Common Sense

A Journal of a wholly new type

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Common Sense

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The illustration on page 81 is entitled 'Another Dreadful
Suicide at the Monument'; the illustration on page 84 is a detail
from 'Reviewing the Blue Devils' which, in 1833, depicts members
of the recently formed Metropolitan Police.

Note for contributors: send articles in clean typescript, as we
reproduce direct from what we receive. Type in single spacing or
space-and-a-half (not double space). Leave wide margins on both
sides, and wide gaps at top and bottom of each page. Start first
page half way down.

Contact address: Werner Bonefeld, 16 Keir Street, EDINBURGH EH3 9EU
(telephone 031 228 1669). Or Richard Gunn c/o Department of Politics,
University of Edinburgh, 31 Buccleuch Place, EDINBURGH (telephone 031
667 1011 ext. 6660). Or Richard Norris (telephone 031 442 4023).

Last year, our current Education Secretary visited Moscow and offered students at the University of Moscow his opinions on <u>glasnost</u>. Reagan, some time ago, had hectored them from quite probably the same lectern. The Western media reported that the Moscow students responded to Kenneth Baker's speech with "oohs" and "aahs" of delight because he told them that, in the West, speech was free. There's a photocopying machine in every corner shop, he averred, and it takes only the possession of a desk-top computer to enable anyone at all to produce and publish the magazine of their choice.

The editors of <u>Common Sense</u> perused these reports with something of a wry smile. First of all, we thought, there's the matter of the copyright law which seems to have grown new teeth under Thatcher: so much so that universities are afraid to produce multiple copies of set texts for students, a practice which in the old days used to go forward vigorously and upon which some of the most exciting teaching relied. In one case well known to us an academic was denied permission to photocopy an article written by herself.

Our second smile was in response to the corner-shop image. Corner-shop photocopying is amongst the most expensive methods of reproducing a text known to humankind. Speech may be free but the reproduction of written prose isn't. The consequence of this is that queues exist wherever it turns out that reproduction is (relatively) cheap. Queues, we used to understand, were one of the evils of centralised state planning. No queues under Thatcher! It's evident that Mr Baker is not producing a small journal on a shoestring budget and that he doesn't live down our road.

All this is by way of supplying an apologia. We regret the gap, caused by queuing, between <u>Common Sense</u> numbers 5 and 6. Regular readers of <u>Common Sense</u> who may have been aware of an absence in their lives can now be reassured. We are alive and, despite choking into our beer over the pirouettes of Goodman Baker, still well. Since there is still a world to change, <u>Common Sense</u> is still in the business of changing it. From now on we trust that issues of our journal will follow hard upon one another's heels.

The Scientistic Fallacy:

Excluding Psychologists from Psychology

Andrew Duncan

There have been two major lines of research devoted to the construction of a proper discipline of psychology. On the one hand we have had what might be called the ideographic, literary type of approach, identified perhaps with psychoanalysis, with phenomenology, with existentialism and other essentially non-scientific movements. These rather different approaches have indeed looked at man as a whole, but in a disorganised, unscientific and fundamentally subjective manner. The student has a choice of either believing or disbelieving; he has no opportunity of objectively appraising experiments and proofs in the manner usual in a science. When I say that we must reject this approach I do not mean to put any restraint on people's choices; just as a student is free to believe in the truth of Christian, Moslem or Buddhist religions, so he is free to believe in the sayings of Freud, Sartre or Heidegger. Such a choice removes the students from the ranks of those who search for a scientific answer to the problem of man – *naturwissenschaftlich* rather than *geisteswissenschaftlich.* I shall not take the time to argue that in a very meaningful manner the former approach is superior to the latter; I shall simply leave the adherents of subjective and inspired truth to the contemplation of their particular navels, and concentrate on students who wish to approach the problem in a more objective frame of mind, subject to the rigours of theory-making followed by experiment and attempted disproof. [Eysenck, 1980, p.49]

Eysenck's attitude is an honest proclamation of an ideological position. The ideology is *scientism.* This is the belief that science is the only possible form that knowledge can take or the best from amongst alternatives. On the one hand there are proofs and objective appraisal of experiments, on the other there are choices from amongst subjective beliefs. Whilst subjective opinions are important, they are inferior to the objective and rigorous methods of science. Psychologists who do not wish to treat humans as wholes or subjectively by insight in a disorganised way, must follow the proper path of science and become overwhelmed by the evidence in its favour. Any other psychologist is simply not worth listening to irrespective of what his or her views happen to be.[1]

Eysenck clearly believes that science is the only possible form that knowledge should

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[1] It is immediately interesting to reflect that this quotation is taken from the first page of a paper in which Eysenck proposes a "Bio-social Model of Man" which will "unify" psychology. It is not entirely clear how this unification is to take place when Eysenck has already excluded all contributions to human understanding which do not conform to his proper discipline of psychology.

take, anything else being simply belief or faith. The crucial difference is the use of experiments as attempts to disprove theories. In the sentence following the quoted section, Eysenck refers interested readers to debates within the philosophy of science – in particular those arising from the work of Popper – and clearly agrees with Popper that the correct method of doing science is the experimental testing of hypotheses derived from theories, and that any intellectual effort which does not, or is not able to, do this is strictly not scientific [Popper, 1972].[2]

Eysenck is perhaps unusual among psychologists because he is willing to proclaim his ideological committment without embarrassment. Psychology as a whole is a little more reserved, but nonetheless ideological. For example, a brief survey of the **British Journal of Psychology** does not quite recapitulate Eysenck's opinion, but it does leave an impression of something rather similar. Of the 373 papers published in the **BJPs** during the 1980's, 308 are reports of experimental procedures, 47 are commentaries or reviews of evidence, 7 are methodological or statistical, while the remaining 11 are a miscellany.[3] Of the 364, 97% are unambiguously scientific, and 83% are experimental reports. This shows simply that scientific papers are published in the **BJPs**, and thus that psychology is predominantly scientific; only if <u>non-scientific</u> papers are <u>excluded</u> can it be said that the journal is scientistic. Exclusion is probably not the correct concept to apply, but there are very few non-scientific papers in the recent **BJPs**.

Indeed, the editorial board has recognised a deficiency and in 1985 it took stock of the way that it operates. An editorial comment in the third issue for the year noted the large number of submissions of reports of experiments on human cognition, and appealed for submissions from elsewhere. The Board was "eager to encourage more submissions from other fields of psychology and would [have] like[d] to [have been] able to consider a greater variety of papers." [**British Journal of Psychology**, Vol 76, p. 289]. Although it felt that it should maintain the general role of the journal and hinted that there are many more specialised journals available for those psychologists undertaking specialised work, the editors emphasised their policy of considering three kinds of paper: "(a) reports of empirical studies likely to further our understanding of psychology; (b) critical reviews of the literature; (c) theoretical contributions" [ibid].

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[2]Popper's opinion of non-scientific endeavour is less straightforward than Eysenck's. It is fairly plain, however, that he thinks it to be of lesser value than science. There is no space here to deal with Popper properly, but it is arguable that his characterisation of work which does not meet his criteria of scientificity is at most patronising and at worst false.

[3]This classification is, of course, as arbitary as any other. However, certain criteria were employed in making it. All "experimental reports" are written according to the formula intro/methods/results/discussion or some variation of this. Not all of these are strictly experimental, but all are empirical and involve some classification and codification of data. "Commentaries and reviews" are discussions of theory and evidence without reference to empirical work carried out and reported by the authors. The "statistical and methodological" papers are discussions of the formal methods of experimentation or of the statistical procedures whereby data are adjudicated. The "miscellany" is: 2 case studies of dyslexic people in the light of theories of dylexia; 6 short historical papers – 4 on Tolman, 2 on Burt; a psychodynamic consideration of self/other relations; an argument in favour of "contextualism"; and Skinner's polemic against cognitive science. Clearly these criteria suit my purposes, but others could be used.

This tripartite classification of writing is a scientific one: one can report empirical work, or review reports of empirical work, or contribute to theory – presumably with reference to reports of empirical work or reviews thereof.[4]

Whether they realise it or not, the editors of the **BJPs** tend towards scientism because the journal is a general one which, as a matter of policy, declares that greater variety and other fields of psychology can all be categorised within the tripartite division of writing quoted above. Since the papers submitted to the **BJPs** are largely scientific, it is reasonable to conclude that it is not all the things from which Eysenck so carefully distances himself. And this suggests some incipient unconscious or implicit scientism. Although not all psychologists are quite as brazen as Eysenck in the proclamation of ideology, it looks as if the process whereby psychological writing is produced fosters an ideological stance not far from his.[5]

This is not a criticism of science, it is simply an indication of the extent to which psychology, in reproducing itself as science, becomes scientistic. This happens to some extent by default – that is irrespective of the intentions of individual psychologists (although the very existence of the likes of Eysenck is not insignificant). It is also noteworthy that this situation can be glimpsed through a fairly mundane analysis of a very small bit of psychological writing. However, this paper is a discussion of the tendency for certain psychologists to assume that, or write as if, we are all in some respects scientific. *There are some psychologists who publish statements to the effect that human activity (or bits thereof) is in general scientific.* In this way the incipient scientism of psychological writing is projected[6] out over everybody else.

It is, of course, obvious that not all human activity is scientific, but suspicion is aroused when one group of people declares that the activity of people in general is the same as that of the group. If bus drivers were to claim on the basis of their work that we all conduct our lives like bus drivers, we would not – I presume – pay too much attention. When scientific psychologists – whose labour is presumably dedicated to knowledge of human beings – declare that human beings are all scientists, human beings would be perfectly justified in wondering why. The more cynical might wonder why psychologists have got it so wrong – are they not human

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[4]The **BJPs**'s classification of writing is not dissimilar to the one a made above. The first two pairs are virtually identical while my statistical/methodological and miscellany could fall within the rather more vague category 'theoretical contributions'.

[5]This argument declares my own ideological sympathy to Karl Marx – in this case to the opening chapters of Capital Vol. I [Marx, 1976]. I am treating "writing" as the vast accumulation of commodities by which the wealth of capitalist society is presented and through the contradictions in which the production process (writing) is revealed.

[6]Drever defines projection as "... the interpretation of situations and events by reading into them our own experiences and feelings" and as "... the attributing unconsciously to other people, usually as a defence against unpleasant feelings in ourselves, such as .. guilt or .. inferiority, of thoughts feelings and acts towards us, by means of which we justify ourselves in our own eyes" [Drever, 1952, p. 221]. Both of these meanings are applicable to the following discussion.

beings themselves? Do they not at the very least have their own experience of being human upon which to base more perspicacious thoughts?

Those of us for whom the writings of existentialists, psychoanalysts, and phenomenologists are to be taken as at least of equal value to those of scientists, and who remain committed to a psychology which is not the contemplation of our own navels, do not seem to have much option but to launch a full scale attack on much of what is called "psychology" simply because one seems already to have been launched on us. We have already been excluded. We can justifiably reciprocate and exclude those who do not meet the standards of what we consider a proper psychology to be. Anyone who has been intimidated by agressive Popperians and who suspects that such a course is not scientific, need not worry: if science is objective, value free and disinterested, then no particular practice necessarily follows from this other than reporting what is the case. We need not make theories or test them by experiment, we can equally describe what we see and analyse this for patterns and contradictions which seem interesting. In any case, the attack here is on scientistic psychology not on science.[7]

As is proper in science, I now present examples to support my contention that psychology's scientism is projected out over humanity in the form of general theory. Thus, those who have no experience of psychological writing might begin to see its inherent contradictions, and those psychologists who are alienated by Eysenck and the incipient scientism of the **British Journal of Psychology** might organise in opposition to these. (Those psychologists who believe scientism would probably regard my work as all very interesting but unworthy of serious consideration.[8]) The examples which follow are selected more or less randomly as reasonable examples rather than because they are making any particular claims. My intention is to indicate the projection of scientism over humanity by psychological writing and any discussion of the particular confusions this fosters is incidental to this main point.

> Categorisation of sound patterns and of objects and events in the real world is basic to learning a language. [Nelson, 1977, p.223]

> The theoretical scheme describes a child who actively organises and categorises the world on the basis of its observable functional properties, and then compares the categories used by others (as reflected in the language) to his own on the basis of the matching instances. [ibid, p.238]

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[7] It is extremely important to grasp the difference between science and scientism. Unfortunately the two words are rather similar and do not adequately signify the difference. The reader is urged to make some effort of distinguishing the concepts in his or her mind, to read all words which begin "scien.." very carefully, and to understand these within the surrounding grammatical context. To reiterate: science is that activity which reports what is the case; scientism is the ideology which claims that a particular kind of science is superior to other kinds of knowing.

[8] But if any such psychologists are reading this I would urge them to take these words very seriously!

At first glance this example does not appear contraversial: language does indeed categorise the world, but it does not only do this – it also expresses feelings, polemicises, organises social roles, gossips, argues, communicates, and so on. To assume that the basis of learning language is a straightforward categorisation of sounds and objects, is to forget the many other uses to which it can be put, and to bias subsequent analysis in favour of the formal procedures of science in which the categories of language and the objects of the real world must be related in a determinate way. Nelson's assumption is scientistic, and therefore her theory is scientistic. The child actively organises and categorieses the world on the basis of its functional properties – just like a scientist; then the child, having clearly connected his or her own categorisation with language, assumes that everyone else has done the same and compares categorisations – a procedure not unlike that employed by scientists communicating their work to one another through journal articles. Furthermore, Nelson assumes that language can be easily defined on the basis of sound patterns: this is no doubt scientifically convenient, but it excludes the possibility that language might have something to do with facial expression, gestures and gesticulation, and local social context.

> Any scientific theory of the mind has to treat it as an automaton.
> This is in no way demeaning or dehumanizing, but a direct consequence
> of the computability of scientific theories. [Johnson-Laird, 1983, p.477]

Here is an explicit declaration that scientific theories of mind should treat it as an automaton because scientific theories – in order that they be scientific – must be computable. This reveals that computability of theory is a more important criterion of theoretical efficacy than empirical content. Scientific criteria seep into a general theory of mind and declare that all minds must be automata even if it is empirically obvious that they are not. The crucial assumption beneath the second sentence is an equation of humanism and science: presenting mind as an automaton is not dehumanising because this is done for scientific reasons. The sentence only makes sense on some assumption that science is good or otherwise humane. So this reads as if we should consider ourselves to be automata because this is what science demands and because science is good.

> ... I present a model of Man as a problem-solver, based on the
> assumption that successful problem-solving involves the following three
> elements in a proper relationship: (a) an agreed purpose to be achieved;
> (b) well-understood resources to be brought to bear in solving the
> problem; and (c) an effective strategy for making the best use of
> resources available. [Howarth, 1980, p.143]

Again, this example is quite explicit: Man[9] is a problem solver – just like a scientist or technologist. But not only this: Man is a problem solver who shares a common purpose with his fellows, who understands many methods of solution, and who is prepared to choose the best one. Howarth's "Model of Man" is perhaps a laudable ideal from a scientific point of view, but it falls rather short of actual human experience: how much of life involves solving problems and how much of this is achieved by consensus of purpose and efficient use of resources? Not much. The model is an idealised description of scientific labour if it is anything at all – it could never be a general model of Man.

> It may be argued that the scientific endeavour and perhaps the entire intellectual enterprise is directed towards the development of ever-more efficient means of processing and transmitting information. This is reflected by the advances in knowledge that characterise the development of individuals and of cultures. The pursuit of knowledge, like other human activities, may be assumed to serve an adaptive purpose: it functions to support man's survival. The attempt by psychology to generate a language for describing the behaviour of organisms may be viewed as an integral part of this process. One idea about how the acquisition of knowledge promotes human survival [...] incorporates a model of man that is cast in the terms science has generated to describe the universe man inhabits. [Brener, 1980, p.87]

> The fundamental thesis is then that the search for knowledge is a manifestation of the evolutionary tendency of life forms to manage energy resources in such a manner as to promote their survival. Implicit in the evolution of life forms is the development of information-processing capacities that permit optimal utilization of available energy resources. [ibid, p.94]

It hardly seems worth commenting on this example in any great detail: now the scientific enterprise is written into the evolutionary struggle for life itself which is directed at processing information in a way which uses energy efficiently. Not only psychology, but Nature is determined to circumscribe human activity as scientific.

> ... the higher cognitive processes are notably similar to processes of scientific discovery – indeed, ... the latter are the former writ large. Both, of course, are deeply mysterious; we don't understand non-demonstrative inference in either its macrocosmic or its microcosmic incarnation. [Fodor, 1985, p.4]

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[9]"Man" is used here as a generic term for human beings. I would prefer not to use the word but do so because I am discussing quotations from a book entitled Models of Man.

Fodor states explicitly the similarity between scientific discovery and thinking in general. He evidently believes that both are of great value although it is not entirely clear how he could notice the link between them if both are so deeply mysterious and beyond understanding.

> What perceptual systems typically "know about" is how to infer current distal layouts from current proximal stimulations: the visual system, for example, knows how to derive distal from proximal displacement, and the language system knows how to infer the speaker's communicative intentions from his phonetic productions. Neither mechanism, on the present account, knows a great deal else, and that is entirely typical of perceptual organisation. Perceptual systems have access to (implicit or explicit) theories of the mapping between distal causes and proximal effects. But that's all they have. [ibid, p.4]

This example is a little more dense: In order to perceive the world at all, we must already know how to construct it on the basis of the stimulation that it is currently providing – we must know the various laws of organisation of reality. In short, we must know science in order to perceive the world. For example, we must know the phonetic categories of linguistics in order to infer what a person intends by speaking to us. Here Fodor makes a similar assumption to Nelson (above) that understanding speech is a simple matter of analysing sounds. This assumption may be appropriate to the formal science of phonetics but it is doubtful whether it is universally appropriate. Whether or not this assumption is universal, it is written into Fodor's theoretical ideas about understanding and indicates science overwhelming general theory by requiring that all people must know its categories in order to perceive the world.

> The perceptual system does not always agree with the rational thinking cortex. For the cortex educated by physics, the moon's distance is 390,000 km. (240,000 miles); to the visual brain it is a few hundred metres. Though here the intellectual cortical view is the correct one, the visual brain is never informed, and we continue to see the moon as though it lies almost within our grasp. [Gregory, 1977, p.224]

Gregory here makes the easy assumption that the areas of the brain which have not been associated wih any particular activity (the so-called "uncommitted cortex") are concerned with rational thinking. Since Gregory wrote this, Brain Science has advanced considerably. It would be impossible to review the evidence here, but it is sufficient to note that the cortex is not the autonomous entity implied by Gregory and is implicated with many other neural structures. Moreover, it is not uncommitted and is associated with many kinds of activity other than rational thinking [Trevarthen, *In preparation*]. He adds that the thinking cortex has been educated by physics. A

somewhat precarious argument in itself, but to then claim that the educated cortex is correct but does not bother to tell the visual brain about its education is stretching things a little. Gregory is attempting to explain the "illusion" of the moon being close at hand. It is quite obvious – at least to me – that the moon is a long way off, and if Gregory has any belief to the contrary then that is his problem – a problem which hardly merits the bizarre *ad hoc* explanation he provides. This example not only demonstrates the exclusion of general theory by scientism, but also one of the peculiar confusions it fosters. Gregory's belief in the virtue of science leads his argument to maintain this evaluation at every turn. Gregory again:

> It is not difficult to guess why the visual system has developed the ability to use non-visual information and to go beyond the immediate evidence of the senses. By building and testing hypotheses, action is directed not only to what is sensed but to what is likely to happen, and it is this that matters. The brain is in large part a probability computer; and our actions are based on predictions to future situations. Perhaps inevitably, we cannot predict with certainty what our, or other people's, predictions will be – what they will see or how they will behave. This is a price we have to pay; but intelligent behaviour is not possible without prediction. Predicting from hypotheses derived from meagre data is the hallmark of perception, intelligence and science. Science is shared perception. [ibid, pp.224–225]

Apart from the explicit mention that activity is related to sensation by the testing of hypotheses (just like science), Gregory makes some rather startling claims about intelligent behaviour, the brain, perception and science. The grammar of this example defies logical analysis,[10] but it is fairly clear that Gregory is trying to link together science, perception, and intelligence with the testing of hypotheses, and the claim that the brain is a probability computer. Not only is this obviously scientistic, Gregory is prepared never to be able to predict what another person is predicting which, when translated out of his language, amounts to never being able to know another person. Not only does this infirm his social life rather more than somewhat, it undermines his pretentions to be a psychologist. Lumping together science, intelligence and perception as examples of hypothesis testing in the vain hope that in spite of meagre data he might one day get it right is inadequate to support the bizarre notion that science is shared perception and, seems, at the very most, to consign him to solipsism.

The common theme of these examples is an implicit belief in the virtue of science and a more or less explicit attempt to convert this into psychological theorising. The fact of the matter seems plain enough: *some psychological theorists claim that human thought*

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[10]and to be perfectly frank, it baffles me that anyone can actually get away with writing such nonsense.

perception and action are in general scientific. I believe that these psychologists are wrong. William James would have agreed with me. No-one seems to have read the significant warning he gave to the future of psychology and which survives in his Principles of Psychology.[11] Much of what is today called psychology – the legacy of the "new psychology" which James did not think "worthy of the name" [James, 1899, p. 7] – is committing the biggest error that James believed it could make. His description of this mistake is therefore worth quoting in full.

'The Psychologist's Fallacy.' The *great* snare of the psychologist is the *confusion of his own standpoint with that of the mental fact* about which he is making his report. I shall hereafter call this the 'psychologist's fallacy' *par excellence.* For some of the mischief, ... language is to blame. The psychologist ... stands outside the mental state he speaks of. Both itself and its objects are objects for him. Now when it is a *cognitive* state (percept, thought, concept, etc.), he ordinarily has no other way of naming it than as the thought, percept, etc., *of that object.* He himself, meanwhile, knowing the self-same object in *his* way, gets easily led to suppose that the thought, which is *of* it, knows it in the same way in which he knows it, although this is often very far from being the case. The most ficticious puzzles have been introduced to our science by this means. [....]

Another version of the psychologist's fallacy is the assumption that the mental state studied must be conscious of itself as the psychologist is conscious of it. The mental state is aware of itself only from within; it grasps what we call its own content, and nothing more. The psychologist, on the contrary, is aware of it from without, and knows its relations with all sorts of other things. What the thought sees is only its own object; what the psychologist sees is the thought's object, plus the thought itself, plus possibly all the rest of the world. We must be very careful therefore, in discussing a state of mind from the psychologist's point of view, to avoid foisting into its own ken matters that are only *there for ours.* We must avoid substituting what we know the consciousness *is,* for what it is a consciousness *of,* and counting its outward, and so to speak physical, relations with other facts of the world, in among the objects of which we set it down as aware. Crude as such a confusion of standpoints seems to be when abstractly stated, it is nevertheless a snare into which no psychologist has kept himself from falling, and which forms almost the entire stock-in-trade of certain schools. We cannot be too watchful against *its* subtly corrupting influence. [William James, 1890, Vol. I, pp. 196–197, all italics in original.]

