> of May demonstration signalled our own power.

**Hermann:** I am sure that you could elaborate this point much further and that you would like to mention other run-up activities to the World Bank/IMF meeting. However, I think we should come to the protests against the World Bank/IMF itself. What did your days of action look like?

**Herbert:** First of all I think it is a misconception to focus on the World Bank/IMF meeting solely. Capitalism has to be attacked not only when the officials of exploitation and domination come together to discuss and to celebrate their ways forward. However, you are quite right in implying that such a key event as the World Bank/IMF meeting provides a focus of resistance, mobilisation and organisation. To come to your question, we prepared four days of action each with a different motto corresponding to the results of our discussions. We also mobilised for a big demonstration against imperialism which was attended by 6000 to 8000 people despite considerable provocation by the police.\*

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\* Naturally the big garden party together organised by the trade unions in front of the Reichstag was attended by lots of people from kids to grandparents. About 100.000 people enjoyed the nice day out.

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\*There was also a big run-up demonstration shortly before the World Bank/IMF meeting started. This demonstration was mainly organised by reformist circles. About 50.000 people took part in the demonstration.



**Hermann:** What happened on those days of action? What were their mottos?

**Herbert:** It is impossible to give a full account of the things which happened. There were, fortunately, too many activities to be listed in an interview of this kind. We mobilised for the first day of action was under the motto of female labour as the basis for domination and exploitation - a day of action against the coercion to work. There was a sit-in at Siemens, a company, as you might recall, engaged in electronics and nuclear industry. There were various other actions which kept us busy all day and night long. The second day was related to the policy of population, so-called development policies and racism and sexism. There were various protests at Pan Am (sex tourism), at Schering (producer of all kinds of pharmacy products), at the institute for development policy and also lots of applause for the bankers.

**Hermann:** What do you mean by applause?

**Herbert:** The usual stuff: clapping hands, throwing an egg now and then, blockade of streets, throwing some bags of colour or blood to greet the moneybags, redesigning some bankers' cars either by denting them or looting them and making it hard for business to keep on going in the normal way (smashing of windows and protests in front of shops). As an effect, in the main area of the City shops were barricaded by the shops themselves. I think that was a rather nice expression of resistance making it visible throughout the centre that business was not quite as normal when the bankers were in town. Protest must be visible; dented cars, looted cars, smashed shop windows and barricaded shops made it more than visible that the World Bank/IMF was quite unwelcome and their policies radically criticised. However, this happened throughout the days of action. It was not part of our official protest and rather difficult to contain.

**Hermann:** What do you mean by saying 'difficult to contain'?

**Herbert:** Oh, that was just an irony.

**Hermann:** What happened on the two remaining days of action?

**Herbert:** On the third day of action we mobilised under the motto of constituting revolutionary counterfactual power - a 'attack of exploitation and domination in daily life'. On this day too, we held protests at shops, job centres, police immigration offices and restaurants, bars and culture palaces where the bankers sought to relax from their hard days work. Lastly, the fourth day concentrated on the issue of exploitation and domination in peripheral and metropolitan countries alike. We held our big demonstration which I mentioned above at the end of the fourth day.

**Hermann:** You talked already about the various forms of protest. What else happened?

**Herbert:** Apart from officially registered protests and cultural programmes (street theatre, music etc.) there were lots of unofficial activities as I mentioned briefly above. The imagination of the protest was tremendous ranging from people acting and dressed like bankers who went on the streets to discuss their rather unpleasant life with passers by, made up bankers gave passers-by faulty dollars as a donation for the citizens of Berlin to improve their living standard etc.. There were also push-bike demonstrations which blockaded the whole traffic and a cab-drivers' demonstration which had the same effect. About 150 cabs took part. There was also a daily newspaper produced and edited by various groups called Payday (Zahltag) with which we tried to inform the public about what the World Bank/IMF is about. Payday had an edition of 50.000 copies per day.

**Hermann:** You already mentioned briefly the provocation by the police. What exactly happened?

**Herbert:** Berlin was a police state during the World Bank/IMF meeting. Ten thousand (10.000) police officers were on duty. Police control was present at every important junction, surveillance was very intense as passports were controlled continuously, streets

were closed by police and helicopters were in the air all day long. However, the police could not cope with the imagination of the protest. Their military response was further constrained by the presence of international press, while, at the same time, the press was dealt with by the police rather rudely. The police, however, arrested about 200 people per night. These arrests were made randomly so that almost all those arrested were released without charge after 12 or 24 hours imprisonment. Those arrested were to a large degree, but not exclusively, passers-by unconnected with what was going on. The police, as I said, could not cope with the fantasy of the protest. The arrests were for nothing else than to boost the morale of the police and to improve their balance sheets in order to signal to the international public their capability to deal with the protest. In the event, the state of emergency proved to be ineffective, and counterproductive in the face of annoyed citizens and the international protest against the curtailment of the freedom of the press.\*

**Hermann:** I think we have to come to an end now. The last question I would like to ask you concerns the political consequences of your protest for the future development?

**Herbert:** This is a rather difficult question. It is almost impossible to anticipate future developments of the rather open-ended historical process of capitalist society. What I want to say is that the autonomous days of action were a success. Lots of different people from different groups took part in our protest. Further, it was the first time ever that a World Bank/IMF meeting in a metropolitan countries was attacked in such a way as it was in Berlin. The world public has to learn that the World Bank/IMF cannot just go anywhere they want in metropolitan countries any longer. Radical protest will accompany the World Bank/IMF not only in peripheral countries but also in metropolitan ones. We are in contact with political groups like ours in other countries. They will learn from our experience.

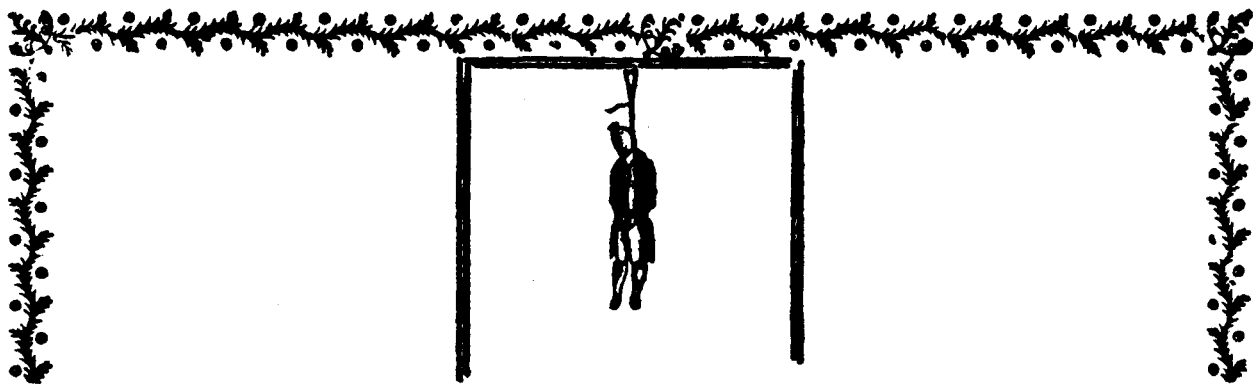
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\***Editorial Note:** A good account about the police state in West-Berlin can be found in the issues of the *Fincancial Times* edited during the time of the World Bank/IMF meeting in Berlin.

**Hermann:** What do you think will be the likely political consequences in Berlin?

**Herbert:** This is also difficult to predict. Surely, we have regained strength which we had lost after the destruction of the squatters' movement and the subsequent position of strength of reformist forces in the form of Green Parties and the Alternative Party here in Berlin. I think we have obtained the basic possibility for radical discussions and processes of practice within the autonomous spectrum and beyond. That this development may involve a reorganisation of radical policies after the destruction of the squatters' movement in the early 1980's seems to me to be possible. The close grip of the forces of reform, after the destruction of the squatters, upon the way in which protest is articulated and history produced is questioned once again. However, this reasoning is highly speculative. The future development remains open.

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





Here Comes the Ocean

"Here comes the Ocean  
And the waves  
Down by the shore."  
The Velvet Underground

Nice place you've got here.

Real nice.

Real sweet.

Definitely acceptable, most definitely. Man, what I would give. You don't know how lucky you are. Who would have thought it? Despite all the worries they did yer proud in the end. How nice. How splendid! I'm so pleased for you. Really. But tell me, jew'think you earnt it? Mmm? Do you honestly think you deserve it? More than me for instance? Awe man, you've always had it good. Can't you see how you've always been dealt in. Why do you think that is? Cos you're jammy? Cos you're smart? Smarter than me? Or is it sweeties for teachers pet, mmm? Never crossed your mind, has it? No doubt it all seems perfectly natural to you? Just as it should be, locked after and cossetted, always a helping hand in times of need. Very nice I'm sure. And all because you're middle-class, no doubt about it. Shit, even if you became a junkie, man, you'd still be middle-class. There's no escaping it, even if you wanted. This isn't even close, it's a fucking joke, that's what it is, man, a fucking Wendy house, all safe and cosy, cushy, middle-class safe, because the play-group leaders will always bail you out, because they feel safe with you, because you're the sort of people they wish everybody was - because you are them, right? Yeah, you know what I'm talking about, man, and you just accept it. Jesus, you're so fucking smug it makes me sick! I could

slash your face, know what I mean, slice you up real bad, and then torch  
this gaff. Burn every fucking thing you own. Wakey, wakey! There's a  
Sister Ray knife at your throat! Heh, heh, heh - Who's staring at the rayon?  
Who's licking up the pig-pen? I'm searching for my mainline. I said I  
couldn't hit it sideways. I said I couldn't hit it sideways. Just like, just  
like - hey, only kidding, man, juss focling around, yeah? But you know so  
little, y'know that? Fuck all. It's sad. It's sad to see you in your pathetic  
state of ignorance, that's what's sad, man. Really. There are certain things  
you should understand, right, certain crucial items you've gotta know. So  
I'm gonna tell you, right. Cos at the moment, man, you are living in a fuck-  
ing dream - no doubt about it.

Now then, are you sitting comfortably?

Good, then I'll begin.

Have you ever seen a man shooting himself up in the balls? Nah, not a pretty  
sight. Or a geezer getting his skull pulped with a pick-axe handle? Or an  
old whore, skin like raw pastry, eating the shit from some rich cunt's arse?  
- Awe, you shouldn't do that. Don't you know you'll stain the carpet. Don't

Specifics you know you'll mess the carpet? - Yeah. But I'm not gonna talk to you  
about specifics, right. Specifics are bullshit, right. A complete  
waste of fucking time - Oh man, she hasn't got the time-time. Too busy suck-  
ing on my ding-dong, now do it just like, do it just like - I'm just not  
interested, know what I mean. I don't need that kind of shit in my head,  
right. It can't touch nobody. Pure verbals. It's down to two things, right -  
the Street and the Ocean. That's it. One or the other. There's the Organis-  
ations too, right, but that's different, that's on the inside. Outside, man,  
it's between the Street and the Ocean. Nothing else. You know what I mean?

Survival, man. People who've got it real hard, the whores and pimps, the  
smack-heads and the dealers, lives you don't even imagine, lives out  
The Street on the Street. Everyday a struggle, right. Which is what makes it what  
Reality it is - Reality, man. An'cos of that, all the characters are real too.  
They're quick, they're smart, they're alive. Jesus, they're not fuck-  
ing zombies like everybody else. They feel real, y'know what I mean, there's  
no bullshit, right. An'you should see some of them operate. Like an ace  
street mechanic. Man, that is a sight to behold! Strip a motor clean in a  
couple of minutes, no hassles - clean, pure, an'sweet. It's an art, man, a  
fucking art - strip it down, shift it, rebuild the fucker - pure class!  
Nowhere else, man, nowhere else; cos anywhere else you can get away with  
underachievement, y'know what I mean? No, not a fucking clue. It's what



Severity makes it real, man - the Severity. If you wanna see perfection, it's out there, and it doesn't give a shit for anyone else; cos when you're good, man, you're invulnerable - do it, do it, do it, just like, just like - Yeah, the finest fucking place on earth, but dangerous. If you haven't got the talent you're not gonna last. The Ocean's gonna come right up and

The Ocean get you; I seen it happen to a lot of people, a lot of good friends of mine, just sucked away, just disappeared, no trace. It's hard, man, really hard when you know one of your friends is going. There's nothing you can do: one day they're juss gonna be gone, thassall. But that's it, they couldn't handle it. Me, no Ocean's gonna take me, I can tell you. No way! The Street, man, that is cool, but the Ocean - I'm staying out of there, too fucking right I am! I'm not even gonna get my toes wet - whip it on me Jim, whip it on me Jim... awe, I said oh, oh... just like, just like, just like - Eh, fine music. But business, my man, business. Pure 100% unadulterated class A,

The Rasta no shit. Feel free. I know this rastaman, yeah, and he's getting me this real rasta weed. Which is rare, man, cos they prefer to keep it amongst themselves, which is why there's always that shit bush around, yeah. But we get on really well, we understand each other, y'know what I mean? Like he was cautious to start with, y'know how Rasta's are. This isn't some guy playing at it for the image, man; designer locks and only fucking white chicks; this man is the genuine article, right? Got his lady stashed away upstairs - never see anything of her except these big white eyes peering through a crack in the door. Man, does she look scared! Yeah. Like he's shifting weights at a time straight from J an'he's got the means to protect himself, know what I mean. Man's a karate freak. This guy, yeah, he was telling me, this guy ripped him off, right, turned up with a couple of mates and a sawn-off instead of the goods. Now that was out of line; a purely personal initiative, y'know what I mean? The guys higher up knew nothing about it, and if they had they wouldn't have approved - bad for business, right? Man just got greedy, thassall, thought he'd help himself to a few grand. So this Rasta, right, know what he did? Payed a visit on this guy about three in the morning; ransacked the place, took all the cash, TV, stereo, video, the man's motor, the lot. Then sliced three of the stupid fucker's fingers off with a machete. Guy went and whined to his organisation, right, demanded some retribution. They said, "You had it coming, cunt." and cut him right out of their operation. Ah sweet, man, really sweet. Like I say, me'n'this rasta, we get on. A lot of Rasta's really fuck me off though cos they won't have anything to do with you if you're white, yeah. An'that's

not arrogance, man, that's fear. All the real money's white money, right, so what the fuck do they think they're doing if they're not dealing with us, uh? Hiding in a fucking ghetto, that's what; wallowing in their fucking ignorance and poverty. Stupid, man. It pisses me off. An'they say they wanna go back to Ethiopia! It's a joke, man, how can you get to be so dumb? Behaviour like that an'they're gonna sink without trace. Extinction. Annihilation. Total stompings by the pigs. Yeah. Eh, put another record on.

