

# **A PALLID HOPELESSNESS: REFLECTIONS ON ALIENATION**

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Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness....

-Herman Melville, "Bartleby the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street" (1853)

Various commentators have targeted a wide array of causal explanations as shaping the dominant problems within American culture. Business leaders, for example, have long faulted governmental economic meddling, or unionization, or decline of a free enterprise spirit; ecologists point out environmental degradation or lack of human balance with the natural world; teachers may see failures of educational philosophies or maldistributed resources; social scientists study malfunctions in families, communities, institutions, belief systems, and the like. Psychologists, economists, philosophers, spiritual figures, journalists, artists, and many others have perspectives, as does the typical nonspecialized individual living in American society. Such an almost- unending profusion of accounts suggests that something is quite problematic in American culture.

Although nearly all of these problem characterizations contain at least some elements that are intriguing and informative to any thoughtful person, in the end their heterogeneity makes for a fragmented view of American society. Is such explanatory disarray merely an accurate reflection of a host of unconnected situations? Or, more fundamentally, is everyday life underlain by an innately fragmented societal reality? Can such diverse views be interrelated coherently and comprehensively? In short, is there a potential for a radical theory; that is, for a unifying explanation of the problem situation at its roots?

## **A Strategy to Examine the Problem**

The writings in the body of work generally termed "alienation" share the thesis that some psychological and/or social qualities that people experience or that they consciously or intuitively desire are strange to them or are estranged from them. These writings' long, multifaceted, and rich history helps to give them standing as well-ripened, sophisticated, and insightful. Psychoanalytic views, especially that view termed object relations, have similar attributes from having been formulated by diverse and thoughtful clinicians through decades of psychotherapeutic work with a considerable variety of individuals. .,

## **The Strategy to Be Pursued**

It is proposed, then, that the thinking of alienation and of psychoanalytic object relations can cohere well with one another. Each is a well-developed and radical theory of the relationships between individuals and their wider world, with psychoanalytic thinking concentrated more on humans as individuals (herein generally termed subjectivity), alienation thought more on humans in environment (objectivity). It is therefore proposed that, with enrichment from understandings that are grounded in psychodynamic object relations, the concept of alienation can help to unify and to deepen widely varied understandings of psychosocial problems.

Convincing support for such a strategy will be found if, after having been developed and presented, it helps thoughtful people compose some broad, meaningful insights about themselves and others, and about their array of concrete and abstract interrelationships. Introductory support may come here from favorable comparison with similar strategies which others have fruitfully pursued.

### **Socio-politically radical analyses and traditions of thought**

Much of the argument to be presented here draws on analyses and traditions that have been in the forefront of alienation thinking, particularly that thinking about an alienation which more suffuses society at its roots. At times, radicalism is the socio-economic-political stance of psychoanalytic thinkers and practitioners.

This is the case for British clinical psychologist Barry Richards. Richards is the editor of *Capitalism and Infancy: Essays on Psychoanalysis and Politics* (1984) and his summation of one of that book's contributions reflect a strategy overlapping that in this work:

Peter Barham suggests that socialists might see psychoanalysis, especially Kleinian and object-relational theory, as offering important, perhaps necessary, contributions to the thinking through of the socialist project and its requirements for action in a capitalist world.... [Raymond Williams' theory of "cultural materialism", which Barham draws upon] calls for explorations of individual internalizations of the social order." (p. 12, emphasis added)

Joel Kovel (1988) similarly proposes that two strands of thought come to confluence in the person. Where Richards (1984) rather likes the theoretical utility of psychoanalysis for a "socialist project," (Ibid.), Kovel emphasizes a psychoanalysis/Marxism epistemological interrelatedness:

What we learn psychoanalytically is the subjectification of everyday life--the way immediate social existence is registered subjectively under the peculiar conditions of human psychic representation.... What Marxism provides in the way of a dialectical history has to be transcribed, then, into a dialectics of the objects of everyday life, suitable for representation in the dialectical psychology of psychoanalysis. (p. III)

It is abundantly recognized in this work that both psychoanalysis and Marxism are anathematic to most Americans. Beginning with Chapter Four, it is examined how the social and psychological matters of primary importance to each are apprehended--and misapprehended-- by typical Americans. Here, to introduce and to undergird the strategic inclusion of the particularly anathematic Marxism in this dissertation, the undeservedly distorting or dismissive stances of many observers toward it is addressed.

