

TOWARDS A DIALECTICAL METHODOLOGY
FOR SOCIAL INQUIRY

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Sociology
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

By
John B. Scotty
Spring, 1976

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is foremost a thoroughgoing critique of the metaphysical assumptions of orthodox Western sociology. The critique extends into the theoretical and methodological consequences upon interpreting reality. Having demonstrated the uselessness of orthodox social inquiry in these dimensions, an experimental methodology and theory are generated using a dialectical metaphysical position as a starting point.

Several examples of the writings of socially critical authors were analyzed as part of the project. The main conclusion reached was that there was an affinity between the various metaphysical stances of the authors and those of orthodox sociology. The case was made that this metaphysical affinity was a result of the ability of capitalist social organization to assign to itself a supra-historical character through the process of reification. Finally it was posited that only a dialectical analytical position can provide a perspective which can accurately depict the social relations of capitalism for what they are, a transitory form of social organization destined to pass from the historical stage.

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CHAPTER I.

Divergent and vehemently opposing opinions have emerged as to what the nature of theoretical concern and (by way of more than coincidence) methodology of social inquiry should be. Without resorting to extended discourse into the history of social thought, the purpose of this thesis will be to bring analysis to bear upon this bifurcation of intellectual purpose. This development in present day sociology can be traced back to the mid-eighteenth century and the origins of modern social thought. George Lichtheim in his essay "What is History?" addresses himself to the question of this process. In discussing the idea that contemporary social sciences are outgrowths of the advent of philosophical history, he notes that

. . . it was taken up and converted into a rudimentary sociology by Saint-Simon, Fourier and Comte. . . .

But we still need to be told exactly what the term "philosophy of history" was meant to convey. Voltaire, Condorcet, and the other pioneers clearly supposed that they were describing mankind's emergence from barbarism to civilization. Their successors became progressively more modest. As time went on, they narrowed their field of vision from the whole of human history to that of Western Europe, then to the history of particular institutions and finally to their own age. Then it occurred to someone that the business of the historian was itself an interesting subject, worthy of sustained thought. "Philosophy of history" thus came to mean "reflection upon the writing of history", rather than concern with the historical process (if there was one). By now the circle is closed: historians are so busy writing about historiography that they scarcely have time left to consider what actually happened. As for philosophers, their task has been redefined for them; it is no longer to write about the meaning of history but to ascertain what historians have thought of it.¹

Subject to the same factors responsible for this transition in the parent, the child of philosophical history has sadly endured an analagous fate. The task of Western sociology has similarly been deflected from the ends of its forebears: rather than coming to grips with the evolution and dynamics of the social process, the present condition of the profession is satisfied mainly with reflection upon and celebration of itself.

Here, rather than offer an analysis of the development of metaphysics, we will posit a typological scheme in order to identify the distinctions within opposing metaphysical positions. The major theoretical device which will be utilized throughout this analysis, the concept of the dialectic, is a multi-edged sword and its versality as an analytical tool is necessarily remarkable. We will argue and demonstrate that dialectical thought is the only suitable vehicle for rationality to deal with large questions of human existence and make sense. Conversely, it should be noted here that we also intend to explore the non-dialectical (and consequently non-sensical) nature of contemporary Western sociology below.²

The process of dichotomization of outlook in contemporary sociology is itself a result of a dialectical split in terms of metaphysical legitimacy. The nature of this metaphysical polarization and possibilities for its

resolution are the ultimate issues with which this analysis, in several round-about ways, will be concerned. It will also be argued that a whole, human metaphysics can deal adequately with the larger questions of existence if not subjected to the twisted criteria of an overpowering, pathological surrogate. Thus it is being argued that the theoretical meaninglessness and methodological position enforced by orthodox Western sociology is itself a product of the dialectical nature of the universe.

The fact of the existence of this diatribe is (or should be to the perceptive reader) a tacit acknowledgement of the power of the endeavor to command methodological/theoretical orthodoxy at this point in time. To acknowledge its power is not to acknowledge its truth. To admit its hegemony is not to admit its validity. In an urgent sense the purpose of this investigation will be to contribute to the reversal of the ebb of intellectual spirit before the atrophy becomes terminal. A rapprochement of intellectual activity with worthwhile questions does not seem wholly out of the realm of desirability as a goal, though the feasibility of such may be soon limited by time.

The emergence of separate thought-styles with corresponding universes of discourse has two consequences: each of these universes develops a paranoidal response to all others, since its exponents experience the existence of conflicting interpretation and views as a threat to the truth and rightness of their own universe of discourse. Second, the process of meaningful communication between

these mutually distrustful universes come to a virtual standstill.⁴

In attempting to systematically posit a comprehensive and coherent alternative to present day orthodoxy, efforts will be made to keep the communication level above that of a standstill and the response offered minimally rational enough to avoid the label "paranoidal".

The phenomena we are dealing with are easily identified and separated into respective camps. The duality of theoretical/methodological analytical outlooks polarize in a related way along both dimensions resulting in two distinctive metaphysical outlooks. Theoretically the important declension occurs along an historical-existential continuum as relating to conceptual frameworks. This tendency operates to give the intellectual universe in the broadest sense either a dynamic or static character. Methodologically the critical dissociation occurs in assigning data either fragmentary or integral character. Again a picture is painted of a metaphysical universe which is either evolutionary or stationary in nature.

To abruptly pursue another tack now, we want to take a look at the practical results on applied social thought which derive from the fragmentary and existential dimensions of the orthodox metaphysics. In demonstrating that within the domain of social inquiry, two mutually

exclusive metaphysical positions are being generated, we may be trying contiguously to demonstrate the necessary (in the philosophical sense) connection between the two world views. An important factor, which we will investigate in a following chapter, relating to the question of declining aspiration in social explication is the context of the imperialist stage of capitalism which provides the social milieu for Western intellectual activity. The minds which are both products of and in turn reproduce the sociology of this lame metaphysical base are the ones which Herbert Marcuse has called one dimensional or C. Wright Mills called sociologically unimaginative. The reason of this debilitated position is the reason Leszek Kolakowski has called alienated.

Circuitously we have begun superficially to examine one facet of the virtually inexhaustible supply of questions and perspectives suggested by Marx's historical, dialectical concept of alienation. Below we will move toward a more specific definition of the term; for the time being let it suffice to say that the a-historical, fragmented and static metaphysics of Western sociology has become alienated from the dynamic historical totality of the universe which is the central fact of existence. Here it is being argued that in relation to the concept of a dialectical metaphysics alienation is the driving force behind this dynamism, the sustaining impetus as mankind evolves through history.

We intend, at a later point, to attempt to demonstrate the value and viability of this concept as an analytical tool. Before proceeding however, as a further validation of the preceeding critique of orthodox sociology, it would be well to examine briefly the relationship between the application of the concept of alienation by the orthodox, and the theoretical and methodological contortions which have been necessitated to render it harmless. As we will determine later on, a dialectical application of the concept of alienation is anything but harmless to established reality. As we have pointed out above - theoretically, operationalism, and methodologically, reductionism are major factors leading to the present co-optation of the metaphysical underpinnings of social science. Now, we want to ask, have these trends affected the concept of alienation practically?

Herbert Marcuse has given important insights into the nature of operationalism as it functions to innervate the formulation of critical theory. Marcuse would say that a dialectical notion of the concept of alienation is one which has transitive meaning. By this he means that

. . . all cognitive concepts have a transitive meaning: they go beyond descriptive reference to particular facts. And if the facts are those of society, the cognitive concepts also go beyond any particular context of the facts --into the processes and conditions on which the respective society rests, and which enter into all particular facts, making, sustaining, and destroying the society. By virtue of their reference to this historical totality, cognitive concepts transcend all operational context, but their transcendence is empirical because it renders the facts recognizable as that which they really are.⁴

Joachim Israel, in a comprehensive survey of the concept of alienation, deals with the fate of transitive meaning at the hands of empiricists.

. . . the concept of alienation is not unambiguous. In fact, usually it covers two completely different categories of phenomena. One comprises social processes, the other psychological states which need not necessarily be consequences of these social processes.

The psychological conditions or states play a relatively unimportant role in the theories of Marx. The emphasis in his theories is on social processes and their effect. In empirically oriented sociology, however, a central role is played by the psychological state of alienation, the individual's estrangement. The individual's experience of his own situation is the object of investigation against the background of sociological phenomena. In addition, more or less clearly expressed values and other types of presuppositions constitute the foundation for the description and analysis of the psychological as well as the sociological conditions. The social criticism, which is of so much importance to Marx, disappears almost completely in these studies. The social structure of society is often accepted in its current shape. The possibilities of the individual for social adjustment are the starting point of the theories concerning alienation, where alienation meaning "the experience of estrangement" often is perceived as being equal to the lack of social adjustment.⁵

Or as Marcuse would agree

Where these reduced concepts govern the analysis of the human reality, individual or social, mental or material, they arrive at a false concreteness--a concreteness isolated from the conditions which constitute reality. In this context, the operational treatment of the concept assumes a political function. The individual and his behavior are analyzed in a therapeutic sense--adjustment to his society. Thought and expression, theory and practice are to be brought in line with the facts of his existence without leaving room for the conceptual critique of these facts.⁶ (my emphasis)

Thus we begin to understand the connection between alienated theory and method. Theory which rejects the ideas of

historical development of social processes in turn must redefine "objectivity" as well. The concern with alienation as a psychological process of maladjustment is a horse of an entirely different color than the notion that alienation is a product of a specific set of contradictory social relations present in capitalism and is the dynamic of revolution to resolve those contradictions. The immediacy of existential, static metaphysics, is mediated through non-transitive conceptual frameworks and ultimately imprints a subjective character upon supposedly "objective" data. Once this metaphysical imperative has been established, the orthodox can use this hegemonial definition of data as a sort of tautological circle to further circumscribe questions of society as only being ones about which "objective" data can be secured. " . . . once the 'unrealistic' excess of meaning is abolished, an investigation is locked within the vast confine in which the established society validates and invalidates propositions. By virtue of its methodology empiricism is ideological."⁷ The excesses and complications, the generalizations of historical, total metaphysics must be avoided. Israel correctly elaborates the process.

Positivistic and empirically oriented sociology is at the onset much more careful. It tries anxiously to avoid large, sweeping generalizations and tries instead to anchor its theses in empirical data. This sociology is microsociology; it deals with definite well-delimited problems but not with society at large. Sometimes research based upon this orientation has a tendency to

exclusiveness. One deals with minor problems often in an intriguing way, but sometimes it may be difficult to discover the relevance of the problems for sociology as a social science. The German philosopher and sociologist Adorno once characterized this type of sociology as "sociology minus society". An empirically oriented sociology can also mean that questions of methodology are considered to be more important than the problems to be studied. The consequence then will be that the methods are allowed to determine the problems which are to be studied and not--as it ought to be--the other way round.⁸

Up to this point we have been attempting to demonstrate the logical unity of a defective metaphysics and the generation of defective theoretical and methodological concomitants. As a basis for developing a critique of contemporary, bourgeois sociology we have been focusing attention upon one pole of the antimony. We want to try and pull this diverse analysis together with some relating thoughts which I have written in another place.

