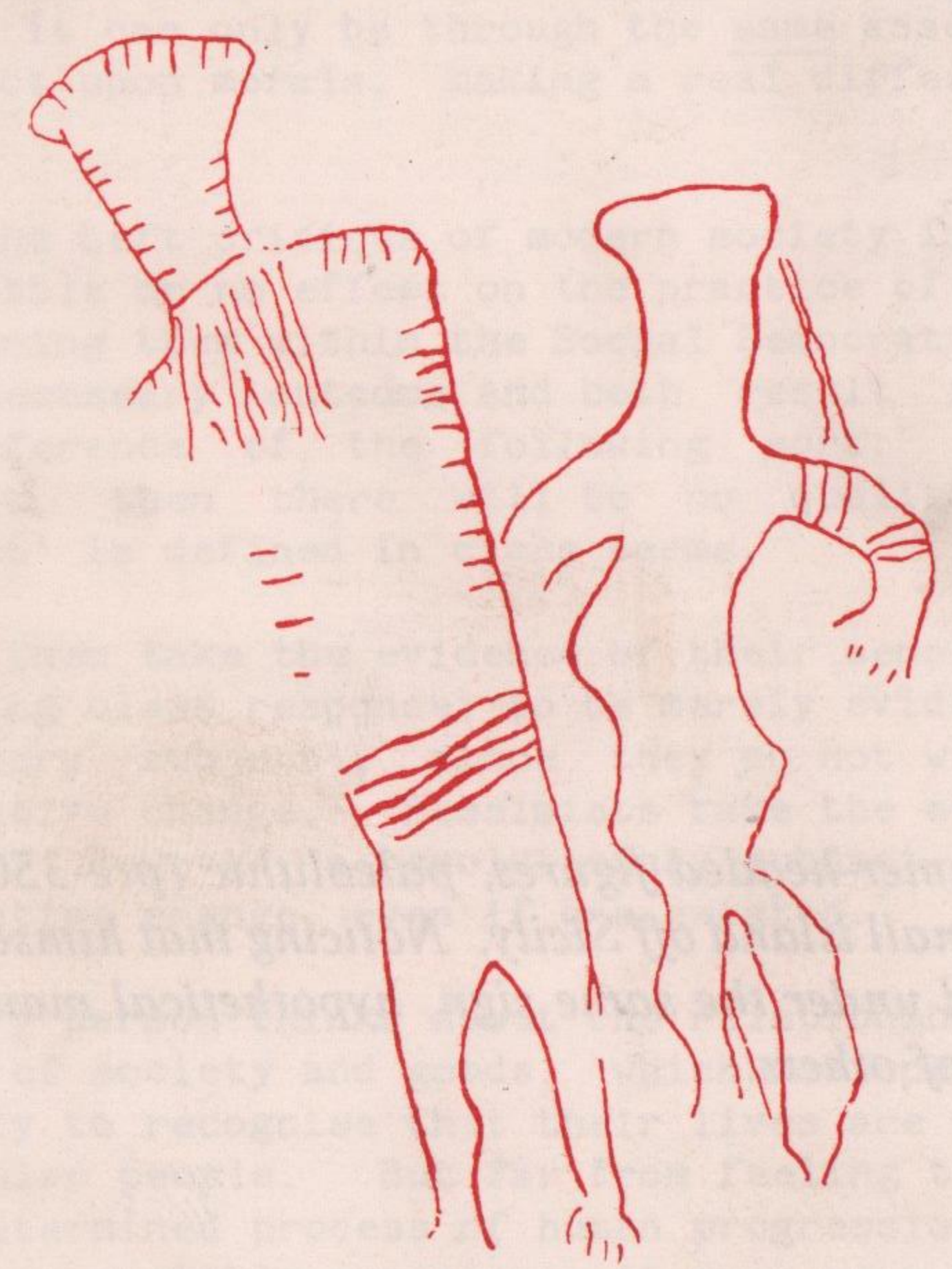


Return of the Moral Subject

AN ESSAY ON CLASS, IDENTITY & FREE WILL
from
THE PLEASURE TENDENCY



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Contents	Page
Return of the Moral Subject	
Introduction	3
The Philosophical Basis	5
Class and Struggle	12
Appendix:	
The Place of Dialectics in the Understanding	25

Cover: Strange hammer-headed figures, paleolithic (pre-3500 B.C.) art from the Levanzo Cave, on a small island off Sicily. Noticing that himself and other objects in the world were unified under the same sign, hypothetical man could not fail to put himself 'in the place' of others.

The philosophical failure in the triumph of Materialism was the loss of the Soul. Carried away by the success of the new technique of Empiricism, theorists brought bald science to bear on the whole field of human existence. The choice was either that the course of human history is a process, like climate, and the content of individual minds and their associated bodies is, like local weather, determined by transient conditions in the development of natural forces; or that Man stands partly outside causal nature. It has taken a long time for a synthesis of the transcendental and the material to emerge, moving reluctantly in some cases from the hegemony of scientific understanding to the admittance of the unknown or 'human' factor.

Broadly, the 'Left' has not yet fully appreciated the implications of the 'human' factor, and treat it as a minor variable within the development of history. The rest of their outlook still rests on the assumption of a determined universe. But neither have the 'Right' wholly accepted the consequences of the individual soul, taking Man to be no less bound to the iron laws of economics than does the Marxist, tortured by a sinful nature inflicted upon him by a capricious God, and subject to Authority on principle. And if the laws of economics are the interaction of many freely taken choices expressed through the commodity, as is at least conceivable, it remains to be shown whether economics as we know them is the only way that these choices can interact.

If the relationship between base and superstructure propounded by Marx is to be inverted, as well as the ideas of Authority and Economics as 'natural' dissolved, it can only be through the same assertion of the freedom of Man to make or act upon morals, making a real difference to his life by so doing.

Revisions to the Left critique of modern society inspired by Marx seem either to have had little or no effect on the practice of the radicals, or to have ended up by aligning them within the Social Democratic project. Neither of these is the necessary outcome and both result from the continuing adherence to an inference of the following sort: 'If there is no revolutionary subject, then there will be no qualitative change', when 'revolutionary subject' is defined in class terms.

Optimists will then take the evidence of their senses (ie., a fragmented and undirected working class response) to be merely evidence for the need to redefine 'revolutionary subject', since they do not wish to give up the prospect of qualitative change. Pessimists take the evidence to mean that that hope is doomed. However, a revolutionary subject is not the sufficient condition for qualitative change, even if one existed.

If the ordinary person thinks about the relationship between themselves and the organisation of society and goods, which most people do at some time, they are very likely to recognise that their lives are dominated both by a system and by particular people. But far from feeling themselves locked in, as it were, to a determined process of human progression in which freedom is only an illusion, they probably experience it more as a casual accident, just one of the possibilities among the many that could have been. Their account of change in that world would probably incorporate two factors which determine the shape of history.

One is the causative chain by which one event follows another down time, giving rise to effects far along the chain, separated from their origin in scale, and often opaque to reason and understanding. These are experienced as inherited conditions. This is the beginning of an understanding of tradition

and authority.

The other factor is human free will, which must act upon what is given in starting causal chains of its own. I will discuss the nature of this free will later. But it is one of the main mistakes made by Left-wing ideologies to fail to recognise in any meaningful way the commonly held conviction that we are in some very important way in control of our destinies.

Let it not be thought that a partly causative account of the conditions we find allows us 'off the hook' to the slightest degree in bearing responsibility for the shape of the present or the future. In some sense, human beings are 'constrained' by given conditions over which they have little or no control. But the given conditions of existence are what pose the possibility of action. Not only does the concept of choice as we know it rest upon the idea of an enduring external world, it rests upon the idea of manipulating what already exists to conform to our will. Hence the idea of chosen actions depends on there being starting conditions about which choices can be made.

There is much to recommend this 'naive' view, not least its appealing simplicity. The fact is that all 'scientific' theories of history are so far at a low level of significance; specifically, keep having to invent more 'hidden demons', epicycles and further theorems to keep up with reality. Scientific analysis of history may be useful in identifying certain cases of cause and effect, or unifying disparate phenomena under a single explanation, but the disturbances of individuals interrupt the smooth flow of events, making any single all-embracing analysis impossible to construct. History itself is only the study of the freely chosen actions of some people and their consequences. The problem of restructuring social relations to more agreeable forms is essentially a-historical, a wild leap out of the mere awareness of reality into the realm of the imagination, and historical only with hindsight.

That, at any rate, is the thesis I wish to demonstrate here.

* * *

Firstly, I wish to say a little more on the subject of the 'naive view' which I described briefly above and the way it may be able to sit more comfortably within the scientific tradition. At first sight there seems to be little common ground between what might be called the materialist and the idealist account; either one or the other must be true, it seems, not both. In the end, Marxists will settle with the materialist way of explaining history, and the rest of us will bring in individuals, ideas, volitions etc., not as merely a superstructure on the base of relations of production, but as having the major part to play in determining relations of production.

What is important is not that any theory be comprehensible as a classical scientific analogy with commonly understood reality, but that it fits the facts as we know them. It may then - and this can happen only rarely - become part of the commonly understood reality. Indeed, we are forced, by continually reiterated observations, to come to terms with the a-causal side of reality, even if we can never grasp it in the same way that we feel we grasp the more 'solid' aspects of nature.

