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## Radical Philosophy and Critical Theory: Examination and Defense

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RADICAL PHILOSOPHY AND CRITICAL THEORY:  
EXAMINATION AND DEFENSE<sup>1</sup>

by

Kai Nielsen

The real social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevalent. That does not mean superficial fault-finding with individual ideas or conditions, as though a philosopher were a crank. Nor does it mean that the philosopher complains about this or that isolated condition and suggests remedies. The chief aim of such criticism is to prevent mankind from losing itself in those ideas and activities which the existing organization of society instills into its members. Man must be made to see the relationship between his activities and what is achieved thereby, between his particular existence and the general life of society, between his everyday projects and the great ideas which he acknowledges. Philosophy exposes the contradiction in which man is entangled insofar as he must attach himself to isolated ideas and concepts in everyday life. My point can easily be seen from the following. The aim of western philosophy in its first complete form, in Plato, was to cancel and negate one-sidedness in a more comprehensive system of thought, in a system more flexible and better adapted to reality.

Max Horkheimer

I

In 1972 a group of young philosophers in England, largely in reaction to the way philosophy was practiced in the Anglo-Saxon world in general and in England in particular, formed a group of loosely affiliated philosophers called the Radical Philosophy Group and began the publication of a new and exciting journal dubbed by them Radical Philosophy. Like the logical positivists in their formative period, they put forth a number of manifestos and programmatic essays which both made clear what it is they were reacting against and something of where they wanted to go.<sup>2</sup> The Radical Philosophy Group is no more unified a group either politically or philosophically than were the logical positivists, but in both instances there are distinctive philosophical commitments which help define them. I shall set out what these are for the Radical Philosophy Group and, initially and briefly, relate this movement to the older radical school of Critical Theory coming out of Frankfurt.<sup>3</sup> I should say at the outset, however, that I am not simply engaging in an exercise in intellectual history. I feel quite comfortable with such ideas myself and I shall, after my initial general characterization, move, formulating matters in my own way, to argument and defense.

## RADICAL PHILOSOPHY AND CRITICAL THEORY: EXAMINATION AND DEFENSE

I shall in this preamble only add something to which some of my radical colleagues would not so readily assent, namely that I see no conflict at all between being a radical philosopher and being, what used to be called, an analytic philosopher. Indeed, I share J.L. Mackie's view that, while "conceptual analysis is not the whole of philosophy," all good philosophy "must be analytic," meaning by that nothing more controversial or portentous than what Mackie does, namely a) that attention is paid to the meanings of the key terms used and the logical status of one's remarks, b) that the theses set forth are formulated "precisely enough to allow them to be fairly examined and tested," c) that reasonable alternative possibilities are carefully considered, and d) that there is a critical reflection to one's own procedures.<sup>4</sup> I should hope to persuade my radical colleagues jaundiced by the posturing and superficiality of much analytic philosophy that these are virtues in any philosopher.

There is a way of trivializing a discussion of radical philosophy which I would like to confront at the outset. It is to say that to talk about radical philosophy is simply to talk about Marxism. This is false as far as the intellectual commitments of the Radical Philosophy Group are concerned. Some are Marxists, some are not and some are simply people such as myself who may be on their way--perhaps in ten year's time--to being Marxists. Moreover, even those who are Marxists do not characterize radical philosophy in such a way that to be a radical philosopher is to be a Marxist. There is a common recognition among the group of the importance of Marx and an understanding of the need to come to grips with him in a way that philosophers in the Anglo-Saxon tradition have not commonly done. But such a recognition of the really vital need to understand Marx is another matter altogether from the claim that to be radical philosophers we must be Marxists.

This discussion is trivialized, if it takes that turn, for we are on well-trodden ground if the discussion revolves around whether a) philosophy or b) at least good philosophy should be or even must be Marxist. Perhaps it should, but there are endless questions here and indeed assumptions which would first have to be reasoned out and resolved, not the least of which would involve a rather more complete understanding of what Marx was all about than most of us have. For these reasons, this discussion of radical philosophy shall not be about the viability of Marxism.

We should also keep in mind that, unless we persuasively re-define 'radical philosopher' in a partisan and dogmatic way, there are radical philosophers with overriding radical philosophical outlooks who are not Marxists. The Critical Theorists of the Frankfurt school are key examples, Jurgen Habermas being perhaps the most striking case. He is indeed what Ryle would call a Teutonic camel who has developed a grandiose, very Germanic overall philosophical view, which tries, in addition to the Marxist tradition, to integrate into a coherent whole some of the philosophically relevant work being done in linguistics and many of Wittgenstein's, Pierce's, and Freud's key conceptions. While respectful of and building on Marx, Habermas is extensively critical of Marx. Indeed, Habermas rejects certain of Marx's key conceptions and beliefs. And while it may very well be, as Goran

Therborn has powerfully argued, that Habermas' account is no improvement on Marx's and that, in his ponderously obscure Germanic Manner, Habermas has unwittingly done a disservice to radical philosophy, this is by no means obvious.<sup>5</sup> In this essay I shall not take sides on this matter. Indeed, 'taking sides' is irrelevant to my present point, for it is clear enough that Habermas' account is a) a totalistic one and b) a radical account. Similar things could be said for the rest of the Frankfurt school. Orthodox Marxist accounts may be superior, but whether or not that is so, it is the case that the Frankfurt Critical Theorists all have socialist commitments and they all philosophize with an emancipatory interest. It is not the case that Marxism is the only totalizing radical theory and it is not the case that those radical philosophers who are not Marxists are without any general theory of the social reality they wish to describe.

However, in gaining a sense of what radical philosophy is all about and something of its range, it is important to see how these Critical Theorists differed from Marx. Habermas and Wellmer, for example, criticize Marx for his objectivism and latent positivism, for his overly mechanistic view of the relation of base to superstructure and for generally underestimating the power of ideology. Marx, on Habermas' view, too easily assumes class consciousness will emerge from changed economic conditions and that with those altered economic conditions the proletarian revolution will inevitably occur. The ideological devices for human domination are far stronger than Marx realized and the causes of human misery, alienation and false consciousness are not as narrowly economic as Marx gives us to understand. Habermas, and his American disciple, Trent Schroyer, both take it as a crucial axiom of their Critical Theory--an axiom which sets it apart from Orthodox Marxism--that "the scientific image of science is the fundamental false consciousness of our epoch."<sup>6</sup> This scientific ideology, finding its purest philosophical expression in positivism, mediates and partially defeldts the structural conflicts between capital and labour. "Alienation of human activity," Schroyer remarks, "is now not directly expressible as the appropriation of surplus value, but is more accurately conceptualized as the repressive results of instrumental rationalization."<sup>7</sup> It is a central feature of the scientific ideology of our time to have a very narrow economic conception of rationality--a conception held in common by such very different philosophers, with such very different conceptions about ethics and social philosophy, as Russell and Rawls. It is the view of Habermas and Wellmer that it is not just the relations of production which are fetters but the whole technical and technological complex in which they are embedded with the appropriate persuasively defined conception of rationality.

It is true that, like Marx, Habermas contends that emancipation from coercive and repressive institutions depends upon the extent to which the processes of nature can be technically controlled. He even goes so far as to argue that the very form in which actual moral and political problems are posed depends on the technical context in which they arise. Yet, Habermas believes as well, and this sets him (or at least seems to set him) apart from Marx, that institutions and institutions and indeed society itself can only be changed by self-reflection systematically pursued and scientifically refined. Here we have in his account Freud

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supplementing and perhaps contradicting Marx and we have, as well, a richer notion of rationality than the dominant conception of economic rationality. The need for self-reflective knowledge in addition to purely instrumental knowledge emerges from the fact (putative fact) that there is no direct way to control the adaptations we make to make nature meet our needs so that our practical adaptations will be reflective (reasonable) and controlled. There is no direct way to such control because institutions, like symptoms, are compromises between defense and gratification.

Whatever the comparative merits of Marxism versus Critical Theory (something I shall not try to sort out here), it is important to note that radical philosophers in England have tended to go their own way, profiting from Critical Theorists and from Marx and Marxists on the way, but hardly developing that ponderous and often obscure Continental manner, and not coming to any set identification with the doctrinal commitments of either Orthodox Marxists or Critical Theory.

This is not to say, however, that there is nothing distinctive about these diverse philosophers in virtue of which we can fittingly call all of them 'radical philosophers.' What stands out as a common core of agreement among all radical philosophers is the conviction that our capitalist society needs a radical transformation into a genuinely socialist society. The qualifier is crucial, for some societies which have thought of themselves as socialist societies have exhibited only a necessary condition for the attainment of socialism. That is to say, besides social ownership of the means of production we must also have production geared to satisfy the real needs of the masses of people and we must have as well a worker's democracy, where the workers actually have clear control of their own social environment.

A radical philosopher takes such convictions and the social intent built into them as providing a key underlying rationale for much of his philosophizing. As a philosopher, he will, of course, be concerned to clarify and perspicuously display and integrate his key concepts and beliefs relevant to such a view of man and society and he will, moreover, be concerned to provide them with a systematic and coherent elaboration. He will strive to provide an elucidation of his key concepts which will free them from charges of incoherence and stultifying vagueness and he will be concerned to set them out in such a way that his claims are clear enough to be assessable and indeed (where they are empirical) clearly confirmable or disconfirmable.