When abridged and translated into a more modern style, the message is plain. The psychologist ought to take care to avoid seeing the consciousness of a person as

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[11]This book is still in print but it is sold only in a very few bookshops. It never appeared as recommended reading in any of my psychology undergraduate courses although a number of copies are held in the university library.

either: the consciousness that the psychologist has of that of which the person is conscious; or the consciousness that the psychologist has of the person. We should not presume that everybody sees themselves and their worlds in the way we psychologists do. It is difficult to avoid this mistake all the time, but we must take care. If we do not take such care we will become involved in all sorts of fruitless discussions because we have failed to to notice the vagiaries of common speech. A simple and straightforward warning which does not depart much from common sense. A diagram will illustrate James' point:

PSYCHOLOGIST

D   C

PERSON   A   OBJECT

B
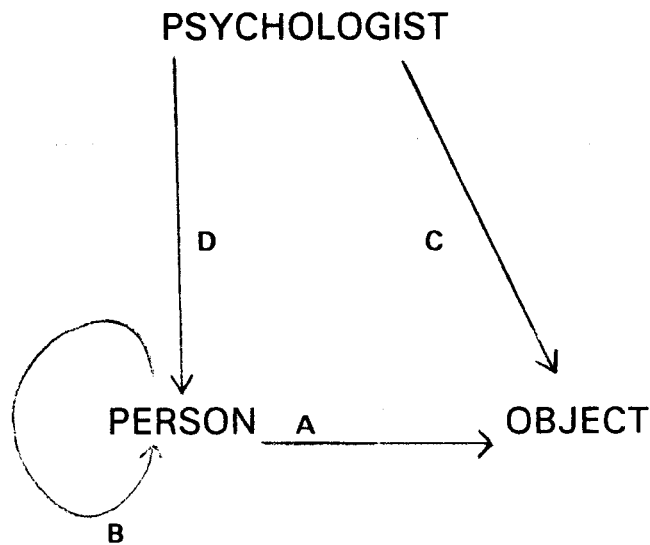
This illustrates the relationship between a thinking person and the object of his/her thought (A) as well as the relationship that this person has with him/herself as the object of his/her own thought (B). Also shown is the ralationship between the psychologist and the object of the person's thought, and the relationship between the psychologist and the person (C and D respectively). (For the moment "the rest of the world" is not important.) James' point was simply that A does not equal C and that B does not equal D.

James was a sincere and practical man who recognised human limitations (and perforce his own) and who understood that it is probably impossible to see the world as another person does. He referred to this as a "certain blindness in human beings". He wrote:

> We are practical beings, each of us with limited functions and duties to perform. Each is bound to feel intensely the importance of his own duties and the significance of the situations that call these forth. But this feeling is in each of us a vital secret, for sympathy with which we vainly look to others. The others are too much absorbed in their

own vital secrets to take an interest in ours. Hence the stupidity and injustice of our opinions, so far as they deal with the significance of alien lives. Hence the falsity of our judgements, so far as they presume to decide in an absolute way on the value of other persons' conditions or ideals. [James, 1899, pp. 229-230]

The Psychologists Fallacy is really just a formal statement of the obvious fact that each one of us views a complicated world, of which we are all part, from a slightly different place in history.[12] James wrote that each one of us makes a division of the world into *me* and *not-me*.

> The altogether unique kind of interest which each human mind feels in those parts of creation which it can call *me* or *mine* may be a moral riddle, but it is a fundamental psychological fact. No mind can take the same interest in his neighbor's *me* as in his own. [James, 1890, Vol I, p. 289]

The Psychologist's Fallacy is a warning to take care when being a psychologist – not simply at an epistemological level but also at the level of ethics. It is well to remember that James himself advocated a strong ethic of respect and tolerance. We must not, he writes,

> be forward in pronouncing on the meaninglessness of forms of existence other than our own; and [we must] tolerate, respect, and indulge those whom we see harmlessly interested and happy in their own ways, however unintelligible these may be to us. Hands off: neither the whole of truth nor the whole of good is revealed to any single observer, although each observer gains a partial superiority of insight from the peculiar position in which he stands. Even prisons and sick rooms have their special revalations. It is enough to ask each of us that he should be faithful to his own opportunities and make the most of his own blessings, without presuming to regulate the rest of the vast field. [James, 1899, pp. 263-264]

Eysenck has never read this, or at least if he has, he does not consider it to be a principle which is applicable to himself. Likewise, the other psychologists quoted above provide no good reasons to suggest that they are heeding James' warning or regarding people with his humble respect. These are the opinions of respectable psychologists who report their work and expect this to be comprehensible to others like them. These psychologists are publicly prepared to confuse their own standpoints as scientists with those of people in general.

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[12] I use "history" here to indicate that we are all, except under very special circumstances which are for the moment irrelevant, displaced from each other both in space and time.

Nelson and Fodor commit the first version of the psychologist's fallacy because they presume that people listen to speech by phonetic analysis. By suggesting that people in general are scientific in their thinking, perception or existence, all of the quoted psychologists are committing the second version of the fallacy. A particularly vivid example of this is Gregory's claim that the thinking cortex knows physics. Evidently, these psychologists do not take enough care with their language and easily assume that natural language is similar to the formal languages of science. Indeed, it looks as if the confusion of standpoints is the stock-in-trade of at least one school of modern psychology; Fodor and Johnson-Laird being gurus of cognitive science at M.I.T. and Cambridge respectively.

Clearly, the psychologist's fallacy is being committed, but it is now committed in a slightly different form to when William James warned against it. *It is now tinged with a moral imperative; it tends towards a belief that psychologists and everyone else ought to be scientists.* This is a more difficult idea to establish, but surely the very fact of making general exclusive statements about the way things stand is as much a moral as an epitemological effort.[13] Nevertheless, it does seem obvious that Eysenck is making explicit efforts to circumscribe psychology as one thing rather than another and the rest of the quoted psychologists maintain a high moral attitude to science throughout their generalising. What is more intriguing is that this high moral attitude rests on such things as "belief" and "subjective opinion". It would seem that the theory within which the scientistic fallacy appears is supported by just those categories that scientism excludes.

More specifically, Brener's belief that the search for knowledge is aimed at the evolution of efficient means of processing information and Howarth's idea that Man the problem solver works towards the efficient use of energy and resources, have more to do with aspiration than actuality. Fodor's ideas have something to do with an arrogant hatred of relativism and blind faith in a particular kind of rationality. He hates relativism "more than ... anything else, excepting, maybe, fibreglass powerboats" [op cit, p.5] and believes in the "fixed structure of human nature" [ibid]. Without getting bogged down in the technicalities[14] or pausing to analyse Fodor's writing in depth, it is clear that his attitude has more to do with "emotion" than "reason". Eysenck's appeal to Popper puts him close to a philosophy of science which has more to do with the way science ought to be done than with what has actually happened during

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[13]This argument depends very much on the status of theory and on what logic is employed. If theory is taken as some sort of temporary model subject to transcendental logic, then the argument is weak. However, if theory is taken as a moment of the stream of life and thus subject to the grammar of being, then saying what is the case is as much a delineation of the permissable and the possible as it is of the actual. This is a more complex issue than it would appear from my comments here, but there is no space to discuss it properly.

[14]These are discussed in Hollis & Lukes, 1982. In particular, Barnes & Bloor argue that in order to remain rational, all those sciences concerned with human knowledge – cognitive psychology included – must adopt relativism. All knowledge must be assumed to be equivalent with respect to the causes of its credibility [Barnes & Bloor, 1982, p.23].

the history of science.[15] Likewise, Popper's methodological morality is imposed on human beings in general when Gregory refers to the testing of hypotheses as a mechanism of perception. Gregory appears to be trying to justify the science that he celebrates by the theories he suggests: if perception and thinking are scientific, then he has no need to worry about how his own opinions might obscure the objectivity of his perception and thinking. Convenient, but empty and circular. Fodor's idea that perceptual systems are not saturated by cognitive processes – the second of the above quotations – is doing something similar.

The quoted examples leave a rather confused picture of how the psychologist's fallacy presents itself, but it is clear that the theory in which it now appears is contradictory, moral in tone, and does not simply report what human beings are. It looks as if the only people that psychologists can see in the world are ones very much like themselves – scientists. Moreover, the general context of this presentation indicates that there has been some historical intervention which has conspired to suggest that there is no fallacy at all.

The difference between then and now justifies a new name: This modern version of the Pychologist's Fallacy is better called *The Scientistic Fallacy*. The scientistic fallacy is the great mistake of scientific psychology. It results from a scientistic belief in the virtue of science and can be seen upon careful analysis of psychological writing. It claims that human activity is in general scientific or that people understand themselves, each other and the world as scientists believe they ought to. The modern warning to psychology is as strong as William James': Psychologist's should try to avoid theorising about human beings or specific activities in which human beings engage in terms borrowed from the formal activities of scientific methods. They should neither suggest that people understand their worlds in the same way that science has come to understand the world in general, nor should they presume that people understand themselves in the way that scientists understand themselves, or according to the moral proclamations of Popperian philosophy of science. But psychologists should also make an effort to understand why, over the past hundred years, conditions have changed such that the fallacy is not only not considered to be a fallacy, but also such that what was warned against is held up as some sort of ideal – or, at the very least, is considered to make sense. Another diagram will illustrate the *Scientistic Fallacy*.

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[15]Many historical discoveries would not have occurred if the scientists involved had adhered strictly to the rules for science provided by the philosophers of science. Popper is caught in a contradiction between cherishing the progress of science and defending rules and standards [Feyerabend, 1982].
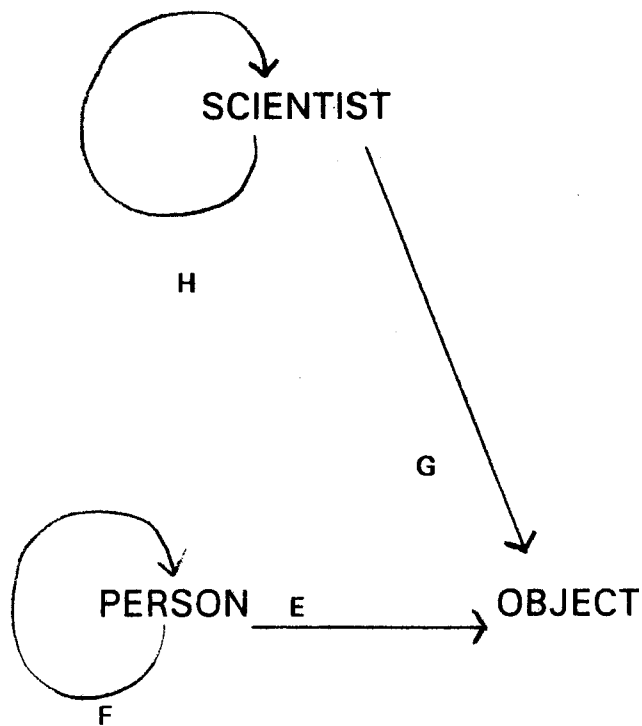
A person is related to the object of his/her thought by the arrow E, and the scientist to that same object by the arrow G. The self-awareness of the person is represented by the arrow F, and the self-awareness of the scientist by the arrow H. In the modern case, E does not equal G and F does not equal H.

Obviously the reasons for the change away from understanding James' Psychologists' Fallacy as a fallacy are complicated, but it is necessary to make some effort to understand these if any principled opposition is to be taken towards the psychology which makes us all scientists.[16] However a preliminary sketch of explanation can be drawn. [17] The explanation can be roughly divided into two categories: **historical** – in reference to actual events which have taken place; **psychological** – in reference to the circumstances under which psychology makes sense to those who believe in scientism. I will focus here entirely on the latter category. I will try to sketch the

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[16]There are clearly many reasons for explaining the transition between the relationships of the two diagrams. From a purely disinterested point of view, given that the picture could have changed in any number of ways, why did it change as it did? From an evolutionary point of view, what adaptive function is served by believing in the virtue of science. Marxists would want to know whose interest is served by the presentation of this belief as universal. Cognitive scientists even might feel inclined to model the various processes underlying the transition between the diagrams in some sort of program. Psychoanalysts might speculate on the feelings of inferiority and guilt that are repressed by scientistic psychology's unacknowledged projection of itself over others. My own interest is polemical.

[17]The final paragraphs of this work should not therefore be taken as anything more substantial than notes towards further work or the basis of future discussion. A glimpse rather than a view.

reasons why it currently makes perfect sense for psychological writing to circumscribe human activity as scientific and will base my argument on my own experience of scientistic psychology with illustrative attacks on some misquotations of William James.[18]

The Psychologists' Fallacy takes up less than two pages in the middle of volume one of The Principles of Psychology and so it requires some effort to discover. Part of the **psychological** explanation for the existence of the Scientistic Fallacy invokes a straightforward laziness on the part of some psychologists. There is however a tendency for some psychologists to misread James from a scientistic viewpoint and to thus exclude those bits of his work which do not conform to the scientistic attitude. This results in an anachronistic plantation of contemporary meanings into writing which can only be properly understood within the context of the late nineteenth century.

There are so many examples in the psychological literature of misunderstanding and misquotation of James' work that it is tempting to believe that no-one has actually read it. And this is all the more remarkable because he is almost universally characterised in the literature as a great-grandfather figure commanding nothing but respect and deference. In fact, my experience is that most of what is written about James misses some crucial principle or otherwise fails to understand what the man was telling the world. For example, Thayer writes that James meant to establish psychology as a natural science in which "explanations ... should be based on experimental physiology and biology rather than on introspective procedures which had dominated psychology since Locke and Hume." [Thayer, 1988, p. 221]. This is a grotesque distortion. James emphasised that *"Introspection is what we have to rely on first and foremost and always."* [James, 1890, Vol I, p. 185, (all italics in original)], and said that although introspection is fallible and difficult, "the difficulty is simply that of all observation of whatever kind" [ibid, p. 191]. He believed that psychology should employ the experimental and comparitive methods in equal measure to introspection. He fully supported introspection but wanted to refine it according to the principles of pragmatism and to thus remove all the abstractions with which it had been associated since Locke and Hume. Furthermore, the natural science that James advocated had more to do with description in the Darwinian mode than with experimentation in the physiological. James' view of experiments in physiology was rather ambivalent. Although he accepted that they might prove useful, he could not imagine that such practices could have arisen in any nation whose natives could be *bored* [ibid, p.192]. A dig at the rival psychologists of the German school perhaps, but sufficient to illustrate

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[18] I have not completed sufficient research to be able to fill out the former category with any authority. However, my experience of the present enables me to concentrate on the psychological explanation.

Thayer's clumsy and inaccurate rendition of James' hope for psychology.[19] I mention this example in passing as an illustration, but will concentrate here on the first sentence of volume I of The Principles because one might not expect this to require the same effort as is involved in discovering *The Psychologist's Fallacy*, and because, in spite of this, it is often misquoted in a particularly interesting way.

The opening sentence of The Principles of Psychology makes it fairly plain what psychology is to be.

> Psychology is the science of mental life, both of its phenomena and their conditions. [ibid, p.1]

In his Talks to Students, James was keen to emphasise that the understanding of human beings requires the conjunction of phenomenal existence and material conditions:

> But, instinctively, we make a combination of two things in judging the total significance of a human being. We feel it to be some sort of product (if such a product only could be calculated) of his inner virtue *and* his outer place,- neither singly taken, but both conjoined. If the outer differences had no meaning for life, why indeed should all this immense variety of them exist? [James, 1899, pp. 284-285 (italics in original)]

This initial distinction between "phenomena" and "conditions" is a plausible and useful one which is compatible both with common sense and rigorous psychological analysis. It is arguable however that the very existence of the scientistic fallacy reveals an inability to understand this distinction. If a psychologist sees the other person as very much like him or herself or suggests that the other's world is perceived as science perceives the world in general, then the psychologist has failed to see that conditions are not universal and that phenomena cannot be viewed in isolation from conditions.

The poor understanding is exemplified by psychology's willingness to define itself without reference to phenomena and conditions of mental life. George Miller's introductory textbook, Psychology, is subtitled "The Science of Mental Life", and the opening sentence of The Principles is misquoted on the first page of the text!

> "Psychology", said William James in the frist sentence of his classic text, "is the science of mental life." [p.15]

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[19]This misreading is all the more scurulous since it is presented in an authoratative lexicon of psychology which is for sale amongst psychological textbooks in academic bookshops. Budding psychologists are being sold lies.

Miller believes that James' first sentence stops at the end of the first clause: where Miller puts a full stop, James had put a comma and added "both of its phenomena and their conditions.", thereby completing his sentence. Nevertheless, Miller believes that the first clause is sufficient as a "relatively familiar and mercifully short" [p.15] definition of psychology. Miller's misquotation is not an isolated example. Beloff writes that in "the opening sentence of [The Principles] William James defines psychology as 'The Science of Mental Life', offering as samples of mental life such items as thoughts, feelings, desires and so forth." [Beloff, 1972, p.3]. Again no mention of the second clause and in this case emphasis on the phenomena - "such things as we call feelings, desires, cognitions, reasonings, decisions, and the like" [James, 1890, Vol I, p.1] - rather than both these and their conditions. Hudson [1988] writes "Almost a hundred years ago, William James epitomised psychology as 'the science of mental life'." [ibid p. 347]. It would seem that psychology is prepared to define itself as the science of mental life, and it is already clear that it is a science of mental life that James did not understand. It is no longer explicitly concerned with the phenomena and conditions of mental life.

But it is this ommission of "conditions" and concentration on "phenomena" which is significant. Leaving Beloff and Hudson aside, and focusing on Miller as an illustration of what is excluded when "conditions" are not examined carefully and of what happens to "phenomena" when they are considered in isolation to conditions. Miller spends the remainder of his opening chapter describing the benefits that have accrued to humanity in general as a result of psychology becoming scientific. His story is a celebration of the saleability of scientific psychology - about how it has been useful to educationalists, the military, states, employers, psychiatrists, the judiciary. This is sufficient for Miller to justify the "scientific ethos shared by most psychologists" [p.23], and the faith inherited from the nineteenth century "that scientific methods can be applied to the mental life of human beings ..." [p.24]. His "approach to scientific psychology is through its history; we can go back to the nineteenth century and try to recapture some of the enthusiasm and confidence with which scientific methods were first applied to the human mind." [p.23].

But Miller's historical approach is not terribly historical: In the rest of the book, he certainly displays some degree of enthusiasm and confidence that scientific methods can be applied to "the human mind" - which is, incidentally, rather different from "mental life", but the only thing he recaptures from the nineteenth century is a spirit of Comtean positivism - a spirit for which James did not have much time.[20] His book

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[20]Klein [1970] points out that James reacted negatively to the kind of scientific psychology which would serve as the basis of the professional work of educators etc. James' psychology was underpinned by a common experience of being human with human beings in many contexts, and if it was at all "positivist" it was pragmatically so and did not exclude metaphysics as Comte had done. Klein believes that James' positivism is liberating. James was far removed from the Comtean idea that science should be used as the organising method of the good society - an idea which comes through Miller's writing and which Klein regards as restrictive.

describes the work of a few "great men" and shows how their ideas have been changed by the application of scientific methods. In its way it deals with the history of psychology as a phenomenon of scientific investigation, and this is perhaps an example of an "internal history" in the sense advocated by Lakatos.[21] But it is a partial history which never questions the enthusiastic faith in science and which traces a neat path to the present. Although he explicitly mentions that our conception of a science of mental life has changed [ibid p. 15], he does not consider what this change has been from any position other than from that which it has become. What he misses out - just like his misquotation of the first sentence of The Priciples - is the conditions under which this change has taken place. His enthusiasm - although done in the name of history - is more useful here in pointing out the psychological factors to be brought to bear in explaining the scientistic fallacy.

The type of history which Miller does cannot add to any understanding of why the scientistic fallacy is committed except to say that it is because of a belief in the virtue of science. But this is tautological. It does however indicate that history too can be scientistic. In general, those who write history from within concepts that are not held up to critical reflection will reproduce the conventions upon which these are based and say more about the present than the past. Miller was educated as a scientist and so his writing reproduces the conventions of science. These rest on the way scientific writing is produced - just those historical conditions which are made systematically invisible by psychology's definition of itself, and which scientific writing conspires - in the following ways - to repress or otherwise ignore.

The stucture of scientific textbooks itself unfolds a teleology to the present - past results are presented as stages on the way to current understanding. Scientific papers employ strict criteria in the description of experimental events. These concentrate on methodology and statistics and have little to do with what actually happens during experimental work. Papers generally only acknowledge the work of a few "experimenters" and ignore the contributions of the many others whose labour has produced the reported results. What is more important for scientific papers is describing how procedures may be replicated and not how they actually occurred. The initial stage of scientific writing focuses on an idealised description of events rather than on events themselves. The entire *ethos* of science claims to be able to stand outside history categorising and explaining universals which endure in spite of contingent circumstance. When this is transported from the natural sciences (*naturwissenschaft*) - where it is at least comprehensible - and is used as the foundation of human science (*geisteswissenschaft*), historical events will be at best

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[21]Lakatos argues that the ideal of scientific rationality is approached by being able to explain as much historical change from within the limits of the science in question rather than by "external" factors such as technological advance, superpower rivalry, sociological and demographic changes, and wars. See Chalmers [1982] chapter 7 for a fuller discussion of Lakatos' attempts to maintain the inherent rationality of the scientific endeavour.

misunderstood and at worst completely ignored.[22]

The alternative must be some sort of Khunian approach in which the institutional arrangemnets and historical circumstances of psychology are given as much emphasis as the results of the science, and in which science is not felt to be in need of high evaluation or justification. But as present circumstance stands, this cannot happen: psychology has developed a profound physics envy and has become convinced that scientific labour is the only appropriate way of fulfilling its historical role – a role which is reasonably well characterised by the whole of the first sentence of The Principles – although some thought needs now to be given to "science". Moreover, psychologists divide this role and specialise into a plethora of subdisciplines ranging across many sectors of human conduct and in each of which human beings tend to be characterised as atomised individuals rather than fully as social beings.[23] Thus, the institutional and historical issues which would emerge from any exercise of Khunian historical method would at worst remain unwritten and at best become someone else's problem.