Mankind has consistently shown, through his primitive beliefs about the spirit, up to modern variations such as psycho-physical parallelism, psycho-analysis, and the stubborn separation of the mind and body in everyday thinking, his need to see 'mental' and 'physical' as two distinct sides to his existence. However, in language itself, mind and body can never be separate, as every mental term is a, or has an equivalent, bodily term. The mental is irreducibly physical and public; that, at least, philosophy seems to have

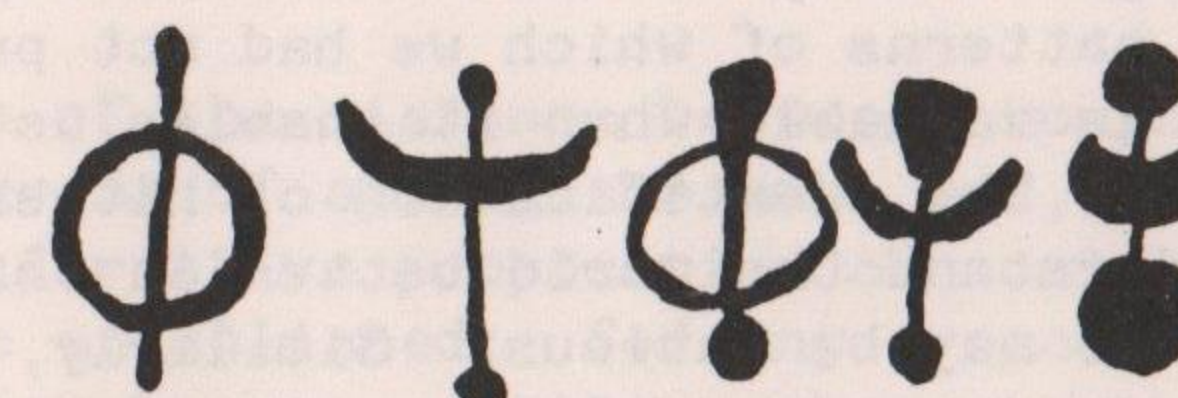
shown. Yet although this may be the 'right answer' philosophically, this separation has yet to be surpassed practically and we must not be too hasty in consigning such a convenient way of thinking and speaking to the dustbin.

Theoretical physics has taught us that we cannot reject a scientific model merely because it does not satisfy previously understood criteria for rationality. A classical explanation of some of the behaviour of atoms and their constituents is seen in the behaviour of billiard balls in our everyday world. But some of the behaviour of fundamental particles do not conform to any of the behaviour we are used to calling natural.

The instance of the causal world in which the body seems to reside compared with the a-causal world which volition seems to inhabit, is a case in which stubborn reality in the form of this unaccountable, but difficult to deny, bifurcation must be allowed to supply a new model for scientific theories.

This new a-causal model will probably remain a theoretical construct for us, lacking the reality which only experience can give it, unless we can grasp the challenge of considering Man and Nature as an essential unity. This void at the centre of causal reality, which hitherto has not been explicable in scientific terms, itself becomes a term in scientific explanation, primarily in sub-atomic physics. I refer to some implications of Heisenberg and Bohr's indeterminacy theory, and the 'uncaused' jump in electron orbits in unstable elements as instances. As billiard balls and atoms define for us the same rules of rationality, so human free-will and particle physics define others.

It is time to look a little deeper into the philosophical basis of all this.



Prehistoric symbols for human beings from Covatilla de San Juan, Eastern Spain. The concept of people as ends-in-themselves, and hence the possibility of a society and of ethics, arises in parallel with the idea of personhood; this idea is realized through language.

The Philosophical Basis

Those who are reminded by the above of the phenomena/noumena, body/will distinction in Schopenhauer are right to be so. As noumena are the essence of reality, will is the essence of humanity. We would say that there is an unknowable void in common between the essence of humanity and the essence of reality; indeed, that it is the same void, and that misunderstandings only occur when human beings, with their necessarily imperfect understanding, try to represent reality in language - or imagine that reality is represented in language. Language can treat only of phenomena.

Where we do not accept the dualism which is implied in this distinction is that, like Kant and Nietzsche, we cannot see the sense, or the reference,

in attempting to refer in language to what cannot be put into language, an attempt to know the unknowable. Our account of the process of reasoning, and the language in which the noumenal base is referred to, makes use of Wittgenstein's ladder, which is 'kicked away' once the objective is reached. The noumenal is indicated to us not by its presence as an object of knowledge but by its complete absence. Our own consciousness is not present to us as knowledge - and how could it be? 'The eye cannot see itself'. The central nature of reality is not open to our understanding precisely because we share with it that nature; we are in reality and of reality.

Our account of language is that it is primarily a tool or a set of tools; that it is a way of doing things as well as the form in which logical propositions are expressed.

We tend to think that because some of the theories which account for some of the facts we experience conform to the familiar cause-and-effect pattern of billiard balls, that they have an exclusive plausibility. But plausibility is a two-way relation. What is plausible is what is often observed, but what is often observed also becomes plausible.

We forget that the highest level of scientific theory does not account for the facts or explain them, but merely describes them. Cause-and-effect is really no more understandable or less mysterious to us than its absence. 'What we will accept as an explanation is a matter of where we feel like drawing the line'. Scientific theory encounters the noumenal and cannot go any further. The essence of reality cannot be 'explained' any further in language, which merely exists on the level of the phenomenal. It cannot go beyond the limits of human understanding. The test of understanding is whether or not we go on to show that we have understood, in our actions and in a way that makes an intended difference to the way we live.

In no way need it be in the least mysterious that we find experiences of a particular kind recurring. A leap in the understanding occurs when we grasp that reality conforms to patterns of which we had not previously been aware, and this is demonstrated as valuable when it enables us to direct and predict events better than before. The identification of hitherto obscure 'motives', for instance, helps us understand the world better in this sense, although the real status of those motives may be dubious. Similarly, group motives, forces of production and class agency may all provide us with a better way of understanding the world, although with the complexity of the observed phenomena they can hardly ever be thought of as anything more than provisional.

Such leaps occur through the reconstruction of meaning in language. Language is a poor fit to reality, but advances continually in its usefulness. Different parts of it serve different functions, but share the purpose of helping us live better, and in this operative function they do not differ from any other tool.

Some advances in understanding of this kind were: differential calculus, the zero, the definition of 'force' in physics and the postulation of bacteria. Newton grasped in an instant (so we are led to believe) that the Moon and the planets were governed by the same laws as the apocryphal apple. Pasteur realised that much experience could be explained if infection were seen as borne by tiny living organisms, although such an idea seemed ludicrous at the time and no one had seen them. He constructed tests which gave the theory further weight. The meaning of whole categories of disease, of things that happened to organic substances open to the air, changed in an instant, and beneficial effects on people's lives followed. The tests of any explanatory theory include that it be consistent with previous data, that it be the simplest possible, and that it has some perceptible testable effects.

Hope for the immediate future of Mankind rests upon the recognition of two simple ideas: that knowledge is of phenomena and that human beings are also noumena. None of the words we presently use go out of use, but we no longer know whether to call knowledge direct or indirect, or whether we are realists or idealists. But two things are clear; although we do not know how - because for us there are only two possibilities, causal and a-causal - human beings possess a responsibility for their actions, and in our coincidence with the unknowable lies the key to understanding knowledge.

Experience is structured by the ego. Confronted by the same object, the engineer will see engineering, the designer will see design, the artist will see form and colour, the acquisitive will see property, the user will see utility and so on. An animal may only see a hiding-place, but it is likely that they will not see what we see as a 'thing', as a 'thing' at all. A frog will see it best if it is moving - its interest is mainly in food and predators.

Ambition is a form of intensionality. Our interests as living things with particular needs reach out and indicate the world in certain ways. Human interest dresses the world in categories. This is the 'condition of objective experience' (1).

It is impossible to conceive of an interest-less perceiver, a disinterested subject. The duality of perceiver/perceived, sign/signified posits to the observer quantity in the very essence of being. This is an illusion, fostered by the reification of grammar. The world is only one thing.

To know what is not, to be able to assign a modality of existence to propositions is (while nevertheless 'objective') to employ the ego. Nothing indicates what does not exist but for our own ambitions. To be conscious is to know what is not - a subject must be able to do this to differentiate between the self and the other.

An illustration of the distance between thought and reality is that for us, the infinite regress of syllogisms must end, but for the world, it can't. The truth of every informative proposition can only be established by another. This in turn must be established; for any proposition to have a determinate truth value, there must be a proposition whose truth is dependent on no other. But this is impossible, because this would require an empirical proposition which was unconditionally true. Yet quite obviously, this is a problem for human beings alone. The same goes for the problem that for a sentence to have a determinate sense, there must be simples with a determinate truth-value.

Category mistakes involving, for instance, 'the statue and the bronze' or 'the fist and the hand' again show that the interpretative nature of consciousness is manifested in language. I can see the statue and the bronze from which it is made. When it is melted down into ingots, although the bronze is still there, where is the statue? And, more interestingly, where was it to begin with? I open my hand and the fist is gone. In what sense did it 'exist' before, and does the bronze or the hand 'exist' any more than the transient forms of them to which we gave names? It is evidently not strictly a legitimate question to ask whether the statue or the fist was 'in our head' or whether it really existed 'in the world' because no satisfactory answer could be imagined.