To take an illustration, Ralf Dahrendorf, a perceptive liberal social theorist and now director of the London School of Economics, has argued that the socialist ideal of classlessness is incoherent.<sup>8</sup> No society, he argues, could possibly be classless. A radical philosopher, in the face of such a criticism, will attempt to give an account of classlessness which a) frees it from the charge of incoherence so that we can see how it could have an application, b) he or she will try to state it in such a way that it is clear under what conditions [pace Rawls] it correctly could be said classlessness was attainable, and c) by normative argument such a radical would attempt to make plain why such a state of

affairs [pace Isaiah Berlin] is desirable.<sup>9</sup>

Generally such a person would do similar conceptual things with many of the elements of a socialist statement of principle such as the one I made above and, of course, a radical philosopher would extend it to many other such notions. We very much need to get clear or at least clearer about such conceptions as 'worker's democracy,' 'social ownership of the means of production,' 'worker's control,' 'class conflict,' 'historical materialism,' 'revolution,' 'truly human society,' 'ideology,' 'false consciousness,' 'proletariat' and the like. We need to elucidate them in the piecemeal way we have learned from the analytic tradition and we need systematically to interrelate them in a manner similar to the way Strawson, Hampshire, Rawls and Hart have done in other domains. It is the social intent and the set of distinct moral and factual beliefs about the world which primarily distinguishes radical philosophers--or at least the kind of radical philosopher I take myself and many others in the Radical Philosophy Group to be--from their non-radical establishment predecessors or colleagues.<sup>10</sup>

The stress on social intent should not be understood merely (though it is that as well) as an interest in social phenomena (many non-radicals share that interest) but also as a commitment to the achievement of a socialist world order, though like any other rational commitment it must be open to criticism and assessment such that it would not be held no matter what evidential, moral and conceptual considerations were brought to the fore concerning such a commitment.

## II

I strongly suspect, a radical philosopher's non-radical colleagues will remark (or at least think) the radical philosopher is unlike us and like a Christian philosopher (keeping in mind that not all Christians who happen to be philosophers must be Christian philosophers) in that he or she starts with a social-moral commitment and taking that as given he or she engages in conceptual analysis simply to try to make that antecedent commitment more palatable to the sceptic, yet--it will be thought--a radical philosopher is not prepared to critically inspect his own ideology or to abandon it in the light of philosophical argument. Such a philosopher is in no way a neutral analyst, and in that partisan commitment he or she is decidedly unphilosophical and perhaps is even guilty of a certain lapse of reasonableness.

I am anything but confident that this criticism applies to all Christian philosophers--consider Basil Mitchell, Ian Crombie or Michael Durrant for example--but it certainly does not apply to radical philosophers, though it may well apply to certain socialist hacks. A radical philosopher (indeed I hope radicals generally) will very much want to know whether his vision of the world is true or indeed sometimes (depending on exactly what his own philosophical conceptions are) whether the commitments integral to that vision are even the sort of things which could be true or false. He will, as a rational individual, want to subject his beliefs and claims to as severe tests as possible, though he may--through

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scepticism about scientism--be sceptical about doing it in a Popperian manner.<sup>11</sup> But he will see the need for test and assessment and as a philosopher he will be concerned to set out his account in such a way that it can be assessed. Indeed his radicalism will make him doubly sensitive about the ways ideological conceptions function in our lives and he will be concerned to purge his account of any ideological irrational residues.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, given a careful factual normative and conceptual examination--I do not imply these can be separated off into airtight compartments--if it is shown to him that his socialist commitments are in error he will abandon them. He will, no more than will a reasonable scientist, conservative, shaman or Christian, abandon his overall framework because of a few unresolved difficulties, but if the weight of the evidential, rational and moral considerations cut against him and indeed do so as clearly as we can reasonably expect over such large issues, such a radical will abandon his or her radicalism. Such a person surely will not hold on to socialist commitments come what may. (I should remark here parenthetically that we should beware of postures about neutrality. People are seldom neutral about fundamental issues, and more importantly still, to be objective is not necessarily to be neutral. It is objectivity and a respect for truth that is important not neutrality. We should take to heart in this context C. Wright Mill's remarks about his won study of the Marxists: "I have tried to be objective, I do not claim to be detached.")

### III

There is a further point to be stressed here that may lead us into deeper waters. Radical philosophers are more liberal than most of their colleagues over what they will allow the term 'philosophy' to range over; most particularly they are not concerned to limit philosophy to conceptual or linguistic analysis. Indeed they expressly and pointedly forswear any such limitation and are very unconcerned about drawing boundaries between the different disciplines. They are for impurity in philosophy in a way that would shock an Austinian, Wittgensteinian or a logical empiricist.<sup>13</sup> There is little concern to ask if a given remark is a grammatical remark or if a given question is empirical, normative or conceptual. They (or I should say 'we' for I am exactly of this persuasion) are concerned to relate philosophical investigations to a general critical theory of society in which work in economics, sociology, anthropology, psychology (particularly social psychology) and history is closely related to philosophical work. Typically, non-radical philosophy with a kind of Cartesian penchant--sometimes wittingly--sometimes unwittingly--finds its non-philosophical model or at least intellectual associates in mathematics, theoretical physics or more recently in theoretical linguistics. There in the austerity of those disciplines, we have something highly formal, seemingly more certain and freer from the winds of doctrine, change and the distortions of ideology than anything we can attain in most domains. But we also have something very abstract which tells us very little about man and society. Radical philosophy and critical theory with its interest in understanding society, with its interest in understanding such phenomena as capitalism and (more generally) changing social forms--together with some very considerable interest in questions about the possible limits and development of

social forms--will turn its interest away from mathematical disciplines and turn its interest away from mathematical disciplines and turn to what any philosophers (perhaps quite rightly see as the murky waters of social and historical studies.<sup>14</sup> We radicals will try to take Hegel and Collingwood's injunctions seriously and will seek to make our philosophizing come to grips with history in some fruitful way so that we can understand human and conceptual change and develop categories to clearly and helpfully display this change rather than persistently viewing things synchronically and ahistorically, e.g. Plato and Ryle disputing about what is knowledge. We will be far more interested in asking questions about what are the social determinates of truth, what is the nature of authority, what (if anything) constitutes development or progress (as distinct from change) and what (if anything) constitutes emancipation, than we will be concerned to ask what is it for something to be a cause, what is entailment, are there unsensed sense-data or is self-deception possible? We will be far more interested in linking philosophy firmly with the social sciences and we would de-emphasize philosophy's formal and purely autonomous sides. A philosophy curriculum structured by radical philosophers would have much more Kant, Hegel and Marx and a less exclusive study of Descartes and Leibniz and the trip through Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Philosophy graduates students would do less logic and philosophy of language and would link their epistemological studies more closely with social studies. Philosophy Ph.D.'s, would once again know Adam Smith, Ricardo and Marx and core contemporary social theorists such as Durkheim, Weber, Pareto, Keynes, Lukacs and Freud. This would not be merely the specialized knowledge of a few people with a specialist's interest, but would be part of the core of their studies, while study of deontic logic, modal logic or transformational grammar would be work for people with a certain specialist's bent. Finally, modelled somewhat after the work done by George Lukacs and Lucian Goldmann, philosophy would be related more carefully to literary and historical studies. Philosophers would once again be intellectuals--albeit intellectuals with distinctive interest in concepts--rather than narrowly specialized professionals who indeed in the more unfortunate cases are Fachidioten.

#### IV

Radical philosophy should be understood both in terms of what it is a reaction against and in terms of what positive claims of a tolerably distinctive sort it makes itself. We have already seen something of the latter in my general characterization of radical philosophy, but I shall here extend this and put it explicitly in terms of the commitments of the Radical Philosophy Group. There is no sharp distinction between their reactive claims and their positive claims, but drawing that distinction is, I believe, a useful methodological device. I shall begin by simply listing (1 - 10) certain of their positive claims, postures and commitments (procedural and otherwise) and then in (11-17) I shall state their negative and reactive claims. That task done, I shall in the following sections comment on these claims.

- (1-10) 1. There is a concern to philosophize in such a way that philosophy will have some rational human use. There is a rejec-

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tion of the view, current among most non-radical philosophers, that philosophy itself needs no justification.