### Sacrifice and Self-Interest

"The cinematic spectacle has its rules which enable one to produce satisfactory products. But dissatisfaction is the reality that must be taken as a point of departure. The function of the cinema is to present a false, isolated coherence, dramatic or documentary, as a substitute for a communication and an activity that are absent. To demystify the cinema it is necessary to dissolve what is called its subject matter."

from the soundtrack to Critique of Separation by Guy Debord, 1961

Now, the Spaghetti Western has enjoyed a certain vogue amongst - what shall we call them? - the residues of leftism? Student activists, lecturers in film-studies, analysts of culture in carmine lip-stick and the short black dress, the entire 'staff of City Limits... Enough! Anymore and we'll puke. But what could better demonstrate the pathetic passivity of these so called activists, their complete submission to the spectacle, than this eagerness to avoid doing anything but spectate? That the Spaghetti Western might be a sort of anti-Western, and Clint and buddies folkheroes of the anti-social fighting against law and power (corrupt sherifs, big railway companies, etc.) not in the name of some higher good but in the name of nothing (How Nietzschean!, they all cried.), does not seem to us cause for celebration. Rather, apart from boredom, cause for thought. The Spaghetti Western is, we shall show, not simply the spectacle of opposition, whose function would be merely to pacify and divert the will, but the spectacle as opposition. And it is this that we term spectacular opposition - the representation within the spectacle of the spectacle as its own opposition. In this sense, as the personification of spectacular opposition, the Spaghetti Western hero is akin to another folk-hero, another fighter of sheriffs, another supposed enemy of the rich, the wicked, and the corrupt - Robin Hood.

What, after all, is the legend of Robin Hood? Not just the story of a gang of brigands who stole from the rich to give to the poor. But the story of a lord who voluntarily stripped himself of his lordship in order to defend the interests of an absent king himself stripped of kingship and imprisoned while returning from a glorious crusade. Raoul Vaniegem has demonstrated in The Totality for Kids how sacrifice, the real sacrifice of the peasant in his labour, and the mythical sacrifice of the lord in his duty to God, his people, etc., harmonizes the world into a purely imaginary unity - a unity upon which the stability of feudalism was founded. Thus Robin Hood is a perfectly mythical lord, and Richard the Lionheart the mythically perfect king, since they both sacrifice everything. But it is obvious that in sacrificing his nobility Robin only manages to strengthen it. And moreover, not just as some abstract moral quality, but as the concrete relation between him and his men. Noble and peasant are, after all, separated by birth, and the noble since he is inherently noble can only dissimulate his nobility not shed it. The members of his band identify with Robin not because they see in him their own image, but because he is exactly what they will never be. And he is what they will never be precisely because he is able to identify with them; that is, to nobly ignore his nobility while they can only basely cling to their own baseness. They identify with his identification, an identification that only proves their difference and inferiority. They identify against themselves, a process that is both utterly passive and utterly alienating. The lord's saintly regard for his serfs is literally the light of their being. The peasant is always firstly not a lord. And his consciousness is always consciousness of this inadequacy.

The allegiance of the poor to Robin Hood, then, far from being a popular revolt against the feudal lords, is the ideal relation of peasant to master. What then is it that Robin and his merry men fight against? Bluntly, reality. King John and the Sheriff of Nottingham are real masters, possessors of real lands and real souls, and they do not bother to indulge in the mythical sacrifice to God and country which would "justify" their power. That is their crime - that in refusing to participate in myth they jeopardize reality. The struggle against the Sheriff and the King is a struggle between ideology and truth, appearance and reality, the necessity of exploitation and the necessity of maintaining it. A struggle that cannot be resolved because, despite appearances, there is only one side - that of the exploiters, equally committed to their riches and their lives. But that this never ending struggle between the spectacle and the reality which it mythic-

ally negates in order to preserve should find representation within the spectacle; that spectacular inversion should find its own spectacular inversion; that we, the passive spectators, should be conscripted in the active support of our own passivity; for all its ingenuity, is a sign of desperation. With the rise of classes who do not directly participate in the symmetrical exchange of sacrifices between lord and peasant, harmony is broken. The existence of exploitation has to be "frankly" admitted to, but it is blamed on corrupt and decadent tendencies, a regrettable modern falling-away from the old ideals, that cannot compromise feudalism itself in anyway. But decadence and decay are only the inverted images within the organisation of appearances of that organisation's imminent supersession. Attempting to hijack supersession and reverse its movement, the legend of Robin Hood develops synchronously with the collapse of English feudalism; the earliest reference is in Piers Plowman (late 14th c.), the first written sources are 15th c.; printed in the 16th repeatedly, it has acquired all its modern features by the 17th. Nostalgia for the past is its inversion of the real hope of the future; and Sherwood Forest, its inversion of the real site of opposition - the towns. This list can be extended. As with all myth, Robin Hood must be read as in a mirror.

But today myth has already been overthrown. The unity of sacrifice that bonded lord to bondsman has been replaced by a fragmented and impoverished equilibrium of exchange. The single great mirror in which the real sacrifice of the peasant was reflected as the mythical sacrifice of the lord has been smashed, but only so that a speck can have entered into each of our eyes. The identification of the peasant against himself in his lord has not been abolished, but been simply internalised and subjectified as the self that is master of itself, the self that speculates on itself, the self which invests itself as its own capital. We are, we are assured, all capitalists now. And whereas the absolute separation of lord and peasant in the myth of birth reflected the real freedom of the nobility from the slavery they imposed on everybody else, the spectacular equality of all individuals reflects the reality that indeed not even the capitalists are protected anymore from the banality and the boredom of the survival they force upon us. Without the image of the sacrificed lord nothing remains to justify our exploitation. But it was myth that justified; spectacle simply bedazzles. It fragments reality, and sets fragment against fragment, masking exploitation behind the the incessant playing out of the farce of self-interest.

Why farce? Because self-interest is never actually allowed to be self-

interested. Paradoxically the general right of everyone to pursue their own interests means that the interests of others will take priority over ours. The pursuit of self-interest actually means submission to the self-interest of others. With the understanding, of course, that the definition is recursive, and that the "self-interest of others" is itself governed by the definition. Submission to submission, then - an endless and baroque ritual of bowings and scrapings passed off as the law of the jungle. In short, a farce. But in whose interest is this submission, who dictates it? Clearly, Self-Interest, which is nothing other than the spectacular representation of Capital and the necessity of a return upon its investment.

Now evidently the Spaghetti Western hero is the very personification of self-interest. There is no cynicism here, but rather an entirely uncynical heroisation of the capitalist ideal as the enemy of its reality. Just as Robin Hood was a lord without land, so Clint Eastwood is a capitalist with no capital - that is to say, the ideal capitalist. Do not all capitalists at least claim to have started from nothing? His "selfishness" like Robin's nobility is only redoubled by the loss. Everything he does is always for a price. His dealings with his fellow man are always those of the market-place, while his enemies - thugs, gang bosses, company bosses, leaders of men, - do not deal in exchange but extortion. They must be extirpated for exposing the reality of appropriation normally masked behind the spectacle of free-exchange. Strictly speaking, these real bosses and real capitalists are not even motivated by self-interest - whoever was? They pursue quite different ends. They are, in short, idealists: the railroad boss in Once Upon a Time in the West is driven by an obsession to link the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans; the bandit in For a Few Dollars More is tormented by the stain left upon his honour by an unfaithful betrothed. Self-interest is a hard task-master. It demands a constant re-investment of gain, a continual deferment of expenditure. And it is their expenditure without hope of return, their wasting of themselves in dreams, which is corrupting and demoralising. But not only do dreams weaken and destroy the self hardened to its interests, they also lead to excesses - the murder of women and children, rape and torture, the usual stuff - excesses to which self-interest, always prudent, is not prone. The helpless victims of these meglomaniacs, these depraved aberrations, are forced to turn to the ascetic, upright figure of the hero in his self-interest to rid them of these mad dogs.

As in Robin Hood the reality of a system has been condemned in the name of its impossible ideality. Confronted by the crimes of lords and bosses who

are we told to turn to but lords and bosses, imaginary lords and bosses at that. But we shall turn elsewhere, not towards ourselves, doubtless, but towards our dreams and our desires which are everybody's, and which in their absolute non-productivity, their scandalous waste, shall prove the means to oppose not just the bosses but all their squabbling bureaucratic, technocratic, cybernetic, would-be successors.

"I have scarcely begun to make you understand that I don't intend to play the game. "

Guy Debord, Ibid.

Nah, let me choose. Apologies for all the prowling, man, juss a little bit wired, y'know. But tell me, who was that lady in the pub with you that time I met you? Man, she was nice. Those little rich chicks, they're too much. Money, man, pure money, it pampers them, know what I mean? They've got a sheen that's pure fucking pampering. Deal me in, you hear, give us her phone number. I am obsessed, I have to have that number, right. Don't you worry, I'll look after her. I'll wine and dine her, whatever it takes, I'll show it to her. Man, she'll go crazy for it. They love it, rich chicks. It's all money in their heads, they wanna feel that you're paying them for it, y'know what I mean, it excites them - and why not? Cam'on, the number, man. I know you've got it. What you scared of? I'm not a fucking rapist, I juss wanna ask her out for fuck's sake. You're not her fucking father! What's the problem? Too good for me, is she? Well, fuck you, asshole; you fucking uptight asshole, you're really beginning to piss me off, y'know that, treating me like shit, like some fucking infestation you wouldn't touch with a barge-pole. You need a shrink, man. Seriously, you need help, you really do. You know what's wrong with you? You're anally retentive. All this moral dilemma shit, it's constipation, that's all, so leave it out, right. It's sick, man, sick. What the fuck was she doing with you if you don't know her, eh? Answer me that. Alright, so give me her number. And she'll have this chick's number, yeah? She better have. Come to think of it, she's alright herself, in't she? Ah now this I have not heard in a long time. Ta. Two birds with one number, eh? Heh, heh, heh. Boo, boo, boobububoo - An' if it don't work out with the blonde number I can always try it on with the 722 number, yeah? She's sweet too. I've always liked the look of her, y'know, she seems like she's got a lot of suss for one so young - Eigh you've been crying, your face is a mess. Come in baby, you can dry the tears on my dress - Ah, youth! A fine thing, I tell yer, a fine, fine thing. Young

Breakfast

in Bed



girls, man, they are so excitable! Awe, Surabaya, man! I crashed their for a couple of months after the Slaughter House got closed down. Man, it was

The Poodles intense! There was this whole bunch of little girls, right. Dick called'em the Poodles, which was brilliant, a rare flash of inspiration from the man. It just about summed'em up. Awe, they were eager, man! - Don't be shy, you've been here before. Pull your shoes off, lie down, an'I'll lock the door - Fourteen year old drug groupies, thrilled to bits to be let in on the scene, y'know what I mean. Total fucking Power! Dick spent all his time winding them up an'really taking the piss, cos that's what he's like - a real cunt - but they just lapped it up, man. Any shit an'they'd take it as a compliment. They would do anything, man - willingly! Like they used to come round in their lunch hour, right, and we'd still be crashed out, so we'd send'em down to the shops to get us our brakfast, and when they got back they'd bring it to us - Breakfast in bed! This is on me, you don't have to say you love me - Blowjobs and Frosties, hoh yeah! Yeah. But it was sick, man, it got outta hand, y'know what I mean? Like cos Dick was the Man, they really clung to him, right, an'it warped his head, liquified his brain. The man had always been a cunt, right, but now he was just a dick-head. He really thought, yeah, he was some kind of Oriental potentate, know what I mean, some fat, greasy sadist sitting propped up in bed all day, demanding heads on platters and massacres of the innocents all the fucking time. He started to think he could treat us like he treated the Poodles. If he thought I was gonna suck his cock and thank him for the privilege just cos some dumb fucking school girl dripping between the legs did, he was wrong, man. There's nothing that smart about fucking Poodles, it doesn't take that much talent, y'know what I mean, anybody can do it if they want. I'm not saying there's anything wrong with it, right, it's got its points, but what I mean is, you've fucked your head if you start taking it seriously, y'know what I mean? What you've gotta understand, right, is that these girls are children, yeah, and dumb, really fucking dumb. So when they started telling you that you were a fucking god what you had to bear in mind, right, was that they didn't know fuck about it. Right? They were deluded, man, they'd been conned. By you, remember? Which was sweet, I grant you, cos it meant you could do anything you liked with'em. But, man, it is sad, I mean tragic on a grand scale, if you allow them to con you back. That is like

Irony badly Ironic, know what I mean? The thing was, though, Dick an'the others were easy, it's what they'd always wanted. Like it was more natural for them than the realities, right. They never were Street people, y'know,

basically they were just like the Poodles, only older, but the same background, right. Natural regression. Reality had never suited them, they'd just been trying it out cos it seemed exciting, like the Poodles. The first chance that came along they bailed out and hunkered down with their child-

Saffron brides. Like Dick took up with this chick, Saffron. She thought she was so cool cos she was like totally stunning, man - awe fuck, she was good looking - an'Dick had always sort of favouritised her. She got these ideas about her situation, right, thought she was a big time coke-dealers lady. Sadly delude on both counts there. Really swelled her head on the powder. Man, it was disgusting! Everything was all wrapped up. It wasn't real, y'know what I mean, everybody was feeding off everybody else's delusions. And off me. I felt like a fucking mascot. I was just something in off the street, this weird friend of Dick's, y'know, weird and scarey, which is what all the excitement was about, no doubt. But that made Dick oh so glamorous, didn't it? I split, man. Jesus, they treated me worse than a fucking dog. Friends! Fuck'em. Who needs'em? Didn't give me a look in, did they? An'that fucking bitch, that little slag, she was twisted, man, she was well fucked up. I was well out of there. It was like fucking Enid Blyton by the end. Now this is good. Yeah, like Sue said, all it proved was that they couldn't handle real women. Too right! The only non-bullshit she's ever come out with. It was like they hadn't even sussed the difference, man.

### Here Comes the Ocean

As for the other meaning, the third, the one "too many", the supplement that my intellection cannot succeed in absorbing, at once persistent and fleeting, smooth and elusive, I propose to call it the obtuse meaning.

The Third Meaning, Roland Barthes

Obtuse: a. Of blunt form, not sharp-pointed or sharp-edged; (geom.; of angle) greater than one, less than two right-angles; (of pain, the senses) dull, not acute; stupid, [f.L. p.p. of OB(tundere, tus - beat)]

Writing is that play by which I turn around as well as I can in a narrow place:

Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes

Now in every language the signs return, and by dint of returning they end by saturating the lexicon - the work.

