AMNESIA CRITIQUE: A 'MARXIST' APPROPRIATION OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

Ray Morrow

Phil Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School: A Marxist Perspective.* Routledge and Kegan Paul: London and Boston, 1977, pp. 185, xvi.

The subtitle provides an accurate forewarning: "A Marxist Perspective." With minimal metatheoretical fanfare Phil Slater describes his *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School* as a "metacritique" — "a critique framed within a context that transcends the object under scrutiny. In the case of the Frankfurt School, such a procedure is both complex and problematical: they acknowledge as their frame of reference the method, categories and political orientation of historical materialism, yet their analyses fail to concretize these categories, particularly as regards to the problem of economic manipulation and revolutionary social praxis. Thus, immanent critique and metacritique, in the case of an analysis of the Frankfurt School, fuse." (p. xiv)

For those who have previously understood the Frankfurt School as a "metacritique" of Marxism, this may come as a surprise and appear a rather dubious interpretive strategy: a catalogue of "deviations" has little to recommend itself beyond its function as an indicator of the current standings on the ideological charts. But the author's intentions are more conciliatory, restorative, indeed "practical".[1] The metacritique provided is not "purely" theoretical, but is based on "a close study of the Frankfurt School's failure to establish links with the working-class movement in the 1930's and, subsequently, in connection with the *practical* critique the Frankfurt School underwent at the hands of the student anti-authoritarian movement in the 1960's." (p. xv) As a consequence: "The present study . . . stresses the intended Marxist orientation of the Frankfurt School's formative years, an orientation which is distorted in the vast majority of the commentaries at hand today, where the Frankfurt School's works in its early years is either condemned for 'revisionism' and 'eclecticism' (by the 'orthodox' Marxist-Leninists), or else 'saved' from the 'slanderous' label of 'Marxist' (by bourgeois intellectuals). Both perspectives are inadequate: what is needed is a differentiated analysis. The following study propounds the following thesis: the Frankfurt School of the 1930's and early 1940's made a serious contribution to the elucidation and articulation of historical materialism but, *at the same time*, failed to achieve the relation to praxis which is central to the Marxist project." (pp. xiii-xiv)

Taken at face value, this is not an implausible interpretive strategy. Let us concede the need for such a metacritique oriented toward the problem of praxis

— political praxis — in the Frankfurt tradition. Let us concede the possibility that this requires overcoming the tendency to attempt to excommunicate or embalm it. Let us accept, in short, a potential heuristic value in a study which could compare the early Critical Theory with classical Marxism and Marx from the perspective of a contemporary in the 1930's such as Karl Korsch.[2] Let us grant the possible redeeming characteristics of a metacritique of the early Frankfurt School from some kind of 'Marxist perspective'.

Regrettably, Slater's study scarcely meets even these minimal objectives. The reasons are many, ranging from such technical features as brevity and frequent lack of penetration in the summary of texts,[3] to underlying theoretical difficulties which converge ultimately in the decision to isolate the period from 1930 to 1942. This is coupled with the assumption that the work after this period is simply the beginning of a series of steps toward idealistic regression culminating in the younger generation of the Frankfurt School.[4] He can thus avoid accounting for the diversity of these later interpretations and how even those who continue, like himself, to hold a belief in the possibility of a proletarian class movement in the traditional sense, have found it necessary to proceed via an immanent critique which passes *through* the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, rather than passing around or behind it, thus confirming that which would be denied. The consequence is the naiveté of historical anachronism and a grave neglect of the internal tensions within Critical Theory from the beginning. The resulting interpretation culminates in a kind of latent theory of *coupure épistémologique régressive* — a psycho-theoretical malady resulting from an aversion to economic class analysis and to nitty-gritty proletarian politics.

