

But if you firmly maintain the ambiguity, if you sacrifice neither one nor the other aspect of words, you have properly begun to produce true literature: a challenge which challenges itself. The writers of *Tel Quel* know this. Only that which they contest is language as an instrument of communication and expression. Thus, they end up in a sort of literary positivism of the signs we spoke of a moment ago. I see resignation there, since if you suppress communication you also suppress literature, which lives only through this *dépassement*.

### THE POLITICS OF SUBJECTIVITY:

#### NOTES ON MARXISM, THE MOVEMENT, AND BOURGEOIS SOCIETY

by

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Theoretical contributions on and for a white left seem irrelevant if not intolerable. Irrelevant because the object of any discussion, stable and well defined political groups has passed from the scene — excepting the Marxist sects: and because the loose participants of the left have themselves passed from political activities that include reading and theory to political (and non-political) activities that preclude it — movies, music, drugs, and the rest. To bemoan this is already to mystify the reasons that brought it about. To ignore it, is to acquiesce. And intolerable because the theory — and theoretician — which is to reflect on a general situation seems to exclude itself from that very situation; it passes judgement from without. It smells of elitism. Yet, as Marx noted, theory or philosophy “does not stand outside the world anymore than man’s brain is outside him because it is not in his stomach.”<sup>1</sup>

The defense of theory, if not boring, is suspect: it serves no purpose. Citations from Lenin on the importance of revolutionary theory for a revolutionary movement as a response to this charge are insufficient. Rather, theory if it is to become a force, must comprehend why it is not; it is obliged to study not only a left that has junked theory, but a “counter-culture” — and culture — that has phased out books and words for images and feelings. Talk of a revolutionary “counter-culture” is the gab of the culture industry itself — if investigations into the nature of the prevailing culture is foresworn. What is unique to the left may be common to the establishment, at least the vanguard of the establishment. To illuminate the former one must look to the latter.

The following thoughts shift between the two, between phenomena within the left and those outside it. They are obviously related by more than mere negation. The left duplicates as well as negates bourgeois culture. Two points should be mentioned at the beginning. This analysis is concerned with the trends, though trends that permeate the whole of a young left. And secondly, some of it may be obsolete because details of the political thought and slogans

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1. Karl Marx, “The leading Article of No. 179 of *Kölnische Zeitung*,” in *Marx and Engels on Religion* (N.Y., 1964), p. 30.

examined have already been discarded; so rapidly does the left change today. Yet this is already the problem. Opinions and ideas dated within the left are obsolete not by choice and thought, but “automatically,” thoughtlessly and unconsciously. If the latest political opinions are improvements over former ones, they have not surpassed, but more or less forgotten them. They pass as they arose, uncritically – and promise to return. Thinking falls under the spell of fashion: change without change. If ideas such as “smash monogomy” are not promoted in certain circles with the same vigor as previously, this does not mean they have been subject to criticism and transcended, but simply dropped, to be elsewhere and later recycled and reused.

The rejection of theory is grounded explicitly or implicitly in the affirmation of subjectivity. Theory seems politically impotent and personally unreal and irrelevant. Only human subjectivity – the personal – seems real and potent; the personal, it is said, is political, the political personal. The identity of the two eliminates the need to pursue either separately. Theory and objective thought makes way for human relations, feelings, intuitions. The immediacy of these kills to the quick the core of theory and thought: mediacy. The presence of the here and now in the form of subjective feelings banishes thoughts to after-thoughts. It instills an immediacy that stills reflection.

The promise that a focus on human subjectivity could harbor is lost if no attention is given to its place within bourgeois society in general. It is here where the relation of phenomena within and outside a left is at once critical and fluid. For the cult of human subjectivity per se is not the negation of bourgeois society but its substance. Yet against a Marxist dogma that proscribed all subjectivity, its articulation within the left was progress; but as an exclusive pursuit it courts regression that constitutes bourgeois society’s own progress. The fetish of subjectivity and human relationships is progress in fetishism. The rejection of theory seeking insight into objectivity in favor of subjective feelings reconstitutes a suspect Cartesian tradition in the reverse: I feel, therefore I am. The inner drive of bourgeois society was to throw the human subject back on itself. Descartes himself thought no other. “My third maxim was to endeavor always to conquer myself rather than fortune and to change my desires rather than the order of the world . . .”<sup>2</sup> Human subjectivity was left to shift for itself: to examine and transform the self, not the universe of the self. To prescribe more subjectivity as aid to the damaged subject is to prescribe the illness for the cure.

