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SARTRE'S CONTRIBUTION TO MARX'S CONCEPT OF ALIENATION

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 1969

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Anthropology and Sociology

We accept this thesis as conforming to the  
required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

August, 1973

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Date August 30, 1973

## Abstract

Marx's concept of alienation has proven to be a subject of controversy for many social theorists. One of the more provocative treatments of this concept has been outlined by Jean-Paul Sartre. Drawing heavily on Marxism's Hegelian tradition, Sartre portrays alienation as being a crucial element in the formation of the individual's perception of social reality. An appreciation of Sartre's project and its relevance to Marxist theory necessitates the examination of the origins and development of the concept of alienation. For this purpose, a brief account of Hegel's usage of the term is followed by a discussion of Feuerbach's efforts to counter Hegelian idealism with an explicitly materialist perspective. Alienation makes its first appearance in Marx's work with the publication of the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* and the concept was to be a topic of concern throughout Marx's life. In particular, his analysis of commodity fetishism in his later work shows an obvious connection with alienation. Georg Lukàcs' presentation of the reification of consciousness is a valuable addition to the examination of the fetishism of commodities. Lukàcs provides numerous insights concerning the relationship between alienation and commodity fetishism as well as offering a useful articulation of the role of consciousness in Marxist theory. Lukàcs' contribution is especially helpful in clarifying the nature of Sartre's project. Both theorists seek to outline an exposition of consciousness which counters idealistic excesses with a materialistic perspective faithful to the basic tenets of Marxism.

In addition, Sartre employs the notion of reification as well as that of alienation in his psychoanalytic approach. His technique is intended to illuminate the class biases inherent in the consciousness of each individual, a proposal which finds an immediate application in explaining the distorted awareness which petit bourgeois intellectuals such as Lukàcs and Sartre himself bring to the study of Marx's method.

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## INTRODUCTION

The concept of alienation occupies a controversial position within Marxist social theory. It appears at different junctures and with varying significance throughout the course of Marx's work. Recently, the concept of alienation has proven to be a major concern of academics subscribing to very different interpretations of Marx's theory. For example, while Jean-Paul Sartre (1963:61-62) tends to regard alienation as one of the key terms within Marxian thought, a concept which may prove to be the cement which holds the whole apparatus together, Louis Althusser (1970:239) considers alienation to be an anachronism, an artifact from Marx's pre-scientific apprenticeship. In fact, Althusser regards the concept of alienation as one of the major obstacles to the development of an authentic representation of Marx's project. Both Sartre and Althusser are highly respected theorists. Both claim to have uncovered the definitive reading of Marxist theory, yet they take diametrically opposed positions with respect to the notion of alienation.

The disclosure of the "true" function of alienation in Marx's conceptual scheme is not the fundamental purpose here. An attempt will be made to trace the evolution of the term from its Hegelian roots, through its reformulation by Feuerbach, to its later development at the hands of Marx. However, this is not intended to be an exhaustive treatment of the history of this concept. Instead, it is merely designed to situate the discussion in order to permit a sympathetic yet critical examination of the ideas of Georg Lukàcs and Sartre who consider alienation to be an integral component of Marx's thought.

This investigation begins with an account of Hegel's usage of the concept of alienation. Hegel uses the term to describe a transitory moment in the self-creation of *Spirit*. He considers his notion of *Spirit* to refer to an *Absolute Being*, an idealist construct which embraces both the natural and the social realms. Alienation refers to a critical moment when individual humans, agents of *Spirit*, fail to recognise that the world about them is simply *Spirit* in objectified form. Instead, they regard the social and natural domains to be alien. In Hegel's estimation, this lack of recognition constitutes the self-alienation of *Spirit*.

Ludwig Feuerbach opposes Hegel's thesis, posing a materialist critique which discredits the Hegelian notion of *Spirit*. According to Feuerbach, *Spirit* is simply a refinement of the religious conception of God, and as such is subject to similar criticisms as those directed at theology. God, Feuerbach argues, is little more than a projection of human consciousness. It represents an idealised version of human essence. Unfortunately, most people are so mystified that they are unable to recognise that God and *Spirit* are constructs of human consciousness. These spiritual deities are mistakenly perceived to be the creators of humanity rather than the human creations which they are in actuality.

Feuerbach's remarks proved to be extremely helpful to Karl Marx in his attempts to determine the social conditions which promote human alienation. Marx's early probings into political economy lead him to conclude that the alienation of labour constitutes the basis for all forms of human alienation. In particular, he directs his attention to

the examination of alienated conditions in societies in which the capitalist mode of production predominates. By the time of the publication of *Capital* in 1865, Marx has generated a more thorough analysis of how the prevalence of commodity production has distorted the relations between people as well as between individuals and their products. Marx's notion of commodity fetishism refers to the situation in which commodities predominate to the extent that social relations come to be viewed as relations between things. Human debasement has developed to the point where the products of human labour dominate the actual producers (Marx, 1971:121-123).

Marx's account of the mystifying character of commodity fetishism is extremely suggestive. Later theorists argue that this concept contains numerous insights which are useful to the understanding of the transition from "false consciousness" to "class consciousness." For example, Georg Lukàcs believes that its elaboration could assist in the raising of the consciousness of the working class. He argues that it is only through an awareness of the actual character of capitalist society that the working class can come to recognise its position of exploitation. However, as long as the proletariat suffers from the distorted consciousness associated with commodity production, the likelihood of the establishment of a collective movement whose goal is the elimination of the causes of alienated consciousness remains remote indeed (Lukàcs, 1970: 69-70). What Lukàcs proposes is an intensive study of the nature of alienated consciousness with the intention of illuminating possible practices which could lead to the dispelling of "false consciousness." He



argues that the mystifications stemming from commodity production can be detected in virtually all aspects of capitalist culture. In particular, he focuses on the practices of bureaucrats and scientists as illustrative of how the distorted consciousness associated with commodity fetishism is inscribed in the products of mental labour. The pursuit of isolated facts at the expense of an awareness of how phenomena interact within the social totality is judged by Lukàcs to be an especially pronounced characteristic of intellectual activity in advanced capitalist society. This lack of sensitivity to the dialectical nature of the social whole is considered to be a major stumbling block to the attainment of an accurate perception of the nature of class society.

As will become apparent, Lukàcs' presentation suffers from some major flaws, yet it does provide a number of profitable elaborations of Marx's thought. For example, his intention is to outline how capitalist culture as a whole reinforces and perpetuates the mystified consciousness which is a consequence of alienated labour. In effect, this can be interpreted to be a step towards a general critique of daily life in capitalist society. Lukàcs confines himself to outlining the social conditions which militate against the development of class consciousness. His principal concern is with the distorted awareness which is a result of alienated labour and how this mystified consciousness hinders the understanding of social reality. These efforts by Lukàcs to expand the boundaries of commodity fetishism effectively clear the path for the unique project of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Sartre extends Lukàcs' general discussion to include an in-depth

account of the origins of class distortions in the individual. What this entails is an examination of how each child acquires certain class biased perceptions of the social realm. It is Sartre's contention that these youthful blinders are the consequence of the socialisation process. Sartre's psychoanalytic approach is advanced as a technique specifically intended to reveal how a class bound perception of society is instilled during childhood. This furthers Lukàcs' efforts to determine the sources of reified consciousness which prevails in advanced capitalist society. In addition, it is a logical development of Marx's discussion of alienation, one which is of particular significance to the production of social theory. Sartre has made a notable contribution to Marxism, the importance of which can only be appreciated with an awareness of the evolution and refinement of the concept of alienation.

## Chapter 1

### FROM HEGEL TO MARX

#### Hegel

In an essay written in 1946, Sartre directs a blistering attack at the dogma of Soviet Marxism. Rejecting Stalin's materialism as being mechanistic, Sartre (1955:191) calls for the rediscovery of the dialectical nature of Marx's thought. A truly dialectical materialism, Sartre contends, would recognise the synthetic character of the forward movement of consciousness. With each successive totalisation of consciousness, ideas are at once continued and surpassed. New dimensions may be added but this does not mean that previous formulations have been discarded. Each idea retains within itself the totality of antecedent ideas.

The career of Marx's concept of alienation is no exception to this principle of dialectics. The development of the term can be traced from its origins in Hegel's system of philosophy, through a decisive reformulation by Feuerbach to its unique positioning within Marxian social theory. Of course, much that was integral to the concept at its idealist formulation has been reworked and modified. Yet it would be naïve to expect to grasp the essence of Marx's use of alienation without having first explored the term's Hegelian heritage.

It was Hegel's unique task to correct the philosophical dichotomy between subject and object which finds its most complete expression in the work of Kant. This distinction is outlined by Kant as involving things as they appear to us and things in themselves. It is his belief

that thought always perverts reality by imposing categories upon the perceived objects (Lichtheim, 1971:60). Knowledge is a tool which misconstrues that which it is attempting to know. Consequently, Kant denies the possibility that humans can attain absolute knowledge. The most that we can hope to gain is some understanding of the nature of the tool of knowledge and the inevitable distortions which it inflicts upon the objects of experience (Solomon, 1972:50).

Hegel chooses to reject this conventional distinction, adopting a course which emphasizes neither the knowing subject nor the natural world. Instead, Hegel claims that the faculty of knowing and the object of knowledge are essentially one. This is not meant to imply that knowledge and its object cannot be distinguished from each other, but that both are "inseparable aspects of a single experience" (Plamenatz, 1963:138). Moreover, in sharp contrast to Kant who believes that knowledge is a passive structure which is capable of being accurately examined, Hegel maintains that knowledge is in fact active. Any investigation of knowledge will change knowledge; the critique of knowledge is at the same time the modification of knowledge (Solomon, 1972:51).

The crucial element in Hegelian philosophy is *Spirit*, a concept at once so equivocal as to prove to be almost indefinable. Hegel judges reality to be the manifestation of *Spirit* and the development of reality is itself the development of *Spirit*. In general terms, *Spirit* is judged to be the active identity or point of fusion of consciousness and reality. Hegel considers the dynamic facet of this identity to be reason. He perceives reason to be the certainty of consciousness as it

reveals itself in reality. The realisation of reason is manifested in such creations as religion, art and philosophy and in such institutions as law and the state. In essence, *Spirit* is "the activity of reason actualising itself within reality and creating it" (Rotenstreich, 1965: 32).

Hegel claims that *Spirit* produces the social and natural world and comes to recognise its own nature by reflecting on the product of its labours. That is, *Spirit* expresses itself by creating the world and attains full knowledge of itself as it identifies the world as its own creation. However, *Spirit* is not immediately aware of this act of self-production. *Spirit* constructs the world but initially fails to recognise the world as being an outcome of its creative powers. Nevertheless, it is eventually revealed that this apparently independent realm is nothing other than a manifestation of *Spirit* itself. At this juncture, *Spirit* "recognizes that the world is rational (or intelligible) because it is the product of reason; it recognizes itself in the world (as Hegel puts it) and so is at home in the world and is satisfied" (Plamenatz, 1963: 151).

But how does *Spirit* gain this self-awareness? Hegel maintains that it is only through the medium of finite minds that *Spirit* can achieve knowledge itself. Yet he hastens to add that *Spirit* is greater than any of the individual consciousnesses through which it arrives at this state of self-recognition. *Spirit*, rather than the human individual, is considered to be the ultimate subject of history for Hegelian idealism regards human beings to be merely agents which have been activated by *Spirit* (Rotenstreich, 1965:32).

Nevertheless, the integrity of the human community is an important requisite for *Spirit's* self-realisation. Hegel contends that each person is a manifestation of *Spirit* and that an essential quality of *Spirit* is universality. Only through the unity of the individual with the social substance can universality at the interpersonal level be maintained. In Hegel's estimation, the principle of human unity is of utmost importance and he considers this solidarity or universality worthy of all the sacrifices demanded for its attainment (Schacht, 1970:89).

It is at this point that we encounter Hegel's use--or, more correctly, uses--of the concept of alienation. Hegel is of the opinion that one must be able to recognise oneself as a separate individual before it will be possible to realise oneself in unity with others, in universality. This process is considered to be one of self-enrichment of *Spirit*, with alienation representing but a transitional moment on the road to the attainment of self-knowledge.

According to Hegel, the relation of many people to the social substance is one of complete unity. Schacht (1970:46) interprets this to mean that certain individuals are unaware of themselves except in terms of particular social roles. That is, these persons hold an immediate or unreflective identification with the social groups and categories in which they find themselves. Moreover, the recognition of oneself as a particular individual does not inevitably emerge in the course of one's life. A self-conception distinct from that of the social substance (i.e., cultural institutions) is a phenomenon which has

appeared relatively recently and can by no means be considered to be universal even today. Nonetheless, it is frequently the case that conflicts do force the individual's consciousness back upon itself. The person no longer identifies with the social substance, but rather comes to limit self-identification to one's own person. Hegel considers this to be a desirable step for he feels that the emergence of a sense of distinct individuality is a necessary prerequisite to the realisation of *Spirit's* essential nature. Consciousness must first extricate itself from its immediate merging with the social substance in order to gain sufficient perspective to enable it to "grasp the content of experience in its truth and actuality" (Solomon, 1972:48). With the rupture of this initial unity, the individual comes to perceive the social substance as being external and "other." A person in this situation is characterised by Hegel as being self-alienated.

It is important to note that Hegel considers the social substance to be not merely the creation of *Spirit* but its objectification as well. The social substance is *Spirit* but in objectified form. Therefore, an individual who is alienated from the social substance is in fact alienated from objectified *Spirit*. "In other words, one fails to see that the social substance which seems alien to one is not really so, but rather is one's own creation and objectification" (Solomon, 1972:54). This is the first way in which Hegel employs the term alienation. It refers to a perceived rift between the individual and the social substance, so that self-identity is confined to that of the particular person. Solidarity with other persons is abandoned and *Spirit* finds itself in a state of self-alienation.

This dislocation of the individual and the social substance is only remedied through a further alteration in the individual's consciousness. The particular identity--"willful self-assertion," Hegel terms it--must give way to an affirmation of unity. The person for whom the social substance is now seen to be alien must renounce the particular self in favour of a reconciliation with the social substance (Solomon, 1972:54). In this second usage, alienation of the particular self corresponds to the negation of the negation. The particular self estranged from the universality transcends this alienated state to unite with the social substance once more. Particularity and willfulness are surrendered in this bid for the re-attainment of unity (Solomon, 1972:44).

The relations between these two senses of alienation and the notion of objectification are seldom clearly understood. Schacht (1970: 63) attributes much of the blame for misrepresentation to those people who have based their interpretation of Hegel's usage on Marx's early works. Marx gives the impression that Hegel fails to distinguish between instances of alienation and objectification. Following Marx's lead, numerous theorists have perpetuated this distortion of Hegel's work.

Hegel views the creation of the social substance as being an "objectification" of *Spirit*. This process brings into existence such spiritual formations as law, the state, art and religion. However, objectification does not necessarily imply alienation; the individual's sense of estrangement is not inherent in each externalisation of *Spirit*. Hegel indicates that during a stage which he terms the "ethical world," the person remains in a relationship of unity with the existing social



substance. Objectifications only take on the appearance of alien entities when the individual undergoes a specific shift in consciousness. Thus, Hegel does differentiate between objectification and the alienation of the substance, although the latter necessarily presupposes the former.

Although highly schematic, this account provides a description of the essential elements contained in Hegel's notion of alienation. It is a concept which Feuerbach is to find especially useful in his own attempts to discredit the Hegelian construct of *Spirit*. Marx in turn will use much that is embodied in the original idealist formulation of alienation as well as build upon Feuerbach's modifications and refinements of the term.