The book itself is coherently organized in terms of five chapters: (1) the historical background of the Institute; (2) an exposition of the "critical theory of society" as historical materialist ideology critique; (3) the historical materialist praxis-nexus; (4) historical materialist psychology; and (5) historical materialist aesthetics. Yet the insistent repetition of the loaded contrast term "historical materialist" gives a clue to the latent tendency of the discussion to approach a deviationist catalogue. This sense is further reinforced by the loose internal organization of the chapters, each of which is divided into a dozen or so numbered sections usually two to three pages long. The only thing that seems to link these sections — for the most part textual summaries — is some kind of thematic relation to the chapter topic and a patient search for symptoms of the two guiding metacritical axioms deriving from Slater's "Marxist perspective": first, that the failure of Critical Theory stems from an unwillingness and an inability to develop an "agitational" strategy for a "practical critical" proletarian movement; and secondly, that this is a *logical* consequence of a "tendential idealism" which is manifest in an inability to provide an economically grounded class analysis, especially a theory of the "economic

manipulation" of monopoly capitalism instead of an absolutization of "superstructural manipulation."

These constitute, as it were, the internal and external poles of this metacritical strategy. Despite a certain plausibility as objections of the sort that might proceed from a Marxist perspective, the fatal limitation of this strategy lies in its implicit assumption that such theses can be taken for granted with only minimal explication and that they need not be confronted with the later theoretical developments within the Frankfurt School as a whole. This is not to say, as we shall see, that there is not *some* attempt to justify these two overriding assumptions, but that this justification makes no effort to try to persuade anyone who has a deeper comprehension of the issues posed within the Frankfurt School. This is a telltale sign of a catechismal variety of unreflexive critique, however forgiving it may be in the end.

The first chapter provides a routine rundown of the pre-Horkheimer history of the Institute followed by a background analysis of the rise of Fascism in the Weimar Republic. While it is indeed difficult to give more than a thumbnail sketch of this period in ten pages, there is a notable failure to penetrate to the character of the political stalemate, the implication of the Left within this catastrophic totality, and the very real political and personal isolation of Institute figures within the academic world. This neglect is essential to the strategy of harping on the failure of the Frankfurt theorists to develop a "practical" theory and of rejecting at the outset Jay's thesis that this very marginality was a condition of the peculiar theoretical achievements of the Frankfurt School.

In the second chapter, devoted to the difficult task of an elementary summary of the leading themes of Critical Theory from 1930-1942, Slater introduces and defends his "revisionist, anti-revisionist" interpretation of the development of the Frankfurt School. To this end, Wellmer's *Critical Theory of Society* is singled out as the important source of the erroneous view (culminating in Schroyer's work) which seeks to deny that early Critical Theory was *really* Marxist. Fortunately, "all" of Wellmer's arguments are "wrong". These are summarized as the threefold contention that "first, Marx's version of historical materialism shows serious metaphysical and crypto-positivist deviations; second, the Frankfurt School, under Horkheimer, were aware of this in the 1930's already; and third, their work of that period was a conscious attempt to rectify the science of historical materialism, which Marx had distorted! Each and every of these assertions is, in fact, false." (p. 43) Perhaps doubly so, since they are something less than a nuanced reproduction of Wellmer's argument. In any case, there is little that can be added here to resolve this debate and Slater has not provided any convincing new tools. Suffice it to say that at least Wellmer can provide a persuasive account of the immanent continuity of the transition within Critical Theory without necessarily assuming that this was a

"conscious" effort from the very beginning. Slater, in contrast, can account for the "tendential idealism" of Horkheimer and Adorno only in terms of a psychological reaction-syndrome assumed typical of bourgeois intellectuals.