The wholesale rejection of theory incurs the constitutional failing of the individual retailer; apparently free to buy and sell he is a victim of objective laws without knowing them. The private individual free to pick and choose was a joke from the beginning; not only the allotments were already picked and chosen, but the contents of the choice followed the dictates of the social not individual world. “The private interest is already a particular social interest and it is only

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2. Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, pt. III.

within the given social conditions and given social means that it can be pursued. It is the interest of the private individual, but its contents, like the form and means of development are determined by independent social conditions."<sup>3</sup> The individual as an autonomous being was ideology even as bourgeois society announced it. The unemployed, like the employed, were to think their lack of luck, like their luck, was due to private abilities, and not fated by the social whole. No less are the private hopes, desires, and nightmares cued by public and social forces. The social does not "influence" the private; it dwells within it. "It is above all necessary to avoid postulating 'society' once again as an abstraction confronting the individual. The individual *is* the *social being*."<sup>4</sup>

The fetish of human relations, responses, emotions, perpetuates the myth; abstracted from the social whole they appear as the individualized responses of free men and women to particular situations, and not, as they are, the dehuman responses to a non-human world. A rat psychology befits humans only when a suffocating world has transformed men and women into rats. The endless talk on human relations and responses is utopian; it assumes what is obsolete or yet to be realized: *human* relations. Today they are inhuman; they partake more of rats than humans, things than people. And not because of bad will but because of an evil world. To forget this is to indulge in the ideology of sensitivity groups that work to de-sensitize by cutting off human relations from the social roots that have made them brutal. More sensitivity today means revolution or madness. The rest is chatter.

The cult of subjectivity is a direct response to its eclipse. The more authentic human experience and relationships disappear, the more they are invoked – for exactly that reason. Autobiographical accounts replace thought because autobiography as the history of a unique individual ceases to exist. 'To get in touch with one's feelings' – a slogan picked up by parts of the women's movement – is to affirm an individual existence already suspect. Self and mutual affirmation and confirmation seek to recall an individualized experience that is a social memory. The atomized particle known as the individual salvages itself as advertising peddles its identical wares: by emphasizing differences that long ago were unreal.

The exclusive pursuit of subjectivity insures its decline. Not against the drive of bourgeois society but in tune with it, it takes a social product as a private woe or utopia. What was exacted from the bourgeois individual at the beginning of its history, that its freedom, labor, etc., were only subjective, is promoted at the final stage as its salvation. That parts of the women's movement have made subjectivity programmatic, repudiating all objective theoretical thought, indicates only the extent to which the revolt recapitulates the oppression: women allegedly incapable of thought and systematic thinking but superior in sentiments and feelings have repeated this in their very rebellion. Yet the point is not to resuscitate a scientific (Marxist) orthodoxy that eliminated any role for

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3. Marx, *Grundrisse* (Frankfurt und Wien, n.d.), p. 74.

4. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, "Private Property and Communism," VI. (all editions)

the subject. Since Lukács and Reich, and others, viable Marxist thought has worked precisely against this orthodoxy; but here it was not a question of advancing pure subjectivity, rather of restoring a subject-object dialectic. The alternative of pure subjectivity and pure objectivity are the alternatives of bourgeois thought itself. Marxist and radical thought must use another logic, dialectical logic.