. . . at this point we begin to discern exactly the relationship between methodological fetishism, metaphysical relativity; and corporate capitalism.

Bourgeois sociology must establish a method of social inquiry which does not call into question the fundamental presuppositions of capitalist society. The methodology is that of fetishism with detail. Sophisticated quantitative research strategies which elevate factual data to a position of self-justification and statistically operate upon that data in such a way that it assumes an independent reality by virtue of its mere existence, are the order of the day. And this order is not random, or even an "objective" survival of the scientifically fittest. This exaggerated emphasis on detail is the means by which the totality of history is distorted. This elevation of a-historical detail is a distortion of reality, transitory fact is torn from its developmental, evolutionary continuum and given an absolute existential meaning. To the extent that this distorted reality is reflected in research, then research is merely a distorted reflection. The policy recommendations of such research regularly

confine themselves to the feasible limits of the existential situation even when those limitations dilemmatically frustrate human, rational solutions. These efforts inevitably conclude in, at best, reformism and a reinforcement of the status quo. It is against this obsession with detail, this predetermined defeat of reason, with inherent rejection of historical alternatives which radicals and humans in sociology rail. It is within the context of this positivistic world of diminished possibilities that the separation and compartmentalization of theoretical scientific endeavor from practice occurs. For it is at this point the recognition is made by the orthodox that there must necessarily be no juncture made with a metaphysical position in which historical alternatives exist. For in such a world as that it would be possible to call into question the validity of the isolated view of reality offered by orthodox society.⁹

The purpose of the preceeding exposition has been to open the way for justification of an analytical/theoretical position which is reanimated with the questions of social evolution and eschatology. Since the advent of philosophical history and its satellite disciplines, there has been a subterranean alternative running parallel to this more visible process of degeneration and shrinking horizons. This alternative position is one which relies heavily upon the Marxian-Hegelian lineage of thought. The theory and methodology which this tradition of thought relies upon is a metaphysics which embraces the expanding historical horizon and uses the dialectical process in the broadest sense to give meaning to history.

¹George Lictheim, Collected Essays (Viking Press, New York, 1973), p. 394-395. The idea of progress in the history of mankind is central to our thesis here and has been investigated extensively in other places by Lictheim. cf. George Lictheim, The Concept of Ideology (Vintage Books, New York, 1967). Here the apperaance of the historical treatment of consciousness is traced from the formulations of liberal French intellectuals of the Institut de France circa the establishment of the Republic to the currently confused situation we are attempting to clarify in this exercise.

²Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution (Beacon Press, Boston, 1955). For a scholarly analysis of the philosophical differences between the development of positivism and dialectical inquiry, Marcuse's work is pedagogical in the most complimentary sense in following the logic and intent of the systems of thought involved with this process.

³Gunter Remmling, Road to Suspicion (Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1967), p. 7-8. cf. C. Wright Mills, The Sociological Imagination (Oxford University Press, New York, 1959). Mills' analysis of the problem is thorough although limited and naive in the sense that he attempts to be a-political and value free in his criticisms. His analysis and critique not going beyond the framework of "science" dictates that the solution to the problem, too, is to be found in the non-ideological pursuit of "science" per se.

⁴Herbert Marcuse, One Dimensional Man (Beacon Press, Boston, 1964), p. 106.

⁵Joachim Israel, Alienation (Allyn and Bacon, Boston, 1971), p. 207.

⁶Marcuse, op cit., p. 106-107.

⁷Ibid., p. 114.

⁸Israel, op cit., p. 206.

⁹Ernest Everhard, "Sociology of sociology at the U. of H.", Praxis, Vol. I, No. I, April 1974, p. 4.

CHAPTER II.

Thus far we have offered a critique of what we believe to be a specific, historically determined contemporary metaphysical form. We have supported the position that, as a vehicle for meaningful social analysis, this mode of rationality is rapidly approaching uselessness. We argue that the theoretical and methodological concomitants of this metaphysic necessarily expedite obfuscation and confusion in understanding and making sense of social phenomena. We have tried to insinuate the connection between the hypostatized representation of history and social processes and, more practically, the interest of orthodox sociology in reproducing and reinforcing economic and political "equilibrium".

Here we briefly want to examine the fundamental conservative nature of the orthodox metaphysics as it interpenetrates processes at different levels of abstraction. We mean to say that the dynamic equilibrium of the orthodox sociology, dependent upon norming processes, etc., is in fact static and absolute. The power of the orthodox metaphysic to enforce methodological and theoretical imperatives ultimately dictates what constitutes "objective" data and "answerable" questions. Further, if conflicting data can be declared "non-objective" or uncomfortable questions "outside theoretical scope", then what is superficially a dynamic "equilibrium" turns out to be in fact a static "absolute".

When analyses attempting to answer uncomfortable questions, which use non-objective (in the sense of non-orthodox) data for support can be characterized largely, in the view of the author, as polemical, a trend seems to emerge. The social analysis based on orthodox metaphysics is in this indirect way a defender of the economic and political regularities of the unarticulated, but no less real, absolute which is the true character of dynamic equilibrium. In this way orthodox sociology is organized and mobilized to decry as "scientifically illegitimate" attempts at analysis which would in any way undermine the basic presuppositions of imperialist society.

Orthodoxy in sociology has branded as negative or nihilistic within the organized discipline what could be called, in a practical analogue, anarchistic within the judicial-political realm. This example is intended to demonstrate the existence and character of the ideological constellation of the orthodox metaphysic as a connection establishing continuity between the "value free" science of the metaphysic and the "democratic" evolution of the society practically.

We believe that in attempting an exposition of the alternative position, we can characterize the negative connotations ascribed to the polemical attacks of critical writers as basically correct. There is little common ground between the two perspectives and seems to be getting less as time goes on. We intend to investigate the possibilities of the

alternative position theoretically and methodologically to counteract the stagnation and fragmentation of the world we have attributed to orthodox analysis. We posit the development of dialectical analysis as it originated with Hegel and has been revised by Marx and his successors as the main demon against which the epithet of nihilism is spat.

Hegel's philosophy is indeed what the subsequent reaction termed it, a negative philosophy. It is originally motivated by the conviction that the given facts that appear to common sense as the positive index of truth can only be established by their destruction. The driving force of the dialectical method lies in this critical conviction.¹

Classically, the simplistic triad of thesis, antithesis and synthesis is used to describe Hegel's dialectic. We must delve deeper into this formulation for the needs of our analysis here. The polarization of the world, or for the sake of our purpose say social reality, into thesis and antithesis derives from a primary organic integrity of the world. The struggle for synthetic reunion between the positive and negative tendencies of phenomena is the process and dynamism of the dialectic. The tension between thesis and antithesis prior to resolution and synthesis is termed alienation. This notion of alienation is, as we shall see, multiform and flexible to an extreme in possibilities for application to theoretical and analytical projects. We mean to show that the Hegelian-Marxist concept of alienation is pregnant with transitive meaning. This transitive character of the dynamic

metaphysic of the dialectic will have corresponding ramifications on theory and method. Further we believe as stated above that as the alienation of social inquiry from its potentially liberating role, i.e., as a vehicle for greater truth and insight, continues--that so increases the potential for intellectual revolution and rejection of the defunct paradigm of the orthodox metaphysic.

Herbert Marcuse, in writing of Hegel, addresses himself to the complicated question of describing the metaphysical character of the dialectical process and the relationships of this metaphysics to objectivity.

Hegel does not mean that everything that exists does so in conformity with its potentialities, but that the mind has attained the self-consciousness of its freedom, and become capable of freeing nature and society. The realization of reason is not a fact but a task. The form in which the objects immediately appear is not yet their true form. What is simply given is at first negative, other than its real potentialities. It becomes true only in the process of overcoming this negativity, so that the birth of truth requires the death of the given state of being.²

The given state of being in contemporary orthodox social inquiry is a product of the same idealism found in Hegel's concept of the dialectic that later provided the ideological foundations of Prussian Germany, the Absolute state. Having been divorced from practical activity for a number of decades now, contemporary sociology as an intellectual activity has succeeded in undertaking to create for

itself a closed, absolute universe of discourse and inquiry. We must follow Marx and his revision of Hegel in order to determine the spurious nature of the claims made by this dialectical idealism we have been describing.

It was up to Marx to first, stand Hegel on his head, and then turn the dialectical method upon history itself. Marx posited that instead of Hegel's idealistic conception of self-conscious reason as the agency of negativity, that materially grounded, class conscious reason generated by alienation to specific, concrete situations through evolutionary history was the dynamic of society.

Criticizing Hegel in The Holy Family, Marx notes:

As Hegel puts self-consciousness in the place of man, the most varied human reality appears only as a definite form, as a determination of self-consciousness. But a mere determination of self-consciousness is a "pure category", a mere "thought" which I can consequently also abolish in "pure" thought and overcome through pure thought. In Hegel's Phenomenology the material, perceptible, objective bases of the various estranged forms of human self-consciousness are left as they are. Thus the whole destructive work results in the most conservative philosophy because it thinks it has overcome the objective world, the sensuously real world, by merely transforming it into a "thing of thought", a mere determination of self-consciousness and can therefore dissolve its opponent, which has become ethereal, in the "ether of pure thought".³

In The German Ideology Marx writes that

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here we ascend from earth to heaven. That is to say, we do not set out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh. We set out from real active men, and on the basis

of their real life-process we demonstrate the development of the ideological reflexes and echos of this life process.⁴

Relavant to our line of thought here, what we believe Marx to be instructing is that the task of reason is to critically expose the contradictions and shortcomings of the real world relative to the parameters of possibility. This suggestion runs counter to the case of orthodox sociology which aims at the converse, namely to reconcile social conditions with some conception of ideal based upon a non-critical interpretation of society. And certainly not the least of these facets is the job of discovering the material limitations and determinations operating upon reason itself. Thus much of current social research has had any intention of practical and intellectual unity subjugated by the realities of the existential facts and power relationships of society. Contemporary sociology has done exactly what Marx would have predicted. The discipline has begun to concern itself with explaining away contradictions and rationalizing of the absolute metaphysical presuppositions of imperialism. Rather than maintain a critical theoretical position which could interpret practical society, orthodox sociology has allowed practical society to incorporate social theory into its political and ideological service.

Marx is unequivocal as to the evolutionary, socio-historical character of the life-process which shapes the

consciousness of man and is the dynamo of the dialectical process.

. . . observation must . . . bring out empirically and without any mystification and speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production. The social structure and the State are continually evolving out of the life-process of definite individuals, but not of individuals as they may appear in their own or other people's imagination but as they really are, i.e., as they operate, produce materially, and hence as they work under definite material limits, presuppositions and conditions independent of their will.⁵

To better appreciate how Marx's application of materialism and historicity to dialectics inject animation into our alternative metaphysics, we must briefly follow some of Marx's observations concerning the productive process. Earlier we discussed the idea that alienation supplies the kinetic energy of the dialectic. Alienation was the concrete manifestation of the metaphysical tension resulting from the polarization of the organic unity of the social world into reality and potentiality. We must wonder, of course, what is the primal mover so to speak in this process of polarization. The process of alienation of the world from man and concomitantly the process of realization of some ultimate reunification is seen by Marx to lie in the nature of man and his unique ability to consciously operate upon the world. Thus as nature provides the means of existence to man, as he operates upon and appropriates nature to concretely exist, the process of appropriation simultaneously is the process by which the external world is alienated from man.