With such considerations in mind, the third chapter on the theory-praxis nexus takes on a rather different significance than meets the more or less naive eye. All of the evidence compiled to prove the fact of an avoidance of strictly political debates about actual struggles and an inability to develop a practical theory of revolutionary organization remains essentially anachronistic and hence ahistorical to the extent that it simply bypasses the historical circumstances and immanent theoretical deliberations which underlay this failure of concrete strategy. For why should the Frankfurt theorists have hoped to succeed where their predecessor and early source of inspiration — Karl Korsch — with all of his practical experience and theoretical brilliance had failed? The irony that slips past Slater's lament is that the charge that "'Praxis' thus became a theoretical, methodological category rather than a concrete notion of socio-historical class struggle" (p. 63) and was consequently "ultimately academic . . . not a constituent of a concrete revolutionary struggle" (p. 55), applies *almost* as well to Korsch, Mattick and the Council Communists who Slater reasonably takes as potential allies. This failure is attributed, however, to a mystical faith in a "spontaneity" theory of revolution. Even though it is admitted that the Frankfurt School stood "head and shoulders" above the normal ivory tower and "had a great number of highly differentiated observations to make on the *general* problems of class-struggle", they could not translate this into a "*practical* theory of class struggle." (p. 56) Following a series of snippets on the Frankfurt theorists' relations to Lenin, the dictatorship of the proletariat, Stalinism, Rosa Luxemburg, the KPD, Trotsky, Brandlerism, Council Communism, SPD reformism, and left-wing social democracy (Adler), it is concluded — largely through imputation by default — that the Frankfurt theorists must have had a spontaneity theory because they persisted in affirming a faith in revolution and yet avoided coming to terms with the question of organization. In short, they "failed to assimilate in an adequate and conscious manner the lessons of defeat of the German and Russian workers. Fascism and Stalinism remained . . . traumas that blocked the view of any concrete critical praxis." (p. 55) Perhaps. But with the third trauma of that "brave new world" opened up by the view from Morningside Heights and Beverley Hills, they could begin to assimilate the implications of the "victory" of the American workers. In their deepest of Marxist hearts, it was probably nostalgia which lead Adorno and Horkheimer back home to the defeated proletariat of Central Europe.

This is not to imply that Slater avoids providing a formal presentation of their mode of reasoning. As he points out, the Frankfurt School "seems to have been convinced in the early 1930's that political praxis, given the conditions

obtaining, was already doomed. The 'truth' of the 'critical theory of society' became, of necessity, increasingly isolated from the organized oppositional groupings; the only hope was that, at some future date, 'the truth' would once more be taken up in earnest by a significant political movement." (p. 81) Yet since this argument is not taken seriously as a reasonable existential judgment, the anachronistic lament persists: "Naturally, a spontaneity-theory is conveniently freed from the necessity of formulating organizational categories, but any such theory can hardly claim to be the revolutionary 'truth'." (p. 82) Perhaps it cannot claim to be the whole truth, but it could be said that it was the unseen side, the moment of negation, where truth must begin practically to reconstitute itself anew.

Somewhat surprisingly, despite the central place of the concept of "spontaneity" in Marcuse's theory and the continuities between the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *One-Dimensional Man*, Marcuse is granted a dispensation and credited with having "radicalized" and "sublated" the "critical theory of society." This judgment stems from a formal application of the criteria of practical-political class orientation and the primacy of economic manipulation as the cornerstones of fidelity to historical materialism. Consequently, because of his "historical materialist insights" — consistent acknowledgement of the proletarian revolution despite the allowance of a complementary role for the student movement, theory of libidinal liberation, scattered remarks on rationalization in the sphere of economic production — Marcuse can qualify more or less as a "good Marxist". And this *despite* the aberrations of Marcuse's aesthetic theory with its rejection of the use of art as a weapon of the class struggle. Yet this latter dimension cannot be dismantled as some kind of superfluous detail when it is the trigger underlying his whole theoretical project. What is missing in Slater's account is any recognition that the differences among Marcuse and his former colleagues (excepting the later Horkheimer) are not so much theoretical as circumstantial and temperamental: departing from a shared tradition of discourse he has continued to articulate the logic of utopian possibility much as Adorno, the traumatized realist, conversely tried to come to terms with the logical consequences of the possibility of historical catastrophe. For someone such as Slater, for whom the meaning of "radicalism" is reduced to a purely political stance, militant affect and attitudes — *Parteilichkeit*, the internal dynamic between optimism and pessimism as the motive for exploring the logic of possibilities in a new historical conjuncture is lost. In this context, Marcuse's effort to stretch the old categories to the limits of utopian possibility and Adorno's attempt to pose the question of their archaic contamination are only two sides of the same coin: their value can be realized only together, not by setting off a radical from a regressive side in the name of militant exchange value.