These reflections are relevant only to the conditions under which the scientistic fallacy makes sense; the "mental phenomenon" is a powerful repression of thinking about actual events as they happen, manifest under these conditions by a deep desire to abstract oneself from history so that one will remain objective and free from ideological bias. A desire to cut oneself away from historical conditions and survey the world without oneself in it. The trouble is that psychology believes that it has already satisfied the desire because it does experimental science to the exclusion of other kinds of theoretical work. Before it looks out on the world, psychology has already decided that what it is interested in seeing has got very little, if anything, to do with history.

And yet this mental departure from history is performed by more than scientistic psychologists. Circumstances are often so unbearable that people refuse to experience them and drift inwards to a "safe" world of their own making.[24] In the present context, it is the very act of reflection which invokes the transcendence of actual events. Pirsig's recollection of his feeling that his son is so close to him and yet so distant, illustrates the problem the psychologist faces in reflecting on his or her efforts to understand another person.

> Sometimes, when thinking about this, I thought that the idea that

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[22]See also Laing's "Foundations for a science of persons" in his The Divided Self pp. 17-26 for a critical discussion of the assumption that the methods of natural science are applicable to the human sciences.

[23]Even bits of "social psychology" lapse into some variety of the problem of determining how much of human conduct is due to "social factors" – a problem which can only make sense within the causal vocabulary of experimental science.

[24]Two films deal with this particularly vividly. Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* and Alan Parker's *Birdy*

one person's mind is accessible to another's is just a conversational illusion, just a figure of speech, an assumption that makes some kind of exchange between basically alien creatures seem plausible, and that really the relationship of one person to another is ultimately unknowable. The effort of fathoming what is in another's mind creates a distortion of what is seen. I'm trying, I suppose, for some situation in which whatever it is emerges undistorted. [Pirsig, 1976, p. 293]

How can we get a clear view of another person without transcending the moment of understanding in reflection and displacing the other person as alien. Making an effort which defeats itself. Being left simply waiting for what there is to emerge – to present itself – undistorted?

This is the big psychological question which emerges from understanding that the psychologist's fallacy is something that no psychologist can avoid committing at some point. It is the problem of reflexivity. Reflecting back creates a reflection and an "it" which is miraculously able to do this. What is this a reflection of? What is this "it"? Reflection has created a whole complex of problems in which the subject is suspended by some mystical space out of actual contact with anything but a simulacrum of an unspecified other place. And what is the subject anyway?![25]

If these are problems for which there are answers, then they must have as much to do with practice as with theory. In his famous Theses on Feuerbach, Marx attests that all social life is essentially practical and argues that all mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in practice and in the comprehension of this practice. Pirsig's mystery leads theory to mysticism because it employs transcendental reflection. Marx advocates practical reflection and the effort of actively changing the world – and perforce oneself – rather than simply understanding it [Marx & Engels, 1970, pp. 122-123]. The "reflection" is mystification. Those psychologists who now seek a rational "answer to the problem of man" [as Eysenck put it], must actively change what is said of people rather than passively report what they appear to be. And this involves nothing less than creating new ways of being psychologists.

The absolute bare minimum of this alternative is a recognition of Marx's recollection of classical wisdom:

> The human being is in the most literal sense a political animal, not merely a gregarious animal, but an animal which can individuate itself only in the midst of society. [Marx, 1973, p84]

It is not an accident that we are all together here and now, it is the very essence of

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[25]If you want to feel the full force of this complex of problems, I recommend that you read pages 70-73 of Martin Buber's I and Thou. For a more historical view see Kolakowski's Metaphysical Horror.

our understanding of ourselves, each other and the world. The atomised individual of psychology "is as much of an absurdity as is the development of language without individuals living *together* and talking to each other" [ibid, (italics in original)]. All psychologists must now understand themselves as active participants in a complex *ensemble* of social relations. William James understood this:

> We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favourably by our kind. [...] Properly speaking, *a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him* and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these his images is to wound him. [James, 1890, Vol I, pp. 293-294 (all italics in original)]

Although it is bending credibility to cast him in the role of "Marxist" he believed that people should always be considered in relation to each other and to their worlds. He even warned future generations of psychologists that it is a formal mistake to confuse their own standpoints with those of the people with whom they are in relation.

It is deplorable - although not much of a surprise - to see the warning to psychology systematically forgotten and to have those who would remember it excluded from psychology because they are not scientific or are otherwise too subjective.[26] The Scientistic Fallacy (dispersed in nooks and crannies of psychological writing and yet supporting institutional practices which are governed more by "methodological foresight" [Duncan, 1987, p. 128] and dogmatic faith than by any comprehensible spirit of scientific endeavour) renders the psychologists fallacy invisible and excludes much of James' psychology. In some cases the scientistic fallacy reduces to little more than the ludicrous proposition that "everybody ought to be like us because we are scientists". When such propositions are legitemised by the might of the scientistic establishment, power is exerted over the living soul of humanity. Psychologists who take advantage of this power - either explicitly or because they do not know any better - alienate all of us who do not believe that we are all the experts say of us. They do nothing to convince us that psychology is competent to reveal the undoubted mysteries of being human. If there is to be a new psychology worthy of the name, these psychologists should also be excluded from psychology.

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[26]As far as I am concerned this is the final nail in scientistic psychology's coffin - the reason why it is not worthy of the name. Any effort to understand human beings which excludes subjectivity surely cuts the ground from beneath its own feet. If psychologists cannot be subjective, how can they be anything at all?

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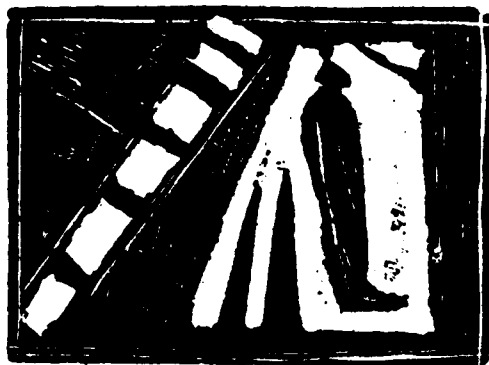
NUCLEAR 'WEAPONS' AND PEOPLE'S LAW

an interview with Keith Mothersson

Keith Mothersson is a co-founder of the Institute for Law and Peace (INLAP) which can be contacted through its Secretary, INLAP, Bryn-y-mor, Parrog, Newport, Dyfed, Cymru SA42 0RX (telephone: 0239 820661). He has recently completed a poster kit on the Geneva Conventions, which includes an explanatory pamphlet on the conventions and their use (75p); and 'No Prerogative to Poison - A Study Companion on Law, Peace and Non-Combatant Rights' (£1 to £5, variable according to income), available from K.M. at 1b Savile Terrace, Edinburgh, EH9 3AD, or from INLAP. The present interview takes up the question of the extent to which the peace movement may use appeal to law, as distinct from opposition to law; in addition it discusses the background to these arguments in aspects of feminist thought.

R.G.: The first question I'd like to ask concerns your view, as I understand it, that the possession of nuclear weapons is illegal. Can you say why and under what kind of law?

K.M.: That's quite a tricky question to answer. I will try to explain why they are illegal under international law, military law, ordinary, domestic law and constitutional law but first I want to talk about this phrase 'nuclear weapons' because in that is the key to the whole answer. If nuclear 'weapons' were weapons then their possession would not, per se, be unlawful. Of course, certain unlawful uses might be made of the nuclear devices. Let's imagine the commander of a Panzer tank division. He could be killing invading enemy soldiers or he could be ordering his men to fire on a hospital full of prisoners of war, or helpless Jewish people. If the same commander were caught

with a tank in his possession he could argue that he was going
to use it lawfully.   But supposing we catch him, not with a
Panzer tank but with gas chambers in his possession;   now gas
chambers are only any use when killing people who have already
been made harmless, that's what they're for.   Therefore logically
they can't be considered a means of defence and therefore they
aren't really <u>arms</u> which, incidentally, comes from the Latin
root for shield, as for example, in armadillo.   So, nuclear
devices - nukes - aren't essentially weapons at all, that's what
I'm saying.   Now, how come we still think of them as bombs;
and what are they if they aren't bombs or weapons?

I've come to think of it like a branch.   If you're climbing
along a branch, sooner or later you keep going out along the
branch and it breaks, and it's been like that with the analogy
of 'the bomb'.   The idea of the bomb grew up along the lines
of gradual evolution.   The first use of military airplanes, around
the time of World War I, was for an extension of shelling, like
artillery fire;   they operated in terms of blast, and you dropped
bombs on, mostly, soldiers.   Then in World War II, although
what was going on with the 'strategic' bombing campaign was
justified by reference to the model of pin-point blast effects,
what they were actually experimenting with was area bombing,
and fire - how to create fire-storms, not just multiple blast-
effects.   Now I suppose you could, theoretically, use a fire-
storm lawfully, for example, in an enemy division of Panzer
tanks was passing through a forest.   But when you get onto the
nuclear question it's very important that we aren't any longer
flinded by past analogies, that we aren't fighting previous wars.
When we're dealing with the nuclear question we've actually
got to get up to date and really see what's going on.   And they're
really about poison, so I call them, not nuclear weapons, I call
them universal poison dispensers.

A lot of people laugh when I say this but I reckon that
every serious movement does involve a struggle for language reform.
Like women got laughed at at first when they said 'Mankind,
he' was an obnoxious use of language and people told them, Oh,
it was a trivial point, not to nit-pick and so on.   But I believe
language reform is integral to a serious movement and it's time
we stopped calling these devices nuclear weapons.   It's a question
of whose side are we really on?   Mentally speaking the British
military write on Polaris missiles 'This is for the Red Army
high-command'.   Are we going to take that perspective or are
we going to see it from our own perspective as ordinary citizens
of the world?   Are we going to factor into our equation, the
ordinary people of Moscow who would form 99 per cent of the
immediate victims of a so-called bomb which hit the Kremlin.
Now if we just stick with the blast and fire-storm effects then
this lets the government back off the hook of possession.   They
say, How do you know our Polaris weapons aren't targetted on
isolated military targets with little collateral   damage   among
civilians?   How do you know we won't use only one at a time,
or only one full stop?   So that gets around the Nuclear Winter
argument about the cumulative effect of several fire-storms.   So

the force of factoring in the poison is that unlike for example, the Dresden fire-storm, the Moscow fire-storm would sooner or later but inevitably, kill and maim people all over Russia, all over neutral nations, all over the world, all different species, and of course it would sooner or later poison the people and ecology of Britain for twenty-four thousand years, which is half life of plutonium. Now that's not defence of the realm, that's poisoning the realm. There is no way you can continue to call this poisoning a side-effect or a mere by-product. Although it happens slower than the blast of the fire effects, it's the main thing from the point of view of most people in the world. From the perspective of five hundred or five thousand years we can imagine kiddies asking, 'Mummy why have so many of us got hare-lips or no legs and arms?' And the mother telling her child about the poison times and weeping because she knows that humanity is living in the end times, that eventual extinction has been ineluctably inflicted through the cumulative, irreversible, genetic effects of plutonium. So I say it's time for a figure ground reversal. These devices are mainly unipods, one could say, a sort of acronym for universal poison dispensers. Cancer machines and agencies for genetic wipe-out. Now they also have admittedly, weapon-like aspects or uses. But, once you factor poison into your understanding of nuclear devices you see they should not any longer be conceded to be weapons principally or essentially, and therefore even possession can't be justified, but becomes prima facia evidence of unlawful purpose.

R.G.: So that's where the issue of law comes in?

K.M.: Right. The Peace Movement first turned on to the illegality issue, as we saw it, around 1982, 1983. We were influenced partly by Lawyers for Nuclear Disarmament and even more by George Delf of INLAW - International Law Against War - who subsequently wrote a brilliant book, Humanising Hell: Law versus Nuclear Weapons. Our focus then and subsequently has been **international law**. A Nuclear Warfare Tribunal was held in London involving Sean MacBride, Richard Falk and various top international lawyers and scientists. Nuclear strategies were seen as violating various well-established rules of customary international law and international treaties. For example, rules against causing unnecessary suffering, not destroying civilians and non-combatants indiscriminately, rules concerning the necessity for proportionate relationship between any attack suffered and the so-called retaliation. And they were seen as breaching the 1925 Geneva Protocol, the 'Gas Protocol' as it's called, which bans 'the use in war of asphyxiating, poisonous or other gases, and of all analogous liquids, materials or devices' as well as 'bacteriological methods of warfare'. So a more useful nickname for the 1925 Geneva Protocol would be the 'Poison Protocol' - though of course nuclear 'weapons' do release radon gas among all the other poisons they scatter.

However, George Delf in particular pushed a lot further into ordinary domestic and **military law**. He distributed leaflets to soldiers headed 'War Crimes Warning' which showed soldiers

from their own Manual of Military Law that it was their duty to refuse 'manifestly unlawful commands'. Subsequently, Bruce Kent and others told Cruise missile attendants and British soldiers involved in anything to do with Cruise missiles and other nuclear missiles, to refuse to have anything to do with them along the same line of argument. Moreover, so far as officers are concerned, they are described as being in a position to 'foresee and avert the execution of grave war crimes', i.e. they could lock Thatcher and the Defence Council up if they started giving orders for global poisoning. And this wouldn't just be a possibility, it would be their duty to do this. Now I call this 'deterring deterrence' and it puts the government in a terrible quandry. On the one hand they would like to charge us with incitement to disaffection, or even incitement to mutiny, and they could if we got careless or pushed our luck in respect of non-nuclear bases. On the other hand any trial would inevitably show up the criminal nature of preparations to use these nuclear devices because George or Bruce or whoever would be able to argue that they were merely encouraging soldiers to loyalty and scrupulous observance of their own professional code and their legal obliga-tions to their country to defend the realm, not poison it, 'accord-ing to the laws of disciplines of war', to quote one form of the Queen's commission to officers. It's a primary contradiction which we are going to be driving deeper and deeper over the coming years.

We also argue that nukes violate ordinary domestic law –

R.G.: Before you go on to that, can I ask you whether you're arguing that possession of so-called nuclear weapons is in itself illegal, or only the use of them, or just the threat of them?

K.M.: Possession, I would concede, is recognised in some inter-national treaties, for example the Non-Proliferation Treaty acknow-ledges that certain nations have nuclear weapons, so from that point of view it is difficult, on a level of international law, to say that it is per se unlawful simply to possess them, though there are treaties banning them from specific areas – from South America, the Antartic, the sea-bed etc. However, the main thing about nuclear poison-spreaders is not that they exist as static possessions locked in some granite caves, rather they are con-stantly kept on a launch-on-warning hair-trigger, they are deployed actively, there are surrounding strategies and conditional agree-ments and plans to use these things in certain circumstances. To use them not just for threatening, which is unlawful enough, but plans and rehearsals to use them in the sense of actual detona-tion and the spreading of the plutonium deliberately, quite apart from the inevitable accidental spreading of plutonium which comes from the manufacture of the devices themselves. The processing at Sallafield and so on. And indeed also the accidents which inevitably will occur, such as the Palomires accident when a B52 dropped so-called bombs, which didn't detonate but did spread nuclear plutonium all over that part of Spain.

Concerning possession, it's more useful to look at **ordinary domestic law.** For example, the Superintendent of the Cardiff atomic weapons establishment has been charged with breach of Section 4 of The Explosive Substances Act, which makes it a crime to possess an explosive substance without lawful object. Likewise, the Prevention of Crime Act 1953 makes it a crime to possess an offensive weapon without lawful authority and excuse. The proof of which is on the defendant. And the Criminal Damage Act, 1971, makes it an offence to possess things with intent to allow others to cause criminal damage. Of course nukes aren't just possessed like a hand gun in your bedroom drawer. They are being paraded down the High Street with the safety catch off and brandished at other people's heads, so they constitute an assault, a putting of people in terror, or threats of unlawful violence contrary to the Public Order Act and they are associated with threats to murder people which is unlawful even if you don't intend to carry the threats out.

Nukes are so uniquely nihilistic that their actual use, i.e. detonation, would drive a coach and horses through every value humanity has ever fought for or attempted to shield and establish. Not surprisingly, therefore, it would also violate lots and lots of laws across a whole spectrum, from, for example, the spreading of poison, laws prohibiting cruelty to animals and harming of wildlife, even laws to do with treason, one of the definitions of which is compassing the death of heirs of the monarch, and also laws such as the Geneva Conventions Act which I'll come back to. And of course, in addition to the completed crimes which would probably never be tried because there would be no world left in which to have a trial, there are also what are called the inchoate offences, which concern attempts, conspiracies, or being art and part in Scotland. And incitement to do any of the above, to breach any of the above laws and clauses, and others which I haven't even mentioned.

Finally, the nuclear state violates **constitutional law.** In the U.K. this comes up by reference to lawful authority and excuse for example, threatening to kill, or possession of these explosive substances. The government lays claim to a Royal prerogative, or the Crown Prerogative power. Crown Prerogative is a sort of left-over of the Divine Right of Kings and it means an exclusive discretionary power, exclusive power which is solely within the discretion of the monarch, or nowadays, the executive. However, the sphere in which the Prerogative is exercised is itself controlled by the courts on the basis of the degree to which Parliament, by passing Statutes, has eaten into the sphere of Crown Prerogative which is therefore a sort of residual and diminishing sphere. It can't be added to, you can't extend Crown Prerogative any longer. In BBC v. Johns in the 1960s they said it was '300 years and Civil War too late' to invent new prerogative powers. If you were to claim that soldiers who were threatening to kill invading enemy soldiers were guilty under the Offences Against the Person Act, Section 16, prohibiting threats to kill, those soldiers would be able to claim that they

had lawful authority and excuse under the prerogative for defence of the realm because defence of the realm is an established, lawful, recognised, specific and particular and named activity. But, so far as non-defensive activity, like killing and poisoning noncombatants and poisoning Britain is concerned, that's <u>ultra vires</u> of the Defence Council's Charter to defend the rea<u>lm</u> - outside its functions, beyond its powers. There isn't any prerogative to poison and therefore there is no bar on courts if a prerogative activity is named, to ask, 'Is that prerogative activity which is relied on by the Crown, one which bears any relationship whatsoever to the activities complained of?' As far as we're concerned defence is exactly what we aren't complaining about. We're complaining about attack. And we're complaining about poison. It's a bit like if you were to see somebody driving a motor car in a drunken state and you went to the magistrates and you said, 'Hey, case of drunken driving', you gave information about drunken driving, and the magistrate were to say, 'Oh no, he's got a valid driving licence therefore he can't be guilty of drunken driving.' Justice demands there has to be some relationship between the basis of charge and the basis of acquittal or conviction. So the fact that somebody has a lawful authority and excuse to use a - let's say a rifle - doesn't mean that they are going to be able to get off if they use the rifle to murder their granny. Just because - as the government says - there is no specific law against nuclear weapons means very little. There's no specific law against rolling pins, but if you batter your granny to death with a rolling pin you can't plead that there's no specific law. What we're talking about is categories of action and the category of action of defence is, we submit, a different category of action from the action of poisoning. It is justiciable because it has been put into a statute and, therefore, into the domain of the courts to judge of. It's not true to say that any matters to do with the military are reserved for the Crown, because the Naval Discipline Act and the other services Acts enshrine statutory control and provisions concerning aspects of the military. We would argue that activities such as genocide, activities such as grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions Act and all these other activities are justiciable, are proper matters for the courts to decide on. And they needn't be intimidated by the government claiming, correctly, that it has, in principle, a prerogative power of deciding defence of the realm because what we're complaining about is not defence but attack.

There's another angle to constitutional law. This and next year are the three hundredth anniversary of the Bill and the Act of Rights which involved a big establishment ceremony in Westminster Abbey with the Queen and Thatcher and everybody in the establishment present, to celebrate this glorious revolution of 1688 and the Bill of Rights. Tony Benn and others, however, saw it as merely a stalking horse for Protestant sectarianism and the National Front. However, what the left have ignored here is the clause in the Bill of Rights which says that the executive has no dispensing power. They are not entitled to

dispense with or suspend the laws of the land except that they get Parliamentary authority for it. If the government wants to pass a law legitimising the killing of harmless people let them move a Genocide British Enablement Bill or whatever. If they don't do that then the Genocide Act, the Geneva Conventions, and the Offences Against the Person Act all stay on the statutes book. If you've got extra parliamentary repeal of the laws that's called tyranny, that's called a junta.

R.G.: Most of the laws that you have talked about have been British laws and so it could be asked whether your appeal to law is not a bit quixotic? Is the perspective you are talking about - one of addressing the question of the nuclear threat via law-based considerations - something that is developing only in Britain or are there signs of a similar kind of movement around the world?

K.M.: Well, every serious movement gets called quixotic at the beginning. For example, the movement against slavery. There is a lot of development around the world and I'll mention just three. In West Germany there was a case in the Frankfurt District Court where direct actionists successfully raised the defence that, when they had been blockading a Pershing base, they were enforcing the law. The district judge in Frankfurt found that nuclear weapons stood on German soil without any lawful foundation whatsoever, both because they violated the German constitution concerning conformity with international law and because they threatened other Germans. In Germany subsequently the Judges and Prosecuters for Peace organisation, which numbers hundreds, some of their members were involved in a series of blockades and subsequently hundreds of them took out a full page advert in Die Deit, which is the equivalent of our Times, in support of their comrades who had been arrested. And then there even began to be headaches for the establishment because certain judges were liable to release the other judges and prosecutors and not convict.

In the United States Professor Francis Boyle and other legal experts have got literally hundreds of protesters off charges of direct action against the CIA, protestors against nuclear 'weapons', against policy in Central America or against commercial appeasement of Apartheid. They have used the law concerning necessity, whereby you say that you had to breach one law because you were trying to vindicate another. And in the United States the US Constitution enshrines international law as part of the supreme law of the land. Therefore when the World Court found the US guilty of violating international law through its proxy war with Nicaragua this enabled radical defendants to claim that they were simply enforcing domestic US law when, for example, they besieged CIA recruiting drives in universities as ex-President Carter's daughter, Amy, was arrested for. And so they found a way through the laws in the United States to defend the most radical actions and are actually beginning to start getting off in large numbers. So there's a real crisis of legitimacy for the United States government building up.

No.w thirdly in New Zealand there is a movement beginning with support also in Geneva through the International Peace Bureau which organised a petition of lawyers and in many other quarters of the world, and this movement aims to have the United Nations General Assembly make a reference to the World Court for an advisory ruling on the lawfulness of nuclear stategies. It's important to note here that United Nations General Assembly is not controlled by the nuclear super powers and any serious examination of this question by the World Court could not fail to find nuclear strategies completely unlawful and this would give a terrific boost, both internationally and within the nation states which possess nuclear poison machines, to the anti-nuclear struggle. So, however surprising it might seem, this development is far from an isolated quixotic one but is beginning to make solid strides around the world.

R.G.: But still questions could be raised about the recourse to law which you see as being important. Many people on the left, for example, see the law, putting it somewhat crudely, as a club which the rulers use to bash and control the ruled. You seem to be implying that there are resources in law upon which the ruled themselves can draw to shield or to defend themselves. Can you say more about this?