. . . the more the worker appropriates the external world of the sensuous nature by his labor the more he deprives himself of means of existence, in two respects: first, that the sensuous external world becomes progressively less an object belonging to his labor or a means of existence of his labor, and secondly, that it becomes progressively less a means of existence in the direct sense, a means for the physical subsistence of the worker.⁶

Reiterating, Marx writes in another place

. . . alienation appears not merely in the result but also in the process of production, within productive activity itself. How could the worker stand in an alien relationship to the product of his activity if he did not alienate himself in the act of production itself? The product is indeed only the resume of activity, of production. Consequently, if the product of labor is alienation, production itself must be active alienation. . . . The alienation of the object of labor merely summarizes the alienation in the work activity itself.⁷

The final step in Marx's argument is to identify the realization of alienation as it culminates in the relation between the worker and the capitalist, in the institution of private property.

If he is related to the product of his labour, his objectified labour, as to an alien, hostile, powerful and independent object, he is related in such a way that another alien, hostile, powerful and independent man is the lord of this object. If he is related to his own activity as to unfree activity, then he is related to it as activity in the service, and under the domination, coercion, and yoke of another man.

Only in the final stage of development of private property is its secret revealed, namely, that it is on the one hand the product of alienated labour, and on the other hand the means by which labour is alienated, the realization of this alienation.⁸

We have deemed it necessary to closely follow the argument concerning the moment of polarization within the dialectical process for a number of reasons. The most important, however,

is to prepare ourselves to make a number of seemingly fine metaphysical distinctions which will prove to be obvious and central on the practical level.

For instance, C. Wright Mills tendered bitter criticism against orthodox sociology on metaphysical grounds. Yet in posing the problem of what he called sociological imagination, he posited a dialectic between "abstracted empiricism" and "grand theory". While he did recognize the reciprocity of interest emerging between social science and capitalist hegemony, he seems to have viewed this development as more of a chance correlation than as a necessary symbiosis. Here we mean to show that rather than by some coincidence, the dichotomy of metaphysical outlooks is the necessary product of alienated intellectual activity as it has become realized in the context of imperialism. The Marxist notion of alienation and the polarization of the dialectical moment is the only perspective which can account realistically for the division of outlooks and their respective theoretical and methodological approaches. While we do not hold the opinion that orthodox sociology is merely a gross epiphenomenon of the capitalist system of which it is a part, we do mean to illuminate the mutual dependences and interests which have emerged concurrently as a product of their metaphysical affinity.

The end point of our digression is to expound the fundamental differences between the fragmented, existential

social science of imperialism on the one hand and the organic, historical character of our alternative position. We have been trying to show how the concept of alienation as utilized by these positions respectively has totally diametrical meaning. One position would have us believe that alienation is an unresolvable by-product of the technological character of social evolution--alienation as a quantitative phenomenon. The other sees alienation as the product not of technology per se but rather as an integral process which is both the problem and the solution to a specific historical form of social organization--namely capitalism.

Above we have discussed the idea that in Marx's view social and physical phenomena formed an organic whole, that the basic nature of the world is integral and harmonious. Man is seen as a universal; social organization is seen as horizontal rather than hierarchial.

The universality of man appears in practice in the universality which makes the whole of nature into his inorganic body; (1) as a direct means of life; and equally (2) as the material object and instrument of his life activity. Nature is the inorganic body of man; that is to say nature, excluding the human body itself. To say that man lives from nature means that nature is his body with which he must remain in a continuous interchange in order not to die. The statement that the physical and mental life of man, and nature, are interdependent means simply that nature is interdependent with itself, for man is a part of nature.⁹

Yet as a result of the process of appropriation and the realization of this process in the capitalist social structure,

man's identity with his nature is alienated, he becomes separated from his environment mentally and physically. In a parenthetical remark, Marx describes the outcome of the disruption of the unity and harmony of the organic unit.

(The alienation of the worker in his object is expressed as follows in the laws of political economy; the more the worker produces the less he has to consume; the more value he creates the more worthless he becomes; the more refined his product the more crude and misshapen the worker; the more civilized the product the more barbarous the worker; the more powerful the work the more feeble the worker; the more the work manifests intelligence the more the worker declines in intelligence and becomes a slave of nature.)¹⁰

We believe that the alienation manifested in the theory and method of orthodox sociology, manifested in the rejection of a holistic and transitive approach to research and analysis has resulted in the vitiation and atrophy of this intellectual form. We believe that salvation of the discipline must start with a return to the dialectical method. Once having made the critical reinterpretations of Hegel's system, Marx went on to develop his own theory of social evolution based on historical materialism and the dialectical method.

It is in this spirit that the author here is attempting to demonstrate the necessity of returning to the roots of sociology. Only in this way can the contemporary enterprise be rescued from its present state of stagnation. It is in this spirit that the author will be attempting to

apply the dialectical method, to reanimate the critical question of human existence, and to contribute to the process by which social inquiry might reunite with its intended function of providing meaningful insights into the process of social evolution. The remainder of this exercise will be aimed at forging a new analytical paradigm capable of entertaining the complex questions we find lacking in the orthodoxy.

Early on in this section we raised the question of nihilism as a descriptive device and noted the application by the orthodox to alternative analyses. Under other circumstances it could be interpreted as absurdity to feel compelled to defend historically grounded methodology which aims at discerning process and totality. Yet conceptual frameworks which are relevant and viable in terms of larger issues are at every turn attacked by those who possess no more than (to turn the criticism back upon itself) a self-generated nihilism. For there is no other accurate description than nihilism for an organized and conscious attempt to destroy history and ultimately humanity.

¹Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, op cit., p. 26-27.

²Ibid., p. 26.

³Karl Marx and Fredrick Engles, The Holy Family, in Karl Marx: The Essential Writings ed. by Fredric L. Bender, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1972), p. 140-141.

⁴Karl Marx and Fredrick Engles, The German Ideology, Bender, op cit., p. 170-171.

⁵Ibid., p. 170.

⁶Karl Marx, Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, in Karl Marx: Early Writings trans. by T. B. Bottomore (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1963), p. 123.

⁷Ibid., p. 124

⁸Ibid., p. 130.

⁹Ibid., p. 126-127.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 123-124.

CHAPTER III.

The purpose of the foregoing comments has been to lay groundwork for the theoretical justification of using the dialectical method in social analysis as opposed to the "more scientific" regimen of the positivistic orthodoxy. In this section we will attempt to generate some concrete dimensions both in the terms of theory and method for our alternative metaphysic. We will attempt to delineate some meaningful practical problem which may provide us with some insight as to the power and usefulness of dialectics in making sense of the social world. We want to define a way in which an analysis of the movement of consciousness (and if we may define consciousness as the social tension between reality and potentiality; we therefore mean to include the kinesis in the operation of the dialectic and therefore the movement of history) can be effected. The problem we set forth must be one which will both minimally determine the validity of some logically derivative theorem of dialectical metaphysics and at the same time not do violence to the methodological imperatives we have outlined. George Lukacs in discussing the writing of Engles on the subject observes that

Engles conceptualizes the dialectic by opposing it to the "metaphysical" conceptualization. He emphasizes with penetration the fact that, in the dialectic method, the rigidity of concepts (and of the objects which correspond to them) is dissolved, that the dialectic is the continuous transformation of one determination into another, resolving contraries which pass into each other. And he

argues that consequently, the unilateral, rigid causality must be replaced by reciprocal action. But the most essential interaction, the dialectical relation of subject and object in the process of history, is not even mentioned, not to say placed in the very center of the methodological consideration where it belongs. Abstracted from this determination the dialectic method, in spite of any affirmation in the last instance of "fluid" concepts, ceased to be a revolutionary method. The difference between the dialectic and "metaphysics" should not then be sought in the fact that all metaphysical studies require the object of investigation to be untouched and unchanging, and that the conception consequently remains "contemplative. . . and cannot become practical, but is in fact that for the dialectic the central problem is the transformation of reality.

If one neglects this central function of the theory, then the advantage of a "fluid" conception becomes problematic, a purely "scientific" affair. The method can be accepted or rejected in accord with the state of science, but without changing one's attitude of reality, its "fatal" and unchanging character, its conformity to law in the sense of the bourgeois, contemplative materialism and its classical economics this can even be reinforced. . . .¹

Within the domain of science generally (and sociology particularly) conventional treatment of the subject of art, when broached at all, is usually reluctant. Yet in attempting to frame a problem suitable to our purposes for analysis, to examine the subjective and objective interaction in the movement of history as process, we believe that some specific problems in the creative process can be formulated in such a way as to prove the power of illumination and scientific worth of the dialectic as method. Central to our thesis here, it will be argued that if one is concerned with the evolution and dynamics of society, an historical society; on which has a past, present, and future, that a theory of

art . . . a framework for the interpretation and evaluation of art as an ideological-cultural enterprise is essential.

In no other aesthetic does the truthful depiction of reality have so central a place as in Marxism. This is closely tied up with other elements in Marxist doctrine. For the Marxist the road to socialism is identical with the movement of history itself. There is no phenomenon, objective or subjective, that has not its function in furthering, obstructing or deviating this development.²

We mean to demonstrate the special position that the artist occupies in his particular relationship to the creative process and in making concrete the subject-object tension and giving consciousness a specific, concrete representation. We mean to show how art is on the one hand a means (in the sense of functioning to concretize contradictions in social relations) to the realization of art as potentiality (artistic ethos). The dialectical character of alienated art is exhibited through a representation of reality which is critical in that it is at the same time rooted in and yet transcends the existential limits of its production. We must assume the a priori critical nature of art in that until the point is achieved that contradictions in social relations no longer exist, art remains critical at least in the sense of depicting those contradictions and the (at least implicit) notion remains that contradictions can be resolved.

In his Essay on Liberation Herbert Marcuse projects a "new sensibility" in which art has transcended its "negative" (in the Hegelian sense) function and has become the

aspect under which existence is subsumed. Consciousness having fulfilled its critical function, having turned the realm of potentiality into one of realization would mean the end of politics and would seem to be coincident with Marx's idea of the end of pre-history.

The liberated consciousness would promote the development of a science and technology free to discover and realize the possibilities of things and men in the protection and gratification of life, playing with the potentialities of form and matter for the attainment of this goal. Technique would then tend to become art, and art would tend to form reality; the opposition between imagination and reason, higher and lower faculties, poetic and scientific thought would be invalidated. Emergence of a new Reality Principle: under which a new sensibility and desublimated scientific-intelligence would combine in the creation of an artistic ethos.³

Of course Marcuse will be the first to point out that what he is describing is, on the one hand, speculative and utopian by design. On the other, however, he would also argue that his projection is firmly grounded in empirical observation. We recognize the validity of his method and intend to modify it to our own needs. For we will attempt to demonstrate the crucial importance that an understanding of the movement of art towards its realization in Marcuse's "artist ethos" plays in relationship to the movement of history and the realization of society in socialism.