Ibid.<sup>1</sup>

At stake, doubtless, is a question of translation. Here more than elsewhere, not just a putting into question after the fact, but the question of the fact, its necessity and its impossibility. Film is, after all, even more than language, not quite a language (an illuminated script? The question mark like an angle-poise providing the light that saves us from obscurity). Film overwhelms us by its excess. There are things that I can list, that is, enumerate, but which I cannot account for: the particular line of the mountains against the sky, the matrix of pores upon a face. And not just in the background or the fine detail. How much of a hand, of an arm, of a body, is needed for a gesture? Not much, a verb will normally suffice. Film's excess is not the excess of language, which is an excess of signification, the threat of an infinite but countable recession; it is the excess of the flesh, accidental, irrelevant, "too much", and all there, spread out uncountable in its plenty. Embarrassed by the scandal of its fleshiness, aspiring to the modesty of a text, film has clothed itself; clothed itself in movement. The rapid succession of images, their flurry as it were, disguises the indecent repletion of each; the infinity of a series replaces that of a field. Here we remain strictly faithful to Barthes, who writes, "The filmic, very paradoxically, cannot be grasped in the film 'in situation', 'in movement', 'in its natural state', but only in that major artefact, the still." (The Third Meaning). But a law, once inscribed within the domain of its own jurisdiction, is, as we know, its own contradiction. And Once Upon a Time in the West bears the traces, so it seems to us, of just such an inscription - a reinscription within the film of the filmic - that is to say of the still.

Now stillness mimes nothing - by definition. Indeed, it would be tempting to say with Barthes that, "The still offers us the inside of the fragment." (Ibid. The first emphasis is ours, the second his.) In the extreme close-up of a face without expression, excess seeps as if from the pores. The longer the shot is held the less can meaning inhere in it. In the end, and it is after an unreasonable time, we are faced only by the granularity of the face. Let us speak of its "texture". For that is what we are tempted to "see" as replacing, or covering (cladding, as in those products which lend to the exterior of one's home an air of rustic roughness) - smothering the meaning; a texture of the skin, its pores, its lines and cracks, its shiny oiliness. Texture coats the surface of the film like a cataract. It blinds us, but at the same time it promises itself to us immediately - finger to surface without gap; touch, feel, this. Touch has always been feeling par excellence, the sensual sense (for Hegel, the material sense, as yet unidealized), and

sensuality is immediacy; overwhelming, flooding, melting, and dissolving, the body. Against the distance, the separation, the never-here, of meaning, the immediacy of the medium calls out. A seductive call, doubtless, offering the prospect of a meeting without veils, a contact without intermediaries, a hearing without interpreters<sup>2</sup>; but one not without its disappointments. This texture, this raw skin, this impassive face, quite simply, they fail to move, that is to say - to touch. Which is their strangeness, their uncanniness, an uncanniness which grows as the shot thickens. What is this texture if it fails to touch? Somehow, obscurely indeed, it is, it seems to us, the texture of texture. If texture were to have a texture this would be it. Texture covered over by texture. Texture presented by texture as texture. Texture signing itself - a sign of the non-sign. Mediacy mediating itself - as immediacy. The texture of the text as the text of its texture. Texture and text, as if two identical grids only minutely displaced<sup>3</sup>, slipping into each other so that the grain of the face might be as infinitely smooth as celluloid. But smoothness, the smoothness of a pebble, of a mirror, is always the result of a polishing, a wearing away [une usure].

At the moment of maximum obscurity (and even in its uncut version Once Upon a Time in the West remains a confused and broken narrative, knotting impossibly at points, and continuing only by virtue of an Alexandrian cut) the railroad boss is mortally wounded and dumped from his private train. Not yet dead, he drags himself, his legs useless in calipers, across the churned up yellow earth beside the line towards a puddle of dirty water. It is a slow process, as is the way of things in this movie, a slow, cruel process shown in a series of close-ups of his tortured face thrust forward of him turtle-like by the brace around his neck. As he draws inch by inch towards the puddle the soundtrack begins to fill with the sound of waves, the sound of an ocean breaking upon the shore. And - do we really need to spell it out? - at the moment he reaches the puddle he dies, the roar of the waves engulfs the soundtrack, and his head drops into the inch deep water.

2. And one that does not fail to seduce. In Susan Sontag's essay Against Interpretation we find, almost by accident, "What matters in Marionberg is the pure, untranslatable, sensuous immediacy of some of the images...", and as the final thesis, "In place of a hermeneutics we need an erotics of art.". But inbetween there is this, "Transparency is the highest, most liberating value in art - and in criticism - today. Transparency means experiencing the luminousness of the thing in itself - of things being what they really are.", which sounds like Aquinas (claritas), hence doubtless Aristotle, and shines with a platonic light. A sensuous transparency, an erotics of the Good, an immediacy of the sublime? This strange eulogy to light unsettles and disturbs all the assurances of our pleasure.

3. Textuality/Textuality, the displacement is  $ur \rightarrow ou$ , birth  $\rightarrow$  place, the movement internal to the birth-place, the schism of the origin, torn and folded back upon itself.

This ocean can, it is clear, mean a number of things. Firstly, as the actual Pacific Ocean it is the railroad boss's goal, his dream. But this ocean only occupies the soundtrack, and sound when divorced from the visual refers to the mental - a cinematic device that copies, no doubt, the classical identification of speech and thought, hearing and understanding. But both are like oceans; sound, after all, drowns, and in Marvell's The Garden, for example, we read, "The Mind, that Ocean where each kind/ Does streight his own resemblance find." And yet equally, and in what is also an absolutely classical figure, the ocean is the railroad boss's death. Already we can see that this ocean is crawling with meaning, is polysemious - that is to say, full of seed. But, recalling those shots so beloved of nature documentaries in which sea-horses fill the water with their copious, thread-like sperm, we see that the ocean turning upon itself may even figure its own endless metaphoricity. Not just a literal ocean and a metaphorical ocean, this ocean is also that "medium" which both separates and links sign and concept, i.e. is sign and concept and that and (which and? How many are you asking me to choose from?), that "between" which without meaning itself prefigures all meaning, the ur-meaning which is the opening for the birth of meaning - a birth, however, without place.<sup>4</sup> Without place because it is, though it isn't at all, everywhere. The ocean, a womb by the most commonplace of determinations (will its fecundity never cease?), is as big as the world. It engulfs us, it engulfs itself, it engulfs everything that could be said of it, which is to say that everything that could be said of it is its (a double genitivity). What use our speculums now? To open up the inside (of a text, of a film, "of the fragment") one must first be on the outside - but the ocean drowns us just as surely as it drowned the railroad boss, and without ever touching us, just as it never touched him. We remain on dry land through out. But is that any comfort?

The ocean is the double of the land. ("It was a common opinion that all the species found on land had their counterparts in the sea" - a gloss on the lines from Marvell already quoted.) And the speculum is supposed to reflect the inside to the outside. But since the ocean is a mirror too, it must reflect the speculum. A reversal not easy to control. One that would get out of hand - as the Escher print, in which two hands rising out of the paper on which they are drawn draw each other, might be said to get out of

4. cf. note 3. Doubtless, it is the endless turbulence of this ocean that polishes and smooths, that rounds and wears away the sharp edges; that, in short, makes obtuse.

hand. The ocean, however, both is and isn't the medium between "itself" and the concept, the inside, the womb, the conception, etc. Always already the word suffers from a hair-line fracture. And the speculum is tarnished by the ocean, possibly even bent out of true by its inversion within it. Thus the circularity of reflection is broken - but only virtually, which is to say that it is almost joined. And in the gap which is hardly there, like sound, the ocean's roar reading us drowns us, and loses without recovery the bodies dashed against the rocks. Out here, in the West, no safety, no laws, it is wild.

I mean, it's something to have the admiration, right, the trust, yeah, of a real lady, y'know what I mean, someone who knows what its about, someone

The Lady who's in a position to discriminate, right? Like there's this real sweet lady I really value at the moment. She's had a rough time, and I'm sort of looking after her. Getting her her gear and making sure its clean, cos when I first met her she was close, man, an'I didn't wanna see the Ocean come'n'take another. But I've been getting a lot of unneeded advice cos of this lady. Earache, man. Like what they say is - the more you help her, man, the easier you make it for her. Typical ex-junkie shit - wash your hands and run away. Course I'm making it easier for her, any less easy and

No Sell Out the lady'd be a fucking stiff! - Distinguished guests, brothers and sisters, ladies and gentlemen, friends and enemies... No sell out! - See, we've got to stick together, cos there's nobody else. All the organisations, man, they don't give a fuck. They're raking it in, for them and their friends. You know how much cash goes through (Deleted) a year? Five hundred grand! And all they do is hand out shit advice. Somebody is lining their pockets, and, man, you can bet your arse they don't want anybody else in on it. We went along, right, with some proposals. Sound proposals, man, keep the professionals right out of it, use the people involved, so that they could be helped for once and not screwed, right. Shook their heads and drivelled some toss about lack of funding. Not enough control for them, see, i.e. they wouldn't be able to move their cronies in on the scene. They don't want you in at all. They're just saying it so that they can go on shitting on you. That's why they call you "clients", man - The only thing power respects is power - You're just an excuse. They look after their own, that's what it comes down to. All the shit about "participation", "accountability", blah, blah, blah - it's just front. It's in their interest, "caring" is their operation, their particular screw, know what I mean? It's their road,

man, their road to the money, that's all. I used to despise that, I wouldn't have anything to do with it cos it made me feel so sick. The cowardice, man, and the hypocrisy, it made me puke. So I steered clear, know what I mean, looked after myself and my own by myself. But that was sentimental, man, I understand that now. I've seen a lot of things recently; the Street's been getting a lot tougher; I've seen people who shouldn't have it happen to 'em get sucked down by the Ocean. And I've been thinking a lot lately, thinking

Organisation real hard, and what I've come to realise is that you've gotta have an organisation. Organisation, that's what I've sussed. That's what they respect, that's what they're scared of. It'd just take a few of us: sort it out, put something together, get ourselves a name, a respectable name, stitch it up all real tight, and we'd walk all over them! Cos that's when you start to get the funding, man, which is what you want, yeah - funding is crucial, right. That's what I've got clear in my head - use them. Get hold of their money and invest it in yourself - No compromise, no sell out, no controlled show - I'm serious about this, man. I've been sorting it out in my head for a long time, and I'm gonna do it. I'll cut you in if you want. You'd be good, you're acceptable, know what I mean? They'd trust you. They'd treat you like one of their own. Awe man, it could be so good! We'd move in and take over, no doubt about it. Once we're established they'll be no stopping us. All we need, man, is a base. Once we've got ourselves a territory we can expand in any direction, right? We can install a lot of heavy equipment, some really good sounds, video stuff, and film - professional gear, man, none of your amateur shit. We've got the talent, man, it's all around us. You know we could do better than most of the crap you see all the time. And, man, there's money everywhere, all just waiting for us to get our hands on it. Fucking hell, I've got it sorted out. It's taken time, but there's definitely gonna be no more fucking around. Yeah, I've got it well straightened out in my head. I know exactly what I've got to do, and it feels good man, it makes me feel really strong, yeah. It's a buzz. I feel confident cos I know everything's gonna work out, cos I've got it all planned. Nothing can go wrong, I can feel it. Awe, there's energy, man! Yeah, definitely. I'm gonna get it together, y'know what I mean?

This time.

No bullshit.

### Notes

#### Here Comes the Ocean

1. I have been in love for some time, four years it is now, with a certain gloss that is both a sheen and an apparatus of the text - a mechanism of notes, commentaries, references, and headings, and a look which is nothing other than their distribution on the page, literally a glossy look. At once both revealing and coy, generous and elusive, the look entices the gaze and is smooth to the touch. The finger cannot stay put but glides over a surface that it can never penetrate. I touch but do not feel that I have touched. I melt at the skin's cool indifference, its glossy imperturbability. I desire it, this indifference, and it caresses my desire, but nothing is exchanged - as though contracts had been suspended pending legal opinion. I feel as if I have wasted myself upon a seduction that will only prove my impotence. And I delight in it - my body, without weight, without power, nothing but the field of play for another's stratagems. Yet I treasure them as my own, as indeed found treasure would be.

When I read Robert Louis Stevenson, Marguerite Duras, the later Barthes (this list comes off the top of my head, there are others, doubtless, but not Dostoevsky, say, or Conrad, just to give some flavour of the distinction) I stumble over certain fragments - a sentence, three or four lines, nothing more - that seem of themselves out of context, as if so ripe they had already dropped, and I am struck still. There is no longer any desire to go on. I read and re-read - call it scratch reading - and feel there can be no greater pleasure than this continual sampling. I dream of a book that would be nothing other than a compilation of these fragments, arranged upon the page and reproduced with all the care and skill, the perfect registration and the immaculate margins, of a coffee-table art-book - all sealed, enveloped, gathered up, in my signature, which like wrapping paper, no doubt, would be torn off and immediately discarded by the recipient.

"That the Western died yesterday, since Mann, or Ray, Peckinpah, or Leone - the Western should still wander toward the meaning of its death - or that it has always lived knowing itself to be dying... An elementary algebraic substitution, but with what consequences, and what signature? Erased by a certain violence, a certain repetition, another voice serves blankly as the bed for this one, its sheet, its read, its inspiration - written over, bawled down, it is wiped clean so as to be begun again as if from scratch.



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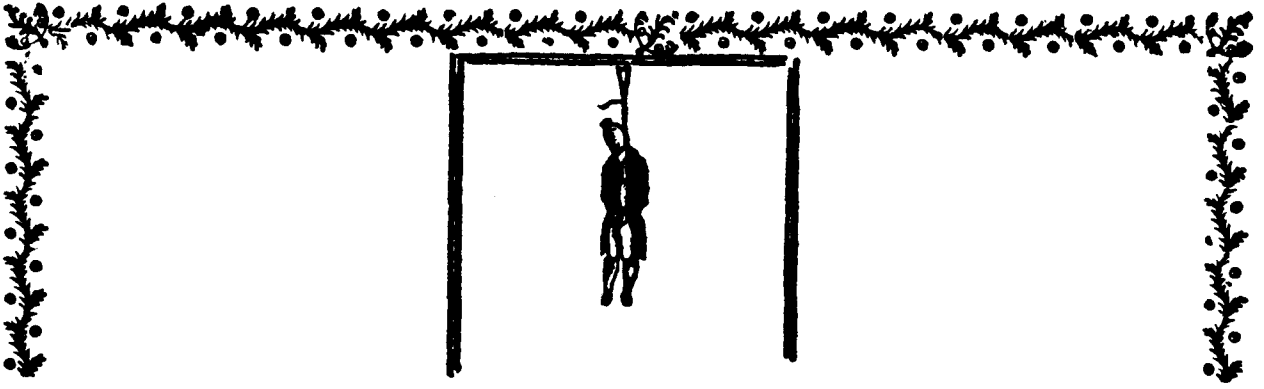
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present whereabouts unknown, rumoured to be alive and well and smoothing it out in New York.  
It is possible.