The promise of radical subjectivity to escape political and personal irrelevancy is unfulfilled. While it was positive progress against an older 'objective' orthodoxy – which progress here will simply be noted but not elaborated – it repeated in reverse the same sins: an indifference toward the actual content of bourgeois society that perpetuates this content. "The passage to theory-less praxis was motivated by the objective impotence of theory," wrote T.W. Adorno, "and multiplied that impotence by the isolation and fetishization of the subjective moment of the historical movement . . ." <sup>5</sup> Subjectivity that forsakes sustained theory gravitates towards slogans that are not the crystalizations of discussion and thought but secretions of the existing society. Under the sway of immediacy slogans are accepted as coughed up by bourgeois society. As such they do not serve to popularize thought, but replace it. From "armed struggle" to "smash monogomy" they are not wrong in themselves, but wrong insofar as they are blank labels indifferent, or rather antagonistic toward content. They are to be applied anywhere and everywhere, as if indifference toward the particular content was the hallmark of revolutionary theory and not its negation. Blindness toward content is the social logic of a society that deals in exchange values: how much? The logic of revolution must be another logic – the recognition of the particular and its social context: concrete dialectical thought. No matter their tone blank categories of affirmation or condemnation on armed struggle, the third world, leadership, men, and the rest, repeat not resist the inner mechanism of this society. The preservation of concrete dialectical analysis, even in idealistic form – to follow Lenin – makes it closer to dialectical materialism than vulgar materialism that is blind and indifferent. The former in its loyalty to the particular preserves what a crude materialism deaf, dumb, and blind to distinctions loses. What Lenin said of idealism can perhaps be said, for the same reason, of pacificism. Intelligent pacificism is closer to revolution than vulgar armed struggle.

The slogan of 'smash monogomy' is of particular interest for elucidating the political content of a current slogan; to be examined is the extent such a slogan resists the drive of bourgeois society, or appearances notwithstanding, seconds it. From the start it suggests a violence that is hardly commensurate with its object, as if the forces out to sustain bourgeois monogamy were to do so with cannon and gun. Rather to 'smash' monogomy is to smash something weak and frail, already despised and hated, openly or secretly, by many. The popular ridicule that surrounds marriage indicates the historical judgement on an institution that

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5. T. W. Adorno, "Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis," *Stichworte*. (Frankfurt, 1969) p. 177.

persists illogically in the face of its own refutation. The open scorn or ridicule reveals the profound ambiguity of bourgeois society towards its own product: maintaining marriage as a means of transmitting authority while suspecting it to be obsolete.

In fact, as Marcuse and others have shown, the bourgeois family – and bourgeois monogomy – as instruments of authority are being eclipsed by more efficient means, schools, television, etc., that bypass the family. The father as the wielder of the absolute power of condemnation or inheritance is being phased out. The erosion of the economic content of the family unit ultimately saps its authoritarian structure in favor of complete fragmentation. Yet what is to be noted is that the family in its ‘classic’ form was not simply “the factory of bourgeois ideology,”<sup>6</sup> but it contained an anti-authoritarian moment. The family as an independent and (relatively) isolated unit preserved a ‘space’ in which the individual could develop *against* the society; as a mediator of authority, and not merely an instrument of it, it resisted as well as complied. It supplied an intellectual, and sometimes physical refuge which is the source of resistance. The notion – practically extinct? – that you can always come home echoes this role of protection offered against the forms of social domination. Within this space, the family relationships not only partook of the prevailing inhumanity, but preserved the possibility of something else and better. “In contradiction to public life, in the family where the relations are not mediated through the market and the individuals do not confront each other as competitors, the possibility exists for men and women to act not merely as functions, but as individuals.”<sup>7</sup> The use of “sisters and brothers” by the left itself recalls the solidarity that at least for a moment was nurtured in the family.

That the family – and monogomy – was a form of humanity as well as a form of inhumanity is crucial to the Marxist critique. To lose this dialectic is to invite regression; it is to fall behind bourgeois monogomy, not realizing the human moment in monogomy, but irradicating it in favor of a new and repressive equality. It is this notion of equality that fuels and inspires the critique – and hatred – for monogomy, as well as that of privilege and exclusion in general. It belongs to the bourgeoisie’s most progressive *and* regressive program: progressive in its democratic content against feudal privilege, and regressive in that it is ultimately grounded in the market of “equal” exchange, and works to further the domain of the market. This equality is abstract as money is abstract; knowing neither quality nor content, it registers only numbers. In its indifference toward the actual content of life, a critique sustained by equality signals its bourgeois ideal “that tolerates nothing qualitatively different.”<sup>8</sup>

In different guises – always resisted by Marx – it emerged within and outside Marxism, as in critiques of wage-labor, classes, private property – and monogomy. The substance of such critiques was directed towards forms of

6. W. Reich, *Kritik der bürgerlichen Sexualreform* (Berlin, 1968), p. 60.

7. M. Horkheimer, “Autorität und Familie,” *Kritische Theorie der Gesellschaft* Band I (Frankfurt, 1968), p. 346.

8. T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik* (Frankfurt, 1970), p. 148.

inequality, and it sought only equalization or democratization. In seeing only privilege and inequalities it worked to level — capitalism's own task. In losing the dialectical moment, it regressed; not the abolition of classes but their equalization,<sup>9</sup> not the abolition of capitalist property but its democratization, not the abolition of wage-labor but its extension to all, were programs based on a bourgeois ideal of equality. Equality fixated on forms forgot the content that was inhuman equal or not. A critique of capitalist property inspired solely by equality suggests only an equality of domination, not its end.