The mistake is to expect to find that the world corresponds to the syntactical rules we find in language and hence in our rules of thought. While in reality language is an operative system, so that if I want an 'x' (and I am bedridden!) I can say to someone else 'fetch me the 'x'' and they

come back with what I wanted. Exactly the same could be effected if, in the right circumstances, I had said 'perform the ritual Z', where it involved fetching the 'x'. Then the 'x' would be both an object and just an action within a ritual. Which is employed would be a matter of convenience. The question of whether there 'really is' an 'x' or not is immaterial.

Representing the world through language is like trying to represent the surface of a globe on a two-dimensional map. 'The cat sat on the mat'; there are not two things here, cat and mat, neither are there none; but still the cat did sit on the mat. We can still navigate by the map. In representation a new world comes into being, independent of the world, not its mirror, but a system of relationships between people through rules, whose aim is to allow cooperation. The rules are entirely its own, internal.

It might be useful to note here the precise status of linguistic rules. Language is not constructed by rules, but dissected by them in the same way that science dissects reality.

The 'syntactic fallacy' is this; to take the grammar of a statement about a state of affairs as reflecting its essential nature. Or, to assume that because a thing can be spoken of in certain terms, that then the object itself has logical clarity within these terms. The fallacy occurs, for instance, with the treatment of 'mentalistic terms'. They can be understood equally well as category mistakes. If a person is 'sad', it is reasonable to ask what this 'sadness' is and where it resides, and to posit a non-material substance, a mental medium in which this 'sadness' lurks along with all the other feelings and attributes. But such a mechanism is really unnecessary, considering that when a car is 'temperamental' in the mornings and moves 'hesitantly' round a corner we do not feel the need to ascribe it a mental life.

Linguistic questions such as 'referring' and 'meaning' cannot be pursued as subjects in their own right within a restricted field called 'linguistics'. Language is not a puzzle which has been set by some great being, so that we are sure that there is a right answer waiting if only we could unravel it. Language must be viewed as an operative system with reference to human purposes and actions. The search for the meaning of meaning is a search for a fugitive theory, while the "cash value" of meaning is social life.

The question of the ontological status of the object of consciousness inevitably arises here. There seems to be an unbridgable gulf between the world and our knowledge of it, implying dualism. All we know of, we know through the questions we ask, and there can be no observer who does not pose implicit questions related to who and what they are. 'Yet the existent in fact cannot be reduced to a finite series of manifestations' (2). The existent could be reducible to the infinite series of manifestations, but this resolution of the problem feels unsatisfactory. We feel a less hypothetical solution to our search is needed, one which is 'closed'.

There is a dynamic tension in the theory between recognition of the 'existent' as necessary and the recognition that it is unknowable; between knowing that the noumenal drops out of the equation without affecting anything, and knowing that it is in a sense absurd to let it.

The solution to the problem lies in the fact that consciousness, as intentional, cannot intend itself. It is easier to understand if language is remembered to be primarily an operative system, which only contains representation as one of its internal approximations-to-rules; words are employed 'as if' they represented. Consciousness, through language, cannot

disclose to itself the very nature of itself as representation, and to do so it would have to be able to name the un-namable.

The semantics of the word 'manifestation', as indeed 'phenomena', betray anyone who wishes to deny any sense to the words 'existent' or 'noumena'. These words exist only as binaries. Yet any attention to the implications of using either one dissolves the sense in which either is used. It is a lesson in why we should not take language for reality. The nature of the world, or our relationship to it, cannot be said in language.

Deeper than the sense in which 'object' stands for that thing which cannot be perceived, objects are things which are perceived - that is how they exist to be named. 'Noumena' is an empty name - it has no meaning except for the place it has in understanding. We know of the presence of the noumenal only by its absence to knowledge. It is an entity postulated in an attempt at comprehension, in constructing a theory.

To know the world without ego is the unrealisable aspiration of the mystics. To know the totality of presentations would be a kind of objectivity, but perhaps another approach to knowing the unknowable would be to know nothing. We can only get a simile of what it would be like to go beyond perception.

To experience is to manifold perceptions; descriptions likewise. The forms of experience and the categories in which it is understood are not found in an inventory of the contents of the universe. They are supplied by human beings, are a-priori and synthetic, and can only be described as meta-physical. To understand is to connect particulars under one of the categories; this thinking is the conscious application of the principles of objective experience.

To explain, therefore, is to order true propositions in a logical hierarchy - in syllogistic form.

How do the engineer, designer, etc., communicate with each other, if they 'see' different aspects of the same object? Human beings communicate complex interpretations by the use of common terms. The way in which an object is understood is reduced until a level of agreement is established, what could be called the material base of communication, and from this level systems of inference and identity are built using common terms and the true simpler propositions. Because this process of thought is no more than the conscious grouping of disparate experience concerning a very complex thing (ie., the world) under forms and categories, it is never more than provisional (a process of conjecture and refutation), which is why disagreements can occur.

To change consciousness is therefore to re-order objective experience (common terms) into a better explanatory system. It is the substitution of a new theory, and on much the same grounds as new scientific theories emerge. This occurs through language and can be regarded as a kind of linguistic restructuring, as changes in meaning. As meaning is fixed through a social process, their use of language reflects the degree of integration of the individual with the social.

Where all this has relevance for the issue of the material and the ideal in history is this: the interpretative power of consciousness determines both the way in which the world is understood and that it should be shaped by consciousness in a material way. Along with the meta-physical principles which underly objective experience, human beings cannot avoid bringing into existence metaphysical principles of good and duty, which they act upon. These arise in the following way.

Language is an essential pre-condition of consciousness. It brings modality into existence (x and not-x). Life is really no more than a level of self-organising complexity in matter, but it is also an explanatory term. Our experience of some objects of consciousness leads us, pre-reflectively, to group them under the title 'living', and some under 'human, living'. What is the most mysterious is what seems to be the transition from the awareness of others as 'like myself' to treating them with that special respect which we accord other people of being ends-in-themselves. It would be easy to understand if it followed from the fact that I treat myself as an end-in-itself that I should so treat others, but it does not follow. What follows is merely that they might well treat themselves as ends-in-themselves, not that I should treat them thus. The only way this could be established would be to enter into a mutual contract to treat each other as ends, so that we both benefitted. But this is a Utilitarian idea and destroys the unconditional nature of the respect we must have for other life.

All that can be said here is that any consideration of Utilitarian motives eventually undermines the Utilitarian purpose of ethics and that therefore any system of ethics must be grounded on the unconditional recognition of others as ends-in-themselves. I like to think that the recognition of others as ends occurs simultaneously with the recognition of others as beings like ourselves, and that in fact no reasoning is involved when we feel sympathy with others. Indeed, such feelings of sympathy with, for instance, the pain of others is normally involuntary and cannot be removed even if there is a 'reason' for this pain to be inflicted. Where these feelings are absent, as with psychopaths, understanding of the pain of others must be absent.

It is possible that the pre-reflective identification we have with others arose with the capability for language. Noticing that himself and other objects in the world were unified under the same sign, hypothetical Man could not fail to put himself 'in the place' of others. And with this primitive grasp of the categorical imperative, and the primitive attempt to grasp the essential nature of personhood through the idea of an eternal spirit, Man transcended the Animal and took the first step along the road to advanced society.

There are two conflicting principles in the essence of Man; the self-knowledge of desire and the recognition of others as ends. In the former, the knowledge that we desire means that we are able to conceive of what is not. We can also posit its non-fulfillment for rational ends. In the latter, our treatment of other people can only be described at a primitive stage in thought as irrational, although not without purpose. Once our treatment of other people, or our conception of them, becomes as a rational means to an end, the stage is set for totalitarianism or barbarism, which are uncongenial forms of life. Perhaps that is why, as self-organising systems whose organisation is dedicated to survival, we resist the development of the conceptual apparatus which allows such things to happen.

The reason why treatments of human beings remain right and wrong in an absolute sense, regardless of the consequences, is the same reason why it is wrong to drive through a red light even when there is nothing coming. That is, that unless certain rules are obeyed seemingly for their own sake, one day you will be careless and someone will suffer. If moral rules are only there for convenience, they are subject to erosion. One does up one's flies even when alone and there is no reason to, and if you do not bother when there is no need, you will eventually leave them open in public. A wrong act done for the greater good is still wrong, and the guilt we feel is our salvation. The balance of guilt is how we make up our mind.

I hope by now it is becoming more plausible that human beings are not entirely bound by the laws and processes which they see displayed in the world around them. Consciousness apprehends cause-and-effect, identity and continuity even in some of the movements of human beings, but these are only manifestations, the form and content of experience, not things in themselves. Human beings, no less than anything else, are noumenal too, although as with everything else, we only know the phenomenal side. It is not surprising, then, that our own true nature is unknowable to even ourselves.

Causality is one of the conditions of objective experience. We cannot understand what is not cause-and-effect, only puzzle over it. Even in ourselves, where we must inescapably confront the noumenal, our own essence remains obscure to us. We call the experience 'free will' or 'volition' and have to leave it at that.

In fixing values - what is 'good' - human beings partake of their capability for meta-physics. The whole metaphysical basis of existence is a dip into the irrational. Man has the unique capability of being able to form an idea of what does not exist, and the responsibility of being able to choose to create it. Responsibility is the inescapable finger which points through space and time to the human point where 'possible worlds' diverge. Human agency is the only place where causal chains begin.