### Feuerbach

"Compared with Hegel, Feuerbach has little to offer," Marx commented in 1865, "yet he marked an epoch" (Lefebvre, 1970:66). Indeed, there can be no denying the awesome achievement of Hegel's conflation of history and philosophy. Philosophers who followed in the German idealist traditions were hard pressed to make any inroads into that imposing structure; in fact, Marx was of the opinion that of all the Young Hegelians, only Feuerbach was to produce anything of consequence. Throughout his life, Marx returned periodically to Hegel's work, each time renewing his appreciation of the richness and clarity of Hegel's dialectical method. Feuerbach's writings, on the other hand, proved to be far less fertile. Clearly they marked a decisive advancement on

Hegelian idealism; yet it was apparent that the depth and incisiveness which characterised Hegel's scheme were sadly lacking in Feuerbach's contributions. Nevertheless, Feuerbach's accomplishment was nothing less than the positioning of the corner-stone on which Marx was to construct his materialist critique of Hegelian metaphysics.

In *The Essence of Christianity* and *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, Feuerbach's main concern is to illustrate how the notion of God is simply the misapplication of the conception of the essential nature of human beings (Schacht, 1970:75-76). He perceives religion to be the outcome of the projection of human qualities onto a transparent entity, namely, the image of God. Feuerbach recognizes that the theologians of the day unconsciously attribute to God precisely those human attributes which are deficient in the contemporary individual:

My doctrine in belief is as follows: Theology is anthropology, i.e., that which reveals itself in the object of religion . . . is nothing other than the essence of man. In other words, the God of man is nothing other than the divinized essence of man. (Schacht, 1970:76)

Feuerbach considers religion and Hegelian philosophy to be subject to the same general criticisms. Hegel himself regards philosophy to be merely a refinement of truths which religion fails to rigorously express. Feuerbach's achievement lies in recognizing that Hegelian philosophy is primarily a refined version of religion and consequently, is subject to many of the shortcomings inherent in religion itself. He sees Hegel's attempt to lend credence to religion by buttressing it with his philosophy as the cultivation of a fundamentally impoverished position (Schacht, 1970:77).

For Feuerbach, humans have created God in their own essential image. This image does not coincide with the individual's actual nature but rather, represents an idealised conception of the human essence. Theologians present the disparity between the two natures as being the difference between the individual and God, the division being respected as a "natural" one. In other words, God is endowed with characteristics inaccessible to human beings. Yet Feuerbach contends that by renouncing these attributes we are in fact denying our own essential nature. In religion, we posit an abstract entity in opposition to ourselves and in the process we become estranged from our ideal essence (Schacht, 1970:76).

In Feuerbach's estimation, the efforts of Hegel's speculative philosophy to liberate human beings from this alienating formulation have been entirely unsuccessful. Religion has elevated the individual's essential nature to the status of a deity. Any form of reconciliation with this ideal essence is doomed to failure for religion considers God to be qualitatively distinct from human beings. Furthermore, Feuerbach maintains that Hegel conceptually wrenches the individual from nature in order to effect a future reunion of that which was initially a unified whole. Hegel argues that *Spirit* is ultimately actualised in the human individual, yet his method demands that, at some point, a distinction be made between *Spirit* and the phenomenal subject. In contrast, Feuerbach holds that the individual is a part of nature; thus, he sees Hegel's reconciliation as a false union of that which is essentially one. Feuerbach begins with the concrete individual as the subject, concluding that *Spirit* is merely a projection of human consciousness. Where Hegel

depicted thought to be the subject and existence to be the predicate, Feuerbach effects an inversion by asserting the primacy of the existing concrete subject over that of thought. Thus, Hegel's mystifying idealism gives way to a materialistic philosophy. The human individual is released from a position of subservience to abstract thought and is established as the true starting-point for philosophy (Avineri, 1969:11).

At an earlier juncture, we noted that Hegel considered alienation to be a necessary moment in *Spirit's* progression to self-consciousness. Alienation is instrumental to the enrichment of *Spirit* and consequently, is assigned a positive value in Hegel's system. Despite his generally critical stance, Feuerbach does not deny the worth of alienation. It is his contention that self-estrangement can be of some benefit to the individual. The realisation that God is but a projection of human qualities can serve to educate the individual as to the nature of human essence. Yet Feuerbach predicts that ultimately a fully developed anthropology would eliminate the need for the continued existence of religion. Once human beings have elaborated a mature human philosophy, one which replaces alienated consciousness with a "self-knowing immanence," religion will be rendered obsolete (Rotenstreich, 1965:156-157).

Thus, Feuerbach's contribution lies in his awareness that the individual must be emancipated from the mystifications of Hegelian philosophy. Unfortunately, while his proposed solution does correct many of Hegel's distortions, it fails in its own right to ground metaphysics in concrete reality. "Anthropology" replaces philosophy. Yet it is an ahistorical anthropology, one which falls short of fully grasping the

lived experience of human individuals, situated as they are within a particular social setting.

### Marx

Marx adopts Feuerbach's transformative method (subject-predicate inversion) but his results are qualitatively distinct from those of the Young Hegelian. Plekhanov (Mandel, 1971:154) observes that if "Marx began to elaborate his materialist explanation of history by criticizing Hegel's philosophy of right, he could do so only because Feuerbach had completed his criticism of Hegel's speculative philosophy." Certainly Marx's debt to Feuerbach is unquestionable, but whereas Feuerbach's studies lead him into the realm of anthropology, Marx directs his attention to that of political economy. In both instances, the transformative method employed is essentially the same, yet the outcomes are drastically different.

Marx's *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* begins not with the dismantling of the Hegelian system itself but with a criticism of Hegel's political philosophy. The social implications of this idealism are examined and only then is the philosophical system as a whole subjected to scrutiny (Avineri, 1969:13). Marx's assault on Hegel's glorification of the existing Prussian state shows his preoccupation with the secular manifestations of alienation. This concern stands in conspicuous opposition to that of his contemporaries, who restricted their criticism to matters of religion (Meszaros, 1970:73).

Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself. It is the *task of history*, therefore, once the *other-world of truth* has vanished, to establish the *truth of this world*. The immediate task of philosophy, which is in the service of history, is to unmask human self-alienation in its *secular form*. Thus the criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, the *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of theology* into the *criticism of politics*. (Marx, 1964:44)

In contemporary society, Marx argues, a definite schism exists between the political state and civil society. It was Hegel's intention in the *Philosophy of Right* to mediate between these two extremes, thereby resolving the tensions generated by the presence of this gap. Marx contends that this project is ill-conceived. In his view, the successful mediation of the two extremes is an impossibility; only with the abolition of the state as a separate realm can the stress be effectively relieved.

Marx perceives the growing separation of civil society and the state to be an historical occurrence, a fact which Hegel has failed to fully appreciate. Hegel is oblivious to the fact that the integrated society of the Middle Ages was no longer a possibility. The emergence of freely exchangeable property and the rise of free trade signalled the end of this state of social unity. Civil society became free from all political constraints; economic enterprise operated independent of any consideration of the common good. Consequently, Marx observes that the private status of the individual was found to be in diametrical opposition to the political sphere. The state assumed the appearance of the "heaven of man's universality in contrast to his mundane actuality" (Howard, 1972:62-63).

Marx believes that the removal of the state as an entity in opposition to civil society can only be achieved through the establishment of democracy. In such a society, every individual is both a private person and a citizen. The disappearance of the external political state facilitates the emergence of the truly "universal" individual. The need for artificial mediations is eliminated as the actual, empirical person constitutes the resolution of the historical contradiction between civil society and the political domain (Howard, 1972:67).

"On the Jewish Question," an essay written concurrently with the *Critique*, again poses the criticism that bourgeois society separates the individual from the community, each person maintaining distinct identities as public citizen and private individual. Marx claims that the issue of Judaism can best be understood as being yet another facet of the relation between civil society and the state. Marx sees the religious individual as nothing other than an actual person within civil society. Just as we have seen that the social emancipation of the individual is forthcoming with the abolition of the external political sphere, so the social emancipation of the Jew is contingent upon the freeing of society from Judaism.

Marx's contemporaries concern themselves with the demand that the issue of religion be removed from the realm of politics, arguing that each person should have the final decision in religious matters. Marx (Meszaros, 1970:126) recognises the validity of treating religion as a secular question, yet he refuses to concede that the political emancipation of religion is the final step to human emancipation. Religion is

seen to be a product of an alienated mentality. Only the transformation of civil society can bring into existence social conditions which will promote human confirmation rather than human estrangement.

What is the secular basis of Judaism? Practical need, self-interest. What is the worldly cult of the Jew? Bargaining. What is his worldly god? Money. Very well! Emancipation from bargaining and money, and thus from practical and real Judaism would be the self-emancipation of our era. (Meszaros, 1970:126)

The human liberation of the Jewish individual is not a consequence of the removal of the religious question from the political arena, but rather is dependent upon the elimination of those social conditions which encourage religious consciousness to flourish in the first place. Marx extends this argument to embrace virtually all aspects of bourgeois society. The common denominator of alienation reveals itself not only in considerations of religion and the state but also with reference to economic and family relations (Meszaros, 1970:73).

It is precisely in the area of economics that Marx uncovers the key to the whole question of alienation. In *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, he determines that all forms of alienation--be they religious, political, moral, artistic--trace their ultimate origins to the phenomenon of alienated labour. That is, alienation of the individual's productive activity is the root cause of all human alienation. Successive encounters with Hegelian philosophy and Feuerbachian anthropology have involved Marx in the investigation of the relation between the individual and abstract speculation, religion, civil society and the state. *The Manuscripts of 1844*, mark his first sustained materialist



criticisms of political economy in general and private property in particular. As Marx (Meszaros, 1970:126) makes apparent, the notion of alienation, or estrangement, is to occupy a central position in this critique: "The positive transcendence of private property as the appropriation of human life, is therefore, the positive transcendence of all estrangement--that is to say, the return of man from religion, family, state, etc., to his human, i.e., social mode of existence. Religious estrangement as such occurs only in the realm of consciousness, of man's inner life, but economic estrangement is that of real life; its transcendence therefore embraces both aspects."

Marx's concept of alienation was influenced by both Hegelian idealism and Feuerbachian materialism. However, it was not until *The Manuscripts of 1844* that Marx presents a fairly systematic account of his differences with the Hegelian scheme. Marx's distinctive materialist method emerges with these manuscripts. As Marx points out, Hegelians consider human estrangement from the social substance to occur in the realm of thought. Thus, "the whole history of the alienation process and and the whole *process of the retraction* of the alienation is therefore nothing but the history of the production of abstract (i.e., absolute) thought--of logical speculative thought" (Marx, 1971:175).

In Hegel's estimation, alienation is an alteration in consciousness as the individual confronts the phenomenal world. This is a transitory experience in which the person comes to regard the objective realm as being external or estranged. Hegel contends that consciousness surpasses this moment of alienation by recognising that what is perceived

to be an external object is nothing other than a projection of consciousness itself. In other words, consciousness is essentially "self-consciousness," for the entity which appears to be a negation of consciousness is simply consciousness in a reified or objectified form (Avineri, 1969:97).

Hegel's mental contortions may be intriguing yet they are valueless to any programme which intends to bring about a change in the material world. For example, his phenomenology may accurately describe the relation between Master and Slave, but when all is said nothing will have been done to alter the situation. Slavery will continue to exist; the social substance which provides the basis for alienated forms of consciousness will remain unaltered. In addition, Hegel's documentation of the "unhappy consciousness" may be eloquent, but it offers no solution. Its articulation effects no remedy. Social contradictions are reduced to "thought-entities" and the transcendence of these abstract conceptions contributes nothing whatsoever to the alleviation of alienation in capitalist society (Meszaros, 1970:62).

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Marx's critique of Hegel's philosophy begins not with an examination of the "concept" of alienation but with an eye to the actual circumstances under which production is carried on. He observes that under capitalism the worker's degradation appears to intensify with every increase in the rate of production of commodities. His conclusion is hardly a philosophical one, confined to the plane of ideas and theoretical formulations. On the contrary, Marx declares that: "In order to abolish the *idea* of

private property, the *idea* of communism is completely sufficient. It takes *actual* communist action to abolish *actual* private property" (Mandel, 1971:158).

Marx's call for revolutionary action stands in marked contrast to Hegel's political conservatism. Hegel's reactionary tendencies do not generally stem from his response to existing social conditions. In fact, his assessment of contemporary events frequently proves to be very progressive. Hegel's conservatism results from his epistemology which tends to confirm rather than criticise existing social conditions. Marx contends that Hegel restricts the abolition of alienation to the realm of consciousness, thereby supporting the view that the actual elimination of alienation is an impossibility. Idealism affirms a reality which it finds itself ill-equipped to change. Spiritual emancipation thereby validates material oppression by omission (Avineri, 1969:99).

Nevertheless, Hegel makes an important discovery with his recognition of the universal significance of human activity, even if he does persist in regarding this activity to be an abstract one. Marx is appreciative of Hegel's contribution, yet he does not hesitate to point out the shortcomings of Hegel's perspective. Labour is seen to be human essence in the process of self-constitution, but in Hegel's system self-creation is perceived to occur only in terms of mental labour. Marx strongly opposes such a lop-sided conception of productive activity. In addition, Marx claims that Hegel neglects the negative aspects of mental labour which are forthcoming in contemporary society. When human activity is ordinarily viewed in terms of abstract thought and when such

labour is carried on in bourgeois society, the outcome can only be the perpetuation of alienating social conditions (Meszaros, 1970:88).

Despite his obvious theoretical deficiencies, Hegel is not entirely oblivious to the importance of material production for human self-creation. Hegel considers property to be the embodiment of human personality. Consequently, acts of production are judged to be crucial for the development of each individual. According to Hegel, the possession of property provides the person with an objective expression of human freedom and it is only with the existence of freedom that the individual's personality can be actualised. Moreover, the actual formation of a particular object is a process wherein the individual gives expression to personal will. The finished product is judged to be a reflection of the will, of the personality. Thus, there exists for Hegel an essential connection between the production of objects and the realisation of personality (Schacht, 1970:83-84). Hegel approaches the Master-Slave relationship with this recognition in mind. He characterises masters or lords as persons who live off the productive activity of others. As masters do not actively engage in production, they deprive themselves of the means for self-realisation. Productive labour ensures that the individual becomes self-consciously aware. Hegel argues that at least in this respect, the slave occupies a more desirable position than that of the master.

Marx was well acquainted with Hegel's examination of property and personality in *The Philosophy of Right* and with his presentation of the Master-Slave relationship in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In many

respects, Marx's treatment of the relationship between property, production and human self-realisation is strongly reminiscent of Hegel's formulation. For example, Marx does not seem to take exception to Hegel's belief that private property is vital to the actualisation of the individual's personality. The principal difference occurs with Marx's assertion that the present circumstances surrounding production and private property militate against the emergence of true--i.e., non-alienated--self-realisation. Hegel appreciates the essential connection between self-creation and private property, yet he fails to realise that conditions of capitalist society corrupt this relation. Marx maintains that capitalist conditions are such that workers cannot realise their unique personalities through their productive activity (Schacht, 1970: 84-86).

However, it is not the case that Hegel is completely oblivious to the social contradictions generated by capitalist society. In his *Aesthetics*, he provides an interesting--albeit convoluted--description of the relationship between poverty and wealth and the alienation that results from this arrangement:

Here there appear within this industrial formation and the reciprocal employment of other formations together with their repressions, partly the severest ferocity of poverty and partly, if misery is to be held at bay, of the individuals who have to seem rich, so as to be freed from work to meet their needs and to be able to devote themselves to higher interests. In this abundance the constant reflection of a ceaseless dependence has been eliminated, and man is all the more remote from the risks of earning his living because he is no longer integrated into the milieu closest to himself, which no longer appears to him as his own work. All that surrounds him is no longer his own creation but is . . . produced . . . by others than himself. (Mandel, 1971:156)

This statement provides a good example of Hegel's consummate skill for mystifying social reality. Hegel is aware of the existence of alienation, yet he is unable to recognise its cause. Certainly the rich individual suffers from no longer producing objects which reflect his personality. However, Hegel refuses to recognise that in the very contradictions between rich and poor lie the potential solution to the problem of human alienation. Once productive forces have developed to a certain level, the wholesale transformation of the social system will be possible. The social conditions producing human alienation will be eliminated with the removal of the fundamental contradiction between the poor and the wealthy (Mandel, 1971:156-157).