Rather bourgeois property contains both human and inhuman moments, as does bourgeois monogamy. Marcuse's essay on Marx's *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts* is emphatic on this: Marxism seeks the abolition of *alienated* labor and *class* property, not 'labor' and 'property' which is the praxis of free men and women.<sup>10</sup> It rejects both of the abstract alternatives that a critique founded on equality proposes: the abolition of all property — primitive communism — or its extension as wage-labor to all — utopia as a work-gang. Rather Marxism seeks to realize the human and individual moment in labor and property that goes beyond formal equality. Marx ridiculed those who saw communism as the abolition or equalization of all property. In his piece on the Commune, he wrote, "the Commune, they explain, intends to abolish property, the basis of all civilization! Yes, gentlemen, the Commune intended to abolish that class property . . . It wanted to make individual property a truth."<sup>11</sup> Or in the *Manifesto*: with the end of capitalism "personal property is not thereby transformed into social property. It is only the social character of the property that is changed. It loses its class character."<sup>12</sup>

A passage in the *Manuscripts* is the fullest discussion of the communism that would not end capitalism, but would universalize it by equalizing it. To Marx it is no accident that the key to such communism is its critique of bourgeois monogamy. The passage is worth citing in full: Primitive communism "wants to destroy *everything* which is not capable of being possessed by all as *private property*. It wants to do away by force with talent, etc. For it the sole purpose of life and existence is direct physical *possession*. The task of the laborer is not done away with, but extended to all men . . . Finally the movement of opposing universal property to private property finds expression in the animal form of opposing to *marriage* (certainly a *form of exclusive private property*) the *communism of women*, in which a woman becomes a piece of *communal* and *common* property. It may be said that this idea of the *communism of women* gives away the *secret* of this as yet completely crude and thoughtless communism. Just as a woman passes from marriage to general prostitution, so the entire world of wealth (that is, of man's objective substance) passes from the

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9. See Marx's comments on Bakunin's program, Marx-Engels *Werke*, XVIII (Berlin, 1969), p. 14f.

10. Herbert Marcuse, "Neue Quellen zur Grundlegung des Historischen Materialismus," *Ideen zu einer Kritischen Theorie* (Frankfurt, 1967), p. 35f.

11. Marx, *Civil War in France* (N.Y., 1940), p. 61.

12. cf. Marx, *Capital I* (Moscow, 1961), p. 763.

relationships of exclusive marriage with the owner of private property to a state of universal prostitution with the community. In negating the *personality* of man in every sphere, this type of communism is really nothing but the logical expression of private property, which is its negation. General *envy* constituting itself as a power is the disguise in which *greed* re-establishes itself . . . In the form of envy and the urge to reduce things to a common level . . . this . . . even constitutes the essence of competition. The crude communism is only the culmination of this envy and of this leveling-down proceeding.”<sup>13</sup>

The full content of the regressive critique of capitalism is here articulated; founded on the bourgeois notion of equality, and in part driven by envy and resentment, it works to spread capitalism, as opposed to ending it. Blind to content, it registers only privilege and exclusion and seeks formal equality. The denunciation of leadership, theory, talent, relationships between two people or between a man and a woman as forms of exclusion and privilege participates in this ‘thoughtless’ communism. Privilege seen only as a violation of equality is privilege seen through the eyes of the bourgeoisie. “. . . The developed modern state is not based . . . on a society of privileges but on a society in which *privileges are abolished and dissolved* . . . Free industry and free trade abolish privileged exclusivity . . . and set man free from privilege . . . they produce the universal struggle of man against man, individual against individual . . .”<sup>14</sup> The Logic of equality that sustains these critiques of exclusion and privilege is the logic of the market itself. It seeks to level – a utopia of complete pulverization of human relations and inter-changeability of individuals. The universalization of alienation, not its abolition, is its unconscious goal; it promises as liberation an equality of domination.