K.M.: Well the origin of the term law - L A W - is probably in Anglo-Saxon L O R E and the origin of that is probably L O G H I which is an Icelandic Nordic word for 'the things laid down'. I would say that the Lore is the source of all the different kinds of law the world over. Almost at an ethological level. In primate societies it is a condition of our evolution that certain ground rules have been observed. Species cannot develop if they don't have an ABC that you don't attack other animals of the same species that aren't attacking you. For example, none of us would be here today if we'd been murdered in our cradles or yesterday, when we went to buy a loaf of bread at the corner shop while our backs were turned, somebody drove a knife in. Although in a way it is obvious, this ABC basic lore, nevertheless beginning to seriously reflect on what we take for granted contains possible energies for social transformation. We don't see the law as a gift of State. We see the law as the people's norms, the people's norms which they often had to raise up against arbitrary lawless terror, against the right of, let's say, feudal thugs on horseback to go rampaging and stealing and raping and murdering. Now the State - the nation state - has to make terrific emphasis on claiming to represent the law or our basic social norms as a community, in order to puts its own legitimacy on a reasonably sound foundation. I'm not saying that there aren't tremendous problems with the actual legal systems which we have in this country and in others. There certainly are. The legal systems and the legal personnel who operate those systems are certainly patriarchal, thoroughly bourgeois, and many of them freemasons - in branches of the judiciary, for example. But there are going to be tremendous problems with any approach because exterminism has a tremendous momentum in the world. There isn't a trouble-free angle and the fact that there are problems with this specific angle isn't necessarily a reason not to develop it and try and get round

the problems. I'm not against defence and I'm not against keeping
the peace. I'm for them. I'm not against security services
in the sense that I'm in favour of security. And I don't see
why I should give either Law or Order over to those who are
subverting the entire natural order with plutonium and threats
of utter nihilism. We see the law then, as a form of civilian
or social or civil defence against lawless exterminism.

R.G.: But then I have some further questions about the law
and the radical use that you want to put it to. Questions of
a more directly political kind. From a Marxist point of view,
for example, the law is to be seen as part of a capitalist state
and so by drawing upon the law and basing a campaign on what
it says, aren't you legitimising, at the same time, the law itself?
And also therefore the capitalist state? Aren't you reinforcing
precisely the kind of state which causes just the kind of problems
which you are addressing? And, a further question, not this
time from a Marxist but from an anarchistic point of view:
what can using the law in radical campaigns amount to if one
takes an anarchistic perspective? Aren't you, once again, rein-
forcing precisely the source of the problems you address?

K.M.: To answer your second question first - I've taken some
stick from some anarcho-pacifists around the Peace Pledge Union
and Peace News, who either object, on pacifistic grounds, to
any attempt to find common ground with soldiers, or who object
on anarchist grounds to anything which evokes the law. But,
if you look at anarchist classics neither Proudhon nor Kropotkin
nor Landauer were against the law as such, they counterposed
communal law to the law of the unitary sovereign conquest state.
Moreover without theorising this contradiction, the same people,
for example around Peace News, are in practice prepared to
support individual instances of the use of the law, for example
by gay groups or law as environmental defence as among survivors
of the Bhopal disaster.

    From the point of view of the ruling class the law is
a centralised system for punishment. Part of a sort of sado-
masochistic machine. Now if you can't enforce international law,
they argue, it isn't really law. I'd say that law isn't just
one thing, it's a contested terrain and the question from the
point of view of the ordinary people of the world is what use
can we make of law, to prevent, not to punish after the event,
but to prevent arbitrary violence, terror, trouble? The classical
definition of the state in social theory is something to do with
being a monopoly of legitimate violence. Here in this perspective
we are challenging every one of the three terms in this definition.
We are challenging the monopoly and the legitimacy and the vio-
lence. Now I fully admit that we're operating, to some extent,
with a view - a sense of the law which is romantic or idealistic
you could say - but then people say the same about the prospect
of a survivable World at all. It's no small thing to have even
a capitalist state which agrees not to blow the entire world
up and poison it. On such a central question as the survival

of the world, I would argue that a 'historic compromise' would
be in order even if it left nation states intact.   And it's sig-
nificant in this connection that the new regime in the Soviet
Union under Gorbachov has taken a much more positive attitude
to international law, and has, of course, long dropped the thesis
concerning inevitable world war.   Now what use you make of
this perspective will depend on your politics.   Gut Liberals,
serious liberals, will be able to dig their heels in and struggle
with it in their terms.   On the other hand, anarcho-pacifist
ultras, or even anarcho, non-pacifist ultras, could make use
of this in terms of their politics too.   For example, I've noticed
that in the Poll Tax refusal there is an increasing tendency for
people to justify non-payment of the poll tax on the grounds
that constitutional law is being breached.   The Act of Union
doesn't permit that there are to be civil government laws passed
which discriminate against one part of the equal union.   And
one could imagine that Poll Tax refuseniks or people who are
had up in court for using cannabis or other offences could raise
the point that, since the most fundamental law is not being en-
forced, that they were released from their leige obligations to
obey the other laws.   That legality was, as it were, suspended
pending the most central and important laws being put back on
a basis of respect and enforced.   So law might be part of the
capitalist state but it is also part of our people's defence.

The law means different legal practices and   different
appeals in different contexts.   I believe the heart of the law
is something beautiful and something which confirms true natural
law and a moral law, but I accept that the statist interpretation
of law makes it something ugly often and specific laws have
been passed which are quite appalling.   One can think, for
example, of the Control of Pollution Act which specifically exempts
radiation emissions from its scope.   We can think of the way
in which the legal system has been abused.   Take for example
Private McBain, released after only two years in jail.   Private
McBain was charged with murder when he shot into a crowd and
killed someone in Belfast.   He had no lawful excuse in terms
of self-defence and he was acting outwith the yellow card which
contain the rules under which he could open fire.   So, when
he came to court, the amry and the Crown didn't shield his
actions and he was found guilty of ordinary murder.   But he
was released after just two years - quietly released and then
allowed to continue serving in the British Army.   One can further
think of the way in which the Attorney General controls prosecu-
tions.   Decisions not to prosecute in the Stalker Affair, for
example.   And one can think of the way in which, at the time,
for example, of the Falklands War, if one had wanted by direct
action to stop the armada sailing one might have had morality
on one's side but one wouldn't, alas, have been able to make
a very strong case in British law.   So I accept fully that there
is no hundred per cent overlap between morality and the law,
but I would keep coming back to my sense that, in terms of
this principal contradiction in the world, dealing with the most
excessive and universal forms of violence, we can, I believe,
use the law to de-legitimise the people threatening and perpe-
trating this poison and de-legitimise, therefore any state or
any system which refuses to return its defence policy within
the paths of legality.

R.G.: My next question relates more directly to British politics. How widely are the views that you have been developing and expressing here shared in the British anti-nuclear movement? Could you say something about the relation of the campaign that you are involved in to CND and current attitudes in the Labour Party?

K.M.: Well, progress is being made, albeit quite slowly. Lawyers for Nuclear Disarmament have mostly - there's not very many of them actually - but they've mostly taken a conventional view both of nukes as some kind of weapon rather than some kind of poison plot, and of what would constitute success for a legal defensive strategy. So they've restricted themselves to technical defences of individual activists who've been arrested for direct action and they've restricted their critique of the illegality of these nuclear so-called weapons to the international sphere, to the plane of international law. This lets them off the hook in respect of their responsibility - as I would argue - to help summon the energies for and by consultants for and indeed lead, or help to lead, a serious well-researched and financed, legal offensive.

However, there is a lot of very useful expertise building up in the anti-nuclear movement. Some very militant people out there who've been causing enormous problems for the establishment and the Crown Prosecution Service. I'm thinking of some of the Cruise-watchers like Ian Lee and Di McDonald. Some of the Greenham women and John Bugg who have fought campaigns against the by-laws, Military Lands Act by-laws which were completely invalid in the way that they were brought into operation by Hesletine. And there are others too who are developing confidence and refusing to be a victim in the face of the legal mystification and confusion which the law often represents to people as it's practised.

An example of the way in which the tide is turning is that the Snowball campaign, which originally began as a **law-breaking** campaign with some symbolic act of criminal damage such as cutting a strand in a fence and if two were arrested this time then more would come back and the campaign would snow-ball because each time more and more people would do it - this snowball campaign then changed as they went along into a **law-enforcement** campaign whereby they still continued cutting their bit of wire, but they now argued that they were doing it in order to stop damage to their property or in order to stop crime as is their lawful entitlement under the Criminal Law Act of 1967, Section 3 of which reads:

> A person may use force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime or in effecting or assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or suspected offenders.

Bruce Kent now puts the phrase 'nuclear weapons' in inverted commas, but most people still talk - most prominent people in CND - still talk of nuclear weapons, nuclear bombs, nuclear retaliation and so on which betrays our civilian estate and secretly adopts the perspectives of our oppressors. Here in Edinburgh CND we created a Working Party to review our strategy and outreach and we began by asking basic questions about what we were really about in CND. For we aren't just against nuclear extermination, we are against chemical and biological 'weapons', we're against the bombing of Tripoli when it's asleep, we're against bombs in supermarkets and we're against death squads in Gibraltar for example. Now the common theme which links these apparently different activities is that they all of them violate our rights as civilians or non-combatants to non-combatant immunity. So if we reframe 'Ban The Bomb' as Standing Up For Non-Combatant Immunity that's a good first step and a second step is if we then translate 'Non-Combatant Immunity' into ordinary popular understanding which is that you don't attack people that aren't attacking you. You might of course attack someone who was attacking a weak person, but in that case what you'd really be doing would be defending someone and the disarming or even harming of the attacker would be incidental to your real, main purpose of defence.

Once the issue is reframed in this way then we believe we see a real potential for the Peace Movement to play a much more active role in a progressive re-groupment in society at large. That's to say we can imagine the Peace Movement helping to convene a broad, non-partisan politics, a coalition which would include women up in arms against, for example, rape, battering and other forms of violence that they are subjected to, gay people against queer-bashing, ethnic groups against, for example, Paki-bashing, children against beatings and bullying and child-abuse, old people who live in fear of, for example, mugging - and indeed there is the possibility of linking here with the survivors and the families of victims of non-direct forms of attack, for example cancer sufferers and leukaemia sufferers and other people who have suffered from the indirect poisoning of our environment which has then poisoned them.

Now there's a long way to go but we think this is a possible direction for serious out-reach and the issue of nukes no longer being seen as something remote from people's experience out there to do with governments and complicated technology, but to be really very, very close to people's experience about the way that we actually live. If we can get people to think of how we live and the dignity of our way of life, and what our human right is to a life free from attack if we're not attacking anybody, then it'll be very much harder for the government to mystify people with talk of defence when the government is not only attacking people (not defending people), not only spreading poison in the realm but they're also violating the way we actually live - not defending our way of life - they're actually violating it.

So far as the Labour Party is concerned, it's common that Labour Party activists in the Peace Movement consider that our attempt to have the law enforced now as it is is misplaced and they believe that our objective should be to first win a majority in Parliament and then have new laws passed which ban nuclear 'weapons' specifically. Now of course there is a political dimension to this struggle, nobody would deny that, but there is also a political dimension to rape and ballot rigging. This doesn't mean that we should be fobbed off if we go to police stations and say, Hey we've seen a rape, or Hey there's some ballot rigging going on, by being told, Oh go and see your MP about the question, or Go and win a majority in Parliament and then we'll enforce laws against rape. So it's primarily a moral and a legal question which only becomes political and then a question of constitutional politics if the laws, which have already been passed by Parliament, are not enforced.

The Labour Party is racked with difficulty about nuclear so-called defence and they see it as a vote loser. I believe that the myth of Nuremberg could be a terrific vote winner: 'Was the last war fought in vain? Are we going to allow the kind of activities of mass extermination to be carried out in our name which many of our loved ones laid their lives down in a world war to stop? Activities which, in the case of people like Goebbels, they went to the gallows in Nuremberg because they had carried them out or tried to carry them out. Now law and order is a theme which the Tories are very vulnerable on. Kinnock is trying to present a respectable face of the Labour Party. Well in that case let him seize this radical nettle and present it in the most conservative possible ways as a matter of law and order. Indeed, when questions are asked at Labour Party Conferences or Press Conferences about nuclear so-called weapons and nuclear so-called defence, the issue should be taken away from the defence spokespeople and passed instead to the law and order spokespeople and the spokespeople concerned with the environment and preventative health. Massive rallies could be held which the labour Party could help to organise in every city for the people in that city to ratify the Geneva Conventions locally, and to reaffirm the law and the lore which makes their lives possible and they could also be involved in symbolic action concerning poisoning so as to win a popular majority against nuclear poison terrorist threats.

R.G.: Could you say something more direct about the tactics and strategy which your views, as you've been developing them, entail? In previous conversations you've talked about, and I quote, "helping the police and military". What, for example, does this mean?

K.M.: Well, I raised it in the context of discussion concerning non-violent direct action. Many of the activists in this connection have been very influenced by Ghandi who, of course, was operating in a completely different context where the British made all the laws and it was necessary to pose conscience against

the law in Ghandi's case. However, where by some miracle, the state has forgotten to pass the necessary legislation and to up-date the legal framework to allow these most appalling exterminist preparations, it seems crazy to persist with a conscience versus the law perspective. It's because it's a moral question we must insist on the law being carried out. And we won't be able to succeed in persuading police and soldiers of what the law is if we ourselves are still believing secretly in some part of our souls that it is us that are illegitimate and us that are breaking the law and this is simply some clever little tactic which we are using and giving it a spin. We have to really believe it deep down what the law is. In that way we can transmit this knowledge to soldiers and police because they're certainly not going to have a correct interpretation of the law given to them by Mrs Thatcher in Downing Street. And if they don't get it from us who are they going to get it from? So we have to believe first of all in our own legitimacy and we have to control, not just our physical actions when we sit down with our bums on the road outside a nuclear base or cut wire at a nuclear base, that's important, but we have to also go further and control the meanings surrounding our actions. We could imagine, for example, holding hands round a police station and offering them our support in a very difficult position in which they are being placed whereby they are being told to ignore, contrary to their oaths of allegiance, laws which are being broken. And we can imagine asking to help them and asking them to accept our assistance in the restoration of law and order on this issue and we can imagine asking them to come with us and help the soldiers too in the restoration of good forces discipline. It's a sort of ju-jitsu I'm talking about. A sort of creative magic of confidence which is something which we need to learn. A style of doing politics which is potentially hegemonic rather than constantly being sub-cultural and oppositional in our understanding of ourselves and in our understanding of the issue as we project it in society.

Now we also need to help magistrates, magistrates' clerks and other figures in the judiciary and the legal system and help them too to come to an accurate understanding of what's involved. The Snowball law enforcement campaign has now issued into a snowball information laying campaign, whereby more and more groups round the country are going back, sometimes several times, in a sort of long seige for justice, laying information before magistrates. The situation in Scotland is more difficult where you would have to go to the Solicitor General or Lord Advocate to ask their permission on prosecutions - there isn't the equivalent to the private prosecutions possibility as there is in England. But in England it's free. Any group can go. And the Institute for Law and Peace has published a manual which advises groups who wish to begin a private prosecution how to do it. What's happening is that we are being fobbed off, we're being told that the matter is clearly an 'abuse of process', and that we are being frivolous or vexatious but, sooner or later, we're going to find magistrates who are honest - there are after all

30,000 magistrates - surely a few of them will be prepared to take an honest and courageous view of the situation. If we don't get any joy from magistrates then we are going to have to think increasingly about finding the magistrates vexatious and abusive, finding the magistrates in contempt of people instead of us being in contempt of court. We're going to have to think about alternative tribunals and staging a sort of alternative Assizes really. A popular assizes to withdraw legitimacy and consent from the government, and we're going to have to talk about cutting off funds. For example Nuclear Free Zone local authorities should be encouraged to begin making noises to the magistrates associations in their area concerning the possible withdrawal of funds which are allocated for the administration of justice normally.

Now if people are going to courts citing evidence, establishing a prima facia case under valid laws of the land which have not been repealed, and they are being told that they are being vexatious and no reasons are being given why poisoning the globe should be considered lawful then we are entitled to say that this is not the administration of justice at all, it is becoming servitors of exterminism and funds should be cut off.

R.G.: In what you've said you've talked about helping the police and the military; but again, what do you mean by this? Despite what you've said, also about radical protest not remaining in some kind of sub-cultural and purely perhaps oppositional perspective, it seems to me that there's a fairly heavy dose of irony in the way you use the world 'helping'. It's the kind of help which the police or many magistrates wouldn't be especially grateful to receive.

K.M.: That's true, but Ghandi used to say that the highest form of Satyagraha was not non-violent resistance but non-violent assistance. And our object would be to take the irony out of the helping. After all, police and soldiers and magistrates have loved ones, have grand-children or conceive of having grand-children and they too are threatened by this. It's a unique human crisis which calls for new and unique responses. I'm particularly interested in using the Geneva Convention Act as a basis for campaigning. It's no stronger or weaker in strict legal terms than many other approaches, such as conspiracy to murder, or threats to kill and so on, but from the point of view of campaigning it has a great potential because of its pluralistic structure. the Geneva Conventions Act brought into British law part of the Geneva Conventions and, in addition, the rest of the Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocol also established various categories of non-combatant who must not be attacked or harmed in wars. Taken together we have a possibility of creating what I call Geneva Circles and Poster Parades in which the various social categories can all come together with a common framework and in which the authority and energy and autonomy and dignity of each social category can support the authority and dignity of all the others. I'm thinking here then of the social categories: health workers, emergency service

workers - those can include the police incidentally, peaceful
civilians in general, people with a disability, children, old
people, mothers, natural environment and also neutral nations,
although strictly speaking that's the Hague Convention V of 1907.
One can also think of various protected buildings under both
the Geneva Conventions and the Hague Convention in 1954.

In addition I believe that we can also put poisoning on
the agenda with radical symbolic actions. I'm thinking in parti-
cular of the way in which after Hiroshima the women of Hiroshima
were seen carrying eggs to emphasise the vulnerability of life
and the preciousness of its transmission. Imagine a thousand
people each standing for one generation or 24 years and therefore
together standing for 24 thousand years which is the half-life
of plutonium, imagine if they passed an egg or a basket of eggs
down the chain and said "Take care of this pass it on", "Take
care of this pass it on" and passed a loving cup saying, "Take,
drink, we shall not poison you". And imagine further if these
thousand people were composed of inter-generational threesomes,
that is to say, grandmother, mother, daughter, or grandmother,
mother, son because of course when we're talking genetic damage
and vulnerability we're talking about how the eggs are central
to this because the eggs are on the planet and vulnerable to
radiation for very much longer than the sperm which are only
created ad hoc when needed. Now, imagine if once that basket
of eggs is passed along the line half the people drop out and
it comes all the way back again, and again half the people drop
out and the basket of eggs is passed back again and so forth,
this would help to get the half-life of plutonium across. And
really extend people's thinking to see Ban the Bomb now more
as Stop the Poison Plot. After all 'Ban the Bomb didn't - for
the last thirty years Britain and NATO have been pace-makers
in the nuclear arms race and it's distressing how this hallowed
phrase is still being uncritically passed on when there's a much
stronger line of attack, both in terms of people's own popular
fears about, for example, having a mal-formed baby or about
their granny who's already dying of cancer and so on, and in
terms of a particular pathway through the law which can be
discerned when it's clear that what's at stake is poisoning,
not a military business at all. Whenever you talk eggs and
genetics, you're talking three generations because each of us
are made with the eggs which our mothers received from their
mothers in the sense that they were born with the complete
complement of eggs for our mothers' lives. So I think that
there is a possibility in looking at genetics to work towards
a three generational politics which would have a much deeper
legitimacy in ordinary popular communities than having a single
generational politics which is what people at present n nally
associate with the idea of politics - something in which old
people and children aren't really active and present and counting
for much.

R.G.: You've talked about tactical and strategic matters. Can
you say something more generally about why you think that your
approach to nuclear weapons is an important approach and can
you say something about the ideas that lie behind it?

K.M.: One way of conceiving it is by analogy with Marxist dialectic between the means of production and the old social relations of production, in which of course the new means of production are considered to be the more potent and indeed favoured side. Well of course we could rejig this Marxist equation and we could look at a dialectic between the new forces of destruction on the one hand and the old social relations of conflict on the other and we could then say that we're hoping that ancient social relations of conflict can be revalidated and re-established and that the right to life isn't diminished as new gadgets of killing are invented, but rather that there can be social control exercised over the means of destruction and the social groups engaged in activities of conflict. I'm thinking for example, of the Iraquois as described by Engels in Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State, where the Iraquois clan mothers were able to appoint and depose which of the braves they chose as war chiefs, and because they were in control of the food supply, they were able to endorse or not endorse proposals brought to them by the braves for a release of the food supplies for military expeditions only if the conflict was defensive and only if the defensive conflict would be waged defensively and wouldn't involve for example the children of the white settlers being killed, would the clan mothers then give permission for a war and also tell the braves where the tomahawks were buried. That's an example of women's control over the means of destruction which I think could be very relevant today - imagine local councils of women holding the keys of regimental armouries!

R.G.: In other words, you're saying there are important lines of feminist thought which should be drawn upon to build an anti-nuclear case. Can you say a little more about that? Why do you think feminist ideas are so important in this regard? Which strands in feminism do you think are the relevant ones?