Kovel (1978/1988) protests how "attenuated and vulgarized 11 (p. 110) a view of Marxism is.. held by many in the West. He notes, as an example, one psychoanalyst's summary of Marx as characterizing the individual human as "'a pawn in an economic process.'" He replies that

for Marx, man has indeed become a kind of economic pawn, but is not to be considered as such in his essence. This essence is that of a socially self-transformative active agent, one who acts on nature to make the world and is dialectically made by it. (p. 110)

This passage introduces Marxist ontology very well. The continuation of the same passage (Kovel, 1978) begins to point up Marxism's overlap with the psychoanalytic aim of historical inquiry:

The record of man's self-transformation is history. Thus, before anything else, Marxism is the historical vision as such.... The historical dimension of Marxism is the successor, within the terms-of scientific discourse, to the vividness of the animistic world-view. The bourgeois revolution deadened the world and froze it into an ahistorical world of Kantian "thing-in-itself" and a knowing subject transcendently removed from materiality. It took Marx to restore a sense of motion to the things of the world--a trajectory given by concrete human activity, or praxis. Despite a certain psychological indifference and short-sightedness ... Marx leaves no doubt that our psyche, along with everything else human, is to be regarded as a historical product.' (pp. 110-111)

Perhaps surprisingly to many mainstream Americans, they are likely to concur with Marxist ontology.

### **Extenuation and Distortion**

A notion termed *extenuation* suggests a willful or tacit perceptual distortion of the actualities of human circumstances, thought, and meanings; such distortion is undertaken with the aim of sustaining a psychosocial status quo. This sense of extenuation may be adumbrated here so better to apprehend typical American understanding of Marxism: It has been presented to everyday people, and to mainline social thinkers as well, essentially as a prescriptive theory of state socialism. What is attenuated by such an apprehension is Marxism's central guiding thrust which is a descriptive critique of existing capitalist societies.

I would agree with Marxism's critics that it has been remanded to "the ash-heap" (or "the dung-heap")<sup>7</sup> of history. This does, though, not mean the supersession or the "death" of Marxism, though it seems to have run a terminal course as a developmental theory of state socialism for cultures without a capitalist precursor.

Rather, the "ash-heap/dung-heap" metaphor is taken here more dialectically than is (consciously) intended by anti-Marxists: Both ashes and dung symbolize that which is classed as undesirable, to be gotten rid of. To pro-capitalists, Marxism's critique--to the extent that it is unsettlingly-accurate--surely is highly undesirable. The hope of the pro-capitalist is that the thrown-away detritus, literal and conceptual, of their society is gone for good. But, as in the act of (psychoanalytic) repression, the repressed necessarily returns to subtly make itself known as an influential, if consciously unrecognized, determinant of individual and social life and lives. What is repressed is not merely the theoretical-rhetoric of Marxism but the full realities of the ongoing humanly harmful practices of capitalism. These are what Marxist critique illuminates.'

A key influence of Marxism herein, then, is its critique spirit and radical digging for meanings that typically are obscured in discourse about American life. Of comparably primary influence is its dialectic methodology: Its probing for radical meaning in the interrelationships of societal elements, which also typifies psychoanalytic methodology at its explanatory best. Somewhat less primary herein, for methodological and content considerations to be taken up later, is close obeisance to many of Marxism's specific theoretical tenets.

Psychoanalysis and its variants have been mobilized by many authors as an enriching corrective to what Kovel (1978/1988) above identified as a Marxist "psychological indifference and shortsightedness" (p. 110). Such is its role here. To Marxism informed by psychoanalysis, "the cultural dimension of human life," says Barham (1984),

is neither secondary nor epiphenomenal [as "classical", economistic Marxism would hold] but in crucial respects determining, and progress is therefore more likely to come from a rigorous examination of how the forms of liberal-individualist culture sustain their hold, and of what is most intimately involved in seeking to reach from one form of human project to another. (pp. 38-39)

Following the lead of thinkers such as those just surveyed, the argument that is here presented aims to demonstrate the validity of two observations, First, that there is a complex, subtle, normally unarticulated, but understandable congruity to the fundamental nature of many American societal problems; and second, that apprehending this fundamental nature as alienation between many individuals and the institutions, beliefs, meanings, and other people of their society both will clarify many problems and will encourage problem solutions that might otherwise not be found.