The final two chapters are devoted to what is acknowledged to be the most important contributions of the Frankfurt School: a theory of superstructural "manipulation" based upon an analysis of both the psychic dimension and its mediation through the culture industry. The choice of the term "manipulation", however, is indicative of a form of interpretation which may have the effect of unintentionally stressing an aspect which easily lends itself to vulgarization. The term manipulation suffers from a conspiratorial connotation which, despite its agitational resonance, tends to gloss over the nuances of a theory of domination and its abolition. Moreover, it is a concept which has a tendency to return to haunt its author: when revolutionary agitation is implicitly defined as a form of counter-manipulation, counter-propaganda, the question of the creation of a counter-culture drops out of sight as self-evident.

As for the psychological dimension of "manipulation", the sins of the Frankfurt School are those we have seen before: no strategy for the anti-authoritarian movement; and inadequate grounding in an economic theory. "The psychological theory of the Frankfurt School is not structured according to the need of any ideological struggle of the present. Nowhere are there indications as to a theory and strategy of anti-authoritarian struggle." (p. 113) On the one hand, it could be asked in response why would they have even tried or have been able to develop a theory of praxis for the 1970's on the basis of the circumstances of the 1930's? So here we are reminded of the better example of Wilhelm Reich who "had been active in this work during the crucial, and fatal, class struggles of the last years of Weimar Germany. The Frankfurt School, by contrast, held no hopes for changing the world, so they set about explaining it. That explanation, though dialectical, did not throw up any concepts for an anti-authoritarian strategy and even failed to emphasize the *need* for such a strategy." (p. 114)[5] This failure is explained as the "logical outcome" of the fact that "in the absence of a sound economic theory, the role of psychology becomes distorted." (p. 114) Unfortunately, the relation between such a "sound economic theory" and psychology is not clarified for the reader and no alternative other than Reich is suggested.[6] The "practical" fate of Reich in the various phases of his career is not elaborated upon.

In the final, and in many respects best, chapter all of these issues converge on the question of "historical materialist" aesthetics. Here we are lead to the conclusion that "in the evolution of the 'critical theory of society' . . . the experience of fascism was, in a sense, traumatic for the Frankfurt School. Their theory was not developed with any concept of a continuing confrontation between wage-labour and capital, anything less than total revolution, with a perfect mass class-consciousness, was viewed as hopelessly caught up in the contradictions of that very world which was to be smashed. This weakness is reproduced in the Frankfurt School's aesthetics. The analysis of manipulation is highly incisive, whereas the concept of 'negation' is tendentially idealist."

(p. 135) "Ultimately, the Frankfurt School's differentiated critique of culture collapsed due to its failure to proceed from ideology-critique to the *practical-critical* theory of class praxis." (p. 145)

In contrast, the author finds it adequate to point to the counter examples of Brecht and Benjamin reduced to materialist measure. While it is perfectly legitimate to challenge the pessimism of the assumption of total administration and to pose "the question of the possibility of critical work in popular culture . . . the question of the progressive employment of the advanced means of communication," (p. 136) to locate this discussion anachronistically in the context of the Weimar Republic tends to overlook the contradictory effects of agit-prop even then, and completely bypasses the fact of the general absence of such a proletarian public in the postwar period.

There is little point here in replaying the details of the polarization between the Frankfurt theorists' conception of determinate negation — the resulting high estimation of the capacity of avant-garde art forms to elicit utopian remembrance on the one hand, and an agit-prop aesthetic oriented toward the subordination of art to the immediate class struggle on the other. Slater's discussion, while only scratching the surface of the problematic of the aesthetic theories of Adorno and Benjamin, does provide an instructive confrontation of positions in terms of their implications for revolutionary organization. But what emerges from this discussion — despite the author's obvious intentions — is a lingering sense of the misplaced focus of the whole debate and the limiting horizon of its genesis in Central Europe in the 1920's and 1930's. As mirror images of each other, the two polar positions reproduce the contradictions of a form of social crisis which has largely faded from advanced capitalist societies. In this new context, it is clear that any agitationally conceived theory of counter-manipulation cannot compete with the consciousness industry: it is the cultural equivalent of the illusions of the urban guerilla.[7] Nor does the affirmation that protest lingers on in the technical virtuosity of Schonberg or the estranged language of Beckett provide any great consolation. Both of these perspectives fail to grasp the changed horizon of possibilities and the contradictory dynamic of the reproduction of culture in the context of advanced consumer societies.