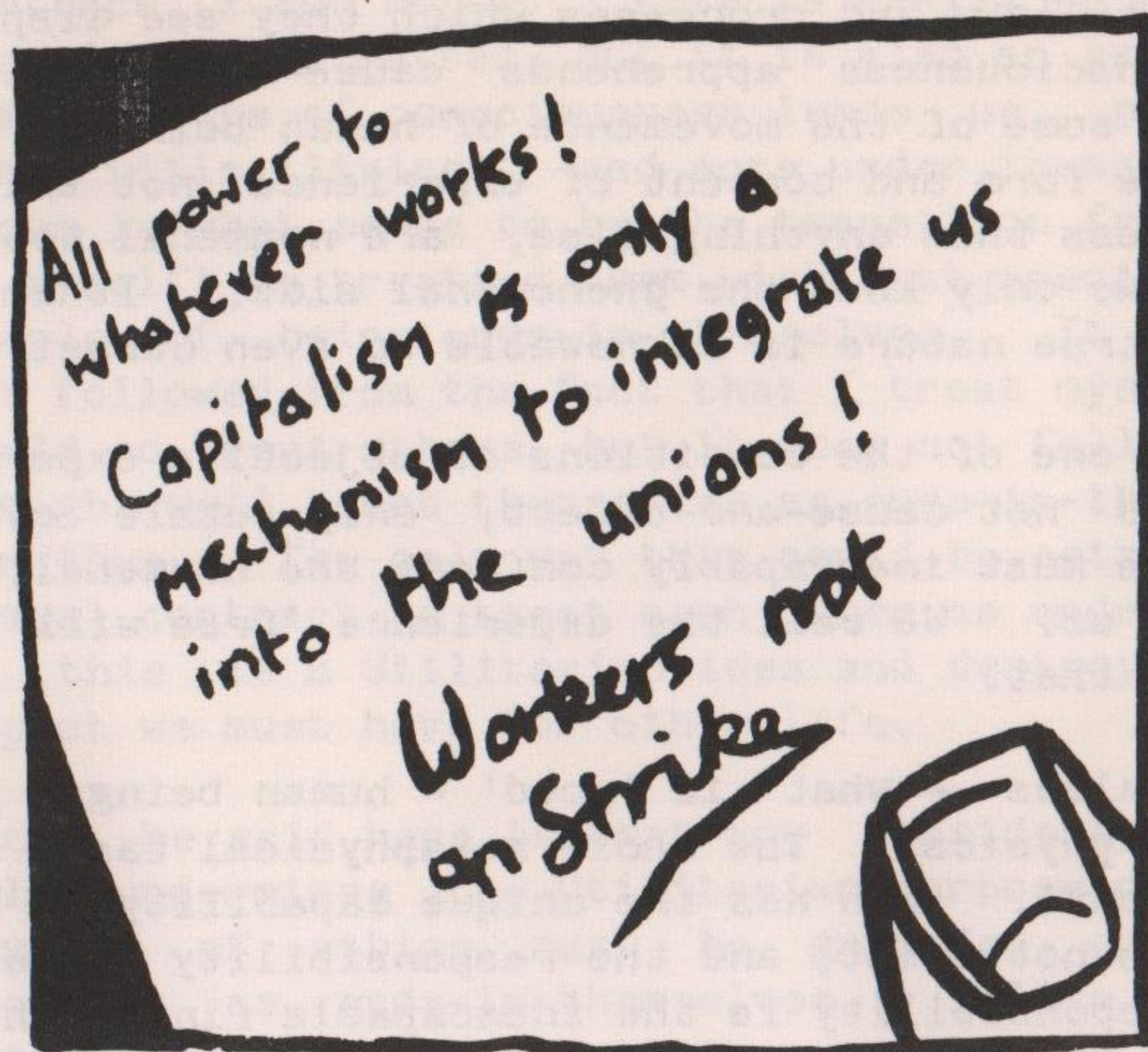
And responsibility works; the institution affects the world for the better, forcing people to recognise themselves as actors. Man is the only point of intersection of what is and what is not, he alone can determine for himself that what is not at present can become real. If historical processes alone shape history, then Man is deprived of the capability of choice.

Thus it is that conditions do not give rise to consciousness in the first instance. Conditions do give rise to consciousness - but something also gives rise to conditions. They do not arise naturally out of the structure of Nature like snowflakes. They arise from the needs, the thought and the moral decisions of human beings, which spread ripples through history like a stone thrown into a pond. We experience the freedom of others as inherited conditions, but without the concrete in which to operate we would have no freedom anyway. The material base of society is determined by the state of consciousness of human beings.

To change social institutions it is only necessary to change the way people understand the complex phenomena of the social terrain, and to do this one must establish a reduction to common terms about the material base, and then offer a better theory. A better theory is one which is more consistent, simpler, explains more and offers a better future. A successful theory today should be able to acknowledge moral freedom and Man's boundless capability for Good, eliminate the need for Original Sin, explain the present degeneracy and sweep away the fetters and obstructions which create, whilst 'guarding against', the hegemony of evil.

(see Appendix)





Class and Struggle

It must be remembered that the theory that there is a process at work in history which will end with Communism is contemporary with Darwinism, Phrenology and Freudianism among others. The first is in need of modification already from within the scientific world, and the other two are, I venture to say, already largely discredited. That, of course, is not by itself enough to discredit 'Scientific Socialism', but it would be surprising indeed if any Victorian scientific theory could come down to us entirely unchanged. The idea was thrown up at a time when it was thought that science would be able, ultimately, to be applied to every quarter. The idea that the process of history was also amenable to being totally understood through scientific laws was extremely attractive to some, the more so when linked to a higher destiny for Mankind. Its continuing popularity can only be attributed to the fact that it is in some ways a comforting idea. It would not be new to say that marxism took the place of God for those in whom he had died. They were to find, however, that they had also inherited one of the worst contradictions of religion, the more painful in that they wanted to be monistic, or at least materialist in the way they described it. The contradiction was this: Man lives in a world governed by an omnipotent power, but is given free will to test his moral courage. Only the latter is true.

Socialism is a dogma which asserts the fundamental goodness of Mankind, yet which fails to see the need for addressing the problem of values and morals. This failure stems from its nature as an eccentric cross-fertilisation of Utopianism with science, such as could only have happened at the time it did. It asserted, at root, that a world of people being nice to each other, a moral order based on consent, would come about by a natural, inevitable process in the development of the forces of production. The participants need not fully understand what they are doing, since all they have to do is react to the situation as they find it, in their class interest. The 'self-consciousness' of the working class in the Marxist sense is not self-consciousness as we know it; it is here just the part of the causal chain which comes after one set of conditions and before another. Nothing like 'decisions' or 'volitions' come into it, they are just illusions; the human mind is just one very convoluted part of the logical succession of events.

Note the logical priority of the state of things and the state of the mind. Conscious choice is not the genesis of the putative new order. Hence the glaring contradiction of a theory which raises the possibility of essential human goodness, but which condemns ethics as 'bourgeois luxuries', making the furbishment of values to humanity subservient to class struggle and 'historical necessity'. It is difficult to see how the project can get off the ground. 'Good' and 'just' do not seem to be qualities which are exactly scribed in the very heart of Nature, and cannot be expected to arise from her alone. No truly moral values can be entirely dependent on antecedent causes and conditional on historical trends.

All socialist-influenced idealists refuse, except in their deepest desperation, to consider defending or promoting higher values or confronting people directly with ideas, even though their greatest successes coincide with the adoption of a voluntarist practice. To do so consistently would undermine other idols of their faith. They prefer to see their work done (where no-one else does) behind the scenes in the mysterious engine of History. Sublimating the task of establishing values until some imaginary date in the future, it blocks its own project of establishing the reign of human values in the present. All on the basis of an unproven scientific hypothesis.

As with Freud, what is 'evidence' in Marxism is given by the theory. What does not fit the facts is not evidence, and where it is inescapable it is interpreted in an opposite way than the obvious; the strikes against black workers in America, for instance, and the Ulster Workers' Strikes of 1974 and 1986 are not 'authentic' working class struggles. The 'false consciousness' argument can invert the value of any empirical observation, attributing to workers 'real' interests and 'real' motives. It shares with Freud the nature of being metaphysical, that independence of empirical data which indicates an act of faith rather than justified belief. This is a fatal flaw in anything that purports to be scientific. There is a place in human affairs for unjustified belief, what could be called 'faith'. It is the first condition of the revolutionary. Metaphysical beliefs are simply those which cannot be substantiated; they have no substantiation or material content. They cannot be proved precisely because they are the structure of experience itself. The trouble arises when they are treated as empirical statements, or deriving from experience.

Marxism is independent of the evidence in the sense specified. There is no conceivable test which would prove or disprove it. Even were the workers to rise up with one voice to reject Communism, go on to benefit as never before from Capitalism, take part in its every institution with every sign of willingness, and Capitalism to go on to last for a thousand years, this would still not falsify the theory. The apparatus of false consciousness, bourgeois reaction, reformism and amelioration is already there, but most reasonable observers will have drifted away.

A Marxist might attempt to show that some of the assertions of Marx are testable and come out true, as indeed many are, for instance the notion of surplus value; though it should be said that even accepted as a category of value brought into existence by a particular method of enquiry, its exclusive origin from within variable capital is neither convincingly demonstrated in theory nor observable in practice. But there are a spread of statements in Marxism of varying veridicality. Many are testable and come out false, on any normal criteria. If one of the testabilities of Freud is therapeutic success (which it fails), surely one of Marx is successful class struggle in the places he indicated, the industrial proletariat. Another would be the development of worse and worse crises leading to insurrection. Marx too fails the test of 'therapeutic success'.