Some further support for the strategy is formulated in the upcoming section outlining the history of a notion regarding *alienation*.

### **Alienation and Its "Inevitability"**

Implicit or explicit in many world views, including sometimes psychoanalytic theory, is an argument that alienation is historically universal, inevitable to some degree as a product of the unavoidable separation from the primeval object(s) of our desires. As Lasch (1979) says:

each society tries to solve the universal crises of childhood--the trauma of separation from the mother, the fear of abandonment, the pain of competing with others for the mother's love--in its own way, and the manner in which it deals with these psychic events produces a characteristic form of personality, a characteristic form of psychological deformation, by means of which the individual reconciles himself to instinctual deprivation and submits to the requirements of social existence. (p. 76)

The hyper-utopian argument that a blissful unalienated state is closely approachable or attainable will be part of this dissertation primarily to illustrate its regressive allure. Rather, the specifics of American capitalism that might realistically be altered toward a lesser alienation are of prime attention here. People will inevitably have hunger as well; this neither justifies starvation or malnourishment, nor does it make it quiescently inevitable.

I offer three intertwined observations regarding alienation. First, I propose that subjects' relationships with objects are paradigms for subjects' relationships with objectivity; and, dialectically, that the structures and conventions of objectivity are paradigms for subject-object relationships and their meanings. In short, subject-object relations and subjectivity-objectivity relations are intermingled much more thoroughly than capitalist culture's belief and practice acknowledges. Among many possible manifestations of this statement, one vital one is that parent(s) and child(ren) constitute each other; the totality of their-psychosocial surroundings constitutes them and is constituted by them and by the equalities of their interrelationship.

Secondly, I propose that the historical circumstances of American capitalism undermine and distort the healthiest developmental potential of the dialectics of subject(s) with object(s) and objectivity. Furthermore, these circumstances justify, or even laud, the subject-object relationships which result. This condition of justified distortion is termed an extenuated dialectic. Its origin may be traced in

substantial part to the self-maintenance necessities of capitalism, particularly those flowing from an attenuation of public and private realms of life.

Third, I propose that the concrete (such as institutional structures) and abstract (such as ideas) psychosocial repercussions in American society of the dynamic sketched by the second proposal are often incongruent. both with one another and with the healthiest developmental possibilities as suggested by psychoanalytic object relations. It is argued that, by understanding the invariably complex, usually subtle interplay of these three thesis components, prominent and everyday features of American culture may be meaningfully characterized and analyzed as alienation of individual lives from human life.

### **Some Postulates Underpinning These Proposals**

The prime postulate for the construction of my three proposals follows: for one's and others' personal and social lives to make sophisticated sense, there should and needs to be an ascertainable extrapersonal concrete and abstract objectivity that is appropriable by individuals. Investigation of the nature, construction, and meanings of objectivity and its interplay with subjectivity is thoroughly interwoven with the remainder of this work. Surely it is self-evident that extra-individual qualities such as provision of food and physical safety, or others' communicative and emotional responsiveness exemplify essential externals for potentially healthy and functional development of individuals. To developing individuals, such qualities impart knowledge, socialization, interpersonal orientation, physical survival, and the like. Ascertainable objectivity, then, dialectically makes/is made by individual subjects, and is essential to human development. This suggests it may be introductorily termed an essence (which later will be recast as meaning).

#### **Essence**

Essence is seen as something {and/or something) that inherently vulnerable developing individuals--through infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood—can draw upon, contribute to, participate in, and rely upon. And such essence as exists for potential development is certainly immanent to humanity, else it would be an alien essence<sup>13</sup>--an unsustainable paradox. Lack or shortfall of a coherent, sensible, adaptively dynamic essence is a most fundamental alienation; there remains little but an immature, impulse-ridden, fantasy-suffused, solipsistic self or array of such selves.

Such a state constantly looms not only for an infant or a child, but also for an adult or child-adult adolescent buffeted by regressive winds of isolation. If essence is absent or inadequate, then spurious, seeming-essences may be arbitrarily asserted, by inchoately desperate individuals for lack of anything better, and/or by exploitive elites aiming to accommodate people more effectively to their exploitation.