Marcuse has come the closest here with his portrayal of the tension between repressive desublimation and the systematic cultivation of new needs. In various formulations, this is the point of departure for conceptions of a "legitimacy crisis" as a longer term locus for the development of a new form of potentially collective subjects with more advanced forms of communicative competence. Whatever objections may be raised to such conceptions, it is clear at least that they are trying to come to terms with the possibilities immanent in the transformations of advanced capitalism. In contrast, the agitational conception of proletarian organization as developed by Slater simply avoids addressing

the anomaly that the most potentially critical forms of popular culture no longer proceed self-consciously under a class banner, but cut across class lines, binding individuals together in an array of class-heterogeneous status-spheres. In persisting in narrowly defining the instrumental functions of art in terms of the mobilizing capacity of aesthetic cheerleaders, such a view loses sight of both the new field conditions and the end zone. The goal of critical communication can no longer be simply the "solidarity" of damaged selves in a march of cripples (as in the slaughter scene concluding Alexandro Jodorowski's film, *El Topo*), but in the equi-finality of reconvergence of those who know themselves well enough to love their neighbours. That is the long egocentric march in the West: to proclaim the death of the subject is a precondition of reconceptualizing its further development.

It must be admitted that in the course of the book, some evidence is given for its two guiding metacritical assumptions by Slater's references to the development of the German student movement and to the economic theory of Alfred Sohn-Rethel. The use of the example of the German student movement — a falsely promising theme — does not penetrate beyond the citation of early expressions of intention as expressed in Hans-Jurgen Krahl's observation that "Critical Theory was able to recognize a concept of totality . . . But . . . was nonetheless unable to grasp this totality in its concrete expression as class-anatagonism . . . The practical class standpoint, to put it crudely, did not enter into the theory as an active constituent of that theory." (cited p. 82) Hence the German student movement was concerned with a "practical" appropriation and "awareness of the need for organized ideological struggle . . . Thus, the German form of the student anti-authoritarian movement organized to criticize the social significance of the content and method of university courses." (p. 82) Curiously, the reader is spared any account of the subsequent decade of development of this movement and the sectarian splintering of the "ideological struggle" in the face of the polarization provoked within the German university system and society. Above all, there is no hint that this attempt to use the university as the bastion for a traditionally conceived agitational struggle has proven itself a complete failure in terms of Slater's own two criteria — applied to the Frankfurt School — for assessing the promotion of changes in consciousness: "*effective* communication, and communication to a *revolutionary* class." (p. 146)

But the analytical backbone of Slater's argumentation seeks to build upon the work of Alfred Sohn-Rethel. Almost unknown to the English-language reader, he has a tangential relation to the Frankfurt School (corresponding with Adorno and Benjamin in the 1930's) and has provoked some interesting discussions on the West German Left over the past several years.[8] But on the basis of a five page exposition of Sohn-Rethel's fragmentary and controversial thesis on

the rise of Fascism in Germany, there is scarcely space for moving beyond a superficial account; above all it does not credibly establish the *use* made of his theory. For the argument is that because the Frankfurt School "never elaborated a systematic theory of manipulation in *production*," it was unable to develop an adequate account of superstructural manipulation or a theory of organizational praxis. (p. 17) In contrast, because Sohn-Rethel could propose an economic critique of the USSR, he did not have to betray the idea of concrete class struggle as such and could turn to the development of a practical theory for capitalist society based upon the rationalization — Taylorization — of the economic process. While the Frankfurt School was not blind to this and pioneered the discussion of monopoly capitalist theory, "unfortunately the primacy of economic manipulation was not reflected in the overall direction of Horkheimer's and Adorno's research." (p. 86) Sohn-Rethel, on the other hand, could point the way toward practical liberation through worker's control and the abolition of the split between manual and mental labour brought to its peak with scientific management.