K.M.: I see feminism as really very central to social theory and social change, particularly I'm most impressed by matriarchally oriented feminism - that's to say where notions of authority and true authority, true dignity are involved rather than fighting shy of these and saying that they simply equate to power and power equates to being male. Now I'm not impressed with feminisms which are opposed to men biologically, and indeed most women aren't. Sex is different from gender, feminists have taught us. It's a different concept. Sex is about biology. Gender is about social conditioning. Now if sex and gender are different it seems to me that we can then invent a third gender perhaps. Inaugurate, socially organise and this would then mean that we could have an anti-men, pro-'sons', feminist movement. Unless women are leading the movement for social change we aren't going to survive. I see my work as hopefully contributing transitionally to a women's led movement which is yet a mixed movement - mixed on women-defined terms. A movement against the Men but re-calling the men to loyal son-hood. In other words, a movement to re-son the men and to call them to a new loyalty, a new loyalty to the mother land of civilian life. A

new loyalty to the matrisphere. A new loyalty to mother earth, a loyalty - because they all align - which we can begin to call them to by calling them first to a loyalty to the British Manual of Military Law and to British statutes and to international laws, albeit that the international laws were agreed in concentions in which mostly men were participating. Nonetheless they can be transitional too. A calling of the alienated men who have broken unfree from the matrisphere into men's gangs into fratriarchies, they can be hopefully recalled to come in behind and to serve again the matrisphere - not just in connection with matters to do with defence, because Mum was our first source of defence, but Mum was also our first means of transport, for example, on her hip. so transport workers can be recalled to loyalty to the mothersphere, to co-participate in the co-mothering work of society if, for example, they were to campaign with the support of the community for free public transport. And workers in the food industry - who was our first food? Our Mum was our first food, so workers in the food industry who want to insist on good grain, good breast as it were, who want to campaign, not just for workers control of the bakery, but for new recipes and organic agriculture, then these workers can be seen - like the prodigal sons as it were - as prodigal men returning as loyal sons to the matrisphere. So this is a Myth I honour. Mother Hood and Her loyal daughters and sons rising against individual patri-men and the fratri-men, the collective of 'real men' and some token women or 'fembots' (a fourth gender?) who've broken unfree of the matri-sphere and the true lore of their mother communities. I believe there are the resources in the matriarchal forms of feminism for a mythic understanding of the division of labour which cannot just intellectually contest at the level of isolated opinions, which is how the Labour Party still sees itself as operating - think of the influence of opinion polls - but can appeal to the hearts and minds of women and men for a new understanding of society, for new ways of socialising but based on very ancient, very basic values.

R.G.: What you've said about the matriarchal strand in feminism and its importance seems to me to depend very much on an idea that the child's relation to his or her mother is on the whole and generally a benign and nurturative relation but there's a lot of, for instance, psycho-analytic theory to suggest that in the benign and nurturative relations of childhood there is also a strongly aggressive strand. For example, Melanie Klein has talked about the good breast and the bad breast. In other words couldn't it be suggested to you - on psycho-analytic grounds - that a good deal of the aggressive impulses that feed into the nuclear threat have their origin in childhood and in mothering?

K.M.: Well, it's a big question but by and large it seems to me that most psycho-analysis shares in the general notion of what counts as theory in a world dominated by not just patriarchal power, but also by the autonomous men's huts, or fratriarchies or men's gangs upon which the power of individual patriarchs depend. that's to say that I think that there's a large blaming

the mothers aspect too, not just the Bible but in other kinds
of culture in patriarchal society which blame the mothers and
women, and I believe this is carried forward in much of psycho-
analysis.   Now I'm not saying that every kind of psycho-anlysis
and psychological theory partakes in this but it is a central
problem.   Of course individual mothers are well aware that their
children are feeling ambivalent towards them, and they are feeling
ambivalent towards their children, but what we're talking about
is the shape of the world and who controls the major decisions
and the major power and the major violences and the major owner-
ships in the world which set the parameters for what quality
and kinds and contexts of immediate mothering are possible.
For example, a lot of children experience their childhood as
being told-off by their mothers when they follow a perfectly
natural inclination to explore their world.   But if mothers are
growing up harrassed on a housing estate, with cars whizzing
by, then they have to keep stopping their children if the children
are going to survive at all.   Because each motor car is a threat
to murder in itself, saying, "Get out of my way or I'll kill
you".   If you said that carrying a knife walking along the pave-
ment you'd be locked up, but somehow this has been accepted
as a legitimate thing to do if you have a motor car around you.
So children are growing up in a male-dominated social world
- and this is not individual men and not because men are indivi-
dually biologically flawed, or necessarily nasty - we're talking
about a collective social form, the fraternity, and its domination
of social life rather than the activity of women and men in produc-
tion subserving the mothersphere;   in this context it's clear
that individual children are going to grow up with terrific feel-
ings of rage and all sorts of complexes vis a vis their mothers,
but the problem is to encourage people to actually see where
the major problems in the world are coming from which isn't
by and large mothers   - even mothers collectively, and isn't
men individually, it's the collective social form of the fraternity
- of the unaccountable fraternity.   Unaccountable to the mothers-
phere, the motherland, the motherland of civilian land and mother
earth.

R.G.: Anything else you'd like to add?

K.M.: There is something which people don't usually think about
when they think about the law and that's how Hitler could have
been stopped if the law had been taken seriously.   It's all
very well criticising bourgeois law but the bourgeois laws left
over from the Weimar period still banned slavery and kidnap.
So in some contexts the bourgeois patriarchal form can yet avail
if real social energy - hopefully led by women - can be brought
to bear to operate and invigorate those social forms and the
matrilore they still imperfectly mediate, against the fratriarchal
or lawless terrorism of the Nazis who were kidnapping and en-
slaving, contrary to actual laws which were on the statute book
until 1945 and subsequently.   And that relates of course to the
present situation where we have got laws on the statue book
which aren't being operated, aren't being enforced.   Imagine

Greenham-type actions, appropriately supported by anti-sexist men ('sons'), holding hands round every court-house in the land!

R.G.: Doesn't your example of the Nazis illustrate rather clearly how formal and insubstantial legal protection can be when historical movements and forces are riding roughshod over them?

K.M.: Yes, but historical movements and forces don't just come out of a vacuum they emerge through processes of social interaction which do themselves involve negotiation and contestation concerning social meanings. what I'm arguing is for example, the Labour Party will never be in a position either to enforce the existing laws as I believe would be necessary, or to pass new laws specifically outlawing nuclear weapons, which they still think would be necessary unless they can raise the perspective of criminality and then, through aligning morality and preventative medicine and the fight against terrorism with their version of politics then they might be in a position to actually win in terms of their version of politics. Likewise non-violent direction actionists. Even if you think in the end you're going to have to have, let's say immobilisation of the military machine through millions of people putting their bodies on the line, I would argue you'd never actually build the movement to that point unless there has been a generalisation of awareness in society concerning the law and its potential uses in stopping ultimate nihilism, unless the poison plot was being seen in a criminal light (as well as being insane, immoral and imprudent).
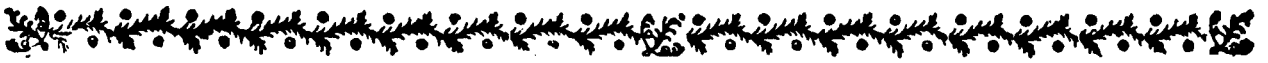
PHILOSOPHY AS POISON   MARTIN MCAVOY

Philosophy anglo-american-style strives for clarity, purity,
and precision; as a tool of thought, picture some kind of
mental spanner, perfectly transparent and non-reflecting, al-
most invisible except to the experienced hand. Philosophy
continental-style looks for density, complexity, and universal
application; imagine some fantastic multigrip or adjustable
wrench, heavy but wieldy enough for titans. In practice both
get casually plunged into our mental machinery without much
thought for the consequences. Poison works like that, like a
spanner in the works, jamming the catalytic enzyme system that
breaks down invaders, and so destroying life or impairing health,
having first disarmed us in this case with its ingenuous rhetoric.

Philosophers seem blind to this destructive power - they lack
safety consciousness. Their permanently lit world might
catch fire before they'd see its dark side; another side would
be another absurd fabrication to be unbolted and dismantled.
Philosophy tells us it has no other side suppressed, no inside/
outside, heart, soul or body of subject material to be poisoned.
It is all above board, a perfectly adjusted adjustment-activity,
as neutral and secure as speech therapy, as innocuous as meccano.
Having no particular subject matter or unified body it has no
body language, no recognisable identity or self. Having no
self it need not be self-conscious or self-critical though can
somehow self-destruct. This cloak of invisibility it tries to
don, but we have seen the body of workers under its spell and
the works they throw out at us. We have seen and felt their
destructive power and might, if they fail to see it, encourage
them to turn it on themselves, the selves they haven't got.

It is this power I'm looking at, taking the hint from Plato,
and another from Derrida. Both derive from the Phaedrus, it-
self suppressed as marginal (being pornographic,or worse,too
literary), a privated part now returning to the body of Plato.

In the Phaedrus Socrates says philosophy is a kind of madness.
There are two types of madness, one the product of disease,[1]
the other a gift of the gods, and this divine madness, said
to be the source of our greatest blessings, occurs when heaven
sets us free from the yoke of convention, and takes four main
forms, prophetic madness, mystic or telestic madness visited
on families, poetic madness of all the arts, and erotic madness.
This last kind, the madness of the lover, is supposed to be
peculiarly exemplified by the philosopher, whose love of the
truth and wisdom (as the name implies) is inspired by a vision
of beauty which all of us have had, but the philosopher is
particularly captivated by it and becomes increasingly enthrall-
ed to it by the power of reason.   Reasoning is here presented
as recollecting the lost vision, re-collecting the various ob-
jects in the perceptual field and organising them into unities
or Ideas.[2].   Dialectic is here defined as this organising
process of division and collection according to kinds, and dia-
logue the mutual intercourse of philosophic lovers, the eristic
strife of debate being at the service of the erotic love of the
truth, reason being a crucial constituent of this divine madness.

It is madness to the world which sees the philosopher as a vic-
tim of distraction or else overweening hubris, trying to be like
a god and know everything.   Socrates identifies himself as a
madman (3) though his behaviour is more erratic than erotic,
shifting through several moods then analysing them in detail.
This is not the usual Socrates, the master of self-control; he
is described as odd (atopos- out of place, for the first and
only time in 25 dialogues out of his beloved city Athens), he
claims to be possessed by natural forces, female spirits, in-
spired to rapturous poetry.   He is very self-reflective, wonder-
ing if he is more complicated and puffed-up than the monster
Typhon, or else some simpler, gentler, less arrogant creature.(4)
At the fictional age of 60 he says he still does not know him-
self though it has been his life's work.

He gives two long speeches, one attacking love as madness, then
stopped half-way and violently recanted, following by the other
praising love as madness, nearly ½ dialogue in length. It cul-
minates in a journey to the roof of the world to glimpse the
hyperuranian beings (the Forms or Ideas), a journey taken by the
winged mind of the philosopher, a psyche imagined as a winged
chariot with charioteer and two winged horses, one of which is
dark and lustful and rebellious, the other white and honourable
and obedient. The dark horse has the features of Socrates,
stout, snub-nosed and ugly (5) and is the driving force which by
its lust for a beautiful boy drags the white horse into action
and gives the charioteer a reminder through the boy of the vision
of beauty seen before. The image is more complex than usually
appreciated; the elements are not just faculties but types of
personality, each rational and irrational in turn, even the
charioteer who recognises the compulsion, the possession in his
striving. It is an image as many-tangled, if not more than
that of the monster Typhon (6), an complex image of desire.

Hard-headed moderns haven't much time for monsters and gods and
winged chariots, but talk of madness can raise a stir. It is
still the basis of the principle accusations against philosophy,
that it is too abstract, an other-worldly pursuit, obsessional
and compulsive in tendency, too narrow, ignoring real, practical
issues, useless, not quite a sane activity. Now there is added
the accusation that it is bent on destorying itself, is reduction
-ist, hyper-negative, forever announcing its own death, committ-
ing Hara Kari ceremoniously or otherwise. Is there something
peculiar about philosophy and philosophers, something like a
special kind of madness?

Sharfstein's study of philosophers and their lives (7) is quite
interesting on this question. Out of 22 philosophers from
Montaigne to Sartre, 16 show evidence of mental disturbance under
four categories· 14 reveal significant depressive tendency -
Pascal, Voltaire, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Mill
Kierkegaard, James, Nietzsche, Santayana, Russell, Wittgenstein.

7 show fear of inherited illness or disease, usually madness-
Descartes, Rousseau, Kant, Mill, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Russ-
ell. Montaigne also was certainly haunted by madness.
6 show hypochondria- Hobbes, Voltaire, Rousseau, Kant, Schopen-
hauer, James. Also Hegel and Mill are considered possibles.
6 show suicidal tendency- Hume, Kant, James, Nietzsche, Russ-
ell, and Wittgenstein. Of the 22 in total (selected on the
basis of information available) 20 had some kind of painful
early separation.

Two particular peculiarities seem to be apparent here, a tend-
ency to depression (14 out of 16), and a fear of infection
through illness or inheritance (11 to 13 out of 16). In
Platonic terms depression could be seen as the loss of vision
following the manic rise to the Forms, which reason like an
anti-depressant attempts to recover. Fear of infection is
particularly evident in Kant, who in fact falls into all the
categories listed by Sharfstein. He reveals a character ob-
sessively rigid and bound by compulsive routines, anxiously
concerned with diet and health. Eventually Kant came to the
conclusion that all medicines, without exception, were actually
poisonous to him.(8). That the infection (the poison) might
be madness, and the madness poison, that medicine-madness-poi-
son are linked is suggested several times in Plato, but it is
Derrida who raises specifically the spectre of poison in his
essay Plato's Pharmacy.

With his great eagle-eye for detail Derrida examines the Greek
text of the Phaedrus and spots a half-buried chain of linked
words, of significations, related complex meanings, and proceeds
to dig it up. Its most significant link is the word 'pharmakon'
which itself has several meanings, the four most important being
a drug (healing or harmful), a remedy or medicine, an enchanted
potion or spell or charm, and a poison. In the Phaedo the
hemlock poison that kills Socrates is denoted by the word 'pharm-
akon', In the Charmides a cure for a headache is called 'pharm-
akon' and this turns out to be an introduction to philosophy. (9)

The Republic offers a cure for madness (10).   The Phaedrus
offers a prescription for memory and wisdom but with some
equivocation, and Derrida dives on this.   It is in a tale
Socrates tells at the end about the invention of writing.
Its inventor, an Egyptian god, offers it to the king of
Thebes, another god, as a medicine for memory and wisdom but
the king condemnms it as having quite the opposite function(11)
'ceasing to exercise memory because they will rely on what is
written,' and not gain wisdom but only its semblance, information
The contrast is explicitly between a recipe for memory and one
only for reminder, though it does seem from the above that the
king is also saying something stronger, which lies partially
hidden beneath an ambiguous word.   The opposite function of a
medicine is a poison, but the same word in Greek.

Though Derrida does not refer to it, Euripides 'Palamedes', also
about the invention of writing but this time by a Greek, puts the
issue stronger; a 'lethes pharmaka', drug for forgetfulness he
calls it, even memory poison is possible.   If Plato drew on this
play (12) he diluted the poisonous element and shifted the scene
to Egypt.   Derrida's point is that Plato is struggling to contro
a problem in his own text, being compelled to criticise writing
in writing, compelled by a metaphysics of presence to demote the
more absent (dead writing) and praise the more present (living
speech) but to do so in terms of 'writing in the soul'(13).   In
effect Plato is seen as chained down by his own metaphors and
must resort to myth and allusion to escape open inconsistency,
must use the non-writer (Socrates) who follows the Delphic in-
scription to do his work for him.

The extent of Plato's awareness of this is not Derrida's concern,
though sometimes he suggests that Plato is aware but cynically
concealing the problem, othertimes that he is unconsciously de-
constructing himself.   Either way for Derrida there is nothing
outside the text (14) which need concern him.   He is looking
for what is being suppressed, what the text doesn't know about
itself, and so he approachs it from behind or the side, looking
for the marginal, the tossed-off or tacked-on, and just like in

the case of Rousseau and Saussure he finds what he is seeking,
the ambiguous loyalty to a hierarchy of speech over writing.
In Plato he finds a tale tacked on at the end, the epilogue
of the myth of writing, to be central, crucial. Unfortunately
by focussing on the tale he misses the donkey, the body of the
text which is itself marginal (or considered so) to the Plato-
nic corpus; being so busy grinding his axe of writing on Plato
he has to a large extent missed the mark on the dialogue and
to some extent on its epilogue.

The great bulk of the dialogue is taken up with a criticism of
speeches (and not just written speeches) and rhetoric from the
point of view of the erotic madness of philosophy, criticising
them to the extent that they show no love of truth but more a
love of audience-persuasion without any necessary knowledge of
the subject. At the beginning Socrates claims that speeches
hold a spell over him like an enchantment (pharmakon) or drug
(15), that he and Phaedrus are men 'sick for words', that his
passion for speeches amounts to a disease (16).   There is no
barrier set up between speech and writing, more an osmotic (17)
membrane where the pros and cons of each filter through to
each.   Not all writing is attacked but only that which like
some speeches is not concerned with imparting any truth.   It
is specifically criticised for being more easily fetishized,
for encouraging the worship of the absent ideal of the original
creative moment,exemplified in Phaedrus's behaviour.   Also
writing is described as an orphan with no one to defend it and
can only say the same thing, can more easily be misinterpreted
and abused, unlike direct speech which can defend itself, can
answer questions; this is obviously a political distinction
Plato wants to make, not an ontological one.   Essentially for
him there is no difference between speech and writing when
compared to his great ideal, which is silent vision. Dialogue
is preferred to long speeches because it is more clearly perm-
eated by silences, the pregnant pauses of question and answer.

To this extent Derrida's account of Plato's logocentrism is
correct; he praises dialogic speech above all other kinds,
but from the point of view of silent vision, a vision of
Ideas, not a metaphysics of presence because the Ideas must
remain absent from discourse except as names, it being im-
possible to describe them without self-contradiction, only
presentable in the terms of a myth.   There is no metaphysics
in Plato (18), only fragments of a broken mirror, inconclusive
suggestions, a sense of presence and absence in the text not
unlike Derrida's own conception of the general text, though for
Plato it could never be seen as the world itself. (19) Their
different attitude to myths brings this out.

Derrida claims that Socrates says he is not bothering with myths.
In fact as the text makes clear Socrates is not bothering with
demythologising myths (20) in the manner of reductionists or
antiquarians but accepts 'the popular attitude towards them',
that is not ask where they have come from but to see if they
have anything to tell him.   Looked at this way the myth about
the invention of writing can be seen as also a myth about the
origin of myth, the origin of the distinction between myth and
truth, and curiously enough here Plato sides with myth and the
people who listened to oak and rock (21).   Far from not bother-
ing with myths, Socrates recites half a dozen, not simply be-
cause Phaedrus is weak on dialectic, but because there can be
no other 'relation with oneself' but the mythical, given the
impossibility of a discursive account of the soul or psyche.(22)
Logic requires myth just as myth requires a logic.

This is not at all to disparage what Derrida has dug up from
the Phaedrus, this chain of significations, pharmakon and its
related cognates, but only what he does with it.   In effect he
ties it to his own legendary chain of substitutions, differance-
trace-supplement-hymen-parergon-etc-etc, interchangeable prim-
ordial infrastructures, burying 'pharmakon' as an undecidable
(poison/remedy) beneath his textual metaphysics (23).   In
Derrida's pharmacy the distinction between poison and remedy
has gone (24), and the pharmakon becomes nothing in itself.   Its

critical power, if it had any, is dissolved.   The only poison
for Derrida is Platonism; what troubled Plato enough to write
what he did is submerged under what follows him.   It gets lost
in Derrida's 'world of signs, without fault, without truth,
without origin, offered to an active interpretation,'(25) and
without direction for every sign always leads to another sign,
and another and another.   We need to look closer at Derrida
to see what he has suppressed or marginalised, or left hanging.

It is a surprise to find he has absolutely nothing to say about
erotic madness, though it bulks large in the dialogue, though
he must know that Eros is the daimonic interpreter, the 'herm-
eneus' of the gods to us and us to the gods; erotic madness
could well be first cousin to his own chosen approach of 'herm-
eneutic excess'(being compelled as he says to 'slip away from
recognized models of commentary'|.   We know from his argument
with Foucault that madness interests him, though not it seems
erotic madness, andnot here.   Perhaps this is because it is
too obvious and too obviously bound up with a real figure, or
rather a real mythic figure, the erotic madman himself, the
figure of Socrates.   But Derrida knows from Freud how good
the obvious is as a hiding-place, and how easily we could sub-
stitute for the myth of writing the myth of Plato's Socrates.

Like so: we have seen the features of Socrates in the dark
horse of the soul, troublesome, rebellious(26).   In the Sym-
posium Eros is described in the same terms, plus shoeless,
homeless, sleeping out of doors or under doorways (all refer-
ences to stories about Socrates retold there (27)) 'always
philosophising, a terrible trickster, sorcerer or poisoner,
and sophist.'(28) Several records refer to Socrates the Sophist.
The word for sorcerer or poisoner is 'pharmakeus', one of the
chain of Derrida's cognates.   In the dialogues we get a long
list of accusations levelled against Socrates besides those
which condemned him (for corrupting youth and bringing in new
gods); a satyr, a bully,(Sym. 218), a 'perplexed man who re-
duces others to perplexity'(Meno 80), but most associating

with poison or the effect of poison: e.g. in the Meno he is
'like a poisonous stingray' that paralyses his opponent with
arguments, numbing them into silence (Meno 80) Anywhere but
Athens he would have been arrested as a sorcerer or cheat.
Alcibiades in the Symposium likens Socrates'philosophy to
'the bite of an adder, even something much more poisonous than
a snake; in fact the most painful bite of all... worse than a
viper's tooth, that worst of pangs, most violent in ingenuous
youth, the pang of philosophy, which can make someone say or
do anything it likes.(Sym.218). He goes on to liken philosophy
to a dionysiac madness or frenzy - 'this sacred rage'he calls it.

Alcibiades is drunk and claiming to be a rejected lover (of
Socrates); also a religious and political criminal, plausibly
one of the youth, along with Critias and Charmides, that Soc-
rates is charged with having corrupted. But Plato's Socrates
describes himself or his effect like a bite possibly poisonous,
a bee that leaves its sting behind (in the Phaedo) and dies,
a gadfly (a blood-sucking fly, sometimes the botfly, a poisonous
parasite) stinging the lazy horse of Athens (the Apology) out
of slumber, only to be finished off with a single slap. God's
fly, he calls himself, arrogant or a humble fly to the last.

And so Socrates enters myth as dangerous but useful, possibly
indispensible, the perfect 'pharmakon' or 'pharmakeus'. The
latter has a synonym, pharmakos, also poisoner or sorcerer,
one skilled in witchcraft, but with a change of stress refers
to one sacrificed, executed as a purification for others, a
scapegoat. Plato never used this word in connection with
Socrates or anything else, and it is easy to see why. It
was a general term of reproach, a fate reserved not only for
criminals but for 'a number of degraded and useless beings
maintained at the public expense' (29) and sacrificed by the
Athenians once a year, the same day each year, 6th Thargelia,
curiously enough Socrates' birthday.

Derrida notes this but choses to leave it hanging; for him
writing is the scapegoat, not Socrates.   He implies that
Plato has had a loss of nerve.   But in no way would Plato
want to suggest that Athens was getting rid of his beloved
Socrates like a body gets rid of poison or vomit.   This
'pharmakos' was no Christian scapegoat; he would avoid it
like the plague, especially as Socrates may have been mark-
ed from birth with its taint, and they were chosen for their
ugliness, of which with his snub-nose he was always condemned.