The Poodles appear courtesy of Sten International Mega Productions Inc.,  
though all attitudes or calumies expressed, and all use made, are the sole  
responsibility of the lessees.

(In signing this paper, which I did, and  
which I counterfeited here - where? - there,  
I am simply staking my claim, or getting  
caught up in the line from the harpoon.)



Adam Beck, London, 1988



## THE POLITICAL ACTIVIST AND TRADE UNIONS

Walter Gibson

Broadly speaking, Common Sense is written and read by a bunch of pinkos none of whom agree with a word any of the others get printed. This will doubtlessly be no less evident in considering the immediate task of the day in practical political terms. Here, however, common purpose and unity are at their greatest premium. Nowhere is the theoretical and practical position of the broadly 'revolutionary' Left more confusing and contradictory than in its qualified and resentful approach to the Trade Union Movement.

As activists we are individuals whose experience of society has produced in us a political consciousness which rejects the limitations and oppressions created by the development of international capitalism. We have each experienced an individual part of that historic struggle in the society we now live in. Our path as individuals has not been a mirror of each other. In a struggle on all fronts individuals and groups are being forged with widely differing priorities, the way forward bitterly contested. At best, our associations come together in uneasy unity concealing hidden agendas.

This is not, in itself, particularly depressing. At the heart of social struggle is an implicit belief in development and continual change. We do not rely on a common inherited ideology. All men and women are compelled to move with the society which surrounds them. It is from this social necessity that our divisions, as our unity, stems.

Our society, our struggle, has not yet produced the decisive circumstances where, like dominos, old associations prove false and we move inexorably together under single slogans, necessary paths and unified leaderships. The historical example of the Russian Revolution shows us that only from July to October did the Bolshevik position gain decisive form and support. It was surely the international and historic position of the Russian classes that divided and formed the hard revolutionary position and success of the Bolshevik party from the Social Democratic parties of the rest of Europe.

Equally central, however, to the common understanding of society that we do share is the limitation placed on individuals thinking and acting alone. The ferocity of the fight between groups whose eventual target is unity beneath a single Party is one result.

In Britain, a dominant group appears to exist. We fall under the shadow of the Labour movement, which stands as a monolithic stone over our hopes. Its constituent parts represent the only associations to have gained mass membership which affects people in their daily working lives. Its Party is the only mass Party of people who have become active through their traditions and their experiences.

Yet it does not unify in such a way that many activists, even in the constituent branches, can easily dedicate their efforts to it.

Consistently defensist, Trade Unions and Party appear as a brake before our understanding. "Wait; let the others catch up!" is its slogan to the faithful in times of an advance. "Stop, let us go over there and bring our Brothers and Sisters along", in times of retreat.

Politically conscious activists, with all their different routes to understanding, become impatient. Looking to the world around them and their own short lives, there does not appear time for a gradual 'inevitable progress' ideal while, in Western dominated areas, people die in preventable starvation. Seeing growing poverty and homelessness and hearing only the words of compromise and uncertain defence they look to clear roads of hope and change.

Activists want to share their discovery; this is a class war in which people who work have only taken

and never been given. Associating the weakness and failure of 'The Movement' to fight effectively for change and rejecting the mass structures of the labour movement, we become individuals again and our activism is formed by the possibilities remaining; the people we know, the Parties who fight or whose name evokes historical legitimacy and the strength of the class whose strength is the body of our understanding.

The 'official' Communist Party itself acts like an individual intellectual and advises, in its impotent inability to summon the people, how best the Labour Party can form class coalitions.

As individuals, we are caught in a vice of alienation, atomised and sectionalised. Small Revolutionary groups stalk the streets, talking the language that requires a high degree of prior political awareness to understand waiting for October as Moses awaited the Lord to bring his people home.

Intellectuals write for each other, remembering betrayals, dreaming of a mass movement. They form reverse plaudits to a Capitalism which has moved its harshest terms to the Third World and has presently concessions enough for the foreshortened vision of our controlled working lives.

Within this situation there are also achievements; the 'single issue' campaigns have proved successful at mobilising considerable support that in more hopeful times might have turned to wider fields.

Anti-apartheid has finally achieved the sort of acceptability for its soft focus campaign that is politically useful. Its bitter antagonis, City A.A. has made a lesson of commitment in creating a dedicated support system for its Non-Stop Picket, and if its A.A. credentials are challenged, can point to its pioneering work in fighting for our right to protest as a considerable domestic achievement.

Union disputes, though failing in their isolation, have disproved the 'lager and Sun' declassified youth fears of their elders, and provided new forms of organisational unity of a non sexist and racist kind.

Defence has sometimes merged into attack; the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign believes that without its work Thatcher would have provided welcome evidence that workers can develop successful strategies against the enormous power of multi-national companies. The very success of the extreme Right is providing its own opportunities and for political activists a body of important work and an opening.

In my own job as a Council worker in an inner London borough it is possible to see political benefits coming out of the polarisation emerging from the right wing push.

The Social Services are under constant attack. Our ability to service public need is threatened by reduced funding for operational budgets, cut ILEA classes, an inability to contact or refer clients to social workers who are understaffed and must deal almost exclusively with emergencies and child abuse case-loads. Services are threatened by privatisation, where accountability is lost, wages and pensions are cut and need becomes subject to low bids and profit.

Everything our clients need, all operational strategies, all progress, is subject to the requirement that there is a saving or no increase in costs. Our Management make their careers on their success in cutting expenditure. Staff are not consulted on strategy decisions; clients needs are prostrate before the God of No Rate Increases.

Custom and Practice conditions have to be fought for again and again. Funded training is nearly impossible to obtain. Secondment is virtually dead. Every worker experiences threats to their expectation, their jobs and the public's needs.

The importance of Union membership in such a climate becomes clear. An active Shop Steward will have a succession of issues where the necessity of solidarity is clear to all. An active Shop will expose the common ground between workers doing the same or similar jobs and convert individual concerns and troubles into a common cause where action can be considered and taken. The democratic process of a Shop dispels the propaganda of the media and provides a contrast with the arbitrary and, precisely because of their isolation, often incompetent decision-making of the workplace dictatorship.

These experiences can be a recruiting agent for Trade Unionism, democracy and activism in the workplace, solidarity and recognition of common bonds. Without organisation they will remain individual experiences that may indicate none of these. Socialist commitment does not necessarily follow. Our Union is the wide based NALGO. It has been estimated that the majority of our membership locally are Conservative or non-Labour voting. Our struggle for decent working conditions does not address the problems of the low paid in an always direct way. We insist on existing differentials. While Metropolitan NALGO and the National Office support Nicaragua and our counterpart South African Union, a Shop or even Branch which does not concern itself almost exclusively with workplace issues is endangering the participation of its members, and its existence.

At first such a labourist orientation would appear to necessitate cynicism and evoke rejection from political activists who reach for revolutionary change. Consider instead that such ordinary Trade Union work provides the opportunity for activists to display the strength of their convictions through work. The most persuasive form of political work is practical experience of a struggle over an issue which personally affects us and in which the wider political context becomes clear. It will not very often become clear on its own.

Time and time again in an active Union Shop links are made between the individual and the general where many members would, alone, have seen only a personal or unique problem.

Initially activists may be discouraged that they are not surrounded by people of similar views, or that their views are treated with suspicion by other workers. However, since workplace struggle is judged by commitment, solidarity and hard work, it is the last bastion for Revolutionaries who want to be elected by open consensus.

The stronger that a Shop Steward stands on everyday workplace union disputes, the more that their 'individual' political understanding is listened to. This is not to suggest that anybody wants to be continually on strike, workers are quite well aware of the limits of a Union's power. They want a Steward to fight with them on issues of common solidarity, if only, but consistently, expressing the common view and common discontent to the management.

The consequent built up trust then becomes an openness to Socialism. When NALGO campaigns for comrades abroad and a trusted Shop Steward is seen to work for International cause causes there is a visible and concrete propaganda which is more affective than the newspapers the members buy. Very importantly, a link can in such a way be formed between the solid Unionism of an older generation and what can appear as alienating 'trendy' socialism of today.

The experience of setting up a Shop for council workers over the last year has drawn some common conclusions from its members. The situation where similar jobs and establishments had been paid and treated differently has been exposed and, by gathering knowledge, we have gone on to take active steps to redress grievances once felt, impotently, as individuals. Staff have joined and become active Union members who previously felt 'uninterested in politics' or could not see what the Union could do for them. The benefits of working together has been commonly recognised and the consequences of this has been to increase our involvement in wider areas of the workplace; Democracy has been extended.

One such emerging issue of concern to our members has been Equal Opportunities. Recruitment, training, advertising and general policy appear to perpetuate the failure to employ black staff, or make our establishments attractive to black clients. Due to a 'colour blind' Council policy 'race issues' cannot be talked about by staff except within the protection and independence of the Union.

Shop concern followed the election of a Union Equal Opportunities officer who was finding her meetings poorly attended, making progress difficult. We opened our Shop to a general Equal Opportunities meeting and good participation resulted in active continuing achievement and growing interest.

It seems clear that the important difference between earlier E.O. meetings that failed to draw interest and successful participation dominated by the staff affected directly was the earlier Shop work which formed the structure of involvement and drew out the links between direct experience by individuals at work and the wider issues that 'Equal Opportunities' in abstract failed to make. For black staff in particular, who have spent so many meetings explaining the situation, the prospect of concrete practical results, even if modest, was important.

Our common experience in the Shop is the continual growth of problems facing people at this time which creates political awareness and activism. This is, in the workplace, a time of advance and recruitment, not retreat. The demoralising failures of higher level work is not especially relevant to the Shopfloor. Here, advances may appear marginal, but because Union members are a full part of the process they can achieve a momentum and pressure towards challenging the difficulties they face.

It is, however, also apparent that this openness amongst the workforce is generally met by a rotten structure which cannot seek and is unable to take advantage of the situation and involve them. To an alarming degree Unions have rotted away, Senior Stewards appear dead, many workplaces have never seen nor heard from their Union. It seems clear that workers who would be active, but are stuck with their individual experience, become neither Revolutionaries nor Unionists; missing the workplace solidarity most effectively recognised in Shop meetings.

In this context the debate over the decline of the traditional working class seems a canard. The Revolutionary turmoil of starving and oppressed workers may not be our situation (generally) but it is in the developed consciousness of people at work in a society under the dictatorship of the needs of Capital, private interest, which has always been our road to progress.

We need fear the loss of an automatically oppositional working class only if we feel that experience no longer teaches Socialist lessons or if we wish to control 'the masses'.

Although the loss of the 'Estates' of Socialism requires new efforts, it is strange, given the often wholly reactionary nature of the Labour Party in this country, that Socialists should mourn and abandon hope when it is no longer enough for a McDonald or a Wilson, or a Kinnock, to be 'for Labour' to win sufficient popular approval.

Perhaps the major concern for Marxists at least is the relative decline in numbers of workers as producers, the creators of wealth alienated from their labour and exploited in the difference between pay and their production. Their understanding and their strength is more 'necessary' and independent than the increasing numbers of service workers.

Marxist? We are not an island in world production. Lenin would have hard words. Bolshevik Marxists had to face embarrassing correlation between industry and agriculture, working-class and peasantry. This led Lenin to make the following statement of policy at the ninth Congress of the Soviets:

"... does there exist, however, enough industry for the transformation of the country? ... If you take the question on a world scale, such a flourishing large scale industry does exist on the earth... We put that at the basis of our calculations."

1

An industrial working class provides and remains the centre of socialism. However, the above quote should disabuse us of the idea that there has ever been a golden age or 'Royal Road' for conscious political change.

In its past, the industrial working class has had to attract the support of those around it to achieve success. Its historic role and project does not rely absolutely on numbers but on the strength and direction of its experience. Today the support of non industrial employees is crucial to socialist success in this country. There seems no reason to regard this as a problem for socialism; which claims to be the victory or affluence worldwide in the freeing of productive and industrial forces which will leap across the destructive and restrictive competition and exploitation of private ownership.

The spectre, moreover, of unemployment and poor wages and the workplace dictatorship is now once again a recruiting agent.

It is certainly true that if political work was ever a process of organising the wholly converted, it is so no



longer. The battalions of Socialism are no longer isolated in huge factories or communities from the divisive influences controlled by the Owners. The distinctive history of working people and its renewal is filtered by the social economic trends in which we are told to read the death of change. Socialism, however, cannot claim to be both the truth of tradition and the conscious great leap forward without somewhere stepping ahead of the fully understood existing stage in History. In common with all eras, the consciousness of activists and workers is limited by the period they live in and is never perfect. Everyone has always remained attached to some anti-Revolutionary stages; in the 1960s for many it was most obviously Patriarchy.

We can expect people to remain emotionally attached to forms and words whose reality they are in the process of sweeping away. The principal task of political activity thus remains the same now as in reputedly more favourable times; to ensure as far as possible the success of people as they come together in response to violations of the existing Labour History. Attacks have never ceased, even where understanding of them has slipped back.

As activists, this consists not in resing upon our own analysis, which so often is confused and individual, but in taking part at the level where the struggle takes place as it appears to working people. We, like them, cannot expect to clearly see with clarity rosy lands beyond.

Only if we abandon the whole platform of the historic left, alienation, dialectics, the drive to freedom and equality and embrace pessimism and stagnation need we be so afraid of contamination or dissolution by a modern lumpen proletariat that we hold back from working for, as opposed to occasionally supporting, their struggle or feel it ends in pacification.

We should not, however, underestimate the challenges to that minimum political understanding which we thought we had built up out of the Second World War which are frightening and deep. In the context of the attacks on Women, Gay Men and Black people, a concentration upon a workplace struggle may seem pitifully irrelevant. Both the 'traditional' reformist politics and the efforts of 'traditional' activists seems to have achieved nothing.

In Europe we once again see, incredibly, middle class Parties collaborating with Fascists. Across Britain the repressive experiments of Northern Ireland have predictably spread to other targets. From the 1960's wave, the people have slipped away and the situation changed. Curiously, the prosperity of twenty years ago for many, which was then a radicalising factor, seems to have had two effects. Activists 'looked up' from their specific situation and started to believe in inevitable change, while almost simultaneously coming to believe that the prosperity was inevitable and dealt a deadly blow to change.