There is a two-part repercussion of the foregoing postulate. First, little clear, mature, reliable human essence is now either generated or ascertained by most people living in American society, and b) that much of current psychosocial practice, apprehended as "reality," "human nature," and the like, not only discourages their doing so, it provides spurious, seeming-essences--such as "consumer"--to accommodate people to their socially necessary personality characteristics, thinking processes and contents, roles, and behaviors."

Attainment of human essence is not (re.) attainment of a "golden past" (though this humanly universal longing frequently is exploited) but does unavoidably contain or build upon a longing for such

attainment. There is a strong desire to capture our individual and transhistorical essence and *species-being* for our social and historical essence. This perspective is transmuted from, respectively, psychoanalysis and Marxism.

### **Psychosocial Maturity**

A closely linked further postulate is that psychoanalytic object relations thought suggests a model of psychological maturity that is both a prototype and a concordant condition for essence-recognition and achievement, and for societal problem amelioration as well. Briefly cast, psychosocial maturity is knowing and dealing with others, and with the extra-individual world, as fully objective; that is, existing in its/their own right, as substantially more than infantile-based self-reflections, self-projections, or instrumental means of self-gratification.

Psychosocial maturity is further regarded herein to be an attainment of what C. Fred Alford (1989), drawing on the work of Melanie Klein, calls "reparative morality" (p. 44). This mature moral state contrasts with the more primitive "talion morality." The latter is, in short, an urge to take revenge or to institute punishments for some wrong(s), the former an urge to make repair for it/them (Alford, 1989).

Klein's thought supports these notions, says Alford (1989), because she is a psychologist of the "passions." The "master passions" are love and hate, and "other powerful emotions, such as envy, gratitude, guilt, grief, or mourning may be seen as versions and combinations of the two master passions" (p. 8). Alford argues that Klein shows concern about what he thinks is best called *caritas*: "Affection, love, or esteem" felt toward others by those having successfully attained attitudes of genuine reparation in the Kleinian depressive position.

[*Caritas*] connotes the value of the object loved rather than the intensity of desire" (p. 9). Alford summarizes: "In a word, [reparative] love is neither an aim-inhibited expression of libido nor merely an attempt to identify with a powerful other. Rather, it expresses concern--*caritas*--regarding the welfare of the other qua other" (p. 35)

One further postulate builds from arguments, like that of Alford, that intrinsically interlink individual subjective development and maturity with the development and maturity of wider society. Basic to social problem amelioration would be a subject-object relationship which may be significantly altered from the current, often-immature and regressive, patterns. It is repeatedly pointed out that a major regressive tenet and practice of capitalism is the mobilization and indulgence--that is, exploitation, in its Marxist sense--of developmentally early human aggressive and desirous tendencies.

In the main, aggressive tendencies are rewarded in capitalism's productive sphere (and in extra-economic variations of this theme); desirous, needy tendencies are encouraged in the realm of consumption/commodities (and in the spinoffs of that realm). A postulate for which underpinning is developed is that, while the universal difficult legacies of primitive human development will never be absolutely transcended, individual and societal developmental possibilities that are more mature than those now enabled are feasible.

### **History of "Alienation" and of Marx-Freud Synthesizing**

As a societal condition, alienation of one or another sort is presumably as ancient as sentient human society. Alienation as an organizing concept for a cultural analysis goes back about two centuries to the

work of philosopher G.W.F. Hegel, who saw alienation as humanity estranged from, though unfolding toward, what he called Absolute Spirit (Hegel, 1807). In the 1930s, with the retrieval and spread of some mid-nineteenth century writings of Karl Marx (especially his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*), the word and concept of alienation resurfaced, now more in socioeconomic than in Hegel-like philosophical form.

### **"Alienation" and Its Shortcomings**

Marx had extended and transformed Hegel's work to argue that the cultural and personal effects of the exploitive capitalist productive system bloc s humans, as a class of workers, from their species-being, by which he meant the communal, self-productive aspects of their nature. From the 1930s into the 1970s, alienation was widely explored from diverse Marxist and extra-Marxist platforms. Alienation often overlapped--to some thinkers, override—such concepts as Anomie, mass society, and reification.

In current studious literature, both alienation and its conceptual cousins are found with much less frequency and salience than they had been in the past. One now typically meets "alienation" either as an incidental descriptive. term or as only one of an array of sub-headings in empirical research, for instance as one category of voters' attitudes toward a polity. In the literature of clinical psychology, the presence of "alienation" is confined almost exclusively to writings on adolescence. Alienation, it very much seems, now tends to be regarded by social thinkers primarily in a non-radical, non-Marxist manner.