The ultimate source of Hegel's short-sightedness is his commitment to the position that the essential nature of human activity is not material production but mental labour. To be sure, Hegel acknowledges the significance of the production of physical objects, but his philosophical system considers the activity of "thought-entities" to be its centre of reference. In other words, abstract speculative thought constitutes the "mediator between Subject and Object" (Meszaros, 1970:87). Marx is highly critical of this position. It is his contention that productive activity is not primarily a question of thought processes but refers instead to the active involvement of the individual with the physical world. In Marx's scheme, the object is a concrete entity, not simply a reified form of consciousness. Such creations as religion, art, science, law, etc., are not excluded from the Marxist notion of productive activity, yet it is the creation of material objects which is deemed to

be the fundamental form of human production (Schacht, 1970:87).

In *The Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx chooses to use the conception of productive activity to refer specifically to capitalist forms of labour as well as to the fundamental determination of humanity in the ontological sense, i.e., the self-mediation of the individual with nature. Marx is aware of the fact that alienation is not a phenomenon unique to the capitalist mode of production. However, his discussion in *The Manuscripts* does tend to be restricted to an examination of the occurrence of alienation in capitalist society. According to Marx, the positive transcendence of alienation necessitates the removal of such second-order mediations as private property, exchange and the division of labour (Meszaros, 1970:78-79). As long as the individual's activity is distorted due to the presence of these particular mediations, the realisation of the human potential is thwarted. Thus, Marx is concerned with eradication of the historically specific mediations of private property, exchange and the division of labour. Productive activity specific to capitalist social formations results in the alienation of the individual for undistorted self-mediation with nature is an impossibility in this context. Alienated consciousness is simply a reflection of the destructive nature of this productive activity (Meszaros, 1970:80-81).

*The Manuscripts* fall short of elaborating a comprehensive materialist alternative, but they do contain ample evidence that Marx is striving to abandon the philosophical blinkers that are the legacy of German idealism. Marx has obviously made a significant advancement on Hegel's conception of alienation. In place of abstract speculation,

Marx endeavours to lay down a critical analysis of a "particular ideology (political economy) through real social contradictions observed empirically" (Mandel, 1971:174). Nevertheless, it cannot be said that Marx has completely purged himself of the residue of the Hegelian system. While undeniably moving towards a rigorous social and economic critique, Marx's thought still bears the imprint of his youthful contact with idealism. *The Manuscripts* therefore comprise a transition between the Hegelian and Feuerbachian perspectives and the approach which Engels is later to term historical materialism. Hegel's dialectics, Feuerbach's materialism and the social facts of political economy are fused here in a unique--albeit incomplete--synthesis.

One important consequence of this conflation is the emergence of what Mandel (1971:165) judges to be two distinct conceptions of alienation. He claims that both anthropological and historical versions appear in *The Manuscripts*, a juxtaposition of ideas which he regards to be logically irreconcilable. The alleged presence of an anthropological formulation of alienation constitutes a throwback to Feuerbach. The individual in Feuerbach's scheme is viewed as being in a state of eternal harmony with nature; human being and nature are locked in a timeless relationship. The religious alienation to which Feuerbach refers is not perceived to be the outcome of particular social conditions. Rather, alienated consciousness is merely considered to be an error in judgement on the part of the individual.

In Feuerbach's estimation, alienation has nothing to do with the social situation confronting the person, nor does it refer to the specific



productive activities in which the individual is engaged. Moreover, Feuerbach's anthropology posits the existence of a human essence and it is precisely this component, Mandel (1971:161-162) argues, which makes at least one appearance in *The Manuscripts*. He cites a particular section in which alienated labour is contrasted to the activity of a generic human being. Two individuals--one alienated, the other idealized--are placed side, Marx thus comparing mutilated humanity with species being. In Mandel's opinion, Marx is guilty of failing to ground this analysis in a specific historical context. Mandel accuses Marx of speaking in terms of some immutable relationship between the individual and nature, thereby lapsing into an anthropological interpretation of the nature of human alienation.

Yet is this a fair evaluation of Marx's position? Does Marx actually give a non-historical account of alienated labour? Meszaros, for example, is at least as critical as Mandel of the shortcomings of an anthropological approach. He considers any presentation of alienation which neglects the historical setting to be little more than mystification. However, Meszaros believes that it is precisely Marx's avoidance of all illusory formulations that accounts for his success in clarifying social reality. In contrast to his predecessors who at some point abandon the historical context for imaginary resolutions, Marx is viewed as proposing a dialectical theory which never betrays its historical underpinnings of self-developing human activity (Meszaros, 1970:42). Meszaros argues that Marx considers the individual to be an integral part of nature's totality. This accounts for the self-mediation of

nature in which human beings are conceived to be active elements in the natural domain. Nevertheless, it is true that Marx's depiction of this relationship is not always perfectly clear. For example, we occasionally encounter the notion of individuals creating themselves through interaction with the natural domain. Here human beings are portrayed as being somehow distinct from nature. For the most part, however, Marx takes pains to emphasise humanity's position within the natural realm.

With a conception of the individual as a self-mediating being of nature, each person is thereby considered to be "inherently historical" for history is regarded by Marx to be an implicit dimension of nature (Meszaros, 1970:251). In addition, it could in fact be argued that Marx does have a precise time period in mind. The passage in question is a direct attack on political economy's efforts to analyse contemporary society. Marx takes his lead from the *Outlines of a Critique of Political Economy* in which Engels portrays alienation as being the outcome of the present mode of production, an economic formation which perpetuates the existence of private property and the division of labour (Meszaros, 1970: 77).

Thus, Meszaros would appear to hold the upper hand in this dispute. The whole controversy might well be ignored if it were not for the fact that it serves to illuminate undeniable ambiguities contained within *The Manuscripts*. Marx's theory is still in its formative stages and productive insights destined to have long careers are bound to crop up next to observations and formulations soon to be discarded and forgotten. At this point, Marx may have little more than an inkling of the

actual contradictions inherent in the existing mode of production, yet his intuitive grasp of the necessity to criticise theories of political economy is well founded. Despite certain theoretical inadequacies, Marx is able to provide a sound basis for many of his later formulations. With the possible exception of the aforementioned passage, *The Manuscripts* is consistent in depicting human alienation as tracing its roots to specific historical conditions.

In these early writings, Marx makes the observation that political economy chooses to accept private property as a given. That is, Marx claims that most theorists merely generate descriptive laws on the basis of the present functioning of the economy. In contrast, Marx demands that private property be recognised as the contingency that it truly is. In his estimation, the existence of private property must be explained in light of contemporary social fact. That fact is the phenomenon of alienated labour (Howard, 1972:152).

Marx maintains that alienated labour in capitalist society has four distinct components. In the first place, individuals are estranged from the products of their labour and come to be dominated by them as well.

The alienation of the worker in his product means not only that his labour becomes an object, assumes an external existence, but that it exists independently, outside himself, and alien to, and that it stands opposed to him as an autonomous power. (Marx, 1971:122-123)

The objects produced come to subjugate the workers in the form of capital. The more products created, the greater the degree of impoverishment of the individual.

The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value of the world of things. Labour does not only create goods; it also produces itself and the worker as a commodity, and indeed in the same proportion as it produces goods . . . the performance of the work is at the same time its objectification. The performance of work appears in the sphere of political economy as a vitiation of the worker, objectification as a loss and as servitude to the object, and appropriation as alienation. (Marx, 1971: 121-122)

Under present circumstances, objectification inevitably results in alienation. Rather than facilitating the self-realisation of the individual, the production of objects ensures human oppression. Only with the elimination of capitalistic mediations can the individual come to benefit from material production (Avineri, 1969:102).

It follows logically that workers who find themselves in an alienated relationship to the products of their labour must be alienated in the act of production as well. Estrangement in productive activity--in the process of creation--constitutes a second facet of alienation.

The work is external to the worker . . . it is not part of his nature; . . . Consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. (Marx, 1971:124)

Workers no longer willingly engage in work in order to fulfil themselves as human beings. Labour is now seen to be merely a means to an end and not an end in itself.

His work is not voluntary but imposed, forced labour. It is not the satisfaction of a need, but only a means for satisfying other needs. Its alien character is clearly shown by the fact that as soon as there is no physical or other compulsion it is avoided like the plague. (Marx, 1971:125)

A consequence of these developments is the generation of two further aspects of alienation. As work is no longer a truly creative activity which serves to actualise the individual's humanity, productive labour now simply reduces the person to the status of an animal.

Conscious life-activity distinguishes man from the life activity of animals . . . i.e., his own life is an object for him, because he is a species-being. Only for this reason is his activity free activity. Alienated labour reverses the relationship, in that man because he is a self-conscious being makes his life-activity, his being, only a means for his existence. (Marx, 1971:127)

The individual ceases to be a free agent, one who consciously decides upon personal goals and courses of action. As survival is now the sole consideration, nature is perceived to be nothing more than the means for staying alive.

Thus alienated labour turns the species life of man, and also nature as his mental species-property, into an alien being and into a means for his individual existence. It alienates from man his own body, external nature, his mental life and his human life. (Marx, 1971: 128-129)

The final outcome is the total destruction of the notion of species-being. The individual is now completely estranged from fellow human beings.

If the product of labour does not belong to the worker, but confronts him as an alien power, this can only be because it belongs to a man other than the worker . . . If he is related to the product of his labour, his objectified labour, as to an alien, hostile and independent object, he is related in such a way that another alien, hostile, powerful and independent man is the lord of this object. If he is related to his own activity as to unfree activity, then he is related to it as activity in the service, and under the domination, coercion and yoke, of another man. (Marx, 1971:130)

In sum, individuals in capitalist society are victims of their own productive activities. Objects created by some are appropriated by others; the capital thus created oppresses the very workers who produce it. The human individual originates and perpetuates the conditions of human oppression. These conditions are "none other than the capitalist economic relations: private property is the result of alienated labour" (Hernandez, 1972:101).

We have, of course, derived the concept of alienated labour (alienated life) from political economy, from an analysis of the movement of private property. But the analysis of this concept shows that although private property appears to be the basis and the cause of alienated labour, it is rather a consequence of the latter, just as the gods are fundamentally not the cause but the product of confusions of human reason. At a later stage, however, there is a reciprocal influence. (Marx, 1971:131)

Marx at no time provides an explanation of how the original state of alienation came into being. He chooses to emphasise the intimate connection between private property and alienation. In Marx's later work (1970:51-52) it becomes evident that the first instance of private property is located in the family "where wife and children are the slaves of the husband." Marx regards this form of property to be the outcome of the division of labour which originates in the sexual act.

*The Holy Family*, published in 1845, attests to Marx's continuing concern with the concept of alienation. The following remarks are especially interesting due to the similarities with the previously cited quotation from Hegel's *Aesthetics*:

The propertied class and the class of the proletariat present the same human self-alienation. But the former class finds in this

self-alienation its confirmation and its good, its own power: it has in it a semblance of human existence. The class of the proletariat feels annihilated in its self-alienation; it sees in it its powerlessness and the reality of an inhuman existence. In the words of Hegel, the class of the proletariat is abased and indignant at that abasement, and indignation to which it is necessarily driven by the contradiction between its human nature and its condition of life, which is the outright, decisive and comprehensive negation of that nature. Within this antithesis the private owner is therefore the conservative side, the proletarian, the destructive side. From the former arises the action of preserving the antitheses, from the latter, that of annihilating it. (Marx, 1956:51)

Marx's observation that the phenomenon of alienation encompasses this propertied class as well as the working class is a perceptive one. It shows the profound influence of Hegel's Master-Slave discussion on Marx's own theoretical formulations.

Nor does *The Holy Family* neglect the relationship between capitalist mediations and self-estrangement. Marx includes a provocative illustration of his appreciation of this connection. Indications as to how this dehumanising situation must be transcended are implicit in his comments:

These *massy* communist workers, employed, for instance, in the Manchester or Lyon workshops, do not believe that 'pure thinking' will be able to argue away their industrial masters and their own practical debasement. They are most painfully aware of the difference between *being* and *thinking*, between *consciousness* and *life*. They know that property, capital, money, wage-labour and the like are no ideal figments of the brain but very practical, very objective sources of their self-alienation and that they must be abolished in a practical, objective way for man to become man not only in *thinking*, in *consciousness*, but in *massy* being, in life. (Avineri, 1969: 142)

In *The Holy Family*, Marx still entertains the naïve view that the realisation of a socialist society is conceivable merely because the

majority of the workers are exploited and without property. Not until the publication of *The German Ideology* does Marx identify the social and political preconditions essential for the attainment of socialism. The capitalist mode of production with its inner contradictions discloses a series of specific potentialities which previous oppressed classes are considered to have lacked (Mandel, 1972:10).

*The German Ideology* also includes the first comprehensive statement of the absolute necessity to eliminate the division of labour in the future society. Marx expresses this basic principle of socialism in the course of attacking Adam Smith's treatment of the division of labour. Smith views the division of labour as being a logical distribution of different tasks to people who are seen to be inherently different from each other. Marx, on the other hand, maintains that dissimilar human capacities are actually the consequence of the division of labour. The perpetuation of the capitalist system will only facilitate the continuation of this false belief that individuals "naturally" possess varying human potentialities. In Marx's opinion (1970:53), the abolition of the division of labour would guarantee human emancipation from one-sided activity, thereby permitting each individual to develop fully as a whole human being:

As long as man remains in natural society, that is, as long as cleavage exists between the particular and the common interest, as long, therefore, as activity is not voluntarily, but naturally divided, man's own deed becomes as alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him instead of being controlled by him. For as soon as the distribution of labour comes into being, each man has a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape. He is a hunter, a fisherman, a shepherd, of a



critical critic, and must remain so if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood; while in communist society, where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, to fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming a hunter, fisherman, shepherd or critic. This fixation of social activity, this consolidation of what we ourselves produce into an objective power above us, growing out of our control, thwarting our expectations, bringing to naught our calculations, is one of the chief factors in the historical development up till now.

By 1857 Marx's understanding of political economy had deepened to the extent that he was able to formulate a rigorous synthesis of the phenomenon of alienation and the labour theory of value. *The Grundrisse*, written at this time, consists of notebooks to Marx's proposed six volume work, *Economics*, of which *Capital* was fated to be the only volume published. The writing of these notebooks marks the emergence of Marx's mature economic theory. *The Grundrisse* includes a number of shifts in emphasis from Marx's earlier work: the analysis of exchange is replaced by the examination of production and Marx now holds the view that workers sell their labour power rather than their labour. These developments are not insignificant for their elaboration results in the theory of surplus value. According to Marx, the inception of the capitalist means of production permits the capitalist class to exploit the use-value of the productive activity of the working class. Capitalist appropriation generates values far in excess of the exchange-value of this labour, a value which merely allowed for the bare survival of the working class (Walton, 1972:28).

The relationship is first realised in the act of production itself, in which capital actually consumes the alien labour. Just as, for

capital, labour is exchanged as a predetermined exchange value against an equivalent in money, so money is exchanged against an equivalent in commodities, which are consumed. In this process of exchange, labour is not productive, it becomes productive only for capital; it can only take out of circulation what it has already put in; that is, a predetermined quantity of goods, which is as little its own as it is its own value . . . while the worker sells his labour to the capitalists, he retains a right only to the price of labour, not to the product of his labour, nor to the value that labour has added to the product. (Marx, 1970:81-82)

The appearance of surplus value and the alienation of labour which it implies result from the historical development of economic productivity. Individuals in primitive society are well integrated into the social surroundings, yet they remain relatively impoverished in terms of their human potential. The forces of nature dominate human activity to a considerable extent at this stage, with religious alienation being an obvious outcome of these circumstances.