Since then, the '70s Shop Steward movement did not produce a sufficient depth and spread and democracy or appreciate the limited weakness of its role. The sectional organisations' struggle against a retreat and failure of progress has led, in the fight against clause 29, to the recall of the ominous litany of isolated destruction recounted by Pastor Neimoller, which begins:

'In Germany, first they came for the Communists  
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist'

It is the duty of political activists, of all the different strands our History represents, to struggle against further retreats. We are, however, divided in views and inclined to blame the organisation and inadequacies of each other and our predecessors. To many, it seems necessary to start anew.

If we do this, we are abandoning a bedrock or real strength and power lying in the structures created in the organisation of working people.

How many people who read right wing newspapers, whose tiring working day cannot include meetings, can you expect to reach out on the streets? How are we to build an organisation with the industrial and political power to attract, reach and prepare not just activists but tired working people; which has a strength greater than any existing political opposition? Where Communists, Anarchists and activists of all kinds can be elected by working people with a chance to prove themselves, their commitment and relevance? Every Union has Shop meetings attracting such support, and since joining together in a workplace is a concrete and actual power, quickly demonstrated, the more work that goes into them, the more real achievements result.

If this is not accepted, certainly it is accepted enough to be noticeable how it is to the Unions that the Left has turned to put out Thatcher in succeeding disputes while even as Kinnock seems supported by Union leadership, he can equally go no further Right than they can feel is consistent with their own position. Many, in short, have come to the Unions when things get exciting, or when they need protecting, but have had little to say for them in between.

Many political activists will not find it easy to accept Trade Unions as avenues of progressive change. They have appeared as the monoliths of the Labour movement whose block vote is served up to the Right of the Labour Party. They fight for change within the existing system, defending privilege built on the inequalities important to it.

That, however, is not the predominant experience concerning Trade Unions of a Union member in the workplace. He or she is already within a workplace whose

methods are those of private Capital. The Union transforms her individual experience into a political realisation of a real opposition between a body of people who carry out the work and those who administer and direct it on behalf of sectional ends. The satisfaction of one issue leads to a sympathy and solidarity with another. It becomes clear that this is not a discussion place, which quickly, with lack of progress, depoliticises, but has power and politicises.

How many activists are there in the country? If there are one in a hundred and they were active in creating Shops or building them up much of what we have seen under Thatcher could not have happened.

It is not enough to have a political party or an organisation which grows in a dispute. To succeed, political organisational work must already have created the solidarity and understanding to oppose attack. Organisation must continue once the excitement is over, or when one is expected. For many it will otherwise be too late to make connections or too far to travel when crisis arrives if the initial work has not been done.

This kind of activism is not being carried out. Unions are not merely powerful monoliths dominating with their reformism; but shaky structures entirely reliant on active memberships whose involvement alone can provide the base from which to argue seriously for radical positions.

It would not have been necessary to call on the N.U.M. to fight such a wide struggle if the Union Movement was not so weak at its democratic workplace level. We would never have been forced so far.

Unions have become 'unpopular' because they are organisations whose direction is dependent on activism and yet most of whose members may never have seen a Shop Steward and have probably never attended a Shop Meeting. Why they remain Union members is a historical call on which we have relied too long. They are susceptible to lies about their Unions because their Union really does not involve them and they do not realise they are the Union. Whose 'fault' apathy is must remain a question fought out by involving members successfully while we struggle to reverse the consequences. The less the membership is involved the more the leadership is suspicious of them. It begins to hide its political commitment and in the end is open to the Right.

Only through issues demanded by the Shopfloor can the leadership campaign with strength. When it can no longer call on a vibrant organisation to distill work issues for it, it will not connect in placing radical ideas and must retreat. Eventually, captured by the Right, unfocussed

and distant from the membership the Union will become the insurance company of the workplace like the E.E.P.T.U. and without the experience by members of involvement in workplace issues such a leadership will not be opposed. They will not recognise the issues that are at stake as those of their individual experience unless activists have taken the opportunity to develop solidarity and understanding in good time.

For all of us on the left, the position of people at work is at the centre of the political question. They have the power and must be won over to the concerns of the homeless and those without work or advantages. They are already organised into mass structures, the trade unions. Those organisations have rotted and declined and we are responsible. Without them we cannot prepare people for the difficulties they face, nor gain from their experience. Only by being led by the direction of active workplace struggle can any individual or party define correctly its political path. A refusal to engage in active political industrial work in favour of pre-caucused demonstration politics is an attempt to impose abstract philosophy, not build the living revolutionary body of Marxist struggle and practise/theory.

Most of a Shop Steward's time is taken up in trying to force employers to behave in accordance with the negotiated agreements that represent the written bill of Rights workers have fought for in individual and associated work places.

Activists will wish to spend more time on attack issues of progress rather than in teaching employers how to be 'good' and rational managers. It is, however, through this process of engagement that understanding and interest is developed.

The story of our time is of growing contradictions in British Capital, in its relation to the world economy and between its sections, between its prosperity and its failures, between riches and unemployment; between the whole range of its propaganda and its deeds. 'Freedom' and 'prosperity' are said to have won out, but rafts of labour laws and worsening conditions say not; lessons which must be related as they occur and understood before a new gloss covers them over.

It is virtually useless in these times for activists to appear at struggles over the more 'sexy' issues seeking a sound policy based on their understanding, but not on the apparent logic of the immediate concern if this means going beyond the developing consciousness of and the verbal and workplace interest of the majority. Discussion will be dominated by the articulate who may appear alienating and difficult to understand. If demands are made which are too abstract from the issues that evoked interest and which have minimal chance of being taken forward, attendance and correspondingly power is lost.

Unionism is a process of organising workers to go along a path that they have willed, ensuring that you represent the 'truth' of the situation in the tactical as well as the theoretical sense and are therefore able to win enough ground to build progress. Being democratic organisations, unions cannot survive without constantly reiterated success, since the memberships are not disciplined committed Party members.

The apparent success of single issue campaigns and the militant clarity of strikers developed in the major disputes of the last few years, such as the Miners' Wives Against Pit Closures campaign, seems to be a contradiction of any such need to engage in reformist unionism or forms of politics that are part of the middle class State.

Strikes are, however, controlled and deliberately invoked crisis situations for groups of workers which simulates to some extent a revolutionary situation; as committed activists and single issue campaigns can simulate and, to some extent, substitute for large-scale mobilisation.

The continued ability of employers to overturn workers' lives and so develop a radical consciousness in them is an objective proof of socialism; but it is not a method of struggle as such for socialists. We cannot provoke such struggles at will and since it is in that isolated struggle that workers have become radical and internationalists, we have no reason in day to day work to believe that other workers not immediately affected will experience the same conversion at the same time and offer the kind of support available from the State to the employer. This being the case, such educational strikes are also often defeats in a Union sense. In time they can also become defeats at most levels; Miners and Communities may have been radicalised, but, for the most part, are now no longer Miners and no longer Communities and are incapable of taking many of the organised successful activities which could maintain any such gains.

Revolutionary Parties do, however, find a focus in the strike and therefore perhaps tend to interpret what is often the practical weakness of workers having to use their weapon of reluctant resort, as strength.

All of us on the Left look to the Unions in one way or another. single issue campaigns themselves are often dependent on Union support. It is our duty to work within them and build their strength; not because we expect anything from the Labour Movement's leadership, but because Unions form an actual power. They are, in their everyday work, the organised expression of workers to their experiences in the workplaces. When we work for them, it is our political understanding which informs our position and success. It is by demonstrating this that our politics draws Brothers and Sisters away

from conservative outlooks on work and its organisation. Honesty and integrity in our relationships with comrades is therefore essential and is the key weapon against the continual lies from the Employers.

As we demonstrate the divide and build strength, our cause appears as common sense; not 'Revolutionary' and it is owners who become the troublemakers in workers' consciousness. Since this is the truth, firm strengthening of the position of workers will reveal this to them, while pre-caucusing, or prematurely correct positions will therefore often abort a maturing process.

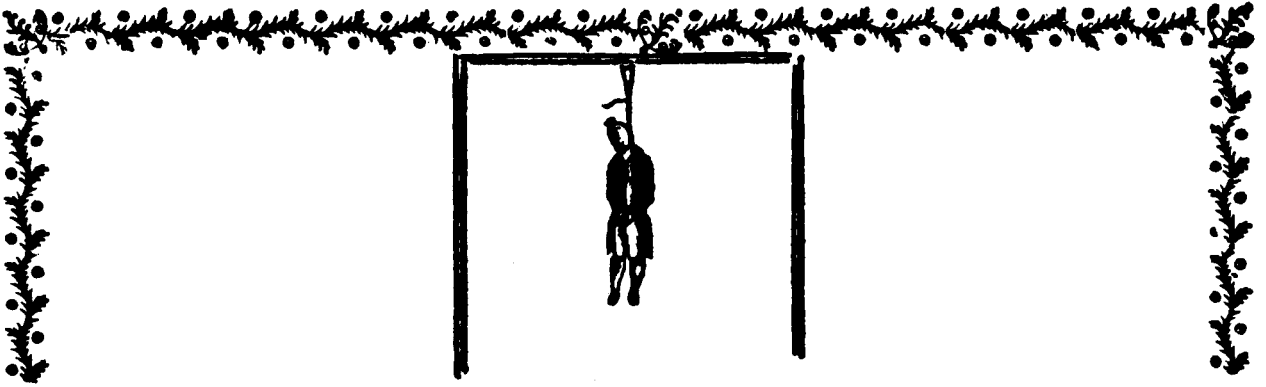
If we have something to offer workers, or wish to build solidarity and internationalism with them, then it is to the workplace we must go and it is there that our inherited and developing conceptions will find their reality.

There is a smokescreen of prosperity disguising the rapid descent from Liberal ideas of 'compassion' and legality by Capital. It will not be surprising if the workplace is soon the only public place we can be heard. We must renew the unglamorous, slow, hard work now.

In the old style, the slogan is:

**BUILD THE WORKERS' ORGANISATIONS !**

**THE BASE OF PEOPLE'S POWER !**



## **CLASS STRUGGLE AND THE PERMANENCE OF PRIMITIVE ACCUMULATION**

Werner Bonefeld

In this paper I respond to Kosmas Psychopedis's critical account of what he termed the Mediation-Analysis (1). I shall develop my response by evaluating the idea of the permanence of primitive accumulation (2), a notion which was rejected by Psychopedis because of its allegedly 'methodological problematic conception resulting from lack of clarification of struggle' (3). There then follow some critical points on his own methodological stand as presented in his paper. This critique will focus on his understanding of 'appearance as complex phenomena which are mediated with the essential relationships of capitalist societies' (cf. Psychopedis 1988 p.73). The thesis of the critique will be that, quite contrary to his intention, Psychopedis grounds his argument in terms of a theory of combination favoured in structuralism. Contrary to Psychopedis I shall argue that the historical mediation of the social relation of capital and labour 'inherently

involves the permanence of primitive accumulation' (cf. Bonefeld 1987b). Polemical overtones may hopefully be regarded in the manner of 'immanent critique' (see Gunn 1988).

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So-called primitive accumulation relates in Marx (1973; 1983) to the historical epoch prior to social reproduction in the form of capital. Capitalism developed out of this epoch. In this sense, primitive accumulation characterises the dimension of time as a break between pre-capitalist history and capitalist history. Marx remains vague as to how long this epoch has lasted. In relation to England he suggests that the epoch of primitive accumulation started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and came to an end at about 1850.

Additionally, primitive accumulation refers to the systematic process of the 'clearing of estates', that is the separation of labour from the means of production, from the natural conditions of labour and reproduction and from the objectification of labour power through unalienated labour. "It is not the unity of living and active humanity with the natural, inorganic conditions of their metabolic exchange with nature, and hence their appropriation of nature, which requires explanation or is the result of a historic process, but rather the separation between these inorganic conditions of human existence and this active existence, a separation which is completely posited only in the relation of wage labour and capital" (Marx 1973, p.489). 'This separation is inscribed in the annals of human history by blood and fire' (cf. Marx 1973). This bloody historical process created and formed the doubly free labourer on the one hand and capital on the other.

The reproduction of the social conditions of the doubly free labourer on the one hand and capital on the other are essential for the existence and continuation of social reproduction in the form of capital. Having said this, it follows that capital has to ensure permanently the



separation of labour from the means of production, from labour's natural conditions and from the objectification of living labour power in work. As such the historical process, as argued by Marx, is not the result of capital, but its presupposition. In turn, this presupposition has to be reproduced in the process of social reproduction of the historical form of capitalist reproduction. The separation of labour from the 'natural community' (Marx 1973), from the means of production and from its objectification, i.e. the very substance of primitive accumulation which made capitalism possible, have to be reproduced permanently in the development and historical existence of capitalism. In Marx (4), there exists a glimpse of economic closure when he argues that the value of labour is solely determined by labour time necessary to reproduce labour power, a value which consists of moral and historical elements which are imposed on capital through the class struggle. This closed formulation is surprising, since the moral element mentioned by Marx relates to the permanent radical reproduction and production of the separation mentioned above and the permanent radical reproduction and revolutionising of the natural conditions on which, in turn, capital depends at the same time. I shall develop this argument in more detail later.

The crisis-ridden development of the capitalist social relation reproduces and regenerates itself permanently through the substantive element of primitive accumulation and the collective experience it generates: the scrapping of labour power in wars, the disintegration of social relations through the bombing of cities, the destruction of the social environment through the burning of land, the expropriation of collective (class) experience through the liquidation social conditions which generated this experience in the first place, etc, in particular in times of war (5). The permanent expropriation of (revolutionary) subjectivity and the permanent expropriation of the collective knowledge of self-organisation and counter-factual experience, and the appropriation of these (moral) values by capital in the course of the reproduction of the separation of labour from itself as force of

objectification, render the classical Marxist prediction of forthcoming revolution immature. There can be no doubt that wars play an important part as a lever of the recomposition of the organisational and repressive presence of labour within capital. There can be also no doubt that capitalism can only reproduce itself through cyclically sharpened revolutionising of the substantive elements of primitive accumulation. 'Socialism or Barbarism' (cf. Luxemburg). Capital reproduces itself through barbarism. The two imperialist world wars at the beginning of this century were both a moment in the crisis-ridden restructuring of capital in the wake of the crisis which started in 1870. Whether or not the solution to the current crisis of social reproduction in the form of capital heads towards a similar recreation of capital through barbarism remains open (see Clarke 1988, 1988b). However, given the defeat of the working class since the early 1980s the prospects leave not much space for optimism. The answer of capital's 'remediation' (cf. Psychopedis 1988, see also Bonefeld 1987b and Gunn 1987) as an attempt to restructure its own contradictory existence which promises a radical reshaping of its authoritarian form may take forms of a radical reproduction of the elements of primitive accumulation. In sum, the perpetuation of social reproduction in the form of capital supposes not only the reproduction of capital and labour within the limits of historical and moral elements but also the reproduction of the separation of labour from the means of production etc.. As such, the moral and historical element attributed by Marx to the determination of the value of labour power exists only as long as capital can apply itself profitably. In periods of sustained crisis within which capital faces the barriers of capital to itself as capital, the only solution possible for capital is the radical recomposition of the historical determination of the presence of labour within capital, a recomposition which entails, however rough or smooth, the elements of primitive accumulation. There is no morality and humanism inscribed in capitalism. The only moral is profit. I think that there can be no doubt that sharpening of the historical process of primitive accumulation within the social formation of capital has to be seen as a lever of the recomposition of

the historical determination of social reproduction 'not only as use-values; but surplus-value; not only surplus-value, but the social relation of production between capital and labour" (Clarke 1982, p. 86).