### **Downplaying of Alienation**

The recent downplaying of alienation surely in some measure came about from changing political times and variations in intellectual fashion, such as an increased tendency to see the nature of problems as being of individual psychology rather than social, or as approachable--and soluble--only when defined in quite discrete ways.'" Such influences, though far from unimportant, are not emphasized in this dissertation because their impact upon the substantive notions of alienation<sup>1</sup>is mostly indirect.

Rather, it is seen that the radical explanatory promise of the notion of alienation has, with limited exception," been disappointed by its lack of underpinning by a clinically based depth psychology. Alienation writings typically have examined peoples' acquisitions of reality, meaning, ideology, and belief systems, their development of thinking and cognitive patterning, their affective lives, and their formation of relations to others, to otherness; and to the external world, familiar and novel; alienation thinkers have examined, in a word, peoples' psychologies, writ individually and/or socially. But the means of examination have been wide philosophical or religious conjecture, narrow empiricist social science, inexactly constructed polemics, or literary fictionalization.

In methodological contrast, the group of psychoanalytic views termed object relations are a continuation, enhancement, and transformation of Freudian theory that apprehends personality, cognition, and psychosocial meanings as created in the conscious and unconscious dialectics among subjects and internal and external literal and representational objects. Richards (1984) summarizes that post-Freudian [psychoanalytic] theories are characterized by a relational conception of the basis of psychic life"" (p. 9). These are just the sort of resources alienation thinking needs to become more insightful, sophisticated and, especially, radical.

The premises of object relations were developed largely from direct clinical practice. As Kovel

(1978/1988) notes "... the empirical base of psychoanalysis [is] the lived life of the human" (pp. 107-108). Thus, these premises help provide practical, empirical groundwork for the abstractions of alienation theory, with "empirical" seen here, rather less restrictively than in some methodologies, as lived human species life and individual human's lives.

Finally, incorporation of clinical insights helps address one shortcoming in the notion of alienation flowing from the influences on its ancestry of one central strain of Marxism: A tendency to view alienation as primarily a phenomenon of a narrowly cast labor process rather than as a broader cultural pattern." In this vein, Martin Jay (1973) notes that, in a personal communication with him, critical theorist Theodor Adorno commented that "Marx wanted to turn the whole world into a giant work-house" (p. 57). See Chapter Three, page 103, for some more on the Marxist concept of labor.

## **Marx and Freud Together**

The theoretical combining of Freudian notions with political analysis, particularly a critical Marxism, has a rich history, and is the intellectual tradition of the single most influence on this dissertation. To establish a tone and intellectual context for elaboration of the goals, scope, and methodology pursued herein, some salient writers and writings in this tradition are now sketched. The most prominent figures are, chronologically, Wilhelm Reich, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, Eric Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Joel Kovel, and Christopher Lasch.

### **Fenichel and Reich**

First, a few words about some unpromulgated early leftist psychoanalysts are germane. Russell Jacoby has now told their story in *The Repression of Psychoanalysis: Otto Fenichel and the Political Freudians* (1983). In the 1920s and 1930s, Fenichel and some other European analysts organized with the aim of applying psychoanalysis and political radicalism to studying and to changing European society. Jacoby traces how the rise of European fascism and the onset of World War II dispersed this movement, and how, subsequently, conservative established psychoanalytic communities, especially in America, drove it into secrecy and ineffectuality (Jacoby, 1983). These thinkers thus have few primary writings appropriate for this section.

Psychoanalyst and Marxist Wilhelm Reich was, until an acrimonious split, closely affiliated with this group. Unlike them, he wrote publicly and prolifically on the psychoanalytic-radical politics interplay. (Jacoby, 1983, pp. 80-84). The often-contentious Reich eventually parted ways with Freud as well, both over the etiology of neurosis and over psychoanalytic technique.

Reich differed with Freud over cultural theory, too. In his late-life writings, Freud came to posit a biologically based death instinct; Reich (1963) theorized rather that this phenomenon was based in the historically specific circumstances of the prevailing capitalist culture. Reich saw the etiology of neurosis and aggression in capitalism's sexual constraints. Inhibited sexuality {specifically, inadequacy of orgasm) "... makes aggression a power beyond mastery, because inhibited sexual energy turns into destructive energy" {p. 290). Some see Reich as brilliant; others, as mad. He is undeniably energetic. Though he does provide some relevant theoretical support and some articulate rhetoric, his work is not especially vital to this one. Other thinkers have been more thorough and better grounded in saying the same sorts of things.