The intention of the proposed analysis is to investigate the relationship between art as a critical device with an existing milieu and its potential as a vehicle for a

transformation of life as Marcuse has theorized. We want to ask in what ways, as history has progressed and reality been transformed, has artistic endeavor been able in some sense to anticipate and direct or predict change in society. In remaining within the bounds of the task before us (i.e., not taking the analysis to dissertation length) we have chosen to examine some aspects of the works of four authors. We have purposely chosen authors who form a sort of sequential progression in order to be able to give some sort of minimal historical perspective to our analysis. Using the idea of historical stages from political economy, we want for one thing to be able to see how the particular authors handled the objectively critical problems of the period in capitalist development about which they were writing.

As historical examples we have chosen to briefly analyze some aspects of the writings of Mark Twain as representative of the period in which laissez-faire capitalism was in the process of throwing off the last vestiges of feudalism. Also the written social comment of Jack London will be examined. London was writing in the early 1900's during the period of consolidation of monopoly capitalism. Both these examples are calculated to provide the subjective data from periods of objectively massive social upheaval in America. It seems reasonable to expect that there will be continuities and similarities as well as significant

differences in the comparative treatment by the authors of the questions and problems outlined above. It is hoped that data from these examples can present thematic or gestaltic insight into the subjective processes accompanying these dynamic periods.

Returning to the point that the aim of art is the establishment of the artistic ethos of Marcuse. At present, art in contemporary American society is not the aspect under which men operate, but rather (as Marcuse notes in another place) art is circumscribed by a condition of total, fully developed imperialism.

The power of corporate capitalism has stifled the emergence of such a consciousness and imagination; its mass media have adjusted the rational and emotional faculties to its market and its policies and steered them to the defense of its dominion. The narrowing of the consumption gap has rendered possible the mental and instinctual coordination of the laboring classes; the majority of organized labor shares the stabilizing, counterrevolutionary needs of the middle classes, as evidenced by their behavior as consumers of the material and cultural merchandise, by their emotional revulsion against the non-conformist intelligensia.⁴

Thus the problem for consciousness becomes: what factors have been responsible for the frustration of the realization of the artistic ethos? What have been the deviations responsible for the arrest of consciousness resulting in the reality of fully developed imperialism as opposed to its utopian alternative? In a nutshell, this is the question we will undertake to investigate. In order to more clearly

develop the methodology for dealing with this question, we must now turn again to an examination of Marx's conceptual framework.

Above we have alluded to the centrality to Marx the idea of alienation plays. The problem of alienation we have tried to show is nothing less than the foremost problem of contemporary society. Yet we must frame our analysis in a manageable way. We must follow Marx in his transmutation of the metaphysical notion of alienation on the theoretical level to his more concrete and operable concept of reification as the manifestation of alienation in the practical realm. The logic of the argument we must follow is a little complex but important nonetheless. As above we demonstrated the realization of the appropriation of nature in private property so we must now follow the realization of the alienation of production under the social relations of capitalism as they take concrete shape in the idea of commodity production. To quote Marx at length

Whence, then arises the enigmatical character of the product of labor, so soon as it assumes the form of commodities? Clearly from this form itself. The equality of all sorts of human labor is expressed objectively by their products all being equally values; by the measure of the expenditure of labor power, by the duration of that expenditure, takes the form of quantity of value of the products of labor; and finally, the mutual relations of the producers, within which the social character of their labor affirms itself, takes the form of a social relation between products.

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of men's labor appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labor; because the relation of the producers

to the sum total of their own labor is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labor. This is the reason why the products of labor become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses . . . it is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.⁵

Our emphasis has been added to Marx's passage here to underline the importance of his insight. Here we can begin to see how Marx shows the way capitalist development and the concomitant social relations engendered militate to create and alien milieu, an "objective" universe which "subjectively" is independent and autonomous. Once the level of commodity production has been achieved, Lukacs elaborates upon the process

. . . because of this situation a man's own activity, his own labor becomes something objective and independent of him, something that controls him by virtue of an autonomy alien to man. There is both an objective and a subjective side to this phenomenon. Objectively a world of objects and relations between things springs into being (the world of commodities and their movements on the market). The laws governing these objects are indeed gradually discovered by man, but even so they confront him as invisible forces that generate their own power. The individual can use his knowledge of these laws to his own advantage, but he is not able to modify the process by his own activity. Subjectively, where the market economy has been fully developed--a man's activity becomes estranged from himself, it turns into a commodity which, subject to the non-human objectivity of the natural laws of society, must go its own way independently of man just like any consumer article.⁶

Again we can see the room in Marx's theoretical scheme for dynamism in the tension between objective and subjective development of process allowing for movement in the historical continuum. Perhaps following in this way we can posit a

testable situation relevant to the historical development of consciousness.

Classically (vulgarly?), Marx was concerned with "objective" processes in dealing with the problem of reification. George Lukacs writes, interpreting Marx

The separation of the producer from his means of production, the dissolution and destruction of all "natural" production units, etc., and all social and economic conditions necessary for the emergence of modern capitalism tend to replace "natural" relations which exhibit human relations more plainly by rationally reified relations.⁷

And yet there is a qualitative difference between the conditions classical Marxist categories we are analyzing and those of contemporary society. The preceeding example was included, not to demonstrate the vulgarism of Lukacs (who should be regarded as one of the pathfinders in reversing that very trend) but to provide a reference point from which to observe the total invasion of a reified universe into the subjective as well as objective world.

In comparison with laissez-faire capitalism--the capitalism of Marx's time, where the problematic of the human situation was expressed mainly in terms of economic exploitation and political oppression--the new type of capitalism contains an almost irreversible tendency toward the universalization of alienation. In other words it tends to convert the "totality of social life and existence into an object of domination with the 'intention' of transforming all subjectivity and activity into reified objectivity."⁸

We have mentioned the intent to analyze the works of Mark Twain and Jack London as perhaps representative of the

subjective situation during the period of 'vulgar' capitalism in America, as historical examples. The point of using historical examples for analysis is to provide continuity into the present and theoretically to project into the future as well. As contemporary examples for analysis we have chosen the literature of Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut as representative of the "new type" of capitalism, the stage of imperialism. Thus we can begin to formulate testable hypotheses for our application of the dialectic. Does the idea of universalization of alienation find reinforcement through stages of capitalist development in the work of these four writers? Does this type of historical analysis indicate direction minimally in the sense of quantitative escalations or qualitative transformations in the historical continuum? Have the changing objective situations through stages of development been reflected in the focus upon specific problems by the writers in question? And what have been the subjective reactions to these situations?

Thus we have posed the question to be--how has the character of alienation been shaped through periods in the historical process? Finally and more importantly than simply asking how did writers depict problematic situations objectively, we want to ask: how have writers dealt with breaking through reified and static reality during these dynamic periods? Were writers able to perceive alternatives to unacceptable situations and, more importantly, were they able to

indicate ways to practically implement solutions? We have indicated one criteria by which the value and ideological content of art can be assessed. We have posited the a priori critical nature of art in its function to depict objective reality in such a way as to make obvious contradictions specific to the reality of the artist. Within our framework of analysis any cultural products which do not meet this criteria must be considered failures in that they comprise not art but rather simple propaganda. The writers we have chosen can all be said to have effected success in tendering criticism at least on this level. In posing our final question we must ask about success on another level. What writers were able to succeed in the sense of solving the problems they set out for themselves in their works? Have these writers dealt successfully with the problem of reification as we have outlined it above? If alienation is the foremost problem of contemporary society and the concrete manifestation of this phenomenon is realized through a reified perception of reality, then the factors responsible for the successful resolution of this problem would seem to be of paramount importance for the viability of the critical perspective.

People who perceive the world through this mask of reification never question the exploitative and oppressive relationships which determine their lives, for they are unable to imagine that any alternative to this situation

is possible. Only during periods in which the reifying structures of institutions are disrupted--during periods of profound social crisis and disintegration--does a clear perception of the true nature of society and the structural relationships which characterize it become fully possible.⁹

Our attempted analysis cannot and will not be by any means exhaustive or encyclopedic. What will be tried will be a typologization along some suggested theoretical dimensions using some examples from fictional American literature. By choosing examples from what the writer believes to be critical periods in American history, we may be able in this way to look at the relationships between this specific art form and reified consciousness.

¹Georg Lukacs, "What is Orthodox Marxism?", in Marxism and Human Liberation, ed. by E. San Juan, Jr., (Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1973), p. 23-24.

²Georg Lukacs, Realism in Our Time, trans. by John and Necke Mander, (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1964), p. 24.

³Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation (Beacon Press, Boston, 1969), p. 24.

⁴Ibid., p. 15-16.

⁵Karl Marx, Capital, Bender, op cit., p. 336-337.

⁶Georg Lukacs, "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat", in History and Class Consciousness trans. by Rodney Livingstone, (MIT Press, Cambridge, 1968), p. 87.

⁷Ibid., p. 91.

⁸Bruce Brown, Marx, Freud, and the Critique of Everyday Life, (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1973), p. 13.

⁹Ibid., p. 12-13.

CHAPTER IV.

A. MARK TWAIN

Mark Twain (1835-1910) the first subject for our analysis can be understood as either a simple humorist and tale-spinner of the period or upon closer scrutiny can rather be placed in the tradition of social satirist of classical status. In writing of Twain's works, Philip Foner writes

His social criticism, expressed in novels, stories, essays, and pamphlets, ranks with that of Milton, Swift, Defoe, Janius, Voltaire, Tom Paine and Bernard Shaw, both in terms of literary quality and their influence on public opinion. His humor tipped a sword's point. It cuts through social and political pretenses, defended and enriched the democratic heritage . . .

Mark Twain was our greatest social critic. As such he speaks to us with an immediacy that surmounts the barriers of time.¹

Twain included in his prolific commentary extensive writings on corruption in politics and government, a critique of monopoly capitalism and the Robber Barons. He wrote extensively on the questions of vulgar imperialism as they emerged in the Spanish-American War, the Boer War and events of the day in China. Twain virtually left no hypocrisy untouched by the biting wit of his satire.

Yet here we have a specific purpose and want to focus upon a particular aspect of Twain's work. We want to choose a specific problem and once having established an historical context, we want to try and decipher the ideological content of the artist's treatment of it. We want to examine Twain's

work as a

characteristic product of the decade when Americans generally first realized they were entering the modern world. The Civil War had given a decided impetus to the mechanization of industry in this century, and the process had gained speed in the post-Civil War decades. By the 1880's a revolutionary change began to be apparent to most people in the United States--not only factory workers and dwellers in the industrial cities, but also farmers, especially in the West, who were using machines to expand agricultural production and found themselves dependent on the new railway systems to send their crops to markets in the East and Europe.