'Truth' is, for Marxism, a false category. It is subsumed under praxis;

what is merely 'right for the time'. But there is another dangerous circularity here. For the economic theories Marx propounded and the 'proofs' offered are offered as true statements, as justified belief, and these are what is supposed to support the theory of 'praxis'. How can a system of truths support an idea that is anti-truth? Unless, circularly, the truths that establish 'praxis' are merely 'right for the time'.

Scientific Socialism is based on one simple idea; dialectical materialism applied to the history of Man. This means that nature is a continually changing flux between contradictory forces, forces which act to unfold a pre-determined series of events. Economic forces and the forces of production take a special part in this process, when applied to human history. The forces which determine social relations are those which are produced by advances in the techniques of production. As surely as cause follows effect, stages in the development of the forces of production succeed one another in a predictable manner, and this development takes place within the laws of economics. With this succession of economic situations comes a succession of social relations, or relations of production. The final relation of production, communism, happens when the forces of production oblige the proletariat to seize the means of production.

The theory holds that, as the bud holds within itself the certainty of its own supersession in the form of the flower, capitalism cannot help but create the conditions for its own destruction. It brings together, houses, feeds and educates the proletariat, becoming increasingly dependent on them. The dangerous proximity of individuals in socialised production acts as a hothouse to breed dissatisfaction and dissent. The proletariat, whose interests are contradictory to those of the capitalists, cannot help but assert their own class interests; to contribute to economic crisis by forcing concessions from the capitalists, and to be forced by economic crisis to act for themselves. There comes a point where, powerful and self-conscious, the proletariat finds itself in a world where capitalist order is collapsing all around it. The contradictory interests of the classes, brought into a relationship with each other through economic necessity, cannot be resolved and provokes a final crisis which cannot be managed. The proletariat steps in and becomes the dominant class, coming to consciousness in parallel with the conditions that make this possible, and institute a new social relation.

That, as far as I understand it, is a basic statement of Scientific Socialism. It leaves two questions, at least, unclear; the role of free will and of right and wrong. All modern attempts to revise it within a left-wing framework have left it, in substance, unchanged. Or rather, all those who have changed it have left the Left. Perhaps it is now impossible to do the former without the latter. The fetters of Scientific Socialism have hampered radicals and idealists of a liberal persuasion since their conception, and it is high time we moved on without them.

Every statement and prediction in the description of Scientific Socialism above is wrong, and not just because the description is wrong. Only the loosest interpretation of the evidence could lend them support.

Many have pointed out before that capitalism is far more adaptable than Marx could have given it credit for. How, also, the institutionalisation of the class struggle has given capitalism a new lease of life, and allowed it to ride out rough patches which, ironically, before the advent of the 'Labour Movement' it might not have been able to survive. The organisation of the workers into self-conscious, centralised class bodies with a Socialist programme has led, in fact, to a lessening of their radical potential. However, what those with Marx-tinted spectacles have failed to grasp is that this fact does not merely postpone the day of reckoning, or lengthen the death-throes of capitalism, but continues to postpone it indefinitely, and

lengthen them infinitely. With the idea of meaningful change led by the working class leading to a definite conclusion, falls the whole edifice of class determinism.

There should be little doubt left in anyone's mind that what is usually called 'class struggle' has precious little unique relevance for aspirations to a new world. Yet even those on the left who subscribe the least to any form of 'inevitablism' cling on to the belief that it is important, in the hope, presumably, that something good will come of it eventually.

"Sooner or later, due to one of those 'accidents' unavoidable under the present system, the masses will enter into action anew, to modify the conditions of their existence. The outcome of this struggle will depend on the degree of consciousness, of initiative, of will, of capacity for autonomy which the workers will then show.

But the formation of this consciousness and the affirmation of this autonomy depend to an important degree on the continuous work of a revolutionary organisation which has understood the experience of a century of working class struggles. It must understand, above all, that both the objective and the means of all revolutionary activity is the development of the conscious and autonomous action of the workers."

Cardan, Modern Capitalism & Revolution.

Cardan has dispensed with the idea of a logical progression of events in history, and has rediscovered the true meaning of history as the interaction of human agencies; for the early Cardan, those two classes involved in class struggle (3). So, having done away with what might be called the determinist component of Marxism, Cardan has retained what might be called the consequent theorem of working class struggle, but within the framework of free will. I do not wish to say that this move is untenable. Indeed, it is backed up in as much as Cardan has replaced economic forces of immiseration, confronting the working class and forcing it to deal with the problem, with the less immediate force of the increasing management of time and bureaucratisation. But he has seriously fudged the question of which is logically prior, History or Will. He merely exposes more clearly the way in which this question is not resolved in Marx by separating the two, holding both that there is a relationship of necessitation between material conditions and mental states and that there is not. The mechanics of determinism are still there, but they do nothing.

Cardan's only crime is not to take his conclusions to their logical end. He continues to act as if he were addressing the same people in the same places and for the same reasons, not the hugely expanded 'working class' which he defined and not with a completely different philosophical outlook radically different than any other which addressed the problem of the liberation of Labour. And he still assumes that there is a causal process at work which will throw up greater and greater crises. He continues to adhere to a manifestation of class struggle whose worth and form is a result of old Marxist categories.

This can only be because he has two other beliefs, shared by many of the 'new' left; the first is that class struggle as it is known in its classical form is either the result of the proletariat's developing consciousness, or will itself further the development of that consciousness. The other is that there is a 'true voice' of the proletariat, its authentic voice, which is seen only in a distorted form in industrial action (distorted by treacherous leadership or false consciousness), and which will find its true expression only when the limits of protest are clearly displayed.

The first is an error. On the contrary, there is no evidence that class struggle of the classical type helps to foster anti-capitalism, at least any more than anything else. Surely there are enough examples of reactionary strikes and strikes which are purely in pursuance of sectional interests to demonstrate this, but if more proof were needed surely it is that the present state of consciousness exists despite a century and more of turbulent labour history. After a strike the level of combativity soon falls back to what it was before or lower, even after a victory. There may be more strikes in times of labour's ascendancy, but this need not affect the worker's ideas in between, or during, the strikes. Industrial militancy, no matter what its form, always in the end serves only to strengthen the worker's integration with the system that makes labour into a commodity and comes down to a continuation of barter by other means. Any contention that there is a hidden motive for the worker's action must fall under Occam's Razor.

The genesis of the most significant thoughts and attitudes in individuals as often as not lies in experiences outside the workplace. How can this be so, if in labour is displayed capitalist relations at their most bald? One would expect this to be so for one of two reasons; that the area in which capitalist relations are most obvious is also the area in which false consciousness is most prevalent, or, if the obviousness of capitalist relations bears no relationship to dissenting attitudes to them. The first is another example where what seems to be evidence for one thing becomes evidence for its opposite, and the conundrum is inescapable anyway. The second could be true if those relations were consented to in full knowledge of the facts, which is possible, or if there were no link between the intensity of oppression and the reaction to it, which is less likely.

What is a far simpler view is that capitalist relations are not displayed at their worst in the workplace at all. There is much circumstantial evidence for this. The worker often finds that he or she welcomes labour time as a respite from home and leisure life, and the old 'Last International' definition of "leisure" as "work your boss doesn't pay you for" has a ring of truth. Or, setting aside whether or not exploitation is felt at its worst at work, it might be that the expression of dissatisfaction with the totality occurs in a different location to that in which it is experienced.

The apparent failure of the process of struggle to significantly alter working class thought for the better, has led those who recognise this fact yet still remain within the tradition of Left philosophy to question merely the methods of proletarian action, and to define 'authentic' proletarian action in contrast to actual proletarian action. This takes assertions about 'class struggle' out of the empirical realm and into the theoretical mechanisms of an abstract idea. Likewise, in an attempt to come to terms with the a-historical nature of the present, they have been led to emphasise those parts of the contradictory attitude of Marxism to determinism which address the need on the individual scale for the exercise of free will, without renouncing the scientific side of Marx's socialism.

This tension between free-will and determinism which arose with Marx's attempt to marry Utopian and Scientific thought lies at the heart of the contradictions in the modern Left. Driven to intervene in the process of struggle, by the belief that 'it' must happen and the knowledge that it isn't, there is a sense that the Left is not really committed to any particular issue they participate in. This impression is not entirely mistaken, because industrial action is just, in their eyes, a rocket under the proletariat to propel them into the rarified atmosphere of the heightened consciousness. Anything which lights the fuse is permissible, no matter how many untruths have to be swallowed by the workers to get them on the march. 'Truth', to the Marxist, of course, is a relative concept, relative to the needs of the time,

so there is nothing wrong with getting people to believe things that are not true. The mistake is to lead people into making demands of the system, and within the system, which only the cadres know cannot be granted, and then wondering why people do not draw the conclusion that the system itself is at fault. The moral status of dangling baubles in front of a gullible proletariat to entice them into making impossible demands on capitalism leaves much to be desired. Befuddled by the collision of these untruths with reality, and not to say mistrustful of these 'friends of the working class' for not telling them the whole truth, it is no wonder that the average proletarian does not make the leap of imagination to revolution and Utopia. He simply cannot understand, and who can blame him, how the unreasonable, selfish and callous Trade Unions could lead to a world of brotherly love. Or how their anti-technological, anti-progressive protectionist attitude could lead to the abolition of work. What the ordinary person does not fully grasp is that it is simply 'necessary' for them to believe those things and take those actions - through their own free will - so that the general laws of late capitalist economics can take their course. The 'hidden agenda' allows this to be consistent with Marxist theory.