## **Adorno and Horkheimer**

Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer were theorists who made similar, but more sophisticated, critical points about capitalism than did Reich; they are, along with Kovel and Lasch, the thinkers who come closest to what is aimed for in this dissertation. Adorno and Horkheimer were, from the 1920s through the 1950s, the intellectual nucleus of what is termed the Frankfurt School. Martin Jay (1973), historian of that movement and explicator of its thinking, points out that "although the two men did not write collaboratively until the 1940s, there was a remarkable *similarity in their views from the first*" (p. 65). Therefore, their thinking may be approached in a unitary way.

A survey of their direct use of the term "alienation" shows it to occur mostly descriptively, typically when they invoke Marx on the nature of capitalist labor. Alienation may be inferred to be an inherent co-product of that to which they do direct their attention. The increasingly commoditized nature of not just concrete things but of abstract thought and cognitive conceptualization. Furthermore, their notion of modern totality, in which crude processes of overt domination characteristic of earlier or less-developed societies are replaced by subtle processes penetrating the psychic makeup and cognitive reality of a society's members.

Finally, their sophisticated theory of reification: That the specific features of a society became rigidified, and so simultaneously become over-concretized and mistaken for a universal nature of humanity; and d) their recognition of the fetishization of "rationality," either as science or as empirical pragmatism (Jay, 1973). All these are major points of sustenance for the outlook of this work, and all will be later developed.

The philosophical methodology of this duo is, though, subject to critique. In a subtle and so potentially insidious way, their presentation often falls prey to the trap of fastening upon the logic of the discussion and upon nuances of philosophical language, and not so much on the phenomena of their ultimate subject matter--lives themselves, which are logical and extralogical, languaged and extralanguaged.

For instance, Adorno critiqued American jazz as spuriously spontaneous, and as "a commodity in the strictest sense." Jazz, he argued, was highly regressive (As cited in Jay, 1973, p. 186). But, philosophical words about regression, even those as highly articulate and meaningful as these are, do not fully appreciate or convey regressive experience. In an aside, Adorno does approach a languaged portrayal of regression when he recalls his horror on first reading the word "jazz" and recognizes it may have produced in him an association with "the German word Hatz (a pack of hounds), which evoked bloodhounds chasing after something slower" (Adorno, 1956, p. 117, as cited in Jay, 1973, p. 186).

## **Erich Fromm**

Jay (1979) comments that "It was primarily through [Erich] Fromm's work that the Institute [für Sozialforschung] first attempted to reconcile Freud and Marx" (p. 88). Like Reich before him and Marcuse after, Fromm eventually left the Institute, and his major writings explicitly on alienation came following his departure. Richard Schacht (1970) notes that "Fromm has had a great deal to do with the popularization of the term 'alienation' in the United States" (p. 123). Christopher Lasch (1979) derisively observes that such popularization is at the expense of theoretical coherence—occurring in the service of Fromm's "watery love for humanity" and his "eagerness to sermonize about the blessings of brotherly love" (p. 72).

Fromm's writing on alienation is at its strongest when he resists savior impulses and stays with explication of Marx, as in his *Marx's Concept of Man* (1961), an exegesis of Marx's *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*. A major value of Fromm's effort is in his linkages between *The Manuscripts* and *Capital*, that is, his linkages between workers as subjects and the objective economy. Fromm observes:

Marx's concept of the alienated product of labor is expressed in one of the most fundamental points developed in *Capital*, in what he calls the "fetishism of commodities." Capitalist production transforms the relations of individuals into qualities of things themselves and this transformation constitutes the nature of the commodity in capitalist production. {p. 50}

Though Fromm (1961) also makes linkages between Marx and religious existentialism which are unrelated to this dissertation's ends, he does give useful attention to updating Marx's nineteenth century concepts of "worker" and to unlinking Marx from responsibility for Soviet totalitarianism in the name of socialism (pp. 24ff and 69ff). In sum, Fromm's usefulness to this dissertation is very truncated, as his intellectual penetration of alienation was rather compromised by his salvational urgings.