Increased productivity produces an economic surplus, thereby creating suitable conditions for exchange, the division of labour and, eventually, the production of commodities. The economic alienation ensuing from the existence of capitalist mediations leads to the formation of classes and the establishment of the state. The developing means of production bring about further alienation as the workers become increasingly dominated by the instruments of production. According to Marx (Mandel, 1971:82), alienation intensifies with each new advancement and innovation in the means of production:

All progress in civilisation, therefore, or in other words, any increase in socially productive forces, in the productive forces of labour itself, if you like--as they come about as a result of science, inventions, the division and the combination of labour, improved

means of communication, the creation of a world market, machinery, etc.--do not enrich the worker, but only capital; they only serve, therefore, to increase the power that controls labour still further; they merely increase the productive powers of capital. Since capital is the opposite of the worker, they only increase objective power over labour.

Despite these negative elements, the enhancement of the productive forces does create the possibility for the full satisfaction of human needs. It is conceivable that automation can effect the creation of a surplus large enough to make pointless "the base appropriation of other men's labor" (Mandel, 1971:173). Yet the rational utilisation of labour--both human and mechanical--will be forthcoming only with the introduction of a socialist mode of production. The attainment of such a social transformation will presuppose a heightened awareness of the evils of capitalism on the part of the working class.

When the worker recognises the products as being his own and condemns the separation of the conditions of his realisation as an intolerable imposition, it will be an enormous progress in consciousness; itself the product of the method of production based on capital, and a death-knell of capital in the same way that once the slaves became aware that they were persons, that they did not need to be the property of others, the continued existence of slavery could only vegetate on as an artificial thing, and could not continue to be the basis of production. (Marx, 1971:110)

The harnessing of mechanisation to socialist principles can bring about the gradual abolition of the division of labour and of commodity production, the root causes of human alienation. With these capitalist mediation, Marx (Mandel, 1972:106) foresees a time when the human potentiality can unfold in all its richness.

In fact . . . when the narrow bourgeois form has been peeled away, what is wealth, if not the universality of needs, capacities,

enjoyments, productive powers, etc., of individuals produced in universal exchange? What, if not the full development of human control over the forces of nature--those of his own nature as well as those of so-called 'nature?' What, if not the absolute elaboration of his creative dispositions, without any preconditions other than antecedent historical evolution which makes the totality of this evolution--i.e., the evolution of all human powers as such, unmeasured by any previously established yardstick--an end in itself?

Marx continues this discussion into *Capital*, published some eight years after *The Grundrisse*. By this time, his analysis of human estrangement is more finely honed than at any other period of his career. In *Capital*, Marx argues that alienation in a society with well developed commodity production is essentially a function of the fetishistic character of the commodities. Contrary to popular belief, Marx does not arrive at a position of holding alienation and commodity fetishism to be identical phenomena. Mandel (1971:184) cautions against making such an erroneous conflation of terms. He points out that the concept of alienation encompasses a broader scope than the fetishism of commodities. In addition, he notes that Marx refers to the existence of alienation in primitive societies in which commodity production is unknown.

Geras makes a similar distinction between the two concepts, indicating how Marx has employed the notion of alienation to describe certain relationships from ancient times, through the middle ages, right up to the present day. Alienation's frame of reference is seen to be relatively wide, whereas commodity fetishism refers to an historically specific period in which the production and exchange of commodities dominate all economic relations. Geras (1971:72) also indicates that while alienation in certain periods (the middle ages, for example) tends to be

readily apparent, fetishism of commodities is concealed or hidden from view in capitalist societies. In addition, alienation in societies poorly developed in terms of commodity production is generally identified to be a working class phenomenon. This is not the case with respect to commodity fetishism. With advanced commodity production, even those persons concerned with extracting the maximum amount of surplus value from the worker's labour are as much victims of fetishistic domination as the working class itself.

At least as destructive as commodity fetishism's tendency to dominate is its capacity to mystify the existing situation so that "a definite social relation between men . . . assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Marx, 1967:72). In fact, the thrust of Marx's critique in *Capital* is directed towards dispelling these illusory appearances so that the true nature of the mechanisms of capitalist society can be disclosed. Marx commits himself to the task of clarifying the "internal rupture" within capitalist society whereby social relations come to be experienced in a manner which obscures their actual character. Thus, Marx's project is similar to that of a scientist who is faced with "the necessity of constructing reality against appearances" (Geras, 1971:124).

Commodity fetishism constitutes the prime source of mystification in capitalist society for it resides at the core of the dialectic of commodity production (Shroyer, 1969:124). A commodity is a duality composed of both a use-value and an exchange-value. The idea of use-value is readily understood: human labour transforms an object into

something useful or serviceable to the individual. Exchange-value is more problematic. Marx contends that an article created in a capitalist society acquires an abstract relation in addition to use-value, its objective relation to human labour. This abstract component, exchange-value, refers to the object's worth on the market. In other words, the commodity is considered to have a value with respect to other commodities, that general value being expressed in terms of money (Shroyer, 1969:127). According to Marx (1967:87) it is "just this ultimate money form of the world of commodities that actually conceals, instead of disclosing, the social character of private labour and the social relations between the individual producers."

Money relations ultimately determine the meaning of an individual's labour. In turn, this abstract relation acquires a status as the criterion for all relations between individuals, their work and their products. As the commodity form extends its domination of human productive activity, Marx claims that people experience themselves and their relations to others in terms of this fetishism of commodities.

Men's reflection on the forms of social life, and consequently also, his scientific analysis of those forms, take a course directly opposite to that of their actual historical development. The characters that stamp products as commodities, and whose establishment is a necessary preliminary to the circulation of commodities, have already acquired the stability of natural, self-understood forms of social life, before man seeks to decipher, not their historical character, for in his eyes they are immutable, but their meaning.  
. . . (Shroyer, 1969:129)

The individual has lost sight of the actual purpose of human labour: the creation of useful objects. Political economy's myopia--its

inability to see beyond capitalist mediations--further this mystification by validating the alienated forms of human labour. Thus, the recognition of actual relations between persons and products becomes an increasingly difficult undertaking.

Marx locates the source of this illusion in the fact that workers produce use-value for exchange rather than for direct consumption. Similarly, he exposes the content of surplus-value as being the surplus labour time of the worker. Conventional political economy, on the other hand, takes exchange-value and surplus-value and dehistoricizes them by viewing them as being natural phenomena. Capitalist social relations are also transformed into natural phenomena. Consequently, the mystifying character of fetishism stems from its metamorphosis of qualities possessed by such social objects as commodities and capital into properties residing in them as natural things (Geras, 1971:77).

Marx's intention is to eliminate the opacity of these social relations by laying bare the true character of capitalist society. The supersession of capitalism would cleanse society of these distorting ideologies, thereby creating the possibility for a social system in which "the practical relations of everyday life offer to man none but perfectly intelligible and reasonable relations with regard to his fellow man and Nature" (Geras, 1971:82).

## Chapter 2

### LUKÀCS

An understanding of the concept of alienation is dependent upon an appreciation of the nature of human consciousness. The work of Georg Lukàcs is especially helpful for acquiring this awareness. Lukàcs examines certain aspects of consciousness which find only brief mention in Marx's writings. For example, Marx offers an incisive treatment of commodity fetishism but at no time does he provide an adequate account of the process by which "class consciousness" replaces "false consciousness." Marx (1963:173) notes the interests which working class members hold in common and points to the need for workers to become aware of the antagonistic position of their class with respect to the bourgeoisie. Yet he neglects to present a detailed discussion of the mechanisms whereby the working class comes to realize its exploited position and begins to organise to transform the existing social formation (Howard, 1972:160). This omission is a major shortcoming and has resulted in numerous misunderstandings on the part of later Marxists.

The elaboration of this process was precisely the task undertaken by Georg Lukàcs in the early 1920's. Lukàcs wishes to clarify the role of consciousness in the socialist movement and to pinpoint the objective conditions which stifle the emergence of revolutionary class consciousness. Consistently opposing any form of self-serving individualism, he repeatedly emphasises the need for proletarian co-operation, a solidarity to be cemented with the awareness of both the present social conditions and



the historical interests of the working class as a whole. Lukàcs understands class consciousness to entail the unity of revolutionary theory and practice: workers are transformed from being objects determined by capitalist relations of production into active subjects, freed to rationally assert their own collective will.

An issue central to Lukàcs' discussion of class consciousness is the Marxian notion of totality. This term was originally introduced by Hegel to describe the domination of the whole over the parts. In Hegel's system, the particular interaction which occurs between philosophical categories and sub-categories may be accounted for by referring to the determining influence of the total system on the elements within that system. Marx uses this notion for an examination of concrete social existence, thereby providing the abstract formulation with a materialist content. The usefulness of the concept of totality is revealed in his clarification of the nature of political economy. Marx frees the study of economics from being a narrow, mechanical exercise, one in which fixed categories are manipulated with little awareness of their relationship to each other or to the system as a whole. He recognises that political economy is but one aspect within the social fabric, yet he maintains that an investigation of this component will ultimately lead to the comprehension of all categories of human society (Meszaros, 1970:72).

Marx regards the economic base to be the "ultimate determinant" of social reality, yet he is aware that it is nevertheless a "determined determinant." It is a dialectical component of the whole and as such must be understood to be immersed in a complex network of interconnections

with other aspects of society. It acts upon all dimensions of social reality but it is acted upon in turn. Thus, the most diverse considerations such as art, religion, ethics or politics are not simply super-structural forms built upon an economic base. They actively influence and modify this base due to their own particular structure and content (Meszaros, 1970:71).

These components are regarded by Marx as being processes which constantly interact within a dynamic overall complex. Social categories which are commonly viewed by bourgeois science to be discrete elements, isolated and frozen, are transformed into vital aspects of an ever-changing whole. This means that elements of social reality are no longer to be apprehended in their immediacy, i.e., as isolated facts, but rather are to be confronted with an appreciation of their relation to other components and to society in its entirety. In this manner, subsystems such as art, religion, and law are situated within the inclusive movement of the social totality. The interrelatedness of these subsystems, or partial totalities, must be recognised if the mediated nature of social reality is to be correctly understood.

Lukàcs primarily uses the term mediation to refer to the interconnection and interaction of the parts within the overall complex. For instance, the legal system must not be examined in isolation from its social context. It must be recognised to interact with other partial totalities--political ideology, for example--and to be related dynamically to the social system as a whole. The points of mediation where the various components contact and influence one another must be

appreciated if the actual nature of the legal system of a particular society is to be understood.

The whole issue of immediacy-mediations-totality is a complicated question, one for which Lukàcs is never able to supply a comprehensive explanation. He became acquainted with the general problem through his encounter with Hegelian idealism. Lukàcs realised that abstractions intended by Hegel to provide a link between a number of theoretical categories suffered from a tendency to become divorced from the process to which they referred. Instead of clarifying the relations between concepts, these mediating constructs took on a petrified immediacy of their own. Consequently, these abstractions only served to aggravate the very difficulties which they had been designed to remedy.

His encounter with Marxism makes Lukàcs aware that any resolution of this problem is not to be effected in the realm of philosophical idealism. The discussion must be firmly rooted in a recognition of the role of "practico-critical activity" as the crucial link between all human phenomena (Meszaros, 1970:70). Marx's conception of human labour steers Lukàcs away from the ethereal and points him in the direction of sensuous production, with its reference in the last instance to the economic dimension. Marx retains the essential aim of the Hegelian programme--the dissolution of immediacy--yet he drastically alters the content of the project by shifting the frame of reference from idealist philosophy to political economy. Marx counters the propensity of bourgeois scientists to view things as static and discrete by treating these entities as dialectical components of a dynamic social totality.

Lukàcs follows Marx's lead by insisting on the need for an appreciation of the interconnections and interactions of partial totalities in order to comprehend the overall character of social reality. He considers this awareness to be an essential requisite of class consciousness. As Lukàcs makes apparent, class consciousness does not refer to what a typical or representative member of a class thinks or feels. Rather, it consists of an accurate knowledge of the position of one's class within society, a recognition which implies the existence of an understanding of the nature of society as a whole. Lukàcs argues that while class consciousness is theoretically within reach of anyone in society, the proletariat is the class which is most likely to act responsibly in light of this knowledge. In Lukàcs' opinion, class conscious bourgeoisie who recognise their minority interest, can only pretend that their hegemony is for the benefit for all of society. The proletariat, on the other hand, is in a position to correctly grasp the essential character of capitalist society and to react rationally and appropriately as a result of that understanding. This is not to infer that the working class could possess absolute knowledge. However, the proletariat does possess the objective possibility of understanding that the realisation of its particular interest would lead to the betterment of society as a whole (Parkinson, 1970:10-11).

In Lukàcs' opinion, self-awareness on the part of the proletariat combined with the existence of an effective political organisation can give birth to a class conscious revolutionary movement which could transform the existing social order. He goes on to claim that the

eventual elimination of social classes would produce a situation in which individuals could identify with human consciousness in general. It is at this point that we encounter Lukàcs' controversial discussion of the identical subject-object: the equation of the interests of the class conscious proletariat with those of society as a whole constitutes the merging of the subject and object of social theory. That is, the individual's aims coincide with the aims of society in general. This union corresponds to the realisation of Hegel's absolute spirit in which the knowing subject fuses with the social whole. As Goldman (1969:51) points out, Lukàcs' postulation of this identical subject-object is something of an "apocalyptic vision," a conception which places him in the midst of the idealist camp. In fact, Lukàcs' writings are frequently categorically rejected by Marxist theorists simply on the basis of his treatment of this particular subject. Despite these obvious shortcomings, Lukàcs does offer some helpful insights concerning the nature of the obstacles hindering the development of class consciousness. He indicates that the proletariat must gain an awareness of its position in society if it is to become a subject capable of asserting its own will to establish the hegemony of the working class.

Lukàcs introduces his concept of reification to account for the barriers which currently stifle the emergence of this class consciousness. The exposition of reification comprises the central essay in *History and Class Consciousness*, a book whose appearance in 1922 ignited widespread controversy throughout the European Communist movement. Lukàcs' thesis flew in the face of the conventional Marxism of the day; his theoretical

conceptions and their practical implications for revolutionary practice were hotly disputed by leading Marxist theoreticians (Meszaros, 1971:3). *History and Class Consciousness* prompted especially sharp criticism from advocates of the orthodox materialism first popularised by Engels. They regarded Lukàcs' proposal to revitalise Marxism to be highly suspect. In their estimation, his so-called reassessment of the Hegelian tradition implicit in Marx's writings could only lead to the polluting of Marxism with idealist concepts.

However, these orthodox Marxists are themselves placed in a highly questionable position due to their allegiance to Engels. In *Dialectics of Nature*, Engels takes the position that consciousness is simply a by-product of nature and that both unfold according to the same laws. This marks an attempt to delineate a universal dialectical method, one which includes both human beings and nature within its boundaries. This proposition bears a suspicious resemblance to Hegel's belief that human society and nature are governed by an identical set of dialectical principles. Even contemporary Marxists (cf. Lefebvre, 1968:107) will occasionally lapse into this neo-Hegelian perspective, wistfully calling for the resurrection of the notion of the dialectical movement of nature. Thus, it would appear that these particular Marxists are guilty of the very charges of idealism which they level at such alleged revisionists as Lukàcs.

In contrast, Lukàcs endeavours to avoid the pitfalls inherent in both classical idealism and classical materialism by charting a course between these two extremes. It is his contention that consciousness is

neither a manifestation of *Spirit* nor a mere reflection of the objective material world. Lukàcs shares Marx's belief that reality is not the so-called objective world, external to the individual. Both theorists acknowledge the fact that the natural, material domain exists; what they wish to make clear is that human reality involves the shaping of the natural realm through conscious activity. People modify nature and in the process change themselves and their relations to other human beings. This process whereby reality is altered by the individual includes human consciousness as an important component (Avineri, 1968:71).