Yet it seems very plausible that he was a 'pharmakos', a
criminal scapegoat in the Greek sense.   I.F.Stone in his (30)
recent book argues very convincingly that Socrates was guilty
as charged, that he deserved what he got, that he got what he
wanted; that he was an anti-democrat pro-Spartan monarchist,
that democracy was the god of the city he brought into dis-
repute, and Critias (one of the tyrants),Charmides and Alci-
biades were some of the youth he corrupted.   Unfortunately
Stone never wonders if the Athenians deserved what they got
in Socrates, never once questions the democracy, based as it
was the most advanced slavery of its day.(31) or that Sparta
unlike Athens had not suffered tyrants and so attracted many
Athenians at the time.   Yet we can agree that by all accounts
Socrates was a troublemaker and a thorn in the flesh of many.

The last link in the chain is more complex, but perhaps most
interesting.   Socrates casually inserts the detail of an add-
itional character into the legend of Boreas's (the savage North
Wind) abduction of Oreithyia (the daughter of the first human
king of Athens) from nearby the scene of the dialogue.   This
figure is Pharmakeia, the female spirit of a spring with supp-
osed medicinal properties near the river of the scene, a spirit
with whom Oreithyia was supposed to be playing when the accident
or murder or abduction occured.   Coming as it does just before
Socrates' remark about the power of enchantment (pharmakon) that
speeches have over him, Derrida rightly points out that we are
being prepared by this association with death to view such

speeches with even more suspicion.   But what are we to make of
a figure raised in a rationalised legend that is immediately
dropped ?   Not much, perhaps, but Derrida sees the shadow of
a poisoner lurking there, for 'poisoning was not the least
usual meaning of pharmakeia'(32).   It was not the most usual
meaning either, which was 'the use of drugs, especially purg-
atives, emetics, abortifacients, the kind of drugs Socrates
refers to in the Theaetetus when he claims to be following his
mother's profession, not only the son of a midwife but a mid-
wife himself.(33)

Socrates compares himself and Phaedrus to young girls, and
claims that while giving his first speech he was possessed by
a female spirit, a speech he gives with his cloak over his head
ostensibly because he is ashamed of it.   But also it reminds
us of the rolled speech that Phaedrus had hid under his cloak,
the one that Socrates calls 'Lysias himself'(the speechwriter)
and demands be uncovered.   By a simple substitution we can
think of Phaedrus as Oreithyia (Plato suggests this in many
ways), Socrates as Pharmakeia with whom Phaedrus/Oreithyia
was playing, playing with under his cloak, the pharmakon of
the rolled speech 'Lysias himself' who Socrates was imitating
in his first speech; and Boreas as Eros, the inspiration of his
second speech, the one that completely seduces Phaedrus in the
end.

So, like in many of Plato's dialogues, we have an internal el-
ement acting as a model in miniature of the larger action, a
play within a play, a story that in Socrates' reduced version
ends in death, in its original mythic version ends in mythical
children and more myths, more stories.(34)   It can be a story
of seduction or abduction or rape or murder, depending on how
we view the mysterious role of Pharmakeia, as midwife or poison-
er, as erotic or deadly.   This is the same problem we have with
Socrates, but like Derrida's 'pharmakon' it may be undecidable.

Perhaps then this pharmakotic chain of Socrates hangs around
Plato's neck, but willingly, a talisman, a love charm, a drug.
Need it hang around philosophy? Who needs Socrates? Whatever
the answer, it is not so easy to get rid of him. The Athenians
tried it and failed. Mythic figures are indestructible; for-
gotten perhaps, but still they live on somewhere. Philosophy
tries to forget it is the child of a pederastic union (S=P)but
a suppressed childhood always comes back to haunt. Anyway there
is no suppressing Socrates' daimonic voice, which always said
no. There is no getting rid of 'no'; it is the pharmakon in
action, 'nothing in itself' as Derrida might say.

To end with a myth, a likely (unlikely) story:
Desire (and satisfaction) creates speech (and silence), the
speech of reflection on the conditions of satisfaction, the
speech of desire creates the speech about desire creates the
speech about speech creates the speech about the whole of desire
and satisfaction and so silence. Desire and speech are marks
of disjunction, our separation from things. We need to be con-
nected but also distant from things. We need both without
suppression of either, which means balance. We need compre-
hensive if not complete satisfaction, given the opposing forces.

Philosophy is basically erotic, i.e. driven by desire, following
its logic through to its end, a complete account of anything or
everything. That this might mean silence has occurred to many.
That it is madness to be compelled by such a vision, though it
is perhaps the only basis for rational speech that the world is
intelligible. Discourse needs vision like logic needs myth.
These conjunctions can be appreciated, not perpetually disavowed,
for speech itself is a conjunction of speech and silence, absence
and presence, position and negation, yes and no in every stroke
and space, the pharmakon in action; i.e. the 'no' that poisons
discourse, the 'yes' that remedies the poison; though each can
change in function they work together. But die alone, victims
of their own destructive power.

(1) Phaedrus 265a, 244a

(2) Ibid 249b,c

(3) Ibid 265a

(4) Ibid 230a

(5) Ibid 253e

(6) The whirlwind with 100 snake-heads; man, beast and bird.

(7) The Philosophers, Ben-Ami Sharfstein

(8) Ibid. Chapter on Kant.

(9) Charmides 155b

(10) Republic 382c

(11) Phaedrus 275a

(12) See G.R.F. Ferrari, Listening to the Cicadas P. 281, n. 21.

(13) Phaedrus 278a

(14) Grammatology P. 158. See also Dissemination P. 43.

(15) Phaedrus 230d   (16) Ibid 228b

(17) Ferrari, Chpt 7.

(18) Plato's Sophist, Stanley Rosen, 1983.

(19) 'There has never been anything but writing' Grammatology 159

(20) Dissemination P. 67.   Phaedrus 229d-230a

(21) Phaedrus 275b

(22) Hermeneutics as Politics, Rosen, 1988, P. 85.

(23) La Carte postale, Derrida, 1980, P. 212.

(24) Dissemination P.169

(25) Writing and Difference P427.

(26) Phaedrus 253e

(27) Symposium 203c,d and 219,220.

(28) Sym. 203d   (29) The Golden Bough, J.G. Frazer.

(30) Trial of Socrates, I. F. Stone, 1988.

(31) See Passages from Antiquity to Feudalism, Perry Anderson.

(32) Dissemination, P. 70.

(33) Theaetetus 149.

(34) See The Greek Myths, Robert Graves, P. 168-172; also P.27
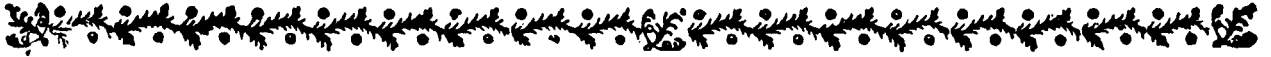where Oreithyia as Goddess of Creation produces Boreas from her
hands and dancing.
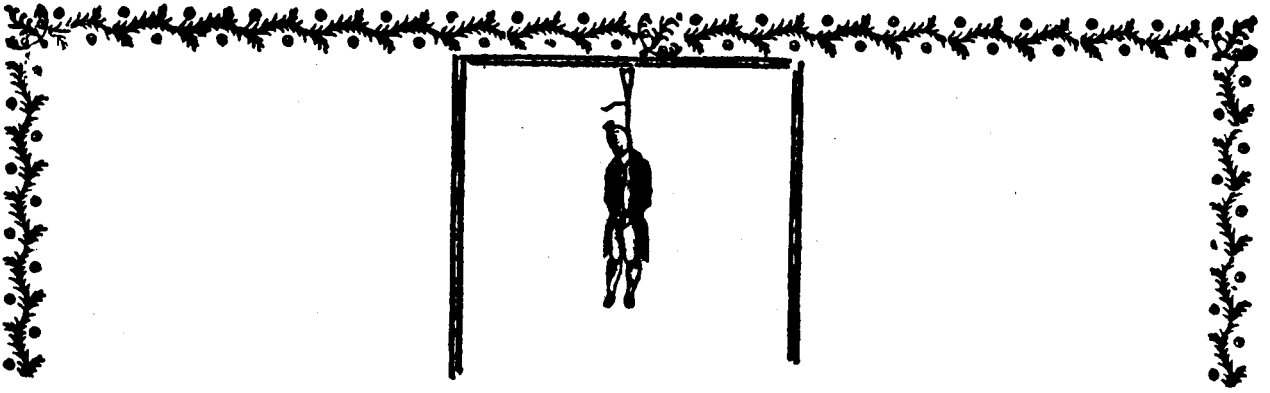
Marxism

A Theoretical and Political Programme

Marxism is a theory not of oppression but of the contradictions of oppression. Those contradictions are the expression of our strength.

John Holloway

*****

on all four
hundred thousand million billion kisses
i travel you in be me
the inaccessible friend
happy the Greek Orthodox mornings

          *

a curious day on a bench
colourful tactics regained

          *

nowadays jokes are nowadays
conversations called jokes xx by the cynical mind
a chorus xx a squadron to assist a trauma
coming into being
out to seeing
c'est ca

          *

three bills of exchange ordered casual dress to appear
aptly rococo xx

          *

a cast supplied with concrete rites and beton rituals
tipp-ex for originals
typo for soho bureaux
ordination
naked
a prick swims
head-on off
collides
the merry maiden is the last one to queue

          *

subways and dumbdays intoxicate chandeliers
raw mushrooms cut off love supplies
demand
ayes to the right
noes to the left
divide and rule the waves

sober
stake at freedom
for sale
a token tale
re-enforce endorse back to whom xx the evolution tune
        *
i wait for the Nott News
the cutthroat blues
so do i so
            *
time over time
overtime times
time time over
            *
a hoarse metallic xx not too sinister xx
symptom auto-erotic drives a manic-matic
too close to the kerb
rail's companion
a hard shoulder
a soft cry
a whisper
may is done
done-day
        *****

No Trains on the Northern Line

         *****
be there
bet here
and then xx stuck
         *
if i could i'd love
an acre of rotten gestures
         *
no
         *
to die from one
to live with none
         ***
you opened the floodgate
i offered you a bouquet of rain
you turned your left cheek to the wall
i kissed the doormat
with tailored tolerance you asked me to come in
i came out of words left language's
exhibition to cist
the headroom omnibused four quads to melt
the bellywidth ransacked the sheets
my right iris caught a nymph
my left iris had caught iritis
         *****
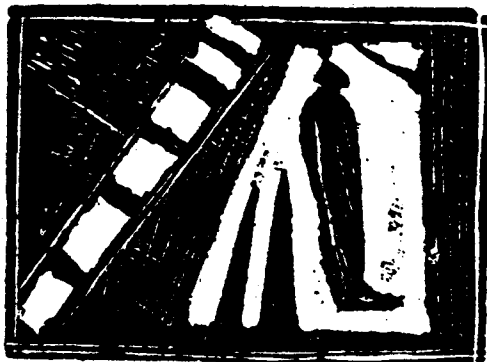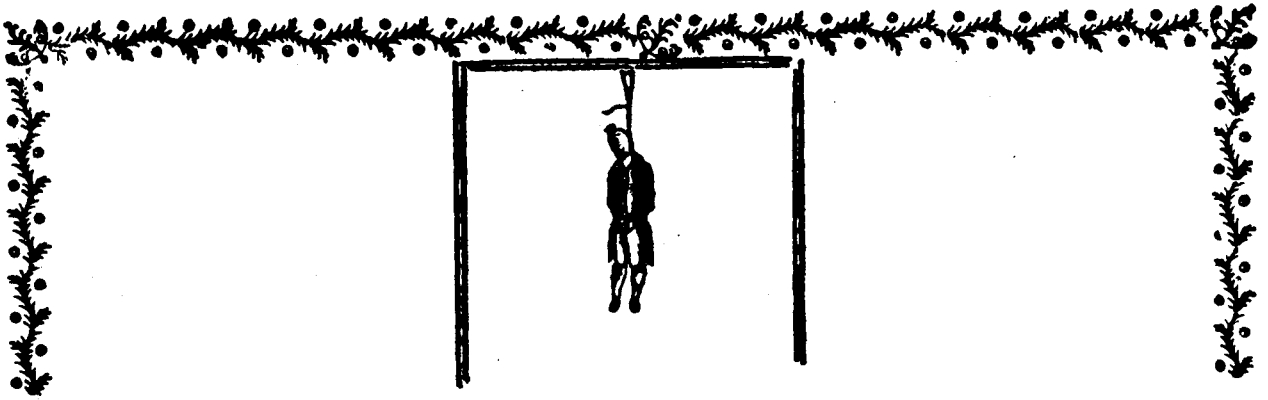
IN DEFENCE OF A CONSENSUS THEORY OF TRUTH

RICHARD GUNN

Two spectres haunt the labyrinthine corridors of truth-theory. One is the spectre of the absolute: the idea here is that truth is inscribed in the firmament, and awaits discovery. An absolute truth is thereby a truth whose status is non-human, and theories of absolute truth have as their presupposition an already meaningful (a "cosmological") world. The locus classicus of such theories is Plato's Reputlic 500c-e, wherein the programme of philosophy is seen as one of mimetic and contemplative assimilation of the philosopher's soul to a 'divine' world-order. This particular spectre is, surely, well and truly dead. The irreversible ratchet-effect of enlightenment places the notion of "cosmology" in a realm of innocence which it is impossible to re-achieve.

The second spectre breathes a more living air. It is the spectre of relativism, signalled vividly in the shifting lights of Nietzschein perspectivism: contemporary thought shares Nietzsche's 'profound aversion' to 'reposing once and for all in any one total view of the world'.(1) One index of the centrality of the problem of relativism in recent philosophy is the ambivalent attitude to it which such philosophy displays: at one moment the problem of relativism is trivialised out of existence,(2) at the next it is underscored as the question which divides humanity from nihilism itself.

This said, a qualification and a question have to be introduced. The qualification: conceptions of the absolute have their long afterlife - an afterlife as long as the histories of empiricism and positivism - in correspondence theories of truth. Truth "consists in correspondence" - but to what? Correspondence to a divine world-order (natural science as a reading of the "book of nature") might have met the case, but this still-cosmological outlook falls victim to the progress of empiricist enlightenment itself. Correspondence to the world fares no better in the light of the standard objection: what can be meant by propositions

(the presumed vehicle of truth) corresponding to what is non-propositional? (Even a world whose truth might be reported propositionally does not amount to a world which consists in propositions for its part.) Correspondence theory's next fall-back position, according to which truth consists in correspondence to the "facts", in effect rejoins the relativist position since, famously, "brute" facts - facts which might be specified independently of truth-criteria and category-systems which establish what in a given case counts as factual - are non-existent. Nietzsche's perspectivism, apparently, wins out against both the absolutist and the correspondence positions which, rightly, it treats as ancient and modern versions of the same philosophical view. 'Is there any meaning in the in-itself?! Is meaning not necessarily relative meaning and perspective?'(3)

And the question: is it fair to tax truth-theories with not having an answer to the problem of relativism? Is it not the case that truth-theories are ontological, i.e. that their concern is to specify what truth consists in rather than to specify what might count as criteria for truth? A view according to which truth consists in correspondence, or alternativly coherence,(4) may surely be true or false independently of what are held to be criteria for the acceptance of this or that proposition as true. Two points should, in this connection, be granted at once. Firstly, the concern of truth-theories is indeed ontological (they attempt to answer the question: in what does truth consist?). And, secondly, answers to such a question in no way turn on supplying "methodologies", i.e. criteria purporting to demarcate truth from falsity everywhere and everywhen. (A truth-theory announcing itself as a methodology in fact begs the question of relativism since the categories and truth-criteria constitutive of the method call for justification - for vindication as "truthful" - in their turn.)

These points having been conceded, however, a question remains. By what entitlement does truth-theory delimit its ontological province in such a way as to exclude the issue of truth-criteria from the issue of that in which truth consists? Hegel can serve as an example of a philosopher who holds to the ontological question but who refuses such a delimitation: 'Truth would not be truth if it did not show itself and appear, if it were not truth for someone and for itself, as well as for the spirit [i.e. practice, history, society] too'.(5) In other words an ontology of truth must include - or, even, be - an ontology of its "appearance" or, better, "appearing": an ontology of this appearing (of "science as it comes on the scene", linked to the notion of an "end of history" whereby truth and freedom conjointly emerge) is just what Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit undertakes to provide. The force of Hegel's point is this. An ontology of truth which excludes the issue of truth's appearing could only be an ontology of a non-human truth, that is, a truth construed in a cosmological and Platonic mode. The ontology of a humanly-available truth, and still more of a human (an intrinsically practice-related) truth such as the Hegel of the Phenomenology defends, requires that the question of truth's human appearing be taken theoretically on board. For this reason, the issue of relativism (of truth-

criteria and their justification) must, to be sure without any conces-
sions to the apriorism of "methodology", stand at the centre of
a truth theory which seeks to depict the full range of truth-related
issues in an ontological light.

My contention is that the consensus theory of truth is successful
in laying the ghosts both of absolutism and of relativism while
proceeding in a consistently ontological way. That is, its ontology
encompasses epistemology (the question of the validity of truth-
criteria, and hence the question of relativism) instead of allowing
it to "float free" of ontology as on methodological - let us say:
Kantian as opposed to Hegelian - conceptual schemes. To set
the scene, some definitions are in order.

First of all relativism. By "relativism" I understand the view
that conversation which might reach results that are binding for
its participants is impossible across the boundaries of category-
systems, since (which I take to be incontrovertibly the case)
category-systems are "incommensurable" with one another in virtue
of the differing truth-criteria they employ.(6) Notice that, on
this definition, a refutation of relativism does not turn on supply-
ing a methodology - indeed, such a refutation would be question-
begging and self-defeating - but merely on showing how (ontologi-
cally) it is possible for a cross-categorial conversation whose
results are binding for its participants to occur. (That is, nothing
need be said in advance of such a conversation about the truth-
criteria which, in a given instance, it might pertinently invoke.)
Sometimes it is assumed that the issue of refuting relativism is
important only for someone by whom a methodology is sought (so
that "to refute relativism is to discover method"); the definition
just given, however, escapes this imputation since whether or
not method is invoked the question of whether (and if so how)
it is possible to converse bindingly and cross-categorially stands.
Notice too that the above definition entails that the questions
of the possibility of category-validation and of relativism are
one and the same. Justification of ones categories involves talking
compellingly to one who does not share them, and talking compel-
lingly to such a one raises validity-claims regarding the categories
and truth-criteria one employs.

Correspondence theories start from absolutism but are driven into
relativism (in consequence of the non-existence of brute facts).
Coherence theories directly beg the question of relativism (see
note 4, above). Can consensus succeed where correspondence and
coherence fail?

Secondly, therefore, consensus. Whereas correspondence theories
treat truth as consisting in correspondence (with "the world" or
with "the facts"), and coherence theories treat truth as consisting
in 'the agreement of a thought-content with itself',(7) the consensus
theory treats truth as consisting in warranted agreement. The
main contemporary exponent of a consensus theory of truth is
Habermas.(8) But its roots go back to Feuerbach, according to
whom 'the thought in which "I" and "You" are united is a true
thought.'(9) And behind Feuerbach stands the Hegel of the

Phenomenology, for whom true theory (which is to say phenomeno-
logical theory) and free practice (which is to say mutually recog-
nitive practice) presuppose one another and go hand in hand.
To the outlines of this Hegelian argument I return below.

A truth which consisted sheerly in consensus would concede the
field to relativism at a stroke. The qualification "warranted"
consensus is needful to meet the objection that a consensus approach
'leaves truth as merely relative to a local culture'.(10) Therefore
more than a little turns on the notion of "warranted" being expli-
cated in such a way as to avoid introducing any view of truth
construed in non-consensus terms. For example, the theory would
be undermined if "warranted" were taken to mean "internally
coherent" or "corresponding to the facts". Habermas's proposal
is to say that agreement counts as warranted if and only if it
is arrived at where the conditions of an 'ideal speech situation'
obtain (or where they are anticipated: see 'Appendix', below).
An ideal speech situation is specified as one wherein all conversa-
tional participants have equal chances to perform speech acts
of the same kind. Therefore it is one in which, considerations
of authority and power having been nullified, the course of discus-
sion will be guided by nothing but the project of arriving at
truth concerning the matter in hand.

More precisely: the notion of arriving at truth is here inappro-
priate. Consensus under the above-mentioned conditions is truth's
sufficient condition. Habermas's contention is not that - as in
Plato's dialectic - unconstrained discussion converges on a truth
which would have existed, unacknowledged, even if no such discus-
sion had occurred. Rather, it is the logically (and ontologically)
stronger contention that the outcome of such a discussion just
is truth. Thus Habermas, at least by implication, endorses Hegel's
claim cited at note 5, above. Thus, too, Habermas raises a claim
as to the nature of valid truth-criteria - they are those upon
which, and in terms of which, participants in an ideal speech
situation reach agreement - without announcing a "method" (a demar-
cation-principle) such as would purportedly separate truth from
falsity in advance of the play of power-free conversation itself.
Moreover, no absolutist or cosmologically-inscribed conception
of truth is signalled by Habermas, since on the contrary everything
- the question of valid truth-criteria included - is here thrown
to the conversational winds. And these winds blow more freely
than either absolutism or methodology can ever understand, or
concede. In a sense, it is precisely the unconstrained breadth
of the envisaged conversation which allows consensus theory to
declare that truth just is such a conversation's outcome: no more
severe a test of truth-claims can be imagined than - to change
the metaphor - the crucible of a conversation in which no cate-
gorial holds are barred (nothing is prescribed in advance, either
by "methodology" or by "authority") so that, all comers counting
as competent, the base-metal of falsity can turn to ashes and
the gold of truth appear. And finally: this gold appears with
a human status and within (solely) human - which is to say:
fragile, revocable and non-absolutist - terms.

Thus it seems that a consensus theory of truth meets all of the above-indicated requirements. It circumvents absolutism, contains a reply to relativism, holds no truck with methodology and offers to tell us in what (ontologically) truth consists. And so the task becomes one of examining the objections to which a consensus theory appears exposed. Within the confines of the present paper I shall consider only a single objection, which I take to be the most crucial. (Two further areas where, in the literature, objections are signalled, are indicated in my Appendix, below.)

The objection I shall consider is to the effect that a consensus theory equates 'the criteria of truth' (specified as the existence or anticipation of an idea speech situation) with 'the criteria for the warranted assertion ... of truth-claims'.(11) The statement "P is true" becomes equivalent to the statement "To assert P is justified", i.e., truth comes to be elided with justified belief. (The force of the objection stems from the circumstance that I may be perfectly justified in believing that I have £10 in my pocket when I arrive in the supermarket, while in the event it turns out that I was pickpocketed on my way. Here, it seems, a correspondence theory of truth comes into its own.)