The point is not the mindless defense of bourgeois monogamy, bourgeois property, leadership, etc. Rather it is to understand their dialectical content which will make their abolition not regressive but progress; it is to understand their human as well as inhuman content; monogamy not simply as mutual oppression, but the attempt at a sustained relationship between two people; theory not simply as elitism, but as necessary insight into objective reality; leadership not simply as manipulation but a rational form of organization. The inability or refusal to grasp the dialectical content makes talk about their abolition suspect, and the more so, the open resentment; it expresses the desire to break down privilege and exclusion not so as to liberate but to share the spoils. The envy which would destroy in the name of freedom is too often apparent, e.g. communal groups which systematically set out to destroy exclusive relationships as threats to their own. The endless talk on human relations within the insular group works to promote group domination; it flushes out the last hiding places.

The critique of unique and exclusive relationships as crimes against democracy and equality has been formulated by bourgeois society’s own advanced representatives, notably deSade. The human individual – and body – is rendered totally functional, subject to all and everything. The progressive and regressive elements of bourgeois society have rarely been so clearly articulated: equality

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13. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, “Private Property and Communism,” pt. IV.

14. Marx, Engels, *The Holy Family* (Moscow, 1956), p. 156-7.

and democracy serve as a critique of privilege so as to make way for mutual and equal domination. The indifference towards the actual human content of relationships makes deSade's program at one with the bourgeoisie's own dream of liberation: liberation as a spree in the bargain-basement of human sexuality. In "Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If you would become Republicans," he proposed "Never may an act of possession be exercised upon a free being; the exclusive possession of a woman is no less unjust than the possession of slaves; all men are born free; all have equal rights; never should we lose sight of those principles; according to which never may there be granted to one sex the legitimate right to lay monopolizing hands upon the other, and never may one of these sexes of classes arbitrarily possess the other . . . Love which may be termed the *soul's madness*, is no more than a trifle by which their constancy may be justified: Love, satisfying two persons only, the beloved and the loving, cannot serve the happiness of others, and it is for the sake of the happiness of everyone, and not for egotistical and privileged happiness that women have been given to us. All men therefore have an equal right of enjoyment of all women . . ." That this is not just an equality of women for men but all for all is clear. "If we admit . . . that all women ought to be subjugated to our desires we may certainly allow them ample satisfaction of theirs . . . I would have them accorded the enjoyment of all sexes, and, as in the case of men, the enjoyment of all parts of the body; and under the special clause prescribing their surrender to all who desire them there must be subjoined another guaranteeing them a similar freedom to enjoy all they deem worthy to satisfy them."<sup>15</sup>

This is the full content of the bourgeois equality and democracy unfolded: a utopia of total fragmentation and mutual exploitation. The rights championed are the rights of money that had been doled out to all; alienation is transcended by universalizing it. As such, these rights, like equality, are informed by the market – and forget it; focusing on the abstract, they leave to one side the concrete economic content. "Right can never be higher than the economic structure of society . . ."<sup>16</sup> The rights advanced of late by parts of the left – rights of homosexuals, of control over one's body, etc. – participate in the same dialectic of bourgeois equality and rights; they are both progress in freedom and progress in domination. The right to free labor was the right to wage-slavery. The right of freedom of speech is the right to read a mass-produced newspaper. Their essential content was dictated by the economic-social structure of society, not by the formal and abstract rights and equalities. And yet they were progress – against serf labor and state-run newspapers. So too with the newer rights championed.

This is not to argue that they are not worth struggling for; they are – just as wage-labor and freedom of speech was, and is. Yet not to be forgotten is the content; rights do not negate the prevailing society, but extend it. The right to free labor as that to free sex is ironic. It is the freedom of individuality which has already been killed in its substance; it is the image of freedom under conditions of its denial. When this content is ignored, then the relationship of these reforms and rights as part of a revolutionary process, but distinct from a revolution that would revolutionize the content itself, is mystified. Where these rights are billed as ends in themselves, the democratization of reification is

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15. deSade, *Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, etc.* (N.Y.: Grove, 1966), pp. 318-19; 321.  
 16. Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (N.Y., 1966), p. 10.

dubbed its dissolution. The glorification of the rights of homosexuals control over one's own body, group relations, masturbation and the rest confuse equality within alienation with liberation. To romanticize masturbation is to hawk the quintessence of bourgeois society for its negation. The systematic eradication of human relationships has left the decimated subject only with itself. The concept of freedom lies elsewhere it is anchored in the sustained relation between two individuals; it can transcend and go beyond this – and ultimately must – but cannot bypass it.