Setting aside any discussion of Sohn-Rethel as such — which would lead us far beyond the point at stake here — several comments are necessary to situate this attempt to link an ostensible failure to analyze economic manipulation in the 1930's with an inability to conceptualize political practice. First, it must be noted that Sohn-Rethel's position, despite its germination in this period, has only been fully developed and published in the 1970's. As a consequence, it is inconsistent to exclude all interim developments within the younger generation of the Frankfurt School which have touched upon similar themes.[9] Second, it is not at all self-evident how a specification of these issues in the 1930's would have provided a practical theory of organization. The link between rationalization in the workplace and a political strategy is difficult to find, indeed this is only one more of a series of obstacles to organization. Moreover, these transformations were implicit to the superstructural theory of domination, an extension of the theory of the consciousness industry and the critique of positivism, rather than a purely "economic" phenomenon. The continuous reference in Slater's study to a theory of "economic manipulation" in contrast to a theory of "superstructural manipulation" obscures the intimate relation between the two which was one of the defining characteristics of the new order *and* Critical Theory. Third, reference is made to the Frankfurt theorists' awareness of the changing economic structure of "monopoly" capitalism without indicating how this was coupled with an even stronger emphasis on the role of the state in this process, yet another factor which reduces the immediate significance of purely economic factors as the basis for a conventional revolutionary strategy.[10] Finally, there is no indication that at the centre of Adorno's conception of emancipation was the abolition of the split between manual and mental labour. In short, the thrust of Slater's thesis can be completely reversed:

precisely *because* the Frankfurt School had a basic sense of the new structures of domination in the workplace, in institutions of socialization, in the public sphere and communications, and in the state, they retreated from any attempt to develop a theory of "practical" politics as theoretically premature and historically displaced into an indefinite future. Moreover — and this is the most regretable feature of Slater's "Marxist perspective", any "Marxism" which does not attempt to push all the way through the immanent logic of this mode of questioning *is* bound to be "preaching to the saved."

Despite its failure as an account of the "origin and significance of the Frankfurt School", this study of "Horkheimer's team" succeeds more or less in terms of its own agitational self-understanding. Through easily digestible summaries of key texts coupled with a metacritique guided by a vocabulary of positive truth terms (advanced positions, practical class standpoints, materialist insights, idealist regressions), it will serve as a self-defensive soundingboard for those who, in dream-like wish-fulfillment, continue to "think with their ears" (Adorno) in the name of the proletariat.

Sociology
University of Manitoba

Notes

1. Metacritique here is a polite way of referring to signs of "revisionism". This metatheoretical self-understanding bears citation in full to grasp its "stringent" logic: "The metacritical perspective . . . demands a stringent procedure . . . the critical categories must be appropriated in such a way as to qualify the theoretical distortions within the manipulative machinery to the needs, possibilities and goals of critical praxis. The intention is not to demolish, but rationalize the Frankfurt School's work in the period concerned (1930-42)." (p. 93) The specific meaning of the term "rationalize" in this context remains a mystery.

2. This "Marxist perspective" seems to be a present-minded (practical) reading of the Frankfurt School in this early period through the 1930's eyes of Korsch (theory of ideology and praxis), Alfred Sohn-Rethel (economic theory), Reich (psychology) and Brecht (aesthetics). The difficulty is that this "present-mindedness" gets in the way of comprehending the discontinuity between past and present, obscuring the comprehension of both.

3. There are also a number of annoying stylistic habits which must be attributed to editing such as the incessant reference to "Horkheimer's team" and the use of the term "critical theory of society" without a preceding "the". I have silently changed the latter in citations. Textual penetration fails with such generalities as the fact of "Adorno's ignorance of the complex, dynamic nature of class-consciousness" (p. 141) or the comforting knowledge that "the basic difference between Benjamin and Adorno can be summarized as the differing levels of concreteness in their respective work. Adorno's aesthetics reveals a high level of hypostization, even unintelligibility . . ." (p. 136). And of course it is easy to find an appropriate passage to "prove" this to the English reader! Benjamin, a good materialist, ironically gets off scott-free on the unintelligibility count.