The objection comes down to this. If truth is equated with justi-fied or warranted belief, then (a) at a given time conflicting views of the same matter may have equal justification - both P and not-P may count as true - since either one and the same argument may have an indeterminate outcome or different arguments conducted cotemporally, and still under conditions of the ideal speech situation, may reach differing views; and (b) what one is justified in believing and asserting may be expected to change as a given conversation or quence of conversations proceeds, i.e., P may count as true at time t_1 but as untrue at time t_2. (Walking to the supermarket, it counts as true that I possess £10; arriving in the supermarket, it counts as false that I possessed £10 while still on my way.)

Already in an article published in the 1930s, Max Horkheimer - steering a middle course between absolutism and relativism - emphasised the changeability of truth as the (acceptable) cost or consequence of avoiding these twin pitfalls: 'later correction does not mean that a former truth was formerly untrue'.(12) That is, some proposition may be true at t_1 but become untrue - con-versation having moved to a new stage - once t_2 arrives. I suggest that Horkheimer is right in thinking that this consequence, or in other words point (b) above, is unobjectionable. That truth is changeable, in the strong sense that a proposition which was true subsequently becomes false while leaving its former truth unimpaired, is acceptable as long as whoever first asserts the proposition and then denies it is in a position to give binding reasons for his or her change of view. For then "P (which was true at t_1) is now at t_2 false" means simply "Reasons can be given for abandoning P (for which previously reasons could be given for accepting) in favour of not-P". The cogency, as it were, of a conversation in which the truth or untruth of P is in question is in this way maintained.

As with point (b), so with point (a). "At one and the same time, P and not-P are both true" can be taken as meaning simply, "There are no compelling or binding reasons, at present, for deciding between them". Here too the cogency of conversation between upholders of P and of not-P is maintained, at least on condition that the possibility of arriving at compelling reasons (which would resolve the matter) remains so-to-say in conversational play. Only someone who despaired of such a possibility, or who failed to understand the substantive issue as between P and not-P, would be tempted to draw sceptical conclusions from the cotemporality of P's truth and falsity. And one can readily imagine a conversation in which this latter condition does not apply.

This said, it may seem that my rebuttal of the objection signalled to a consensus theory of truth has moved forward too fast. In this connection two issues arise. First, there is the question of what Mary Warnock, exploring a similar implication of Nietzsche's conception of truth, calls 'the deep recalcitrance of language'; what I have offered by way of a defence of consensus comes up against what Warnock terms 'the impossibility of saying "I know but I may be wrong" or "It is right, but perhaps it won't be tomorrow"'.(13) Whether the 'recalcitrance' of language - by which Warnock appears to mean ordinary language - can be made the basis for an argument entailing 'impossibility' is, however, doubtful. For example, it may be that absolute and/or relativist premises are inscribed in the usages of ordinary language itself: no language game is metaphysically innocent. Certainly (but this is not necessarily an objection) an oddness with regard to ordinary usage is something which, at least according to my defence of it, a consensus theory of truth involves.

The second issue strikes me as more serious. Suppose that P and not-P are truths asserted from within differing category-systems; that is, suppose that each counts as "true" in the light of truth-criteria which are incommensurable and distinct. (To say that assertions which are incommensurable cannot clash head-on is, surely, misleading: whether a given action is or is not "a murder" not infrequently depends on the categorial perspective from within which it is to be seen.) In this case the condition of "compelling or binding reasons", whose possibility-at-least-in-principle underpinned what I called the cogency of conversation, seems to disappear. Where P and not-P are categorially incommensurable, argument which moves forward from the one to the other or which decides in favour of one as against the other must proceed - must reach binding outcomes - across categorial divides; and it is the impossibility of just such an argument which the relativist asserts. Earlier, I reported invocation of the ideal speech situation as a move by which the consensus theory of truth sought to fend off the charge of relativism; now, it appears that this can be at most a first move - since consensus theory must be able to cope with the issue of cross-categorial disagreements which arise within the ideal speech situation itself. To cope with this issue it must be able to demonstrate the in-principle possibility of conversation arriving at outcomes which are binding across categorial boundaries, and it must be able

to do this without retreating to notions of "warranted" results deriving from acceptance of correspondence or coherence views.

Notice once again that what is asked after here is a demonstration of ontological possibility; and that no requirement for a "correct method" able to resolve cross-categorial disagreements is thereby invoked.

That cross-categorial disagreements can occur under ideal speech-conditions is conceded by Habermas, according to whom four 'validity claims' - thos of 'comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness and rightness' - are raised 'in performing any speech action'; Habermas's contention is that conversation can reach 'agreement' only when these claims are 'mutually recognized' by each of the individuals who listens and speaks.(14) Of these four validity-claims, it is that as to 'rightness' which brings the problem of relativism into view. To claim 'rightness' for one's utterance, says Habermas, is to claim its appropriateness 'with respect to a recognized normative background' (loc. cit.); that is, it is to claim that the categories and truth-criteria in terms of which one's 'comprehensibility, truth [and] truthfulness' count as such are valid for their part. (Habermas's 'rightness', I take it, covers validity claims not merely of an ethical-practical or normative but also of a theoretical-categorial sort. In a sense, the issue here is one of what J.L. Austin calls "infelicities".) Now, Habermas certainly thinks it possible for "discourse" to reflect upon, and to raise the question of the defence and redemption of, the validity-claims which in communication are raised; and so he thinks it possible that conversation should address the issue of its own 'rightness' or category-justification. In other words, since (as above argued) the issues of category-justification and of relativism are one and the same, he thinks it possible for conversation in the ideal speech situation to proceed bindingly even across categorial bounds.

But how in fact (how, ontologically) is it possible for the categorial 'rightness' of utterances to be addressed, bindingly, in conversations wherein - given the equivalence of the issues of category-justification and of relativism - these same utterances represent, so to say, gambits or moves? More specifically: how can the issue of rightness be addressed bindingly? Habermas presents redemption of his four validity-claims as conditions of communication rather than as a result to which conversation can attain; hence it is difficult to see how that species of communication he terms "discourse" (the species which addresses the issue of the validity of validity-claims) can do more than presuppose what it was supposed to show.

The difficulty here raised with regard to Habermas applies quite generally to writers who propose - as does consensus theory - "conversation" as the salve or therapy whereby the sting of relativism can be drawn. One such writer is Bernstein who characterises what he calls good or 'true' conversation as 'an extended and open dialogue which presupposes a background of intersubjective agreements and a tacit sense of relevance'.(15) The difficulty

is, of course, that insofar as conversation presupposes intersubjective agreements it can arrive at outcomes which count as valid only within the "local" community where the agreements in question are shared. On, as it were, the borders of such a community, the issue of relativism emerges once more. An effective answer to the relativist requires that agreed-upon categories and truth-criteria can be shown not as conversation's presupposition or necessary condition, but as (without remainder) conversation's outcome or result. That is, it needs to be shown how even in the absence of agreed categorial premises a binding conversation can take place.

That conversation does in fact reach binding results even when conducted across the boundaries of category-systems is, I think, undeniable. But if the outcome of such conversation is not to be vulnerable to the charge of illusion or "false consciousness" we need to know how - "how", ontologically (which is not to say methodologically) - it is possible for such to be the case. Richard Rorty may well be right in equating the 'success' of a conversation with its 'continuance',(16) but, if so, the ontological possibility of a continuance amounting to "successful" continuance must needs be shown. For, whereas the sheer continuance of an instrumental practice demonstrates the earlier stages of that practice to have been (instrumentally) successful - the penalty of failure not having been incurred - in the case of communicative practice no such signal of success can be unequivocally summoned. A conversation remains at issue within itself; so that, pace Rorty, the pragmatics of instrumental and communicative actions have to be treated as distinct. Thus to emphasise the irreducibility of the ontological question "how possible?" is not to hanker, nostalgically, after the strong foundationalism of absolutist or methodological views; still less is it to lay down truth-criteria in advance of those which conversation agrees upon as appropriate in a given, necessarily conjunctural, case. All that is asked after is a possibility-in-principle, and possibility-in-principle (the ontological version of a Kantian transcendental deduction) can be supplied without any invocation of a 'metaphysical or epistemological guarantee' (loc. cit.). We are bewitched by magic unless we can understand how conjurors in general, as distinct from any conjuror in particular, can draw the rabbit of truth from conversation's perspectival and thence relativistic hat.

The result of our discussion so far can be summarised as follows. A consensus theory of truth can be maintained only if the question of relativism is answered; and consensus theory, which requires this answer, must be the means by which the answer can be supplied. Can this be done?

My contention is that it can, but only by broadening the terms in which consensus theory is prescribed by Habermas himself. Habermasian theory as a whole stands somewhat to one side of the phenomenological philosophical tradition, perhaps because Habermas thinks of phenomenology as bound up with transcendental and monological subjectivity (as in the Husserl of Ideas or

Cartesian Meditations) in distinction from the dialogical, intersub-
jective and conversationally at-issue, character of his own thought.
Certainly he draws on the phenomenological conception of an inter-
subjective "life-world" (cf. the later Husserl's The Crisis of
European Sciences) but the manner in which he thus - rightly,
I believe - shifts from 'the paradigm of the philosophy of con-
sciousness' to 'the paradigm of mutual understanding'(17) at the
same time moves away from the emphasis on the rich texture of
first-person experience which was always phenomenology's central
and most fertile concern. Be this as it may, I shall contend
that the validity of a consensus theory of truth presupposes
phenomenology while, conversely, the validity of phenomenology
turns on phenomenological truth-claims being construed (pace the
earlier Husserl) in a dialogical sense. An argument along these
lines returns us to what I have suggested is one of consensus
theory's sources, namely the Hegel of the Phenomenology of Spirit.
(In his Theory and Practice as well as in his recent The Philo-
sophical Discourse of Modernity, Habermas himself presents his
views in the form of a renewal of Hegelian insights, although
in both cases it is to the pre-Phenomenology Hegel that he turns.)
For the Hegel of the Phenomenology, I propose, the themes of
phenomenological theory and of mutually recognitive practice go
hand in hand.

No interpretive argument concerning Hegel is possible here.(18)
Nonetheless I shall outline my understanding of the phenomenology/
consensus interrelation in the form of a set of assertions as to
the view which Hegel's Phenomenology presents. By "mutual recog-
nition" Hegel understands a reciprocal acknowledgement by indi-
viduals of one anothers' freedom so that each mutually recognitive
individual is free, not (as on liberal theory) in spite of, but
rather through each of the others amongst whom mutual recognition
obtains. As it were, Hegelian 'recognition' has not merely a
cognitive but a constitutive force.(19) In Habermas's ideal speech
situation, it should be apparent, echoes of Hegelian mutual recogni-
tion sound.

By "phenomenology" Hegel understands the description of what
he calls 'experience', i.e., the description of the dialectical
interplay whereby consciousness and its object reciprocally inform
and correct one another: consciousness, by seeking to adjust
itself to its object, alters not only itself but its specification
(its categorial specification, or "individuation") of its object
as well.(20) Notice that Hegelian phenomenology as thus character-
ised has nothing in common with an (impossible) project of
describing experientially brute facts, and so escapes a charge
against phenomenology - that of ignoring the categorial specificity
of any conceivable experience - which is not-uncommonly raised.

The phenomenology/mutual recognition connection has two sides.
First of all, mutual recognition goes forward interactively or
"conversationally", and this conversation for its part goes forward
phenomenologically. In effect, mutually recognitive individuals
interact by raising phenomenological claims: "It's like this,

isn't it?". Mutually recognitive interaction is phenomenological for the reason that to recognize an other is to recognize him or her as a worldly being (a being-in-the-world); to recognize an other is to recognize his or her experiential "world" as well. This is not to say that the other's categorial construal, or individuation, of their world is to be accepted unquestioningly. It is to say that the mutually recognitive appeal "isn't it?" is always premised on a claim "it's like this", it being understood within the framework of mutual recognition that the other is no less epistemologically competent than oneself to raise claims of an equivalent kind. For Hegel, the necessary and sufficient condition of such a competence is freedom, a polity of mutual recognition being one wherein, uniquely, freedom comes into its own. To an audience of mutually recognitive individuals, the Phenomenology will (qua phenomenological) figure as 'at once exoteric, comprehensible and capable of being learned and appropriated by all'.(21)

Secondly, and conversely, phenomenological claims are raised dialogically: the "isn't it?" part of the claim is important inasmuch as it appeals for recognition and thence validation of what has been said. A monological phenomenology, like that of Husserl's Ideas, cannot but contradict itself by inscribing the a priori of a "method" (in Husserl's case, the method of bracketting) in advance of experience itself. The raising of phenomenological truth-claims is dialogical, and projects mutual recognition (recognition of the other's phenomenological competence), because such truth-claims appeal not to method but to experience, and so can be redeemed only by others whose experience is adknowledged (recognized) as competent or in other words "non-pathological" for its part. Only where mutually recognitive freedom obtains, which is to say only where the practical bases of scenarios of false consciousness have been uprooted, can phenomenological theory discover the audience which its own project summons and also needs.

The dialectic of 'experience', referred to earlier, in this way just is the play of mutual recognition; and the play of mutual recognition just is the unfolding of phenomenological description. Each (phenomenological theory and mutually recognitive practice) is the other's mediation, or mode of existence. In an active and interactive process, they subsist through one another and join hands.

Moreover what has been said carries implications for the question of the reflexivity of Hegelian (phenomenological) thought. Hegel's description of the play of mutual recognition is itself phenomenological; and, inasmuch as his phenomenology is dialogical, in phenomenologically describing this play - the play of good or "true" conversation - he reflexively situates himself within the conversational play which the Phenomenology reports. That is: the Phenomenology addresses itself to an audience - a free and thereby "post-historical" audience - amongst whom the ideal speech situation of mutual recognition obtains. Hegelian phenomenological theorising is thus reflexively consistent with itself.

This turn from Husserlian (monological) to Hegelian (dialogical) phenomenology suggests how Habermas's consensus truth-theory can be experientially enriched. Our final task is to show how this move can also resolve the problem of relativism on consensus theory's own (we can now say: phenomenological and mutually recognitive) grounds.

Consider an example of a "good" conversation. For the present purposes the conversational topic is immaterial: let us say that we are debating the question of whether Turner's Fire at Sea is a beautiful work of art. Such a conversation can be disappointing in two ways: it can confine itself either to the application to the painting of a pre-given criterion of beauty ("Turner's swirling rythms lack classical harmony and proportion") or to what counts as beauty ("Never mind what Turner does, consider the following conceptual point..."). The former conversational variant counts as disappointing because it fails to place categories and truth-criteria at issue, the latter because it addresses only categories and truth-criteria and fails to interrogate, experientially, Turner's work. In contrast to both of these variants, a good conversation is one which allows first-order ("theoretical") and second- or higher-order ("metatheoretical") points - respectively: "What do we find when we examine the Turner painting?" and "By what criteria should we judge its beauty?" - to interweave, to interprenetrate and to inform one another in the same conversational flow. Theoretical and metatheoretical issues are both in play, and neither is treated in abstraction from the other. On the contrary, what counts as beauty is decided in part by examining the Turner (so that the interrogation of truth-criteria is not merely conceptual but also experiential, the phenomenological "object" playing a role in deciding the categories which individuate it) while, on the other hand, what we find when we examine the painting is decided in part by the point which our discussion of the category "beauty" has reached (so that in describing Fire at Sea we are not projecting an - impossible - recounting of brute facts). The qualification "in part" in each of the clauses of the preceding sentence reports the circumstance that the clauses refer to two aspects (or "moments") of a single conversational "totalisation" between which, in Hegelian terminology, a relation both of unity and of difference obtains.

Consider now two points. One is that the conversation just imagined is conducted on the basis of no presumed agreement as to category-systems or of (with Bernstein) presupposed agreement as to conversational terms. What counts as "beauty" is wholly at issue and up for grabs, so that it is as conversation's result rather than its premise that categorial agreement appears. (It is irrelevant to urge, here, that the participants in the imagined conversation are likely to agree on other categorial terms even while they are disagreeing about "beauty". For, if conversation presupposed agreement as to terms, disagreement as to "beauty" would in itself be sufficient to call in question any result which the conversation about Fire at Sea reached.) The second point is that, despite absence of prior agreement as to "beauty", the imagined conversation

can be conducted binding_ly - binding agreement as to the beauty of the painting and as to the question of what counts as "beauty" can be its conjoint outcome - precisely because first-order or "theoretical" invocation of the experience of the object (the painting) and second-order or "metatheoretical" invocation of truth-criteria (in the present example: "what counts as beautiful") provide resources of appeal not reducible to or identical with one another while at the same time not falling apart into discrete "theoretical" and "metatheoretical" realms. In short the conversation can proceed, compellingly, across categorial bounds. In virtue of the unity of "theory" and "metatheory" the incommensurability of rival truth-criteria remains admitted - there is no covert appeal to brute facticity - while in virtue of the distinction between "theory" and "metatheory" (always and only a distinction within a unity, or within a totalisation) one can appeal beyond category-systems to experiential objects without, in doing so, seeking to jump over one's own categorial shadow or to escape into brute facticity out of category-systems' skin. Put otherwise: the conversation just imagined and described is precisely the sort of conversation which, according to the relativist, can never appear on the face of the earth.

Notice that everything here turns on seeing "theory" and "metatheory" not as separate and discrete conceptual regions but as interlinked moments within a single totalisation, namely, the totalising movement of conversation itself. As it were, one and the same move or gambit in the conversation - e.g. "But let's just look at the painting again..." - plays now a theoretical, and now a metatheoretical, role. Neither is the phenomenological move towards the detail of the painting a move away from issues of category-validation; nor is taking up categorial questions a conversational move which abstracts from phenomenology and leaves questions of painterly detail behind. Although in a given conversational conjuncture theoretical and metatheoretical questions may no doubt be treated as relatively separate, in the larger context of the conversation's movement they are inseparable since each of the two moments here distinguished is the other's mediation, i.e., the mode in which the other exists.

I stress this interlinking because, once theory and metatheory are treated as separable theoretical regions, the relativist case becomes impossible to destroy. For then it is either in the realm of "theory" or in the realm of higher-order "metatheory" that any justification of categories and truth-criteria must be carried through. If category-justification is made "theory's" task then the result is vicious circularity, since then a given body of theory is invited categorially to validate itself. If, on the other hand, category-justification is made the task of "metatheory" the result is an infinite regress, since the category-validating metatheory employs categories which themselves call for justifications by a still-higher order metatheory ... and so on, without the prospect of reaching any final term. The only way to escape the dichotomy of vicious circularity versus infinite regress is to resist, at the outset, the theory/metatheory separation from which the dichotomy springs.

All this having been said, a further step remains. To refute
relativism it is insufficient merely to exhibit an instance of con-
versation which accomplishes what the relativist says can never
be achieved. For then it is still open to the relativist to write
"false consciousness" and illusion over just the conversational
outcomes where "binding results" would be the superscription
favoured by the conversational participants themselves. To draw
the balance of probability back on to the anti-relativist side
we need to show how (ontologically) it is possible for such a
conversation as the one imagined to take place in a compelling
way.

Its compellingness does not stem from an appeal to brute facticity
(the facticity of the painting) since any appeal to the painting
is mediated through, and exists in terms of, the issue of categories
(the question of "what counts as beautiful?") which is also in
play. And so correspondence theory, whose plausibility as an
approach to relativism derives - despite all qualifications - from
the notion of brute facticity, is not surreptitiously reintroduced.
Nor does its compellingness derive from an appeal to any pre-
given validity of categories, since the question "What counts as
beauty?" is placed at issue in the experiential interrogation of
Fire at Sea itself; and so coherence theory (always ready to
devalue experience if the hanging-together of some system of con-
cepts is infringed) remains equally out of court and out of play.

On the contrary, the (ontological) possibility of such a conversa-
tion taking place bindingly across categorial boundaries is given
solely through the interdependence of the themes of phenomenology
and recognition. Recognizing the other (my conversational partner)
I recognize his or her experience of the painting and so, even
although we disagree about what counts as beauty (and hence indi-
viduate the painting in different fashions), we can talk - and
recognize that we are talking - about the same thing: we can
allow the other's experience to impinge on, and call in question,
our own categorial scheme. We can do this without covert appeals
to brute facticity because it is in and through our recognition
of the other - an other who construes "beauty" in a different
manner from ourselves - that we come to see the painting (the
phenomenological object) with fresh eyes. through recognition
of the other our first-person experience becomes richer; through
dwelling on experience (our own experience in a relation of compar-
ison with the other's) our interaction with the other is enriched
no less. The lenses of our category-systems are no longer welded
to our eyes - we can see empathetically through the other's eyes,
and hence make our comparisons, inasmuch as the other is recog-
nized - while at the same time, in gaining this self-distance and
as a condition of it, there is no attempt to see (in the manner
of theories of brute facticity) without any lenses at all. Still
seeing through categorial lenses, these lenses become so-to-say
detached from the object perceived through them in the same
movement, and by the same token as, they become detached from
the eyes which see. It is comparison of our own view with the
other's different view of what is recognizably the same object
- recognizably the same, because we recognize the other and hence

also the other's experiential "world" as well - which allows the object itself to play a (partial) role in determining how, validly, it may be categorially known. In short we can appeal phenomenologically to our own experience in the matter of resolving category-disputes because we recognize the other, and conversely (complementarily) it is because we appeal not merely to categories but - phenomenologically - to experience that our conversation can place at issue, instead of monologically dismissing, the category-systems and attendant experiences by which the other takes his or her stand. Thus, in the conversational example given, phenomenology - the phenomenological and experience-interrogating procedure of conversation - and mutual recognition - the space and flow of the conversation itself - are each other's mode of being. The phenomenology/mutual recognition relation allows us to see how binding conversation across the boundaries of category-systems is ontologically possible: it is possible as a praxis of mutually recognitive beings. Moreover it allows us to see this without abandoning consensus-theory's own conversational and interactive terrain.

Thus the relativist is answered, and consensus theory, which requires a solution to the problem of relativism, can (in its phenomenological version) be the means by which just such a solution is supplied. It can supply this solution only on condition that it takes on board phenomenological themes: owing to the link between phenomenology and mutual recognition, the truth of phenomenological descriptions is neither "correspondence" nor "coherence" but "consensus" truth, just as "consensus" truth is phenomenological truth for its part. The openness of mutually recognitive interaction is the ground on which, perhaps uniquely, the figure of truth is able to appear; conversely, and complementarily, the unconstrainedness of a conversation which as phenomenological admits of no methodological or a priori closure and counts all experiential appeals as competent, clears the ground for the play of mutual recognition itself. This openness and this unconstrainedness are one and the same. Phenomenology is the precise opposite of a methodology - it is rather the radical absence of "method"(22) - just as mutual recognition entails the absence of fixed social institutions and pre-given role-definitions and norms.(23) The unrestrictedness of recognition's and phenomenology's coinciding horizons supply, arguably, the severest testing-ground of truth-claims imaginable: exposed to interrogation from all comers, no truth-claim can seek safety in monologically prescribed redoubts. Indeed it is the severity of the testing entailed by phenomenological and mutually recognitive openness that allow us, with consensus theory, to term the outcome of a thus-open conversation "truth". Such a truth is, of course, never irrevocable since any conversational outcome may be placed freshly at issue as, for example, new voices make themselves heard. Truth remains "changeable". Something of the Nietzschean "play of perspectives" is preserved in such a truth but, this time, in such a way that (however non-definitively) the validity of perspectival shifts can be discursively assessed.