With this conception of human consciousness in mind, Lukàcs proceeds to outline his notion of reification, a term which includes elements drawn from Marx's analysis of commodity fetishism, Simmel's discussion of alienation and Weber's treatment of rationality (Arato, 1972:83). As we have already observed, commodity fetishism consists of the commodity taking on attributes as a "mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of man's labour appears to them as an objective character stamped upon the product of that labour: (Marx, 1967:72). The market relation of commodities does not facilitate the recognition of the role played by human labour in the production of these items. Instead, products of human activity are now regarded to be natural entities responding to non-human powers. Commodity relations take on the appearance of relations between natural objects and market activities, comprised of social relations, come to resemble relation between things. These relations appear to function in accordance with natural laws, a misconception perpetuated by political economists who formulate the laws

of the market place as though they were clarifying eternal forces.

Fetishism of commodities is a significant aspect of Lukàcs' notion of reification. Lukàcs agrees with Marx that the human relations implicit in commodity relations have so faded from view that it is difficult to detect them at all. Self-expanding capital, i.e., money generating money, is perhaps the most notable example of how commodity production leads to a point where the social origins of an entity cease to be apparent. Marx comments that "it is the capacity of money, or of a commodity, to expand its own value independently of reproduction-- which is a mystification of capital in its most flagrant form" (Lukàcs, 1971:94).

Increased fragmentation and specialisation in the production process has a mystifying effect on the consciousness of the worker as well. A distorted awareness arises from the fact that individuals are commonly faced with specialised tasks which must be repeated like clockwork. Marx contends that "through the subordination of man to the machine the situation arises in which men are effaced by their labour; in which the pendulum of the clock has become as accurate a measure of the relative activity of two workers as it is of the speed of two locomotives" (Lukàcs, 1971:89). Mechanisation lends itself to the rational calculation of the time required to perform any activity. Human labour is reduced to being a function of the machine, as a predetermined work schedule comes to rule the individual's every move. Forced to comply with the laws of this mechanised system, human consciousness becomes less actively engaged and more contemplative with each passing day (Stedham Jones, 1971:29).



George Simmel (Arato, 1972:83) considers this increasing passivity to be symptomatic of a widening rift between what he terms objective culture, the production of things, and subjective culture, the self-creation of individuals through this productive activity. He points out that people may lose awareness and control of their creations. They may come to exist in a world of objects which has a movement of its own, a movement which is independent of the will of the individual. Simmel locates the source of this loss of control in the growing separation of the individual from products, tools and fellow workers. Thus, Simmel has neatly deduced some important components of Marx's theory of alienation from the passage on commodity fetishism in *Capital*. However, the two theorists eventually part company for Marx views alienation to be primarily a function of a particular mode of production, whereas Simmel chooses to depict this growing estrangement as an unavoidable consequence of the human condition.

Lukàcs is not misled by the element of inevitability in Simmel's presentation (Arato, 1972:97). He makes full use of the perceptive features of Simmel's account, but maintains his basic allegiance to the historical version of alienated labour alluded to in Marx' critique of political economy. Lukàcs agrees with Marx that commodities take on the appearance of natural objects, independent entities which seem to bear no relation to human productivity. These commodities appear to be governed by natural powers, forces which come to dominate the very people who are responsible for their creation. On the basis of these observations, Lukàcs concludes that the separation of the worker from the product

and the fetishistic character of commodities are mutually reinforcing phenomena.

The concept of reification finds its origin in Marx's analysis of political economy. Lukàcs elaborates upon Marx's observation, seeking to substantiate his claim that the totality of social reality has fallen prey to the destructive influence of commodity production. Lukàcs turns to an investigation of business administration and science in order to find evidence to support this view. He discovers that the methods used in both administrative and scientific practices are those which best serve to divide the world into partial totalities, isolated complexes which lend themselves to quantitative calculation. At this point, Lukàcs incorporates Max Weber's notion of rationality to account for the pre-occupation with calculation and prediction which prevails within these partial systems. Empirical facts are valued as ends in themselves as the objective world is fragmented into successively smaller components in an attempt to gain control over discrete aspects of reality.

This concern with precision is a common feature of the bureaucratic institutions that predominate in an advanced capitalist society. Modern businesses with their rationally ordered systems of technological production demand the existence of an equally logical and predictable administrative organisation. Specialisation and calculability are crucial to the operation of the institutional structure. In fact, Lukàcs (1971: 98-99) contends that the same standardisation of the division of labour as exists on the technological level occurs within bureaucracy. Persons engaged in capitalist mental labour sell their personal attributes and

skills in much the same fashion as manual workers. It is in fact the case that manual workers face the suppression of all mental faculties while their physical labour-power is being exploited. Workers in bureaucratic positions, on the other hand, experience the appropriation of only one mental faculty or one complex of mental faculties. Nevertheless, the general phenomenon is similar in both instances; the rationalised and specialised nature of both manual and mental labour permits the engagement of only a fraction of the total personality. This routinisation of productive activity means that the individual must adjust to a repetitive way of life, the outcome of which is the reification of consciousness. Thus, mental labour comes to be dictated by certain conventions which seem to exist independent of human design. Principles deduced from the examination of partial systems now dominate the bureaucrats and scientists who formulated them in the first place.

Lukàcs believes that the pervasiveness of reified consciousness is most graphically revealed in the actual products of mental labour. Here he submits the whole of contemporary philosophy with its neo-Kantian and scientific tendencies to a corrosive review. Even much that passes for Marxism is not spared his devastating critique. What Lukàcs charges is that the wholesale application of methods from the natural sciences to the study of social reality testifies to the prevalence of reified consciousness. A case in point is political economy's chronic failure to penetrate to the essential dynamic of capitalist society. Instead of first examining their premises, political economists immediately set out in blind pursuit of social facts. They are insensitive

to the historical character of these facts and to their own cognitive distortions and so persist in uncritically accepting the appearance of the object as given. Lukàcs argues that this faith in positivism perpetuates a bourgeois illusion which grossly misrepresents social reality (Lichtheim, 1970:67).

In Lukàcs' opinion, conventional political economy neglects the active dimension of society, the dialectical process with all the realignments and modifications of the partial totalities which it entails. Instead, empirical facts are pursued with no effort being made to appreciate the tendencies and counter tendencies emerging in the historical movement. In other words, reified consciousness, with scientism being its most sophisticated form, approaches social reality in total ignorance of its mediated nature. Oblivious to the existence of these mediations, reified thought encounters the partial totalities of capitalist society in their immediacy, thereby wrenching these aspects from the complex of actual determinants and examining them in artificial isolation. Lukàcs concludes that consciousness distorted through interaction with such capitalist mediations as private property, exchange, the division of labour--phenomena judged by Meszaros to be second-order mediations--is incapable of recognising the multiplicity of mediated complexes present in the social totality. With labour-power transformed into a commodity and social relations now taking on the appearance of relations between things, this reification of consciousness has become the order of the day in capitalist society.

It is important to recognise that Lukàcs' critique of reified

consciousness is not confined to a discussion of bourgeois philosophy. He points out that certain schools of Marxist thought are inclined to make the so-called scientific distinction between subjective consciousness and the objective, i.e., "real," world. For example, Engels subscribes to a version of historical materialism in which the theorist approaches social reality with the rigor of a scientist. Such a perspective would be admirable if it were not for the fact that Engels believes that this scientific attitude will enable the individual to grasp "nature just as it exists without any foreign admixture" (Althusser, 1971:40). With one stroke, Engels has completely eliminated the question of consciousness from the discussion of Marxist materialism. In its place, he proposes a theoretical framework which looks suspiciously like a species of positivism.

The controversy over the nature of the science of Marxism is one which continues to this day. Louis Althusser (1971:14) provides a useful description of the basic tendencies involved in this dispute. He claims that Marxism embodies a tension between a philosophical dimension and a scientific dimension. According to Althusser, a powerful faction arguing for the primacy of philosophy can effect a shift towards subjectivism. When a science-oriented group is in the ascendent, philosophy is suppressed in favour of positivism. These are very crude distinctions but they do shed some light on the struggle being waged within the ranks of Marxism.

This dispute can be illustrated in George Lichtheim's account (1970:64-65) of the differences which allegedly exist between Lukàcs'

stance and that of Lenin. In Lichtheim's opinion, Lenin favours a version of positivistic materialism during the early stages of his career. In fact, there is evidence to suggest that even his belated encounter with Hegel fails to cleanse Lenin of his scientific leanings. Traces of this tendency appear to be present in Lenin's concept of the Communist party as a vanguard which is privy to an objective understanding of history. Needless to say, Lenin realises that it would be suicidal to ignore the role of the "subjective factor," i.e., class consciousness, in the revolutionary movement. Yet he never wavers in his belief that the party must be comprised of a highly educated elite, individuals versed in the scientific knowledge necessary to catalyse and direct the activities of the proletariat (Lichtheim, 1970:63-64).

Lukàcs' criticism of Lenin's position suffers from an over-emphasis of the role of consciousness in bringing about a radical transformation of society. At one point he comes to the untenable conclusion that a spark of critical self-awareness could fire the revolutionary zeal of the working class, thereby precipitating a virtually spontaneous overthrow of the capitalist system (Lichtheim, 1970:64-65). Lichtheim's account is more useful as a statement of the differences between positivism and subjectivism than as an accurate representation of the theoretical perspective of either Lenin or Lukàcs. It is true, however, that Lukàcs' preoccupation with the issue of consciousness is often at the expense of an examination of structural considerations. Nevertheless, he is among the first to draw attention to the tendency of certain Marxists to re-establish a neo-Kantian schism between personal subjectivity

and objective fact. In addition, he correctly rejects any view of human cognition which claims that consciousness is simply a reflection of the material world.

Lukàcs (1971) recalls that the human essence is the "ensemble of social relations" and he declares that it is only with the abolition of objectified relations that the individual can be reconstituted as a truly human being. A person's level of awareness of the hierarchy of mediated complexes indicates "the degree of clarity to which a man has attained concerning the foundations of his existence in these relations, i.e., the degree of consciousness of himself" (Lukàcs, 1971:185). As the individual penetrates the immediacy of these perceived complexes and begins to appreciate their mediated nature, action designed to eliminate the reified character of these relations can begin. Lukàcs maintains that increased awareness coupled with favourable material conditions will eventually lead to the practical abolition of the mode of production which generated these reifications in the first place.

It is Lukàcs' contention (1971:163) that social reality in its immediacy appears in an identical manner for both the working class and the bourgeoisie. Yet he asserts that the process involved in raising consciousness to a level sensitive to the actual relations of human society is a function of one's social experience. In Lukàcs' estimation, working class individuals are more likely to dispel the mystifying effects of immediacy than are members of the bourgeoisie, a distinction which attests to the qualitative difference between the social existences of the two classes. This observation recalls the aforementioned comments

in *The Holy Family* concerning the dissimilarities in the self-alienation of property-owner and worker. Both persons are victims of alienation but whereas the capitalist clings to the illusion of having some control over commodity production, the worker sees the same process as one of total enslavement. Lukàcs claims that as the proletariat becomes aware of its exploited situation, it begins to recognise the necessity for collective action. What were once passive objects transfixed by commodity fetishism are now active subjects consciously organising to rid society of the source of its reified relations.

Lukàcs presents a sophisticated account of how reified consciousness is propagated by alienated labour and how it tends to perpetuate itself in turn. He speaks of how the consciousness of both the manual and mental worker is so severely distorted and fragmented that all phenomena are viewed as isolated facts rather than as components of a dynamic process. In fact, Lukàcs (1971:68) claims that reification in advanced capitalist society is so pervasive that workers commonly regard themselves to be little more than commodities. But how is it possible to induce an awareness of the totality of social reality in consciousnesses which have been so thoroughly fragmented? Class consciousness supposedly demands the recognition of the position of one's class in the social whole. How can individual workers gain a perspective of their collective predicament when reification is virtually all-encompassing?

As theory, Lukàcs' remarks on the relation between immediacy, mediation and totality are quite impressive. However, they become a bit troublesome when they are related to the existing reality and the need



for practical action. Lukàcs develops a theory of reification which seems to be logically sound--so sound that it would appear that he has left himself no avenue of escape. Lukàcs' expressed purpose is to outline the steps necessary to overcome the immediacy of reified consciousness. Unfortunately, he fails to realise this goal. In addition, his concluding section on the subject-object of history is an open invitation to have his entire discussion dismissed as the work of an idealist.

Lukàcs is ultimately pressured into recanting much of *History and Class Consciousness* in order to maintain favour with the Communist Party. In his introduction to the 1967 edition, he discredits the notion of the identical subject-object as being a metaphysical construct and criticises his over-exuberance in equating objectivation with the reification of the proletariat. Certainly a retraction is warranted in both instances, but Lukàcs permits his exercise in self-criticism to get out of hand. Successive recantations intended to win the blessing of the Party lead him to belittle or abandon many of the valuable insights contained in *History and Class Consciousness* (Lichtheim, 1970:72).

For example, portions of Lukàcs' elaboration of the question immediacy-mediations-totality are useful additions to Marxist analysis. Lukàcs insists that in order to acquire an accurate grasp of political economy, the individual must have an appreciation of the interaction between subsystems and the relation of these partial complexes to the social totality. The fetish-character of capitalist production may require an economic analysis to illuminate its mystifying nature, but this does not mean that conclusions drawn from such an inquiry can be expected

to instantly clarify other fields such as politics, law, culture, etc. The investigation must begin anew with each change in focus. The aspect or complex in question must be viewed in light of its unique position within the intricate system of mediated relations (Meszaros, 1970:71).

An examination of these partial totalities can disclose helpful insights into the tendencies implicit in either the social system as a whole or in one particular class within that system. For example, major contradictions inherent in a specific class may be revealed in its partial totalities long before they are evidenced in the movement of the social class in its entirety. Lukàcs points to the propensity of dramatists to use family conflicts as subject-matter for tragedies, thus enabling them to vividly expose social currents which might otherwise pass unnoticed. He remarks that "an Aeschylus or a Shakespeare draw pictures of family life that provide us with such penetrating and authentic portraits of the social upheavals of their age that it is only now, with the aid of historical materialism, that it has become at all possible for theory to do justice to these artistic insights" (Lukàcs, 1971:176).

Lukàcs' appreciation of the family as a partial totality is an important contribution to social theory. It provides a useful focus for investigations into the dialectical nature of social reality. In particular, the examination of the dynamics of the family will prove to be invaluable to Jean-Paul Sartre in his efforts to establish a psycho-analytic method compatible with Marxism.

## Chapter 3

### SARTRE

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they make it under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seemed engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from their names, battle cries and costumes in order to present the new sense of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language. (Marx, 1963:15)

Marx's comments are as appropriate today as when they were first written over one hundred years ago. Ironically, the people most guilty of resurrecting ancient slogans to account for contemporary events are all too often the very individuals who characterise themselves as being followers of Marx. Cherishing his formulations as eternal truths, they remain oblivious to the fact that Marxian analysis is anything but a dogmatic reciting of chapter and verse from the classic texts. These people view Marxism as a static body of laws and principles to be preserved at all cost--and heaven help existing reality if it doesn't quite fit the procrustean bed. They fail to recognise that Marxism is a dynamic system of thought and not a fixed conceptual grid to be applied mechanically to explain social reality. Marxism is a method which must be continuously amplified and refined and whose sole purpose for being is to facilitate the abolition of social classes.