The historical struggle of capital to secure its domination is oriented against the unpredictable moral and historical elements of labour power aimed towards overcoming the separation from the means of production and from itself (abstract labour) in the course revolutionary subjectivity: the expropriation of the expropriators. At the same time, capital has to secure from time to time the moral and historical element of the determination of the value of labour power in order to prevent the destruction of the value of labour power. These lines may read as a tribute to discussions in the 1970s, particularly in the face of one profound success of what is termed Thatcherism: the retreat on parts of the left from the emancipatory content of Marxism and its replacement by 'Critical Realism' (see Gunn 1988) at a time of capitals' offensive.

In sum, Marx's argument on the moral and historical element of the value of labour power has to be treated with caution as it supposes a rather 'harmonistic' (notwithstanding also destructive) mode of existence of domination and exploitation. Capital cannot rely solely on dominating labour through this moral and historical element as this element is permanently undermined by the self-contradictory existence of capital itself. It is for this reason that capital has constantly to impose its domination on labour through the force of primitive accumulation. As Marx argued in the Grundrisse (Marx 1973, p. 515), "the exchange of labour for labour - seemingly the condition of the worker's property - rests on the foundation of the workers' propertylessness". This form of alienation, as Marx continues, "wherein labour appears in the relation of capital and wage labour, and labour, productive activity appears in relation to its own conditions and its own production, is a necessary point of transition - and therefore already contains in itself, in a still only inverted form, turned on its

head, the dissolution of all limited presuppositions of production, and moreover creates and produces the unconditional presuppositions of production..." (Marx 1973, p. 515). These presuppositions of production are the "appropriation of an alien will" (Marx 1973, p. 500)(6). This domination can only be secured by regressing from the moral and historical element of the value of labour power through the sharpening and historical reproduction of the expropriation of the will of living labour by capital. It is on the basis of this expropriation that capital and the state are once again in the position officially to define and atomise the working class (see Agnoli 1975, London ... 1980).

This official definition and atomisation of the working class in an historically determinate moment of the capitalist form of social reproduction reproduces the separation of labour power from the means of production, and from itself as concrete and social labour, in a form which makes it possible for capital to integrate the working class in terms of the moral and historical elements (7). As such, these elements mystify the reproduction of the permanence of primitive accumulation, that is the separation of living labour from itself as the force of objectification.

The historical process of primitive accumulation is not the result of capital, but capital presupposes its historical development and has constantly to reproduce it. Psychopedis is therefore quite right to stress that the 'point is to show that the abstract category of labour presupposes capitalist society' and that 'the historical analysis of pre-capitalist categories presuppose the notion of abstract labour' (cf. Psychopedis 1988, p.75/6). The problem in question for an understanding of capitalism is to show the abstract determination which shapes the material world of capitalism and, hence, which shapes the material world of capitalism as a social form within which an historically specific separation of labour from the means of production etc. is obtained and reproduced. This task was the methodological objective of the mediation approach.

Following Marx (1973) the abstract determination of capitalism is achieved by abstracting from the forms of appearance, a process which in turn allows us to reproduce the appearance by way of thinking. According to Marx, social phenomena around us have manifold determinations. The object of Marxist conceptualisation is to theorise the unity of the diversity of social phenomena as concrete, as interconnected, as different phenomenological forms within unity. Dialectics seeks an understanding of the isolated facts of life and different phenomenological forms of social existence in terms of a concrete social unity in difference. This way of analysing society does not proceed to its object from outside but rather from inside: it is the effort of conceptual appropriation of reality that unifies the existence of its object in its proper motion (see Negt 1984). Hence, every dialectically understood moment comprises the unity of social reproduction of society (see Lukacs 1968). This implies that every moment is a result and a presupposition in its historical, conceptual and social dimension. "While in the completed bourgeois economic form, and everything posited is thus also a presupposition, this is the case with every organic system. This organic system itself, as a totality, has its presuppositions, and its development to its totality consists precisely in subordinating all development to itself, or in creating out of it the organs which it still lacks. This is how it becomes a totality. The process of becoming this totality forms a moment of its process, of its development" (Marx 1973, p. 278). There is no place here for a theory of combination as suggested by Psychopedis (8).

The question arising here is one of the abstract determination that makes the particular forms of social existence different to each other and that, at the same time, unites them and hence relates each form to one another as a presupposition and result of each other. In Marx, the abstract determination of capitalist society is determined as the social relation between capital and labour, that is the doubly free labourer on the one and capital on the other hand. This is what Marx

discusses as the 'illumination' (Marx 1973) of the difference in unity of manifold phenomena by the antagonism of capital and labour. There is no category of capital external to this antagonism (see Negri 1984). Capital is understood as a social relation, as a relation of domination between capital and labour, as a class relation and hence as a relation of struggle. Understanding capital as a social relation it would be wrong to understand the 'economic' as separated from the 'political' while the former determines the latter as structural Marxism attempted to argue. Rather, the economic and the political are forms of existence of a historically specific form of class relation and hence class domination. The abstract determination of capitalism has to be seen as the conceptually and historically prior existence of capital and labour, a prior existence which suffuses and determines the historical determination of the development of capitalism (see Holloway/Picciotto 1978; Clarke 1982). Hence the notion of the existence of the abstract in the concrete. It follows that capital is not external to struggle, but exists only as struggle. Hence the notion of the 'organisational and repressive aspect of labour within capital' (cf. Bonefeld 1987c; Holloway 1988). The diversity of the manifold determinations comprises a structure of the historical existence of class antagonism, a structure which represents the results and premise of the operation of the antagonistic relation of capital and labour. This derivation of the material world of capitalism opens up an understanding of the material world of capitalism as a relation of class struggle.

This view has to be urged in a distinctive way in order to avoid endorsing an essentialist and romantic understanding. The understanding of class struggle has to focus on the antagonistic relation of capital and labour. It is the historical development of this relation in its contradictory unity of mutual dependence and revolutionary separation which conditions society in terms of a continuous displacement and reconstitution of its own contradictory mode of existence. The movement of this antagonism implies the

possibility of the autonomisation of labour within and against capital (see Negri 1984 and Gunn 1987; Bonefeld 1987a). The working through of this tendency conditional upon the weight of history forces capital to displace its command, a displacement which gives the antagonism a new historical mode of mediation and existence (see Negri 1984). As such, it is the operation of this tendency which forces capital to decompose and recompose the historical form of mediation of class antagonism through reasserting the appropriation of an alien will and the expropriation of the collective experience of revolutionary subjectivity. The 'remediation' (cf. Psychopedis 1988) of the historical form of mediation of the social relation of capital labour 'inherently involves the the permanence of primitive accumulation' (cf. Bonefeld 1987b) and hence the possibility of this accumulations's break-down.

Psychopedis is therefore quite right to stress that 'the essential social relations cannot be artificially separated out as, simply, an 'essential' element consisting in 'struggle' and its 'mediating' forms'. This was not what the mediation analysis attempts, contrary to what Psychopedis claims. What the mediation approach attempted to show was that it is the presence of labour within capital as an antagonistic relation which is the key to understanding the development and instability of capitalism. The notion of the conceptually and historically prior existence of the antagonism of capital and labour opened up an understanding of appearance as a mode of mediation of the abstract determination within the concrete and the 'discontinuous existence of the continuous', that is the permanent reshaping of the historical determination of the mode of mediation, i.e. existence, of the class antagonism. This reshaping not only involves the reproduction of the expropriation of labour but may, under specific historical circumstances, provoke capital to reassert its domination through the negation of the moral and historical elements of the value of labour power as discussed above.

The question remains: on what view of 'abstraction' is Psychopedis's

own methodological consideration on 'mediation' based? He argues that it is through abstraction that a qualitatively new knowledge of social reality can be established. This new knowledge is said to reveal essential relationships that "do not appear as such at the empiricist level of appearances" (Psychopedis 1988,p. 73). He argues that an understanding of complex phenomena can be obtained by reconstructing the appearance from the abstracted essential relations. This reconstruction then makes it possible to understand complex phenomena which are "mediated with the essential relationships of capitalist societies" (ibid.). Hence he seems to advocate the idea that complex social relations at the level of appearance are not mediations of the abstract within the concrete but rather a combination of 'different relationships with the essential contradictory relationships of the mode of production'. This 'associative' method (9), although questioned in a later part of his paper (p. 76) neglects the 'derivation standpoint' advocated by Psychopedis. Contrary to the derivation approach and contrary to his intention, he falls into the trap of structuralism as he develops two 'ontologies': the essential relationships and the 'association of apparent contradictory relationships with the essential contradictory relationship of the mode of production' (cf. Psychopedis 1988 p. 73). As such, Psychopedis contrasts the laws of capitalist development and 'empiricist class struggle' (p. 74) rather than seeing the so-called laws of capitalist development as internal to class antagonism and struggle, as emphasised by the 'derivation standpoint'. "To make the contrast between the laws of capitalist development and class struggle is to fall into the fetishism which is object of Marx's critique in *Capital*" (Holloway 1988, p.9). It is this trap which the mediation analysis attempts to overcome; it is this trap into which Psychopedis's response has fallen into.



## FOOTNOTES

1: Kosmas Psychopedis 1988, On Mediation see Gunn 1987; Bonefeld 1987a

2: Cf. Bonefeld 1987a, ' Bonefeld 1987b, 'Negt/Kluge

3: Cf. Psychopedis 1988, p. 77, fn. 7

4: see Marx 1983. This is less true for Marx (1973): see here especially the section on 'Forms which precede capital' and the introduction.

5: Surely, destruction and liquidation in periods of war is not an exceptional case but rather the sharpening and culmination of capital's attempt to reproduce the separation upon which its historical domination rests: scrapping of labour power in production, poisoning of environment, social disasters etc.. The determination of the value of labour power in terms of moral and historical elements relate rather to the moderation of war time imposition of the regeneration and reproduction of capitals' permanent reconstitution of primitive accumulation. What appeared to be yesterday's outrage appears as today's norm, i.e. the moral and historical element of the value of labour power.

6: "Here the master-servant relation [Herrschaftsverhältnisse] as essential element of appropriation. Basically the appropriation of animals, land etc.cannot take place in a master-servant relation,although the animal provides service. The presupposition of the master-servant relation is the appropriation of an alien will" (Marx 1973, p. 500/501).

7: See here for example the discussion on the Keynesian mode of domination in London ... 1980

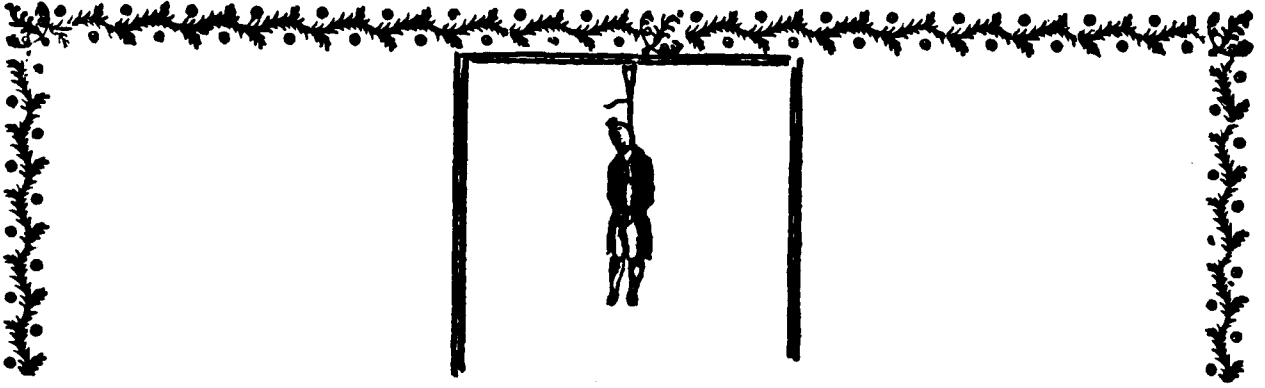
8: Psychopedis (p. 73) argues that we need a "theory of appearance" which has to be "completed through a theory of the process of social reflection and of the practical possibilities of associating apparent contradictory relationships with the essential contradictory relationships of the mode of production".

9: see footnote 8



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## MARX BETWEEN HEGEL AND KANT

Richard Gunn

In the discussion on mediation in CS 2 appearance was characterised as essence's 'mode of existence'. In CS 5, Kosmas Psychopedis concedes that this notion of an appearance/essence relation may be true enough for Hegel - according to whom 'essence must appear' - but urges that it is untrue for Marx. According to Marx, says Psychopedis, essence can be described 'independently' of its appearance, and we gather that (some of) the categories of Marx's Capital are those in terms of which this description can be made.

The question is what the status of such categories can be. If we describe essence 'independently' of appearance then, it seems to me, there exists only the following alternative: either our description is proffered sheerly a priori and dogmatically or it is guided by transcendental deduction (our categories being seen as specifying the conditions of the possibility of appearances). This latter, Kantian, alternative is, I suggest, the one Psychopedis favours. CS 2 attempted to link Marx to Hegel; Psychopedis's reply in CS 5 relates Marx not to Hegel but to Kant. An entire history of Marxism might be written in terms of these rival linkages.

Of course the contrast just drawn may be too simple. Perhaps all

rigorous theorising (Hegel's included) contains a moment of transcendental deduction, in much the same way as all interesting political theory must raise counterfactual claims. There is nothing uniquely Kantian about transcendental deduction. But transcendental deduction becomes uniquely Kantian once that which is deduced is dualistically counterposed against - once it is seen as describable 'independently' of - that from which the deduction is made. Involved in this counterposition is a theory/metatheory separation against which Marx's notion of a theory-practice unity declares. If theory understands itself as a moment in practice then its metatheory is also first-order theory (a reflexive theory of its practical situatedness) and vice versa. The Kantian-dualist version of transcendental deduction allocates to philosophy, which has traditionally reserved metatheory as its own domain of discourse, a privileged (an 'independent') insight into essential domains. On this scheme of things, no sense can be made of the critique of philosophy mounted by Marx in 1844-46.