The pace and scope of industrialization placed unprecedented strains on American society and American culture. The traditional system of values, the beliefs about men, institutions, and the universe that had guided the lives of generations, were coming to seem irrelevant. New conceptions of value, a new ethics, a new philosophy had to be created. As always imaginative writers had the task of synthesizing fact and theory into images that could be understood by the public at large.²

The most obvious contradiction in social relations during the period in which Twain wrote, demanding to be resolved was the question of chattel slavery. Although this problem was solved de jure by the Civil War, the question of the roots and moral implications of slavery was one with which Twain felt it imperative to deal. His most important contribution to the subject is found in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn where

The institution of chattel slavery always forms the background against which these boys live. It forces itself into the very content of consciousness, not only of Tom and Huck, but of all the members of the village. As Bernard DeVoto has pointed out, the existence of slavery explains the role that superstition plays in the minds of Tom and Huck. Here Mark Twain made a neat social comment. He told us, in effect, that if we preserve the

institution of slavery it will permeate our entire culture and become a formidable barrier to progress. Just as slavery produces meanness and brutality, so does it perpetuate magic. Briefly, the backwardness of the slaves, treated as property rather than human beings, will blunt the moral and intellectual development of the masters.³

The dilemma of the objective facts of chattel slavery and the resulting de-humanized property relationship between man and man is the central problem of *Huck Finn* as a work of art.

One of the moving themes of the story is Huck's uneasiness over the fact that by accident he is helping a "nigger" to run away. He has his own code of morality, where property is concerned; he doesn't wish to be a thief. The refinements of honesty, so to speak, he had learned from his father, who always said it was wrong to take what was another man's, unless you had the intention of paying it back sometime. When he and Jim found themselves obliged to rob orchards and gardens in order to maintain life, they quieted their conscience by making it a rule never to steal all they could. Crap-apples, for instance, they always left untouched. But when it came to stealing niggers! On the other hand, when the thought of Jim's kindness to him, of the negro's terror of the plantation from which he could never hope to return to his wife and children, Huckleberry was in a tangle. He did go so far as to write to Miss Watson and tell her where Jim could be found, but he couldn't bring himself to post the letter. "I was in a tight place. I took it up and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, between two things, and I knowed it. I studies a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell", and tore it up."⁴

Thus Twain's book must be said to have succeeded at least in one sense. In creating real, human characters he was able to show the moral consequences of the objective facts for humans as property. This contradiction in the

capitalist order at that time was blatant and yet it was revolutionary to question its legitimacy, so overwhelming was its practical power. Lionel Trilling writes

Huckleberry Finn is indeed a subversive book--no one who reads thoughtfully the dialectic of Huck's great moral crisis will ever again be wholly able to accept without some question and some irony the assumptions of the respectable morality by which he lives, nor will ever again be certain that what he considers the clear dictates of moral reason are not merely the engrained customary beliefs of his time and place.⁵

The everyday depiction of life, the realism of Twain's characters makes his treatment of the moral relativity of the time more powerful even than other more celebrated polemics directed specifically against slavery: Huckleberry Finn provides us with

the one elaborate picture we have of the negro slave before the war, and in a community in which owner and slave alike take slavery very much for granted. Mrs. Stowe's famous book is full of correct observations; she gives us no doubt a fair account of slavery at its happiest--along with other reports which some Southerners will always think exaggerated. But Uncle Tom's Cabin remains a discussion of slavery as an issue of justice; the problem colors every sentence in the book. There must have been thousands of families in which the issue never suggested itself. That is the version of slavery which Mark Twain has given us--the picture of good Christian homes in which the slaves were as natural an incident as any other human relation. Even as propaganda, if Huckleberry Finn had been written early enough to serve that purpose, it would have been more subtly convincing than Mrs. Stowe's book, for the dramatic method, without preaching of any kind, here stirs the emotions deeply.⁶

Arbitrarily deciding to have demonstrated Twain's grasp of the historical situation, the objective circumstances of the exploitation and de-humanization of slavery

we must now turn to the question of how the historical process emerges from his works. Having thoroughly exposed the problem of consciousness posed by the objective situation standing in utterly hypocritical relation to his definition of morality, we must investigate the nature of the moral imperatives central to Twain's critique, his practical implementation of his moral principles. Following our theme into Twain's great moral allegory, Life on the Mississippi, we find the symbolic treatment of his position in his use of the river as the fountain and sustainer of idealism.

The Civil War and the development of the railroads ended the days when the river was the central artery of the nation. No contrast could be more moving than that between the hot, turbulent energy of the river life in the first part of Life on the Mississippi and the melancholy reminiscence of the second part. And the war that brought the end of the rich Mississippi days also marked a change in the quality of life in America which, to many men, consisted of a deterioration of moral values.⁷

Here we come to the principle contradiction which Mark Twain was never able to satisfactorily resolve and which lay at the basis of the profound pessimism and cynicism he came to embrace toward the end of his life. His conception of the moral reservoir symbolized in the river was something which on the one hand stood apart, eternal and uncorruptable, from material society. And yet he came to see that this moral reservoir itself, when divorced from the practical realm came to impotence in competition with the power of material production and development to create a morality, based on

exploitation and hypocrisy, more suited to the purposes of capitalist economy. Roger Saloman, in his excellent analysis of the question in his book Mark Twain and the Image of History, writes perceptively.

In Life on the Mississippi, as we have already observed, two very different themes are developed at some length; on the one hand, the progress of society on the banks of the river from feudalism to democracy and industrialism; on the other, the values of life on the river itself--freedom, independence, essential innocence, escape from society and ultimately escape from the tyranny of time and history.⁸

In this light we can see the ideological consequences for progress begin to take systematic form through Twain's works. Was Huckleberry Finn's decision to violate the morality of chattel slavery property rights made in history or outside of it? Was Twain able to, in his work, to effectively counter the affronts to his morality made by the enormity of industrialization?

. . . in Huckleberry Finn as in Life on the Mississippi time stops at the waters edge. Describing his trip down the great river by steamboat in 1882, Twain wrote that on the Mississippi "the day goes, the night comes, and again the day--and still the same night after night after night and day after day--majestic, unchanging sameness of serenity, repose, tranquility, lethargy, vagrancy--symbol of eternity, realization of heaven pictured by priest and prophet." . . . The motion of a raft . . . is gentle, and gliding, and smooth, and noiseless; it calms down all feverish activities, it soothes to sleep all nervous hurry and impatience; under its restful influence all the trouble and vexations and sorrows that harass the mind vanish away, and existence becomes a dream, a charm, a deep and tranquil ecstasy." Here again the images of sleep and motion over water coalesce to become a symbol of peace, security, stasis, but here in addition, they are

welcomed as a form of mythical release that annuls the agony of consciousness.⁹

Twain proves up to the task of setting up the question in history for our case here, but fails in the task of solving it without a hero who can escape to a mythological region outside time and history. As we stated above, this failure cannot detract from Twain's ability to tender powerful criticism of society, but by the same token his characterization of the emerging social order as overwhelming, static and immutable, led him to reject the image of man as an actor in history, as being capable of actively participating in and shaping the progress of mankind.

Myths, necessarily, are merely concrete representations of the ineffable. Only in the image of the flowing river and the boy who communes with it did Twain convincingly succeed in describing a mode of being apart from the tyranny of history.¹⁰

¹Philip S. Foner, Mark Twain: Social Critic (International Publishers, New York, 1958), p. 313.

²Henry Nash Smith, Mark Twain's Fable of Progress: Political and Economic Ideas in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, 1964), p. 6-7.

³James T. Farrell, "The League of the Frightened Philistines", in Huck Finn and His Critics, ed. by Richard Lettis, Robert McDonald, and William E. Morris (McMillan Co., New York, 1962), p. 324.

⁴John Erskine, "Huckleberry Finn", in Lettis et al. op cit., p. 324.

⁵Lionel Trilling, "An Introduction to Huckleberry Finn", in Lettis et al. op cit., p. 333.

⁶Erskine, op cit., p. 302.

⁷Trilling, op cit., p. 333.

⁸Roger B. Soloman. Mark Twain and the Image of History (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1961), p. 135-136.

⁹Ibid., p. 160.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 166.

IV.

B. JACK LONDON

Jack London (1876-1916) is the next writer-critic we wish to consider. Although a contemporary, objectively, of Mark Twain, London represents a subjectively different generation in his concern with problems and his analysis of them. There were two main points in the facts of existence with which London concerned himself. The first was the condition of the working class being created by the industrialization taking place in America at this time. The second point was the inevitability and consequences of class struggle he saw as a necessary part of this development.

The end of the nineteenth century found the nation in a state of great social and political unrest. It found expression in the rise of the labor movement, furious battles between labor and capital, and the political conflict between farmers, workers and small business men on the one hand and the powerful monopolies on the other. Yet throughout this turbulent period there was a curious dicotomy between literature and life. Anyone dependent upon American letters to guide him would have obtained the most confused and inaccurate conception of the life led by more than sixty millions of Americans and of the major problems confronting them. He would find that the American people were concerned solely with romantic love sometimes enacted in remote times by men and women in costumes who addressed each other as "thee" and "thou", or in imagined principalities of Europe like Zenda or Graustark where gilt-uniformed officers wooed beautiful heroines on marble terraces. If the romance was set in contemporary America it was all in the fragrance of new-mown hay or of magnolias surrounding white-columned verandas. The teeming life of the industrial city produced the formula of the poor boy who married the boss's daughter and was taken into the firm. Of the grinding poverty of the workers, of wretched housing, low wages, long hours and unsanitary working conditions, of child labor, of the ruthless industrial and financial tycoons the literature of the day said little.¹

London, as was Twain, was a prolific writer and wrote into his work a particular point of view which was directed at bringing to light the gross injustices mentioned above. London used a vividly realistic style to describe the excesses of capitalist development in the slums generated by industrialization in England. In his People of the Abyss his famous description of the desperation and degradation of unemployed slum dwellers.

From the slimy, spittle-drenched sidewalk, they were picking up bits of orange peel, apple skin and grape stems, they were eating them. The pits of green gage plums they carcked between their teeth for the kernels inside. They pciked up stray crumbs of bread the size of peas, apple cores so black and dirty one would not take them to be apple cores, and these things these two men took into their mouths, and chewed them, and swallowed them; and this, between six and seven o'clock in the evening of August 20, year of our Lord 1902, in the heart of the greatest, wealthiest, and most powerful empire the world has ever seen.²

London utilized his talent for detail and realism to bring into focus the objective situation that the consolidation of monopoly capitalism spawned as a social consequent. As a result of his experience with the working class and as a product of his intellectual development, London was able to apply his method to provide a concrete dimension to his systematic indictment of the capitalist development. Maxwell Geismar encapsulates London's collection of essays entitled War of the Classes

In the moral underworld that was described in the pages of War of the Classes, the strike and the boycott, the blacklist and the lock out, led the way only to suborned judges and armies of private militias; and these in turn were the support of an industrial system whose primary condition of existence was that there should be less

work than there were men to do the work. Here indeed the tramp had almost become a typical product and universal figure of American society. From its upper reaches of unlimited power--the titians emerging from the tooth and nail struggle of capitalism--to the lowest depth of human misery and degradation, this was a universe of scabs. To the melodrama of Marxist polemics, London had added undertones of the Darwinian jungle and something of his own nightmarish world of fantasy. . . . Moreover, whenever he wrote and spoke, London was not adverse to stirring up the latent fear of class war directly after the Populist uprisings and Bryan's campaigns; or of that "class separation that . . . hints of anarchy." The class struggle was intrinsically a part of the industrial scene of the 1900's, he said, whatever the optimistic American's thought or said to conceal the fact. "It is no longer a question whether or not there is a class struggle. The question now is what will be the outcome of the class struggle."³

Or in another article

. . . London sets out to destroy one of the cherished myths of American capitalism; that there is no class struggle in American society. The believers in the myth are like ostriches with their heads in the sand; because they cannot see the class struggle, they refuse to recognize that it exists. He points out that the disappearance of the frontier forced the superior workers, who usually rose out of their class, to remain in the the working class. So they begin to play a leading role in the organization of labor, and soon these "ambitious young men, denied the opportunity to rise from the working class, preach revolt to the wroking class." The existence of trade unions, London argues is irrefutable proof of the presence of the class struggle. Capital wants more profit and labor wants higher wages, and no amount of pretty speechifying about the need for harmony between these two classes can blunt the basic struggle that exists between them.⁴

London believed absolutely in the inevitability of class struggle and class warfare. His analysis of capitalism from the standpoint of a revolutionary was thoroughgoing and incisive. His reliance upon Marx and Darwin for a theoretical

base combined with his penchant for alarming invective to culminate in his most important contribution to the literature of revolution, written in 1907

. . . The Iron Heel, in the same year, was a key work--perhaps a classic work--of American radicalism.