Finally, notice that any potentially tenable truth-theory must pass a test of reflexivity: it must be able to apply to itself. Notice too that the above example of "good" conversation was presented - to be sure, sketchily - in a phenomenological mode. That is, it entered its own dialogical and recognitive appeal. Thus it is that the defence of consensus truth-theory has itself proceeded in consensus terms: the defence is reflexively self-consistent. An element of circularity makes its appearance here, but the reflexive circle is neither closed nor vicious. It is non-vicious since it figures as a necessary, but not as a sufficient, condition of a truth-theory's truth. And where the truth-theory concerned is <u>consensus</u> theory the circle is an open one, inasmuch as the theory moves, reflexively, into the open space of phenomenological and mutually recognitive conversation itself.

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An appendix: it is needful to stress the limits of the above discussion. I have defended consensus theory only against <u>one</u> objection - which I take to be the most telling one. A second objection turns on the respective roles of agreement and 'dissent' in argument;(24) a third on the notion of counterfactuality. Inasmuch as, at least in present-day circumstances, mutual recognition exists (at most) self-contradictorily, it follows that according to consensus theory all truth-claims are, counterfactually, to the effect that "P <u>would</u> be true <u>if</u> (which is not the case) uncontradicted mutual recognition obtained". Habermas's approach to this question turns on construing the ideal speech situation as proleptically <u>anticipated</u> in any communication whereby shared understanding is sought;(25) difficulties arise, however, when he shifts from seeing this prolepsis politically - as prefigurations of a politically reachable emancipated community - to, as in his later works, something closer to a presupposition of a sheerly Kantian and transcendental kind.(26) For then the thesis of an internal relation between theory and practice, and between <u>truth</u> and <u>freedom</u>, on which from the Hegel of the <u>Phenomenology</u> onwards the project of the Critical Theory tradition turned, threatens to disappear. And, as we have seen, just such an internal relatedness (as between phenomenological truth and mutually recognitive freedom) is part of what a defensible consensus theory involves.(27)

Related to the question of counterfactuality, a still more serious limit to the discussion in the present paper is that it says nothing about the social and political conditions under which mutually recognitive practice might obtain. For Hegel, these conditions are post-historical; for Marx, building on Hegel, they require that class society is at an end. If "good" conversation is a rare occurrence, Marx and Hegel offer to tell us why.

A final limit is that it is only the theoretical and epistemological bearings of mutual recognition that my paper has discussed. The <u>practice</u> of mutual recognition may be something altogether less <u>warm</u> and "humanistic" than I have been able to indicate here.

According to Hegel's Phenomenology, the issue (if not the actuality) of bad faith is humanly ineluctible(28) and the play of mutual recognition amounts to a "drama of suspicion" wherein the validity-claim that Habermas calls 'truthfulness' is the prime stake.

Notes

(1) F. Nietzsche The Will to Power para. 470.

(2) Cf. R. Rorty Consequences of Pragmatism (Harvester Press 1982) p. 166.

(3) Nietzsche op. cit. para. 590.

(4) B. Russell (The Problems of Philosophy Oxford University Press 1967, p. 71) indicates the vulnerability of coherence theories to relativism with the remark that 'there is no reason to suppose that only one coherent body of beliefs is possible'. Certainly, if coherence is specified in terms merely of formal coherence, then true propositions include those which describe any possible world.

(5) G.W.F. Hegel Introduction to 'Aesthetics' (Clarendon Press 1979) p. 8.

(6) More formally stated: the relativist thesis consists in the inference that, since truth-claims raised within differing category-systems are 'incommensurable' with one another (cf. Thomas Kuhn's The Structure of Scientific Revolutions), it follows therefore that binding conversation across their boundaries is impossible. the present paper, in effect, concedes the premise of this inference but resists its conclusion. I take it that (a) the above is the most philosophically interesting version of relativism and that (b) any plausible answer to relativism has to take the form of the argument just sketched. Further, I assume that it is important to refute relativism when it takes the form of the thesis here set forth. Writers like Lyotard (see note 24, below), who seem quite happy to endorse relativism, strike me as burying their heads in the sand. Relativism does not for example equate with tolerance, as Richard Bellamy ('Post Modernism and the End of History' Culture and Society Vol. 4, 1987 p. 731) has recently pointed out.

(7) G.W.F. Hegel Encyclopaedia para. 24. Roughly, Hegel's Encyclopaedia can be seen as standing to his Phenomenology in the realtion of a coherence to a consensus theory of truth.

(8) For a lucid exposition see T. McCarthy The Critical Theory of Jürgen Habermas (Polity Press 1984) pp 291-310.

(9) See L.S. Stepelevich The Young Hegelians: An Anthology (Cambridge University Press 1983) p. 104; also Feuerbach's Principles of the Philosophy of the Future para 62.

(10) M. Hesse in J.B. Thompson and D. Held (eds.) Habermas: Critical Debates (Macmillan 1982) p. 108. See also M. Hesse Revolutions and Reconstructions in the Philosophy of Science (Harvester Press 1980) ch. 9.

(11) McCarthy op. cit. p. 300.

(12) M. Horkheimer 'On the Problem of Truth' in A. Arato and E. Gebhardt (eds.) The Essential Frankfurt School Reader (Blackwell 1978) p. 422.

(13) M. Warnock in M. Paseley (ed.) Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought (Methuen 1978) p. 56; cf. p. 49.

(14) J. Habermas Communication and the Evolution of Society (Heinemann 1979) pp. 1-3.

(15) R.J. Bernstein Beyond Objectivism and Relativism (Blackwell 1983) p. 2

(16) Rorty op. cit. p. 172.

(17) J. Habermas The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity (Polity Press 1987) p. 296.

(18) See, for argument addressing some of the relevant interpretive issues, R. Gunn '"Recognition" in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit' Common Sense No. 4 (March 1988)

(19) G.W.F. Hegel Phenomenology of Spirit (Oxford University Press 1977) p. 111: 'Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being recognized'.

(20) Hegel Phenomenology pp. 52 ff.

(21) Hegel Phenomenology p. 7.

(22) Cf. K.R. Dove 'Hegel's Phenomenological Method' Review of Metaphysics Vol. XXIII No. 4 (1970); A. Kojeve Introduction to the Reading of Hegel (Basic Books 1969) pp. 176, 259. Misleadingly, Kojeve underscores the point about absence of method in a way which suggests that, in Hegelian phenomenology, a project of describing brute givens is indeed involved. Phenomenology goes wrong when either it invokes brute facticity for then it becomes sheerly implausible; or when it allows metatheory sheerly to dictate terms to experiential description, since then it abandons its own programme of restoring to experiential 'ojects' their voice in discussion about how they should be known. What it has to do in order to avoid these opposing pitfalls is to see the twin moments of appeal-beyond-categories-to-experience and of appeal-beyond-experience-to-categories as forming complementary and interacting dimensions of a single totalisation. This, I suggest, can be accomplished only by seeing

experience as in itself public or dialogical: a conception
of experience shared by Scottish 'Common Sense' philosophy,
by the later Wittgenstein and by the early Marx. I would
urge that it is also the conception of experience which Hegel's
Phenomenology of Spirit sets forth.

(23) This is argued for in Gunn op. cit.

(24) Cf. J-F. Lyotard The Postmodern Condition (Manchester Univer-
sity Press 1986) pp. 65-7.

(25) e.g. J. Habermas Theory and Practice (Heineman 1974) p. 17.

(26) Contrast Habermas's (earlier) Knowledge and Human Interests
(Heinemann 1972) p. 314, according to which 'the truth of
statements is based on anticipating the realisation of the
good life', with his (later) Autonomy and Solidarity (Verso
Books 1986 p. 90), where it is declared that the ideal speech
situation is not a 'utopia' (i.e. a political goal).

(27) Arguing that 'I may ascribe a predicate to an object only
if every person who could enter into a dialogue with me
would ascribe the same predicate to the same object', and
that therefore 'the condition of the truth of statements is
the potential agreement of all others', Habermas goes so
far as to specify 'all' as 'all the dialogue partners I could
find if my life-history were coextensive with the history
of mankind' (cit. McCarthy op. cit. p. 299). Life-histories
being what they are, of course, this makes the ideal speech
situation ineluctibly counterfactual. One can see the point
of Habermas's move, however, since 'the assent of a universal
audience' (J. Habermas The Theory of Communicative Action
Vol. I, Heinemann 1984, p. 35: emphasis added) would doubt-
less be sufficient to carry a consensus-based truth beyond
relativism's reach. But the difficulty with such a move
is two-fold: (i) no increase in numbers can amount to univer-
sality, just as no multiplication of contingent agreements
can of itself secure categorial necessity. And (ii) an
ineluctibly counterfactual consensus becomes a sheerly (a
"Kantianly") transcendental consensus. These intersecting
themes of necessity and of ahistorical transcendentality show
how much Habermas's presentation of the consensus theory
remains haunted by the still-lingering ghost of Kantian "strong
foundationalism". By contrast the consensus theory itself,
I suggest, does battle with relativism on the ground of contin-
gency (i.e. of human practice) and treats even a non-relativist
truth as fragile (i.e. as subject to the vicissitudes to which
human practice is exposed). This is its whole realism,
and its whole beauty. Thus it matters to consensus theory
that the ideal speech situation ("mutual recognition") remains
- however counterfactual it may be - linked to practice
as a political goal which might be reached. Further, Kantian
transcendental necessity devalues consensus truth-theory by
transferring truth from the terrain of recognitive practice

to a "beyond" wherein it might just as well be monologically affirmed.   Hence, it may be that the final horizon of the present paper is a defence of the consensus theory of truth against Habermas himself.

(28) Hegel Phenomenology pp 384 ff.
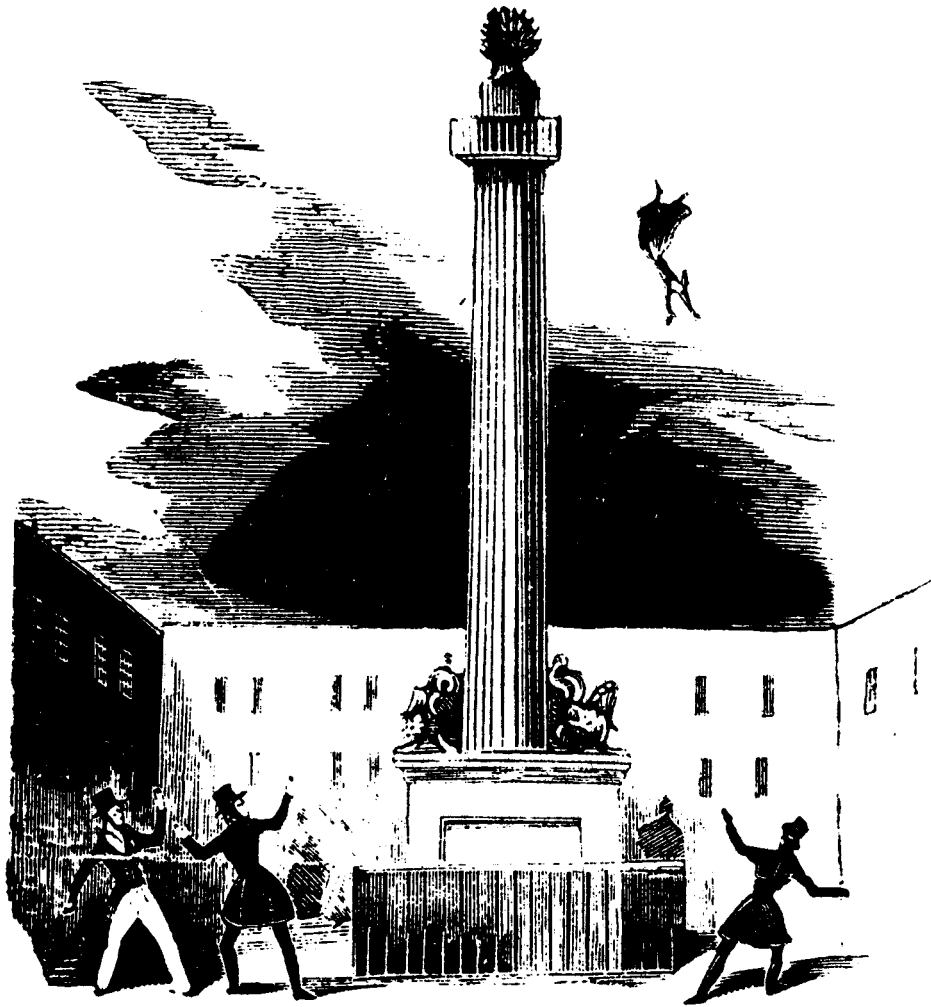
FUTURE NEWS

The remaining wing of New St Andrew's House was burned to the ground today in the fourth Poll Tax Riot. It is believed to have been sparked off by the entrance into the building and subsequent explosion of the Moderator of the Church of Scotland. At first it was thought that he had intentionally detonated a bomb he was carrying but it now seems this was triggered by the sustained firing of security guards. It is rumoured that a further armoured division has left Salisbury for Newcastle.

The M25 is now restricted to Range Rover traffic only.

An experienced TV jury has accepted the claim of the Basque separatist group ETA to have destroyed the fourth clone of the British Prime Minister in Gibraltar last week. The competing claims (from the IRA and the Italian Red Palm movement) were ruled invalid due to technical shortcomings in their presentations. A fifth clone of the PM has been defrosted and was updated in time to host this afternoon's Prime Ministers Question Time.

The Department of Health and State Security has issued wanted notices for 4,000 more loan defaulters. Rewards for information as to their whereabouts will be on the usual scale with a maximum of three times the value of the loan.

The University of the UK has announced from its mobile home (in Oswestry until Thursday, then on to Buxton, Consett, Hawick and Stirling) that it is still expanding fast and soon hopes to offer 200 student places (80% by correspondance). Opposition MPs who claimed this number of places was inadequate to the future needs of the UK and demanded a return to a system of more than one university were accused of being dangerously nostalgic by the Minister for Reinterpretation.

A government spokesman has hailed the privitisation of the Landfill Project as a great step forward in the quest for a healthy economy. From now on the work teams of UB40 holders will be traded on the open market. Sales will be held every month, with previews (including, if desired, medical examination of the assets to be traded) on the preceding day.

Four councillors of the Neo-Tory party have died during their attempt to prove that you can live on the new levels of social security. They will be buried with full military honours today. A spokesperson for the Ministry of Distribution has stated that death was caused in each case by a previously undetected heart condition although when pressed the spokesperson confirmed that all four were unusually "slim" when discoverd.

Thirtysix more political prisoners and others have fallen out of jail windows across the country during the last two days. The leader of the opposition called the state of prison windows "scandalous" and demanded a proper maintainance program for jail buildings. This call was supported from all sides of the house.

Two more pensioners have immolated themselves in a public park in Inverness in protest against the "no money for the unproductive" policy introducted in the Budget.

A Bill to reintroduce voting for the unemployed has been rejected by the House of Commons with a majority against of 550. The decision was hailed by the leader of the military wing of the cabinet, Col. Mick Ainslie, as a triumph for common sense.

The new redundancy first scheme is a great hit! By issueing redundancy notices prior to workers signing their contracts employers can completely avoid redundancy payments!

An outbreak of trouser wearing among Edinburgh women has been eradicated by the SAS Moral Defence Unit. They flew in this morning and according to a Ministry of National Action spokesman performed their task with great courage. Next of kin have been informed.

Due to the unsightly impact of MSC Slave Camps on the green belt, the league of suburban environmentalists are calling for their relocation back to their original sites in the inner cities.

The planned extermination of Scottish steel workers and their dependents has been delayed due to a slump in demand for bodily organs on the Amsterdam spot market.

The dispute between the Highland Heritage Museum and the administrators of the proposed Stirling Pond Festival about who owns the giant fibreglass model of Arthur's Seat recently extradited from California under the auspices of the heritage recuperatiomn fund continues.

ALL OVER BAR THE SHOUTING?

Several articles in the Scottish press have recently suggested that the campaign against the poll tax is all over bar the shouting. They appear to have based this conclusion on some statistics released by poll tax registration officers to an accounting magazine, which estimated that 90% of households had now returned registration forms. We would wish to point out the following -

* However the article **also** states:
" the figures for registration **should be treated cautiously**, since no authority could firmly quantify exactly how many community charge payers resided in its area .Councils estimates have been based on electoral rolls, sometimes supplemented with other sources of data. *The level of evasion remained uncertain."*

* Lothian councillors have repeatedly asked for information regarding the numbers of forms returned and had their requests denied.

* Registration does **not** mean that you have given up the fight against the poll tax. Many people have been frightened by the severe looking penalties for evading registration, and have registered because they can't afford not to. **It'll be a different story when it's money they come looking for.**

Groups like ours have encouraged people to delay registration as part of a campaign of resistance to the tax. We never thought that non-registration would defeat it (after all it's very easy to find out where someone lives). What we wanted to see was how much spirit there was for a fight against this dreadful tax. **In the Lothians 67,000 'responsible people' took some action to delay registration.** Although we're not claiming that all these people were acting in protest, this makes it the **largest civil disobedience campaign** in Scotland since before the 2nd World War. We take encouragement from a *Scotsman* poll which shows that **42%** of those interviewed said they would **support a campaign of non-payment** while **75%** disapproved of the poll tax.

GOVAN SAYS NO TO POLL TAX

The Govan by-election showed us that Scottish people are right behind a fighting campaign against the poll tax. The SNP candidate advocated a non-payment campaign against the tax, and the ballot paper carried the party label of 'SNP - NO POLL TAX'. Although only around half of the SNP voters backed their non-payment campaign , **the poll tax was the main issue for more than 25% of them.**

Jim Sillars admits that the Govan vote was a 'vote of no confidence' in Labour's 'Feeble Fifty'. We feel it is in particular a rejection of their inactivity on the poll tax. The Labour Party have rejected civil disobedience campaigns, but have or-ganised nothing effective in their place. It's no wonder people won't back them anymore!

We expect the.Govan result to goad the 'Frightened Forty-Nine' into a few weeks of 'rethinking'. The issue of the poll tax will be raised again as a result of the 'vote of no confidence'.

However by-elections come along only rarely, and if we want the Labour Party or the SNP to lead effective action against the poll tax **we can't afford to sit back and wait -** we must make it clear what we want from them and that if they don't oblige **we will carry on without them.** That's why the activities of anti-poll tax groups like ours are important.

By Jasus I vish your honor would give us a few throats to cut for we have had enough of breaking heads

We'll do any thing for money.

SOCIALIST *Scotland*

Scotland faces a major political crisis. The Tories continue their massive attack on the working class through deindustrialisation, the creation of a cheap labour economy, the run-down of public sector services and the systematic reduction of civil liberties. Scotland feels the effects particularly acutely: S & N, ROF Bishopton,Bilston Glen-Monktonhall, the Poll Tax and Forsyth's education proposals. Ironically the evidence indicates that it is in Scotland that these policies are least popular. Successive swings saw a record 50 Labour MPs elected and Labour victories in previously rock-solid Tory municipal strongholds. Even where Labour is weak, the Tories have suffered defeats from the SNP. Scottish Toryism has been reduced from its mid-50s majority position (over 50% of the popular vote) to a derisory rump. Opinion poll evidence also suggests growing support for the very political concepts, the public sector health and education services, even the local authorities, and for nationalisation, most threatened by Thatcher and becoming decreasingly popular in England.

As the Scottish and English political cultures diverge, Scots, working class Scots in particular, feel a growing frustration at the seeming invincibility of the Tories, at the total lack of any organised fight-back and, above all else, at the seemingly indefinite imposition by English votes of Tory rule on solidly anti-Tory Scotland.

Since the Union of 1707, Scotland has remained a distinct nation. It is now however, with the issue centring on the defence of the progressive social and economic reforms won by Scottish Labour over the years, that the national question raises itself most forcefully. Moreover with the Tories uninterested in constitutional change and an unelectable (at UK level) Labour Party incapable of delivering it, Devolution appears an increasingly unrealistic and irrelevant option.

Opinion polls and recent elections confirm a changing mood. Radical constitutional change is popular. Independence is increasingly acceptable. Support for a "Scottish Labour breakaway" is substantial.

The Scottish people, the central belt working class in particular, are loath to trust their social and economic future to an essentially conservative Nationalist party. They are cynical also about the Labour Party. It is unwilling to lead a mass campaign challenging the Tory's legitimacy in Scotland and to defend the reforms which it pioneered. It raises the constitutional issue, not from a conviction of the justification of Scotland's right to self-determination, but to defend the "unity of the UK". Finally the Economic Policy Review adopted at Blackpool marks its transition from a Party nominally committed to Socialism, to a Party enthusiastically committed to the maintenance of capitalism and an electoral appeal geared to the relatively affluent south-east of England.

With every major political party in internal turmoil, with the Scottish people uniquely open to questioning the old political order, a socialist party in Scotland, committed to advancing the social, economic and constitutional aspirations of the Scottish people generally and of the Scottish working class in particular, is an urgent necessity.Not only is there a real opportunity and desire for a determined fight-back and, indeed, a strong base for developing socialist awareness, but advancing from a fight-back to victory means recognising the crucial connection between the struggle for socialism and the struggle for independence. No conservative Nationalist party can win the wholehearted backing of the Scottish people, let alone of the Scottish working class, or could offer the resolute leadership which would be required in a situation where the Scottish people were challenging the very integrity of the British state. Equally, no socialist party which fails to recognise the underlying and growing feeling of national identity in Scotland will adequately articulate the aspirations of the Scottish people.

The *Movement for a Socialist Scotland* invites all Scottish socialists who are committed to the immediate struggles of the Scottish people against job losses, the Poll Tax and the destruction of all that is best in Scottish social and economic life to recognise that these struggles are inseparable from the struggle for an independent socialist Scotland. That struggle requires the creation of socialist party in Scotland. *The Movement for a Socialist Scotland* invites all Scottish socialists to join it in building such a party.

TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST SCOTLAND

Contact address: I Dunn 52Broughton Street EDINBURGH