2. Philosophy should be practiced in such a way that it is relevant to people's lives and interests. The aim is for philosophy to help give people some understanding of their lives and an enhanced awareness of how society works and the options open to them. In fine, philosophy is to have an emancipatory interest and this does not come down to simply helping people to have clearer heads.
3. In practicing philosophy and indeed, as part of our practice, in teaching philosophy, we should philosophize with a goal, namely with the goal of educating for a new social order. We need to grapple with the problems raised by the theory and practice of social change. The task is to play a significant role, along with other disciplines, as an accelerator of social change.<sup>15</sup> Philosophy should function as a weapon of criticism in an attempt to raise consciousness--a consciousness which will see the need for and the possibility of a socialist future.
4. In our philosophical work we must endeavour to "make coherent the principles and problems raised by the masses in their practical activity." We must take as our philosophical touchstone the actual problems of human beings and not simply the problems of philosophers.<sup>16</sup>
5. The teaching of philosophy should be taken to be of crucial importance to us and not to be a kind of ancillary activity. We need to excite the non-specialist by helping to "make sense of his world" and we need to give him "something to live by."
6. We must try to capture and perspicuously display the always implicit and often unrecognized presuppositions which are at the base of the conceptual schemes which play the most pervasive role in organizing our experience.
7. We need to do philosophy not just in a piecemeal way but we must also make an attempt to gain a comprehensive and systematic view of reality, especially of human reality.
8. We need to work out in some careful fashion how philosophy is grounded or at least partially grounded in 'view-points' or whatever they would be better called and of how, given this, philosophy differs from ideology pure and simple."<sup>17</sup> We need in this connection to come to grips with the ideological role of philosophy.
9. We need to overcome the 'disrelation' between our political convictions and our philosophical work. What is crucial to see is that while philosophy cannot be reduced to social and political practice--it is more general, systematic

and raises questions about underlying presuppositions—that all the same philosophy and social practice form an essential unity. Philosophies arise out of, and describe and (wittingly or unwittingly) serve to justify certain ways of life. “Philosophy is, in this way, social and ultimately political in nature; it is, in this sense, ideology; and particular philosophies are revealed as such with the passing of historical time.”<sup>18</sup>

10. Philosophy has been and must, of course, continue to be a discipline which, without making a fetish of either, is rigorous and demanding, proceeding by argument and by analysis; but at the same time it needs to provide a systematic and comprehensive overview which can have relevance or interest to the vast mass of people. Contemporary radical philosophers would whole-heartedly subscribe to Paul Nizan’s remark that while “the great anonymous mass of human beings...undoubtedly have a real need for a philosophy...that is, for a consistent world-view and a body of guiding principles and clearly defined aims--this mass is effectively deprived by the bourgeoisie of any ideological material which might prove relevant to their existence.”<sup>19</sup>

The above ten propositions state some central positive things we radical philosophers favour, but it is also true that there are numerous things in our philosophical environment we are reacting against and that our philosophical orientation is also defined by those things, though it is important here to recognize that French, German or Italian radical philosophers would not be reacting against exactly the same thing. In the ‘negative propositions’ which follow it is important to remember that they are strictures--skewed if you will--by conditions which are rather distinctive of the Anglo-American and Scandinavian philosophical communities (if that is the right word).

Radical philosophers reject the following features in the dominant non-radical philosophy in their environment.

11. We reject the belief, sometimes explicit and sometimes implicit, that philosophy is a purely second-order discipline or activity such that it cannot have any substantive implications; most specifically we reject the claim that moral and social philosophy, if it is properly done, must be, should be or even can be neutral with respect to moral and practical issues.
12. Non-radical philosophy has either wittingly or unwittingly failed to consider--or at least to consider at all adequately--questions about the ideological role of philosophy. A myth of neutrality helps obscure from such philosophers the ideological functions of their work. The very idea of examining

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philosophical disputes in the light of non-philosophical ones is thought by most establishment philosophers to rest on a mistake. It is not a thing that a philosopher, if he understands what he is doing, can legitimately do. That this is a mistake is challenged by radical philosophy. Philosophy, radical and non-radical has a social and ideological role and simply must be faced.<sup>20</sup>

13. The scientism of most non-radical philosophy is an object of criticism; that is to say, such non-radical philosophies are uncritical and, therefore, defective in the dependent and passive attitudes they take towards scientific disciplines. Their relation to them is much like philosophy's relation to theology in the Middle Ages. (Here the influence of the Frankfurt School is very evident.)
14. Contemporary academic philosophy is "too little concerned with the social and political conditions of rationality, especially with such conditions as may frustrate and inhibit the exercise and growth of rationality and knowledge."<sup>21</sup>
15. The dominant philosophical orientation in Anglo-American philosophy is criticized for its exclusiveness, its lack of interest in work in other disciplines, particularly sociology, economics and psychology and its narrowness of outlook with respect to alternative philosophical orientations.
16. Establishment philosophy is criticized for its professionalism and academicism. By this is meant that philosophy is too much an esoteric pastime of a small clique of professionals, indifferent to and indeed often contemptuous of the need of the masses for a coherent and informed worldview. Radical philosophy stresses the human necessity that people generally, and not just a few professionals, come to grips with philosophy in some reasonably extensive way.
17. Contemporary Anglo-American philosophers typically work in a historical vacuum with scant socio-historical understanding, with little awareness of how they as philosophers are shaped and limited by their distinctive socio-historical context, and with none of the awareness called for by Hegel, Dewey, Collingwood and Lukacs of the need to develop categories and philosophical techniques for understanding and perspicuously displaying the historical development of our thought.<sup>22</sup> We see (for example) in the work of Hart and Warnock--excellent as in it is in certain ways--an utterly ahistorical appeal to human nature without anything like an adequate consideration of questions about the extent to which these allegedly universal features are in reality products of historically and culturally contingent and variable circumstances.<sup>23</sup>

## V

I shall not discuss all these theses much less discuss them in order. Rather, I shall take certain central ones that naturally cluster together and discuss them. I shall start by examining those claims which I believe most non-radical philosophers would take to be most grossly unfair and/or rather thoroughly mistaken. Surely on or near to the top of the list would be our claims in propositions 3, 9, 10 and 12 about the ideological role of philosophy and particularly our claims about the ideological role of bourgeois philosophy. Indeed, the very phrase 'bourgeois philosophy' will stick in the gullet, for non-radical philosophers will deny that what they do is 'bourgeois philosophy,' anymore than what their colleagues in the physics department do is 'bourgeois physics.' (This is even compatible with their recognition of the appropriateness of the slogan the Heidelberg University students painted on the wall of their institute of applied physics, "Physik, die Prostituierte des Kapitals.") They will resent such talk and regard it as grossly unfair because many of them can quite rightly point out that they are as disdainful and contemptuous of the leadership and many of the values of the bourgeois order as we are and that they have no commitment to it. Many would add that they are also sceptical of our hopes for a 'socialist dawn' and the achievement of a classless society. Their expectation is that one pack of crooks and manipulators will replace another pack of crooks and manipulators, that new slogans will replace old slogans and that we will never get anything that looks like truth, reasonableness or humaneness. They deplore all this, but what they want to do is to get on with their philosophical work and this involves no commitment on their part to any established order. They--depending on their particular philosophical interests--want to understand what entailment is, whether conceptions of identity are relative, whether justice can be adequately characterized in terms of utility, whether rationality can be defined in basically Humean terms, whether (and if so in what way) attitudes essentially involve beliefs, whether we directly perceive sense data rather than physical objects, whether we can derive an ought from an is, and the like. These are difficult and perplexing conceptual questions and they, as philosophers, want to try as best they can to sort them out. In this sorting out or attempted sorting out they are not--so they believe--committing themselves to any ideology, bourgeois or otherwise. They are just trying to do--sometimes in a systematic way and sometimes not--conceptual analysis. They are trying to get clear about and perspicuously display certain of our very central concepts. This is not, they will insist, ideology or ideological.

Part of this reply seems to me reasonable enough. To be fair we need to acknowledge it and make it perfectly plain that we are not denying this. The part, that is a thoroughly legitimate response on their part, has to do with much (though not all) of the content of their claims and, even more importantly, with the intentions of a vast number--probably the vast majority--of contemporary, very professionally oriented analytical or linguistic philosophers. These professionally oriented philosophers simply want to get on with their job of sorting out conceptual perplexities of the type I characterized above. They will naturally resent that we give to understand that they are tools of, apologists for, or even servants of the bourgeois order. What we need to make perfectly plain is that it is not their good intentions that we are attacking, but the indirect effect

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of their work. That, in a way I shall try to detail and justify, is on the whole ideological and indeed ideological in such a way that it serves and supports the bourgeois order.

The very choice of problems that typically get discussed and are taken as the really serious and central problems of philosophy and the stipulations (implicit or overt) about proper method in philosophy, are both such that they are not likely to lead the student or indeed the philosophy professor or philosopher himself to ask critical questions about his society and the quality of his life. Philosophers tend to concentrate on questions such as the nature of identity, personal identity, mind and body, causation and determinism, induction and probability, the relation of knowledge to belief, universals and reality, sensation, perception and the physical world, language, meaning and verification, God and immortality and the nature of moral judgments. Two extensively used and in their own way excellent standard analytically oriented anthologies, Paul Edwards' and Arthur Pap's, A Modern Introduction to Philosophy and Oswald Hanfling's Fundamental Problems in Philosophy, center on just such problems. In these anthologies there is an extensive discussion of our knowledge of other minds, our knowledge of the external world, a priori knowledge, the nature of the nature of the self and the problem of disembodied existence, and our knowledge (putative knowledge) of God. In the Pap and Edwards volume there is no discussion at all of political and social philosophy and in the Hanfling volume there is only a very thin section--thirty pages in a book of four hundred and eighteen pages--and there is no selection from Marx or any other radical thinker. These anthologies, are, I repeat, typical and widely used. They have the not inconsiderable virtue that if they are carefully read and carefully taught they will instill in students a sense of hard and careful argument. In that way they are indeed excellent. But hard and careful argument can be developed about many different topics and conceptual sensitivity can also be developed through an examination of a varied list of topics.