It was this moment which was saved in the Marxist 'abolition' of bourgeois monogomy, and why Marx and Engels spoke of monogomy being realized not eradicated. The relation of two individuals, of loved and lover, belongs to the core of human freedom.<sup>17</sup> The positive content of this is unclear, as it must be till the liberated society has arrived.<sup>18</sup> Yet from Marx through the Frankfurt School to the Surrealists and Freud, unique and individual love and relationships have been seen as an element of freedom, of the rejection of bourgeois civilization.

The drive to level, to reduce all to identical monads efficient and adept at shifting relationships with anyone or anything is the form of love of late capitalism. Unique love harbors a threat to this indifferent and collective form, be it as fabricated by bourgeois society or accepted by parts of the left. Eros is lethal for the repressive collective, and ultimately lethal for the lovers. The etymological link between (love) potion and poison indicates the psychological and historical one. Two people in love reject the rest. "Two people coming together for the purpose of sexual satisfaction, insofar as they seek solitude are making a demonstration against the herd instinct, the group feeling . . ." wrote Freud.<sup>19</sup> Or elsewhere, "the antithesis between civilization and sexuality" is derived "from the circumstances that sexual love is a relationship between two individuals in which a third can only be superfluous or disturbing, whereas civilization depends on relationships between a considerable number of individuals."<sup>20</sup> With Max Horkheimer, the unique relationship between two individuals is the hallmark of freedom against a society that sells sexuality like patent medicine. "Realistic science has objectified sex till it is manipulative . . . In the mass society the sexes are leveled so that they both relate to their sex as a thing, over which they control coldly and without illusion."<sup>21</sup> Resistance is elsewhere. "The lovers are those which preserve neither themselves nor the collective. In disregarding themselves, they earn its anger. Romeo and Juliet die against a society for that which it itself proclaims. Insofar

17. See the letter of Marx to Jenny Marx cited in Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Marx* (Frankfurt, 1967), p. 113. ". . . but the love not for Feuerbachian Man, not for Moleschottian Stoffwechsel, not for the proletariat, but the love for a lover, and particularly for you, makes a man again a man . . ."

18. Yet if utopian thought is in order there is no where better to turn than to the most determined foe of bourgeois monogomy and civilization, Fourier, and especially his long suppressed work, *Le Nouveau monde amoureux* (Paris, 1967). Of particular interest in his notion of "pivotal love", p. 290f: a love relation that is neither "simple fidelity" nor indifferent and brutal interchangeability.

19. Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (N.Y., 1960), p. 93.

20. Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents* (N.Y., 1961), p. 55.

21. M. Horkheimer, "Vernunft und Selbsterhaltung," *Authoritärer Staat*, u.a. (Amsterdam, 1968), p. 111, 113.

as they unreasonably sacrifice themselves, they assert the freedom of the individual against the domination of property.”

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If the intensification of subjectivity is a direct response to its actual decline, it ultimately works to further this demise. It accepts the damaged subject as its own thing, and proposes more of the same. The objective loss of human relationships and experience is eased by their endless pursuit. A cult of subjectivity – complete with drugs – dopes the discontented into taking their own death – figuratively and in fact – for life itself. The immediacy of it all drives out mediacy of any of it. Sustained political and theoretical thought is not simply rejected, but forgotten. The slogans and rhetoric that replace it are necessarily abstract and formal, like the society that tossed them up.

The tone of the slogans notwithstanding, their complicity with bourgeois society is barely hidden: indifference towards content. Blank non-dialectical concepts too often fired by resentment and envy perpetuate the essential content of this society. A critique of monogamy, theory, leadership, relationships between two people, as forms of exclusion and privilege is a critique that falls behind bourgeois society, not advances over it; it is akin to the “thoughtless” communism outlined by Marx. What is perpetually lost under the sway of immediacy is a dialectical analysis: monogamy as both human and inhuman – as the bad refuge from a worse world and a bad solution for a better world; theory as insight into objectivity as well as elitist. To see only one moment is to gain the worse for the bad: no theory instead of elitist theory, inhuman fragmented relations for damaged human ones. The dialectical path is elsewhere.