The story was told through a diary, discovered centuries after the collapse of capitalism in the United States and the rise of an implacable oligarchy. As a novel, The Iron Heel had obvious faults. It was closer to a utopia of horrors, among the first of a new line of such works as Aldous Huxley's Brave New World or George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, which came to replace the social idylls of the last century.⁵

The Iron Heel incorporates London's emphasis on class struggle and places heavy emphasis upon the possibility that in the Darwinistic fight for survival, the capitalist class would prove more of a formidable adversary than most socialists and revolutionaries imagined. Here the underestimation of the fortitude of capitalists to maintain their positions to dominate society is prophesied as resulting in the defeat of the working class, initially. The triumph of socialism is projected to reign after a protracted underground war of attrition between workers and capitalists. The lesson London is preaching is that socialist leaders must recognize the futility of a "democratic" overthrow of capitalism and must prepare for the onset of class war, based on a Marxist analysis of history. He believed that the capitalist would never willingly relinquish power. In this work

It was the capitalist class not the workers, London insisted, who would use violence; in their attempt to

prevent the democratic will of the people from being exercised they would institute a reign of terror to destroy the movements that threatened their power. The years have proved Jack London's picture in The Iron Heel to be tragically correct. We have but to substitute the work "fascism" for "oligarchy" and The Iron Heel becomes a living picture of what actually happened in the past two decades. It is true that London did not foresee the brutal forms which fascism would take in our time. Yet despite many differences between what happened in Germany, Italy and Spain and what is pictured in this book, it is probably the most amazingly prophetic work of the twentieth century.⁶

London's analysis did provide clear and incisive analysis of the American economic and political system and did recognize that a thoroughgoing revolution was the solution to the problem. But we again encounter a problematic situation in his answer. London's embrace of social Darwinism in his estimate of the class struggle in American society and its direction led him to the position that:

Every social and industrial violence, every outrage caused by competition, was beatified with an aura of destined good in the philosophy of Social Darwinism. This put the humanitarianism and idealism under a frightful strain. The blessed prospect of the perfect society springing from child labor called for specially tinted lenses.

For many, a central figure in the social struggle came to be the "superman". In his ruthless quest for power this giant among men would help along the selection of the fittest by crushing the weak and helpless. The superman so appealed to Spencerian thinking that surely he would have been invented by someone else if the German philosopher Nietzsche had not done so. In fact the term "superman" by itself had the power to inflame the imagination of many who had never read Thus Spake Zorathustra, and the rugged individualist superman that emerged in the popular literature--often ferocious blond Vikings--bore small resemblance to the type of genius Nietzsche described.

At the same time the role of unbridled individualism in the evolution of society was being challenged by the philosophy of socialism. In The Communist Manifesto Karl Marx had called upon the workingmen of the world--the supposedly weak and helpless victims of natural selection--to unite and overthrow their exploiters and oppressors, the industrialist ruling class. According to the followers of Marx, not the superman individualist but the socialist community of workers must be the instrument of evolutionary progress.⁷

Throughout London's novels in the character of Wold Larsen in The Sea Wolf, Martin Eden and Ernest Everhard in The Iron Heel, we find the principle actors are archetypical blond beasts--supermen. And this tendency in London's writings forms the basic ambiguity in his creations. Philip Foner comments upon this process.

All works on the Nietzschean world-conqueror, the strong and ruthless supermen, the blond beasts who were destined to be the rulers and emperors over all other men most interested Jack London. He read and discussed several of the books by archpriest of the cult of the superman, Thus Spake Zarathustra, The Will to Power, Genealogy of Morals, The Case of Wagner, The Antichrist, and later wrote a preface for Leo Berg's The Superman. George Bernard Shaw's "philosopher-athlete" in Man and Superman appealed to Jack immensely.

The fact that so much of the Nietzschean philosophy, emphasizing as it did an aristocracy of supermen who would dominate the ordinary run of human beings, and flaunting its destestation of socialism and trade unionism, went counter to his socialist convictions did not bother Jack London. He took those aspects of Nietzsche which appealed to him and which appealed to him and which he could, in his own fashion, reconcile with Marxism. After all, why could not the supermen work to bring about a system under which the average men would be benefited?"⁸

London's acceptance of this elitist point of view has been traced in other contexts to generalize into a

doctrine of supremacy of white races to those of color. Thus it seems in analyzing the work of Jack London we find that his analysis and criticism of the consolidation of American capitalism as an artistic problem is handled in a highly successful way. Yet once subject to the logic of his own expose and his wariness of the power of the ruling class to maintain itself, London was forced to abandon his historical approach and reach, again, outside of history in to the mythological realm of the superman for the location of (to him) a hope for resolution to his problem.

¹Philip S. Foner, Jack London/American Rebel (The Citadel Press, New York, 1964), p. 3-4.

²Ibid., p. 50.

³Maxwell Geismar, Rebels and Ancestors (Houghton-Mifflin, Boston, 1953), p. 161.

⁴Foner, op cit., p. 56.

⁵Geismar, op cit., p. 163.

⁶Foner, op cit., p. 97.

⁷Charles C. Walcutt, Jack London (University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1966), p. 6-7.

⁸Foner, op cit., p. 34.

IV.

C. JOSEPH HELLER

In treating Heller's work, Catch-22, we make an historical shift in the theoretical continuum we have hypothesized. As opposed to the "objective" priorities covered by the preceding writers, as concomitant with embryonic, "vulgar" capitalism; Heller and Vonnegut share artistic affinity for the "subjective" problems characteristic of the stabilized, more totally developed imperialist period in capitalist development. As we move into the contemporary example we find that

. . . Heller's novel does operate within an established literary tradition. Catch-22 is finally a radical protest novel. Like The Grapes of Wrath and An American Tragedy, its protest is directed from the left toward the prevailing centers of power in America. But whereas Steinbeck and Dreiser aimed their polemics at the trust and the tycoon, Heller's target shifted. As C. Wright Mills points out, the new images of power in modern mass society are the interlocking bureaucracies of industry, the military, and the political administration. Heller apparently feels that the power shift must be countered with new patterns of protest.¹

These institutional patterns are products of the capitalist nature of society in the novel. Carl Oglesby in his excellent review of Catch-22

. . . can think of no important American novel whose primary conflict is more deeply class-structured than Catch-22. Heller could hardly have made things clearer; the Second World War, at one level the clash of rival nationalisms, of vertically unified class societies, at another and apparently more important level was an intra-societal clash of rival classes--the men against the officers, the young against the old, the people against the ruling establishment, neither one sharing or even recognizing the other's aim, the one aiming

consciously to extend and consolidate its power, the other aiming fitfully and in semi-darkness to break free of the fold and to redefine social values in its own terms.

In Heller's writing we can begin to discern the movement of emphasis of concern with alienation begin to shift into the psychological, "subjective", dimension. For one of the central themes of his novel deals with the specious logic of the military-bureaucratic hierarchy and its invasion of rationality and redefinition of it with absurdity. The most obvious example of this is the Catch-22 itself. The irrational is given legitimacy

There was only one catch and that was Catch 22, which specified that a concern for one's safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to.²

The insanity of the modern institutional structure, mediated through such rules leads to encounters with absurdity and pathology on the part of his actors. However Heller

. . . refuses to accept absurdity as an ontological fact. Rather, he views it as a by-product of the bureaucracies in control of modern mass society. In Catch-22 the military serves as a metaphor for bureaucratic power in general. As the novel develops, this power spreads until it seems to touch all aspects of human life. Yossarian, the novel's protagonist, is temporarily safe from the destructive influence of the military, for example, when he is on leave in Rome or in the hospital. Eventually, however, these retreats are either destroyed

or transformed by the cancer-like spread of bureaucratic power. MP's drive the prostitutes from the Rome brothel, depriving Yossarian of the temporary solace of sex.⁴

Heller has posed a very significant moral dilemma in attempting to confront the rising power of the absurd milieu he perceives to be contemporary reality. This theatre revolves around the character of Colonel Cathcart. Cathcart as the agent of the dominant class through which institutional-bureaucratic imperatives operate upon mere men is obvious.

Of a very bad lot, Cathcart is the worst. He combines all the standard virtues of his class: ruthlessness, stupidity, avarice, cowardice and so on; Heller persuades us that Cathcart will indeed make general one day--five star, no doubt. But besides this, Cathcart is a centrally placed actor, someone whose decisions directly hit the lives of the men under his command. It is Cathcart who keeps raising the number of missions the men must fly, Cathcart who gleefully anticipates casualties among his men on grounds that this will be a proof to the higher-ups of his own greater dedication and bravery, Cathcart who consciously punishes fliers by volunteering them for exceptionally dangerous missions, Cathcart who demands the pointless bombing of an undefended and perhaps friendly mountain village. He is a ridiculous person, but also consequential--a monstrous combination. Heller quite methodologically refuses us the opportunity of being for one moment mistaken about this Cathcart. He is a criminal all around, everyone's executioner: a clear and present danger.⁵

Following Carl Oglesby's provocative analysis of Catch-22 we must in turn ask the question; "why is Cathcart not assassinated?" If the absurdity Heller is describing is a product of historical development, then why cannot this dilemma be resolved by real men acting to bring the ridiculous back under moral and rational sanctions?