The effect of the stress on the topics listed above is that students and indeed the professional philosophers themselves will not come to think hard and carefully and in a systematic way about topics with a potentially explosive social content; that is they will not be led by anything in their philosophical work to take a careful critical look at their lives and their society. If, as Max Horkheimer contends, the "social function of philosophy lies in its criticism of what is prevalent," if it is--when it is a genuinely critical endeavour--an activity which works "to prevent mankind from losing itself in those ideas and activities which the existing organization of society instills into its members," and if it is to function to help achieve an enhanced understanding of the rationale of the dominant social institutions, the rationality of the ruling ideas and the plausibility and justifiability of these ideas, then there is very little in the standard work in philosophy which contributes toward this critical awareness.<sup>24</sup> Philosophers pride themselves on the capacity of philosophy to enhance our critical powers and awareness, but in the above very crucial ways such philosophy does not develop our critical awareness and potential; in fact it helps blunt it by treating as really deep and significant--and thus concentrating on--precisely those problems which do

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not give us any such understanding of our society and our condition. This is further reinforced by giving to understand, as such philosophy sometimes does, that such social problems are really conceptual muddles or 'all ideology' and that no comprehensive and systematic understanding of them is possible.

Moral philosophy, as it is usually practiced, is no exception to this. There is much discussion of 'the language of morals,' the logical behaviour of 'good' and 'ought,' whether 'good' is naturalistically definable, whether moral judgments can rightly be said to be objective, and whether we can intuit moral truths or even properly speak of moral utterances as being either true or false. But there is very little actual systematic moral argument resulting in assessments of our institutions and our condition. Things that reflective people would really like to come to grips with in trying to make sense of their lives and in trying to understand how they as agents are to live in their world are not faced. Students, and indeed the professor himself, do not come away with any directions or bearings here. Indeed, it is often claimed that such questions are not within the domain of philosophy and that they are indeed not questions to which any non-ideological (pejorative sense of 'ideological') answer can be given.<sup>25</sup> Even where these a priori restrictions on the scope of philosophy are not insisted on, it still remains the case, even with the more permissive establishment approaches to philosophy, that we are given to understand that we are not in the position, at present at least, to come to grips with these problems. They are too vast and multifaceted for us to be able to say anything significant about which would be professionally responsible.

It is indeed true that we want to avoid, where we can, a premature assessment of large scale problems, but we must also remember that the multiplying of distinctions may have no end--there is no obvious and natural place to stop--and to decide which distinctions are sufficiently important to be worth making will have to be assessed in terms of some conception of a larger significance. Moreover, even though these larger scale questions about society and the quality of our lives may be in certain respects distressingly vague, with very ill-defined boundaries, they are also questions with which, humanly speaking, we very much need to come to grips. But a student coming to philosophy does not come to grips with them, and there is very little work coming from non-radical philosophers on such questions.

Where attention is turned to social problems--say abortion or civil disobedience--it is almost invariably piecemeal work which makes no effort to set the problem in a larger framework or to relate it systematically to a critique of society and to any attempt to conceptualize the direction in which society could change and should change.

In failing to come to grips with such problems or even to raise them, establishment philosophy is in effect ideological. Philosophy and philosophers, and the students who study with them, remain--at least as far as their philosophical and intellectual activities go--passive before the status quo. Students who take to philosophy are given an enhanced sensitivity to logical distinctions, a sensitivity to the uses of language and shades of meaning, a better understanding of the logical status of their utterances, and a better grasp of what is being assumed

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as distinct from what is being argued for and what, at least in some domains, constitutes a proof. I do not want for a moment to suggest that this counts for nothing. It most certainly is a valuable set of skills and it would be a mistake of considerable magnitude if these skills were to be lost in a radical tradition in philosophy which I hope will finally come to existence in the English-speaking world as it has on the Continent. (I do not suggest that we at all follow such philosophers as Adorno and Habermas in their penchant for obscurity.) But the acquiring of these skills must not be a 'be all or an end all' and it is important to see that these tools are not nearly sufficient to produce the critical awareness that would give us a critical theory of society in virtue of which we could achieve something of the social function of philosophy, viz. a criticism of what is prevalent, a systematic critique of society.

Establishment philosophy is passive here or worse. (Worse when it sets up stipulations about 'philosophy: which turns such a critique into a kind of irrational ideology and/or rules out the very possibility that such an endeavour could count as a philosophical one.) It is passive in that it simply does nothing with such problems, except in some instances engender a suspicion about their intellectual respectability or suggest that they are outside the domain of philosophical analysis. An ancient and crucial dimension of philosophy is simply lost and few critical tools or methods are developed for examining society in this crucial way. In this way establishment philosophy is in effect ideological and indeed damagingly and conservatively ideological, for it, by its very practice, prevents or at least discourages the raising of critical questions about society or the erecting of theories in virtue of which we can understand society and gain some understanding of how we can and should change society.

Philosophers pride themselves in being critical spirits, but they in reality do not disturb the running of society or the ruling class at all, but dig for themselves a modest niche where they will not disturb anything in society--except perhaps religion (hopefully a dying element in our social life anyway)--or help provide the terms of social institutions, practices and the resultant condition of human beings. In that way, contemporary philosophy in the English-speaking world and in Scandinavia is ideological and indeed is conservatively ideological, i.e. it plays its part in keeping people passive and it helps con them into a continued acceptance of the status quo.

### VI

This is not to say that philosophy should not investigate, and indeed carefully and exactly investigate, the concept of truth, as have Tarski, Strawson, Quine and Mackie, and the concept of rationality, as have Rawls, Richards, Brandt, and Gauthier. This work, we will be told, is indirectly important for a critical appraisal of society and is not ignored by establishment philosophers (indeed it is a staple in their diet), though the radical tradition has made little in the way of a contribution to it.

There is justice in these remarks, but it is also important to recognize the kind of crucial questions about these key concepts that have been rather extensively ignored by establishment philosophers who have examined them. They have ignored the social and political conditions of rationality, the way conceptions of rationality (as Habermas and Schroyer have stressed) are skewed by the technological thrust of our society in the service of capitalist interests, and they have

not faced adequately questions arising about the social determination of truth. (Here the whole issue of truth and ideology looms large.) We are or should be interested in definitions of 'truth' and 'rationality' primarily in order to help us ascertain whether there are stable cross-cultural criteria in the different domains of thought for determining a) when beliefs are true and even when whole systems of belief are true and when they are false or so incoherent or ill-conceived that they could not possibly be true and b) when it is rational or reasonable to believe or do something that what systems for organizing social life are the most rational.

In answering such questions we need to face challenges about the social determination of truth, the effects of ideology on our conceptions and the way our our position in society and history can blinker us in ascertaining what to do or what it is rational to believe. There is indeed an abundance (perhaps an overabundance) of tangled questions centering around the issue of conceptual relativism where philosophy and a host of other disciplines come together. But establishment philosophy's isolationism, particularly from sociology, historical studies and anthropology, puts philosophers in a poor position to examine such questions in any very convincing fashion.

In trying to use the conceptions of truth and rationality in social critique, it is important to be clear about these matters. But here analytic philosophers do not give us clarity but often only arrogant ignorance. Philosophers out of this tradition, as Alastair MacIntyre has observed, have, in analyzing concepts, ignored the historical and social sources of the expressions which are to be the focus of their attention.<sup>26</sup> Such a lack of historical sense has resulted in a failure to grasp certain important changes in meaning and has often led these philosophers to confer necessity on some conceptual scheme when there are actual alternatives to it. Such a philosophical mistake, when unrecognized, gives to an allegedly purely neutral conceptual account an unwitting conservative ideological bias.

Such philosophers sometimes confuse ideology with truth and this confusion enables them to persist in accepting putative truths about the nature of society, man, or morality as such as 'timeless truths,' when in reality what is involved are historically conditioned ideological commitments. To avoid this we need to gain a much greater understanding of social science and of historical techniques. And with such an understanding we need ourselves to forge new tools, perhaps in some sense dialectical ones, for understanding concepts and society diachronically as well as synchronically. Strawson may be right in claiming that some concepts, important to philosophy, hardly have a history at all, but many do and without an understanding of their history, philosophers will often have a parochial semantics and confuse (to take an important example) the moral point of view with the dominant class morality of a given time and place. Here again the effect of non-radical philosophy, with its deliberate cancelling out as irrelevant certain social considerations, is unwittingly conservatively ideological.

What non-radical philosophers out of the analytical tradition fail to see, as MacIntyre also points out, is the persistence among them of "certain uncriticized ideological concepts and values."<sup>27</sup> They fail to see the ways--sometimes very indirect--in which philosophy arises out of and in turn justifies certain ways of

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life and how philosophy, systematic and general, as it often is, is for that reason ultimately political and indeed ideological. (Macpherson's work on Hobbes and Goldmann's work on Pascal show this in important historical instances.) We can usually only see this with any clarity for a complex and important thinker when we look backwards. In their insensitivity to such considerations, again and again, establishment philosophers will fail to see the ideological distortions in their views.