### **Herbert Marcuse**

The Marx-Freud theorizing of Herbert Marcuse differed significantly (and very publicly) with Fromm's in its insistence on the primacy of a Freudian-derived death instinct, which Fromm (like Reich) had relegated to the status of historical aberration. In his 1955 *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse reinvigorated the Freudian death instinct by redefining it as not necessarily an all-powerful destructive urge, but as humans' seeking an end of bodily and social tensions in a wished-for return to an inorganic state:

The death instinct operates under the Nirvana principle: it tends toward that state of "constant gratification" where no tension is felt--a state without want. This trend of the instinct implies that its destructive manifestations would be minimized as it approached such a state. (p. 234)

Marcuse (1955) intertwines Marxist and Freudian viewpoints to argue that capitalist society necessarily entails alienated labor, and not rewarding work, because excessive instinctual repression compels people to oversubliminate repressed material into toilful labor. Humankind has "unredeemable guilt" (p. 235) because of so much unnecessary suffering, and so "it takes all the institutions and values of a repressive order to pacify the bad conscience of this guilt" (pp. 235-236).

His alternate model of society (Marcuse 1955) is one in which libido is mobilized in full-body (that is, pre- and extra-genital, or "polymorphous perverse" [p. 49]) sexuality, and in libidized work. It is a society which transcends capitalism's "paternal domination" and the "performance principle", that is, capitalism's particular, compulsive form of the Freudian reality principle (pp. 49 ff).

A central influence of Marcuse's thought herein is in his interlinking regressive wishes and social structures. But, Marcuse was a philosopher rather than, say, a clinician, making his work subject to the same overly-philosophical methodological critique as that of Horkheimer and Adorno. Also, all three of them wrote during what might be characterized as the adolescence of Freudian theory, when thinking about pre-oedipal development was new, and was mostly limited to clinical circles. Their access to these clinical-theoretical developments was therefore restricted.

## Joel Kovel

Joel Kovel's major work of synthesizing Marx and Freud is *The Age of Desire* (1981). Kovel was for years a practicing psychoanalyst, giving his writing the authenticity of peoples' actual, if often inarticulate, psychosocial experiences. It is somewhat of a disservice to Kovel's complex and subtle thinking to summarize it, but in short, he aims to explicate the dialectics of transhistorical essential human qualities with the features of the historically specific society of his lifetime, advanced capitalism.

For earlier Freudian-leaning leftists, alienation hinges on desires (or instincts or the like) denied or displaced; for Kovel, alienation centers around desires that are mobilized, but in a distorted, manipulated way, for the dehumanized productive and consumptive needs of inhuman capital (Kovel, 1981). The contrast in part reflects that the other authors wrote during differing historical times of capitalism. It also reflects a methodological difference vis-a-vis the earlier theorists., for Kovel, the critical-thinking, paradigm-examining clinician, communicates a much clearer and empathic sense of the actual human experiences of alienation than do philosophers. Kovel's writings, though more recent than, say, Marcuse's, similarly do not travel far from the Freudianism of Sigmund Freud, nor from the Marxism of Karl Marx. The main shortcoming of Kovel, then, is his over-reliance upon the father figures of each intellectual strand.

## Christopher Lasch

The work of Christopher Lasch, a non-clinician, attains grounding in the lived human psyche from his extensive and perceptive use of clinical literature, especially that of psychoanalysis. Lasch was an historian who wrote two works that are particularly applicable to this dissertation: *The Culture of Narcissism* (1979) and *The Minimal Self* (1984).

In a sense Lasch summarizes his view on cultural analysis and change-aimed politics when he says "what's really at stake here [is] a radical shift in the way that culture is transmitted and internalized" such that personality "is dominated by very early and archaic psychic mechanisms" (Lasch and discussants, as cited in Richards, 1981, p. 35). His complex and subtle analysis is especially sustaining of two important notions developed later in this dissertation: a) The paradox of peoples' conservatively clinging to often-exploitive settings, and b) their hungrily, defensively, and immaturely seeking of reliable objects and objectivity.

His work is frequently reinjected into subsequent chapters. The main reason why Lasch's is not such a definitive Marx-Freud work is that his emphasis on the socio-political-historical reverberations of narcissism leads him to deemphasize directly subjective experiences, making "alienation" and its subjectivity-objectivity dialectics, much less of a primary phenomenon than it is here.