The world of Catch-22, that is, is one in which the possibility of political, historical rebellion has already been foreclosed. Only try to imagine what happens to the psychological ambience of the book, its tone and its spirit, if Yossarian--a bombardier after all who kills people every day--should actually bring off the assassination of a war criminal, Cathcart. We have been able to smile with derision at this immune and safeguarded Cathcart who kills and kills with impunity. As soon, however, as he is killed, that superior smile seems no longer possible. Everything becomes suddenly very serious; almost automatically, a search for the mode of his assassin's tragic downfall shoots immediately into the book. Yossarian who makes his rebellion political and real--revolutionary--is a Yossarian who can no longer be focused by means of the underlying assumption of the novel.⁶

The underlying assumptions of the novel are, simplistically, the inevitability of the subservience of man to an irrationally antagonistic existence mediated through absurdity on the individual level. Heller has depicted a problematic situation generated by men through history and yet again sought to disengage from the process in answering his question. Again the failure to confront history results in the failure of the work as art. Rather than writing a novel which resolves/revolutionizes

. . . Heller has not written this novel. At the last minute, he in fact kills the dilemma which he had seemed to pose by introducing a third term. If historical revolution is impossible, he says, private rebellion is not. A rebellion which amounts only to an escape is produced at the very moment the last dice are being rolled. It turns out to be the reverse side of the twenty-second catch, or perhaps it is catch-23: to an unthinkable revolution and an unendurable regime, Heller suddenly adds the alternative of desertion. If men cannot remake their social destinies by acting together in history, then each man, it seems, can avoid social destiny

altogether by escaping history--by escaping politics, by taking asylum in this nonaligned Sweden which Yossarian is headed for at the unconvincingly festive and to my mind disasterous close of the novel. Nonaligned: that is, a country without politics, presumable therefore without Colonel Cathcarts, a country in which social history is no longer individually contingent.⁷

¹Charles B. Harris, Contemporary American Novelists of the Absurd (College and University Press, New Haven, 1971), p. 34.

²Carl Oglesby, "The Deserters: The Contemporary Defeat of Fiction", in Radical Perspectives in the Arts, ed. by Lee Baxandall, (Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1972), p. 40.

³Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1955), p. 47.

⁴Harris, op cit., p. 35.

⁵Oglesby, op cit., p. 46.

⁶Ibid., p. 48-49.

⁷Ibid., p. 49.

IV.

D. KURT VONNEGUT

In taking the liberty of using an analytical division of labor, if our analysis of Heller focused upon the theoretical dimension of contemporary literature, then our analysis of the writing of Vonnegut should center upon the methodological content. This is not to say, of course, that Vonnegut's writings do not exhibit analagous theoretical tendencies to reject historical reality as a basis for rationality. Vonnegut's use of the medium of science fiction to provide a means of historical escape is obvious.

There is another aspect of the science fiction, also pervasive in The Sirens of Titan, which calls attention to itself in Slaughterhouse-Five. That is the element of evasion or escape. For while the science fiction stresses the grim aspects of existence--inevitability, meaninglessness, alienation and isolation, the absurd--it remains itself an escape into imagination and fancy. This ambivalence of science fiction contributes to the mixed tone common in Vonnegut. . . . Billy's space journey extends the extential terms of his earthly journey, it also contains some of the happiest, most comforting moments of his life. The Tralfmadorians themselves seem kind, and apparently do their best to treat Billy with understanding. He feels as happy there as on earth, his little zoo world seems cozy, and his relationship with Montana Wildhack is a loving one. In fact it looks almost like an erotic dream come true combined with ideal matrimonial harmony, the sweet innocence of Adam and Eve recreated in the snug safety of a geodesic Eden. . . .

. . . If in these respects the time and space travel looks like wish-fulfillment or escape from reality, that is entirely appropriate. We must surely wonder, like his daughter and others in the novel, if all Billy's talk of Tralfmadore and time travel is not madness.¹

This is to say that Vonnegut falls into the same trap in his writing as have the other cases we have analyzed. Again while

remaining true to the a priori critical nature of artistic endeavors to critique established reality, his attempt at an historical answer flies in the face of his historical problem. We do not mean science fiction to be escapist in the sense of unable to depict problems, on the contrary

Actually science fiction is primarily social criticism, usually veiled in the remoteness of time and alien location. Good science fiction communicates most effectively by projecting current problems to their logical future conclusions. Nor is science fiction social parody (except when it parodies itself, as in the Sirens of Titan) because parody is normally an inversion or grotesque variation of things which exist now in the world. Science fiction, however is an extension of current trends to logical and frequently horrible conclusions, and an understanding of science fiction's tendency to extend current social phenomena into the future is important, even critical, to a recognition of the nature of current science fiction.²

One of the main literary devices (methodologies) employed by Vonnegut is a representation of reality in which sequential history and causal relationships are dismembered and given random, coincidental character. This method, for instance, provides the basic structure for the novel Cat's Cradle which is a

. . . novel which deals with the end of the universe as the results of a long and complicated train of events. The Vonnegut world in this novel is not so very different from our own. He is dealing with one of the constant themes of science fiction, the cataclysmic ending of the universe through the action of man. But the universe that is destroyed is one which corresponds with considerable sociological, religious, and logical precision to the universe which exists in reality for most of mankind. It is this sense of immediate reality which makes Cat's Cradle the terrifying, if amusing book that it is. Vonnegut uses here an objective, correlative, scientific world familiar to his readers, to communicate the genuine but unfamiliar absurdity of the universe.³

Vonnegut's reality is one in which historical progress and value laden moral questions are given disturbing treatment.

One does not read far in Vonnegut, however, without discovering that despite the naturalness of the narrator's voice, he is not in the natural world. He is instead in a world of futuristic fantasy, a world where beings like Bokonists and Tralfmadoreans are as natural as grass and trees. Vonnegut's narrator lacks the frenzy of Heller's in Catch-22, or the weirdness of Barth's in Giles Goat-Boy, and yet the world he evokes is as fantastic as anything is those books. Indeed it is more fantastic; it is harder to find real-life parallels to Tralfmadore than to Heller's World War II or Barth's cold war campus. At the same time, Vonnegut's world is more "real" than these others. The naturalness of the narrator's voice gives us this feeling, but so do many details of the setting. The names of Castro, Dresden, Hitler, and Stalin occur in Cat's Cradle and Slaughterhouse-Five, for example; but these real events and people are present in Catch-22 and Giles Goat-Boy only as they are made metaphorical or allegorical.

In Catch-22 the world of the Second War is captured in one microcosm, the United States Air Force. In Giles Goat-Boy the post-war world is allegorized, its main personages and events finding their parallels in the smaller world of the university campus. Here everything fantastic has its real-life or earthly counterpart. But in books like Vonnegut's Sirens of Titian, Cat's Cradle, and Slaughterhouse-Five there is a different alignment of fantasy and reality. The two are portrayed side by side as if both are equally fantastic and equally real-- Christianity and Bokonism, Tralfmadore and Dresden, the Wall Street Journal and the Beatrice Rumfoord Galactic Cookbook. Vonnegut's deadpan narrator is related to deadpan tall-tale narrators of all sorts from Swift's Gulliver to Twain's Jim Baker; but in Vonnegut's case the reader's pleasure is derived not only from the continued tension between tone and material (as in Swift and Twain) but, still more importantly, from the tension between two kinds of material, one fantastic and the other real.⁴

The methodology employed by Vonnegut to effect this dissolution of the historical continuum and firmament of the idea of causality is interesting. His treatment of the

non-sequential nature of time coupled with absolute existential equality of phenomena and events is important to this process. The correlation of unrelated fantastic and realistic material in conjunction with a confused concept of qualitative and quantitative moral indifferentiation adds further to this tendency.

The escape generated by Vonnegut in his writings is the culmination, so to speak, of the process we have been observing in the cases examined above. The various distortions of history as the writers focus upon problems moves across the objective-subjective continuum become more extreme. The divorce of morality from material consequences results in forms of idealistic resolutions to moral problems which if we take Vonnegut as the arrival point can be seen as nothing short of fantastic. To illustrate this final point succinctly

Finally for Vonnegut there is no meaning or purpose in history. God is not interested. Deo volante becomes, in Slaughterhouse-Five, "if the accident will". There is no such thing as Progress, or Providence, or Manifest Destiny. Vonnegut's own myths of history is given best in a vision which Billy Pilgrim has, in the fourth chapter of Slaughterhouse-Five, of a war movie run backward. American planes, full of holes, corpses, and wounded bodies, take off backward from England; over France, German fighters heal their enemies and raise the dead by sucking bullets and shrapnel from them; over Germany, the bombers in turn heal their enemies by sucking up bombs and drying up flames; the bombs are shipped backward to America, where factories work day and night to dismantle them ("touchingly, it was mainly women who did this work"); their elements are shipped to specialists who hide them cleverly in the ground, in remote areas, so they can "never hurt anybody again." And then, in Billy's

vision, the American airmen become innocent adolescents, Hitler becomes a baby, and all humanity conspires to produce a perfect couple in Paradise. History, in this vision is sin; and the fall of man for Vonnegut is a fall from timelessness into history. . . .⁵

¹Peter J. Reed, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Warner Books Inc., New York, 1972), p. 196-197.

²Karen and Charles Wood, "The Vonnegut Effect: Science Fiction and Beyond", in The Vonnegut Statement, ed. by Jerome Klinkowitz and John Somer, (Dell Publishing Co., New York, 1973), p. 136.

³Ibid., p. 146-147.

⁴Glenn Meeter, "Vonnegut's Formal and Moral Other-worldliness: Cat's Cradle and Slaughterhouse-Five", in Klinkowitz and Somer, op cit., p. 205-206.

⁵Ibid., p. 215-216.

IV.

E. CONCLUSION

In attempting to recapitulate the thematic trends which run through our examples, we want to observe several points. Our analyses have not been intended to be book reviews and have not exhausted the possibility of utilization of these authors as sources of data for research. A specific intent and bias has been utilized to glean for our purposes ideas and generalizations relevant to our hypostheses.

We have covered the two ends of the historical continuum of the development of capitalism in the United States with our examples from literature. While we cannot support the simple notion of smooth, quantum continuity over history of this development; we believe that the case has been made that within the maturing process, there has been a qualitative shift in emphasis in the character of ideological content accompanying this evolution.

Two main generalizations are intended to be drawn from this analytical section of the thesis. First, that we are indeed witnessing the invasion from the long occupied 'objective' levels of society by capitalism into the 'subjective' realm of rationality. As capitalism has realized itself in imperialism, a process has been under way in which the consolidation of the economic and political bases of capitalist organization have begun to ultimately determine the psychological content of reality. By this line of

thought we mean to say that as the overt, grossly exploitative characteristics of capitalism were in some ways buffered and mitigated as development into the imperialist stage of history occurred; romanticists such as Twain and revolutionaries such as London had the bases of their critique somewhat co-opted. The ability of the system to meet material needs allowed time for consolidation and created the condition for the maturation into imperialism and the shift in emphasis to the subjective dimension. Heller and Vonnegut as representatives of the more mature imperatives of imperialism deal with these more esoteric contradictions concerning psychopathology, absurdity and intellectual alienation in their works. Our point then, is that there has been a fulfillment or realization; i.e., a completion, of alienation moving along an objective-subjective continuum concurrent with the development of total imperialism in the United States.