### VII

Finally, vis-a-vis arguments about non-radical philosophy's social role as ideology, I want to examine some remarks of both Paul Nizan in his The Watchdogs: Philosophers and the Established Order and Sean Sayers.<sup>28</sup> (The remarks of Sean Sayers I shall concentrate on come from his perceptive discussion of Nizan's book.)

Both Nizan and Sayers refuse to stop with the statements of intention on the part of bourgeois philosophers. They want to bring out, from behind the mystification surrounding it, what Sayers calls the real nature--the actual function--of their activity. By this is meant the actual effect it has in society and its realistic social role in society. This is very different from the images these bourgeois philosophers have of themselves and it is in the disparity between these images of themselves and their actual function in society that we find the self-deception--the false consciousness of these philosophers. (We are not here in the conceptual bind that Winch shows anthropologists to be in in studying primitive societies, for we already have a participant's understanding of philosophy.)

They see themselves as detached, indeed as ideologically neutral. They argue whether one can derive an ought from an is or whether Hume was roughly right about causation or personal identity and whether there is in Locke or in reality a coherent distinction between primary and secondary qualities. This is conceptual analysis, it is detached and remote from the struggles and needs of the world. Depending on exactly how they conceive their of activity, philosophers will assert that qua philosophers they either cannot or typically do not and indeed need not be involved in the concrete political and social struggles around them. There neither can be nor need not be any such taking of sides in philosophy. Philosophy seeks to see all the sides of any issue and then, in a detached and neutral manner, to display perspicuously the logic of the situation.

However, Nizan and Sayers argue, this self-image is a false image. Such philosophers "fail to attend to the real conditions of social existence and thus tend to describe the world in idealized terms."<sup>29</sup> Even in doing social and moral philosophy, such bourgeois philosophers tend, with their idealized picture of the world, to ignore "the needs, the alienation and the misery which are the real facts of oppression."<sup>30</sup> Such an idealized picture of the world "has the effect of justifying the established order." This is not how the establishment philosopher sees his work, but these states of affairs are the direct effects of work which is ostensibly non-partisan. It may be genuinely non-ideological in intent, but in

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reality it is a prop to a conservative ideology. Keeping in mind that 'supreme function' means 'actual effective,role,' Nizan's bitter and indeed harsh remarks gain in credibility:

...the supreme function of bourgeois philosophy is to obscure the miseries of contemporary reality: the spiritual destitution of vast numbers of men...and the increasingly intolerable disparity between what they could achieve and what little they actually accomplished. This philosophy conceals the true nature of bourgeois rule... It mystifies the victims of the bourgeois regime... It heads them into culs-de-sac where their rebellious instincts will be extinguished. It is the faithful servant of that social class which is the cause of all the degradation in the world today...<sup>31</sup>

Nizan also contends (and Sayers follows him here) that bourgeois thought with its posture of neutrality is ideological in still another way. To be indifferent to social issues, not to take sides in this struggle between the exploiters and the exploited, the oppressors and the oppressed, is in reality to side with exploiters. Given the moral enormity of the way that capitalist ruling class orders and social world, there are only two sides to take, to be either with the exploiters and oppressors or against them. There is no ideologically neutral vantage point here.

However, it might be responded that Nizan and Sayers overstate their cause. Not all the degradation is caused by the capitalists and 'indifferent' in the context of their argument needs disambiguation. It need not mean 'satisfied' for because he believes no position can be shown to be sound or unsound here and yet he might not be at all satisfied with the capitalist order. Moreover, where the particular capitalist order was as brutal as the Nazi regime, people might fail to take sides, as far as any active commitment is concerned, out of fear. It is also the case that there are some 'philosophers,' rather utterly isolated from any understanding of what is going on around them, who might simply fail to see the kind of oppression, exploitation and dehumanization caused by monopoly capitalism. They are effectively children about political matters and do not side with any order; they just want to do free logic or examine whether emotions are essentially intentional. We should deplore the fact that there are such fachidioten, that being a philosopher and being an intellectual can be so disassociated that this can happen, but we can hardly fairly accuse such 'philosophers' of siding with the oppressor. More generally, we should not forget that there is no reason why philosophers should not, like others, be deeply influenced by the dominant ideological pressures in bourgeois societies which, as Habermas has shown, depolitize and privatize our lives, keeping us firmly in our own little cubby holes, doing our own thing. There are other philosophers, less unworldly and not so politically naive, who, informed by the ideology of the cold war, see the U.S.S.R. and Stalin as the model for socialism and, seeing the ills flowing from such a social order, refuse to take sides in any political struggle. But this does not mean they

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are indifferent to human misery but that they despair of any human political resolution of it. So they tend their garden, which in this case means going on doing philosophy in a manner which, from the point of view of their intentions, is utterly apolitical.

However, Nizan and Sayers are quite correct in stressing that in effect it is not apolitical, for in the struggle between the working class and the ruling class, such a philosophical posture effectively makes philosophy into something which makes no social critique at all and does not help the working class, as its members come into educational institutions, to gain the critical understanding they need in their struggle to change society. Philosophy could function to help give them a critical conceptual framework to understand what was happening to them and around them. However, in actuality it does not, but rather turns them away from such concerns to other concerns which in effect serve to keep them passive. I do not suggest for a moment, what is surely false, that these philosophers direct them to such concerns in order to keep them passive, but all the same, this is a socially and ideologically important effect of their activity. In this very crucial way such utterly apolitical philosophers are in reality very political indeed, their honest intentions to the contrary notwithstanding.

Nizan and Sayers also stress that the effects of such a philosophical posture are more extensive than it seems on a superficial view of the matter.<sup>32</sup> (Though here I think what they say applies more straightforwardly to France, Germany, Italy and Spain than to the English-speaking countries and Scandinavia.) To see what is involved, consider the following. Philosophers are indeed a miniscule group, typically concerned with arguing out certain conceptual matters among themselves and typically quite unconcerned about their effect (if any) on the world. How can their abstruse speculation have very harmful effects? The answer is: through a not inconsiderable trickle-down effect. We must not forget the truisms that philosophers are in the Academy and that they teach students. Slowly their conceptions are assimilated--though it simplified, distorted forms--meshing with other pervasive ideological conceptions from other disciplines--until, worked over by other interest groups, they become part of the popular ideology of a culture. These philosophical conceptions in such bowdlerized forms become pervasive in the culture. An example would be the assimilation--often in very different terms--of a roughly positivist, non-cognitivist conception of the relation between facts and values, such that the claim is that the social sciences must be conceived of--to be sciences at all--as normatively neutral and that there can be no moral or normative knowledge. In the popular culture this may come out in the foggy notions that 'Values are just matters of opinion' and 'No one can argue about values.' In general in western societies, cultural backwaters aside, there is, at least in our relatively educated populations, a rather homogeneous empiricist and liberal-individualist view of the world, though often (particularly with religious people) it is not so labelled. This popular ideology is thus informed, in this trickle-down and assimilated way, by philosophical conceptions and thus in a significant way very abstruse philosophical theories are influential in articulating, transmitting, holding and preserving the ideology of a culture. It is not just the

consequentless pastime of a coterie of intellectuals.

### VIII

I have in the preceding sections attempted to establish that non-radical analytical philosophy, notwithstanding the good intentions of many of its practitioners, has a conservative ideological thrust. In doing this I have tried to come to grips with the issues raised in propositions 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17 stated in Section IV. I now want to consider issues raised by some of the other propositions, again starting with issues which will surely provoke sharp disagreement from many non-radical analytical philosophers. Indeed, we may in some instances not even get to something as intellectual as disagreement; we may just get a flippant dismissive reaction. The remaining propositions most likely to produce such a reaction are 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 and 13 and other elements in 16 than those which have already been discussed.

What most evidently will surely annoy many philosophers deeply influenced by either Austin or Quine and indeed even seem to them to be outrageous is the claim of 5 and 10 that we should as philosophers articulate a consistent worldview and a body of guiding principles which will enable the masses--the working class (the vast majority of people)--to make sense of their world and to give them something to live by. To this it will be responded (as Anthony Quinton and G.J. Warnock have) that this is to give philosophy a task which is not its own.<sup>33</sup> It is indeed to confuse philosophy with religion, ideology or *Weltanschauung*.<sup>34</sup> Philosophy is not a form of preaching or even advocacy but is an attempt to give a perspicuous representation of our fundamental concepts and to give us some reflective understanding of the nature of our moral and social world and the order of nature. Many non-radical philosophers would add, in agreement with to unearth and make evident the often unrecognized presuppositions which are at the basis of our conceptual schemes and to examine what grounds, if any, could be given for their continued acceptance; many would also acknowledge a legitimacy of attempting to gain a systematic view of reality and indeed most particularly of human reality. But they would balk at all talk of giving the masses or anyone else something to live by.

This reaction is understandable and yet I believe that there is a reading of this radical claim in which such a claim can be seen to be perfectly appropriate and indeed indispensable in developing radical philosophy.