## Ideology and Clinical Practice

The scope inherent in working toward the kind of goals represented by the theorists just cited may seem far too broad and too dauntingly complex to be undertaken in any writers' lifetimes. Alienation is an extensive topic, but it should be emphasized that alienation thought is already well developed, and any undertaking to enhance rather than reformulate the thinking can lead to greater understanding of the way this thinking can inform clinical practices. Furthermore, problems of analytic magnitude should not be conflated with problems of making a compendious analysis. There is nothing innate in large

scope topics to justify presumption that their coherent investigation depends upon breaking them into parts for detailed examination.

Such a detail-oriented stance subtly rests on an ideology which helps sustain the stated American belief system (and its variants), as an industrial-technological, "scientific" society. It is an ideology--even an epistemology--of overdetail and overcontrol. To assert ideologically that understanding comes only from a closely focused, segmented approach is to presuppose either that there is no coherent totality, or that our human and extra-human totality is inescapably alien to us.

Speaking in critique of Heinz Hartmann's ideologically discounting of historical analysis in favor of biologicistic, natural-scientific "lawlike"-ness, Kovel (1978/1988) notes that "Hartmann raises a certain ideology to a self-subsisting fact..." (p. 109). Such a phrase is seen here as applicable to many disciplines that place stress on detail-examination and that fetishize natural science's claimed objectivity.

The concept of ideology has a multifaceted history and a variety of significances. As used here, it is in contradistinction to--but also overlap with--theory; both are attempts to understand and explain the world. Theory does so more self-consciously and rigorously, and it is hoped, more clearly. Ideology is seen here much as Lionel Trilling stated in 1950:

[Ideology is] the habit or the ritual of showing respect for certain formulas to which, for various reasons having to do with emotional safety, we have very strong ties of whose meaning and consequences in actuality we have no clear understanding. (As cited in Bullock and Stalleybrass, 1977, p. 298)

The last element of Trilling's statement ("... in actuality we have no clear understanding") is insufficiently dialectical. Rather, the meanings of ideology are distorted--at times to a complete falsification--but also can be plumbed, by radically critical methodology, for clarifications about the society and its manipulations. Because a detail-compelling stance is at least partially ideological, then, it tends to leave its explanatory conventions undisturbed by alternative interpretations, and unacknowledged as even being ideological, and so question-begging," explanations. Rather, conventions are unanalytically taken by most of this society's members as immutable, essential reality.

Central to the incorporation of alienation thinking in psychotherapeutic clinical practices is an exploration of why and how this ideological pattern occurs, involving the ideological and methodological interrelationships among notions of conventionality, reality, and practicality. Consideration must be given to the extensive exploration of what Trilling (1950, as cited in Bullock and Stallybrass, 1977) called "various reasons having to do with emotional safety" (p. 298) --especially as related to the solipsistic relationship of conventionality and reality.

Many objections to "alienation" as a characterizing topic are based on a view that it is too general, but here it is seen as a good characterizing term for the prevalent problematics of total American society just because of its general sweep. The idea "alienation" is primary in this essay, then, because (particularly when compared with "narcissism," "mass society," and the like) it allows an approach among social, psychological and psychotherapeutic clinical questions that is more dialectical.

## **Conclusions**

I believe that we are moving toward a clinically derived, dialectic richness of psychoanalytic thought. This richness is particularly evident in the application of object relations to the extra-clinical contexts

that thinking about alienation addresses. While the concept of alienation offers a broad and primal--if often hazy or seemingly ungraspable--presence in American culture, this concept provides a coherent social theory for strengthening psychotherapeutic clinical work. I would maintain, furthermore, that some theory like belief is always part of social life--if only in tacit, ideological form. It therefore is always part of the clinical mélange.

The developmental implications of object-relational psychoanalytic insights should continue to be drawn upon as guidance in effective psychotherapeutic clinical work—with the notion of effective participatory democracy--in political and in economic realms as well—serving as a prime principle of influence regarding clinical and social thinking. In sum, the guiding ideal for effective clinical practice should be the creation of a thoroughgoing democratic society inhabited by psychosociologically mature-- reparative-- people.

A resultant response to this ideal would be the entirely reasonable question "What would such a society be like?" A straightforward answer would be: "We don't exactly yet know, though more guiding and predictive insight than is typically discussed is available." I would postulate that individuals and society, in moving toward democratic maturity, would be modified in both foreseeable and unpredictable ways.