The conventional wisdom is that the working class comes into conflict with the bourgeoisie because they must assert their own class interest. Yet it is far from obvious that the best interest of the working class lie in this strategy, either within or outside the accepted limits of labour bargaining. Judging from past experience, the best interests of the worst off would seem to be served by 'knuckling under' to the forces of the market and social peace, albeit with some moderate upward pressure on wages from Union organisations. The interests of the working class also lie in an all-out assault on all the conditions of the market system, but not in the disruption of market forces with nothing to replace them. Revolution is one thing, and the practical dictates of living in the present system another; the two are to a large extent separate. As we have seen, there is no necessary connection between agitation within wage bargaining and Utopianism.

The indications are far more strong that an alliance between the bourgeoisie and the working class to overthrow the market serves the best interests of both. An alliance which is, de facto, taking place already. This is not to imply, of course, that their contradictions can be resolved on a day-to-day economic basis.

There is one particular use of terminology which is a grave hindrance to the Left. This is that talk of 'worker's consciousness' as a quantity which there is simply more or less of, according to how much communist-anarchist dogma they believe in. There is much in these theories which is worth believing in, but it is a mistake to treat a one dimensional quantifier as if it were the only quantifier of consciousness. Indeed, to treat consciousness as a quantity is the most culpable blindness, as consciousness is much more a quality or a mode than a quantity. A worker who does not believe in communism or anarchism does not have an objectively 'low' consciousness, he or she simply does not believe in it; they have plenty of consciousness, but just about other things. He or she will conform to capitalism's rules because they don't believe in anything else enough to stop them; they may well positively believe in them. This must be accorded the respect that any freely held view merits, and it is counter-productive to treat it as anything else - as illusion, aberration etc. We should not insult people by saying that they have a 'low' consciousness; that is a hangover from Scientific Socialism, where consciousness of the inevitable and empirical march of Socialism does constitute the only and objective coming to consciousness, like waking up - but consciousness is not really like that. Everyone is conscious already.

The alternative to the 'inevitability' of class consciousness is that

each individual has to be convinced of the desirability of one particular state of affairs, in the same way that they are susceptible to being convinced of the value or otherwise of pasteurised milk or junk food. Real people in the real world pretty soon become aware of the patronising nature of any other attitude, and are not impressed, and the real successes of socialist alternatives coincide precisely with the adoption of voluntarist methods. The onus thus devolves from encouraging a particular form of activity in the belief that this will give rise to the correct point of view by some automatic process, onto a purely intellectual struggle, in which a battle is waged for the heart and mind of each person as a rational individual. What has been seen as a tactic, militancy, is much more like an outcome of something else - the development of consciousness of a particular kind - and only one of its effects.

The mass of the population simply do not recognise many of the 'attacks' on the working class which the Left accuse the dominant classes of as attacks; they feel that the system delivers more or less what it promises. Certainly the socialist critique does not stimulate the quantity of dissatisfaction necessary to prompt the mass into forsaking what they now have. The 'first cause' in moving to commitment against the status quo is absent; the premise is not fulfilled, so the consequent does not follow. The Socialist objections to the present system are, as far as many are concerned, largely academic, and not likely to make enough difference to everyday life to justify a revolutionary break from normality. What we have to do is change the premise, to make them relevant to a significant proportion of people's everyday lives.

If one does not accept the usual account of revolutionary change, then as a first approximation it would not be far from the truth to say that what happens in the mining villages is no more important than what happens to any other people in any other square mile of any other locality. The dawning of the awareness of what unmediated life could be like can happen in any situation. It will be strangled at birth, nevertheless, if there is not some credible alternative already there to take the place of things as they are, and by this we mean something more than the collective suffocation of a fudged commodity-controlled State, the worst of both worlds.

The workplace is no more important in the development of ideas than the forest, or the shopping centre than the fireplace. The riot is neither a more decisive break than the faltering step taken in the weary traverse of a modern urban desert. The experience of collective action is felt equally in the drunken spree, the loving couple and the playing field.

Frustration with the succession of petty irritations and major absurdities which sometimes seem to be all that life is made up of can, without the idea that there can be an alternative, drive a person to a bleak kind of pessimism about the human condition. The cause of life's misery can be misplaced either in the unchangeable nature of human beings or in unfortunate individuals who seem to represent it. Whereas frustration plus an alternative makes the sufferer an enemy of the system rather than of the rest of humanity.

The price in time that has been paid to the idea that class struggle is the most important and constructive process in society is already great. But any cursory glance at History will show that there are far too many exceptions to prove the class rule. A small landowner or trader in the English Civil war could have been a Royalist, a Presbyterian, an Independent, a Leveller, a Ranter or a Digger to name the most famous of the factions to which a person could belong. Winstanley, the Digger, had a middle class background, and just whose class interest was best served by the communal cultivation of common land....the landless labourers? Surely only after the turning of small farms

into large estates to enable capital accumulation to take place; the necessary precursor for any genuine 'proletarian revolt' according to the tram-line theorists. Even the basic Marxist interpretation of the Civil War can't stand up to the facts. This interpretation is based on the idea that the conflict was fundamentally a battle between 'new' money and 'old', and that all the religious and political rhetoric that surrounded that war were mere veneers encrusted upon the real economic class conflict taking place. It was a battle between 'feudal' economic practices and 'bourgeois'. And yet the most important contemporary chronicler of that War, Clarendon, himself a Royalist, admitted that on his side the new economic practices were rife: "The revenues of too many of the Court consisted principally in enclosures and improvements of that nature". What is being stated here is that substantial numbers of 'capitalist' landlords were fighting on the allegedly 'feudal' side.

The only satisfactory explanation of this is that there is something more important than 'class' or 'economic activity' which decides a person on which side he will fight, and that possibly the hinge upon which such decisions are made is one's personal view of the world and oneself within it, and that it is upon all those private agonisings that sides are made and taken, and wars won or lost.

History is littered with examples from the Luddites to the hippies, of human beings who did not fulfill their class interests, but transcended them. Engels, the proletarian revolutionary, was himself a factory owner. Class is just one variable, amongst others, that one takes into account when making one's decision.

What really unites those who should know better with those who have no desire to know better is a belief that the clash of class forces throughout time has been what has determined the nature of society and that everything, be it culture, ideas, or form of life, is determined by the state of play between the classes. The ghost of Scientific Socialism haunts contemporary rebels and revolutionaries, leading to a terrifying suspension of critical faculties at exactly the moment when they are needed most. Instead of looking at humanity's position in the world realistically as a process of human will and desire coming into conflict with the mistakes of the past, these 'autonomists' deny humanity's practical autonomy from history and place their faith in a salvation as morally attractive as the second coming. The working class is engaged in an inevitable struggle with the dominant classes which will bring forth the New Age; therefore every whim of the former class must be valuable, even if it means the proliferation of useless jobs, the maintenance of social museum pieces, inflation etc., while the consequences of those demands are not fully understood or desired.

Among revolutionaries, vision has been lost and replaced by a quasi-religious faith in the inevitability of the working class to get the right ideas without any input from anyone else. Even those who, faced with mass 'false consciousness' from their chosen revolutionary subject, believe the role of the Party to be crucial, then see their function as disclosers of an objectively true consciousness, dishonestly present themselves as within the proletariat as intellectual workers and, with a philosophical somersault, come to see their own arrival and purpose as yet another inevitable factor within the historically determined schema. 'Utopian' becomes one of the worst forms of insult amongst revolutionaries, and so-called thinkers shy away from blueprints and analyses, as if humanity will just trip and stumble its way into the new world.

When reality does impinge on these revolutionaries, when they see the growth of anti-social behaviour within the working class (robbery, racial attacks, rape), they either refuse to place responsibility with the individual by justifying such actions as a response to their exploited condition, or

elevate a-morality as a form of class struggle, making a curious exception in the case of sexual attacks. Instead, they prefer to talk about the dehumanising process of class rule, which it undoubtedly is, without realising that one can only start to talk about a humane society by tackling individual responsibility and values.

In commodity society, the working class's interest must lie in the optimal extraction of more and more commodities, and the pursuance of these interests does not lead inevitably to anything else. There is nothing about being working class, or any other class, which makes a person more likely to want a non-commodity society; there is no evidence to the contrary, and to think there is is just wishful thinking. It therefore does not stand to reason that those who have a vision of a non-commodity society (and a society without arbitrary power) should spend their energies on those areas of social activity which only include the working class. Nor does a Gorzian redefinition of the working class help - there is nothing about being black, gay, order-taker, unemployed, rioter, white-collar or female which gives a predilection to progressive ideas, although all of those people may subscribe to them and take elements of their experience as grounds. But we all have experience and our own experiences form a personal world of absurdity and tragedy.

The same ethic today dominates all classes. This can manifest itself in either acquisitive individualism or co-operative self interest. For the working class, attainment of wealth and power has traditionally taken the form of co-operative self-interest, organising itself into unions and parties designed to ameliorate the condition of the whole class. In this, these organisations take their place in the dynamic structure of capitalism. It would be surprising if this proved to be a fatal flaw. Like any group of petty capitalists, the working class squabbles over the spoils of commodity society, largely at the expense of other members of their own class, and success is determined by their importance to the uninterrupted circulation of things and money. This cannot but lead to the shrinking of horizons and further commitment to the system as it is. It seems to us that the revolutionaries of our era should look more to what they are fighting for and less to what the system makes people fight for. If they have the courage of their convictions why do they seem to place them second to the solution of the apparent 'immediate' problem - a tactic by which they justify ever more activity in the present and ever less thought about the future?