I shall go at this indirectly by attending first to the related but less 'offensive' remarks contained in propositions 1 and 2. There the claim was that philosophy needs to be practiced in such a way that it is relevant to the lives of people. In that way it finds a rational human use. It can be relevant to their needs through its emancipatory interest. That is to say, it can give people some understanding of their own lives. Philosophers can help them to understand the causes of their alienation, misery, frustration and the inchoate but deepseated sense many people have that there is something insane and senseless about much of contemporary life. And in doing this we shall give them an enhanced understanding of

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how society works.

To stop there could be a council of despair. However, part of this emancipatory interest will also be concerned not only with giving an anatomy of society but also with the giving of some understanding of the directions in which society can and should be changed and the dynamics of that change. Here we must not forget that philosophy can and should--as I stressed in earlier sections of this essay--in concert with the social sciences and psychology. Indeed, what I suspect should emerge from what has been called radical philosophy is something rather new which is perhaps best called critical theory, though it will have specialized stresses from people with backgrounds and interests characteristic of what are now distinct disciplines.

So far we have given no grounds for the claim that we are advocating a groundless moralizing or preaching or anything which is at best non-rational or is at worst irrational. Only if some kind of non-cognitivist or subjectivist account of the foundations of morality could be made out would there be any taint of such non-rational or irrational moralism in the above programme. The case against subjectivism and non-cognitivism, I admit, is more difficult to make than most people realize. I have tried in various places a) to meet such accounts of morality head-on and show that we have grounds for believing we can have some objective moral knowledge, and b) to show that the only forms in which such non-cognitivist or subjectivist accounts are even plausible are accounts which have no nihilistic human implications.<sup>35</sup> I shall not try to rehearse these arguments here. Moreover, from within the non-radical analytical tradition itself, there has emerged recently three very important systematic works in moral philosophy which, to put it conservatively, undermine the persuasiveness of non-cognitivism of morality. The books I have in mind are Bernard Gert's Moral Rules, D.A.J. Richards' A Theory of Reasons for Action, and John Rawls' A Theory of Justice. Radical philosophers will want to criticize them in certain directions, but I think it is plain enough that these impressive books lay the ghost of an extreme ethical scepticism which would deny the very reality of any moral knowledge. Without the underpinning of non-cognitivism and ethical scepticism, I do not see any grounds for claiming our programme with its emancipatory interests rests on groundless irrational or non-rational moralizing. We are not preaching or just moralizing or simply trying to get people to do things, but are doing what philosophers have traditionally been properly doing, namely elucidating, arguing and reasoning in a systematic way. Our arguments involve among other things normative arguments but unless some form of non-cognitivism can be sustained, there is nothing illegitimate in that.

Now, going back to propositions 5 and 10, I do not see why helping people make sense of their world or giving people something to live by need be understood as anything more woolly than what I have characterized above. We need to start, as Nizan stresses, from a solid recognition that there is massive oppression, exploitation and gross injustice in the world and that there is a struggle going on between the oppressors and the oppressed. This must be understood in global terms for its full force to be felt. 'There is, as he puts it, in the lives of

most of us, a "spiritual destitution." and an "increasingly intolerable disparity" between what we could achieve and what little we actually achieve."<sup>36</sup> These are concrete realities with which we start. Should they be questioned, we can show that they actually obtain. Proceeding to a more abstract level, we display what it is about our society that makes this so and indicate the grounds for believing that such a condition is not a necessary human condition rooted in 'the very nature of things.' We also, in very general terms, give some conception of a different and better vision of the future--a possible, not, I would argue, an inevitable future.

In doing these things in a reasonably extensive and systematic way, a classificatory and categorial conceptual system of a recognizably philosophical sort will need to be developed, clarified and its presuppositions unearthed and justified. Knowledge and understanding of a theoretical sort is, of course, vital here.

However, this theorizing would still be rooted in a recognition of the primacy and centrality of the interests and needs of the vast masses of mankind. It would be theory in service of that social interest and that would be its underlying social intent or moral rationale. It would have as its most central end the achievement of a comprehensive overview of human life and society which would enable persons to make sense of their lives and to achieve some vision of a better future for humankind. But this must be grounded in a concrete and detailed knowledge of the realities about us and a systematic understanding of man, nature, and the dynamics of society. We must in doing this have something which can be reasoned out and argued for at every step, though in a manner which is relevant to the particular types of things we are talking about.

## IX

There are two criticisms of the argument of the last section which I would now like to consider. The first would be natural to make from a radical perspective and the second would come natural to many a non-radical analytical philosopher, even one with left liberal leanings.

Let me consider the radical criticism first. It could plausibly be claimed that in the above argument some rather excessively elitist thinking is going on. In proposition 5 and in the above section, I spoke of giving the working class 'something to live by' and 'giving them a consistent world-view and a body of guiding principles,' but who are we philosophers to be laying down the law, to be telling the rest of the working class how they should live? Do we think we are high priests or shamans? Our experience in the labour force is distinctly unusual and our class backgrounds are rather varied. Furthermore, it takes more than pure thought--even if such a thing existed--to come to grips with live social problems. In forging new tablets, we need as well, and even more crucially, the varied experiences of the working class in their struggles with the ruling capitalist class. We need to have a good understanding of the working class both in its rather considerable variety and in its typicality; we need an understanding of its characteristic experiences of work, leisure, family life and the like. The forging of new tablets should be a collective affair of the working class and it needs to be

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rooted in a thorough understanding of working class life and working class struggles. New tablets are not to come from above as the promulgations of radical intellectual ubermenschen whose experience of life and understanding of the class struggle may be skewed by either or both a) their upper-class or petite bourgeois origins, on the one hand, or their unwitting identifications and attitudes, on the other, and b) by their rather unique and sheltered work experiences. There can be no such identification of the interests of the working class with the interests of a typical elite within that class.

I accept the thrust of this criticism and if the intent of proposition 5 is to deny what is said above, then I would argue that 5 is mistaken. The role of intellectuals--including, of course, radical philosophers--should be like that of Marx and Engels. Given that our position in the labour force has afforded us very specialized work--work in which we can and indeed should, spend more time in study and reflection than most people can--we should use this expertise in bringing the fore, and setting in a distinct perspective, certain facts, implications, possible consequences of policies affecting the interests of the working class but not likely to be known by our fellow workers. We further can and indeed should, in light of those facts and the like, set-out--though always in a provisional manner--an interpretive framework in accordance with which these facts, etc. should be viewed and classified. But what finally should be done in the light of these facts, implications, theories, and the like should be decided democratically by the working class. There is no need for 'moral experts' or elitists here and indeed that there must be such elites or 'experts' is a plain implication of our conception of a worker's democracy.

Non-radical analytical philosophers--even some with left-leaning political tendencies--will find it natural to object to the case I made in the previous section and to the central claims made in 10 and 16. It will be argued that really serious philosophy, like serious physics, economics, musicology or brain surgery, is just too specialized and demanding to make any headway with unless one is either a genius or a man of normal intelligence but with years of specialized training. With the taking of several good philosophy courses of a relatively introductory sort, some people can come to have clearer heads about some matters of vital interest to them and it might even be possible, if philosophy were taught more in the manner we radicals would have it taught, that people would gain a keener understanding of their society and the options open to them. They might even come in time to have a more adequate comprehensive picture of the world. All this could be true, while it still remains the case that the really deep and controversial elements in this philosophical overview, as the comparable elements in physics or economics, would remain almost articles of faith for the working class or indeed for anyone other than the specialist in this domain. It is not necessarily even a matter of intelligence or conceptual acuteness of special aptitudes (whatever, if anything, these things may signify),

but it may simply be due to certain contingently developed interests and a very intensive specialization that results from the division of labour such that if this division of labour ceases to exist, we will no longer have people who can do what Wiggins and Shoemaker have done on identify or Putnam and Geach on reference or Ziff and Chomsky about semantics or Kripke and Lewis about necessity or Quine or Wittgenstein on conceptual foundations or Rawls and Baier on the foundations of morality. These matters require specialization and indeed the very opposite of the commitment to amateurishness with which some radical philosophers have taxed linguistic philosophers.

People can get useful and systematic popularizations of such notions put together in such a way as to set forth in fairly straightforward terms a reasonable and reasonably unified view of the world. These popularizations will in turn be useful in the development by the working class, with the aid of philosophers with solid working class identifications, of a world-view which will serve as a basis for a critique and a more intelligent understanding of society. But there can be in general no getting to the bottom of these technical philosophical issues by the masses, not because the masses generally lack the requisite intelligence, but because such a philosophical understanding, like the playing of Rostropovich or the performing of delicate brain or heart surgery, is the product of a long training and specialization. To think it could or should be otherwise is to confuse philosophy with ideology or *Weltanschauung*.

Again I am in sympathy with much of this. When we desire it to be the case that the masses will come to grips with philosophy in some reasonably extensive way, we surely cannot reasonably mean that they should be able to gain the kind of knowledge which will push back the frontiers of the subject. In gaining--as typical members of a class-conscious working class--a coherent and informed world view, we cannot sensibly mean that such members (members picked at random) must be able to make original contributions to a theory (account) of reference or to a theory (account) of rationality. It should be admitted that whatever reasonable transformation of philosophy there may be in the direction of a comprehensive critical theory of society, there will remain elements of that account which, for a fullness of understanding, will require specialists.