The second point we want to render concerns the nature of alienated art as products which are influenced by the process of reification. We have shown, at least for our own examples, that art is on the one hand, a priori critical in nature. We mean to say that art is a transcendent enterprise and that by virtue of its representation of the extant reality as imperfect and less than utopian, it is in a sense revolutionary. However, once we proceed from this intrinsic, intuitive feature of art and begin to examine it as an

ideological phenomenon, the impact of the work contains another variable. This feature, we believe, in tying this section of analysis into our previous chapters, is the basic metaphysical character put forth by the author. We have noted the utilization of history by the writers to frame their respective artistic problems. We have seen these contradictions, once elucidated, confounded and then, under the sponsorship of the writers in question, denied their origin.

We have shown how, through the utilization of a Marxist analysis, that what have proven ultimately to be moral problems through history have been given the character of existential, timeless, irresolvable dilemmas. These problems of conscience are Marxist problems in that they are human problems and in that Marxism is fundamentally and foremost a humanist philosophical and metaphysical stance. The problem of alienated art is a product of the divorce of theory from practice on all levels; a product of ideals articulated but not acted upon. The result of such alienated art is, quoting at length from Oglesby again, an artist who tries

. . . to buy time for himself and his culture, snarled with lunacy and injustice as it is, by wrapping up everything in a tissue of cynicism and privileged impotence. History being insufferable but unchangeable, he says the good man is therefore morally reprieved from the awful sentence of having to change it. In the company of Camus' solitary rebel, he need only desert.

What Heller finally offers us super-sensitive Westerners is a contemporary world in which we may ignore what threatens us by its example, what challenges us to change our lives. A world, that is, in which there is no Fanny Lou Hamer, no Schwerner, Chaney or Goodman, no Castro or Guevara or Nguyen Huu Tho; a world without fundamental tension, one which is not destined for significant transformation, a world in which the summons to partisanship has been muffled if not ridiculed by a nihilism which has recently discovered gaiety, a despair which has learned how to frolic in the ruins of a certain hope.

Maybe this was a remotely defensible position in that decade before the First World War when another solitary rebel deserted another homeland 'to forge', as he put it in a tone now forbidden 'in the smithy of my soul the un-created conscience of my race'. But several wars and revolutions have changed the situation. The conscience exists, standing before us now asking not to be created or perfected but to be chosen and defended, in need of champions not exiles. Any fiction which refuses that request is henceforth a collaborationist fiction, a fiction that tells the horrible lie that Charmichael and Bravo and Montes do not exist. It will require indeed a post-realistic fiction to tell this lie, a fiction which suddenly wants to toy with the notion that after reality there might still be something left. There will not be. There will only be men who can catch an eternally difficult reality and those who cannot. Those who cannot will continue to conceal their desertion beneath an historical sadness endlessly more intricate in design and in decoration even lovely; we shall continue to hear the sighs of an expiring culture whose self-confidence is being permanently broken. And those, on the other hand, who will have the courage to see what is there in the world and to see moreover what that world needs to become--these people, putting their own comfort last and labouring to acquire skills which come far from naturally to the modern Westerner, will concentrate all their power on that moment when the good man in hell, acting in acute foreknowledge of probable defeat, nevertheless acts--the true existentialist who chooses his history, who chooses his situation, and who chooses to change it; who declines exile and desertion, who declines to be defeated by a despair which he nevertheless refuses to reject. Such people will have no interest in a fiction of post-realism. They will decide and again decide to live as fully as they can in that eternal home before the eternal revolution which is eternally the moment of a man's communion with his brothers.¹

In effect we must concede that by rejecting history using a variety of theoretical distortions, that this trend exhibited by the authors represents the ability of capitalism to maintain an ideological continuity in assigning to history its ability to sustain itself.

A third line of questions which is beyond the methodological scope developed here suggested for further inquiry nonetheless. This would be an investigation into the possibility of subjective conditions as we have suggested a definition as adequately contradictory for the formation of a revolutionary class consciousness. If subjective conditions are seen as the logical extensions of objective conditions and a historical society rather than some sort of idealism; then the possibilities seem worthwhile examining. For instance, if we were to apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs to our situation we could call the early period of capitalist development one in which contradictions were more obviously contradictory to physical maintenance and safety needs. Our contemporary examples would seem to correspond more to needs for community and self-actualization. Certainly this is not to say that possibilities for self-actualization did not exist before modern society, rather that the material bases for the liberation of men into higher order satisfaction has never before been potentially so universal. Could contradictions of this nature prove catalytic in breaking through reified history? While

our material does seem to indicate some support for this position, it is by no means conclusive. However a specific methodology could be developed to shed light on this interesting question as another project for analysis.

¹Oglesby, op cit., p. 50-52.

CHAPTER V.

We have touched upon many seemingly diverse topics up to this point in our analysis. We began our discussion with an examination of the process of polarization of metaphysical outlook in the social sciences. Opposing trends in theoretical and methodological outlook were analyzed as being necessary phenomena given the economic and political premises which are the realities of social organization in the contemporary West. We have traced the dialectical polarization of intellectual positions and the metaphysical universe as they are rooted in the evolution of society and relations of production culminating in the appearance upon the historical stage of imperialism. Using dialectics and Marx's method of political economy we have followed the circuitious and logically necessary emergence of a fetishized conception of history mediated through a reified consciousness as a functional consequent of capitalist development.

In embarking upon an experimental tack in order to formulate a methodology appropriate to the task of examining the specific character of reified consciousness through time, we believe that we have adequately laid the groundwork to make several general points concerning the nature of contemporary scientific endeavor. The unifying metaphysical principle we find present throughout the specific cases analyzed here is the idea of a hypostatized and supra-historical nature of capitalist reality. We have demonstrated how the methodological concomitant of this theoretical position implies also a

specific, "special" definition of "facts". George Lukacs writes in discussing this phenomenon notes the opposing tendencies to treat facts in either a dialectical or bourgeois manner.

If, then, the internal structure of "facts" and their relations is essentially known in a-historic manner, if they are seen as implicated in a process of uninterrupted revolution, we must ask where the greatest inexactitude lies. It is when the 'facts' are perceived under a form of objectivity wherein they are dominated by laws which I know with a methodological certainty (or at least probability) are valid for these facts? Or is it when I consciously recognize the consequences of this situation and therefore adopt a critical attitude toward the certainty which is achieved, concentrating upon the moments in which this historic character, this decisive modification manifests itself?

Thus, the historical character of the "facts" which science believes it perceives in their "purity" is fated to this illusion. As products of historical evolution, these facts are not only involved in continued change. More than that, they are--precisely in the structure of their objectivity--the product of a specific historic epoch: that of capitalism. Consequently, a "science" which takes the immediacy of the facts as its basis, which sees this form of their objectivity as the point of departure for scientific conceptualization, places itself simply and dogmatically upon the terrain of capitalist society.¹

The analyses of literature made in the preceeding section were designed to present some parallels, in the sense of operating from the same metaphysical stance, of the process of degeneration described just above. The basically idealistic character of bourgeois morality, in operating as theory divorced from practice leads inevitable to a rejection of history; a materially grounded morality, as theory generated through practice operates to overthrow the phantom

stability of capitalist reality, to resolve contradictions within the system through history.

Contemporary Western social science, in embracing "facts" and rejecting history is taking an ideological position. Theoretical and methodological distortions in the sociological realm can be seen as analagous to the distortions which were sponsored by the writers analyzed above. The thread of continuity running through the common metaphysical mistake is the inability of moral imperatives to confront the reified and a-historical enormity of capitalism successfully.

In conclusion we must ask ourselves the question: what is the future of orthodox Western sociology? The answer is simple and will be borne out in history. Mao Tse-tung has commented (to paraphrase) that revolution is the main trend in the world today. The implications for the U.S. as an imperialist power and in conjunction its moribund body of social thought is obvious. To borrow an analysis of the world situation from a communication between the Communist Parties of the People's Republic of China and the U.S.S.R. concerning international political developments

It is perfectly obvious that in our age the main content and the chief trends of the historical development of human society are no longer determined by imperialism but by the world socialist system, by all the progressive forces struggling against imperialism for the reorganization of society along socialist lines. The contradiction between capitalism and socialism is the chief contradiction of our epoch. On the outcome of the struggle of the two world systems the destinies of peace, democracy and

socialism depend to a decisive extent. And the correlation of forces in the world arena is changing all the time in favour of socialism.

The struggle of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America for their national and social liberation, and the successes already achieved in this field, the growing struggle of the working class, of all the working people of the capitalist countries against the monopolies and against exploitation, in the interest of social progress, are of the greatest importance for the destinies of the historical development of mankind. Socialist revolutions, national-liberation, anti-imperialist and anti-colonial revolutions, peoples democratic revolutions, extensive peasant movements, the struggle of the masses for the overthrow of fascist and other tyrannical regimes, general democratic movements against national oppression--in our time will these merge into a single world revolutionary stream undermining and destroying capitalism.²

If the tendency in the world towards universal socialist reorganization is realized then and only then will contemporary Western sociology be seen for what it has really been. As the progress of mankind is marked with the passing of capitalism from the historical stage, so with it will go the bourgeois intellectual enterprises which have fostered the ideological mystifications and contortions which have supported it, chief among them bourgeois sociology. Lacking the a priori critical nature of art to transcend given reality through realism, sociology as a science in rejecting a critical stance through theoretical and methodological distortion, has succeeded in relegating itself (as some future assessment of the history of social thought will surely conclude) to the status of mere propaganda, simple and vulgar.

¹Georg Lukacs, "What is Orthodox Marxism?", op cit., p. 28-29.

²Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in reply to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, A Proposal Concerning the General Line of the International Communist Movement (Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1963), p. 70-71. For an excellent and penetrating analysis of the political economy of counter-revolutionary trends in the Soviet Union which have sharply undermined socialist solidarity internationally, cf. Martin Nicolaus The Restoration of Capitalism in the U.S.S.R. (Liberator Press, Chicago, 1976). "On questions of basic theory, the Soviet leadership has thrown out the Marxist theory of the state as the repressive instrument of a class in favor of the view that the state is the representative organ of the whole people. They have similarly cut the heart out of the Marxist-Leninist theory of the role of the communist party. They have distorted the Marxist view on the transition to socialism to turn it into the illusion of peaceful overthrow of the bourgeoisie. They have discarded the core of Lenin's theory of imperialism in favor of the myth of "irreversible detente" with imperialist powers. This is to mention just a few examples.

In foreign policy, the Soviet leadership beginning with Krushchev broke the solidarity of the socialist camp by forming an alliance with India's expansionism against socialist China and with Yugoslav chauvinism against socialist Albania. It imposed unjustifiable conditions on its aid to these fraternal countries, and abruptly cut them off when they insisted on treatment as equals.

It violated the independence of the Eastern European people's democracies, occupied them with its troops, proclaimed that their sovereignty was "limited" and turned the majority of them into its client-states and dependencies. This, too, was merely the beginning.

Most important have been the changes instituted by the new Soviet leadership in the economic base of Soviet society. They used the power of the Soviet state to nurture, fortify and put in command the traces of capitalism that survived in the relations of production, while breaking up the dominant strongholds of socialist relations. In their economic reforms of a decade ago, they erected an out-and-out capitalist economic structure of a state-monopoly capitalist type. It is today a consolidated economic system that conforms in all essential features to the classic analysis of imperialism given by Lenin. (p. 4-5).

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