In order to realise this project, Marxists must be prepared to discard obsolete categories and to adopt any aspects of new theories

which are deemed to be useful. This responsiveness is absolutely essential if Marxists are to maintain a vital system of analysis, one whose sensitivity to external historical conjunctures is enhanced by a constant scrutiny of its internal theoretical composition. Critical examination will inevitably result in the inclusion of new categories to replace those outmoded by the changing social situation. Consequently, it becomes obvious that Marxists can ill-afford to reject bourgeois theories in a wholesale fashion. Concepts and categories commonly associated with bourgeois ideology must be selectively incorporated if Marxian theory is to be a useful tool for each successive generation (Brewster, 1966:29). Consequently, it becomes obvious that Marxism can ill-afford to reject bourgeois theories in a wholesale fashion. Concepts and categories commonly associated with bourgeois ideology must be selectively incorporated if Marxian theory is to be a useful tool for each successive generation (Brewster, 1966:29).

Certain people feel that one area where Marxism seems to be especially negligent is in the examination of personality formation. A charge that is frequently made by bourgeois social scientists is that Marxist theory sacrifices an understanding of the individual due to its preoccupation with the dynamics of social classes. This may prove to be a valid criticism--certainly it warrants a direct response. In most instances, however, the accusations are so poorly formulated that Marxist theoreticians can avoid giving a comprehensive reply simply by pointing to the obvious poverty of such criticisms. Daniel Bell's comments in *The End of Ideology* are representative of these inept attacks:

The irony, however, is that in moving from 'philosophy' to 'reality' . . . Marx himself had moved from one kind of abstraction to another. For in his system, self-alienation becomes transformed: man as 'generic man' (i.e., Man writ Large) becomes divided into *classes of men*. The only social reality is not Man, not the individual, but economic classes. Individuals count for nought. (Bell, 1965:365-366)

Bell's remarks appear to stem from a misinterpretation of Marxian social theory. In fact, Marx argues that human nature is not a substance inherent in each person but rather, consists of a dialectical construct, i.e., a dynamic complex of social relations present within a specific historical context (Shroyer, 1969:182). According to Marxist theory, it is a gross distortion of human reality to consider the individual as opposed to or isolated from society as a whole. Individuality must be understood to be a process, an on-going interaction between the person, other individuals and the non-human natural world. What Bell presumes is that Marxism perceives people to exist only as members of economic classes; therefore, individuals are entirely reduced to being abstractions of the group. On the basis of these judgments, he concludes that while Marxist social theory can accommodate the idea of social classes, an authentic concept of the individual cannot be formulated on its epistemological foundations (Schaff, 1970:68).

Bell's accusations may be in error yet they do disclose a notable omission in Marx's theory: a detailed analysis of the dynamics of human personality. One can appreciate Marx's dictum that a person is at once product and producer, a locus of interaction of the social relations present at a specific instant. The contention that human activity is mediated by factors as diverse as social institutions, language and

personal and cultural history seems equally acceptable. Yet when Marxists point to the complexity of this process as providing a sufficient explanation for the existence of distinct persons--each personality being undeniably unique--certain observers cannot help but feel short changed. To account for individual differences by casually referring to the intricacy and irreplicability of human character is considered by some to beg the question.

One could argue that the absence of a comprehensive treatment of personality is not surprising given the overall intention of Marx's project. If society is to be transformed, priority must be accorded to the study of mass movements, not to the in-depth probings of the individual's psyche (Schaff, 1970:98). Admittedly, personality theories which claim to be faithful to the general principles of Marxism have since been formulated, but whether Marx himself planned to embark on such a programme remains doubtful. We do know that the body of his work lies incomplete: shortly prior to his death Marx greeted an inquiry as to the proposed date of publication of his complete works with the acid retort that "they would first have to be written" (Nicolaus, 1968:41). It is now widely known that Marx intended to produce his magnum opus, a study comprised of six sections to be collectively entitled *Economics*, of which only one part, *Capital*, was to actually appear in print.

Nevertheless, it is highly unlikely that Marx viewed the investigation of individual psychology to be one of the more pressing concerns of the day. Marx's neglect of this dimension is regrettable if only because it left the door open for such disastrous formulations as

produced by people such as Fredrick Engels, Marx's chief collaborator:

That such a man, and precisely this man, arises at a determined period and in a given country is naturally pure chance. But, lacking Napoleon, another man would have filled his place . . . The same is true of all chance events and of all that appears to be chance in history. The farther removed the province which we are exploring is from the economy, and the more it cloaks itself in an abstract ideological character, the more chance we find in its development . . . But trace the middle axis of the curve . . . This axis tends to become parallel to that of economic development.

In Engels' estimation, people are little more than contingencies, chance occurrences within the limitations determined by their class origins. The unique qualities and traits which characterise individual personalities are dismissed as being minor variants of "an abstract ideological character" (Sartre, 1963b:56).

Engels' pronouncements have undoubtedly jeopardized the overall credibility of Marxism. Unfortunately, recent attempts to explore the psychological aspects of class society have met with little better success. For the most part, those contemporary personality theories which purport to be Marxist in orientation have only served to obscure many of Marx's fundamental tenets. Marcuse's attempt to wed Freud with Marx is a case in point. Surely this exercise will remain stillborn as long as theorists such as Marcuse cling to such non-dialectical irreducibles as sexual and aggressive instincts (Kupers, 1971:37).

Jean-Paul Sartre (1969:50-51) provides a useful summation of the controversy surrounding proposals to integrate a theory of individual psychology with Marxism. He maintains that "everyone knows and everyone admits . . . that psychoanalysis and Marxism should be able to find the

mediations necessary to allow a combination of the two. Everyone adds, of course, that psychoanalysis is not primary, but that correctly coupled and rationalized with Marxism, it can be useful. Likewise, everyone says that there are American sociological notions which have a certain validity, and that sociology in general should be used . . . Everyone agrees on all this. Everyone in fact *says* it--but who has tried to *do* it?"

It is apparent that there is no question in Sartre's mind that the merging of a particular psychoanalytical method with Marxist social theory is a legitimate proposition. What is problematic, Sartre argues, is the actual formulation of a psychoanalytic approach which will adequately clarify those issues which traditionally have proven to be so troublesome for Marxist analysis. It is this very task which Sartre (1963b:56) has taken upon himself to complete. In sum, he claims to have accomplished the chore of articulating a hierarchy of mediations which will account for the presence of a specific person as a member of a particular class within a certain society at a given historical moment. Sartre harbours no illusions that his method of psychoanalysis is in competition with Marxism proper. He believes his approach to be a parasitical technique, a methodology which will be eventually accepted as yet another aspect of Marxism as a whole.

Sartre's psychoanalytic method (1963b:60-62) endeavours to reveal the point of insertion of the individual in the particular social class. The family is considered to be the vital mediator between the class and the person; it is within this primary unit that children unwittingly don



the social roles imposed upon them by adults, both parents and "significant others." Here the individual is confronted with class values which, in the uncertain depths of childhood, are internalized as virtual absolutes.

As Adam Schaff (1970:99) indicates, any personality theory must include an adequate treatment of those irrational elements which seem to be a universal aspect of human behaviour. He cautions that this is a difficult undertaking, one all too frequently ignored by Marxist theorists. Yet Sartre (1963b:62) provides a convincing discussion of this very topic. He observes that, for the majority of us, our beliefs and prejudices are virtually unsurpassable precisely because they have first been experienced during childhood. Irrational responses and resistances to reason are artifacts of these early years, a period when class interests are interiorized as personal shackles. His psychoanalytic scheme tries to determine the extent to which individuals are able to discard these youthful fetters. It focuses on adults with an eye to illuminating those early deviations which are never to be wholly transcended.

Thus, Sartre cautions that class biases should not be entirely ascribed to the individual's confrontation with the means of production as either a capitalist extractor of surplus value or a proletarian victim of that process of exploitation. He claims that many attitudes and prejudices are acquired prior to leaving the family itself. A non-dogmatic Marxism is one which will allow for the integration of psychoanalysis as a method for revealing how each child first lives the reality of the social class within the confines of the home. Only with the inclusion of

this technique can Marxism lay claim to being an authentic totalization of existing social knowledge (Darling, 1965:110).

Antonio Gramsci is one person who has recognised the necessity for just such an "open" Marxism, a vital and comprehensive overview of social reality. In particular, he confirms Marx's conception of the individual as being a process, a focal point of active relationships in which the individual, other people and the natural world are intertwined. Gramsci realizes that if one's own individuality is a totality of specific relations, personal changes will modify the overall complex in which the individual is embedded. Self-consciousness entails an awareness of this present totality yet it also demands an appreciation of the historical process of which this present totalization is but a moment. Therefore, Gramsci maintains that it is insufficient to simply examine the totality of interconnections at a given instant; in addition, one must comprehend how the various relations came into being and changed over time. In Gramsci's estimation, each individual is both the "synthesis of contemporary relationships" and the "summary of the entire past" (Manzani, 1957:48).

Sartre's expressed aim (1963b:60) is to penetrate this past. He is intent upon locating those childhood conditionings which will enable him to discover how an individual's actions are influenced by "not only the present determinations but also the weight of his history." Sartre directs his attention to the study of the person's lived experience, seeking to disclose the exact historical sequence whereby the individual acted in terms of the possibilities at hand and was acted upon in turn.

He believes that the unique composition of personal experience should be accessible to a properly applied psychoanalytic technique. That is, the reconstruction of an individual's history should be feasible by first isolating certain initial determinations and then tracing the person's progress through a succession of choices and actions (Manser, 1971:346-347).

The approach used by Sartre is essentially a variation on the progressive-regressive and analytico-synthetic method first outlined by Henri Lefebvre. Sartre proposes to clarify the intersection of history, social structure and biography and his adaptation of Lefebvre's scheme is admirably suited to this task. Human groups, according to Sartre, must be understood with reference to both a horizontal complexity and a vertical complexity. The horizontal complexity corresponds to the social structure. It involves the specific relations of the group to the dominant social institutions. The historical dimension is accounted for in the vertical complexity, which refers to group activities surviving from the past and to the particular sequence by which the institutions came to be formed. Sartre captures the interaction of these two components with respect to a particular individual by employing a procedure consisting of three distinct stages. The first phase is one of situating the person within the social structure. This involves a straightforward Marxist analysis of the society as a whole and of the class position of the individual within the social system. The second phase consists of a regressive exploration of the person's history. At this point, Sartre introduces his psychoanalytic approach in order to

amplify the conventional Marxist account. The final moment entails moving from past to present in an attempt to grasp the current situation of the individual. This phase is concerned with the integration of the social structure and the particular biography within an historical movement. Sartre claims that his threefold method "will progressively determine a biography . . . by examining the period, and the period by studying the biography" (Weinstein, 1971:346).

Consequently, Sartre maintains that his method will lay bare the unique reality of the individual and at the same time will contribute to an appreciation of the prevailing social conditions. For example, he speaks of how the study of the child Flaubert enriches one's understanding of the French petit bourgeois of the 1830's. The existing class values of this period are made concrete by focussing on the situation of Flaubert, the son of a successful physician. In fact, Sartre (1963b:61) proposes that an historical examination of psychoanalytic monographs would be very instructive in terms of documenting the modifications of the family structure and the social class over a period of time. Here we are reminded of Lukàcs' emphasis on the study of partial totalities such as the family to assist in the comprehension of the movement of society as a whole. Sartre has merely extended Lukàcs' proposition to include the consideration of the biography of an individual within a family.

In part, Sartre's investigation has been prompted by his suspicion that many Marxists tend to be satisfied with little more than a general description of class characteristics. He wishes to enhance this

somewhat superficial understanding by presenting a concrete account of class values, one which is grounded in the detailed analysis of specific individuals. Sartre (1969:45) claims that each person internalizes various determinations such as the family, the relations of production, the social institutions and the lived experience and that these interiorizations are revealed in the individual's beliefs and actions. He considers his psychoanalytic technique to be a useful instrument for illustrating how the present attitudes and behaviour of a person can be more fully comprehended through an awareness of how that individual lived specific family relations during childhood.

Sartre (1963b:31) agrees with Engels' statement that "it is men themselves who make their history, but within a given environment which conditions them." Sartre is seeking to identify the dynamics involved in this predicament of the individual being both a product and a producer of history. He is intrigued with the notion that people, conditioned by the social situations in which they find themselves, are nevertheless able to surpass these existing circumstances, altering or conditioning their environment in turn.

Sartre first concerns himself with the process whereby a person moves beyond the existing situation. It is here that he introduces his concepts of project and praxis. Sartre regards the project to be the person's choice of one course of action from among a number of alternatives. This collection or group of possible actions does not remain fixed, but rather is continuously being modified in accordance with the changing social circumstances. Praxis refers to the actual surpassing of

the existing situation in order to realise the particular end outlined in the project itself. Thus, any purposeful human activity is regarded by Sartre to constitute praxis.

Sartre's notions of project and praxis are not original. They bear a marked resemblance to ideas contained in Marx's conception of human labour. This similarity is perhaps best illustrated in a section in *Capital* where Marx differentiates between human and non-human production:

A spider conducts operations which resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this: that the architect raises his structure in his imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour process we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement. He not only effects a change of form in the material on which he works, but also realizes a purpose of his own. (Marx, 1967:178)

In Sartre's terminology, the imagined goal corresponds to the project; the actual building of the structure refers to human praxis. In all probability, Marx would concur with Sartre that it is by transcending existing circumstances towards particular goals that individuals objectify their projects and contribute to the unfolding of human history. He would undoubtedly share Sartre's view that the particular courses of action feasible at any given moment are determined by the existing social conditions. What Sartre attempts to outline is how the choice of projects is also influenced by the particular history of the individual. He insists that the original childhood project--what he terms the fundamental choice of self--will greatly influence the future attitudes and

behaviour of the person (Laing and Cooper, 1964:23). This initial choice will be made in terms of the courses of action conceivable at that time and Sartre argues that this realm of possibilities will reflect the class values and biases held by parents and other significant persons in the child's life. In sum, Sartre intends to outline the procedure by which a person comes to adopt a unique--albeit class-biased--perception of reality, a perspective which will affect all choices made and actions taken in the future.

It is at this point that Sartre (1963b:62) introduces his particular interpretation of Marx's concept of alienation. He maintains that in the eyes of most Marxists, "everything seems to happen as if men experienced their alienation and their reification *first in their own work*, whereas in actuality each one lives it first as a child, *in his parent's work*." In Sartre's opinion, people continue to live this alienation, this fundamental deviation. Products of their parents' design, they are never fully able to overcome this early distortion of character. It now becomes apparent that Sartre regards the critical juncture of psychoanalysis and Marxism to hinge on the notion of alienation.

Nevertheless, Sartre's use of alienation is problematic in this context. It is highly debatable whether his term is in fact compatible with the Marxian concept. Richard Schacht, for one, believes that Sartre has undeniably broadened the traditional applications of alienation but that he does remain faithful to the essential principles of Marxism. Alienation is generally used in reference to conventional work situations,

a restriction which Schacht (1971:238) considers to be excessively narrow. In Schacht's opinion, Sartre has added interesting and useful dimensions to the concept without sacrificing any aspect of the original formulation.

Unfortunately, Sartre himself sheds little light on this controversy. During his career, he has employed the concept of alienation in a variety of ways. However, since becoming a Marxist he has neglected to explicitly outline his current version of the term. As a result, we are forced to construct our own interpretation of Sartre's concept on the basis of an investigation of his earlier writings. For the most part, Sartre's present usage of alienation appears to be a conflation of elements drawn from Husserl, Hegel, Marx--with a little Lukàcs added for good measure. Of course, his particular rendering is hardly a straight forward synthesis of these components. Sartre's notion bears its own unmistakable cast, as much the consequence of a reworking of his earlier thoughts as a reformulation of other theorists.