However, the other side of the coin is that, if philosophy moved more decisively in the direction of the comprehensive social critique (critical theory of society) that we radicals seek, many of the perplexities that have exercised Wiggins and Shoemaker, for example, or Ziff and Chomsky, might be seen to be just specialists' puzzles with a rather limited general philosophical interest. (This, of course, does not render them worthless or pointless, though they then on our conception, would not be a part of the corpus of problems which are the fundamental problems of philosophy.) But--particularly with Chomsky's work--this is far from certain; that is to say, with some of this work it is not evident that it does not have, at least by implication, a more general philosophical interest. And the radically different endeavours of Kripke and

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Lewis, Rawls and Baier, Quine and Wittgenstein--all requiring a specialist's training for a thorough understanding and appraisal and at least some of which are of general philosophical interest--are not matters that we can expect the masses, no matter how good their education, to, in one very important sense, appraise.

However, 'appraise' needs disambiguation here. If it is taken to mean 'to ascertain the logical cogency and adequacy of,' then the answer is 'No, of course they could not do so,' but if, alternatively, 'appraise' is taken to mean 'to ascertain the value of these conceptions in enabling people to make sense of their lives and society and to engage in social critique and assessment with the end in view of achieving social change,' then the answer is 'Perhaps they could be in a position to do so, provided that they have in some reasonable manner been in an extended dialogue over these issues with those philosophers who are thoroughly equipped to examine the technical philosophical issues in question.' (Here some reasonable accurate popularizations are in order). I make this comment with considerable ambivalence for even this kind of understanding makes incredible demands on people, given the complexity of our civilization. Moreover, the recognition that these may be excessive demands does not commit one to what Horkheimer and Habermas have chastized as scientism. Some think that I am being far too utopian here and that realism about human possibilities would never allow us to even hope this. I share these worries but refuse, before we are in a position to give such a 'utopian conception' a try, to so lower my sights about our educatability.

The difficulties are compounded by the following considerations. I do not mean to suggest that these two kinds of appraisal can be kept completely apart. The remark in the above paragraph needs qualification to the effect that such plain men must have some understanding to the relative merits of the opposing philosophical arguments to be able to carry out the second type of appraisal. I am not claiming that statistically normal members of the working class can resolve questions about the soundness of certain key arguments concerning some of these very technical philosophical issues, but I am claiming that, where the second conception of appraisal is at issue, there--at least in many cases--can be no rational resolution of the issues concerning this philosophical issue, raised by this second conception of appraisal, without some consideration of the logical cogency of the arguments over the philosophical issue at hand. In fine, the latter sort of appraisal requires something of the former. But the qualifiers 'some' and 'something' are very important here; the requirement is not, absurdly, that such normal members of the working class must have a thorough understanding of what is involved in the first appraisive activity in order to make the second kind of appraisal, but that they have some reasonable understanding of the arguments. 'Reasonable' in such a context is, of course, vague and I see no way of making the matter more precise. And I remain worried about its vagueness. Yet I am not convinced that this is a stultifying vagueness for in particular cases--

and this is where the actual crunch will come--experienced and reflective people can decide what counts as a 'reasonable understanding.' (Note, we can usually tell in conversation when students have understood a philosophical argument.)

There is a further relevant point here. It should be noted that while these technical philosophical issues are indeed abstruse, difficult and often intractable, there is no sufficient reason to deny, where competent proponents of opposing viewpoints concerning these issues (say, arguments about the nature of necessity, individuation or reference) put their central and opposing claims in rather plain terms and with reference to issues bearing on the problems of human beings, that soberly educated and reflective non-specialists can gain some understanding of their respective logical merits, particularly at those junctures, if any, where the technical philosophical claims touch on their interests.

If someone persists in saying that the average plain main just could not know enough, then the person making that claim should be reminded of the fact that work in philosophy and economic theory which taxed many of the most powerful and creative minds thirty years ago is now mastered routinely by an competent graduate student in the relevant discipline. There is no good reason not believing that some reasonably accurate and perceptive 'popularization' of what these students mastered could not and would not be mastered by people of normal intelligence when it was in their interest to do so.

It is, of course, the case that creative discovery is one thing and subsequent mastery is another. But there is nothing in a radical (including a Marxist) conception of the world which denies that there will be individuals of creative genius who will forge new conceptions and theories. Rather the claim is that, after their discovery and articulation, there is no sound reason why important and difficult conceptual matters, with a bearing on the articulation of an adequate comprehensive critical theory of society, could not be stated in such a way that they could be understood and their merits or lack thereof appreciated by people of normal intelligence who have been reasonably well educated. There is no adequate reason to believe that there is something here which is plainly or even not so plainly beyond the capacity of normal members of the working class to appraise.

Given the conception of philosophy I have been most centrally concerned to elucidate and defend--namely, philosophy as centrally a comprehensive critical theory of society--what is even more crucial to realize is that many of the issues most baffling to analytical philosophers will be seen to be nit-picking puzzles with very little bearing on a comprehensive critical theory of society. The resolution of these puzzles may require very decidedly a specialist's knowledge, but we need neither to be able to resolve nor dissolve these puzzles in order to solve problems of key importance concerning a critical theory of society. But this is what, from the point of view of radical philosophy, it is crucial to solve and here we have no good reason to believe that we have something which is

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beyond the appreciation of plain persons in possession of a reasonable education.

### X

The whole thrust of what I have been arguing makes it evident how integrally linked radical philosophy must be with the struggle to achieve a socialist transformation of society, though this should not be taken for a moment to imply or suggest that a radical philosopher must not be prepared to consider in all seriousness questions and challenges concerning the justification of socialism and the justification for taking in the struggle for social change, the revolutionary road. He must start from and return to--though in between he may stray far afield--the problems of the masses in their practical activity and struggles. The problems of human beings, in sum, must become the problems of philosophers. In this way philosophical theory interacts with practice, both being informed by it and in turn informing it. (I do not deny for a moment that much more needs to be said here about theory and practice and in a much clearer manner.) It is essential, if good work is to be done in philosophy, conceived as a critical theory of society, that we attend carefully and without mystification to the real conditions of social existence. This, however, is never a purely armchair affair only requiring 'pure thought' or conceptual analysis. Critical theory will, of course, involve theory construction and conceptual analysis, but it will also involve an actual empirical study of society. To carry out our programmatic tasks we cannot accept the arbitrary disciplinary restrictions that most analytical philosophers and indeed most traditional philosophers as well impose themselves. Here we are in approach to Marx and to the pragmatists.

We must be clear that our intellectual work is to be a critical weapon in the class struggle. We must, of course, take care 'to tell it like it is,' to not tell lies to ourselves, let alone to anyone else, or engage in mystification or myth-making, including of course self-mystification. And this latter is, of course, easier said than done. Indeed, in the more controversial portions of this essay I may have engaged unwittingly in some self-mystification myself. This struggle for understanding is an endless one where we can only attain partial victories. But be that as it may, we must not forget that our knowledge and understanding is not something which simply has a value for its own sake--though it may have this value as well--but is instrumentally valuable in helping the working class to attain class-consciousness with its attendant understanding and weapons of criticism--a consciousness which in turn will enable them (given certain conditions) at long last to being an end to capitalist domination and exploitation. And this means that it will enable the working class to bring to an end the whole capitalist

system, for there is no capitalism without domination and exploitation. We must never for a moment forget that this is the contextual background against which our radical philosophizing operates. We reason and act in the light of this background and it provides radical philosophy with its ultimate rationale.

FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> The following are my companion pieces to this essay: "On the Very Possibility of a Radical Philosophy," Proceedings of the Society for the Philosophical Study of Marxism, ed. by John Somerville and Howard L. Parsons, forthcoming, "A Critical Notice of J.F.M. Hunter's Essays after Wittgenstein," Metaphilosophy, forthcoming, and "Remarks on Philosophical Method," Metaphilosophy, forthcoming.
- <sup>2</sup> See the editorials in the various issues of Radical Philosophy and see, as well, the following programmatic discussions of this group. Jonathan Ree, "Professional Philosophy and Radical Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 1 (January, 1972); Benjamin Gibbs, "Academic Philosophy and Radical Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 1 (January, 1972); J.M. Cohen, "Philosophy in the Academy," Radical Philosophy 2 (Summer, 1972); J.M. Hinton, "Reaction to Radical Philosophy," Philosophy 2; Sean Sayers and Tony Skillen, "Hinton's Reaction A Reply," Radical Philosophy 2; Sean Sayers and Tony Skillen, "Hinton's Reaction A Reply," Radical Philosophy 2; the symposium in Radical Philosophy 3. "What is Radical Philosophy?," with essays by Peter Binns, Tony Skillen, Mary Warnock, Roy Edgley, John Mepham, Guido Frongia, Colin Beardon and David Hillel Ruben; Ted Benton, "The Politics of Radical Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 4; Bob Brecher, "Alternative Philosophies," Radical Philosophy 4; Sean Sayers, "Review of Paul Nizan's, The Watchdogs: Philosophers and the Established Order," Radical Philosophy 4; Sean Sayers, "Towards a Radical Philosophy," Cambridge Review, Vol. 98, No. 2209 Philosophers' Newsjournal (August 1, 1973). Also, Kai Nielsen, "Philosophy and Ideology: Programmatic Remarks for a Radical Philosophy," Radical Philosophers' Newsjournal (August, 1974) with comments in the same issues by Roger S. Gottlieb and Larry Elle; Kai Nielsen, "Radical Philosophy: Some Programmatic Remarks," Laurentian University Review, Vol. VII No. 1 (November, 1974); Andrew Collier, "Truth and Practice," Radical Philosophy (Summer, 1973); Bernard Harrison, "Field and the Moralists," Radical Philosophy 6 (Winter, 1973); Trevor Pateman, "A Conception of Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 8 (Summer, 1974); Sean Sayers, Jonathan Ree and Bernard Harrison in a discussion of Ordinary Language Philosophy and Radical Philosophy" Radical Philosophy 8, (Summer, 1974); K.T. Fann, "Wittgenstein and Bourgeois Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 8 (Summer, 1974); Edmund Burke, "Wittgenstein's Conservatism," Radical Philosophy 10 (Spring, 1975); and Sean Sayers, "Radical Philosophy in Britain and the United States," Radical Philosophers' Newsjournal (March 2, 1974).
- <sup>3</sup> The major figures are Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Friedrich Pollock, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Borkenau, Franz Neumann, Jurgen Habermas, Albrecht Wellmer, and Karl-Otto Apel. Their work is now being extensively translated into English. This school has been masterfully discussed by Martin Jay in his The Dialectical Imagination (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973). See his extensive bibliography for the references to the core works of the Frankfurt School. See footnote 13.
- <sup>4</sup> J.L. Mackie, Truth, Probability and Paradox (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. vii.
- <sup>5</sup> Goran Therborn, "Frankfurt Marxism: A Critique," New Left Review Vol. 63 (1973) and see, as well, Peter Laska, "A Note on Habermas and the Labor Theory of Value," New German Critique, Vol. 1, No. 3 (Fall, 1974).
- <sup>6</sup> Trent Schroyer, "Marx and Habermas," Continuum, Vol. 8, No. 1 (Spring-Summer, 1970), p. 60.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63. See also his The Critique of Domination (New York: George Braziller, 1973), "The Critical Theory of Late Capitalism," in The Revival of American Socialism, ed. by George Fischer (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1971), and his "The Paradox of Alienation in the Western Image of Man," Abraxis, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Winter, 1970).
- <sup>8</sup> Ralf Dahrendorf, Essays in the Theory of Society (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1968), pp. 151-78.
- <sup>9</sup> Isaiah Berlin, Four Essays on Liberty (London, England: Oxford University Press, 1969),

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- and "Equality," in the Concept of Equality (Minneapolis: Burgess Publishing Co., 1969), pp. 14-33.
- <sup>10</sup> See my "For Impurity in Philosophy," University of Toronto Quarterly (January, 1974).
- <sup>11</sup> Some of the central issues emerge in the exchange between Popper and Adorno at the Tübingen and Heidelberg Conferences. See here the material collected by Otto Stammer (ed.), Max Weber and Sociology Today (New York: Harper and Row, 1971). See generally on this issue, Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).
- <sup>12</sup> I have tried to do something toward analysis of ideology and to say something about how we distinguish a rational from an irrational ideology in my "Is Empiricism an Ideology?," Metaphilosophy, Vol. 3 No. 4 (October, 1972), pp. 265-73.
- <sup>13</sup> Kai Nielsen, "For Impurity in Philosophy," University of Toronto Quarterly (January 1974).
- <sup>14</sup> In this respect, though without abandoning or fetishizing the rather distinctive English concern for clarity and plainness of statement, English-speaking philosophers would do well to emulate the Frankfurt School and particularly the work of Jürgen Habermas. See Jürgen Habermas, Knowledge and Human Interests (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971); Albrecht Wellmer, Critical Theory of Society (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971). For a general discussion of the Frankfurt School, see Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), "Some Recent Developments in Critical Theory," Berkeley Journal of Sociology, Vol. XVIII (1973-74), "The Frankfurt Critique of Mannheim," Telos, No. 20 (Summer, 1974). See also James Schmitt, "Reply to Martin Jay," Telos (Fall, 1974); Dieter Misgeld, "Between Philosophy and Science: 'The Critical Theory' of the Frankfurt School of Social Research," Laurentian University Review, Vol. 4, No. 2 (February, 1972). Reviews of Habermas and Adorno have occurred in Radical Philosophy, indicating the attitudes of at least some group to the Frankfurt School. In a brilliantly integrated discussion of Habermas' work in The Canadian Journal of Philosophy, Vol. II, No. 4 (June, 1973), Sara Ruddick makes his work much more available for analytic philosophers than it otherwise would be. The depth of her probing and what she brings forth about Habermas' work contrasts very well indeed with Anthony Quinton's superficial, clever-silly attempt at a putdown. See Anthony Quinton, "Critique of the Frankfurt School," Encounter, Vol. XLIII, No. 4 (October, 1974).
- <sup>15</sup> Milton Fisk, "Philosophy and Politics," an unpublished paper presented to the American Philosophical Association, Eastern Division (December 27, 1971).
- <sup>16</sup> John Dewey's Conceptualization of the office and function of philosophy is important here. See in particular his programmatic remarks collected together in the first two chapters of his Intelligence in the Modern World (New York: Random House, 1939). I have tried to say something both elucidatory and critical about his conception of philosophy in my "John Dewey's Conception of Philosophy," The University of Massachusetts Review, Vol. II, No. 1 (Autumn, 1960). An interesting historical and interpretive survey of the attempts to articulating critical theories of society in North America has been given by T.B. Bottomore in his Critics of Society (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1967).
- <sup>17</sup> Bob Brecher, "Alternative Philosophies?," Radical Philosophy 4 (Spring, 1973), p. 36.
- <sup>18</sup> Sean Sayers, "Towards a Radical Philosophy," Cambridge Review, Vol. 98 No. 2209 (October, 1972), pp. 11-16.
- <sup>19</sup> Paul Nizan, The Watchdogs: Philosophers and the Established Order (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), pp. 84-85.
- <sup>20</sup> Sean Sayers, "Discussion of the Watchdogs," Radical Philosophy 4 (Spring, 1973), pp. 38-40.
- <sup>21</sup> Roy Edgley, "A Reply to Mary Warnock's Remarks on Radical Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 3 (Winter, 1972), p. 29. Here again what is being claimed by these English radical philosophers is very like what is claimed by the Frankfurt School.
- <sup>22</sup> Roger Waterhouse, "Teaching Philosophy-To Whom?," Radical Philosophy 4 (Spring, 1973), p. 16.
- <sup>23</sup> J.M. Cohen, "Philosophy in the Academy," Radical Philosophy 2 (Summer, 1972), p. 7.
- <sup>24</sup> Max Horkheimer, "The Social Function of Philosophy," Radical Philosophy 3 (Winter, 1972), p. 12
- <sup>25</sup> I have sorted out some conceptual considerations in my "Is Empiricism and Ideology?," Metaphilosophy, Vol. 3, No. 4 (October, 1972), pp. 265-73, such that it should be clear that 'an irrational ideology' is not a pleonasm and 'a reasoned, justified ideology is not a

- contradiction.
- <sup>26</sup> Alasdair MacIntyre, Against the Self-Images of the Age (London: Gerald Duckworth & Company Ltd., 1971), pp. 3-11.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. viii.
- <sup>28</sup> Paul Nizan, The Watchdogs: Philosophers and the Established Order (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), and Sean Sayers' discussion of it in Radical Philosophy 4 (Spring, 1973), pp. 38-40.
- <sup>29</sup> Sayers, op. cit., p. 39.
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>31</sup> Nizan, op. cit., p. 91.
- <sup>32</sup> Nizan, op. cit., p. 106 and Sayers, op. cit., pp. 39-40
- <sup>33</sup> See here Anthony Quinton's arguments and Isaiah Berlin's and Stuart Hampshire's opposition to it in Philosophy and Beliefs," The Twentieth Century (June, 1955) and G.J. Warnock, English Philosophy Since 1900. (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), Chapter XIII.
- <sup>34</sup> Peter Winch, "Contemporary British Philosophy and Its Critics," Universities Quarterly, Vol. X (1955).
- <sup>35</sup> See my "The Functions of Moral Discourse," Philosophical Quarterly (1957), "Justification and Moral Reasoning," Methodos (1957), "Appraising Doing the Thing Done," Journal of Philosophy (1960) and "Why Should I Be Moral?," Methodos (1963), for my positive account of morality. For attempts to show that non-cognitivism does not have the nihilistic consequences often ascribed to it see my "Bertrand Russell's New Ethic," Methodos (1958) and "On Looking Back at the Emotive Theory," Methodos (1962). I have tried to tie together some of these considerations in more summary form in my Reason and Practice (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), pp. 243-319 and in my "Problems of Ethics," The Encyclopedia of Philosophy Vol. 3, ed. by Paul Edwards (New York: The Macmillan Company and The Free Press, 1976), pp. 117-32.
- <sup>36</sup> Paul Nizan, op. cit., p. 91.