The depletion of political concepts in favor of psychological and subjective ones is a by-product of the scramble for the remnants of human experience. Yet the subjectivization of objective concepts is not the repudiation of the loss of human experience but forms its prehistory. The reduction of the Marxist theory of alienation to a subjective state by bourgeois sociologists has its counter-part in the left in the reduction of oppression to a whim of the individual. Alienation becomes a headache<sup>22</sup> and oppression annoyance. “I’m oppressed,” announces someone, and that’s that.

Inside and outside the left radical subjectivity announces its own end; it resists reification by intensifying it. Hence its totalitarian urge to control everything; endless talk on human relationships within the closed group promotes domination. Bad subjectivity seeks the bad collective that secures it by annihilating it. “Collectivism and individualism complete each other in the false.”<sup>23</sup> The bourgeois individual whittled down to identical monads pursues its last fragment by going public to a public that is only too anxious to share the remains. The late individual in feeding off each other gains nourishment at the cost of self-destruction. Blank and vacant affirmations or condemnations on the women’s movement, men, armed struggle, recent political and personal events

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22. as in Roszak’s faulty reading of Marx and Marcuse, in his *Making of the Counter-Culture* (Garden City, 1969). For some thoughts on Roszak, see *Telos*, 5 (Spring, 1970), p. 188f.

23. T. W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, p. 278.

serve as tools of interpersonal relations. Thought is reduced to slogans and slogans to symbols of mutual and self-confirmation.

Rampant narcissism surfaces as the final form of bourgeois individualism; it at once negates the ego and perpetuates its mangled form. Lax conceptions of guilt, of the universal oppression of women by men, of one's "own" oppression, function as instruments of an ego that is regressing in the face of a disintegrating society. That men too have suffered and died in the massacre of history is affirmed or arrogantly denied, but is in any case irrelevant. What counts is the immediate and here an economism-turned-feminism is promoted as if the blind endorsement of what every worker did or thought is improved when it is as blindly applied to women. Social analysis decays into group loyalty. The jealousy with which the oppression of women, children, homosexuals, etc., is defended as a private preserve off-limits to others expresses an urge to corner the market of oppression akin to the bourgeoisie's own parcelling of it.

Again the point here is not to argue for a return to a "scientific" objective theory that proscribed any role for the subject; and again: the alternatives of pure subjectivity and pure objectivity is the either/or of bourgeois culture itself. Nor are the practical and communal attempts to overcome the deadly privacy and coldness of bourgeois existence to be rejected. Rather they are to be advanced; but advanced now by a mode of thought and action that damns them to be more of the same. The political and personal praxis that is sustained by bad subjectivity and abstract slogans tends to issue into the very prison that is the bourgeois world. What is to be sought is a concrete subject/object dialectic that reconstructs the new out of the decay; only the praxis that shuns the fetish can hope for liberation. There are no guarantees nor tried-and-tested methods. Mistakes have and will be made; but the efforts must remain continually alive to the tension between the 'personal' and the 'political' without abdicating either nor reducing one to the other.

The line that inspired the Weatherman name suggested one metaphor for the path of theory and praxis; you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind is blowing. In classical Marxist theory this metaphor indicates opportunism, that is subjectivism or the lack of principles: the willingness to swim with the current be what it may. Obviously Weatherman was a direct repudiation of social-democratic opportunism; not only by their actions and program, but by their courage and dedication. And yet, as argued here they as others unwittingly collapsed into a subjectivity and abstract sloganeering that is part and parcel of bourgeois society itself. The Lukács of *History and Class Consciousness* suggested another metaphor for revolutionary theory and praxis. He wrote there of the sailor; the sailor, like the weatherman, takes exact readings from the wind – but with a decisive difference "without letting the wind determine his course; on the contrary, he defies and exploits it so as to hold fast to his original course."<sup>24</sup>

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24. G. Lukács, *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* (Amsterdam, 1967), p. 267.