Indeed, it often seems to be the case that the two aims of an effective strike and of social consciousness are incompatible. Strikes at power stations, hospitals and schools spring to mind. Even the disruption by revolutionaries of a MacDonald's, admirable as it is from one point of view, raises the question of the principle involved in causing annoyance, 'suffering' of a sort, of an involuntary kind, on other people 'in their interests' as the revolutionary perceives them.

The pursuance of an effective strike often requires the cultivation in the worker, spurred on in some instances by militants, of a disregard for the human consequences of their actions. Everyone will know what I mean by this, even those who have done something similar but believe that the total consequences of these actions, or omissions, are good. While the insensitivity or callousness of a striker towards the effects of his or her actions on those who rely on their goods and services is (often seen to be) necessary to the strike, the exact opposite of those attitudes would seem to be necessary to the development of a truly social being.

Now while we would have no hesitation in approving industrial action of a kind which only hurts the bosses, we feel that this option has been insufficiently explored in the past. The simple sanction of 'withdrawing

one's labour' is by far from being the only one or the most obvious, and is only thought to be so because of a simplistic Marxist account of the defining conditions of human life. The example of busmen who stop taking fares and of the Northampton nurses during the 1982 dispute who provided care of 'too high' a standard, and of the Car Workers in an auto plant near Detroit who took direct action to improve the product (4), are ones to bear in mind here.

The use of other people's suffering as a tactic in the struggle to advance the class struggle is one example of the treatment of human beings as a mere means to an end rather than an end in themselves. We have attempted to show in what came before why we think this incompatible with the development of a truly social being.

Nor could we fail to condemn the position the militant puts himself or herself in by presuming to have correctly and clearly seen someone else's interests in spite of what that person themselves may think, with such certainty as to provide the right to cause suffering or inconvenience to them. Clearly, someone does have the right, even the duty, to forcibly stop me unknowingly driving over a bridge that is collapsed in the middle. An expression of a legitimate civil power may have some of the same rights and duties, but which may not respect the interests of each individual, instead acting on the interests of society as a whole. I do not wish to go into that here. Suffice it to say that a group or individual with an unpopular or minority view (about the interests of the whole) does not have the right to act as if it were true, even though it might be true, in the case where those actions would adversely affect the interests of other people as they perceive them. Of course, having said this any democratic society does extend the right to some extent for minorities to do this, and does this in the interests of its own survival, and everyone should be free in a non-therapeutic penal system to elect to break the law and take the consequences. A society in which offenders are treated with therapy to 'reform' them are more totalitarian, because they truly cannot tolerate dissent, than those which merely exert of well-understood and simple punishment.

Perhaps the most relevant division of society today is between ideals. This is the single common factor between those who are opposed to the system and those who are for it. To a large extent today it could be said that it is not class that determines consciousness but consciousness that determines class. Consciousness is correlated with class and wealth, but not reliably so. The super-rich are very likely to be on the Other Side, but this is not to rule out the possibility of someone with wealth being subversive - truly disaffected, or to deny the fact of the truly non-disaffected reactionary and anti-progressive proletarian. There is a large measure of justification for proletarian violence towards the rich, but this should not be taken to provide a rigorous basis for a total explanation. Nor would we deny that class is to a large degree inherited; but we must recognise the huge implications of the fact that this is less and less so.

Society is dominated neither by the abstract power of capital, nor by a hierarchical structure, although both do exist. Society is made up firstly of many tiny commodity relations; capitalist ideology permeates everywhere, it is the nuts and bolts of the relations of production and consumption and in the end the relation of Man to his environment. It is slightly misleading to talk in the language of domination and overthrowing, although we do so ourselves, because it allows the enemy to be reified and personalised. The disadvantage is that it distracts attention from the task of tackling ideology on the individual level (the cop in us all), abdicating responsibility from Man himself to the mythical superentity which is keeping an innocent humanity at bay by force. 'The Spectacle is a relation between people' and 'You can't blow up a social relation' are slogans with more than a kernel of truth. The

gross personalised domination which we witness is the consequence, not the cause, of the unthinking acceptance by ourselves of the rules of the commodity and the condition of accumulated power.

We are dominated by Capital, yes, but in the shape of sixty million capitalists. Secondly, to abdicate responsibility and absolve blame is to imply that humanity is essentially not in control of history, and at the mercy of uncontrollable God-like forces. It seems to be odd for atheists to propose that, without the aid of a compassionate God, nature has a hand in organising the satisfaction of human desires. All the evidence is that nature, on the contrary, is indifferent to human needs. Having driven capitalism out of existence once, who is to say that productive forces will not re-animate the corpse at some later date and send it back to haunt us once more? Or something much worse? Nature does not seem to have any interest in making social organisation agreeable to human beings.

Both the development of productive forces acting on consciousness and consciousness acting upon productive forces is at the centre of the historical process, surely, otherwise history would be completely out of human control. If Man had no freedom there would not be the possibility of moral actions. If, as Marxists believe, history is ultimately out of our control, why do they continue to talk in the language of freewill and generally behave as if they thought otherwise, with no account of the experience of free will, on a rationale which supposes the opposite?

"....the essence of socialism is the domination of men over all aspects of their life". (Cardan, Redefining Revolution). The 'development of the productive forces' within the 'historical process' allows this flowering of free will to come about. How does this act of will come out of the absence of free will? 'Nothing will come of nothing....' (King Lear, I.i.(92)).

As we have suggested, a more significant division of society today is between ideas, or more specifically between different forms of social relation, namely:

i) The commodity social relation. This could equally well be termed the commodity mode of information, the commodity being seen as a form of communication between people. The commodity social relation can exist between employers and employees, capitalists and proletarians, order givers and order takers, buyer and seller, consumer and producer, worker and employee, man and nature; indeed between anyone and anything. It is the reification of the two or more parties in an ideological nexus. The pseudo-objects to which the parties are reduced are commodities since their value or the value of the relationship between them is seen in terms of exchange with an abstract commodity. The divisions of interests within the commodity social relation form a dynamic within the capitalist system, producing a series of potential crises that are then partially or wholly reconciled. Thus the dominant social relation and the capitalist system which is the totality of that relation is strengthened and perpetuated.

ii) The pleasure tendency, which is a marginalised mode of information and social relation but a real threat to the commodity social relation, and which is the transcendent impulse to the post-capitalist revolutionary society. This conflict is influenced by other conflicts, dynamics, socio-historical conditions and by human will.

Human relations have been transformed into market relations. The commodity social relation exists essentially intact in the drive for bureaucratic-hierarchical organisation (one of many contemporary expressions of power). Power does not cause the commodity social relation or the

commodity social relation power. Bureaucratic state-capitalism is the two combined in a single expression. The existence of the commodity social relation cannot be explained causally except insofar as pointing out that it has its origin as a form of communication developed in response to certain conditions, which include economic scarcity, the low level of literacy, scarcity of books and paper, limited communications, language difficulties, the absence of effective civil order; as well as people's views of the human condition. It's continued existence depends primarily on the inertia of an economic organisation with exchange-value and equivalence as its logic.

There are many 'contradictions' within capitalism, and many struggles; for instance macroeconomic vs. microeconomic, the expropriation and realisation of surplus value, liquidity vs. investment, mismanagement, management or the lack of management, the qualitative vs. the quantitative, the distribution of surplus, the exclusion vs. the inclusion of individuals in relation to their activities. Not to say adjustment made necessary by changed resources, advances in the means of production, and the changes in the preferences of human beings or the ideologies of our leaders. All of these contradictions, including that of the interests of the poor and the rich, merely represent the dynamics of the system at work. They need not pose fatal problems if the system is managed intelligently, which unfortunately it often is.

For production to 'become the realm of creativity of the associated producers' (Cardan, Redefining Revolution), it must be taken out of the realm of the commodity social relation and into the realm of the pleasure tendency, a higher manifestation of social relations. If nothing else, the new forms of communication demand that this higher stage of efficiency be realised. We are trying to do away with a form of communication which interposes instrumental reasoning into the relationships between people, and which eventually tends to become a thing in its own right whose behaviour has little to do with real human feelings and efficiencies.

Like Cardan, however, and in common with others, we reject the ideas of the dominant role of the Party and of economic determinism. Although we recognise that the pleasure tendency is an essence or description existing in the here and now, this in no way means that we believe that the pleasure tendency will inevitably triumph over the dominant social relation. The autonomy of people from nature is the extent to which they can create, recognise and act upon ideas, a facility termed the 'will', to change nature to suit their own wishes. The new world cannot be left to chance, providence or natural laws - only to human choice.

Although anger and oppression may concentrate itself at a particular social point, and so too reaction against conditions, in that such a reaction is without a programme it is directionless. Hegemony falls to that which can control chaos, stop violence, distribute goods and organise a civil society in place of arbitrary power (cf. Parliament in the English Civil War). The mistake is to imagine that we can do away with the notion of 'thought' as separate from 'action'. Firstly, a respect for proletarian reaction does not relieve the revolutionary of the need to indulge in theory, since it is needed to distinguish 'autonomous' proletarian action from less palatable forms of autonomous proletarian action. This itself is a process of the understanding. And secondly, implying as it does the abolition of the distinction between thought and action in any subject, not just the revolutionary subject, this view undermines the essential concept of Man as a conscious, reasoning animal. Without reflection, without being able to frame a goal and the ways of realising it in the imagination, for neither of which is class position a premise, Man is just a reactive brute.