Sartre first employs the term alienation in *Being and Nothingness*. This particular version seems to be little more than a literal application of the one introduced by the German phenomenologist, Edmund Husserl. According to Husserl, as a person--a woman, for example--comes to realise that others are subjects for themselves as she is for herself, she is compelled to recognise that in their eyes she has an object-character as well as a subject-character. Moreover, she must acknowledge that their view of her has as much validity as hers of them. The other person thus serves as a type of mirror in which she perceives that she is not wholly subject, but also has the character of an object. Here she



experiences herself as something "other," something "alien" to her in her subjectivity. In short, she experiences her "alienation" (Schacht, 1971:228).

An illustration of this phenomenon can be found in Sartre's description of being caught off guard while peeking through a key-hole. Moments before, he was totally absorbed in spying on an intimate scene and was not conscious of being engaged in a shameful act. When he does realise that another person has discovered him in this compromising position, he recoils in shame. The look of the other person causes him to self-consciously reflect upon his appearance in the eyes of that person. He comes to see himself in terms of certain qualities and properties: he self-consciously recognises himself to be a "peeping Tom." In Sartre's words, "by the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other" (Solomon, 1972:306).

Sartre regards this momentary "alienation" from active "subjective" consciousness to be a common occurrence in everyday life. He is quick to point out that the particular identity or character which we recognise by the process of self-reflection is not our definitive essence. Here Sartre recalls Marx's belief that the individual does not have a fixed personality, but rather is engaged in a lifelong process of self-creation. Thus, the specific character or property revealed through reflection is not a static "self," but simply a moment in the individual's life. In Sartre's example, his self-identification as a "peeping Tom" is merely a transitory judgment, a fleeting assessment of

his earlier non-reflective act of spying.

This phenomenon of self-consciousness occupies an important position in Sartre's theory. The occurrence of self-reflection is considered to be decisive to the gaining of an awareness of one's particular situation in the world. Moreover, Sartre insists that it is only through the acknowledgment of the consciousness of others that self-recognition comes into being (Solomon, 1972:306-308). This view is strongly reminiscent of Hegel's contention that self-consciousness involves distinguishing between oneself and other objects in the material world. Hegel also maintains that one's sense of self-esteem depends on being perceived by other people to be a unique individual. In other words, he judges mutual recognition between individuals to be essential for human well-being. Hegel argues that at first a person wishes acknowledgment from others without granting recognition in return, a struggle for self-recognition which finds its most noteworthy expression in Hegel's discussion of the Master-Slave relationship (Plamenatz, 1963: 152-154).

Sartre characterizes this struggle for self-recognition as being an attempt to avoid being objectified in the eyes of other people. Each person wishes to be seen as an active self-creating subject, not as a fixed entity comprised of static properties (Solomon, 1972:305). Yet with every objectification of a project, the specific intentions of the individual are revealed. Other people are free to infer the presence of changeless personal characteristics on the basis of these significations.

Hegel, for one, is especially sensitive to the detrimental

aspects of this tendency to objectify human beings. He judges the attribution of fixed qualities to be harmful to the ongoing creation of self. A series of words or deeds may be construed by others to be an adequate representation of the individual. The person, in turn, may come to view these momentary externalisations as being self-definitive absolutes. Hegel terms such objectifying consciousness "abstract thinking." To illustrate this phenomenon, he cites the attitude of many people upon being confronted with a person convicted of murder: "This is abstract thinking: to see nothing in the murderer except the abstract fact that he is a murderer, and to annul all other human essence in him with this simple quality" (Shroyer, 1971:88).

But how can such abstract thinking be avoided? Certainly a case could be made for it being a universal feature of the human species, restricted neither to a particular historical period nor a specific group of people. Peter Berger and Stanley Pullberg (1966:74) are two contemporary sociologists who follow this line of reasoning. They maintain that the tendency to define oneself and others in terms of fixed characteristics is inherent in the human condition. Trenton Shroyer (1971:88-90) agrees that this propensity to objectify is a real possibility for all individuals, yet he argues that an adequate comprehension of each externalisation is sufficient to prevent abstract thinking. In other words, distortive conclusions can be avoided if both the actor and the observer are able to reconstruct the nature of the project behind the act. Thus, the dialectical process of human self-creation must be acknowledged by both parties. Any breakdown in self-reflection or

mutual-recognition will promote the occurrence of abstract thinking.

Lukàcs' discussion of the reification of consciousness seems especially useful at this juncture. Reified thought is seen to be a product of a specific capitalist social formation in which there is a proliferation of specific types of institutions necessary to the market. The historical dimension of reification is revealed by the fact that such institutions as a bureaucratic state apparatus and highly developed commercial and legal systems are unique to advanced capitalist society. It logically follows that the existence of these social conditions could only facilitate the occurrence of abstract thinking. Reified minds are predisposed to consider all phenomena as isolated empirical facts rather than as finite moments in a dynamic movement. Consequently, an individual's actions, words and gestures will in all likelihood be treated as statements of the static nature of the person's character. Therefore, it could be argued that this tendency to view people as having fixed personalities is likely to be especially prevalent in advanced capitalist society. Reification of consciousness hinders mutual recognition and non-distortive self-reflection. Abstract thinking thereby acquires a historical dimension.

Sartre appears to agree with Lukàcs' premise that reification is a consequence of capitalist society. For his own purposes he further narrows this focus, concentrating on the unique events which occur in the formative years of childhood. We have witnessed how the nature of self-reflection is an important consideration in both Hegel's formulation of abstract thinking and Lukàcs' notion of reification. Sartre seems to

be equally appreciative of this phenomenon. His own version of alienation and reification emphasises the significance of the self-reflective act during a person's early years. The self-recognition process of the child and the prevalence of reified consciousness amongst adults combine to provide the substance of Sartre's application of Marx's concept of alienation.

One of Sartre's basic theses is that a person exists within specific social conditions and makes choices and decisions on the basis of the objective possibilities available. Yet during childhood, the individual acts without clearly comprehending the actual nature of the existing social context. Particular patterns of behaviour are learned, contradictory requests made by adults are frequently experienced, anxious attempts to break free of confusing situations occasionally occur--all this takes place in a situation only vaguely understood by the child. This groping to comprehend social reality and to move beyond what are often bewildering predicaments is considered by Sartre to provide the basis for the fundamental quirks and deviations of a person's character. The reverberations of our initial efforts to make sense of lived situations are still experienced in our activities as adults. Sartre (1963b: 100-106) argues that these early distortions are inscribed in our daily pursuits and that the course of our lives will reflect the unfolding of variations on these initial distortions. He perceives the individual's life to evolve in spirals with the same deviations being repeatedly encountered at different levels of integration and complexity.

To some extent, these childhood legacies are prototypes of the

reifications of consciousness which people will encounter as adults. Yet Sartre maintains that these youthful distortions are more profound, more fundamental, for they originate at a time when the individual is ill-equipped to make sense of them. Invariably, they supply the person with a self-definition which will be reinforced and perpetuated into adulthood. Thus, these early alienations remain as components of a reified identity, a self-image to be defended at all cost. The intransigence of these initial self-conceptions is a function of the novel circumstances of childhood. As Andre Gorz (1959:58) points out, "complexes surviving from childhood are neither explicable nor soluble by Marxist analysis as alienations like any others, because the original choice functions at a moment and at a period where there is still neither history nor conscious practice nor possibility of deliberate consciousness." In other words, fundamental deviations are artifacts from a time when acts of self-reflection were either minimal or altogether lacking.

The first comprehensive treatment of the concept of fundamental deviation is to be found in Sartre's study of the French playwright, poet, novelist and thief, Jean Genet. Born in Paris in 1910, Genet was abandoned by his mother shortly after birth. He was soon adopted and went to live with his foster parents in the rural village of Mettray. By the time he was ten, Genet had been caught stealing on various occasions and was sentenced to a term in a local reformatory. Successive convictions for theft resulted in periods of imprisonment in a series of correctional schools. By the time he was twenty, Genet had served a short stint in the Foreign Legion which was followed by a period of wandering through Europe.

Genet's travels were frequently interrupted by prison terms and it was during one of these sentences that he wrote his first book, *Our Lady of the Flowers*. This work was followed by a number of novels, plays and poems. After ten convictions for theft in France alone, Genet escaped life imprisonment when granted a pardon by the President of the Republic. Such public figures as Picasso, Cocteau and Sartre were instrumental in petitioning for Genet's release (Cooper, 1964:68). Sartre argues that Genet is one of those persons, all too rare, who gain an awareness of their childhood distortions. In fact, the intention of Sartre's psychoanalytic technique is to determine whether individuals remain partially or wholly engulfed by these early flaws or whether they come to recognise these distortions of character, as did Genet.

Genet was raised in a rural community which placed a high value on the ownership of property. According to Sartre, the boy began to steal in a half-comprehending attempt to compensate for his constant obligation to be grateful for all that he received as a ward of the State. His acts of thievery, little more than unreflected diversions, were transformed into objective violations when Genet was accosted and declared to be a thief. It is for this reason that Sartre considers Genet's case to be exceptional for, at a young age, he was literally informed who he was. The majority of his life has been devoted to internalizing this judgment imposed on him by adults, a verdict which he initially considered to be the definitive pronouncement of society.

Genet determines that this decisive event occurred when he was ten years old. Playing alone in the kitchen, he was about to take a knife

from a drawer when he realised that he was being watched. At this instant, Genet experienced himself as an object in the eyes of this onlooker. His unreflective actions were now objective statements of the nature of his character. Under the gaze of another person, Genet in effect came to his senses for the first time. The boy who lacked an identity was now confirmed. Genet does not contest the stigma conferred upon him. He acknowledges the reifying pronouncement, assuming himself to be this particular object, fixed for all time by the judgment of others; "The thief was a monstrous principle which had been residing unperceived within him and which was now disclosed as his Truth, his eternal essence" (Cooper, 1964c: 72).

What was but a momentary "alienation" of his unreflective subjectivity became a lasting reification of consciousness. Sartre views Genet's identification as a thief to be crucial to his future development. The remainder of the biography is an attempt to depict the events of Genet's future years as being elaborate variations on this original crisis. Sartre recognises that this fundamental deviation may not have been the consequence of one specific event. Genet himself refers to a variety of occasions--real or imaginary--when the "melodious child" in him was killed by a "vertiginous word" (Cooper, 1964c:71). This assassination may have been the result of one incident or of a succession of accusations of a similar type. It may well be simply a condensation of Genet's experience of himself as perceived by others during a particular stage of his childhood.

The role played by particular social values was extremely crucial



to the formation of young Genet's perception of the world. The adults who function here as mediators in the socialisation process introduce the child to a class-biased conception of reality, a frame of reference accepted by the youngster as the natural order of things (Gorz, 1959:59). The orphan sees the necessity to obtain possessions of his own in order to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the community. The local authorities, responsive to the virtually sanctified status of private property, identify Genet to be a criminal and banish him to a reformatory. The harsh punishment handed down to the ten year old delinquent underlines the high value attributed to ownership in this provincial community. Sartre contends that Genet's future activities as a self-professed thief are in reaction to these values.

Published in the early 1950's, Sartre's study of Genet testifies to the existential philosopher's heightened sensitivity to the impact of social factors upon a person's development. The relation between class values and childhood fixations is touched upon in this biography, but the subject does not receive a full treatment until the recent appearance of Sartre's study of Flaubert. By this time, Sartre's controversial definition of individual freedom (1969:45) has shrunk in proportion until today he subscribes to a more modest version, one that is compatible with Marxism. He now asserts that freedom is limited to that "small movement which makes of a totally conditioned social being someone who does not render back completely what his conditioning has given him. Which makes of Genet a poet when he had been rigorously conditioned to be a thief."

It is with Sartre's comments on Flaubert that it becomes apparent how each of us serves our class apprenticeship within the context of our particular family. Here Lukàcs' recognition of the importance of the family is explored in depth. It is in the home that class possibilities are made concrete. It is as children that we live our future conditions; it is as children that we probe the class determined realm of possibilities open to us and select--in greater or lesser degrees of awareness--the attributes and qualities of our future professions. Sartre characterises Flaubert as a person who frantically struggles to escape the suffocating demands of his petit bourgeois family and who realises projects as an adult which vividly attest to these smothering conditions of childhood.

Flaubert's progress begins with the child who feels deprived of affection due to the attention conferred upon his brother, a brilliant medical student. Sartre believes that Flaubert strives to be different from his successful brother by initially electing to be inferior to him. Flaubert reacts by first becoming a mediocre student and then entering law school, a profession which he realises his physician father holds in disdain. When faced with the prospect of gaining some degree of respectability as an attorney, Flaubert responds with attacks of "hystèria," once again seeking to hold success at bay. Sartre traces Flaubert's movement through repeated breakdowns to his eventual profession as a committed writer. Sartre indicates how each crucial phase in Flaubert's life appears to be only a repetition of his initial childhood identity crisis.

In a recent interview, Sartre refers to Flaubert's comprehension of the origins of his particular orientation, his unique being-in-the-world. He is alleged to have once made the statement that "you are doubtless like myself, you all have the same terrifying and tedious depths." (Sartre (1969:49) considers this to be an accurate assessment of the nature of psychoanalysis: the individual makes periodic dizzying revelations only to find that in each instance the discovery exposes the same fundamental complex. Sartre (1963b:106) comes to the conclusion that in all its myriad forms, the project which is the individual's life is essentially the struggle to transcend original skews and deviations, the residue of childhood alienations. The individual lives or exists these reifications, surpassing them yet preserving them in each act. Therefore, one's personal history seems to unfold with the same critical deviations being broached, yet always in superficially new guises and at different levels of intensity.

Andre Gorz is one person who has employed Sartre's method in an effort to understand his own history. *The Traitor* is Gorz's account of this exercise, a programme of self-analysis which spanned eight years. It is a difficult book, filled with sections both insightful and obscure. At times Gorz's style is virtually impenetrable, yet certain passages bear quoting in full. Their complexity attests to the contortions this petit bourgeois intellectual was compelled to undergo in order to realise his project: the fusion of his personal biography with Marxism. Much of the book is written in the third person in an obvious attempt by Gorz to gain a clearer perspective of the nature of his history. It is not until

he has exhaustively probed both his own lived experience and the social context of his youth that he is able to integrate his own biography and the social structure within a historical movement. With the completion of this task, he is re-established as the subject, as "I."

At one point Gorz (1959:271-272) recounts an early realisation that others around him perceived him to be an individual with particular qualities. It provides an excellent example of Sartre's notion of childhood alienation:

This body itself was stolen from him, it spoke to others in a language he did not know; he *was spoken* by his body. Unrealizable significations, intentions he was certain he did not have because he did not understand them, came to inhabit him from outside, establishing themselves, like parasites that eat away the flesh or, worse still, the consciousness, without his being able to turn around and see them. He became for others an Odd Little Person of whom they spoke in his presence in the third person, a strange object (playing with the little wheels on the bars of the kind of cage they put him in at the age of two, he felt their eyes, their silence upon him; "I suppose he'll be engineer," his mother said in her encouraging voice; for them, he beat on the wheels wildly; something was expected of him, what was an "engineer?") before whom grown-up men got down on all fours and made faces and ladies went into high-pitched ecstasies. They saw something on him he was ignorant of, he "told" them something he did not know, they expected him to play a role. He did not understand them, he did not understand his role. They terrorized him. He hated them. His entire childhood was spent under this tyranny of identification, for he was required to identify himself with the role, with the ego his mother wanted him to play and necessarily imputed to him because that was how she wanted to see him.

Gorz (1959:272-273) then speaks of how this early self-image is interiorised and confirmed. Each project, each action is formulated with reference to this reified identity, a self-concept incorporated during childhood.

I suppose this is what is meant by 'moral consciousness' (or the superego), this image of yourself which is always shown to you as

what you are, and which, since in fact you are nothing else, you should be from now on, lest you lose yourself in the shadows of being nothing. You interiorize the requirement to identify yourself and, in order to conform to the ego presented to you, you apply yourself to producing it by 'censoring' what contradicts it--that is, by thematizing only those elements in your intentions and behavior that confirm it--the rest, like the dark side of the moon remaining unknown (but not unconscious) for you.