The difficulty with the 'Kantian' version of transcendental deduction just outlined is that it threatens us with tautology. The intelligibility of appearance lies in transcendently deduced essence; the intelligibility of essence is that, in the light of it, the possibility of appearance can be seen. We are sent from pillar to post. Instead of appearance and essence establishing their mutual intelligibility (their intelligibility as moments of a single totality wherein 'essence appears': the Hegelian view) we tread a circle which becomes more vicious with each step we take.

If vicious circularity is one danger with this conceptual schema, the other is infinite regress. Suppose transcendently deduced essence to be not just the necessary but the sufficient condition of appearances. There then remains the question of the sufficient conditions of these sufficient conditions (to specify which a further transcendental deduction is needful)...and so on ad infinitum. The difficulty here is that deduction, whether of conditions from possibilities or of possibilities from conditions, can work only in one direction unless tautology or vicious circularity is to be the

result. The polemic by Hegel - to turn to him only briefly - against what he calls the 'bad infinity' of an endless progression can be understood in this light. Infinite regress is one species of 'bad infinity'. Against the notion of a bad infinity Hegel counterposes the idea of an intensive infinity, i.e. of a totality, each of whose moments exists in and through each other. For Hegel appearance and essence totalise, in this sense. The deduction of the one from the other goes forward not in terms of a conditions/possibilities discourse but on the basis that the one is the other's mode of existence (its mediation, in the sense of CS 2).

In the light of this some consequences can be drawn. In the first place, we begin to see how Marx's critique of 'philosophy' might be understood. It might be understood as a replaying of Hegel as against Kant. To be sure, the signifier 'Kant' is internally complex: I employ the name here only as denoting a particular school of thought. And although I believe chapter-and-verse from Marx could be cited to support my reading, space forbids this being done here (cf. my 'Practical Reflexivity in Marx' CS 1). My argument, so far, has only been to the effect that Marx has good reason for placing a question-mark against the inheritance of Kantian-philosophical thought.

Further: if essence can be described 'independently' of appearance then the categories which describe it have a transcendental status in what I have called the Kantian sense. They control and condition what we can know, and what (in political terms) we can do. No doubt there would be no problem in this if they could also be historicized; and a historicisation of the Kantian 'transcendental subject' - the seat and site of Kantian transcendental categories - has been a recurrent project from the days of Nietzsche through Horkheimer to our own. But if appearance is dualistically counterposed against essence, and if the idea of totalisation vanishes, then categories cannot be historicised. The notion of what CS 2 called 'determinate abstraction' evaporates, and with it the notion of a theory-practice unity. The basis for a historicisation of categories and of subjectivity is undermined because, once theory/metatheory,

theory/practice and essence/appearance take on only an external relation to one another, categories can present themselves only as the conditions of the possibility of history, or at least of some span of historical time. And thereby they fall outwith history. They form what Marx termed a practice-independent 'realm of their own'. At most they can effect a unity of (Marxist) theory and (social-historical) practice within theory's own realm. Minus the idea of a totalisation in which each is the mode of existence of the other they have to be seen as conditioning history from without. They amount to a conceptual grid which it is up to the history of class struggle to conform - or not, as the case may be. And the political consequences of such an a priori conformism are well known.

Some consequences of a Kantian filiation of Marxism can be followed through in Psychopedis's piece. For example categories like 'cost price' (cf. Capital Vol. III) present themselves in the guise of Kantian schemata, mediating appearance to an essence ineluctably severed from it. In the framework of this severance the problems of Kant's 'productive imagination', and of the relation of his first to his third Critique, are not solved but remain.

Further, the disconnection of essence from appearance leads Psychopedis, in his CS 5 article, to an overly crude view of spontaneist politics against which (since he understands it crudely) he rightly declares. If appearance is the mode of existence of essence - or in other words, if the abstractions characterising essence are determinate abstractions - then both appearance and essence and their meshing and/or dislocation are at issue in every social and political struggle arising in a bourgeois world. Spontaneism is not the presence of an immediately intuited essence (as in Psychopedis's construal) but on the contrary the crisis-ridden demediation of the essence/appearance interrelation itself. As it were, there is more of Derrida in spontaneism than Psychopedis sees. But on the other hand (now a point against Derrida) demediation takes place through struggle. It takes place not just in our studies but on the streets. Here again it is (Hegelian) totality

which is important. Once the relation between appearance and essence is understood as other than a totalising one, only the elitism of Lenin's What Is To Be Done? and all the reformist and parliamentary politics which follows from it can be the political result.

Indeed it is a result which makes its appearance in the last paragraph of Psychopedis's article when 'politics' in a post-revolutionary society is introduced as securing the conditions of the possibility of 'recognition without alienation' rather than as the play of that recognition itself. Politics here plays an elitist, because once more a transcendental, role: as it were an unholy alliance of Lenin and Kant. (Did Lenin, despite his polemics against 'agnosticism' and his perusal of Hegel's Logic, ever break free from Enlightenment thought?) To be sure 'threats against' emancipatory existence can never be discounted once and for all, or definitively, but the answer to these same threats can only be the recognitive play of emancipatory existence itself if 'politics' is not to be renewed, in its traditional meaning, as the presence or governance of an elitist guardian class.

Standing back, we can note that it is not only in Psychopedis that current Marxism shifts into Kantian gear. A parallel case is Roy Bhaskar's 'Critical Realism' which (cf. his A Realist Theory of Science ch. 1) employs the notion of transcendental deduction in a fashion not dissimilar to that reported above. Critical Realism attempts transcendently to deduce the 'generative mechanisms' which account for the appearances we know. And here again we are sent from pillar to post: appearances are the criteria for the specification of 'generative mechanisms' (because these latter have to render them intelligible) while also generative - or essential - mechanisms are the criteria for the specification of appearances since, of course, appearances are informative or misleading, 'true' or 'false', only in the light of what they show. Psychopedis places himself at the opposite remove from Critical Realism, but his conception of essence as describable 'independently' of appearances seems to me to leave the distinction he wishes to draw unclear. In

both cases, the appearance/essence interrelation is undermined in the same movement as tautology breaks out.

My proposal is that a recovery of the Hegelian dimension within Marxism amounts to a restoration of Marx to himself.





# Theses on Britain's nuclear weapons and disarmament.

ALAN HUNTER

- ① Britain's nuclear forces constitute an "independent deterrent" and could be used independently of the U.S.A.

There are no circumstances in which Britain's nuclear weapons could be used independently. Let us imagine a case where Britain and the U.S.S.R. came into conflict over an issue that did not involve the U.S.A. at all. Britain might threaten to use its nuclear weapons against the Soviet Union on the assumption that the damage done by British warheads would be so great that (even though the U.K. would stand to be utterly obliterated) the Soviet Union would back down rather than risk such damage. But the U.S.S.R. could not possibly become involved in a nuclear confrontation with Britain alone: the military, economic and social damage that the British weapons could do would be so great that the Soviet Union would be disabled in relation to the U.S.A. Therefore the U.S.S.R. would treat a British threat as an American threat and would direct its counter threat against the U.S.A. The U.S.A. could react either by accepting the challenge and supporting Britain up to the point of general nuclear war (a situation resembling the outbreak of war in 1914), or

by negotiation between the two superpowers or else, if necessary, in the U.S.A. bringing pressure to bear on its ally to desist. Since the existence of the U.S.A. itself would be directly threatened the pressure which would be employed could take any form, including direct attack on Britain. Plans for this undoubtedly exist in the Pentagon. The 'independence' of Britain's nuclear 'deterrent' is thus completely illusory.

② The INF Treaty and the proposals for a cut of 50% in strategic nuclear weapons is a first step towards general nuclear disarmament.

It would be pleasant to think that this were so, but such thinking would be wishful. There is no evidence to suggest that the superpowers, the U.S.A. at any rate, are seriously contemplating abandoning nuclear weapons. In the American case development of new systems to 'modernise' its strategic forces proceeds: MX, mobile MX, 'Midgetman', Star Wars, Trident D-5 and the 'Stealth Bomber'. Were real disarmament being considered, these projects and the equivalent Soviet efforts would hardly be being pushed ahead. In fact, the scrapping of groups of 'useless' nuclear weapons (intermediate missiles, the huge surpluses of strategic systems) allows the arms race to continue

in a more efficient and more orderly way. The notion that, in a few years' time, an "inevitable process of negotiated disarmament" will eliminate nuclear weapons serves only to give "multilateralists" a way out of unilateralist commitments and to allow them to mislead public opinion.

③ Britain can "bargain away" its nuclear deterrent.

This is usually thought of as "part of a deal" between the superpowers. But the U.S.S.R. would only be interested in negotiating its weapons against the totality of those ranged against it. It would not matter how large this totality was. Since the overwhelming majority of these weapons would be American, they would all be treated as such. If the superpowers were determined to bargain they would include the British forces: if they were not, no separate negotiations would take place. There would be no question of Britain's weapons being a "factor" in the talks (other than a diplomatic embarrassment) or of "getting something" in exchange for their abandonment. For the Soviet Union must at all times measure its power against that of the U.S.A. and the U.S.A. is not made a whit stronger by Britain's nuclear weapons, nor would it be weakened in any way if they did not exist.

- ④ Britain's nuclear weapons guarantee it a place at nuclear disarmament (and other) negotiations.

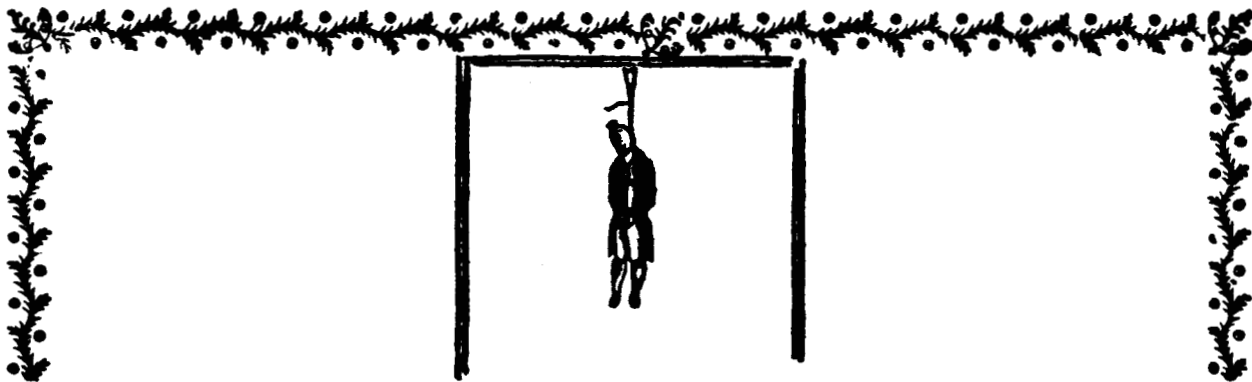
For the reasons given in criticism of thesis 3, there has been no representation at all at the talks which have taken place to reduce the numbers of nuclear weapons. There will never be an instance of a British representative entering into substantive agreements with the Soviet government: the agreements will already have been made. So Bevan's belief that a British Foreign Secretary would go 'naked' into the conference chamber without nuclear arms is beside the point: even with such weapons he does not get into the conference chamber at all.

- ⑤ Britain is safer with its own nuclear weapons.

Britain's nuclear forces are too small to be effective (because Britain is too weak to be a superpower) but are too large to be safe (as shown in ① above.)

- ⑥ Britain is more independent with its own nuclear weapons.

Nuclear weapons tie Britain to America. The basis and first step of independent British action would be to give up its nuclear weapons.



COSTAS DIKEOS

A LETTER ON POLITICS

Answer to a friend about "studying but not arguing about politics".

Edinburgh, late July 1988

Dear Hilary,

I still remember you telling me that you want to study politics but not fight about it. I think that such an interpretation of our field of studies is inadequate and not dialectical. I'll try to prove my point in the next few lines.

Nothing in life is done without a certain purpose. All our actions and activities refer to a certain result or expectation, to a certain motive and motivation; to a certain reason for any activity, ie for any social activity. There is a certain reason for anyone deciding to study politics, or philosophy or engineering or whatsoever. The reason for the pudding is eating.

Marx's eleventh thesis "On Feurbach" says: "Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways. The point is to change it!"

Of course we have to understand the world, otherwise we can not change it. Though studying politics is one of the various ways of understanding the world, the best one is praxis. Even more I don't think that studying for itself exists, or that (even if it exists for idealists) it has any political meaning. In due course, I'll try to give my concept of politics and explain my disagreement with your point and with the concepts of other people about politics and power.

Politics is argument and fight by itself. Politics is not, as some formalist conceptions suggest, the "art of managment" (Lasswell -but he does not define managment of what??) or the art of achieving the possible. Additionally politics is not the art of dessision making; or of obstructing such action (see Bachrach and Baratz). Even in this case we don't have an answer on decision about what. If I decide to go swimming in the afternoon (possibly instead of the morning so that we include the case of having a clear alternative solution) this is not politics. Equally politics is not the art of influence (again influence for what reason). If I make you change your opinion about going swimming etc. this is not politics. My opinion is that

**Politics is the struggle about the control of (or the influence on) economy.**

In other words politics is the struggle for the reproduction (or not) of the relations of production ie of the division of labour (which is different in every society) and of the means of production as well. Last but not least politics is the argument about the distribution or the redistribution of wealth in a society. My opinion is that demands for redistribution of wealth (eg through the welfare state) must be understood as class struggle.

Since there are conflicting interests in economy there can not be politics without struggle or disagreement.

In that way power is not just the ability to change the opinion of other people, since on this definition the reason for the change is not given. Power is the ability to reproduce the relations of production. Reproducing the means of production is called investment (or reinvestment) and impregnation!

Reproduction of the relations of production (ie the division of labour) is called education or "socialization" viz. our introduction to society, and of the societal rules, laws, and roles to us.

The economy does not require more people to flourish, but it does need certain skills and obedient workers! (See Johannes Agnoli "Die Transformation der Demokratie", "The Transformation of Democracy"). Education, in other words reproduction of the labour forces, is forced in capitalist (or even more generally in what H. Marcuse calls industrial) societies to follow certain developments in the economy, so that it will be "functional" for the reinvestment of capital. (See R. Milliband "The State in Capitalist Society").

In this way a first approach to the rise of unemployment during the last years in Britain and other capitalist economies can be introduced.