4. The examples of Habermas and Wellmer are most well-known here. But it should be recalled there are others such as Oskar Negt who have followed this path without losing sight of the practical problems of proletarian organization and education at the center of Slater's concern. Similarly, Jean-Marie Vincent, who carries no love for what he has termed Habermas' "social-liberal reformism", has seen no need to break off the contribution of Horkheimer and Adorno in 1942. Cf. *La theorie critique de l'ecole de Francfort* (Paris, 1976).

5. This is a slight exaggeration facilitated by leaving out the authoritarian personality studies which fall outside the period under examination.

6. But it would perhaps be fair to surmise that Slater's position, given his charge that the Frankfurt theorists "absolutized" psychology, is close to that of Michael Schneider in his *Neurosis and Civilization*, trans. M. Roloff (N.Y., 1976). For a politely devastating response see the review by Joel Kovel in *Telos*, 27 (Spring, 1976), pp. 185-195.

7. This is not to speak against the obvious imperative of a cultural and media politics, but to suggest that such a frontal attack is suicidal and that, even if successful, provides no guarantee that merely the content of manipulation would be changed instead of the communicational process. Slater's conception can meet neither the objections of Alvin Gouldner in his *Dialectic of Ideology and Technology* (N.Y., 1976) who would characterize it as a museum relic of "normal Marxims" or, more seriously from Slater's Marxist perspective, Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge in their *Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972) for whom it would be elitist and social psychologically naive.

8. This controversy has been situated and Sohn-Rethel's theories subjected to a close critical examination in defense of Marx by Jost Halfmann and Tilman Rexroth in their *Marxismus als Erkenntniskritik* (Munchen, 1976). Slater's reliance on his economic theory is ironic given that Sohn-Rethel is better located in the trajectory of the Frankfurt School and is not the clean-cut Marxist implied by exclusive reliance on his Fascism theory. In a letter to Adorno in 1936, he would outline the thesis which would guide his later epistemological analysis appearing three decades later:

   "For I am unconditionally convinced that the scientific consistency (*Stimmigkeit*) of Marxism depends on the possibility of extending the analysis of the commodity form to that point where, beyond the special capitalist fetishisms, the entire mechanism of fetishism, i.e., the genesis of ideologies with regard to their validity aspects (*hinsichtlich ihrer Geltungscharaktere*), will be uncovered all the way through so-called cultural history, thus back to antiquity and perhaps further." *Warenform und Denkform* (Frankfurt am Main, 1971), p. 12. This is the project begun in Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and dismissed by Slater as the first step toward degeneration.

9. For example, Claus Offe, *Leistungsprinzip und industrielle Arbeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1970). Also Pollock's later work on automation should be recalled in this context. Moreover, Slater's account not only underplays the understanding of Horkheimer and Adorno of economic issues in this period, but it fails to grasp the essential point of their profound sense of the transformation of place of the economic process in organized capitalism, a transformation which undermined the conventional understanding of the political significance of economic factors. Cf. Giacomo Marramo, "Political Economy and Critical Theory", *Telos*, 24 (Summer, 1975), pp. 56-80.

10. Nor was Sohn-Rethel's position substantially different during this period; he developed the clear political consequences of his theories only much later with the example of China and further developments in the labour process in capitalist societies. Moreover, his Fascism theory was based upon unique access in the early thirties to quasi-official sources in Berlin which allowed him to trace connections between political and economic elites which was impossible for those in exile. (See his "*Ökonomie und Klassenstruktur des deutschen Faschismus.* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973). And when he finally did draw out those political implications of his analysis of the work process in the 1960's, they were radically different from those implied by Slater: "It will therefore become ever more difficult to find material interests in the working class which allow themselves to be transformed politically into energies for the social revolution. And party-political Marxist thinking is so attuned to this transformation technique that with this technique revolutionary will itself tend to fade at the same time." *Geistige und körperliche Arbeit* (Frankfurt am Main, 1973), p. 259. To rely upon Sohn-Rethel for a defense of the contemporary applicability of the agitational strategies of the 1930's is a slanderous contradiction.