Gorz is especially perceptive in his analysis of how this initial identity becomes a deeply embedded aspect of a person's self-conception. In effect, he outlines how a momentary alienation is perpetuated as an ongoing reification:

The dialectical process of the choice . . . seems to me as follows: originally there was a complex, an irrational attitude assumed in childhood to avoid a situation the child has no means of dealing with rationally . . . If the original project survives instead of falling into oblivion with the rest of childish attitudes, it can do so only to the degree that it has become more than the original complex it was at the start. It is not the *attitude* of the child's original nonidentification with his mother which is perpetuating itself, but a *project* of nonidentification which discovers in events forever new reasons for development, forever new possibilities for refusing identification, and forever new significations for this refusal.

Once Gorz (1959:290) becomes aware of these crucial determinations, he is able to begin to rid his consciousness of its more severe distortions. That is, he embarks on a project of dereification. With increased sensitivity to his own deviations, he becomes more responsive to the unique character of other people:

This is the point I have reached. The 'complex of nonidentification,' since I have recognized it, has drained like an abscess. Instead of keeping the world at a distance like an enemy who must not be allowed to get a grip on me, I am learning to yield to it; to see it, to begin with, to taste its density, my presence within it, to listen to a man talking in the depths of his speech (instead of listening only to surface of what he says). . . .

Gorz makes a number of insightful comments in the course of unveiling his own original choice of self. His autobiographical sketch is drawn from his daily journal and its dialectical unfolding provides an extremely rich and intricate account of his personal development. New discoveries lead to new investigations and actions which in turn promote new levels of understanding. Gorz's entries (1959:290) gain force and clarity as he gradually refines his comprehension of his own unique "ensemble of social relations":

I no longer believe, as at the outset of this work, that a man can change radically, can liquidate his original choice. But I am now convinced that by careful analysis of his empirical situation, he can discover in his choice potential significations that permit him to reach positive conclusions. This is the whole question. You are never asked to change yourself altogether, but to learn to employ your resources, with full knowledge of the case, in view of a positive action.

Finally, Gorz (1959:297-298) undertakes an examination of his situation and of the skills that he has developed in the course of his career. He reaches the conclusion that the primary resource which he possesses is his talent for writing:

Among other things I have learned that I shall never be through beginning again; that my world is this white paper, my life the activity of covering it. I once thought life would be possible when I had said everything; and now I realize that life, for me, is to write; to start out each time trying to say everything and to begin again immediately afterward, because everything still remains to be said.

Gorz sees this to be the principal creative outlet available to him, yet he realises the inherent deficiencies of this fundamentally private, highly specialised activity. He recognises too, the potential

pitfalls it offers the petit bourgeois intellectual who claims it for a lifelong vocation. Here his apprehension matches that of another petit bourgeois intellectual, his mentor, Jean-Paul Sartre (1964:82): "For a long time I treated my pen as a sword. Now I realise how helpless we are. It does not matter: I am writing, I shall write books; they are needed: they have a use all the same." Gorz and Sartre know that theory alone cannot make a revolution; yet both maintain that it is a necessary component of any revolutionary movement. They have taken it upon themselves to devote their energies to its production and refinement.

Sartre has travelled a long and circuitous route to arrive at his present position. In the initial stages of his career, Sartre perceived each person to be a completely undetermined being. An individual's life, Sartre argued, took on its particular form according to the free selection of a project which one made for oneself and continues to make for oneself at each instant. Many people behave as though they are predetermined, pursuing courses of action as if they were totally and unavoidably predefined. This was considered by Sartre to be merely a process of self-deception whereby individuals denied their freedom and their responsibility for their actions (Macintyre, 1971:29). As Sartre outlined in his early biographical portraits of Tintoretto and Baudelaire, the initial awareness of this freedom and the resultant choice of a personal project comprised the crucial moments of self-definition in a person's life.

The publication of *Being and Nothingness* in the early 1940's marked the first comprehensive presentation of Sartre's philosophy of

freedom. Yet with the passage of time, he came to regard his belief that individuals are solely responsible for the making of their own lives as increasingly less acceptable. Each of his portraits of painters and writers contains sections which stress the importance of the formative years with respect to the child's conscious decision to embark upon a specific project. Sartre went so far as to admit that children have a tendency to align themselves with the conventions of the immediate community, yet he denied that the attraction to these norms was irresistible. If individuals chose to uncritically embrace the values of the surrounding society, their principal motive for doing so was based on bad faith: they wished to sacrifice their personal liberty in order to find protection and guidance through compliance with their class (McMahon, 1967:6). While Sartre gradually came to give greater emphasis to the role of early conditioning, he still held to the belief that people are free to choose what course their lives will take. Nevertheless, Sartre (1964:129) finally recognises late in his life that his own history cannot be judged to be truly self-defined:

I had not chosen my vocation; it has been imposed upon me by others. . . . The grown-ups who were instilled in my soul, pointed to my star; I didn't see it, but I saw their fingers pointing; I believed in the adults who claimed to believe in me.

Sartre estimates that it took him thirty years to rid himself of the idealism inherited from this petit bourgeois upbringing. In fact, his disgust with the self-serving character of his class dates from an early age. However, it was not until years later that he was able to appreciate how his solitary revolt against the hypocrisy of the



bourgeoisie embodied elements of the ideology which he found to be so repugnant. Gradually, he came to understand the class distortions which he had internalised as a child and which he continued to express in the existential individualism of his literature and philosophy. Sartre recently confirmed that he did not wake from this "post-infancy hypnotic state" until he had already written most of the works on which his reputation is based (Laing, 1969:15).

Sartre's trance-like state was not due to any lack of exposure to Marxism. The intellectual circles of which he was a part were highly receptive to left wing thought. Sartre (1963:18) recalls that he first studied *Capital* and *The German Ideology* at university: "I found everything perfectly clear, and I really understood absolutely nothing. To understand is to change, to go beyond oneself. This reading did not change me." Sartre approached Marxism as he would any other philosophical discipline. It was an exercise in logic, an interesting account to be mulled over and digested but certainly not something which could lead to a wholesale reworking of his consciousness. Sartre claims that it was not Marx's words but the reality of the working class that irresistibly attracted petit bourgeois intellectuals like himself. The limited knowledge that this academic had of the daily experience of the proletariat was great enough to pull all his "acquired culture out of shape."

The contradiction between his intellectual pursuits and his awareness of the oppressed position of the majority of society was not to be overcome until Sartre had uncovered the origins of his particular perceptions of the world. In time, the philosopher whose reputation was based

upon his conception of free will--the individual's freedom from past conditioning--was forced to acknowledge that his vision of reality was coloured by prejudices inherited from his class. It was at this point that Sartre discovered the reified nature of his consciousness. This tireless defender of individualism is faced with the realisation that the fundamental impulse of his philosophy originates in a childhood deviation, a class-bound reification of consciousness. This disclosure prompts Sartre to trace the development of his own thought and, in the process, to outline a method for documenting the lived experience of every individual. His psychoanalytic technique is the product of these labours. It represents a concerted attempt to demystify the ideological content of human consciousness by employing a novel interpretation of the concept of alienation.

Sartre believes that he has attained an awareness of his own class biases. Certainly there has been a notable shift in the orientation of his writings. But can Sartre's present work be judged to be wholly beyond reproach? It may well be true that Sartre has purged himself of much of his early idealism, yet does not a tendency towards individualism linger to this day: How does one justify his massive project devoted to the life of Flaubert, a nineteenth-century novelist? Is this the product of a petit bourgeois intellectual who has gained a sensitivity to his class biases and who is trying to use his skills to further the revolutionary movement? Sartre has adapted Marx's notion of alienation to better understand the nature of individuality in general and his own in particular. But why this preoccupation with the question of the

singular human being when the attainment of Marxism's goal requires the mobilization of a collective body? Sartre's novel treatment of alienation may be theoretically sound. It may accurately capture the lived experience of certain individuals within capitalist society. But what is its practical value to a revolutionary social movement?

## CONCLUSION

Lukàcs and Sartre speak as petit bourgeois intellectuals and they rank as two of the most conscious members of their class. They are both capable of producing perceptive accounts of what it means to be removed from direct contact with the machinery of capitalist production. This is at once the strength and the weakness of their presentations. For example, Lukàcs seeks to isolate the mechanisms needed to activate the working class as a revolutionary force. Unfortunately, his argument, as theoretically polished as it might be, suffers from a lack of experience of the very class which he is trying to catalyse. Lukàcs' class position may provide him with the opportunity to devote himself to detailed study but these scholarly labours have removed him from direct contact with capitalist exploitation. Consequently, Lukàcs and other theorists like him frequently discover that their constituency is restricted to persons similar to themselves, university-trained intellectuals who have the time and the inclination to explore obscure reaches of dialectical reasoning.

As we have witnessed, Lukàcs is pessimistic that a well developed class awareness can emerge amongst the proletariat. Nevertheless, one suspects that Lukàcs' findings are primarily the logical outcome of his own thought processes rather than accurate observations of objective social conditions. His theoretical formulations occasionally appear to take on a life of their own. That is, they seem more inclined to reflect the internal logic of Lukàcs' thought than to depict the existing circumstances of the working class which they are endeavouring to describe. In

sum, Lukàcs' presentation of the notion of reification may provide a provocative addition to the Marxist exposition of alienation and commodity fetishism. However, it is highly questionable whether his exposition adequately captures the actual situation of working class individuals.

Louis Althusser provides an interesting commentary on the possible distortions which a person of Lukàcs' background can bring to the analysis of social phenomena. In *Lenin and Philosophy and other Essays*, Althusser (1971:74) refers to the two types of readers who confront Marx's *Capital*. The first are those persons who have directly experienced the exploitive character of capitalist production. Althusser states that these people will have little or no difficulty in comprehending *Capital* for it presents an account of their daily existence. The second group of readers are those persons who have never encountered capitalist exploitation first-hand and who are governed in both consciousness and practice by the dominant ideology, the ideology of the bourgeoisie. Althusser contends that these people will have considerable difficulty in overcoming their "political incompatibility" with the content of *Capital*. The theoretical material contained in *Capital* fails to coincide with the ideas which these people carry in their heads, "ideas which they 'rediscover' in their practices (because they put them there in the first place)" (Althusser, 1971:74). Althusser maintains that in all likelihood these individuals will come to a faulty understanding of Marx's project. These observations are extremely significant, yet Althusser neglects to include a comprehensive treatment of this

question. Instead, he chooses to account for these different interpretations of *Capital* by simply referring to the existence of proletarian "class instinct" as opposed to bourgeois "class instinct."

It is at this juncture that Sartre's work gains considerable credibility as being a notable contribution to Marxist theory. His approach is especially helpful in illuminating Althusser's remarks on "class instincts" and in disclosing the reasons for Lukàcs' shortcomings. In general, Sartre seems to be more successful than Lukàcs if only because he appears to possess a greater sensitivity to his class biases. He is aware to some extent that his prejudices disqualify him as a spokesman for the working class. Certainly there can be little question that Sartre is most persuasive as an articulate representative of that small grouping of petit bourgeois intellectuals who recognise the need for revolutionary change. Perhaps more than any other Marxist theoretician, Sartre has captured the character of his class, the lived experience of the petit bourgeoisie. Sartre has employed the Marxist concept of alienation to account for the formation of his particular perception of reality. In the process, he has developed a method which permits other persons to clarify their own experience and to gain a greater appreciation of the distortions which they inflict upon any activity, theoretical or practical. As Sartre indicates, every scientist is a part of the scientific field; the individual must be aware of personal deviations if social reality is to be faithfully described. It seems obvious that Sartre's findings are anything but routine contributions to the revolutionary theorist's conceptual tool-kit. His technique of psychoanalysis

offers an incisive procedure for the clarification of the distortions which each petit bourgeois intellectual brings to the study of social phenomena.

It seems reasonable to conclude that it is the petit bourgeoisie rather than the proletariat who is likely to receive the most immediate benefits from an application of Sartre's method. This is because it is precisely those petit bourgeois intellectuals like Sartre and Lukàcs who seem to suffer the most serious long term effects of childhood mystifications. Andre Gorz (1959:60) is particularly convincing in his discussion of this problem. He claims that members of the bourgeoisie and petit bourgeoisie "will probably carry into their adult life the complexes and religious values of childhood for lack of occasions to liquidate them by the discovery that they make the world and that the world is the work of human beings." He adds that this mystified situation is especially aggravated in advanced capitalist societies where the development of technology has minimized the opportunity for people to achieve a consciousness of themselves as being the actual creators of the social order. Gorz (1959:229) also supplies a useful commentary on the individualism that typifies the majority of his class. He remarks that for most petit bourgeois intellectuals involvement in collective activities is a threatening prospect. They choose instead to form their projects with the intention of making themselves distinct, of individualising themselves.

In light of these comments it becomes evident that the petit bourgeois intellectual who recognises the need to establish the hegemony

of the working class is faced with an exceedingly arduous task. Althusser (1971:11-12) declares that in order to become Marxist-Leninist philosophers, petit bourgeois individuals must undergo a revolutionising of their ideas. They must submit to a long and painstaking programme of re-education, and "internal struggle" to overcome deeply entrenched biases and distortions. In contrast to this drastic process of self-transformation, Althusser considers the predicament confronting the working class individual to be much less severe. Certainly the proletariat requires educating to move to a position of class consciousness. Yet for the most part education is all that is needed and not the wholesale remoulding of thought that is the fate of each petit bourgeois revolutionary.

Sartre's intensely individualistic preoccupation with psychoanalysis appears to be vindicated with these remarks. His is a technique designed to clarify the composition of one's make-up and to facilitate the active self-knowledge demanded if the petit bourgeois intellectual is to become a useful resource for the purposes of the working class. To be sure, Sartre continually emphasises that this approach is a parasitical ideology which will be subsumed by Marxism as a whole. This neatly characterises his own position and that of petit bourgeois intellectuals like him: parasitical ideologues until such time as they have recognised their own class bound limitations and have embarked upon that radical self-transformation that is necessary if they are to be of use to the working class cause. The individualistic impetus which typifies the reality of the petit bourgeoisie must be turned against itself. Sartre's



method for isolating those reifications peculiar to each individual is a move in this direction. It reflects Gramsci's advice (Manzani, 1957:18) that "a beginning of a critique of one's own world view entails a consciousness of one's self," an awareness of one's self as the product of a historical process.

The concept of alienation is the central element in Sartre's thesis. Nevertheless, this term which serves as the point of articulation of his psychoanalytic method bears little immediate resemblance to Hegel's original formulation. Alienation has undergone a number of modifications prior to its appearance in Sartre's exposition. Feuerbach was the instigator of alienation's first major overhaul, rescuing the concept from its precarious perch in Hegel's idealist scheme and setting it firmly within a materialist framework. Marx was quick to improve upon Feuerbach's reworking. He uncovered the essential nature of the notion by exposing its relation to human labour. Exchange, private property and the division of labour are judged to be the culprits as Marx pinpoints the ultimate cause of human alienation. Lukàcs then attempted to extend the boundaries of the term by examining the corruptive influence of commodity production upon society in general. He was particularly concerned with documenting how the distorted consciousness associated with the alienated mode of labour hinders the development of a class conscious proletariat. Sartre rounds off this progression with a study of the formative stages of an individual's consciousness. His work is largely a synthesis of much that has gone before, combining features from Hegel, Marx and Lukàcs to produce his provocative account of the child's initial

encounter with class biases. Sartre proposes a psychoanalytic method which is intended to aid individuals in achieving some degree of sensitivity to the distorted character of their consciousness. Whether or not Sartre himself will be successful in combatting his own class biases remains to be seen. Certainly a requisite for such an undertaking is the placing of one's self at the service of the working class. This involves the replacing of self-directed, isolated labours with collective activity directed at furthering the well-being of the proletariat as a whole.

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