Education in this context must be read in the widest sense. Some questions that arise from such an approach to education are:

Education and legitimation of political power; education and legitimation of the division of labour, appropriation, imposed labour, enstrangement etc.

Education is important in politics. As I've already mentioned, we don't care about an enlargement of the population per se. Education is politics because it is reproducing society.

**We don't want society to be reproduced like this.**

#### **WE ARE IN THE FIGHT AND THE FIGHT IS IN US**

Not taking part in this fight is fighting for the maintenance of the established order!

At this very moment the question of violence arises. Is violence legitimate-acceptable or not? From my point of view violence is not legitimate-acceptable. It is much more difficult (and interesting) to prove your ideas, and make your opponents believe in them as well, than to kill them. Addressing violence against certain people is not going to change the existing status and relations. It is a mistake in the same way as it is to throw machinery in

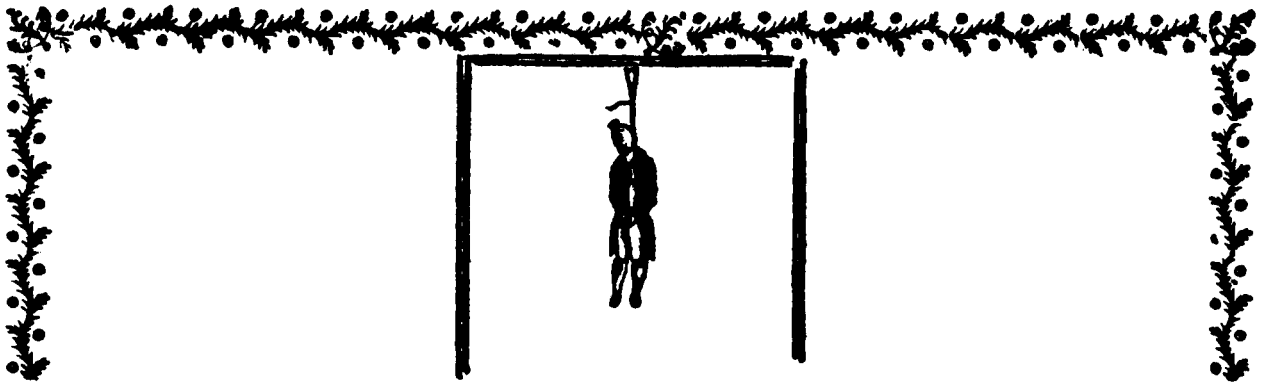
the rivers for the benefit of the workers as if the tools create misery. The persons don't create misery by themselves either. It's their position in the division of labour that does. On the other hand such a violence may have some counter results, ie greater oppression directed to any opposition as it can be considered dangerous and illegitimate, in other words violence may legitimise coercive state policies. Last, by killing eg 10 bloody capitalists, for the happiness and well being of 10000 workers you are involved in a "Benthamite" approach to politics, concerning happiness of numbers per se and not human interests and values. The only thing that changes is the victim! I totally reject such a view of political behaviour.

There is a major epistemological claim made in my approach. My critique is not only of your approach of politics, or of the definitions of politics (or power) I confront. It is mainly an attempt to prove that there can not be any scientific phrase which lacks a clearly defined object.

Additionally, as I said in the first lines of this letter your approach lacks specification of a cause of doing something. Let me call this an aetiological claim (aetia=cause). And I insist that any approach which has epistemological, ontological, methodological or aetiological inadequacies lacks a scientific and dialectical character.







HILARY ANDERSSON

REPLY TO LETTER OF LATE JULY 1988.

Dear Costas,

Your argument is too radical for the consequences that you don't want. The theory implied is dogmatic, and the practice violent.

What kind of "fight" is it that does not require you to be wholly absorbed by it ? "We are in the fight, and the fight is in us" means that the fight is integral to our whole being, our whole life. You cannot be a friend of people that you disagree with if you are truly angry. Or are you "just" a student of politics ?

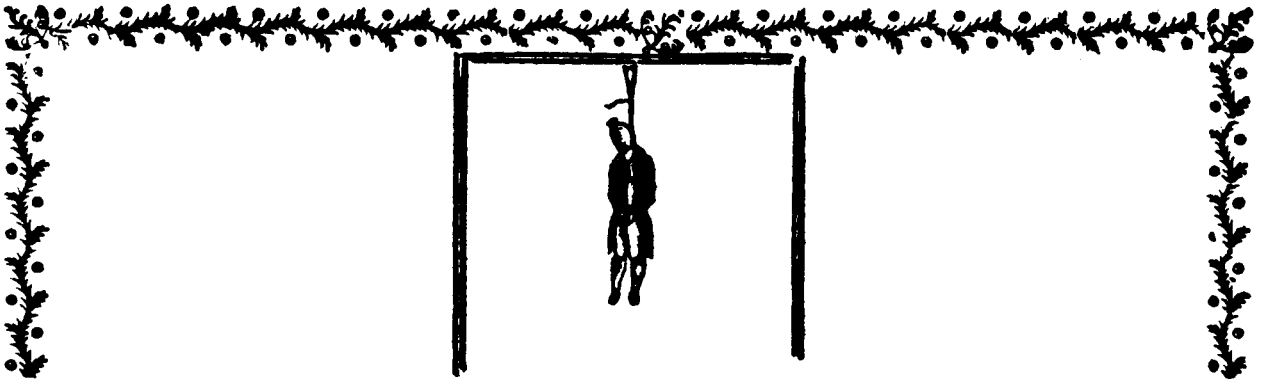
What makes your fight stop at violence ? Why suddenly qualify your fight and engage in a little academic delight: " It is much more difficult (and interesting) to prove your ideas" ?

This fight has another dimension: it is violent persuasion, "make your opponents believe" you say. Your argument is patronizing . It implies that you know what form knowledge takes, that you are enlightened, and that your

task is to enlighten me. In your world I am not allowed in with my incorrect opinion, whereas in mine any opinion is incorporated. Mine is a search for the best framework for freedom, not for freedom itself. You fail to avoid the Benthamite approach to politics, instead you just play on it. Instead of needing to kill 10 people for the happiness of 1000 you just need to persuade all of them to accept the same value. So now you have 1010 "happy" people ! The implication of the first few lines of your letter is that you think your opponents are stupid because they do not know that they are in a fight. This is wrong. We are fighting with a purpose too. Our fight is against idealists and authoritarianism. We are studying the alternatives and are self-critical. What are you doing before you fight ? Apparently you do not study the alternatives but just get angry. Well if I am angry too then who is to say which side to be on ?

The kind of argument that I am putting forward is often criticized for being without cause or hope, and for being defensive and afraid. It is none of these. It is certainly not afraid to fight against your dogma. It is criticized for wanting to reproduce society, but this is exactly what it does not want. It will not have you forcing us to become one united and perfectly "free" mind: this is as bad as infinite reproduction. Any form of truth requires itself to prevail without the other, I am against requirement. This does not necessarily put me on the side that believes that there is an objective realm of knowledge that we have little or no role in creating. It put me nowhere: it is open, neutral. Again, it is a search for the best framework for freedom, and not for freedom itself.

Because your definition of "fight" is not complete you fail to understand my point. My point is that in studying politics I am against the dogma of "the fight".



## REVIEW: FACING UP TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Richard Gunn

The last redraft of the British Communist Party's programme for social change, The British Road to Socialism, took place in 1977. It confirmed the Party's shift to Eurocommunism, and unreconstructed Stalinists duly fled the fold. At that time, in C.P. circles, the influence of Gramsci - rightly or more probably wrongly appropriated as a Eurocommunist gradualist - was in the air. In 1988-89 the programme is undergoing a further, and major, reworking. The first version of this redraft, still up for discussion, can be read in the journal 7 Days for 3 September 1988. This time around, it is not the emphasis on ideology, connoted by Gramsci's stress upon 'hegemony', which rules the roost but the currently fashionable debate on fordism and post-fordism. Undoubtedly, since 1977, a lot of political water has flowed under the Communist Party's bridge.

And of course the Communist Party has gone with the stream. During the 1980's, we have seen the transformation of Marxism Today, which still bills itself as the C.P.'s 'Theoretical and Discussion Journal', into a Sunday-supplement style publication advertising reduced-price wine racks and tee-shirts displaying the Marxist theorist of your choice. The bold print of its title now emphasises not 'Marxism' but 'Today'. Indeed the author of the present review has seen a letter, sent out by Marxism Today in response to a gay group's enquiry regarding advertising, setting forth, enthusiastically, a guesstimate as to the proportion of Marxism Today's readership which earns more than fifteen thousand pounds per year. Not everyone interested in finding out something about today's Marxism will regard fifteen thousand as small beer. Of course it is reasonable for a radical journal to be cynical about its advertising policy (but did this particular letter address gays as allies or as a market?). This said, however, the question suggests itself: to whom, in the 1980's, does the Communist Party wish to speak? And the fairly

self-evident answer to this question makes another inescapable: is it still worthwhile evaluating what the Communist Party says in Marxist-theoretical terms? For the sake of argument I shall set this latter question aside. What follows is an attempt to elaborate on some specifically theoretical issues to which, I believe, the current redraft of the C.P.'s programme gives rise.

Already the title of the draft programme generates problems. It is called 'Facing Up to the Future'. But why facing up? Facing up to something means acknowledging, reluctantly, an entity that at least in-principle already exists. According to the Communist Party, therefore, the future seems to be predetermined. What the programme calls 'modernisation' appears, in a context of post-fordism, to be taking place ineluctably so that (the programme again) the only question is whether it is taking place in a 'conservative' or a 'socialist' way. Paraphrasing Engels: the pudding that we have to eat is already cooked, and all that is allowed to us is the choice of sauce.

Facing up to the future implies a predetermined future. Facing the future permits the future to be an open space.

To complain about a title may seem a trivial matter. In the present case this is not so, however, because the title's foreclosure on the future accurately reports a technological determinism which runs through every paragraph of the draft. Fordism is allegedly turning into post-fordism, under the impact of technological innovation (computers, information technology and so on), and there's nothing we can do about it. Even if we wanted to do something. Post-fordism is presented as the inevitable destiny of contemporary social relations: this version of history is not just technological-determinist but teleological (and thereby idealist) as well. To be sure, this sort of view is immensely prevalent in current Marxism. It received a forceful critique by Werner Bonefeld in the journal Capital and Class no. 33 (1987). When it thus throws pre-given 'models' out ahead of itself, the left finishes up (in the name of its own scientificity) by constraining and debilitating what it may do and what it might become.

There is an irony here. In the bad old days of Stalinism, back in say the 1930's and 40's, technological determinism was certainly the Communist Party's vice. Even, sometimes, scientists could be presented as automatic democrats. In the 1970's, for better or for worse through an invocation of Eurocommunism, this technological determinism was overturned. Some of us thought that it was overturned once and for all. But now, in a period of the left's decline, it appears to have asserted itself once more. The Communist Party returns to its ancient roots. This kind of regression is certainly not uncommon when things are going badly and nobody knows quite what to do. Determinism warms the cockles of the heart (Gramsci himself said this) because it offers the comfort that history is on one's side.

The trouble with this is that 'history' is on the side of the oppressors. They write it, and it is their victories which it reports. Walter Benjamin (in his 'Theses on the Philosophy of

History') registered this objection almost fifty years ago.

All the more specific discussions which 'Facing Up to the Future' contains are shot through with the above-mentioned difficulty. In this connection I confine myself to a single example. One section of 'Facing Up to the Future' is entitled 'Not by Class Alone'. Besides class struggles, it is pointed out, there are struggles over race, gender and so forth. The question is not whether these struggles are important ones (quite evidently they are) but what their relation to 'class' struggle might be. A starting point for thinking about this is recognition of the circumstance that, in the history of Marxism, technological determinism was always hostile to the notion that the story of social change is the story of class struggle. Within Marx's own writings, the famous or notorious '1859 Preface', which refuses to mention class in its report of the 'guiding thread' of Marx's studies, in contrast to the famous opening sentence of the Communist Manifesto which reports 'class' as the sole possible guiding thread, throws this issue into relief in an interpretive sense. In contemporary Marxist debates, the technological determinism of (say) G A Cohen's Karl Marx's Theory of History in contrast to (say) Toni Negri's class-based Marx beyond Marx dramatises the same conflict of Marxist views. In the present connection, the point is that if it is technology through its autonomous development which determines our fate then class considerations are excluded. All that remains is for us to fit ourselves more or less comfortably around the options which the march of technology supplies. Class dissolves into a plurality of interest-groups, each of which relates to emergent technology in its own way. At most, class-interest becomes one interest amongst others. Just this is what happens in the version of the interrelation of political struggles which 'Facing Up to the Future' presents. Class struggle, and its openness into an unpredictable and undetermined future, disappears.

The theoretical mistake, here, is to see class-interests as impinging on politics in the same way as do interest-group interests. 'Facing Up to the Future' treats class-interests as just one set of interests amongst others, but for Marx they are always this and more: they are what conditions the form in which other interests arise and articulate themselves, in political terms. Class struggle is the actually and socially present while at the same time the transcendentally conditioning determinant of struggle per se, according to Marx. This is not to say that 'class' issues, in their more specific sense, are more important than (say) race and gender issues. It is to say that class is the illumination which allows us to understand the form that other issues take. Such a contention may certainly be right or wrong. But whoever abandons it abandons Marxism, rightly or wrongly. The C.P. appears certainly to have abandoned it. Thus it would have been more honest if their current post-fordist politics had been advertised as post-Marxist as well. At least we would have known where we stood.

In fact it is easy enough to know this. The Guardian celebrated 'Facing Up to the Future' as the kind of programme Kinnock would have liked to foist upon the Labour Party, had he

the courage to engage with those of its members who still know how to remember, or to think. To whom does the Communist Party wish to speak? Programmes of modernisation or of post-modernisation are two a penny. The more difficult trick is to disengage from technological hubris and to thematise social relations (for Marxism: relations of class struggle) as what makes for a future open before the decisions - the decisions-in-struggle - that we take. The problem 'Facing Up to the Future' should have confronted is not that of 'conservative' versus 'socialist' modernisation but that of 'modernisation' itself. Literally no-one who is poor, ruined, depressive, furious or destroyed could take heart from the infatuation with new technological marvels which it seems is the governing C.P. norm. In geographical terms, this is a programme for the south-east. In social terms, it is a programme for those with word-processors on their desks.

In terms of 'class-hatred' (Negri) it is a programme for those who still hang on, consoling themselves or celebrating themselves by means of technology through defeat and triumph, but whose murderous hegemony should surely have had its day.



**Destruction of both Houses of Parliament by Fire,**

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