Class is only as 'natural' as any other system of classification. It is a way of drawing a line so that those people one wants in one category are

found there. The 'nothing to sell but their labour power' definition no longer does this, even for Marxists. In altering the definitions, however, to take account of shifting social conditions, the basis of Marxist economic and social predictions are undermined.

There may seem to be little in common between the company director in his country residence, the insurance salesman in his semi-detached and the waitress in a council estate; but it is in terms of the shared values of these people, which the Marxist denegrates as 'bourgeois' and the rest of us call 'liberal', that a radical alternative must be proposed by those seeking qualitative change.

Humanity has never moved towards a new form of society without debate, polemic, vision and intellectual struggle. Still less is a society where the pleasure tendency is allowed free reign likely to be brought about unconsciously on the back of demands for '10% Now!', and other examples of immediate gratification. The standards which the bourgeois revolution set in rational enquiry, the pursuit of knowledge, technological achievement, intellectual progress and respect for the individual must be continued and improved upon. A society without either the commodity or accumulated power to 'guide' it requires first and foremost human beings to be aware of their social nature, the limits of that social nature and a knowledge of what things are connected to what and what are not. This awareness goes against the prevailing ethos of our time, where things which are connected are separated and things which are separated are brought together. The elucidation of this social principle and the exploration of the boundaries of the social is a task of far greater importance than winning any particular strike. We have to recognise, no matter how much it hurts, that radical and revolutionary methods are co-opted and recuperated as much by the working class as the capitalist system for reactionary ends in the war of all against all, and that this happens without any 'rise in consciousness'. In other words, a person cannot accept an argument until it has been presented to them, and radical activity does not necessarily mean radical ideas.

No matter what the weight of conditions, our hope lies in the fact that whatever is apprehended by the mind can equally well be negated in the imagination. Whatever exists, the possibility of its opposite resides within us. Where there is hate there can be love, where there is indifference there can be compassion, where there is the market there can be gift. We can never lose the capability for vision as long as we are human. Sometimes negation is of the wrong thing, and sometimes what seems like negation is just reflection; but there are people living today who are trying to reverse all that is sick in this society. Tomorrow belongs to them, the Utopians, and the laugh with which they are greeted today is evinced because a joke is a reversal of the expected, but the power of the imagination is the equal of whatever reality it encounters.

Notes

- (1) Kant, 'Critique of Pure Reason'
- (2) Sartre, 'Being and Nothingness'
- (3) Later, in 'Redefining Revolution', Cardan moved towards a position where consciousness becomes the determining factor.

"In the meantime, the only differentiation which has a real practical importance is that which exists, at nearly all levels of the pyramid (except, of course, at the top), between those who accept the system and those who, in the everyday reality of production, fight against it.

(4) Management and unions (UAW) had consistently failed to listen to workers' objections and complaints over the poor quality of the cars produced. Suggestions of modification and improvement were ignored. As a result, the workers took direct action to improve the product.

"The contradictions of planning and producing poor quality, beginning as the stuff of jokes, eventually became a source of anger....Temporary deals unfolded between inspection and assembly and between assembly and trim, each with planned sabotage....the result was stacks upon stacks of motors awaiting repair....it was almost impossible to move....the entire six-cylinder assembly and inspection operation was moved away - where new workers were brought in to man it. In the most dramatic way, the necessity of taking the product out of the hands of labourers who insisted on planning the product became overwhelming." Bill Watson 'Counter-Planning on the Shop-Floor' Radical America (May-June 1971).

Appendix:

The Place of Dialectics in the Understanding

The dialectical process takes place in appearance rather than in the material. The oppositions which confront each other are chimera of language. While they seem to indicate contradictions in nature, all we are looking at here is our own way of looking at things, which, as we cannot conceptualise outside our own conceptual framework, appears to us to be the structure of the world.

Marx assumed that because the world, as it seemed, did not fall into neat logical forms and falsified for instance the law of excluded middle, abstract logic was no more than an approximation to the truth. That is, that the shoot is on one end of a continuum that ends with a tree, so that in a sense the shoot is the tree, and vice-versa. A pound of sugar is never a pound of sugar, always slightly more or slightly less, and changing all the time. Everything is its own opposite; its negation is always lying within itself, waiting for time to give it birth.

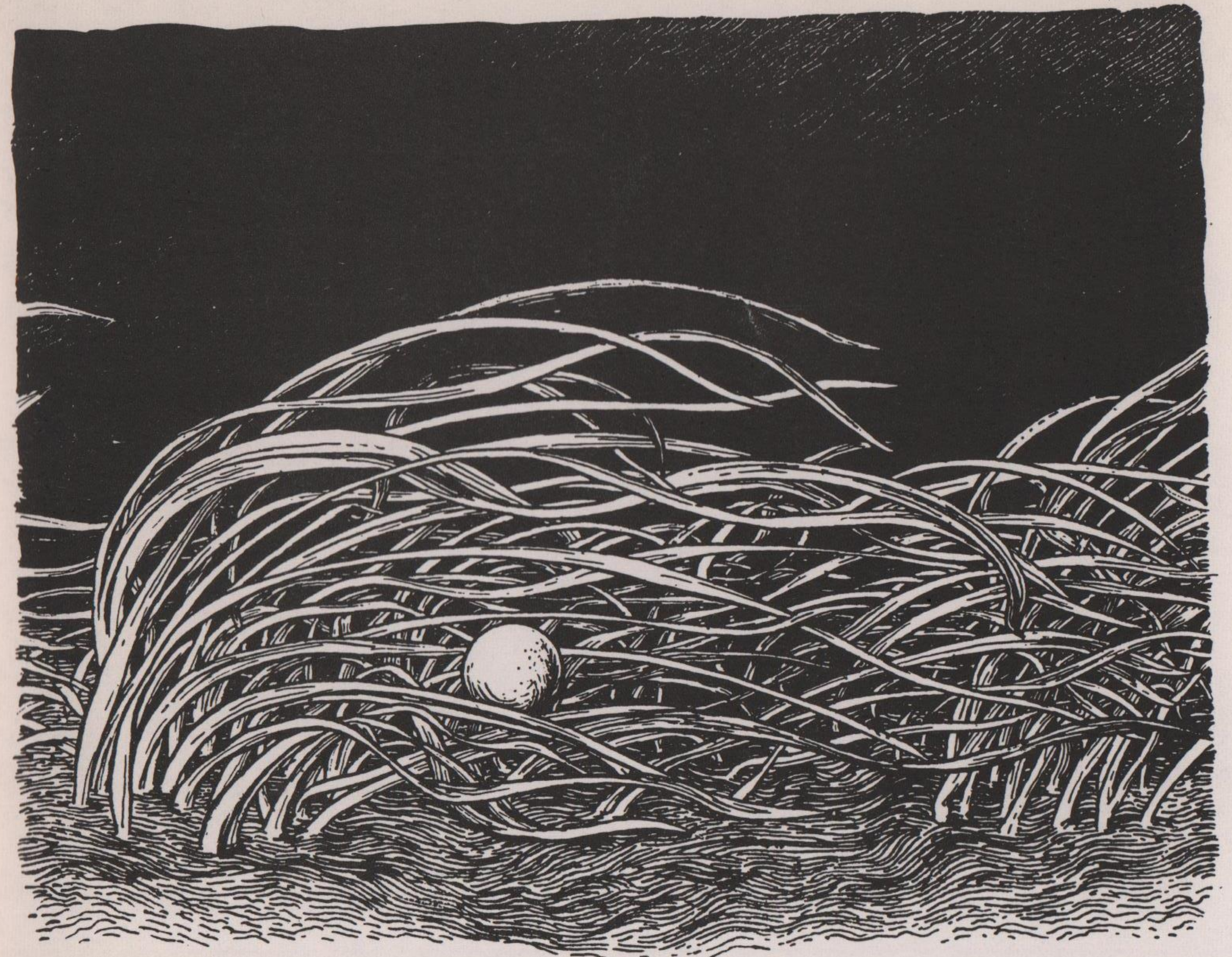
A dialectician would say that in classical logic it cannot be true that 'x is a tree' and that 'x is a shoot'. A tree, he might say, cannot be separated from a shoot, though, so on the contrary 'p and not-p' is true. However, classical logic is in no way undermined by this observation, for the following reason.

Consider another example of the apparent contradiction displayed in reality: 'Smoking is madness' and 'Smoking is informed choice'. Two mutually contradictory predicates are ascribed to the same subject. In this case it can be seen more clearly than in the last that what is at issue here are attitudes. What we must remember is that language is an operative system. The predications we make of subjects code for the groupings in which we place particulars, and each particular is itself a grouping of other particulars. Each level of understanding is a view taken from a different point with a particular interest and intention.

Dialectics and apparent contradictions come about from the conflict of viewpoints, not from contradiction in nature, and indicate the Ideal and not the Real. The proper context of logic is as a system of tautologies, analytic statements whose argument places are blank, indicating the general truth conditions for propositions. Discrepancies occur because we are capable of using the same word in one sense in one place and another sense in a different place.



The urge to transcend the conditions of everyday life expresses itself regardless of apparent geography.



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